

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCILS' FORUM

TUESDAY, 13TH DECEMBER 2005 AT 6.30 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillor R. Hollingworth (Chairman)

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Representative(s)</u>
Barnt Green	Mrs. E. M. Bucket (Chairman) Mr. R. Westbury (Clerk)
Belbroughton	Mr. C. R. Scurrall
Bournheath	Mrs. J. Pelham (Clerk)
Catshill and North Marlbrook	Mrs. C. Russam (Clerk)
Clent	Mrs. P. Harris (Clerk)
Cofton Hackett	Mr. B. Bridgewater
Dodford with Grafton	Mr. R. Oakes (Chairman)
Hagley	Mr. C. Humphries (Clerk) Mr. A. Lewis
Hunnington	Mrs. L. Teese (Clerk)
Lickey and Blackwell	Mr. R. Brown (Chairman)
Stoke	Mrs. T. Roll (Chairman) Mr. P. Callaway (Clerk)
Wythall	Mrs. S. J. Baxter (Chairman)
County Association of Local Councils	Ms. P. Edwards

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from:-

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Representative(s)</u>
Bournheath	Mrs. S. Davies (Chairman)
Catshill and North Marlbrook	Mr. P. J. Baker (Chairman)
Lickey and Blackwell	Mrs. J. A. Casey (Clerk)
Romsley	Mr. I. A. Hodgetts (Chairman)
Stoke	Mrs. Birmingham

2. **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Councils' Forum held on 27th September 2005 were submitted. It was AGREED that the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

3. **CONSULTATIONS WITH PARISH COUNCILS**

There was further discussion regarding the procedure for consulting Parish Councils on planning applications and, in particular, the difficulties experienced when amendments to applications were received following the initial consultation with Parish Councils.

One of the main difficulties was the slowing down in the process if further consultations were carried out on amendments, if targets imposed by Government were not met, this could have a significant impact on the funding of the service via the Planning Delivery Grant. Amendments could be either significant or minor and were sometimes made at the request of Officers, it would be difficult to have consistent procedures with regard to which amendments were to be the subject of further consultation. It was nevertheless felt by the Parish Council Representatives that Officers could decide which amendments were "significant" and that it should be possible to contact the Parish Clerk by e-mail or telephone, or possibly via the website.

The Chairman referred to the discussion he had had with the Head of Development Control and his view that the measures considered so far would be too time consuming and costly to implement. It was clear there was no easy solution to this situation and that consideration would need to be on-going. There was a need for further discussion in an attempt to resolve the issue.

4. **PARISH CHARTER**

There was an in-depth discussion on the role of a Parish Charter. There were alternative opinions regarding the value of the District Council signing up to a Parish Charter. The Chairman expressed the view that the value of such a Charter was limited. He was extremely supportive of the role of Parishes within the District and had established an extremely good relationship with the Parish Council within his own Ward and anticipated that other District Councillors would have done the same. If the relationship and trust did not exist then a Charter would be of little assistance.

Representatives from the Parishes and CALC expressed an alternative view that it was necessary to move forward and that the District had not really participated in the process of drawing up the County/District Charter and had not therefore taken the opportunity to influence the contents. The Charter was seen as a way of improving the joint working arrangements and of developing understanding between the various Councils.

The Chairman was concerned that there was a possibility that entering into a Charter would just be a matter of "ticking a box" and would not lead to the good working relationships and trust which was required. He had, as Leader of the Council, encouraged Ward Members to talk to the relevant Parish Councils in order to get their input on the allocation of budgets to various projects within the Parish areas.

It was noted that the original Charter had now been the subject of several reviews and some of the original content had been removed. It was a developing working document and it may be that some of the areas of difficulty or objection had been eliminated. The Parish Council Representatives still felt that the Charter would be a sensible starting point for improving working relationships and practices between the two tiers, although some of the Parishes were happy with the relationship built up with their Ward Members and felt the system was working well. It was felt that Officers needed to be aware that attitudes may be changing towards the acceptance of a Charter.

The Chairman felt that at present he would not be able to recommend to the Council that the Authority sign up to the Charter but he was willing to request that Councillor Scurrrell begin to take up the issue outside this meeting and to pick up the issue with Officers when appropriate. He also stressed that at present the Authority was going through a period of great change and had many pressures upon finances and other resources.

At present, whilst strongly being of the opinion that Councils needed to work together, he was not convinced that the best way of achieving this was through a Charter.

5. **CONCURRENT FUNCTIONS**

The Chairman referred to the financial information presently being obtained from Parish Councils with regard to concurrent functions to allow this to be factored into the District Council's budget. He was concerned that residents within parished areas should not be "paying twice" for some services and should not be at a disadvantage when compared to unparished areas. In the future it was possible that Service Level Agreements may be entered into.

6. **FUTURE DATES**

It was agreed that the future meetings be as follows:-

Tuesday, 11th April 2006
Tuesday, 27th June 2006
Tuesday, 19th September 2006
Thursday, 14th December 2006

The Meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.

Chairman