

10th January 2017

MINUTES OF MEETING

Title:	Basingstoke District Association of Parish and Town Councils	
Held On:	Tuesday 10 th January 2017	
Present:	Martin Slatford Chris Curtis Les Fryer Julian Jones John Robertson Ros Blackman Adam Trickett Simon Mahaffey Liz Ford John Buckley Sarah Curtis Brian Langer Martin Biermann	Baughurst (Chair) Baughurst Chineham Dummer Mortimer West End Oakley & Deane Overton Silchester Upton Grey Whitchurch Wotton St Lawrence HALC HALC
Guests:	Alison Edwards Matthew Evans	Secretary Head of Planning Infrastructure, BDBC
Apologies:	Nick Thurlow Christine McGarvie Mags Wylie	Mortimer West End Mortimer West End Hampshire Action

1. Neighbourhood Plans: Presentation from Matthew Evans, Head of Planning Infrastructure, BDBC

1.1 Matthew Evans set out the background to, and process surrounding, the development of Neighbourhood Plans. (His presentation is attached as a separate document.) Neighbourhood Plans were introduced in the Localism Act 2011. They have legal status as part of the area's Development Plan and must be taken into account when planning decisions are taken. They can stipulate where and what type of development can take place in the neighbourhood and can include, for example, design standards, and seek to protect local facilities. Neighbourhood Plans must not conflict with the Local Plan or prevent development set out in the Local Plan. They must be put together by the Parish Council or a Neighbourhood Forum and must conform to National Planning Guidelines. The Government is committed to Neighbourhood Plans and has allocated up to £9k grant funding to them. The Housing and Planning Act and the Neighbourhood Planning Bill both seek to strengthen and streamline the process. Benefits of having a Neighbourhood Plan include receipt of 25% of CIL arising from development in the area. Two Neighbourhood Plans have already been adopted in the borough – in Oakley & Deane and Overton. BDBC can provide councils preparing a plan with a range of

ongoing advice, support and guidance, including detailed technical support, support around Sustainable Environmental Assessments, mapping, IT, printing, organisation and funding of referendums, and contacts for statutory consultees.

1.2 Matthew Evans advised councils to consider carefully whether a Neighbourhood Plan is the right tool to achieve the desired outcomes. It was discussed whether, for some more urban areas, the benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan may be outweighed by the time and effort involved in developing one. Timescales and project plans should be agreed at the outset and a committed group of people is required to take the project on as it is incredibly time consuming. It is important that policies within the Plan are drafted with sufficient clarity that the decision maker can apply them. BDBC can help with this. A robust site selection is also important, as is transparent decision making. When publicising the referendum (50% of those voting on the Plan must vote in favour for it to pass) it is important that councils do not push for a 'yes' or 'no' vote.

1.3 Adam Trickett (Overton) advised others not to embark on the Neighbourhood Plan process when elections to the council were due as it was beneficial to have the same group of people take the process forward from beginning to end. The inability to count developments under 10 settlements (or 5 outside of a settlement boundary) towards the total number of houses required in the Local Plan is problematic and, in Overton's case, led to a number of potentially viable sites being discounted and a need to propose development of greenfield sites that might otherwise not be necessary. Brian Langer pointed out that, if the borough falls behind in its five year land supply, areas with Neighbourhood Plans could once again be open to development that isn't in the Plan. If such development is approved then the whole process is in disrepute. Matthew Evans said that BDBC was acutely aware of this and of the importance of maintaining adequate land supply. He noted that, in areas where there is a Neighbourhood Plan, the requirement has now changed such that only a three year supply is required for the Plan to be valid.

1.4 Martin Slatford asked whether an existing Village Design Statement was a good place to start when developing a Neighbourhood Plan, and how much a council could expect the development of a Plan to cost. Ros Blackman (Oakley) advised that it was best to start from scratch, albeit the VDS would be a useful tool to refer to for data, etc. In terms of cost, the large outlays were covered by grants. The cost to the council would be largely around incidentals such as cost of hall hire, etc. Brian Langer said that Planning Aid had helped Overton for free.

1.5 In response to a question around Conservation Area Appraisals, Matthew Evans advised that they still have weight and that BDBC are currently in the process of revisiting and reviewing all Conservation Areas. Realistically, they will look at 3-4 a year. **Action: Matthew will share the programme information with BDAPTC.**

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1.6 Matthew Evans signposted the meeting to the Neighbourhood Planning section on BDBC's website <http://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplan>

2. Proposals by BDBC to discontinue hard copies of planning applications and move to electronic review. Analysis of issues and opportunities.

2.1 Matthew Evans explained that BDBC were looking at how it could give parish and town councils the information they need in the most efficient way. BDBC receive 70% of planning applications electronically through the Planning Portal and providing paper copies to parish and town councils was expensive. He asked for comments on what the barriers would be to moving towards only supplying councils with electronic copies.

2.2 Attendees made the following points:

- Many councils reported that they had either had to increase the frequency of their meetings or request extensions to deadlines in order to submit their response to a planning application on time.
- Some councils reported that lack of computer literacy may be a problem for some councillors if receiving planning applications electronically only.
- Lack of high speed broadband in some areas is a barrier.
- Currently, many of the pdf files that accompany planning applications are poorly labelled.
- Some documents need to be viewed in A3 or A2 format. This is a problem for most councils who don't have A3/A2 printing facilities.
- It is useful to have paper copies to hand round at meetings and show members of the public. Some councils have got round this by having a projector on which to view documents, though this is also a costly solution.
- There is often a delay between the posting of an application and the appearance of the associated documents on the website.
- It can be difficult to flick between documents, for example 'before' and 'after' diagrams, electronically.
- It was suggested that sending the documents as email attachments rather than an internet link might encourage more councillors to look at the documents. A zip file would be a good idea, as well as sending each document separately (in case it was too time consuming to download the entire zip file).
- It was suggested that BDBC review with BDAPTC how officers decide which documents to send to parishes and which are not essential.
- When parishes get sent revised documents it is not always easy to spot the difference. Having this spelt out would be useful.

2.3 **Actions:**

- Put proposal to clerks meeting that BDBC only send paper copies of planning applications to councils that have requested it, either on a general or case-by-case basis, and that zip files of documents are sent in future alongside individual files.
- Matthew Evans asked for a couple of parish councils to agree to be 'guinea pigs' for BDBC and trial a move to electronic applications.

- Matthew Evans agreed to circulate a note setting out the triggers for planning applications getting sent to Committee.
- A workshop run by BDBC on how to provide comments on applications that add value to be considered for the Parish Conference in June. Enforcement to also be considered as a topic.

3. Report on meeting between Martin Slatford, Mel Barrett and Chas Bradfield on 3rd January 2017

- 3.1** This meeting discussed the forthcoming loss of the Limited General Grant and Council Tax Support Grant currently received by many parish and town councils.
Action: could councils who have been in receipt of these grants let Martin know what they are proposing to do to manage the loss of income.
- 3.2** The grass cutting grant is expected to remain. Martin pointed out that litter picking grants given out by BDBC amount to around £100,000 a year, and the savings expected from the axing of the Limited General Grant and the Council Tax Support Grant are around £106,000. Councils who don't already receive a litter picking grant might wish to consider applying for one. Martin Slatford reminded councils that those wishing to apply for a Limited General Grant this year need to apply by 31st January 2017.

4. Any Other Business

4.1 BDAPTC has four representatives on BDBC's Standards Committee. Steve Spillane is stepping down from this role and a replacement is needed. Les Fryer, also a representative, stated that representatives need to attend two meetings a year (usually evenings) and sit on approximately 2-3 panels a year. The panels consider complaints made against parish councillors and meetings usually take place during the day. Most of the work is carried out by email. **Action: could a volunteer please come forward to Martin Slatford at: martin.slatford@googlemail.com.**

4.2 Martin Slatford informed the meeting that Baughurst was about to pilot a scheme to deliver high speed broadband to the area which could be the solution for other areas in the borough unable to obtain high speed broadband through other channels. The programme should deliver speeds of between 20 and 100 mph to around 300 properties at a competitive cost (the capital costs are around £150,000).

4.3 Brian Langer informed the meeting that BDBC currently has a Transport Strategy out for consultation which closes for responses on 31st January 2017.

5. Dates of future meetings

5.1 The meeting scheduled for 11th April 2017 will be moved as it is in school holidays. The meeting will now be on Tuesday 4th April at 18:30.

Meeting closed at 8.30pm.

