



## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **PARISH COUNCILS' FORUM**

**TUESDAY, 1ST APRIL 2008**

**AT 6.30 P.M.**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, THE COUNCIL HOUSE, BURCOT LANE, BROMSGROVE**  
**❖ PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF MEETING ROOM ❖**

### **A G E N D A**

Copies of the Parish Councils' Forum Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on the Council's web-site at [www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/pcf](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/pcf)

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the last meeting of the Forum held on 8th January 2008 (attached - enclosure no. 1)
3. Matters arising from the minutes and feedback / follow-up from the last meeting
4. Adoption of Parish Plans (attached - enclosure no. 2)
5. Neighbourhood Area Committees
4. Litter collection - minimum standards / "zoning" policy  
*(Item requested to be included on the agenda at the request of the Area Committee of CALC)*
5. Regulations and guidance relating to the new local assessment regime - update

*(Item requested to be included on the agenda at the request of the Area Committee of CALC. Note: At the time of preparation of this agenda the*

regulations and guidance have not been published. If they have not been published by 1st April 2008 this item will not proceed)

6. Council and Committee Meetings - access to agendas, reports and minutes

K. DICKS  
Chief Executive

The Council House  
Burcot Lane  
BROMSGROVE  
Worcestershire  
B60 1AA

26th March 2008

# **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **PARISH COUNCILS' FORUM**

Tuesday, 8th January 2008, at 6.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor R. Hollingworth (Chairman)

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Representative(s)</b>
Barnt Green	Mrs. J. M. Jagger (Chairman) Mr. D. A. Gilburn Mr. R. Westbury (Executive Officer)
Belbroughton	Mr. J. M. Bradley (Chairman) Mrs. C. Limm (Clerk)
Clent	Mrs. P. Harris (Clerk)
Cofton Hackett	Mr. B. Bridgewater Mr. K. Duncan Mr. B. Hodgson (Clerk)
Dodford with Grafton	Mrs. C. Limm (Clerk)
Hunnington	Mr. P. J. Peeney (Chairman) Mrs. R. Mullett (Clerk)
Lickey and Blackwell	Mr. K. Woolford
Lickey End	Mr. C. W. Bateman
Romsley	Mr. I. A. Hodgetts (Chairman)
Stoke	Mrs. T. Roll (Chairman) Mr. K. Strawbridge Mr. P. Callaway (Clerk)
Wythall	Mrs. S. J. Baxter (Chairman, and also representing CALC)

Also in attendance: Mr. P. Street, Mr. G. Rocke, Ms. S. Mould, Ms. R. McAndrews and Mr. A. C. Stephens

### 1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R. Hollingworth and the following Parish representatives:-

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Representative</b>
Alvechurch	Mrs. Y. Goode (Clerk)
Lickey and Blackwell	Mrs. J. Casey (Clerk)
Romsley	Mrs. P. L. Taylor (Clerk)
Dodford with Grafton	Mr. V. Dawson (Chairman)
Clent	Mr. E. Sheppard (Chairman)
Beoley / Wythall	Miss P. Harrison (Clerk)
Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC	Mr. R. Levett

2. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Parish Councils' Forum held on 25th September 2007 were submitted.

There were no matters arising and it was **AGREED** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3. **LIFELINE SERVICE - PRESENTATION BY MS. R. McANDREWS, CCTV AND LIFELINE MANAGER**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. R. McAndrews, the Council's CCTV and Lifeline Manager, addressed the Forum and gave a brief presentation in respect of the Lifeline Services provided by the District Council. She outlined how the service was operated and described the benefits of the service to its customers.

After the presentation, Ms. McAndrews answered a number of questions raised by the Forum. The Chairman then thanked her for her interesting and informative presentation.

4. **ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL MATTERS - INTRODUCTION TO MS. S. MOULD, ELECTORAL SERVICES MANAGER**

The Chairman introduced Ms. S. Mould to the Forum who had recently been appointed to the post of Electoral Services Manager and who would, therefore, also be involved with the parish councils' elections.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Mould addressed the Forum with a view to establishing contact with the parish councils and especially the Clerks to the parish councils. She stated that she may be contacted to respond to any questions or issues relating to parish council elections.

5. **IMPROVING EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PARISH COUNCILS' FORUM**

The Chairman referred to this item on the agenda and stated that he had been speaking to Mrs. S. J. Baxter, in her capacity as a representative of the Area Committee of the County Association of Local Councils (CALC), with a view to improving the working relationship between the District Council and the parish councils.

He reported that he was undertaking to arrange a seminar, presented by Mr. D. Cropp from Worcestershire CALC, and Ms. M. Bryan from Worcestershire County Council. Acting as facilitators, Councillor Hollingworth anticipated that as well as running the seminar to enhance the District / parishes working relationship, Mr. Cropp and Ms. Bryan would help to commence work on a Parish Council Charter for Bromsgrove.

However, before arranging the seminar, Councillor Hollingworth asked what problems the parish councils had been experiencing in their dealings with the District Council, and opened up the floor for feedback from the Forum.

From the ensuing discussion, the following matters were raised:

- Working together / working relationship

There was general concern that parish councillors' detailed knowledge of their local area, and their local populations, was not more effectively used by the District Council. In fact, it was felt that the parish councils tended to be overlooked by District Council officers, when their local knowledge may not necessarily be as detailed as the parish councils'. In response, Councillor Hollingworth stated that, in order to work better together and support each other, all three tiers of local government in Worcestershire would need to seek to improve and enhance working relationships.

The Chairman also stated that, if there were any matters which individual parish councils had reported to the District Council which were not being resolved as quickly as hoped, the parish council should take up the matter with the relevant Ward Councillor(s) who would then report back to him in order to resolve the matter. On the whole, it was reported that the parish councils had a good working relationships with their relevant Ward Councillor(s).

It was considered that parish councils had limited input into District Council policy and procedural issues, especially in terms of planning matters. The Chairman stated that the Council had a deadline of eight weeks for the determination of planning applications in order to meet targets set by the Government and that it would be difficult to extend the period for consultations with parish councils. However, it was pointed out that details of all applications received were published on the Council's web-site.

- Communication

It was stated that communication with the District Council was considered to be frustrating and annoying, especially in terms of responses to letters, telephone calls and emails. The Chairman stated that this was a managerial issue which affected the general public as well, but he hoped that an improved working relationship with the parish councils would improve two-way communications.

Furthermore, it was felt that communication was inconsistent between departments and service areas. Where the general public were concerned, the Forum believed that it did not matter which authority was inconsistent or liable for a problem with service delivery - "the Council" was viewed as a single authority instead of County, District or parish.

The Forum considered that the District Council was slow in promoting "good news" items and events, especially where news and projects involving parish councils were concerned. As both the

District Council and the parish councils are working towards the same goals (that is, provision of efficient services), better communications would hopefully lead to an enhanced reputation.

In respect of the Local Development Plan, the Forum considered that more communication from the District Council would be of benefit, especially in view of those parish councils which had developed, or in the process of developing Parish Plans and / or Village Design Statements.

- Unitary / Community Council proposals

Consideration was also given to the future of the two-tier (or, including the County Council, three-tier) arrangements for local government within the District. It was felt that the associated inequalities in the provision of services under the current arrangements, together with the public view of the "double taxation" concept needed to be addressed. The Chairman stated that, if there was a "double taxation" problem within the District, it is most likely to relate to highways and footpath matters which are a County Council responsibility. However, he added that, as far as the general public were concerned, it was perceived to be the responsibility of "the Council." Furthermore, as the District (and County) Council were able to benefit from economies of scale in respect of the provision of services, the issue of the parish councils "buying-in" services from the District would also need to be addressed.

The provision of services in parished areas, as compared to those provided in unparished parts of the District were also questioned. The Chairman responded by saying that this would be addressed fully at a later date during the creation of a Parish Charter.

- The Forum

It was felt that meetings of the Forum have not been used to their full potential in the past and that the items for the agenda, put forward by the Area Committee of CALC, have been rather mundane. Ideally, the Forum should be used to communicate information to the parish councils which could be publicised within the parishes (for example, the LifeLine presentation), with more robust agenda items provided by CALC for discussion, and improved follow-up after each meeting.

In addition, it was considered that, wherever possible, meetings of the Forum should be held in the Committee Room.

However, positive comments were also expressed, including an indication good working relationships with individual departments, expressions of appreciation in respect of the actions of individual District Council officers and the improvements which had been made so far, together with the prospects for the future.

It was also felt that meetings of the Forum had been getting better in recent months and that this could be a useful indicator as to anticipated

future improvements. Furthermore, most parishes believed they had a good working relationship with their Ward Councillors.

The Chairman concluded by thanking the Forum for their comments and stated that he would inform them of the date for the seminar with Mr. Cropp and Ms. Brayn in the near future.

6. **THE STREET CLEANSING STRATEGY AND TIMETABLE**

The Chairman reported that Mr. M. Bell, the Council's Head of Street Scene and Waste Management Services, was in the process of developing a Policy Document relating to a Street Cleansing Strategy from which a timetable of works could then be produced. He added that the delay has been caused, in part, due to trying to merge the Street Scene Service and the Community Services.

A statement by Mr. Bell had been prepared prior to the meeting:-

"The [Street Scene and Waste Management Services] department is working on a Policy Document for Street Cleansing which will detail all of the processes and procedures that we undertake in this activity. This document should be ready by the end of March 2008 and will be presented to the Parish Councils' Forum at a future meeting.

"The schedules for the service have been delayed because of the combining of Street Scene and Culture and Community into a single department. It is our intention to combine street cleansing and grounds maintenance into a single operation and thus prevent the situation that has occurred in the past where grass cutting machinery has cut up litter not picked up by Street Cleaning crews.

"By scheduling both services a better and more efficient service will be provided."

The Chairman clarified that all concerns the parish councils had concerned street cleansing, footpath cleansing, litter collecting, etc.

7. **DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was **AGREED** that the next Meetings of the Forum be arranged for 6.30 p.m. on the following dates:-

- Tuesday, 1st April 2008
- Tuesday, 24th June 2008
- Tuesday, 30th September 2008
- Tuesday, 6th January 2009

The Meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.

Chairman

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**PARISH COUNCILS' FORUM**  
**COPY OF REPORT TO BE CONSIDERED BY CABINET**

**2ND APRIL 2008**

**INTEGRATING AND ADOPTING PARISH PLANS WITHIN SUSTAINABLE  
COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: A  
PROPOSED METHODOLOGY**

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Roger Hollingworth
Responsible Head of Service	Hugh Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive

**1. SUMMARY**

1.1 This report sets out a proposed methodology for the integration and adoption of Parish Plans within the district-wide Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and the Local Development Framework (LDF), the latter prepared by the Council as local planning authority. The benefits of formally recognising Parish Plans will mean that the content can assist in giving many services provided by the District Council and partners community focus. In turn, many of the services provided by the Council and partners within the LSP can, and do feed into the Parish Plan process, creating more informed Action Plans.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 It is recommended that:

1. the proposed methodology for integration of Parish Plans within the LSP and LDF is ratified; subject to
2. a 12-week period of consultation be undertaken within the Council, members of the LSP, Community First/CALC and the County Council.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Parish Plans are an established part of the local governance structure, since their launch in the 2000 Rural White Paper 'Our Countryside, the Future' and promoted through the Countryside Agency's 'Vital Villages' initiative. Parish (or Town) Plans are led, prepared and owned by the local community, usually with the support of the parish/town council. The content will reflect local circumstances and issues, but broadly they will address social, economic and environmental issues identified by the local community through a rigorous process of public participation.

3.2 In addition, communities may also choose to prepare a Village Design Statement (VDS). In many ways the forerunner to Parish Plans set out

design guidance for new development based on distinctive local character. It is prepared by the local community and demonstrates a commitment to good design and identifies what the community value in their local environment. Design statements can be prepared as stand-alone documents or be incorporated within the broader Parish Plan.

- 3.3 An effective Parish Plan will pull all these issues together into an Action Plan (AP) which, under specific topic headings, will prioritise issues and identify opportunities to address problems and seek support from a range of partners and key stakeholders. As such, they provide a valuable source of local information that can inform the work of the LSP and integrate or supplement the local planning authority's LDF.
- 3.4 Within the LSP, the Parish Plan can inform key partners and stakeholders of issues and needs, helping to direct resources and support to where it is needed. By adopting the Parish Plan contents as a local information source, the LSP can ensure that the Parish Plan can help key organisations deliver practical projects locally that can improve the quality of life in line with the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS).
- 3.5 Parish Plans (or VDS) can add value to planning at a local level by expressing a greater level of detail than the LSP or local authority might be able to include in the SCS or Development Plan Documents (DPD). The planning benefits and opportunities of Parish Plans for both local authorities and parish/town councils have been detailed in 'Parish Plans and the Planning System', published by the Countryside Agency (2003). The contents or Action Points (AP) can inform planning policies, influence planning proposals, and set out locally based criteria against which planning applications can be judged if adopted as SPD.

#### **4. PARISH PLANS IN BROMSGROVE**

- 4.1 Parish Plan work in the District is principally supported by Community First and CALC, with both organisations having a remit to work across Worcestershire with local rural communities on Parish Plans.
- 4.2 At December 2007, there were 7 communities which had completed a Parish Plan, and one in production to be completed during 2008.

#### **5. ADOPTING PARISH PLANS AS A LOCAL INFORMATION SOURCE FOR THE LSP**

- 5.1 It is proposed to put in place a framework within the Council and LSP to allow the Action Points in Parish Plans to be adopted as a 'Local Information Source'. This will essentially seek to formalise the existing approach to circulating and implementing specific Action Points but provide greater weight as the Parish Plan would be 'adopted' by both the Council and LSP.
- 5.2 This will allow a Parish Plan to be taken into account in the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy, the aims and objectives of which will feed into the Development Plan Documents which form part of the Council's Local Development Framework. In addition, each

Action Point will be given a 'commitment' to support implementation or an undertaking to bring it to the attention of the relevant Council department, or LSP stakeholder etc. (Appendix 1).

### 5.3 **Proposed approach for dealing with Parish Plans:**

- **Parish Council** adopts or endorses the final version of the Parish Plan and copies sent to the relevant Officer in the Planning Policy Team/LSP Manager at the District Council. Copies are also provided to Community First and CALC.
- **Bromsgrove District Council/LSP** to circulate a copy of summary of each Parish Plan and Action Point to LSP Members via the LSP Manager. LSP Manager and Planning Policy Officer to prepare a joint 'Action Point Report' to Executive Cabinet of the Council via the Scrutiny Board to seek formal adoption as 'Local Information Source'.
- **Bromsgrove District Council** to circulate Parish Plan, Action Point Report (if adopted) to the appropriate officers within the Council to deliver the appropriate level of support. Planning Policy Officer to inform Parish Clerk of the Committee decision in writing and attach copy of minute.
- **LSP** to discuss the Parish Plan at its next available meeting and consider the following:
  - Whether to adopt it as a 'local information source' based on the criteria in Appendix 1 and having regard to the decision of the Council.
  - What support the LSP can offer, if any, e.g. funding advice, influencing ability, contacts, invitation to bid for funds (if available).
  - Identify whether the Parish Plan has any common themes that are shared across a number of parishes and take appropriate action, e.g. encouraging joint working, influencing at a more strategic level.
- **Area Committees** – Where an Area Committee exists, the Committee could perform the role of the LSP described above, feeding back to the LSP Board about the decisions taken and to discuss any further support the Area Committee or LSP can offer etc.
- **LSP Chairman** to write a letter of congratulations to Parish Plan Steering Group, setting out whether the LSP is adopting the Plan as a local information source and if appropriate, offering advice and support.
- **LSP Manager** to keep the Board informed of progress with Parish Plans and raise any common themes arising from Parish Plans across a number of parishes.
- **Individual LSP Members** may also wish to take Parish Plans back to their own organisations and if appropriate, respond directly to the Parish Plan Group.

- 5.4 The Council and the LSP will monitor the process to ensure the range and level of support provided is appropriate to the original 'commitment' in the Action Point Report.
6. **Adopting Parish Plans/VDS as Supplementary Planning Documents**
- 6.1 The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new planning framework, replacing the district-wide Local Plan with Local Development Frameworks (LDF). Within the new system, local planning authorities are required to prepare both a range of planning policy documents as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).
- 6.2 Although the local planning authority does not prepare Parish Plans or VDS, where the content relates to land use planning they may be adopted as SPD. When a Parish Plan/VDS has been adopted as SPD, the content of the Action Plan that relates to land use planning issues can be used as material planning considerations. The Parish Plan/VDS may also provide 'pointers' to topic areas, from which the local authority planning may choose to prepare further SPD.
- 6.3 Adoption of extracts from the Parish Plan/VDS as SPD is dependent on a range of criteria being met:
- The Parish Plan, which the local authority intends to adopt, have to be named in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) which forms part of the LDF.
  - The Action Points need to broadly conform to the adopted policies of the Development Plan Documents (DPD) within the LDF, i.e. policies of the saved Local Plan Review or Core Strategy etc.
  - The Parish Plan content has to have been based on extensive public participation with the local community and evidence provided to support this.
  - The Parish Plan content needs to have undergone a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) undertaken either by the Parish Plan Steering Group, parish council, or local authority.
  - Subject to a six-week consultation period in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- 6.4 It should be noted that it is not possible to adopt an element of a Parish Plan unless it is identified in the current LDS, and that adoption can not be done retrospectively, i.e. Parish Plans that have already been published (however, published plans can still follow the process set out in 5.3 and 5.4).
- 6.5 On submission of the completed Parish Plan/VDS, an assessment of the preparation process and extent of the community involvement will be undertaken by the Council (Section 3). At this stage, an initial appraisal of the relevant sections the Action Plan will determine if the

content is appropriate for adoption as SPD.

- 6.6 If the Council is satisfied part of the content of the Parish Plan/VDS can be adopted as SPD, then the adoption process will follow the statutory SPD adoption process, in parallel with the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) under the regulations of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Having completed the technical work on the SA, agreement from Members to publish a draft SPD and SA report for the statutory 4-6 week period of public consultation will be sought. Following consideration of representations on the draft SPD will be resubmitted for adoption by the Council and published as SPD.
- 6.7 Start-up guidance for new Parish Plans should clearly set out the hurdles for adoption as SPD so the Steering Group can make a judgement as to whether they want to seek SPD status and therefore develop the land use/spatial planning element of the final document accordingly.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 No financial implications.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 None.

## **7. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

- 7.1 This issue links to all corporate objectives.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 Working in partnership is a key risk which is identified in the Corporate Risk Register. The Council and the LSP will not be able to deliver its priorities without working in partnership. The Bromsgrove Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2010 (ratified by Cabinet in November 2007) considered the Parish Plans published to date whilst gathering evidence to ensure local issues were reflected appropriately.

## **9. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Working in partnership delivers joined up outcomes, which is what customers expect and adoption of Parish Plans would ensure linking to customers at a very local level.

## **10. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 If Parish Plans are produced, there is opportunity for all residents of any age, sex, ethnicity, disability etc to be involved in the consultation, and if the proposed methodology is accepted, the Parish Plans may inform future plans and strategies.

**11. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 By integrating Parish Plans within the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Development Framework, it demonstrates that Bromsgrove is addressing the needs of residents of the district and ensuring that future plans and resources are included in the strategic plans.

**12. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Please include the following table and spell out any particular implications in the relevant box. If there are no implications under a particular heading, please state 'None':-

Procurement Issues - None
Personnel Issues - None
Governance/Performance Management- The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new planning framework, replacing the district-wide Local Plan with Local Development Frameworks (LDF).
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act 1988 - None
Policy - The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 illustrates that partnerships are central to building on achievements of recent years to embed them into lasting reform.
Environmental - None

**13. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Please include the following table and indicate 'Yes' or 'No' as appropriate. Delete the words in italics.

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director (Partnerships & Projects)	Yes
Executive Director (Services)	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service ( <i>i.e. your own Hos</i> )	Yes
Head of Financial Services ( <i>must approve Financial Implications before report submitted to Leader's Group</i> )	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services ( <i>for approval of any significant legal implications</i> )	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR ( <i>for approval of any significant HR implications</i> )	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team ( <i>for approval of any procurement implications</i> )	No

**14. WARDS AFFECTED**

All wards with parish councils.

**15. APPENDICES**

Please list the appendices attached to the report as shown in the example below.

Appendix 1: Guidance for the Assessment of Parish/Town Plans for Adoption as a Local Information Source for the LSP

**16. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

16.1 None.

**Contact officer**

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**Guidance for the Assessment of Parish/Town Plans for Adoption as a Local Information Source for the LSP**

- 1.1 In assessing Parish Plans, the following considerations should be taken into account:
  - Evidence and extent of research work to justify conclusions.**
  - Evidence and extent of analysis related to conclusions.**
  - Public involvement and endorsement at local level, i.e. adoption by Parish/Town Council.**
  - Level of implementation available to District Council services.**
  - Conformity with District Council's policies and Sustainable Community Strategy.**
- 1.2 The above criteria will enable the production of recommendations regarding the acceptance of each of the Parish/Town Council's detailed conclusions and Action Points.
- 1.3 A response to each of the detailed conclusions and Action Points will be one of the following:
  - A ENDORSE**

The specific recommendation will be accepted and taken into account on the decision making of the Council.
  - B ACTION**

The specific recommendation will be accepted in principle and, subject to financial, procedural and legal constraints, implemented by or with support of the District Council.
  - C INVESTIGATE**

Further information to be obtained by the Parish/Town Council or other agency may be required in order that the District Council may establish if the specific recommendation can be supported.
  - D SUPPORT**

The specific recommendation relates to a matter that is not the responsibility of the District Council. However, the proposal is supported and will be forwarded to the appropriate authority.
  - E NOT SUPPORTED**

The specific recommendation relates to a matter that is contrary to the policy of the District Council or is beyond the powers of the authority or that insufficient and/or unsatisfactory information has been submitted to substantiate the recommendation.