
Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

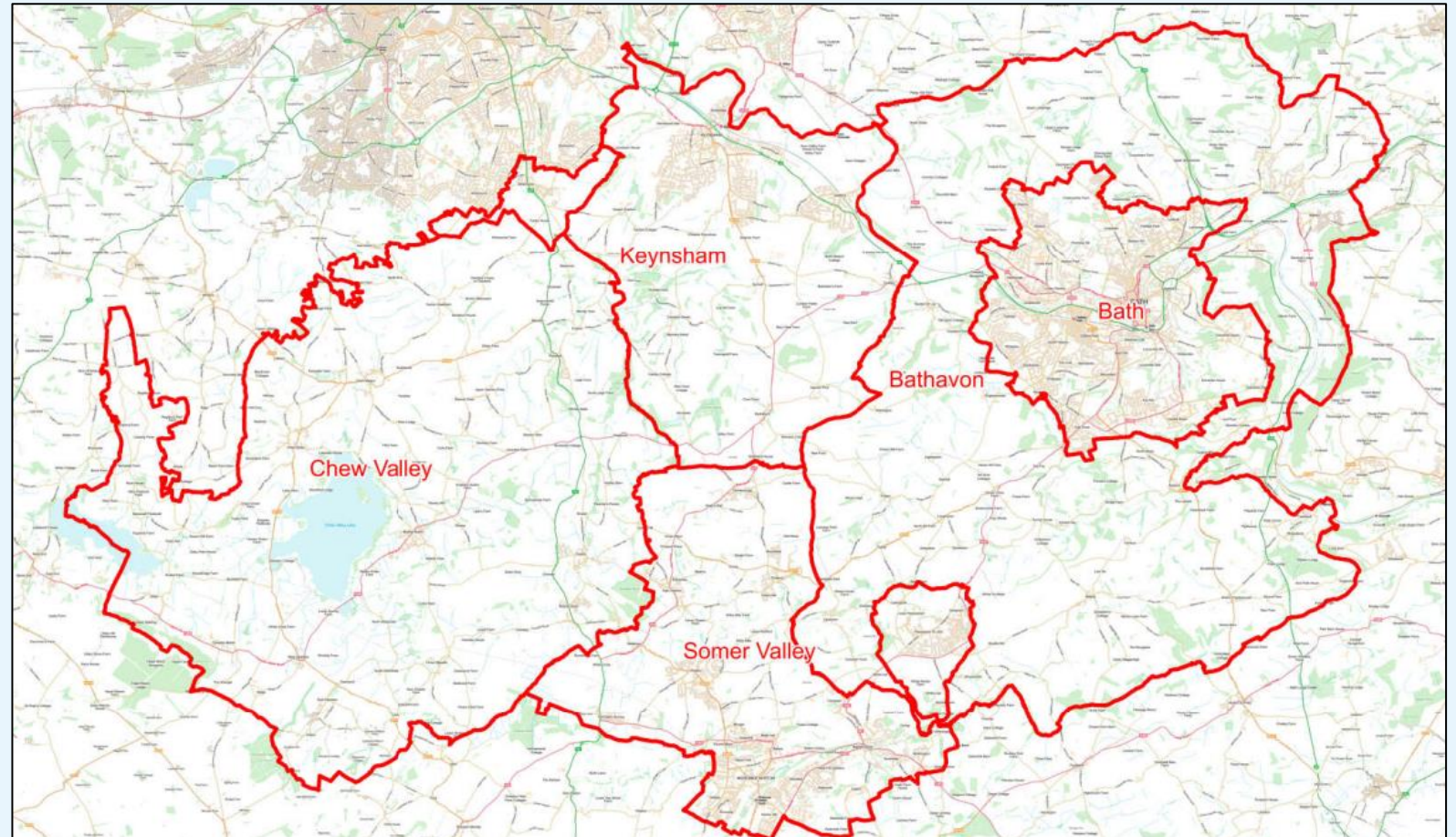
Local Engagement Meetings
Community Engagement Team

Connecting Communities Forums

There are five Connecting Communities Forums covering the Bath and North East Somerset area.

- Bath Area Forum
- Bathavon Area Forum
- Chew Valley Area Forum
- Keynsham Area Forum
- Somer Valley Forum

They provide consistent, place based, grassroots engagement with our local communities.



Background

The Connecting Communities initiative was first developed in 2013 by the Council and its partners on the Public Services Board.

It was an early, place based approach to listening to local communities and working in partnership with them to identify and address priorities.

It also provided a consistent approach to engagement across the area based on five key principles which are still relevant today:

- listen
- prioritise
- join-up
- work with you
- share ideas



Forum Meetings and Governance

Each Forum meets around four times per year with the winter meeting reserved for Budget engagement.

All Forum meetings are open to the public.

The Forums are independent of, but supported by, the Council. Each Forum has its own Terms of Reference; AGM and elected Chair and Vice Chair,

Members of the Forums include Ward Councillors, Parish Councillors in parished areas and representatives of local community groups.



The Bath Area Forum comprises all the Wards that make up the unparished area of Bath.

What is discussed?

Agendas for Forum meetings generally include:

- items the Council and/or its partners need to share or would like feedback on
- topics the Forum members wish to discuss
- opportunities for local organisations to share information and best practice.

The Forums also enable residents to raise concerns with partners such as the Police and Fire Service, which regularly attend.

Anyone may put forward an item for discussion at a Forum. Agendas are agreed in advance through discussion between the officers supporting the Forums and the Chairs and Vice Chairs.



The Bathavon Area Forum comprises the parished areas of Bathampton, Batheaston, Bathford, Camerton, Combe Hay, Charlcombe, Claverton, Dunkerton and Tunley, Englishcombe, Freshford, Hinton Charterhouse, Kelston, Monkton Combe, Newton St Loe, North Stoke, Priston, Shoscombe, South Stoke, St Catherine, Swainswick and Wellow.

Local Engagement Group

The Local Engagement Group comprises the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the five Forums; the Chair and Vice Chair of BANES Avon Local Councils Association which represents parishes and the Chief Executive and Director of the BANES Third Sector Group (3SG) which represents the voluntary and community sector and representatives of B&NES. The meetings are now also attended by representatives of the B&NES Place Team Leads (see next slide)

They also meet around four times a year and their discussions ensure that issues raised at Forum meetings are highlighted and taken forward and that there is synergy between the Forum meetings and other engagement meetings such as Parish Liaison with parishes and the Let's Talk Sessions with the third sector.



The Chew Valley Forum comprises the parished areas of Chelwood, Chew Magna, Chew Stoke, Clutton, Compton Martin, East Harptree, Hinton Blewett, Nempnett Thrubwell, Norton Malreward, Publow and Pensford, Stanton Drew, Stowey Sutton, Temple Cloud and Cameley, Ubley, West Harptree, Whitchurch (dual membership with Keynsham Area Forum).

Place Teams

To further support the Forum's Place Based approach, in 2022, senior managers were nominated as Place Team leads on an internal basis.

The aim is to improve officer's knowledge and understanding of these geographic areas, their concerns and priorities. Also to improve the organisation of internal work activities and avoid duplicating consultations.

The Place Team Leads are:

Bath Area: Simon Martin

Bathavon Area: Louise Morris

Chew Valley Area: Jackie Clayton

Keynsham Area: Pam Turton

Somer Valley: Simon de Beer



The Keynsham Area Forum comprises the parished areas of Compton Dando, Corston, Keynsham, Marksbury, Saltford and Whitchurch (joint membership with Chew Valley Area Forum).

Parish Liaison

There are 51 parishes in Bath and North East Somerset - the first tier of local government. They raise their own Council Tax (precept) and are legally able to run a range of services.

They are vital partners – serving the same residents, representing local views and, in some circumstances, statutory consultees.

We have a Parish Charter – a framework setting out how we will work with our Parishes to serve local residents.

We also meet with them collectively three times per year at Parish Liaison meetings – chaired by the Chair of the Council and led by Mandy Bishop – Chief Operating Officer.

Agenda items are agreed in advance through meetings with Mandy, officers from the Community Engagement Team and representatives of BANES ALCA



The Somer Valley Forum comprises the parished areas of Farmborough, Farrington Gurney, High Littleton, Midsomer Norton, Paulton, Peasedown St John, Radstock, Timsbury Westfield.

Joint working between Parish Liaison and Connecting Communities Forums

The differing remits are set out in schematic form below. We will maximise the potential to:

- Review what has taken place in the previous cycle
- Look forward to what we can do together to improve our area
- Reduce duplication of agenda items and discussions

PARISH LIAISON	CONNECTING COMMUNITIES FORUMS
AIM	
Connecting levels of local government.	Connecting the wider community.
WHO ATTENDS	
Parish councils, ALCA representatives, B&NES Council members, officers of the B&NES Council.	B&NES members, parish councils, representatives of public services (eg officers of B&NES Council, police, fire etc), community groups, public.
AGENDA	
Issues that affect all parish councils in Bath & North East Somerset.	Issues that affect communities within a locality.
Legislative changes and impacts on levels of local government and powers.	Consultation / discussions on services.
Engagement between B&NES and parish councils.	Wider engagement with all public service partners.
Devolution of services and collaborative working.	Supporting communities to do more for themselves.

Third Sector Engagement

A new initiative is the 'Let's Talk' sessions with the area's voluntary and community sessions.

These started in 2022 and the aim is to hold them quarterly to improve the dialogue between the sector and the Council; find out about new initiatives, the support available for the sector and new/changing legislation that may affect organisations.

The sessions are jointly chaired by Kate Morton, Chair of the 3SG and Mandy Bishop, Chief Operating Officer of the Council.

The Interagency Meetings provide opportunities for voluntary and community organisations and service providers to exchange information, promote projects or events and improve partnerships. The meetings are very informal and take place by Zoom over lunchtime. They are open to anyone who works for or volunteers with an organisation in the area.

