

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCILS' FORUM

Tuesday, 14th December 2006, at 6.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor R. Hollingworth (Chairman)

Parish	Representative(s)
Alvechurch	Mrs. Y. Goode (Clerk)
Barnt Green	Mrs. E. M. Buckett (Chairman) Mr. R. Westbury (Executive Officer) Mr. D. Gilburn Mr. T. Gray Mrs. J. Jagger Mrs. S. Whitehand
Belbroughton	Mr. C. R. Scurrall
Beoley	Miss P. Harrison (Clerk) Mrs. J. D. Luck Mr. B. J. Somner
Catshill and North Marlbrook	Mr. P. J. Baker (Chairman) Mr. M. Johnson
Cofton Hackett	Mr. R. J. Deeming (Chairman) Mrs. J. Webb
Lickey and Blackwell	Mr. R. Brown (Chairman)
Lickey End	Mr. C. W. Bateman (Clerk)
Tutnall and Cobley	Mrs. H. S. Davies (Clerk)
Wythall	Miss P. Harrison (Clerk)

Also in attendance:-

Mr. K. Dicks, Acting Chief Executive, Bromsgrove District Council
Mrs. C. L. Felton, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council
Mr. A. C. Stephens, Committee Services Officer, Bromsgrove District Council

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Parish	Representative
Dodford with Grafton	Mr. R. J. Oakes (Chairman) Mrs. C. Limm (Clerk)
Hunnington	Mr. J. Peeney (Chairman) Mrs. L. Teese (Clerk)
Lickey and Blackwell	Mrs. J. A. Casey (Clerk)
Stoke	Mrs. T. Roll (Chairman) Mr. P. D. Callaway (Clerk) Mrs. M. J. Birmingham
Wythall	Mr. R. S. Hall (Chairman) Mrs. S. J. Baxter

2. **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Councils' Forum held on 26th September 2006 were submitted. With the exception of the following, there were no matters arising and it was **AGREED** that the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

(i) **County Council / West Mercia Constabulary - PACT Meetings**

Mrs. J. D. Luck expressed concern about recent Partners and Community Together (PACT) meetings which had, for the most part, been organised by the Police. She stated that Worcestershire County Council had expressed concern about the lead role undertaken by the Police to the detriment of the other 'partners' involved, unlike the previous 'Spotlight' meetings organised by the District Council, the County Council, the Primary Care Trust and the Police.

The Chairman confirmed that he had understood from the County Council that there were concerns about the Police involvement with the PACT meetings. However, he stated that there were some positive areas where the joint working arrangements had been beneficial to local communities. Concern was also expressed in respect of the distribution/circulation of PACT documentation, both in terms of agendas/reports and minutes.

The Acting Chief Executive responded by saying that recent PACT meetings had concentrated on other issues affecting the District, and were not strictly limited to Police/Community Safety matters.

3. **BARNT GREEN PARISH PLAN - OFFICIAL HANDOVER**

Mrs. E. M. Buckett formally handed over the Barnt Green Parish Plan to Councillor Hollingworth, in his capacity as Leader of the Council. Mr. R. Westbury, Executive Officer to Barnt Green Parish Council, took photographs of the occasion.

Councillor Hollingworth stated that he appreciated the amount of work and effort which the parishes invest in the development of their Parish Plans. However, he added that the development of a plan was merely an initial stage in achieving formal recognition of the plan for use as planning policy guidance. Councillor Hollingworth confirmed that the plan would be considered by the District Council's Local Development Framework Working Party in due course.

4. **WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COUNCIL AND THE WORCESTERSHIRE AREA COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

The question of improved working arrangements between the Council and the Area Committee of the County Association of Local Councils (CALC) was raised, and how this could be achieved.

In response, Councillor Hollingworth stated that he was keen to develop an effective working relationship with CALC and invite a representative to meetings of the Forum. Ms. J. Maturi from Worcestershire CALC was suggested in respect of this, to liaise with the parish councils and the District Council.

5. **NEIGHBOURHOOD / AREA COMMITTEE PILOT SCHEME**

Councillor Hollingworth gave a brief presentation in connection with the recent white paper entitled "*Strong and Prosperous Communities - The Local Government White Paper*", published by the Department of Communities and Local Government. In seeking to address the underlying problems with the various tiers of local government and related legislation, he stated that he was seeking ways in which the District Council could work better in partnership with the County Council and the parish councils to benefit the local community.

Councillor Hollingworth outlined some of the Government initiatives which the Council was obliged to adopt; for example, the Local Area Agreement / Local Strategic Partnership; and detailed the agencies involved with the Worcestershire Partnership. He then explained how it was anticipated the District Council's Neighbourhood / Area Committee Pilot Scheme would operate, working in conjunction with community groups, PACT, the three tiers of government and other agencies (including the Police, the Primary Care Trust, the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, etc.)

Councillor Hollingworth explained that the pilot scheme would commence with two trial areas - Waseley and Beacon, and Alvechurch - and that it was anticipated that, when fully implemented, the scheme would expand to cover a further eight grouping areas:-

- Wythall
- Hillside, Linthurst and Tardebigge
- Uffdown, Furlongs and Hagley
- Woodvale, Stoke Prior and Stoke Heath
- Charford and Sidemoor
- St. Johns and Whitford
- Slideslow and Norton
- Catshill and Marlbrook

Further consideration was given to PACT meetings and, specifically, the areas in which they were not believed to be operating effectively and where there were weaknesses in the way the meetings were publicised. Members expressed concern that PACT meetings were ineffective in some areas of the District, and were unlikely to be productive in the future. However, Councillor Hollingworth reassured the meeting that the intention with the Neighbourhood Committee / Area Pilot Scheme was to include parish councils within the decision making and democratic processes, together with the other tiers of local government.

It was anticipated that, as major stakeholders in such meetings, the County Council, the District Council and the parish councils would seek to ensure the success of the community scheme. The trial schemes were also expected to give an indication of the budgetary requirements which the combined Neighbourhood Committees would allocate and, thereby, distribute for the benefit of the District's population. Members were reassured that they would be kept up to date with the progress of the pilot schemes in due course.

6. **CONCURRENT FUNCTIONS AND THE FUTURE**

Mr. K. Dicks referred to the Concurrent Functions process which the District Council had operated until recently. He stated that the distribution of resources to the parish councils had not, historically, been carried out in a fair and equal manner, and that there were no means by which the process could be audited by the District Council.

Councillor Hollingworth added that, to ensure equity of service across the District, the Council would provide the same level of service to all areas. In cases where parish councils sought additional services, he stated that service level agreements could be prepared for individual cases.

It was **AGREED** that an agenda item relating to service level agreements be included for discussion at a future meeting of the Forum.

7. **PLANNING ENFORCEMENT**

Mrs. C. Felton stated that the Head of Planning and Environment Services - Mr. D. Hammond - and her legal team would be willing to discuss issues relating to planning enforcement problems within the parish council areas. She added that a meeting had already been held with Dodford with Grafton Parish Council, and she extended a similar invite to the other parish councils in the District to meet with Mr. Hammond and herself to discuss any enforcement matters of particular concern.

Councillor Hollingworth reported that the Council's enforcement processes were sometimes slowed down by the legal nature of the work involved, together with related appeal procedures, but he added that it was hoped that, by establishing better communication with the parish councils, information about particular cases could be shared and any problems given due explanation.

Mrs. Felton gave members her contact details so that the necessary appointments could be made to discuss enforcement matters - 01527 881429; c.felton@bromsgrove.gov.uk.

This was noted.

8. **SCHEDULE OF FUTURE MEETINGS 2007 / 2008**

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

- Tuesday, 27th March 2007
- Tuesday, 26th June 2007
- Tuesday, 25th September 2007
- Tuesday, 8th January 2008

The Meeting closed at 8.00 p.m.

Chairman