

Agenda Item 2

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCILS' FORUM

Tuesday, 24th June 2008, at 6.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors R. Hollingworth (Chairman)

Parish	Representative(s)
Barnt Green	Mrs. J. Jagger (Chairman)
Belbroughton	Mrs. C. Limm (Clerk)
Beoley	Mr. B. J. Somner (Chairman) Miss P. Harrison (Clerk)
Bournheath	Mrs. S. Davies (Chairman)
Catshill and North Marlbrook	Mr. G. F. Witcomb (Chairman) Mrs. G. Lungley (Clerk)
Cofton Hackett	Mr. B. Hodgson (Clerk) Mr. B. Bridgewater Mr. K. Duncan
Dodford with Grafton	Mrs. C. Limm (Clerk)
Hagley	Mr. S. R. Colella (Chairman)
Hunnington	Mr. J. Peeney (Chairman) Mrs. R. Mullett (Clerk)
Lickey and Blackwell	Mrs. J. A. Casey (Clerk) Mr. K. Woolford
Lickey End	Mr. C. W. Bateman
Romsley	Mr. I. A. Hodgetts (Chairman) Mrs. R. Mullett (Clerk)
Stoke	Mr. K. Strawbridge (Chairman) Mr. P. D. Callaway (Clerk)
Wythall	Miss P. Harrison (Clerk)

In attendance: Inspector D. Shaw and PC Stan Baker, West Mercia Constabulary; and Mr. R. Levett (County Association of Local Councils)

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. H. Bennett, Mr. D. M. Birch, Mrs. S. Mould, Mr. A. C. Stephens

1.

APOLOGIES

Parish	Representative
Alvechurch	Mrs. Y. Goode (Clerk)
Barnt Green	Mr. R. Westbury (Executive Officer) Mr. D. A. Gilburn
Belbroughton	Mr. J. M. Bradley (Chairman) Mr. C. R. Scurrall
Clent	Mrs. P. A. Harris
Tutnall and Cobley	Mrs. H. Davies (Clerk)

2. **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting of the Parish Councils' Forum held on 1st April 2008 were submitted.

It was **AGREED** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3. **PLANNING ENFORCEMENT**

Mr. D. Birch, Area Planning Manager (East), gave a brief update on the situation within the Enforcement Section following the reorganisation of the staffing levels within Development Control, and he referred to the letter dated 1st April 2008, sent by the Head of Planning and Environment Services to the parish councils, in respect of service provision. Mr. Birch reported how enforcement matters were prioritised, together with looking ahead to developing the role of the Section in the future.

In response to questions from members of the Forum, Mr. Birch informed the meeting of the processes relating to the issue of Certificates of Lawfulness. Mr. Dicks, Chief Executive, stated that procedures were in place whereby the Legal Section inform the relevant parish council of the issue of any Certificates of Lawfulness. Furthermore, he undertook to ensure that a presentation would be made to the next meeting of the Forum to explain the processes and procedures relating to Certificates of Lawfulness.

In conclusion, Mr. Birch stated that members of the Forum could raise individual queries with him after the meeting.

4. **"SMARTWATER" PRESENTATION**

The Chairman introduced Inspector D. Shaw and PC Stan Baker, Crime Risk Manager, to the meeting. Inspector Shaw addressed the meeting and gave a brief presentation on the SmartWater initiative. He outlined the background relating to the introduction of SmartWater, and how its use has helped meet the targets set in respect of reducing the number of burglaries within the Bromsgrove District.

Inspector Shaw informed the meeting that SmartWater, a colourless liquid solution with its own unique chemical 'code', was used by the Police in undercover operations to catch and convict criminals. He stated that it was issued to victims of burglary and could also be made available for sale to the parish councils.

He added that potential offenders who are aware of the use of SmartWater feared its power to forensically link them with the scene of a crime, and therefore act as an effective deterrent. He explained that SmartWater Technology, the development company, worked closely with UK Police Forces and partner agencies to develop proactive crime reduction and community improvement strategies, tailored to the needs

of each individual community. It was reported that signs were being erected in strategic locations within the district giving notice that SmartWater was being used in the area, and therefore acting as a further deterrent to potential offenders.

After answering a number of questions from members of the Forum, the Chairman thanked Inspector Shaw and PC Baker for their presentation.

5. **CO-OPTION OF PARISH COUNCILLORS / PARISH MEETINGS AND PARISH POLLS**

(a) Casual Vacancies

Mrs. S. Mould, Electoral Services Manager, addressed the Forum and stated that, in seeking to raise the profile of the Electoral Services Section, she intended to develop closer working links with the parish councils. Therefore, to provide help to the parishes, she reported that she intended to produce guidance notes and other useful procedural information. Mrs. Mould reported that one of the first documents to be published were guidance notes for parish clerks relating to 'Casual Vacancies in the Office of Councillor'.

In addition, Mrs. Mould stated that further relevant information would be added to the Electoral Services section of the Council's web-site in due course. She also reminded the parish councils that, upon the election or co-option of parish councillors, the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Code of Conduct are required to be signed by the new councillor, together with a submission for the Register of Interests.

(b) Parish Meetings and Parish Polls

Mrs. Mould also reported on further guidance which had been prepared in respect of Parish Meetings and Parish Polls. She drew attention to new legislation under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 which provided for community governance reviews. She stated that this was a new concept and that guidance notes for parish councils would be prepared in time for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting of the Forum.

Mr. R. Levett, Acting Executive Officer for the County Association of Local Councils [CALC], commented on how useful the guidance notes were and stated that he would review the existing guides currently held by CALC to ensure that they are up to date and reflect recent changes in legislation.

After answering questions from members of the Forum, the Chairman thanked Mrs. Mould for introducing the new guidance notes.

6. **NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA COMMITTEES - UPDATE**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. H. Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive, addressed the Forum and stated that he was still in the process of making arrangements for the future development of the Neighbourhood Area Committees. He stated that there were a number of issues relating to the division of the district for the proposed extension of the scheme.

He added that the Terms of Reference and initial correspondence had been drafted and that it was anticipated that this would be sent to the parish councils in the near future.

This was noted.

The Meeting closed at 7.55 p.m.

Chairman