

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCILS' FORUM

Tuesday, 26th June 2007, at 6.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths (Chairman)

Parish	Representative(s)
Barnt Green	Mrs. J. Jagger (Chairman) Mr. R. Westbury (Clerk)
Belbroughton	Mr. R. E. Copley (Clerk) Mr. C. R. Scurrall
Beoley	Mrs. J. D. Luck
Bournheath	Mr. E. Elijah (Clerk)
Clent	Mr. S. Malek Mr. E. Moore Mrs. P. A. Harris
Cofton Hackett	Mr. B. Hodgson (Clerk) Mr. B. Bridgewater
Dodford with Grafton	Mr. V. Dawson (Chairman) Mrs. C. Limm (Clerk)
Hunnington	Mrs. R. Mullett (Clerk)
Lickey and Blackwell	Mrs. J. A. Casey (Clerk)
Romsley	Mr. I. A. Hodgetts (Chairman) Mrs. P. L. Taylor (Clerk)
Stoke Prior	Mrs. T. Roll (Chairman) Mr. P. D. Callaway (Clerk) Mr. K. Strawbridge
Wythall	Mr. R. Hall (Chairman)

Also in attendance: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. P. Street, Mr. D. Hammond, Mrs. D. Ibbitson and Ms. R. Cole.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Councillor Mrs. Griffiths explained that she was attending in place of Councillor R. Hollingworth who sent his apologies but hoped to arrive later.

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Parish

Alvechurch	Mrs. Y. Goode(Clerk)
Lickey End	Mr. C. W. Bateman
Hunnington	Mr. J. Peeney (Chairman)

2. **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Councils' Forum held on 26th March 2007 were submitted.

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

3. **'SMOKE FREE' LEGISLATION**

Mrs. D. Ibbitson, Assistant Health and Safety Advisor at the District Council gave a brief overview of the Smoke Free legislation which was coming into effect in England on 1st July 2007. Of particular interest was how the legislation would impact on premises owned or managed by Parish Councils such as Parish or Village Halls, Community Centres, etc. Mrs. Ibbitson drew attention to the booklets and signs which were available free of charge and to the relevant websites which contained further information.

The District Council would be the enforcing authority and additional staffing to the equivalent of half a full time post would be provided. It was intended that this post would be largely concerned certainly initially, with the provision and dissemination of advice and information.

Clearly at a later stage there may need to be an element of enforcement. There was a brief discussion on some of the provisions of the legislation. It was difficult to give exact advice on some issues such as the distance from a building within which people would be permitted to smoke.

4. **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

Mr. Dicks undertook to contact the Chair of CALC regarding a meeting to assist with furthering partnership working between the District and Parish Councils.

5. **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

Councillor Mrs. Griffiths introduced David Hammond, Head of Planning and Environment Services, to the meeting. Mr. Hammond briefly updated the Forum on the Local Development Framework and the various Strategies and Schemes which would form the Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy was the focus for this year and at present no Authority in the Midlands had yet had a Core Strategy approved. In some respects advice from the Planning Inspectorate was conflicting with advice from the Government Office. The time table for completing the Core Strategy for Bromsgrove was obviously dependent upon the resources available. In particular, there had been a number of staffing changes within the Planning Section which had inevitably had some impact on the progress made with the Core Strategy.

Mr. Hammond confirmed that Local Development Control Strategies were also being compiled on various topics. Mr. Hammond undertook to provide on request further copies of an information pack on the Core Strategy.

Care Homes

Mrs. Luck referred to the issue of extensions to existing Care Homes which were sited within many Parishes throughout the District and were often a large employer of local people. As not many of these properties were purpose built but were usually large houses which had been converted, extensions were often required to keep the buildings to the required standard and within the appropriate legislation. Mr. Hammond agreed this was a problem as most of the premises were within the Green Belt and policy PPG2 applied. It therefore became a subjective decision for the Planning Committee in each case and they had to decide how much weight to give to particular circumstances.

Travellers

Mr. Hammond reported that all Local Authorities were required to assess the needs of Travellers and to report back on a regional basis. Each Council was then required to provide an allocated number of pitches. In some areas, such as Wychavon District Council's area, which had a high level migrant workforce, the numbers of pitches could be significant but in Bromsgrove the requirement did not generally cause any difficulty.

Subdivision of Fields With Stabling

Mr. Hammond recognised that this had become a concern in some areas. There was a difficulty in that the subdivision of a field did not require planning permission. Trading Standards had been involved in some instances where companies were offering an apparent 'Investment Opportunity' by offering for sale virtual plots and implying that in future the land may be available for residential development. This was not considered to be illegal. The 'portable stables' horseboxes and hardstandings which resulted were however often unsightly.

Mr. Hammond undertook to raise the issue with the Government Office and to ask whether the Government is considering the problem.

Mobile Phone Masts

Members of the Forum were concerned that regarding the erection of mobile phone masts, the views of Parish Councils and local residents were not taken into account. Mr. Hammond confirmed that the District Council do voluntarily notify Parish Councils of applications but that even if planning permission was required which was not always the

case, it was difficult to refuse an application and to win at appeal, on say health grounds in view of current Government Policy.

Motorways

It was requested whether in the Core Strategy reference could be made to the impact of motorways on the community in terms of air and light pollution. Mr. Hammond felt that this was more of an issue for Environmental Health strategies and policies than planning policies. He made reference to the recently formed Air Quality Scrutiny Task Group which would be considering "hot spots" in relation to air quality, including the M42 junction at Lickey End.

6. **LITTER PICKING**

Mr. Street reported that the Head of Street Scene and Waste Management, Mike Bell was developing a schedule in relation to litter picking. This had been delayed in the light of a number of changes within the department. Mr. Street explained that as well as the regular cleansing, it was now the policy to have a 'litter blitz' on heavily used areas and this involved re-allocating staff to carry out this work.

Some concern was also expressed that some litter was caused by animals damaging black bags which were put out in areas where wheelie bins could not yet be used as the appropriate vehicles could not access the roads. Mr. Street acknowledged this was a difficulty at present and it was hoped that more properties would be able to have wheelie bins. It was also queried whether the schedule could take into account the arrangements for grass cutting by the County Council. Mr. Street confirmed that it was hoped to co-ordinate with the County Council and that the appropriate information was being sought. He undertook to provide Parish Councils with the information when it was available.

7. **LENGTHSMAN SCHEME**

The Forum members were requesting that attempts be made in conjunction with the County Council to develop the Lengthsman Scheme whereby Parish Lengthsmen could pick up litter which the District Council would then collect and dispose of. Mr. Dicks confirmed that the District Council was supportive of this and were aware that it had been used successfully in urban areas.

It was reported that Wychavon District Council had introduced a similar arrangement and had devolved powers to Lengthsmen to facilitate this. Mr. Dicks undertook to request that the Head of Street Scene and Waste Management to investigate this possibility further.

8. **FLY TIPPING**

Mr. Street stated that there had been an increased problem with fly tipping in the District, particularly in areas adjoining the conurbations. The permit scheme recently introduced by the County Council was also likely to have contributed to the increase. Clearly the District would need to monitor the situation and if it was felt that the decisions of the County Council were having a detrimental effect then Bromsgrove and perhaps other Districts would need to challenge the County on this.

The Meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.

Chairman