

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCILS' FORUM**

**TUESDAY, 23RD JUNE 2009, AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors R. Hollingworth (Chairman) and G. N. Denaro

<b>Representative(s)</b>	<b>Parish</b>
Mr. J. Cypher (Chairman)	Alvechurch
Mrs. J. Jagger (Chairman)	Barnt Green
Mrs. S. Whitehand	
Mr. J. M. Bradley (Chairman)	Belbroughton
Mr. C. R. Scurrall	
Mr. J. Harris (Chairman)	Bentley Paucefoot
Mrs. T. Green	
Mr. B. J. Somner (Chairman)	Beoley
Miss P. Harrison	
Mr. G. F. Witcomb (Chairman)	Catshill and North Marlbrook
Mrs. G. Lungley	
Mr. E. Sheppard (Chairman)	Clent
Mrs. R. Mullett	
Mr. K. Duncan	Cofton Hackett
Mr. A. Rea	Dodford with Grafton
Mr. J. J. Prescott (Chairman)	Finstall
Mrs. R. Reaney	
Mr. S. R. Colella (Chairman)	Hagley
Mr. G. Cole	
Mrs. R. Mullett	Hunnington
Mr. P. Smith	
Mr. J. Williams (Chairman)	Lickey and Blackwell
Mrs. J. A. Casey	
Mrs. J. E. King	
Mr. C. W. Bateman	Lickey End
Mr. I. A. Hodgetts	Romsley
Mrs. R. Mullett	
Mrs. H. Davies	Tutnall and Cobley
Miss P. Harrison	Wythall

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. T. Beirne, Mr. P. Street and Mr. A. C. Stephens

1/09 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Mrs. S. Baxter (Wythall Parish Council), Mrs. C. Limm (Clerk to Belbroughton Parish Council and Dodford with Grafton Parish Council) and Mr. R. Harper (Dodford with Grafton Parish Council).

2/09 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Parish Councils' Forum held on 24th March 2009 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3/09 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MEETING**

In respect of the proposed Training Programme on Ethical Governance issues, the Forum noted the information included on the Agenda concerning the anticipated publication of the new Code of Conduct in July / August 2009.

4/09 **CONSULTATION ON THE PARISH COUNCIL CHARTER / CONCORDAT**

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Executive Director - Services addressed the Forum and outlined the responses to the consultation on the draft Parish Council Charter document. He drew attention to the recommendation on page 8 of the report and stated that he considered the most efficient and measured approach to the adoption of the parish charter document would be to establish a working group comprised of parish council representatives, together with the Leader of the Council and two officers. By taking this approach, it was anticipated that the issues raised as a result of the consultation could be considered in detail and reported back to the next meeting of the Forum.

During the discussion on the proposals contained in the report, members of the Forum believed that by limiting the parish council representation on the working group to three would not be sufficiently representative of the 20 parishes within the District. However, views were expressed that too many members on the working group would hinder its progress in reaching agreement on a final document for approval by the Forum.

The Forum also considered that the working group should include (where possible) those clerks who work for more than one parish council, so as to maximise representation of the parishes, together with a representative from the Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that a working group be established to consider in detail the responses received in respect of the draft Parish Council Charter document that had previously been distributed to parish councils;
- (b) that the composition of the working group be as follows:-
  - Councillor R. Hollingworth, Leader of the Council
  - Mr. T. Beirne, Executive Director - Services
  - Mrs. D. Warren, Senior Solicitor
  - Mrs. R. Levett (Acting Executive Officer, Worcestershire CALC)

- Miss P. Harrison (Clerk to Beoley Parish Council and Wythall Parish Council)
  - Mrs. R. Mullett (Clerk to Clent Parish Council, Hunnington Parish Council and Romsley Parish Council)
  - Mr. S. R. Colella (Chairman of Hagley Parish Council) [or, in his absence, an appointed representative]
  - Mrs. C. Limm (Clerk to Belbroughton Parish Council and Dodford with Grafton Parish Council [or, in her absence, James Bradley (Chairman of Belbroughton Parish Council)])
  - A representative from Barnt Green Parish Council [either Mrs. J. Jagger (Chairman), Mrs. S. Whitehand or Mr. R. Westbury (Executive Officer)]
  - Mr. J. Cypher (Chairman of Alvechurch Parish Council)
- (c) that the working group report back to the Forum at its next meeting to be held on Tuesday, 22nd September 2009.

(Note: Mr. J. Cypher questioned whether the working group could also give consideration to possible development initiatives in relation to the provision of ICT equipment and facilities to parish councils in order to enhance communication, and to maximise the electronic services provided by the Council. However, Mr. Beirne stated that he considered the working group should strictly focus on the proposed Parish Council Charter, bearing in mind the limited timescale available, but he stated that he would endeavour to investigate the matter separately and to explore issues concerning the provision of ICT equipment.)

5/09

### **PROGRESS REPORT ON DRAFT CORE STRATEGY**

The Chairman informed the Forum that the Strategic Planning Manager had prepared a written response:-

"The draft Core Strategy was published for consultation on the 31st October 2008 until 16th February 2009. Around 130 responses were received. The responses are currently being evaluated and, where necessary, changes made to the strategy to take into account the comments submitted. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) has also been produced as one of the key pieces of evidence that underpins the housing distribution within the Core Strategy.

Ongoing work on the evidence base will be taking place although further production and publication of the Core Strategy is significantly affected by the ongoing review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and, until the outcome is known, it is impossible to produce a core strategy which would be judged sound by the Secretary of State. Once the outcome of the RSS is known, it will be easier to predict an accurate timescale for the production although, if the RSS directs significant growth to the district in the form of extensions into the green belt at Redditch and South Birmingham, further delays could be necessary."

Members of the Forum voiced their concerns in respect of the use of land for other authorities' housing allocations, together with the size of likely housing developments and the associated infrastructure provision. Several speakers also outlined their impressions of the presentations which had been made earlier in the day relating to Bromsgrove, Redditch and Birmingham at the WMRSS Examination in Public in Wolverhampton. However, it was understood that there was still a considerable amount of time to go before any definitive details could be known.

6/09 **ELECTORAL SERVICES - UPDATES**

The Chairman referred members of the Forum to the information enclosed with the Agenda for the meeting relating to both the casual membership vacancies in respect of the parish councils within the district, and the County Council election results. This was noted.

7/09 **JOINT COUNTYWIDE SCRUTINY REPORT ON FLOODING**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. P. Street, the Council's Executive Director - Partnerships and Projects, addressed the meeting and gave a presentation about the effects of the July 2007 flooding problems and the related Joint Countywide Scrutiny exercise which had been undertaken subsequently.

Mr. Street explained the Council's duties and responsibilities in connection with the clearance of privately owned watercourses and highlighted the recommendations arising from the scrutiny exercise which related specifically to parish councils; in particular, how parish councils may be able to help in terms of making the most of the local knowledge at a parish level, as well as assisting with communications in the event of similar flooding events in the future. He also outlined details relating to the Council's emergency plan to deal with future flooding issues and drew attention to the problems which had to be identified with planning for such unforeseen occurrences.

Mr. Street then responded to a number of questions from members of the Forum. From the ensuing discussion, the main points of concern were the likely development of additional housing (following on from the earlier item in respect of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy) and the related implications this would have in terms of drainage and soakaway land, the enforcement of riparian responsibilities and the resources available in terms of flooding alleviation and prevention.

In conclusion, the Forum expressed its appreciation to Mr. J. Bailey, the Council's Drainage Engineer, for his continuing assistance in relation to flooding and drainage issues, as well as his reassuring advice and wealth of knowledge. The Chairman also thanked Mr. Street for his interesting and informative presentation.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the recommendations made by the County Joint Scrutiny exercise into the July 2007 flooding be commended to the parish councils; and

- (b) that the action plan produced by the Council in response to the recommendations arising from the scrutiny exercise be presented to the January 2010 meeting of the Forum for further discussion.

The meeting closed at 7.10 p.m.

Chairman