

**PARISH LIAISON
THURSDAY, 7TH APRIL, 2011**

Present:-

Councillor Smith (in the Chair)

Also in attendance:-

Councillor F. Blanksby	Wales Parish Council
Councillor Buckley	Borough and Brinsworth Parish Council
Councillor Ellis	Borough and Wickersley Parish Council
Mr. M. Gazur	Anston Parish Council
Mr A. Hodkin	Aston Parish Council
Councillor J. Ireland	Anston Parish Council
Councillor C. Jepson	Anston Parish Council
Councillor Pickering	Borough and Dalton Parish Council
Councillor D. Rowley	Ravenfield Parish Council
Councillor G. Shaw	Wales Parish Council
Councillor R. Swann	Woodsetts Parish Council

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor Ali, Adviser for Town Centres
 Councillor Falvey, Adviser for Cultural Services and Sport
 Councillor St. John, Cabinet Member for Cultural Services and Sport
 Councillor Walker, Adviser for Regeneration and Environment
 Dalton Parish Council
 Laughton Parish Council
 Whiston Parish Council

1. INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME

The Chairman introduced those present and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER RURAL COMMUNITY FORUM

The Chairman introduced Councillor Bagshaw, Sheffield City Council, who was a Sheffield City Councillor and a member of the National Peak Authority.

Last Autumn Sheffield was asked to provide a member for the Yorkshire and Humber Rural Community Forum, essentially a body that worked with and funded by DEFRA to provide a rural voice to some of the discussions DEFRA were having and the way information was presented to the Ministers etc. Although that had changed due to the budget cuts, there was still a need to have a South Yorkshire voice in that organisation.

Together with a colleague from Doncaster, it was the intention to ascertain exactly the extent to which Barnsley and Rotherham engaged with their rural communities to enable the 4 authorities' Parish Voice to be heard in continuing dialogue with whoever it may be e.g. the Local Enterprise Partnership, DEFRA etc. to make sure the things that interested the communities were actually spoken about in Whitehall.

Councillor Bagshaw would arrange to meet the Director of Environment and Development Services and the Chairman with the intention to establishing a 4 authority contact and then contact with the parishes in the 4 authorities to enable them to have a voice.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 15TH JUNE, 2010

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th June, 2010, were agreed as a correct record.

4. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE - THE FUTURE OF AGREEMENTS WITH PARISH COUNCILS

David Burton, Director of Streetpride, gave a verbal update on the future of agreements with Parish Councils relating to grounds maintenance.

He gave a brief overview of the recent budget setting exercise in light of the meeting the pressures of the reduce Comprehensive Spending Review highlighting:-

- Rotherham had a saving target of approximately £30M, the majority of which would be in the next financial year. Streetpride's target was £5M, 1/2 of which was contained within a group of Services which were covered by Leisure and Green Spaces and Community Delivery including sports facilities, street cleansing, grounds maintenance etc.
- The Council would have to commence withdrawing the support for street cleansing and grounds maintenance functions to Parish Councils amounting to £200,000 of savings, 8% of the total target
- Grounds maintenance included public open spaces, maintenance of horticultural features, sports grounds facilities, hedge maintenance and playground litter clearance and in some cases safety inspections. The single biggest element was sport pitches and building maintenance which accounted for 60% of the total £200,000
- It should be noted that the maintenance and provision of such facilities under the ownership of the Council was discretionary and, therefore, at the next tier of local government it was the same discretionary function
- Clearly this was not expenditure that would have been anticipated by Parish Councils but there was a year to prepare and make local decisions as to which facilities they wished to retain and the level they wished to maintain them going forward
- Over the next few weeks contact would be made with the Parish Clerks to start discussions on the areas that were maintained by the Council, how they were maintained and what technical support could be offered in considering standards, frequency and maintenance that a Parish Council may wish to develop for itself. Help could be given in terms of establishing a consistent charging policy which may generate more income to sustain the facilities

- A quote could also be provided for an at cost maintenance service

Discussion took place with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- Contact would be made with each Parish and all the information on the areas the Council currently maintained/work carried out by the Council would be available
- Contact would be made with local voluntary groups with regard to the use of volunteers as well as assistance in the provision of joint training. The replacement for the Future Jobs Fund could provide almost a zero cost supply of labour to help the transition. The Council had contact with Phoenix Enterprises and would be happy to facilitate links with the Parish Councils
- The aim would be to provide support at cost and would hire equipment out if there was capacity to do so
- If it was possible to inform Parish Councils of a schedule of grasscutting etc. it would be done
- The Council had a statutory duty to ensure highway safety and would not be comprised by the budget cuts. Work had started last year in removing shrub beds and replaced with easier maintenance features
- For years parished areas had provided facilities which the Borough Council had maintained. Parish Councils were now expected to take on the responsibility for the maintenance without consideration being given as to the effect on the precept especially in those areas that had no Borough Council facilities. There would be unparished areas that had Borough Council facilities that would be maintained. The funding should be shared out amongst the facilities that were currently provided so there was no double rating
It would not solely be the Parish Councils feeling the effect of the savings but the Borough Council's own open spaces and sports facilities would be affected. If the savings could be achieved in a different way which enabled Parish Councils to maintain their facilities there was a commitment to do so

Agreed:- (1) That the presentation be noted.

(2) That, once the restructure was complete, all Councillors and Parish Councils be supplied with a list of employees (and contact numbers) working in their areas.

5. **BOWLING GREEN CONSULTATION**

Phil Gill, Green Spaces Manager, gave a presentation relating to the bowling green consultation, which focused on:-

Background

- Leisure and Green Spaces contributing to Council £30M savings from 2011/12

- Includes agreed reduction in number of greens maintained by the Council
- Provisional list aimed:-
 - To keep spread of greens across Borough
 - To keep sites where service could be provided most efficiently

Current Provision

Timing

- Affected Council greens – maintenance stops 1st June, 2011
- Other affected greens (including Parish) – maintenance stops before 2012 season

Consultation

- Runs until 20th May, 2011
- Are there other more efficient ways of achieving necessary savings?
- Responses to:-
urbanparks@rotherham.gov.uk
Andy Lee, Green Space Operations Manager, Bailey House, Rawmarsh Road, Rotherham S60 1TD

Future Options

- Cease provision
- Ask Council to quote to maintain
- Self-maintenance
 - Technical guidance
 - Possible funding opportunities
 - Possible co-operation with other providers

A discussion and question and answer session ensued and the following issues were raised and clarified:-

- Consideration had been given to the removal of maintenance from various greens so as to retain a reasonable level of availability across the Borough. Another consideration was where there was information available on usage levels
- Currently it was a potential list based on spread and leaving a pattern of reasonable coverage to commence the consultation process. Information gained at a local level from the consultation may lead to reconsideration of the proposals
- All greens had been taken into account whether the Council paid for the maintenance or not
- There were plenty of greens across the Borough that were already maintained privately
- Acknowledgement that some of the information was out of date
- The consultation period ended on 20th May, 2011

- The fee for a season ticket for Council bowling greens was £62 in 2011

Agreed:- (1) That the presentation be noted.

(2) That Parish Council notify the Council of any comments during the consultation period and request a visit if necessary.

6. LDF UPDATE

Andy Duncan, Strategic Policy Team Leader, gave an update on the LDF process which included the previous LDF consultation during 2009 and the work that had taken place since that time.

The LDF had been drafted in response to public concern and the new direction brought about by the change in Government. Although the regional “top down” target was still technically in place, the upcoming Localism bill would abolish the targets towards the end of 2011. Rotherham had drawn up a much lower local housing target which the draft Strategy was framed around.

Subject to Member approval, it was the intention to consult on the LDF during the Summer of 2011. This could cover both the LDF Strategy, in terms of the broad amount and distribution of new homes and employment land, and the detail in terms of initial consultation on potential development sites around all the Borough’s communities.

Any support that Parish Councils could offer would be welcomed particularly with getting the message out to people that the consultation was taking place.

7. ITEMS REQUESTED BY PARISH COUNCILS

There were no items submitted by Parish Councils prior to the meeting, with the item about the LDF requested by Ravenfield Parish Council being addressed above.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) A representative from Woodsetts Parish Council asked for an update on the flooding on Woodsetts Road.

9. CLOSING REMARKS

Councillor Smith thanked the Parish Councils’ representatives for their attendance and closed the meeting at 7.15 p.m.

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Local Development Framework (LDF) update

What is the LDF?

The LDF is our plan for the future. When adopted by the Council, it will set out how many homes we should plan for over the next 15 years and where they should go. It will also promote job creation by allocating land for employment uses, encourage better town centres by steering new retail development to existing towns and help provide other community facilities. The LDF will also seek to protect the environment at the same time as promoting sustainable growth.

Previous LDF consultation

During summer 2009 we consulted on “revised options” for the LDF Core Strategy. This was mainly to ask for views on how we could accommodate the number of new homes required by the “top down” housing target in place at the time. Understandably, this caused some controversy due to the amount of Green Belt land release that could have been required. Around 6,000 comments were received along with considerable press coverage. Since 2009 we have considered the consultation response received and published two feedback reports in Dec 2009 and June 2010 seeking to answer concerns.

Work since that time

We have also redrafted the LDF in response to public concern and the new direction brought about by the change in government. Although the regional “top down” target is still technically in place, the upcoming Localism Bill will abolish these targets towards the end of 2011. Reflecting this, we have drawn up a much lower local housing target and framed our draft strategy around this.

Current programme

Subject to member approval, we intend to consult on the LDF during summer 2011. This will cover both the LDF strategy in terms of the broad amount and distribution of new homes and employment land; and the detail in terms of initial consultation on potential development sites around all the Borough’s communities.

How Parish Councils can help

We need your help. Any support that Parish Councils can offer would be welcome, particularly with getting the message out to people that the consultation is taking place and how important it is that people contribute. By influencing where people live, work and spend their leisure time the plan will shape people’s lives in the future.

Localism implications

The Localism Bill will have many implications for Parish Councils, which the recent Member Development Sessions covered in some detail. The potential impact of Neighbourhood Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and the Community Right to Build are only just being considered by those potentially affected.

AD 7/4/11