

PARISH COUNCILS LIAISON GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 25th January 2012 at Worksop Town Hall

Present:

Councillors: F Hart (Chair)
Mrs V A Bowles, H M Brand, G Freeman, A Rhodes, J C Shephard and
Mrs K Sutton.

Parish Council Representatives: C Fraser, H Holdaway, E Jefferies, D Langmead, G Perry,
A Stevenson, M Stokes and G Wratten.

Officers in attendance: S Brown, G Connor, J Hamilton, J Proudman and
K Tarburton.

Members of Standards Committee: None.

Also in attendance: Chief Inspector Anderson – Nottinghamshire Police
H Burton – NALC
R Crowder – Chief Executive, RCAN
Superintendent Fretwell – Nottinghamshire Police

(The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and read out the Fire Alarm/Evacuation Procedure.)

21. SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES FOR 15 MINUTES TO ALLOW QUESTIONS

A Parish Council representative asked who had taken on the role of Rural Champion within the new Administration and what is the remit for this role. The Senior Manager Support Services informed the Group that Councillor D Challinor has taken on this role and is developing its remit.

22. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B A Bowles and M T Gray.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

(a) Members

There were no declarations of interest by Members.

(b) Officers

There were no declarations of interest by officers.

24. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12TH OCTOBER 2011

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12th October 2011 be approved.

25. MINUTES FOR ACTION.

RESOLVED that the Minutes for Action be received.

26. OUTSTANDING MINUTES LIST

RESOLVED that the Outstanding Minutes List be received.

SECTION A - ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PUBLIC

Key Decisions

None.

Other Decisions

27. ITEMS SUBMITTED BY BASSETLAW DISTRICT COUNCIL

(Agenda Item Nos 7(a) and 7(b) were transposed due to Mr Crowder being delayed in traffic.)

(a) Future Operation of the Safer Neighbourhood Groups

Chief Inspector Sean Anderson and Superintendent Fretwell, Nottinghamshire Police, were in attendance. Superintendent Fretwell gave some background information on the Safer Neighbourhood Groups (SNGs) to the Group and outlined how they would operate in the future after the implementation of the Nottinghamshire Police's Change Programme.

Due to austerity measures and the need to free up time spent on bureaucracy, Nottinghamshire will be split into three areas: Ashfield/Mansfield, Bassetlaw/Newark and Sherwood, and South Nottinghamshire, each with its own Superintendent. Superintendent Mike Manley has taken control of Bassetlaw/Newark and Sherwood from 6th February 2012, although Superintendent Fretwell will still lead on neighbourhood policing.

Within the Bassetlaw/Newark and Sherwood area, there will be six clusters: East Bassetlaw (including the rural Trentside villages), Harworth, Retford, West Bassetlaw (including Carlton-in-Lindrick), Worksop North and Worksop South.

The SNGs will be restructured to mirror the clusters, each cluster focussing on three main priorities within available resources. Meetings will take place quarterly, as a minimum, and will be a forum for residents and parish councillors. Plans and priorities will be based on the mapping of issues resulting from the completion of the Police survey, which can even be completed face-to-face with a beat officer who will have the survey on his/her hand-held device.

Local Neighbourhood/Beat Teams will still deal with local issues and beat officers will be contactable by phone and email. Officers' time will be spent more "on the beat" to engage with all sectors of the community and less in the office. The beat officer may still call into a parish council meeting but it will be for a shorter time as part of his/her patch walk and he/she may not stay for the entire meeting.

Questions/issues/comments asked/raised/made included: clusters being too large; resources being retained locally e.g. PCSOs; and cluster priorities may differ from local priorities/issues.

AGREED that:

1. The information with regard to the proposed Neighbourhood Teams be noted.

2. A map showing the new clusters within Bassetlaw be circulated with the minutes to all parish councils.
3. Parish councils encourage their residents to complete the Police survey.
4. Thanks be recorded to Chief Inspector Anderson and Superintendent Fretwell for their attendance and useful information.

(Chief Inspector Anderson, Superintendent Fretwell and G Connor, Bassetlaw District Council's Community Safety Co-ordinator, left the meeting at this point.)

(b) Bulk Fuel Oil Initiative and Update on the Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire

Mr R Crowder, Chief Executive of Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire (RCAN), introduced himself and gave some background to RCAN's formation, what it delivers and how, and who it represents.

He provided information on the new bulk fuel oil initiative which is a community-based, countywide scheme which enables its members to purchase heating fuel at a reduced cost. An annual membership fee of £20 for domestic users covers the administrative costs of the oil deliveries for a year. A local co-ordinator (who receives free membership) collects orders, thereby increasing RCAN's negotiating power to secure the best price. Deliveries are made to individual properties and the householders billed accordingly. Average savings are 5p per litre which equates to £50 for 1,000 litres, and any quantity can be ordered, for example, as little as 500 litres, whereas normal individual orders would need to be at least 1,000 litres. Businesses and community enterprises can also join the scheme, although there are differing membership fees e.g. £30 for a village hall. Other initiatives are also available through similar schemes e.g. loft insulation.

Leaflets were available at the meeting. Membership forms are available from RCAN by phone (01623) 727600 or email: oil@rcan.org.uk

A parish representative asked if resources are to continue for Karen Tarburton's role as Rural Officer? Mr Crowder advised that the role/post of Rural Officer is a baseline service across the County and is supported by Bassetlaw District Council. However, if funding is reduced across the County, then resources will reduce e.g. Karen's hours may be reduced.

AGREED that:

1. Thanks be recorded to Rob Crowder for his attendance and useful information; thanks also be recorded to Karen Tarburton for her attendance and continued work and support to the parishes across Bassetlaw.
2. Parish councils encourage their residents to join the bulk fuel oil initiative and contact RCAN by phone (01623) 727600 or email: oil@rcan.org.uk

(c) Developing the Relationship between the District and Parish Councils in Bassetlaw

The Senior Manager Support Services reported that rural issues will be one of the key priorities for the new Administration. The Localism Act will impact on the District/parish relationship and there is an outstanding commitment to review the Parish Charter. Part of the development of the Council's agenda will be an examination of how the relationship between the District and parish councils can be improved and strengthened. Proposed terms of reference were outlined within the report.

AGREED that it be recommended to Cabinet that approval be given for a working group to be set up between the District Council and the Nottinghamshire Association of Local Councils (Bassetlaw) with the aim of strengthening the relationship between the District and parish/town

councils. The working group to comprise five elected Members appointed on the basis of three Labour, one Conservative and one Independent.

(d) Community Governance Review

The Senior Manager Support Services reported that a Community Governance Review may take place and advised of the nature of the types of issues that such a review will consider. This has resulted from a request from a parish council to review the number of seats on its Council. It is understood there may be other parishes who wish to examine their boundaries, possible mergers, etc.

In the interests of effective governance, the District Council is recommended to consider undertaking one review of its whole area, rather than carrying out individual, small scale reviews. There are detailed considerations that the District Council must undertake under the legislation and a summary of this was appended to the report to assist parishes. Extensive consultation will take place as part of any review, particularly with the parish councils.

AGREED that;

1. The position be noted.
2. Parish councils contact Stephen Brown with any feedback and/or concerns, by phone (01909) 533767 or email: stephen.brown@bassetlaw.gov.uk

28. ITEMS FROM PARISH COUNCILS

(a) Broadband Update (submitted by the Trentside parishes)

The representative for North Leverton, South Leverton, Sturton-le-Steeple, and North and South Wheatley reported that the current speed of broadband in the Trentside villages is far too slow, and asked if there were any resources available to improve this.

The Senior Manager Support Services reported that the main broadband providers perceive that there is not a business case for this area and therefore will only commit limited resources to it. However, in Nottinghamshire, all the local authorities, including Nottingham City, agree that there is a strong need in the rural areas for both domestic and business use, and are committed to an improvement in broadband speed.

Nottinghamshire has secured £4.25m of funding but this has to be match-funded. In this regard, Bassetlaw District Council has been asked to contribute £834,000 as it contains the greatest proportion of the total number of businesses and properties that are affected i.e. 43%. In reality, this amounts to £16-17 on every household's Council Tax bill throughout Bassetlaw but this method of raising our contribution is not permissible by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Bassetlaw District Council is currently in discussions with the County Council to negotiate the District Council's contribution, and is committed to upgrading broadband for the rural areas of Bassetlaw. The Leader of the District Council had asked for a message to be passed to the Group that the District Council would be making a six-figure sum offer as part of this commitment.

AGREED that the verbal report be received.

(b) Street Lighting Pilots (submitted by Hodsock Parish Council)

The representative for Hodsock Parish Council asked if the street lights had been switched off in other parishes and, if so, had these areas suffered as a result, or were there any concerns. Some representatives reported that there had been no detectable increase in crime and others that anti-social behaviour had increased e.g. dog fouling. The biggest concern was pedestrian safety where there are no street lights. It was felt that this initiative will only accrue a nominal saving and, as paid for through Council Tax to the County Council, what is this being spent on instead? Some parishes reported that street lights had been left on in areas where concern had been expressed e.g. around the church and in areas which have a high density of elderly residents. Other parishes reported a lack of consultation and/or information.

AGREED that the verbal report be received.

(c) Dog Fouling (submitted by Harworth Town Council)

The representative for Harworth Town Council reported that incidents of dog fouling have increased in the area despite posters and warnings, and asked how other parishes dealt with offenders.

The Principal Environmental Health Manager advised what action the Council is taking and how the parish councils can help. Enforcement action can be taken but this is dependent upon resources, both staffing and funding. Bassetlaw's Environmental Health staff are receiving training on this from Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and the clerk to Harworth Town Council has been invited to this event. This will then be rolled out to other parishes upon request.

Methods of enforcement include Designated Orders and Dog Control Orders. A Select Panel which scrutinised the Dog Warden Service found that the problem often occurs out-of-office-hours when the Dog Warden is not available, and therefore recommended such a change. Although no further funding has been made available for this, other Environmental Health staff do work out-of-office-hours and could be made available if deemed necessary. If stray dogs are picked up out-of-office-hours then it is taken to local kennels and collected by the Dog Warden when available. Covert cameras may also be used for surveillance but at a cost.

Parish representatives reported other initiatives which they had used e.g. patrolling villages other than their own to retain anonymity; local schoolchildren producing posters and encouraging parents to pick up after their dogs; new signage and bins; taking photographs of offenders and reporting to the Environmental Health Team.

AGREED that:

1. The verbal report be received.
2. An update on proposed enforcement action following training by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council be given to the next meeting of the Parish Councils Liaison Group.
3. The Dog Warden and an Environmental Health Officer be invited to the next meeting.

(Councillor J C Shephard left the meeting at this point.)

(d) Fly Tipping (submitted by Harworth Town Council)

The representative for Harworth Town Council reported that there has been an increase in fly-tipping in the area, particularly on the area behind the shop on Essex Road.

The Principal Environmental Health Manager advised what action the Council can take e.g. target hot spots. The name and address can sometimes be found by going through the rubbish; covert cameras may be used; and Fixed Penalty Notices can be given (£80 fine). Not many perpetrators have been prosecuted to date due to a lack of evidence and/or witnesses.

AGREED that the verbal report be received.

(e) Air Pollution – Feedback from Local Monitoring (submitted by Harworth Town Council)

Due to the absence of the Senior Pollution Control Officer, the Principal Environmental Health Manager advised parish councils to contact her if they required advice.

AGREED that parish councils contact Amy Ogden, Senior Pollution Control Officer, for any advice, phone (01909) 533164 or email: amy.ogden@bassetlaw.gov.uk

29. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

As there was no other business to be discussed the Chairman closed the meeting, after thanking everyone for their attendance.