

LICHFIELD DISTRICT PARISH FORUM

17 SEPTEMBER 2019

PRESENT:

Councillors Salter (Chairman), Tapper (Vice-Chair), Anketell, Barnett, Brown, Robertson, Silvester-Hall and Warburton – Lichfield District Council

Councillor J Potter (Alrewas Parish Council)
Councillor J Altham (Alrewas Parish Council)
Councillor R Cox (Armitage with Handsacre Parish Council)
Councillor S Woodward (Burntwood Town Council)
Councillor R Nicholls (Clifton Campville with Thorpe Constantine)
Councillor S Brown – Curborough & Elmhurst, Farewell & Chorley
Councillor S Plater (Colton Parish Council)
Councillor J Meikle (Edingale Parish Council)
Councillor S Roberts (Fradley & Streethay Parish Council)
Councillor K V Wasdell (Hammerwich Parish Council)
Councillor P Kynaston (Hints & Canwell Parish Council)
Councillor G Kynaston (Hints & Canwell Parish Council)
Councillor C Ball (Lichfield District Council/Lichfield City Council)
Councillor J Checkland (Lichfield District Council/Lichfield City Council)
Councillor J Eagland (Lichfield District Council/Lichfield City Council)
Councillor P Ray (Lichfield District Council/Lichfield City Council)
Councillor M Warfield (Lichfield District Council/Lichfield City Council and Parish Clerk at Weeford Parish Council)
Councillor H Ashton (Lichfield City Council)
Councillor D Dundas (Lichfield City Council)
Councillor I Jackson (Lichfield City Council)
Councillor J Marks (Lichfield City Council)
Councillor P McDermott (Lichfield City Council)
Councillor P Stevenson (Mavesyn Ridware Parish Council)
Councillor M J Crowe (Wall Parish Council)
Mr Peter Young (Clerk – Wall Parish Council)
Councillor K Stevens (Wigginton & Hopwas Parish Council)

Officers in Attendance: Miss W Johnson, Ms C Tims and Mr N Turner

11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Field (Lichfield City Council), Councillor Harris (Mavesyn Ridware Parish Council), Councillor Gwilt and Humphreys (Lichfield District Council) and Councillor Place (Burntwood Town Council).

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

13 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2019 as circulated were received and signed as a correct record with the amendment that Councillor Cox was present representing Armitage with Handsacre only.

14 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Mr Neil Turner, Director of Transformation & Resources, delivered a presentation on Community Governance Reviews. It was the district council's intention to undertake a Community Governance Review over the next 12-18 months in order to ensure effective local governance in parishes. He asked for the forum's support as the members in parishes who knew their parishes and they would be required to provide insight.

Mr Turner advised that there are 28 parish councils, 252 councillor seats and 2 grouped parishes and, 8 warded parish councils. The electorate of parishes ranged from 78 to 25,000.

He said a review was required to ensure that:-

- Councils clearly represent identifiable communities;
- That Members reflect the communities that they serve;
- That residents are equally represented; and
- That good, efficient local government is promoted – in a way that reflects the aspirations of local people.

Mr Turner said the ultimate decision rests with the council. He explained the steps of a review which concluded in a "re-organisation order" and advised that a review is usually completed within 12 months of starting it but it needs to be in place ahead of the next elections in 2023.

The Terms of Reference were illustrated, the questions asked, the key issues and the next steps were identified together with emerging issues and questions were asked by the forum members:-

Q. What happens when you have a parish running alongside another county? Does this mean you could not extend in to their boundary?

Q. Is the same true for the district boundaries as Hammerwich Parish Council have recently met with Heath Hayes and Norton Canes in the Cannock Chase district and it is obvious they share mutual interests.

Q. A joint parish council was concerned as there was likely to be a major development in the rural area of the parish meaning it would make this one part of the parish far bigger than the other; would this mean this part may have to branch off on its own as the demographics would change?

Q. Roman Heights are marketing they are a short walk from the Lichfield City Centre and this could potentially overload an already large parish council, should we not guard against this?

Q. In the ever growing parish of Armitage, outside the current boundary there is Hawkesyard which is another development of up to 1000 new homes coming in to the Armitage with Handsacre parish – there is a definite population issue in this area and it was asked if this could be looked at very soon as it may need warding.

Q. Streethay now has more new houses and a junior school so this has to be done for this area quickly too. Also, Fradley has had huge developments built so can this be looked at as well - would it not be a good idea to split Streethay and Fradley?

Q. There have been significant changes over the years and because we now have the Community Infrastructure Levy, wards that are rural could now receive CIL monies which did not exist before.

Q. What happens if you have a Neighbourhood Plan with the current boundaries and the boundaries change under a Community Governance Review?

In Shenstone the Neighbourhood Plan was made in 2011 and in 2015 the Boundary Commission changed the boundary and created the parish of Shenstone – Woodend. It was queried how much strength this Community Governance Review would have to challenge the Boundary Commission to disagree with this decision.

Q. Is there an average number of people the parish councils should represent?

Q. When the word “development” is used, does this include commercial development?

Q. In Lichfield City Council there are miniscule wards, will this map with the county council divisions?

Q. Can we go back to the Electoral Commission and encourage the use of the Dehont method (Jefferson) of voting?

Mr Turner responded to each of these questions but they have been noted and will be reflected in any emerging Terms of Reference. He thanked everyone for their input and said this was only the beginning of the Community Governance Review which would need parish council input throughout the process.

15 STRATEGIC PLAN

Ms Tims, Head of Corporate Services, introduced herself and delivered a Presentation on the new Strategic Plan explaining what it is and the current vision. Ms Tims said because the current one runs out in April 2020, a new Strategic Plan was needed and it was envisaged it would be informed by a strong research base, local facts and figures, as well as the view of local people, councillors, partners and staff.

Ms Tims explained that our Strategic Plan is underpinned by our Delivery Plan which details the activity of projects and services over a four year period to achieve the strategic outcomes. It is a rolling document that is updated as projects progress and is regularly reported upon to cabinet and scrutiny committees and is directly mapped back to the Strategic Plan commitments.

The corporate indicators and the consultation done to date was described and it was hoped to achieve “a plan on a page” now the Strategic Plan was underpinned by a Delivery Plan and a Performance Framework. Ms Tims circulated the current priorities in poster form and asked members to comment on what they would like to see in the new updated Strategic Plan; she asked members to consider whether these are specific projects they would want to be delivered and whether they could be translated in to outcomes. Also, she asked for comments on what may be missing.

Comments received included:-

Use of Railways – business/ environment/employment opportunities – better local transport services;

Definite policy on maintenance of street furniture;

Mental well-being of community;

Support social enterprise;

Local procurement – buy our services in locally – outcome would be - less transportation/greener environment and also supports local businesses;

Work with other authorities more.

It was noted that there was a big emphasis on interaction with the public digitally and cutting down on paper yet, it was felt there was a large section of the population that were not confident with online features and online accounts and it was asked if we could reach out to these people too. Ms Tims said we were aware that approximately 25% of the population are resistant to digital technology and we, as a Council, were working on this.

A member asked if we could ensure the affordability of housing was higher up in the agenda and more employment and the green welcoming places to live.

Ms Tims thanked everyone for their input and the ideas were collected in from the posters given out. The next steps were communicated:-

22 October – Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee will receive the first draft of the plan

12 November – Approval of draft by Cabinet and agree formal consultation

13 November – 13 December – formal consultations

w/c 16 December – Review of feedback from consultation by task groups

28 January – Final review by Strategic Overview & Scrutiny Committee

11 February – Cabinet approval

18 February – Full Council approval

Adoption from April 2020

The consultation was discussed and the best way to consult with parishes was felt to be via the parish clerks and the editors of the parish newsletters. Ms Tims appealed for any contact details to be sent to her (or the clerk) so we could include as many people as possible in the consultation. LDC News was also another popular means of communication as this was sent out inside the Lichfield Mercury but it was recognised that this did not get in to every house in Lichfield now. Solus distribution was mentioned but the delivery costs would need to be measured. Ms Tims said all district councillors received a copy of the LDC News publication and encouraged them to perhaps take a bundle in to their relevant parishes and put them in their Village Halls or liaise with the local churches to see if they could help with the distribution. The Town Trader was also another means of communication and Ms Tims agreed to pass these ideas on and said there was also discussions taking place around an online survey being used so we can reach out to as many people as possible and utilise the Residents' Panel who we had a mailing list for.

It was appreciated that the deadlines were tight but because the current Strategic Plan expires in April 2020 the process had had to start. Concern was raised as some parish councils only meet bi-monthly and this was noted.

16 THE FUTURE OF LICHFIELD DISTRICT PARISH FORUM AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

The Chairman asked if members wished the current format of the Lichfield District Parish Forum to continue as it was noted that the attendance had been very successful again tonight, similar to the previous meeting. There was a unanimous agreement for the forum to continue

as it was felt to be very beneficial to all and for anyone who wanted to come and speak as well i.e. Cabinet Members, Police, Officers and Trainers.

Ms Tims said that because much of the information could now be electronically disseminated she queried if the district council could communicate messages through to the parishes either via e-bulletins or newsletters intermittently or emails to clerks so the information sharing was immediate and then suggested a AGM annually. She asked members what the value of these meetings gave to the residents of Lichfield as a whole as it was very hard to get the timings right for the meetings with the relevant information because the purpose of this forum was for the distribution of information into the parishes and having to wait for a meeting sometimes meant deadlines were not met. It was agreed that regular communications would be useful and the use of e-bulletins and newsletters would be an idea for information sharing but the interaction at the forum meetings was favoured.

A Parish Clerk in attendance said he would prefer no more email communications as already received enough and he definitely preferred the Lichfield District Parish Forum meetings. Discussions took place around the effectiveness and it was agreed that the agenda was key and the purpose of the meetings was paramount. It was hoped that this forum could continue with the face to face interaction otherwise it was felt there was a danger of us becoming a society on-line which is very insular and could mean no one would share their visions which would be bad news at both parish and district level. It was suggested that the agenda did also depend on what is going on at district level and what the plans for the future are which needed to be communicated down to the parish level as the last couple of meetings had had a clear vision and relevant topics. It was proposed that perhaps a couple of meetings per year would be an option but the purpose needed to be identified and valid. Therefore, it was recommended that a meeting should take place as long as it had purpose and this would be left to the officers at district level to decide. Ms Tims appealed for future topics to be communicated to either her, the Chairman or the clerk as often there was a lack of items coming forward. She said she would be hosting a Code of Conduct training event next year and everyone supported this. She was asked if the district level training could incorporate the parishes too as it was felt to be very beneficial as many had found the last planning training session useful in understanding the terminology used.

(It was noted that the Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association will also provide Parish Council Training).

17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

An observation was expressed concerning the percentages of the Community Infrastructure Levy in Lichfield City Centre as it was currently 0% for apartment blocks which was causing a lot of retirement blocks to be built in the city and then there was no infrastructure or services built to support them. This was noted as it was putting a lot of pressure on the Lichfield City Centre. Councillor Cox agreed but said he knew there was a review being undertaken and the Economic Growth, Environment & Development Overview & Scrutiny committee would be looking at this as well as Section 106 Agreements in the city.

A member voiced her concern as she had been present at the previous Council meeting and had understood that the Leader was going to write to the Government and ask them to put a hold on any pre-works for the HS2 and she asked if this letter had been sent and if a reply had yet been received. It was confirmed that the letter had been sent and a reply had been received.

(The Meeting closed at 8.15 pm)

CHAIRMAN