

September 27, 2012

MINUTES OF MEETING

Title:	Basingstoke District Association of Parish and Town Councils	
Held On:	Thursday 27 September 2012	
Present:	Alan Cox Chris Holland Martin Biermann Andy Neilson Julian Jones Graham Falconer Lorna Cuthill Rodney Scott Peter Bloyce Brian Langer Philip Kingston Sandy Johnston Steve Spillane Vanessa Richards Jo Slimin	Ashmansworth Bramley Chineham Cliddesden Dummer (and Chair) Highclere Mapledurwell & Up Nately Oakley & Deane Old Basing & Lychpit Overton Pamber Sherfield on Loddon Silchester Silchester Tadley
Guests:	Julia Leavey Paul Tatam Alison Edwards	BDBC – Parish Liaison Officer BDBC Secretary
Apologies:	Cllr Elaine Still Laura Taylor Martin Slatford Les Fryer Georgina Grace Ann Blyth John Strawbridge Judith Tyson David Leeks	BDBC BDBC Baughurst Cliddesden Hannington Newnham Oakley & Deane Pamber Tadley

1 Minutes of the last meeting – 14 June 2012

1.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

2 Apologies for absence

2.1 Noted as above.

3 Changes to our income proposed by Government

3.1 Paul Bonner (BDBC) circulated advice on 17th September regarding the localisation of council tax support. From April 2013 Government is replacing the national council tax benefit scheme with a new local council tax support scheme. In future, it is intended that support for council tax will be offered as an additional discount to council tax bills rather than given as benefit to council tax payers. The original proposals required the tax base calculation for parishes to include the council tax support scheme reductions as an additional discount. Assuming everything else remained the same this would reduce the tax base for parishes and would lead to a higher band D council tax charge as the precept would be divided by a lower tax base figure than before. There was concern as to how this could impact on parishes with regard to the Localism Act 2011 and whether any resulting tax rises would be deemed to be excessive and subject to veto by residents and potentially require a referendum. In 2012/13, these arrangements only applied to billing and major precepting authorities and not parishes. However, Government has indicated that it will monitor increases in the local precepting sector and does not rule out setting ‘principles’ which apply to higher spending parish and town councils. The original proposal also allowed for Government funding to be provided to billing authorities and for some of this to be passed on to parishes to help reduce the parish budget requirements and the effects of the lower tax base on the band D council tax element. However, it has been recognised that there are potential problems with this original proposal in terms of funding for parishes. In practice the funding is unlikely to compensate for the cost of the new scheme (as Government funding is being cut by 10% at least) and getting the funding to local preceptors could be complex and costly. Therefore, the Government issued a further consultation document in August regarding a new proposal to allow billing authorities to continue to calculate the tax base for parishes in a similar way as previous years (and excluding the council tax support scheme reductions). The consultation period ends on 9 October 2012. The Government is proposing to issue a wider update on the regulations in early October and lay regulations in the autumn to ensure they come into force by 30 November 2012. This leaves very little time for parishes to set their precept. Julia Leavey will ask Paul Bonner to ensure that information is passed onto parish and town councils, and the District Association, as soon as it is available. **Action: Julia Leavey**

4 Migration of websites from BDBC hosting

4.1 BDBC has offered any parish council whose website is currently hosted by BDBC a grant of £375 to assist the council in migrating its website to another host. In order to receive this grant the parish council must email Paul Tatam at BDBC before 31 December 2012 and he will arrange for payment to the parish council. The payment will be made on the understanding that it is used to migrate the website from BDBC. Paul Tatam will therefore monitor parish councils’ websites to see that this is happening and move towards switching off the BDBC hosted sites.

4.2 Some companies are authorised to host and register .gov.uk domain names. If a council uses a company that is not authorised to do this they will need to register a new

name e.g. .org/.com. For councils that do have to register a different domain name, BDBC can set up a 'landing page' that will tell users who try to access the old site that it has moved to the new address. If a council uses a free site provider, BDBC can maintain the .gov.uk registration and send users straight to the new site, but this incurs a cost of approximately £50 a year which will have to be passed on to those councils.

4.5 Alan Cox asked whether there was any guidance available on contracts between parishes and website companies. Paul Tatam said that he would be happy to pass draft contracts on to BDBC's procurement team requesting feedback.

4.6 Jo Slimin advised that the clerk at Tadley had attended one evening course on setting up a website through Google and that it appeared to be relatively straightforward.

4.7 BDAPTC will get a free website if 10 or more councils choose either parishcouncil.net or Vision ICT as their new website supplier. **Action: Could councils please let Martin Slatford know which supplier they intend to use for their new website. BDAPTC also need a volunteer to move the BDAPTC website away from BDBC before the end of 2012 so could any volunteers please contact Martin Slatford at chair@bdaptc.basingstoke.gov.uk.**

5 Matters arising from the minutes of 14th June 2012

Update on the code of conduct

5.1 There are still some Councillors, and in three cases entire councils, that have not yet submitted a Declaration of Interest. Julia Leavey will investigate the status of those Councillors and their Councils. There is still concern amongst Councillors about the publication of interests on the internet.

5.2 Martin Biermann said that it appears different Districts are interpreting the new Code of Conduct rules in different ways, for example regarding spouses' interests. Julian Jones wrote to Sir George Young MP about the Declaration of Interest and received a letter back from a Government Minister saying that spouses holdings don't need to be declared if they are not likely to be of interest to parish council business. Julian also wrote to the Information Commissioner voicing concerns about the publication of interests on the internet. The Information Commissioner replied that the Government has the right to demand this. **Action: Julian Jones to provide the guidance he was given for circulation with the minutes.**

HAT

5.3 Martin Biermann advised that HAT no longer exists. In its place is a working group of County Councillors and key borough officers, excluding parishes, although parishes might sometimes be invited to attend. He hopes that highways issues can be raised at the Parish Conference in November.

Community Speedwatch

5.4 Chris Holland updated the meeting on Bramley's experience with Speedwatch. To date Baughurst is the only council in the District that has bought the equipment, at a cost of around £1850. Bramley has borrowed the equipment at a cost of £25 a time. The equipment appears adequate but the packaging and durability of the stand is sub-standard. Baughurst has advised the manufacturers of the need to make these aspects more robust.

5.5 The greatest hurdle in setting up Speedwatch has been getting the seven volunteers

accepted as police volunteers. This took approximately two months. Forms had to be completed at Tadley police station, where the volunteers were given a health and safety briefing.

5.6 The Bramley volunteers have been out on Speedwatch duty twice. On the first occasion high visibility led to all drivers slowing down, thus achieving the group's aim. On the second occasion the volunteers went to a notorious spot for speeding and handed eight forms to the police. The offending drivers will be cautioned by the police. If this happens twice in one year the police will take more serious action.

5.7 Speedwatch volunteers cannot monitor the same area as the police and the police must approve where the volunteers monitor. The Bramley team have had the PCSO present at both speedwatch duties and the PCSO has acted as the liaison between the volunteers and the police. This has worked well.

5.8 To summarise, Bramley now has a practiced team of Speedwatch volunteers, but needs more volunteers. People are wary of coming forward as volunteers for fear of a negative response from the public. Bramley would recommend the Speedwatch scheme to other councils but would caution against spending lots of money purchasing the equipment rather than hiring it.

5.9 Peter Bloyce reported that Old Basing and Lychpit are setting up a Speedwatch scheme with Chineham. They are still going through the process of getting acceptance as police volunteers. They are also finding it hard to get volunteers.

5.10 Vanessa Richards reported that Silchester are having difficulty setting up a Speedwatch scheme as the police have told them that all notorious spots are being monitored by police and they don't want any conflict of interest.

6 Reports

Community Safety Partnership

6.1 All parishes should have received an email/letter, via their Neighbourhood Officer, from the new Chief Inspector Wallace, advising of cuts to the number of Neighbourhood Officers from early 2013. One will be lost from South Basingstoke, one from North Basingstoke, and two from rural Basingstoke & Deane. Martin Biermann voiced concern that low crime areas will lose out when cuts are made, but the reason these are low crime areas may be due to the presence of a Neighbourhood Officer.

6.2 Crime is going down in the area, except for anti-social behaviour. The Community Focus Team pilot scheme is now treating all such complaints individually and replying individually. If this is not happening in your area please let the CSP know.

6.3 Martin Biermann attended Bramshill Police College recently and reported that there was fear that the new commissioning regime and its associated electoral process would take funds away from the police budget. Details of those standing in the Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner elections in November can be found on the internet.

Disability Forum

6.4 Sandy Johnston circulated the aims and objectives of the Disability Forum and would welcome views. Basingstoke Volunteer Services were very helpful in putting the document together and volunteers will play an important role in achieving the aims and objectives of the Forum. **Action: all councils invited to give views on the aims and objectives to Sandy.**

Voluntary Services Forum

6.5 The VCS Commissioning Framework has recently been out for consultation. In the past, the process by which charitable organisations received grants was relatively simple. Julian Jones reported that the proposed commissioning framework is quite a heavyweight bidding process which could end up costing organisations considerable amounts for consultants fees, etc., which may be disproportionate to the size of grant for which they are applying. Jo Slimin noted that it was proposed this framework might only be put in place for grants over a certain size. Despite the deadline for responses having passed, some Councillors thought it might be worthwhile submitting a response which supported the retention of a simple approach for small-scale grant applications.

6.6 The Strategic Needs Assessment has also been out for consultation. Julian Jones reported that the consultation document was difficult to respond to as it was rather “Motherhood and Apple Pie”.

HALC

6.7 Martin Biermann advised that a Board of Directors has been set up and so one of the three District representatives needed to be formerly nominated as a Director to sit on the Board. In his absence, Brian Langer was nominated by Martin Biermann, seconded by Philip Kingston. All voted in favour, with two abstentions.

6.8 Martin Biermann reported that the Quality Parish Council scheme is coming to an end, to be reincarnated as something else as yet unknown. As of October 2012 no new Quality Parish Councils will be accepted. Existing QPCs will continue for now, probably until spring 2013, by which time a new scheme will be in place.

6.9 Tadley council had had concerns over whether to renew their QPC status as it costs money, time and effort over paperwork to do so and the benefits that were promised have not come to fruition. The General Power of Competence has superseded some of the benefits. Jo Slimin was of the view that in other Districts QPC status meant a council was more likely to get grants, receive support and be allowed to take on services, but that this did not appear to be the case in Basingstoke.

6.10 HALC had received a report on rural broadband. Hampshire’s aim is that 90% of properties will be connected at a ‘reasonable speed’ – 2 Mb – and there is the prospect of £300 grants for assisting with this. Alan Cox said that Ashmansworth had been told by Hampshire County Council that they were key candidates for aid to assist with broadband but that the Government was awaiting permission from the EU to give such grants as it could be deemed to breach regional aid rules.

6.11 Mobile libraries are to be redistributed – not reduced in numbers but positioned elsewhere. Councils may wish to comment on the current review.

6.12 There has been a poor uptake of Transport Packs. Councils to consider whether they are interested in having one.

7 Request for topics to be included in the Parish Conference on 26th November 2012

7.1 At the meeting on 14th June 2012 five representatives were appointed to sit on the hearing panel that will hear any complaints concerning alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct. Jo Slimin requested that the staged retirement of these representatives is considered at the next meeting.

7.2 Other topics put forward were:

- Council tax decisions and the impact on the precept.
- Local Development Framework
- Highways
 - How parishes can be engaged when highways being realigned
 - Obscured road signs
 - Potholes

7.3 Action: could everyone please pass any other suggestions for topics to Martin Slatford.

8. Open forum for questions from members and for topics from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

8.1 All dealt with under other agenda items.

9. Any other business

9.1 None arising.

10. Date of next meeting – Parish Conference on 26th November 2012