

Parish Council Liaison Forum

A meeting of Parish Council Liaison Forum was held on Tuesday, 25th March, 2008.

Present: Cllr Terry Laing (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr John Fletcher, Cllr Barry Woodhouse

Officers: P. Smith (CESC), J. Asquith (RESOURCES), M. Robinson, S. Edwards, G. Collins, C. Snowdon (DNS), D. Bond, M. Jones (LD)

Also in attendance: Parish/Town Councils: H. Atkinson (Billingham Town Council), T. Hampton (Castle Leaving & Kirklevington Parish Council), J. Walker (Egglescliffe & Eaglescliffe Parish Council), T. Bowman, W. Feldon, I. Machin (Ingleby Barwick Town Council), J. Rosser, N. Rosser (Long Newton Parish Council), J. Lithgo, B. Tingle, J. Turner (Stillington & Whitton Parish Council)

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Eileen Craggs, Cllr David Coleman

PCL 16/07 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interest declared at the meeting.

PCL 17/07 **Minutes of the Meeting Held 17th December 2007**

Members considered the minutes of the meeting held on 17th December 2007.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17th December 2007 be agreed as a correct record.

PCL 18/07 **Local Assessment Framework - Stockton's Arrangement**

The Director of Law & Democracy presented a report regarding the Local Assessment Framework and changes to the Standards Framework.

The key changes to the national standards framework were as follows:-

- Standards Committees (as opposed to the Standards Board) would be responsible for receiving allegations and deciding whether any action needed to be taken (referred to as "local assessment");
- Standards Committees would have to be chaired by independent members;
- Standards Committees would report periodically to the Standards Board on their performance;
- Standards Committees would be allowed to enter into joint working arrangements with other standards committees; and
- The Standards Board would be responsible for monitoring and ensuring the effectiveness of local arrangements, including supporting authorities which had experienced difficulties and driving up their performance.

It was explained that regulations were being drafted to prescribe how some of these provisions would work in practice. Local assessment was due to come into effect in April 2008, however this timeframe had proved to be impracticable and therefore the date being referred to for this legislation was May 2008. To support local authorities, the Standards Board would produce a range of comprehensive guidance on the framework for local authorities however, the final regulations would need to be in place before they could finish and publish it.

Views on the issues raised in the checklist from Stockton's perspective had been considered by the Standards Committee and the Council had taken several initial decisions regarding them. These included:-

- the number of parish representatives being increased by adding a second substitute representative to the complement (making two full and two substitute representatives);
- given the potential need for at least two independent chairman (to chair the panel considering a complaint at first instance and a different person to chair the panel considering any review of a decision not to take any action on that complaint), agreeing to appoint a substitute Independent member to the Committee;
- due to the relatively greater potential for elected members to have conflicts of interest in complaints about the conduct of fellow members, agreeing that a panel of five substitute elected Members be established ;
- the substitute members being fully trained in relation to the code of conduct and new local assessment framework (regulations, guidance and procedures)
- a pre-meeting being held with the relevant independent panel chair (before each Panel meeting). Also that there should be a summary of the allegation(s) for the panels; highlighting what the potential code breaches are in each case.
- agreement to the appointment of an Officer to provide specific support for the Monitoring Officer and the local assessment process.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

PCL 19/07 Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members - Members Interests

The Director of Law & Democracy presented the Forum with an update report on the New Model Code of Conduct

The report reminded Town/Parish Clerks of the requirements of the new Code of Conduct regarding the registration of Members' interests. Members must register their interests in their own authority's register by providing written notification to their authority's monitoring officer, who was the Borough Council's Monitoring Officer.

The agreed arrangements were that Town/Parish Members submitted their register of interest's forms to their own Town/Parish Clerks, who signed and dated them on receipt. The originals were then retained by the Town/Parish Councils/Clerks and copies were submitted to the Borough Council's Monitoring Officer.

Following adoption of the new Code, all Town/Parish Council Members should have completed and returned new register of interests returns within the 28 day period of their Councils' adoption of the code. The Borough Council's Monitoring Officer had received completed copy returns from the majority of authorities, however copy returns had still not been received from five Parish/Town Councils.

CONCLUDED that those Parish/Councils that had not forwarded completed

copy returns be asked to do so as a matter of urgency.

**PCL
20/07**

Local Involvement Network

The Strategic Commissioner presented a progress report on the arrangements for the implementation of new statutory Local Involvement Networks (LINKs). LINKs would enable and encourage involvement and participation to influence current and future health and social care service planning and delivery.

It was a statutory requirement that a LINK be set up to replace the Patient & Public Involvement (PPI) Forums, which were due to be abolished on 31st March 2008. The LINK would operate within the geographical boundary of each local authority and those LA's with a social service remit were required to procure and appoint an independent "host" organisation to set-up and provide ongoing support to the LINK. LA's had been given a six month transitional period to procure a host after the abolition of the PPI Forums, although they had to ensure alternative transitional arrangements to ensure LINKs activities were carried out.

Decisions about the LINK programme were taken at a "Getting Ready for LINKs Steering Group" (GRfLSG), which met on a monthly basis and had a wide-ranging membership from statutory and voluntary organisations including PPI Forum members. The GRfLSG took the decision to use the transition period to develop an interim LINK and undertake the procurement of the "host" organisation in a way that allowed for learning from other LA's. Progress in these areas was on target and support and advice had been received from the Office of Public Scrutiny (OPS) and the Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP).

It was believed that a LINK would be a network of individuals, groups and organisations with an interest in local health and social care services. It was foreseen that the LINK would:

- a Promote and support involvement of people in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local health and social care services
- b Obtain the views of people about their need for, and experiences of, local health and social care services
- c Enable people to monitor and review the commission and provision of care services
- d Raise the concerns of local people with those responsible for commissioning, providing, managing and scrutinising services

Under the legislation the proposed powers of LINKs included the ability to:

- a Enter specific types of services and view the care provided
- b Ask for information and get a response within a specific timescale
- c Make recommendations and get a response within a specific timescale
- d Refer matters to the local Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and get a response

There was concern from members that the experience and knowledge from PPI Forums would be lost, and that LINKs may become too big to administer. The Officer noted that PPI Forums had been involved in the preparation for LINKs, and its members would hopefully join the LINK. He expected that there would be approximately 20 - 30 core members of the LINK, and it would be the LINK's

decision on the frequency of meetings, and whether they work on a sub-group basis.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

**PCL
21/07** **Anti-Social Behaviour Team**

The Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Team Manager discussed the work of his team. The team supported the Enforcement Officers, were located in Stockton Police Station and comprised of two Police Officers, a Fire Officer, and a Support Officer. The team worked office hours, 9am - 5pm, Monday - Friday.

The ABS team had the authority to issue AS13's. Once an AS13 was issued to an individual, an information letter would be sent via post to the individual's parent/guardian to inform them of this. If subsequent AS13's were issued to the same individual, a Warning letter would be sent, if the individual continued to get involved in ASB then the individual would be invited to an interview where they would be asked to sign an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC). The signing of the ABC was voluntary; however the invitation to interview could affect their tenancy if they resided in a Tristar property. If the individual broke the contract they may be put forward for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO). The Officer stated that nine out of ten times, the ABC worked. Council members received a monthly email informing of the number of AS13's and ASBO's had been distributed. An offer was made to include Parish/Town Councillors in these emails.

It was noted that each ASB Officer had their own patch area, and leaflets with contact numbers for each area were distributed. There was confusion as to who to contact when a situation which could be considered anti-social behaviour occurred. The ASB Team Manager explained that if the team was contacted outside officer hours the issue would be dealt with the next day. Enforcement Officers were available up to midnight each day; these officers can also issue AS13's. The Police should be contacted when there were incidents of criminal damage, as both the ABS team and Enforcement Officers can get involved but we have no powers of arrest. The ASB Team Manager added that there was a trial being carried out where one telephone number was used to report any incidents of anti-social behaviour, and the operator would pass the incident to the appropriate section.

It was requested that a flowchart be produced showing who to contact when anti-social behaviour occurs, which could be distributed to Parish/Town Councils, and to the public via Stockton News.

CONCLUDED that:

1. A flowchart be distributed informing the public on correct teams to contact.
2. The information be noted.

**PCL
22/07** **Technical Services Update**

Highway Maintenance Funding 2008/9

The Head of Technical Services noted the list of revenue schemes that had been identified as needing structural/engineering repair. In addition there were three further capital schemes:

*B1264 Green Lane Davenport Road to Borough Boundary - Resurface carriageway

*C138 Drovers Lane Redmarshall to Darlington Back Lane - Resurface carriageway

*C144 Letch Lane Carlton Village to Disused Rail Bridge - Resurface carriageway

The identified schemes would be sent to Cllr Bob Cook, Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Transport, for approval. Parish/Town Councils were invited to forward further suggestions for improvements, and while they may not come under this budget, there may still be funding for cosmetic repairs.

Small Environmental Improvement Budget

The Head of Technical Services gave an update on the Small Environmental Improvement Budget. This was a budget of £400,000 per year, and had been divided between wards on the basis of population per ward. Ward members were requested to put forward project ideas by completing a project request form, which were assessed by Technical Services/Direct Services.

Projects implemented in 2007/08 included Additional Dog Bins, Installation of oak barrel planter tubs, Extension of existing car parking lay bys, and Contribution to park improvements (John Whitehead Park and Romano Park). It was believed that the budget had been successful and Technical Services were due to report to Cabinet in May 2008. Parish/Town Councils were invited to forward any comments on the budget and, if relevant, these would be fed into the Cabinet report.

Long Newton Interchange

Members were presented with a progress report on Long Newton Interchange. The Contractor had stated that the work would be completed by August 2008, but it was hoped that the gaps would be closed by April 2008. SBC had been informed provisionally that it was proposed to open the grade separated junction towards the end of April 2008 following the tie in work. The opening of the Link road would follow on towards the end of May 2008. The contractor would send letters to all affected residents concerning the tie-in works.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

**PCL
23/07**

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Website

Members received a presentation from the Webmaster on the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council website (www.stockton.gov.uk), which was named as one of the top ten Council websites in the country.

The website had over 500 online forms to report problems. Many of these forms could be emailed to SBC, although some forms needed a signature and therefore needed to be posted to SBC. Online Planning was noted, and it was

stated that this was the second most used page of the website. Members of the public could check the status of applications, objections received, and decisions made on this page. Information on Councillor and meetings could be found under the Egenda section. This section included agenda and minutes of all public meetings. There was also a section on the website for public consultations, and members of the public could view consultation held by the Council and forward their views online.

Useful links had been placed under the Parish Council section of the website, so that Parish/Town Councillor/Clerks could access information or forms effectively. There was also a useful links page on the website and the Officer stated that any further links that members believed would be useful could be forwarded to her. The Officer also offered to attend Parish Council meetings, or hold a separate meeting for Parish Councillors and their clerks, to demonstrate the website.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

**PCL
24/07** **Issues Raised by Parish/Town Councils**

Prioritisation of highway schemes

Stillington & Whitton Parish Council raised a question on how highway schemes were prioritised. The Head of Technical Services explained that Local Transport Plan Capital Programme settlements, which was affected by Local Safety Schemes prioritised via SBC's annual Road Casualty Review, was distributed into various block allocations from which individual schemes were selected. Schemes were consistent with the Community Strategy, the Road Safety Strategy and the second Local Transport Plan, covering 2006-11.

Priorities were generally decided on an annual basis with HoS/Cabinet Member dependent on factors such as how schemes fitted in with the overall Transport strategy, what development stage they were at, land ownership, level of public support etc. Bridges and Highway Maintenance were allocated between the Principal Road Network, Non-Principal Road Network and Bridge Assessment & Strengthening.

The highway maintenance programme was prioritized via highway inspections, condition surveys and complaints / requests for service from the public / Members. It operated as a two year programme, and was approved by the Head of Service / Cabinet Member.

The 'Find n Fix' initiative generated repairs from routine inspections / requests for service. The Council also allocated capital funding for Small Environmental Improvements, as previously discussed. In addition, the Council would seek improvements to the highway associated with planning applications where this was appropriate (Planning obligations).

Dog Fouling

Stillington & Whitton Parish Council and Ingleby Barwick Town Council raised issues with dog fouling in their areas. The Environmental Health Unit Manager informed that Dog Fouling bins are distributed through out the Borough and the

criteria used for their location was based on

1. Known dog walking sites based on knowledge and experience of Animal Enforcement Officers from their patrols.
2. Site suitability to avoid nuisance to local properties and excessive vandalism
3. Requests from members, parish councils and the public

With regard to the enforcement of the use of bins, the Forum was informed that there were two Inspecting Officers patrolling the Borough on a rota basis from 6am - 8pm, targeting the times when members of the public were most likely to be walking their dogs. The Officers would be dressed in uniforms, and using marked vans. Notices were also put up to inform that Officers would be on patrol. Officers were able to give a fixed penalty fine of £50 to any dog walker caught not using the dog fouling bins, and if this fine was not paid, it could be pursued via the courts. The legislation regarding dog fouling had been changed so that LA's could give fixed penalty fines of £65, however as this would entail changing all notices in the borough it was believed that it would not be cost effective to change the fine.

From 4th April 2008 the Environmental Health Unit took over responsibility for stray dogs from the police, and had arranged to use the kennels at the police station.

Transport Strategy

Stillington & Whitton Parish Council queried whether SBC had a policy on Rural Transport. The Built and Natural Environment Manager had forwarded a statement which explained that as part of SBC's Local Transport Plan policy, investment and support of the public transport network remained a key priority. SBC recognised that the commercial bus network continued to shrink and it was actively engaged in partnership working with the bus operators to try and ensure the bus network remained as stable as possible. To that end, SBC, together with the other Tees Valley Authorities and Bus Operators, had submitted a major scheme bid to Government to remodel the bus network across the Tees Valley, which would create a network of super-core and core bus routes with high frequency services. This would allow current subsidies for bus services to be more efficiently used in supporting rural communities by providing tertiary services to feed into the commercial network.

Until this project was in place, the Officer had stated that SBC would continue to support rural bus services on a priority needs basis, where resources allowed.

Section 106 Funding

Egglescliffe & Eaglescliffe Parish Council queried whether there were any funding available from section 106 for play area, and whether this could be given to Parish Council to spend. The Environmental Development Officer explained that it was not possible for the contributions to be paid directly to Parish/Town Councils as the legal agreement was between SBC (Local Planning Authority) and the developer. Therefore SBC must take receipt and oversee the control and usage of the money, to ensure that it is used in full accord with the terms of the Section 106 agreement and to the planning development to which it pertains. However, Countryside & Greenspace were more than willing to undertake any improvements in partnership with the

respective Town/Parish Council, either taking the lead role or acting as agents / project managers. This was something that was actively occurring already in some areas in regard to the improvement of play area facilities on Parish Council owned/ managed land.
Building Schools for the Future

Ingleby Barwick Town Council requested an update. The BSF Director had forwarded a response noting that discussion and negotiation had been continuing with the government agencies that were responsible for the delivery of the BSF programme. These discussions had not been concluded therefore there was no further information SBC were able to communicate. Matters were not anticipated to be concluded until late April or May 2008.

Expansion of Tesco, Ingleby Barwick

Ingleby Barwick requested SBC's views on the expansion of Tesco, Ingleby Barwick. The Senior Planning Officer had forwarded a response which stated an application for an expansion of the Tesco's store was refused in January 2007 due to the development being out of keeping with the scale, function and nature of the Myton Way Local Centre and would result in an elevation of the centre within the retail hierarchy impacting on Thornaby and Yarm district centres. It was also decided to refuse the application in relation to the impact on the development on the highway network.

A representation from Tesco to upgrade the status of Myton Way to a district centre had been received and was being considered. However, under the current planning policies the Local Planning Authority had not had justification or reasoning to change its view for refusing the application.

The Officer had also explained that the Planning department were in the process of formulating a new local planning system, the Local Development Framework, which would constitute a core strategy and series of 'development folders' to cover a wide range of planning issues and policies. The retail hierarchy outlined in the Local Plan would be reviewed within the Core Strategy, and be submitted to the Secretary of State during 2008. Any representations for retail site allocations would be dealt with through the Regeneration DPD, which this would be published in a preferred options format, along with the Core Strategy during 2008. All Parish Councils within Stockton Borough would be consulted when these documents were published.

Until any material changes in circumstances emerged through either a revision of the relevant national planning policy guidance (PPS6) or through changes to the current retail hierarchy through the LDF process, the planning department's standpoint would remain the same in terms of the retail impacts and any applications were likely to be resisted.

Regardless of this planning policy standpoint, the remaining issue of the impacts of any store expansion on the Ingleby Barwick highway network would also have to be considered. Unless it could be demonstrated that any expansion would not have a detrimental impact on existing highway infrastructure this would remain a reason for refusal of the application.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted

