

Parish Council Liaison Forum

A meeting of Parish Council Liaison Forum was held on Monday, 20th September, 2010.

Present: Cllr David Coleman (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr Kevin Faulks, Cllr Miss Barbara Inman, Cllr Terry Laing, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Barry Woodhouse (Stockton on Tees B.C.); H. Atkinson (Billingham T.C.), J. Walker (Egglescliffe & Egglescliffe P.C.), G. Rees (Grindon P.C.), J. Lithgo, B. Tingle (Stillington P.C.).

Officers: R. McGuckin (DNS); N. Hart (LD), Ms J. Stevely (R).

Also in attendance: Doff Pollard (Tees Valley Rural Community Council), Margaret Middleton (Cleveland Local Council's Association).

Apologies: Apologies were submitted on behalf of Egglescliffe & Egglescliffe P.C., Ingleby Barwick and Redmarshall Parish Councils.

PCL 9/10 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Mrs Beaumont declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of item 4 'Tees Valley Rural Community Council-Involvement of Town & Parish Councils in Village Halls-Presentation' as a result of her being a Council appointed representative on that body.

PCL 10/10 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st June 2010**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st June 2010 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of apologies from Cllr Faulks.

PCL 11/10 **Tees Valley Rural Community Council-Involvement of Town & Parish Councils in Village Halls-Presentation**

Doff Pollard, Chief Officer of Tees Valley Rural Community Council (TVRCC), provided an overview of the role and aims of the TVRCC, which was an independent registered charity and limited company, part funded by the Government's Dept for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, with a remit to support rural needs/issues.

The TVRCC operated throughout the Tees Valley, had offices based in Middlesbrough and worked closely with the Cleveland Local Council's Association and supported the County Durham & Cleveland Training Partnership for Parish/Town Councils in the Cleveland area.

It complemented support also offered by SRCGA and Catalyst to rural organisations and facilitated a local voluntary sector infrastructure body, as well as offering information, support and guidance to Village Halls, Town & Parish Councils and other rural groups. Examples of projects offered in support of rural campaigns included the LEADER project and Community Planning and Community Transport schemes, to ensure rural areas were not marginalised through lack of provision. It also assisted the management of Village Hall associations, and provided advice and assistance regarding 'fund finders', such as with bids to the Big Lottery.

The TVRCC had held its inaugural Rural Summit in February 2010 where it became apparent that wider communication of its purpose regarding rural matters was needed. Details of how Stockton on Tees compared in terms of rural areas to other parts of the region and country, were provided, with an estimated 8,815 persons in the Borough categorised as living in a rural area (according to Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion data). It therefore hoped to establish stronger links in the Stockton area and invited all Parish/Town Councils in the area, and any interested groups/persons to attend their next meeting on the 13th October 2010 at Carlton Methodist Hall. It hoped to follow this up with another Rural Summit, this time in Stockton if possible, later in the year.

RESOLVED that the content of the presentation be noted and Parish/Town Councils note the opportunities available to seek assistance from the Tees Valley Rural Community Council in support of rural needs/issues.

PCL 12/10 Cleveland Local Council's Association-Activities & Future Interaction with the Parish Council Liaison Forum-Presentation

Margaret Middleton from the Cleveland Local Council's Association (CLCA) provided the Forum with a summary of the role of her organisation; which was the smallest of similar organisations throughout the country offering support and advice to Parish & Town Councils under the umbrella of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

Membership of CLCA offered Parish/Town Councils access to support, services and training for both clerks and members provided by NALC and delivered regionally by the Co Durham Association of Local Councils. The membership cost of the CLCA was dependent upon the Council's precept.

CLCA hosted events based around the needs of its members, and last year had provided a session surrounding planning issues and how local councils were consulted/engaged. It campaigned to promote and support the achievements of Parish/Town Councils and was actively encouraging its members to strive to achieve Quality Council Status, thereby strengthening these Councils powers and duties for the future.

Details of the current Co Durham & Cleveland Training Partnership Training Programme were circulated; each session provided by experienced clerks or trainers. The cost of events ranged from £20-£25 per session. It was noted from consultation with local councils in the area that many did not appear to have a training budget in place.

The CLCA were keen to establish closer links with both this Forum and the Borough Council and, following the success of previous joint training events regarding Standards and Planning, hoped to build upon these and offer further new, combined training and development opportunities with Stockton Borough Council in the future. The Team Leader for Democratic & Member Services advised that discussions were on-going with the CLCA to secure the involvement of Parish/Town Councils in induction and training events post elections 2011. Details of this would be brought back to a future meeting of this Forum. Other opportunities, such as the use of the Town Hall for CLCA

training/events and the inclusion of appropriate articles within Stockton News, would also be pursued.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted and future opportunities for interaction between both this Forum and the CLCA be considered.

**PCL
13/10** **Street Lighting Policy-Presentation**

Richard McGuckin, the Head of Technical Services, provided the Forum with a summary of the main elements of the Council's newly approved Street Lighting policy.

It was noted that street lighting was provided under the Highways Act 1980 to prevent danger to road users, but had become more apparent in recent years as an aid to crime prevention. Historically, lighting systems within the Borough had been implemented on the basis of custom and practice and developed over a number of years in accordance with current legislative framework and British Standards for the design of lighting for roads and public amenity areas.

A key driver in improving the Council's street lighting stock was to secure a 25% reduction of the Council's CO2 emissions by 2013, in accordance with Government legislation. PFI funding had been applied for by the Council to secure the investment of £32M in replacing street lighting columns over 7 years old, however, this funding was subject to the outcome of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review in October.

The main objectives of the street lighting policy were:-

- (a) Provide a safe road network for all road users;
- (b) Minimise the environmental impact of public lighting;
- (c) Ensure that public lighting is in keeping with and integrated into the infrastructure.
- (d) Help to reduce crime and the fear of crime;
- (e) Provide a cost effective public lighting service;
- (f) Energy conservation and sustainability
- (g) Reduce emissions of CO2 25% by 2013
- (i) Prevent fatalities and serious injuries, caused by vehicular collisions with street furniture, through the use of passively safe lighting and other equipment.

It was noted that the key fundamental changes to the practices were related to dimming, part night lighting and the use of passively safe columns, such that dimming would be introduced on street lighting units to enable the Council to meet its corporate targets for the reduction of CO2 and energy consumption. Generally, street lighting levels would be reduced from 12 midnight to 5/6am subject to suitability for implementation by assessment.

Other main features of the policy, insofar as it applied to the selection of lighting levels in defined areas, the use of street lighting columns to provide Christmas decoration, the use of private or Off Highway lighting, and the provision of Public Art and Cultural Lighting, were also summarised for the Forum.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure-Presentation

The support of the Forum was invited by the Head of Technical Services for the Council's development of an electric vehicle infrastructure within the Borough.

It was noted that electric cars and vans offered significant improvements over conventional internal combustion engines in terms of fuel efficiency, local air quality, noise, and emissions. They were destined to become widely available over the coming years, and would eventually phase out petrol and diesel-powered vehicles - certainly for cars and vans. Whereas availability was low at present and purchase price was high, this was expected to reduce as production volumes increased in forthcoming years.

Running costs for electric vehicles were very much lower than for conventional ones, due both to the efficiency of the motors and also to there being fewer and more long-lasting components.

At present, the mileage/range of electric cars was lower than for petrol or diesel engined ones, though this would quickly change as battery technology advances. Many cars in the short-medium term would use both old and new technologies - battery/electric for shorter ranges, and conventional engines ('range extenders') for longer journeys. Many of these 'hybrid' cars would also offer plug-in battery recharging, meaning that for shorter, commuter journeys the car would be operating mainly on electric power.

Users of electric cars would also have a range of charging locations:

- Home - via a standard 13 amp socket (3kW)
- Home - via a dedicated 32 amp charging point (7kW)
- Workplace - via a standard or dedicated socket
- Public location - via a dedicated 7kW charging post
- Transport interchange - via a 50kW Rapid Charge point

Public charging points were becoming more available across the North East, via the Government-backed Plugged-in-Places initiative which would see 1300 charging points installed by 2012.

Currently there were public-access charging points in Stockton on Tees at:

- Wynyard Woodland Park
- City Learning Centre, Marsh House Avenue, Billingham
- Bede College, Marsh House Avenue, Billingham
- Kingsway House, West Precinct, Billingham
- Stockton Riverside College, Harvard Avenue, Stockton
- Thompson Street car park, Stockton
- Preston Park, Yarm Road, Eaglescliffe
- Yarm Station, Green Lane, Yarm

Other sites were being investigated or were in development. The estimated cost of recharging a vehicle was likely to be between 50-75 pence and would generally take 3-4 hours to fully charge (although 'fast' charge facilities were being developed) and battery technology was advancing rapidly so that in future vehicles were expected to have up to a 180-200 mile range before requiring charging.

In addition, the Council now had its first electric car, the details of which were provided, which was being piloted as part of the Council's pool car fleet. The

results of this trial would influence the future extension of electric vehicles to other uses within the Council's fleet, such as for mini buses and street cleansing vehicles.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted and local councils be encouraged to promote the programme of support for the development of a borough-wide electric vehicle infrastructure.

PCL
15/10 **Item for Information-Stockton News**

The Forum was advised of the editorial, publication and distribution process surrounding Stockton News, which was currently published on six occasions per year and distributed to homes, libraries and other venues throughout the Borough. Copies of previous editions of the magazine were circulated.

Parish & Town Councils were encouraged to contribute articles and news promoting events within their communities and could do so initially via contact with Jacky Stevely, Deputy Editor of the magazine.

Details of the publication dates and deadlines, together with contact details for the Deputy Editor, would be circulated to all Parish/Town Clerks.

RESOLVED that the availability of Stockton News as a means of promoting Parish & Town Councils be noted, and details of the publication dates and deadlines, together with contact details for the Deputy Editor, be circulated to all Parish/Town Clerks.