

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON MEETING  
HELD AT 6.30PM, ON  
WEDNESDAY, 1 DECEMBER 2022  
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

**Present:**

Cllr David Over  
Parish Cllr Keith Lievesley  
Parish Cllr Dawn Magnus  
Parish Cllr Jason Merrill  
Parish Cllr Neil Boyce

Cllr Vince Moon  
Cllr June Bull  
Cllr Henry Clark  
Cllr Chris Taylor  
Cllr Bryan Cole  
Debbie Lines  
Cllr Tracy Thomas  
Cllr Joe Dobson  
Cllr Andy Radnett

Elaine Matthews  
David Beauchamp  
Cate Harding

Chair  
Ufford Parish Council  
Eye Parish Council  
Bretton Parish Council  
Castor Parish Council and Co-opted Member, Communities  
Scrutiny Committee  
Werrington Neighbourhood Council  
Orton Longueville Parish Council  
Peakirk Parish Council  
Newborough and Borough Fen Parish Council  
Newborough and Borough Fen Parish Council  
Clerk, Barnack and Pilsgate Parish Council  
Northborough Parish Council  
Helpston Parish Council  
Helpston Parish Council  
Think Communities Manager  
Democratic Services Officer  
Co-ordinator, Good Neighbours – Rural Peterborough

**8. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received. It was clarified that that minutes to be approved in the next agenda item had already been amended to include Cllr Bull's apologies.

**9. MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON MEETING HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2021**

The Minutes of the Parish Council Liaison (PCL) Meeting held on 15 September 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**10. PROPOSAL FROM THE GOOD NEIGHBOURS – RURAL PETERBOROUGH SCHEME TO ASSIST COMMUNITIES TO RECOMMENCE EVENTS POST-COVID**

The Co-ordinator, Good Neighbours – Rural Peterborough introduced this agenda item.

The Parish Council Liaison meeting debated the item and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members commented that support had been withdrawn, e.g. Family Voice and

the remaining volunteers were saturated with work. Officers responded that this was also the case in other parishes and represented an opportunity to share best practice and provide mutual support.

- Members commented that attendance at village hall events appeared to be high in Ufford although Church attendance had reduced.
- Members commented that Newborough and Borough Fen Parish Council did not have responsibility for their village hall and collaboration between village hall operators might be needed. Church attendance had returned to normal.
- Officers commented that a meeting with Vanessa Cave regarding village halls had proved useful. It appeared older age groups were lacking the confidence to attend these venues again. The Good Neighbours scheme could contact each parish to organise Zoom sessions to share good practice for organising safe events.
- Members commented that many village halls were not operated by parish councils and the work of the Good Neighbours Scheme would help promote dialogue between the different operators.
- Members commented that attendance was improving at the community centre and village hall in Eye but acknowledged the situation might be more challenging in smaller villages.
- The Chair commented that a large number of resignations had caused a negative effect at an organisation he was part of.
- Members commented although there was high demand from residents in Northborough, the resignation of village hall operators had meant volunteers were saturated with work and there was no one willing to take this on.
- The Think Communities Manager praised the work of the Good Neighbours Scheme to bring village halls together
- It was agreed that the Think Communities Manager would pass on contact details of Cambridgeshire ACRE to the Co-ordinator, Good Neighbours – Rural Peterborough.
- There was unanimous support from the Parish Council Liaison Meeting for the work of Good Neighbours – Rural Peterborough in this area. It was suggested a further report could be brought back to the next meeting.

### **ACTIONS AGREED**

- It was agreed that the Think Communities Manager would pass on contact details of Cambridgeshire ACRE to the Co-ordinator, Good Neighbours – Rural Peterborough.
- The Parish Council Liaison meeting expressed their unanimous support for the work of Good Neighbours – Rural Peterborough in this area and suggested that a further report could be brought back to the next meeting.

## **11. FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON**

The report was introduced by the Democratic Services Officer, Parish Cllr Neil Boyce and the Co-ordinator - Good Neighbours, Rural Peterborough

The Parish Council Liaison meeting debated the item and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members asked if the current model was failing, if the new proposal represented true impartiality and if the Liaison meeting could return to being run by Peterborough City Council at a later date if it proved to be unsuitable. The Chair responded that he felt change was needed although a link with the City Council

needed to be maintained. The Democratic Services Officer stated that the proposal was constitutionally acceptable and the Head of Think Communities added that this proposal from the Good Neighbours Scheme was different from the organisation's charitable work and the decision should not be based on this.

- Members expressed support for keeping existing arrangements to enable communication between the City Council and parishes and felt that introducing a new organisation to administer the meetings would result in additional bureaucracy.
- A variety of different models were used at other local authorities.
- Members commented that Parish Council Liaison had gone through a number of forms, from a well-attended 'top down' format to a more collaborative one involving a steering group. The meeting had recently gone into decline. Formal agreement would be needed to adopt the new proposal; which should result in more interesting agendas and earlier publication of minutes. PCC officers could attend the meeting regardless of who organised it. Districts had showed limited interest in getting involved with these meetings.
- Members highlighted that the Good Neighbours Scheme offered a paid service to Parish Councils, received City Council funding and queried why they would wish to involve themselves in the administration of Parish Council Liaison and why it was necessary to involve a third party. Other ways of revitalising the meeting should be explored.
- Members commented that Parish Council Liaison Meetings were not widely publicised, and parishes did not see attendance as being useful.
- Members stated that it was important to ensure the Good Neighbours Scheme would act impartially if they took over the administration of PCL.
- Members commented that attendance had declined after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic when virtual meetings replaced physical ones. It was suggested that parishes work more closely with the City Council to ensure the meeting produced the outcomes desired by parish councils.
- It was highlighted that the administration of these meetings under the new proposals would be done independently of the Good Neighbours Scheme's charitable work and all parishes would be welcome to attend. The Scheme had greater capacity to administer the meetings effectively.
- Members commented that there seemed to be an overlap between the work of the CAPALC's Parish Forum and Parish Council Liaison. A robust platform needed to be in place given the Government's proposals for double devolution.
- The CAPALC parish forum was informal in nature with no minutes or agendas and had been set up as an alternative to the Liaison meeting during the COVID-19 pandemic when meetings had been cancelled.
- Members commented that although there had been opportunities to coordinate agendas between parishes, there had been insufficient common interest in items. A formula to decide agenda items was needed.
- Members commented that a more robust interface was needed between the City Council and parishes and it was concerning that more parishes did not attend.
- Members suggested that a volunteer could take on the role previously undertaken by the Parish Coordinator.
- Members suggested that each parish could suggest an agenda item for PCL meetings.
- Members commented that the City Council did not want to become more involved with running PCL but queried why the Good Neighbour's scheme wanted to administer these meetings. It was felt that there was a lack of communication from the City Council and their area had been left behind. Parishes should be determining agenda items rather than having them set by the City Council.

- The purpose of the meeting should be for the City Council to inform parishes of upcoming policies that are relevant to them, engage in consultation with parishes, ensure that the City Council considers the views of rural areas when making decisions and to share knowledge and experience. There used to be engagement from every parish but this had since declined. The meeting was currently ineffective and the new proposals should be adopted.
- Efforts to promote cooperation between rural communities were praised and members suggested that the idea of the Co-ordinator, Good Neighbours Rural Peterborough taking on responsibility for administering PCL was a positive one. Efforts should be made for a member of PCC staff to engage more fully with the meeting.
- Members commented that the PCL meeting had become ineffective due to limited support from PCC and this could worsen further if they were no longer responsible for organising the meeting, with parishes having less influence over the Council.
- Parish Clerks received information from the City Council.
- There needed to be clarity on what the meeting was trying to achieve in order to focus on identifying the best route to do so.

*Parish Councillor Henry Clark left the meeting at 7.34pm*

- Members stated that the work of parishes was important. Officers responded that parishes were integral to the work of Think Communities and there was great value in working together. The additional support proposed to be provided by the Co-ordinator, Good Neighbours Rural Peterborough would not detract from this. Parish Cllr Boyce added that the proposal was simply to provide the administrative support that was currently lacking.
- The Co-ordinator, Good Neighbours Rural Peterborough stated that they would restore the meeting to its former strength, e.g. by reviewing the Rural Vision and Parish Charter and it was extremely important that a healthy relationship with the City Council was in place.
- Members commented that the awareness and promotion of the meeting needed to be improved, whether it was organised by PCC or the Good Neighbours Scheme. Additional administrative support was required.
- The Democratic Services Officer outlined the options available in the report.
- Members proposed a third option; to defer the decision on Future Arrangements for Parish Council Liaison to the next meeting, to enable PCC to make it clear what level of support they would be able to provide. This was UNANIMOUSLY agreed.
- Members requested that the Think Communities Manager and Democratic Services Officer liaise with the relevant Heads of Service to establish what levels of additional support for Parish Council Liaison might be available.
- Officers commented that no guarantee of additional paid support could be given.

#### **ACTIONS AGREED:**

1. The Parish Council Liaison meeting **RESOLVED** to the defer the decision on Future Arrangements for Parish Council Liaison to the next meeting, to enable PCC to make it clear what level of support they would be able to provide.
2. The Think Communities Manager and Democratic Services Officer to liaise with the relevant Heads of Service to establish what levels of additional support for Parish Council Liaison might be available.

## **12. SCOPING FOR PARISH CONFERENCE THEMES**

The Parish Council Liaison meeting debated the item and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- There was UNANIMOUS agreement that the environment should be the theme of the next parish conference, with possible speakers to include the John Clare Countryside Project.
- Officers confirmed they would organise the parish conference on this basis. A Decision would need to be taken on whether this was held in person or virtually due to concerns over COVID-19.
- The Chairman suggested two agenda items for the next PCL meeting; responses to the issues raised under agenda item 4 and further discussion of the parish conference and these were UNANIMOUSLY agreed.
- Members suggested that a presentation from the Armed Forces Covenant Officer could be an agenda item for the next meeting.
- It was confirmed that the date of the next meet was 2 February 2022.

**ACTIONS AGREED:**

1. The Parish Council Liaison meeting **RESOLVED** to agree that the environment should be the theme of the next parish conference, with possible speakers to include the John Clare Countryside Project.
2. Two agenda items were confirmed for the work programme of the next meeting; responses to the questions and comments raised under agenda item 4 and further discussion of the parish conference.
3. A presentation from the Armed Forces Covenant Officer was suggested as a possible agenda item for the next PCL meeting.
4. Parish Councillors to email PCC with suggestions for Parish Conference and Parish Council Liaison agenda items.

CHAIR

6.30pm – 7.58pm