

Minutes of Parish Councils Liaison

Meeting Date: Thursday, 1 February 2024, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor G Scott (Chairman)

Councillors:

K Barnsley	K Horkin
D Birtwhistle	M Robinson
S Cowman	N Stubbs
M French	R Walsh

Parish Representatives

J Chang	Aighton, Bailey and Chaigley
R Veitch	Bolton by Bowland, Gisburn Forest and Sawley
R Porter	Chatburn
A Schofield	Clayton le Dale
J Hargreaves	Dutton
P Atkinson	Grindleton
L Halley	Grindleton
M Gee	Hothersall
A Upton	Hothersall
S Rostron	Paythorne and Newsholme
S Greenhough	Read
G Mason	Ribchester
D Briscoe	Rimington and Middop
T Perry	Rimington and Middop
M Wood	Salesbury
J Hampson	Simonstone
D Peat	Simonstone
R Chew	West Bradford
H Douglas	Wilpshire
J Pursglove	Wiswell
R Vickers	Whalley
D Conway	

In attendance: Chief Executive, Sarah Wells and Head of Strategic Planning and Housing and the Partnership Officer

Also in attendance: Borough Councillors K Spencer, T Austin and S Farmer

670 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillors S O'Rourke, H McFall and D Brocklehurst.

Apologies were also received from M Highton of Whalley Parish Council, and J and T Westwell of Salesbury Parish Council.

671 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY, OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interests.

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PRESENTATION ABOUT THE 'SETTLEMENT STUDY'

The Head of Strategic Planning and Housing gave a presentation to Committee providing an introduction to the Settlement Study.

She outlined the reasons why the Council are preparing the study, namely:

- It is a key piece of planning evidence that will inform the Spatial Strategy in the new Local Plan.
- It will inform the decisions on the future role of settlements and future settlement hierarchy.
- It will establish limits to settlements.
- It will inform allocations and policies on green spaces.

The aims of the study were identified as:

- To establish a baseline position in terms of understanding the level of economic and social infrastructure present in each settlement.
- To rank the settlements according to a range of indicators, and by doing so, to inform the definition of a future local plan settlement hierarchy.
- To understand and establish the physical boundaries of settlements, beyond which the area should be defined as countryside.
- To identify and assess sites which can be recognized as green infrastructure sites within settlements.

A definition of a "Settlement" was provided for the purposes of the study:

A place of living that exhibits a level of physical coherence...a number of dwellings and other buildings that exist in relatively close proximity to each other – for instance clustered together around a key point such as a road intersection or village green or taking a more linear form along a key line of communication (i.e. road) or an environmental feature (i.e. a river)."

It was confirmed settlements are not synonymous with parishes and their administrative boundaries or localities/communities.

An overview of the study methodology was outlined. This would be separated into four parts:

- Part A – to assess settlements and score them against identified indicators. A combined rank will score will then be created.
- Part B – to prepare settlement profiles which provides a useful summary of the nature and function of a settlement.
- Part C – to confirm the settlement boundaries.
- Part D – an audit and assessment of open spaces in the settlements

The Head of Strategic Planning and Housing confirmed that she wished to receive input from Parish Councils. The next step would be for the Council to share a list of 'candidate' settlements with current boundaries for Parish Councils to comment on. Parish Councils can also assist in providing data on settlement indicators.

The Head of Strategic Planning and Housing then answered questions from Committee and offered clarification on the scope of the study. It was confirmed that it was not a review of greenbelt land.

Discussion took place around the length of time that would be given to Parish/Ward Councils for their feedback. The initial recommendation of 2-3 weeks was not felt to be adequate, and suggestions were made of allowing a minimum of 6 weeks. Confirmation was given that guidance would be sent to Parish Councils along with the request for information and a further suggestion was made that information from the previous Settlement Study should be provided for reference.

It was reiterated to Committee that Ribble Valley Borough Council want to engage with Parish Councils, but it was important that the preparation of the study should not be delayed. The Chief Executive also confirmed that there is a Local Plan in place whereby settlements are identified. Essentially, Parish Councils are being asked to check whether these have changed at all and whether there are any other to be considered. A lot of the information required is of a factual nature, which in the smaller areas should be quite straightforward.

The Chief Executive reiterated that the most important thing is to make sure that the Council puts the new Local Plan in place as soon as possible and confirmed that there will be consultation throughout the process.

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REFERENCE FROM COMMITTEES

- (i) Health & Housing - Review of the affordable housing allocation policy and purchase of a choice base letting system.

The Director of Economic Development and Planning had submitted a report to Health and Housing Committee which sought approval to numerous amendments to the Council's Affordable Housing Allocation Policy (Allocation Policy) and to consider suggestions made by the Strategic Housing Working Group in respect of moving to a Choice Base Letting (CBL) System for the allocation of available properties to people on the waiting list.

The Head of Strategic Housing and Planning summarised the proposed changes with reference to the following key issues:

- To include a requirement to evidence housing need
- To add further clarity to the local connection definition
- An update to the eligibility criteria to include latest Government immigration advice and armed forces connections
- Amendment to the medical points to ensure that they are awarded to reflect where housing is impacting on health.
- To update the number of points given for those who are homeless

It was confirmed that at Health and Housing Committee it had been resolved to:

Approve the proposed changes to the Allocation Policy for a 6-week consultation as set out in the report and its appendix.

2. Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Planning to make any other minor editorial amendments to the document prior to publishing the document for consultation.

3. Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Planning to explore options for a Ribble Valley CBL system including engagement with partners with a full detailed report brought back to this Committee.

GUIDANCE FOR PARISH COUNCILS

David Peat of Simonstone Parish Council suggested that it would be useful to have some guidance/training for Parish Councils. The Chief Executive confirmed that consideration would be given to Lancashire Association of Local Councils (LALC) attending the next Parish Council Liaison Committee. He also offered to provide Parish Councilors/Clerks with a room where they could all have a meeting with a view to sharing information. It was also suggested that planning training on how to respond to consultations on planning applications would be useful, in particular what can be considered as 'material considerations'.

RIBBLESDALE SWIMMING POOL

A survey has been sent out regarding the future of the swimming pool and queries were raised as to what exactly was happening with it. The Chief Executive confirmed that there was going to be a feasibility study carried out to determine its future. Various options are being considered e.g. repairing the existing pool, rebuilding a new one, re-locating the facilities etc. Parish Councils wanted to be kept updated and asked that a report on the pool be brought to a future Parish Council Liaison meeting.

Parish Councils confirmed that they have received a survey which covered general recreation facilities rather than just Ribblesdale Pool and referenced a meeting that was due to take place the following week. Concerns were raised regarding the short notice of this, the cost of the surveys/study that were to be carried out and whether those preparing the study would have any local knowledge/expertise. The Chief Executive confirmed that he would seek further information from the Director of Community Services.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman informed the Committee that the next meeting would be on Thursday 11 April 2024 at 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 7.47 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Jenny Martin jenny.martin@ribblevalley.gov.uk.