

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON MEETING  
HELD AT 6.30PM, ON  
WEDNESDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2020  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

**Members Present:**

Councillors:

Irene Walsh	Chairman
Martin Greaves	Werrington Neighbourhood Council
Margaret Long	Thorney Parish Council
Dorothy Halfhide	Thorney Parish Council
June Bull	Orton Longueville Parish Council
John Dadge	Northborough Parish Council
Phil Thompson	Deeping Gate Parish Council
Jane Hill	Deeping Gate Parish Council
Mike Chambers	Orton Waterville Parish Council
John Haste	Clerk, Glington and Castor Parish Councils
Olive Leonard	Hampton Parish Council
Jason Merrill	Bretton Parish Council
Henry Clark	Peakirk Parish Council
Denis Batty	Glington Parish Council
Neil Boyce	Castor Parish Council

The Chairman paid tribute to John Bartlett, former Peterborough City Councillor, Mayor of Peterborough, Honorary Alderman of Peterborough and Parish Councillor for Thorney who passed away in January 2020. A Minute's silence was held in his memory.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Keith Lievesley (Ufford Parish Council, Susie Lucas (Bainton and Ashton Parish Council), Junaid Bhatti (Bretton Parish Council), Pamela Blades (Eye Parish Council), Andrew Kenedler (Hampton Parish Council) and Vince Moon – Werrington Neighbourhood Council

**Officers Present:**

Sylvia Radouani	Community Capacity Officer and Parish Coordinator
Paulina Ford	Senior Democratic Services Officer
David Beauchamp	Democratic Services Officer

**2. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON**

**18 September 2019 – Parish Council Liaison**

The Minutes of the Parish Council Liaison Meeting held on 18 September 2019 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

### **16 December 2019 – Extraordinary Parish Council Liaison**

A Councillor commented that many of the actions from the 16 December meeting had yet to be responded to. It was agreed that the Democratic Services Officer would chase these up with the Acting Corporate Director, Resources.

The Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Liaison Meeting held on 16 December 2019 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

#### **ACTIONS AGREED:**

It was agreed that the Democratic Services Officer would seek responses from the Acting Corporate Director, Resources, to action points from the 16 December 2019 Parish Council Liaison Meeting.

### **3. RE-ENERGISING YOUR PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON MEETINGS**

The Chairman introduced this agenda item and raised the following points:

- The City Council and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC) had committed to supporting parish councils via the Parish Council Liaison meetings and the annual Parish Conference, It had been noted that that attendance was low with some parish councillors not sending a representative. Attendees of this meeting would therefore discuss the future of the Parish Council Liaison (PCL) Meetings and determine whether this was the best way to support parishes going forward. Alternative options could be considered such as prioritising the parish conference, setting up working groups or improving existing PCL meetings by reevaluation its location, topics, formats etc.
- Peterborough City Council was currently experiencing a challenging budgetary situation so it was important to make sure that services provided represented value for money. The Community Capacity Officer and Parish Coordinator role was to be discontinued due to insufficient funding for discretionary services. Parish Councils would continue to be supported but this support might take a different format.

The Chairman then invited Henry Clark, Parish Councillor for Peakirk, to lead the discussion session. The PowerPoint presentation may be found in Appendix 1. The Parish Councillor made the following points:

- The Parish Council Liaison Committee had been meeting for approximately 25 years. The format had evolved from being somewhat confrontational towards a more collaborative approach. The work of the meeting included presentations from Peterborough City Council and the development of the parish charter and rural vision etc. The now dissolved Peterborough Association of Local Councils (PALC) also used to hold regular meetings that were attended by a representative of the City Council although these were discontinued due to duplication with the Parish Council Liaison Meeting.
- The future of the Parish Council Liaison meeting was in doubt and attendance needed to improve.
- Attendees at this meeting should work to produce suggestions for re-energising Parish Council Liaison meetings.

- The Parish Councillor Referred to the 'Benefits for Parish Councils' PowerPoint slide and stated that the presence of co-opted parish council representatives on scrutiny committees was an valuable achievement.

Attendees took part in a brainstorming session based around the following questions. Ideas were written on large sheets of paper during the meeting.

- Why is the attendance so poor?
- What do you want out of this meeting?
- What are we going to do about it?

The results of the brainstorm are displayed below under each heading

### **Why is the attendance so poor?**

- Distrust between PCC and Parishes
- No obvious benefit Parishes.
- Are all Parish Councils aware that these meetings take place? Parishes need to do more to promote them and provide information on who can attend.
- Failure to advertise concept and agenda items
- Meetings start too early
- Time is importance, subjects matters discussed need to be considered attractive and important to parishes
- It could be a challenge to find time to attend and more detail needed to be provided agenda items
- Need to have relevant items on agenda
- Cross working / information sharing needed between parishes
- Topic not always relevant to the needs of Urban / Rural Parish Councils
- 'Back to basics' approach needed when choosing topics e.g. rural bus services
- Are First Tier representatives (Parishes) recognised by 2<sup>nd</sup> tier (Peterborough City Council).

### **What do you want out of this meeting / Agenda Items / Purpose?**

- When topics are raised, parish councillors would like to ensure a conclusion is reached.
- True 'liaison' with PCC needed to take place , e.g. around budget cuts and what they mean to Parishes.
- More information needed to be provided on the workings and the structure of PCC so Parish Councils know who to contact.
- Practical advice was needed on how parishes could take on services that have now been cut.
- Councillors would like to come away from meeting with something of value to pass on to their parishes
- 12 meetings could be held per year – 6 focussed on urban parishes, 6 focussed on rural parishes.
- A day-long of annual meeting of parish councillors to break into working groups and network to share best practice might be more effective than Parish Council Liaison.
- Some members preferred not to have separate meetings for rural and urban parishes.
- Some members expressed a preference for quarterly meetings with one annual Parish Conference per year.

- Councillors wanted to know what was going on at Peterborough City Council and found the meeting very beneficial.

### **What can we do?**

- Two Parish Liaison meetings could be held per year with one being the Parish Conference.
- Lead Parish could represent Parish Council Liaison at individual parish council meetings.
- Parishes needed the support of a lead officer from PCC
- A list of Parish Council who have not taken part could be produced in order to engage with them, find out why they were not attending and encourage them to do so. A letter could be sent out by PCC.
- First time attendees could be put off by not knowing what to do or where to go.
- Ward based meetings of Parish Council Liaison could be facilitated by individual Parish Councils
- An analysis of attendees at meetings could be produced.
- Transport could be provided from rural areas to meetings
- A Core working group was to be formed consisting of:
  - Henry Clark
  - Neil Boyce
  - John Haste
  - June Bull
  - Richard Clarke
- The Democratic Services Officer could refresh the terms of reference for meeting and present them to Parish Council Liaison for approval.

Henry Clark invited attendees to take part in a S.W.O.T. analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of Parish Council Liaison meetings. Henry Clark highlighted the importance of defining exactly who 'we' were in this discussion. Is this a reference to the 'parish council movement in Peterborough'? Are the City included in this when they use their own SWOT analysis? Or does it refer to Parish Councillors in general?

The Results of the SWOT analysis are summarised on the next page:

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a louder voice as a group</li> <li>• CAPALC can provide information and updates at PCL meetings.</li> <li>• Parishes can contact each other through clerks and chairmen.</li> <li>• Can draw on the skills, and expertise in each parish and share strengths.</li> <li>• Representatives share knowledge and provide peer support to each other.</li> <li>• Parish representatives could bring a wealth of knowledge about what is happening on ground in their communities to assist in PCC's policy development</li> <li>• Councillors had were aware of the concerns of Parish Residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parishes do not share skills and expertise</li> <li>• Scrutiny representatives were under-utilised</li> <li>• Scrutiny representatives did not have a vote.</li> <li>• Parishes did not provide feedback on the briefings provided by parish scrutiny members.</li> <li>• Parish councillors do not communicate across parishes</li> <li>• The meeting does not identify what of real importance to the Parishes.</li> <li>• Younger Parish Councillors were needed to generate newer ideas. What could be done to encourage them?</li> <li>• Insufficient information about parish business was shared at the meeting.</li> <li>• PCC do not advise of what initiatives are available to Parish Councils</li> <li>• Communication was lacking outside of the meetings.</li> <li>• There was Apathy about volunteering and a lack of communications on the subject.</li> <li>• No response was provided to enquiries and complaints. Parishes did not know who to tact.</li> <li>• Parishes did not share best practice at the Parish Council Liaison meetings.</li> </ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representatives on Scrutiny Committees.</li> <li>• PCC could utilise Parish Councils more when sharing information. Information could go out to clerks and chairs to disseminate.</li> <li>• The Working Group could assess information sent to Parishes and disseminate it a better format.</li> <li>• How to attract younger Parish Councillors. It was noted that Legislation allows time off for public duties</li> <li>• A Closed Facebook group could be used to share information</li> <li>• Parish Council Liaison could take on projects e.g. climate change, tree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scrutiny committee meetings had an unwelcome political dimension to them.</li> <li>• The Parish Council Liaison meeting generated good ideas but nothing was done with it.</li> <li>• Central government cuts threatened the future of the meeting.</li> <li>• Not having dedicated resource to support Parish Council Liaison was a threat.</li> <li>• There was a lack of collaboration with PCC</li> <li>• Deciding to stop Parish Council Liaison.</li> </ul>

<p>planting, 'war on plastic', planning, electric car points, rural transport.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parish Councillors could sit on PCC working groups.</li> <li>• Peterborough and Fenland Parishes could come together to get economies of scale</li> </ul>	
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

While discussing 'Threats' as part of the SWOT analysis Councillors discussed the impact of the removal of Peterborough City Council's Community Capacity Officer and Parish Coordinator position as follows:

- Sylvia had a wealth of experience and a good knowledge base.
- It was useful for parishes to have a single point of contact when contacting Peterborough City Council. Sylvia was very effective at getting things done.
- It was noted that the Community Capacity Manager position had also been removed.  
The Combined Authority might be able to provide support for Parishes.
- Sylvia was dedicated and proactive and Councillors feared that parish support would not be as robust as in her absence.
- Councillors asked if the decision to remove the post was reversible. The Chairman responded that regrettably it would not be possible to reverse this decision. Community Capacity services were discretionary and not subsidised by the government and cuts had been significant. The Chairman would aim to ensure that parishes continued to be supported. Many local authorities were having to make difficult decisions to ensure financial stability and many good people were being made redundant.

The Community Capacity Officer and Parish Coordinator made a statement confirming that her role was being deleted as part of the restructure and would be leaving post after 31<sup>st</sup> March. She would remain active in communities via community volunteering work however. The Officer thanked parish representatives for their support and noted that she had made many friends in her position.

Councillors suggested that the Community Capacity Officer role could be retained if it was funded directly from parish precepts. It was agreed that the Chairman and Democratic Services would contact Adrian Chapman, Service Director – Communities and Safety and Pete Carpenter, Acting Corporate Director, Resources, to investigate this further

## **ACTIONS AGREED**

### **Councillors discussed next steps as follows:**

- A working group would be established consisting of the follow Councillors:
  - Henry Clark
  - Neil Boyce
  - John Haste
  - June Bull
  - Richard Clarke

- The working group would analyse the discussions that took place at this meeting and produce a report / summary to be distributed to all parishes with suggestions for the future of engagement between parishes and Peterborough City Council.
- One additional workshop might be held to discuss the outcomes of the working group.
- The working group should focus on doing things differently and doing things better.
- A meeting of the working group should be convened as soon as possible.
- The Parish Council Liaison meeting should continue and be re-energised.

#### **4. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

22 April 2020

CHAIRMAN

6:30pm – 8.37pm

26 February 2020

# Parish Council Liaison Meeting **Group Discussion**



## Agenda

### Reenergising your Parish Council Liaison Meetings

- Contribute to constructive discussion on how we increase attendance
- Share opinions and ideas on the future direction of your Parish Council Liaison Meetings
- Provide input to shaping the format of such meetings to ensure they continue to deliver value
- Henry Clark will facilitate a round table discussion on this topic and lead a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis.



## Parish Council Liaison Meeting Overview

- Meetings are arranged by Peterborough City Council for the benefit of local Parish Councils.
- Useful means of communication for both parties.
- Opportunity for Parish Councils to integrate with Council officers.

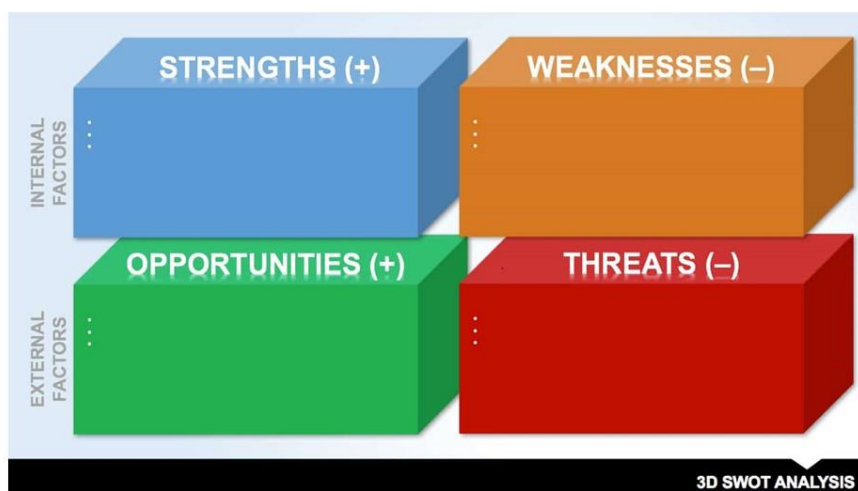
## Benefits for Parish Councils

- Learn Valuable Skills
- Share Success Stories
- Tackle Mutual Parish Issues
- Gain important insight into Council Corporate information
- Deliver Parish views to Council staff
- Put names to faces amongst Council staff
- Being a member of the Co-opted Scrutiny Committees
- Having a Parish Charter and Rural Vision

# Brainstorming

- Collect Ideas
  - Go round the table giving everybody a chance to speak
  - Record ideas without criticism or discussion
- Discuss ideas
- Rate ideas
  - Effort v/s impact
  - Urgency and importance

# S.W.O.T Analysis



## SWOT – Parish Liaison Forum

- Strengths
  - Skills, knowledge, experience and resources that we have
- Weaknesses
  - Skills, knowledge, experience and resources that we don't have
- Opportunities
  - New things we could do, collaboration, sharing
- Threats
  - Hazards, risks, external factors, competition

## Next Steps

- Ideas
  - Analyse the ideas and select the best ones for adoption
  - Re-energise the parish Liaison Meetings
- SWOT
  - Collate the items and circulate a report
  - Address weaknesses and threats
  - Build on strengths and opportunities
- Who wants to help with this?

