

# Rural North Local Forum



## AGENDA

**WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2010, 7.00 PM**

**ALLINGTON VILLAGE HALL**

**1. INTRODUCTION, WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Frances Cartwright will chair the meeting.

**2. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

Members of the public from the area we represent will be asked to raise questions of interest that directly affect the area. The chairman of members will address these. As part of this process, members of the public can speak for up to three minutes on any topic relevant to the forum. Items may be noted by the chairman for discussion during the forum or deferred until a session at the end of the meeting for those comments relating to agenda items.

**3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING -**

These are attached.

**4. UPDATE FROM THE LAST MEETING**

**5. BUDGET 2010 / 11**

SKDC's Corporate Head of Finance and Customer Services will give a presentation regarding the District Council's budget for 2010 / 11.

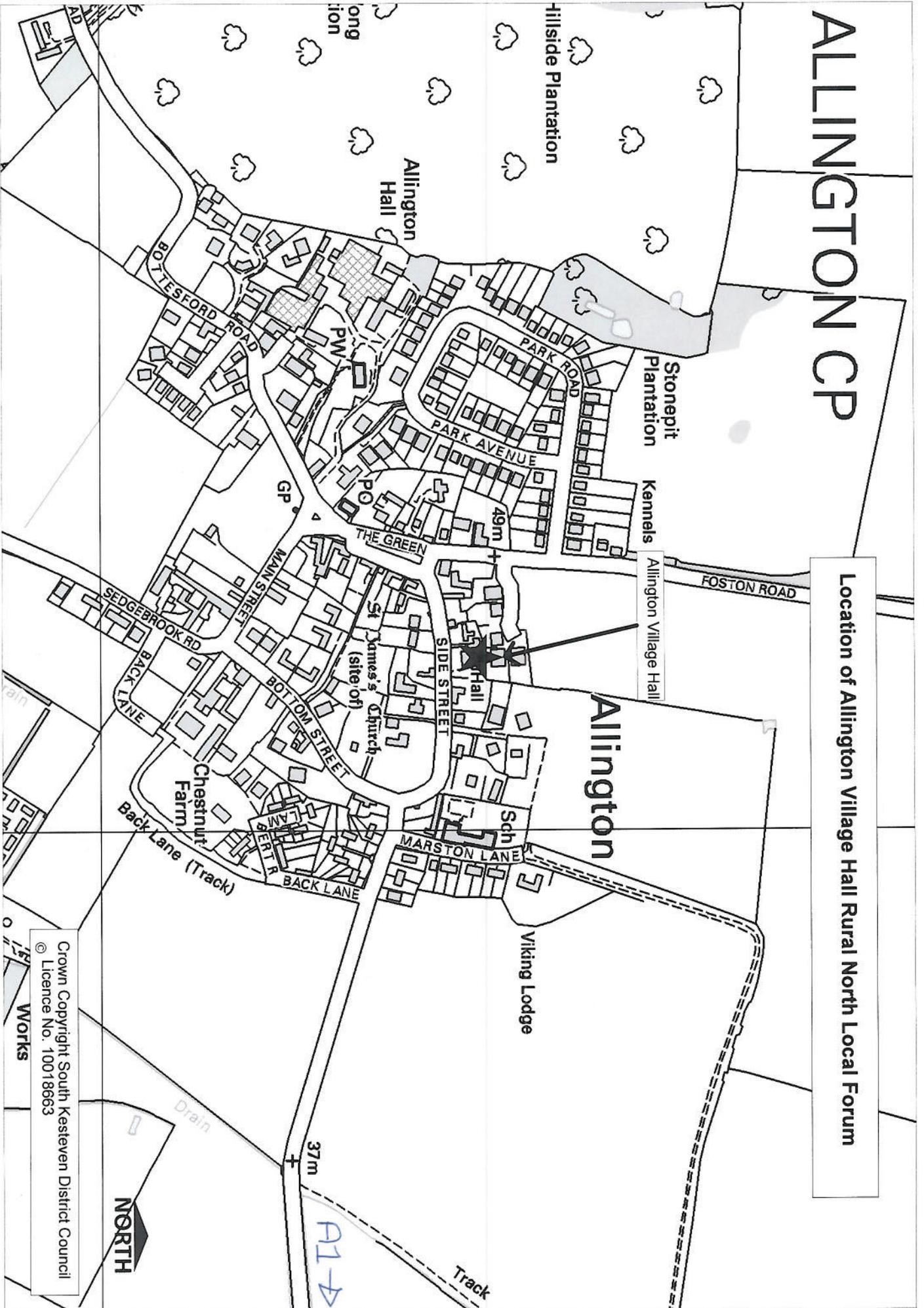
**6. LOCAL FORUMS - REVIEW**

Discussion.

**7. MATTERS THAT THE FORUM WOULD LIKE TO CONSIDER AT FUTURE MEETINGS**

**8. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING**





# ALLINGTON CP

Location of Allington Village Hall Rural North Local Forum

Crown Copyright South Kesteven District Council  
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Works

NORTH

A1 →

Track

Drain

37m

Allington

Stonepit Plantation

Hillside Plantation

Allington Hall

Kennels

Allington Village Hall

FOSTON ROAD

THE GREEN

St James's Church (site of)

Sch

MARSTON LANE

Viking Lodge

Chestnut Farm

Back Lane (Track)

BACK LANE

## RURAL NORTH LOCAL FORUM MINUTES



**23 JULY 2009 - TIME NOT SPECIFIED**  
**Barkston and Syston Village Hall**

### PRESENT

**Chairman:** Councillor Frances Cartwright

**Members**  
Cllr Vic Kerr (SKDC and Dry Doddington PC)  
Cllr Chris Farrar (LCC)  
Nigel Vernon (Foston, Carlton Scroop and Normanton, and Ancaster PC)  
Cllr Andy Roberts (Caythorpe PC)  
Cllr Richard Dix (Caythorpe PC)  
Cllr Jim Mival (Ancaster PC)  
Cllr T. Newcombe (Hough on the Hill PC)  
Cllr Robert Prabucki (Claypole PC)

**Officers**  
Corporate Head of Sustainable Communities – Teena Twelves  
Democratic and Scrutiny Support Officer – Jenni Gibson

**Apologies**  
Cllr Paul Wood – SKDC  
Cllr Rosemary Kaberry-Brown - SKDC  
Cllr Gary Greenhalgh – Fulbeck PC  
Cllr Ray Wootten – LCC / SKDC

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### **1 INTRODUCTION, WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Frances Cartwright welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Greenhalgh (Fulbeck PC), Kayberry-Brown (SKDC), Wootten (LCC / SKDC) and Wood (SKDC).

### **2 PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

Councillor Vic Kerr asked if anything had been done since Parish Councils were asked to apply for quality status, and what the benefits were in achieving quality status.

- The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme was launched in 2003 following the Government's Rural White Paper, 2000. The aim of the Scheme was to provide benchmark minimum standards for parish and town councils.
- Parish and town councils with quality status could apply for additional

- grants and funding.
- Some parish and town councils have found that they have been given more responsibilities by principal authorities as a result of their quality status.
- Councillor Cartwright suggested that this subject come back to the next forum.

Andy Roberts asked why County and European election results were not posted to villages. He felt that in the interests of encouraging the public to vote, the results should be made more publicly available.

- Councillor Cartwright advised members that the election results were available on the council's website.
- Mr Roberts pointed out that not everyone had access to the internet. He suggested that if parish clerks were posted a hard copy of the results, they would be more than happy to display them in the villages for the public to view.
- The Committee Support Officer offered to speak to the Elections Officer regarding this matter, and bring a reply to the next meeting.

Andy Roberts asked how members' expenses were audited and checked, and when they would be published in the local newspaper.

- The Committee Support Officer advised members that she was responsible for checking members' expenses, along with two colleagues. She reassured members that the team were very thorough when checking claim forms. An electronic committee support system was used to check whether councillors had attended meetings which they were claiming mileage for; a rough calculation was made to check the mileage claimed was correct; and all sums were double checked.
- A forum member asked if councillors over the age of 60 were encouraged to use their bus passes. The Corporate Head of Sustainable Communities, Teena Twelve, advised members that district councillors were conscious of their carbon footprint and that most members did share lifts whenever possible, especially on planning site visits. She reminded the forum that it was a matter of choice, and most members chose to drive for convenience. A councillor could have several meetings in one day, and they could be situated all over the district.
- The Committee Support Officer advised the forum that members' expenses for the financial year 2008/09 would be published in the local newspaper within the next month. She also informed members that as part of the Council's new website that was currently being redesigned, members' expenses would be published online.

### **3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING -**

Andy Roberts advised the Committee Support Officer of an amendment that he would like made to item 3 of the minutes of the previous meeting regarding bus services. The Committee Support Officer noted the amendment and agreed to adjust the previous minutes accordingly.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2009 were adopted.

## **4 UPDATE FROM THE LAST MEETING**

Richard Dix asked if there had any progress on the suggestion that the rural north of South Kesteven should have an area office. It had been suggested at the previous meeting during talks about the budget.

- Various premises were suggested, including the old police offices in Caythorpe.
- The Chairman offered to speak to the Corporate Head of Finance and Customer Service to see if anything had come of this suggestion.

Andy Roberts noted Teena Twelves' comments at the previous meeting regarding the recycling depot at Caythorpe.

- He expressed disappointment that there seemed to be a lack of support from SKDC.
- Mrs Twelves reassured the forum that she had been in contact with Lincolnshire County Council, and representations had been made.
- Councillor Chris Farrar of the County Council reassured the forum that he would be speaking at the relevant County Council Committee that heard the application, and would convey the views of the residents of Fulbeck and Caythorpe.

Jim Mival drew the Chairman's attention to item 2 of the minutes of the previous meeting in which it stated "Councillor Cartwright promised Mr Mival that she would chase up the promised correspondence".

- Mr Mival noted that to date he had received no specific correspondence in connection to his complaint.
- Councillor Cartwright informed Mr Mival that she had spoken to the relevant department about his complaint, but apologised as she had forgotten to chase up the response.
- Mr Mival acknowledged that he had received all the relevant information with regard to his bin collection dates this year, but the letter of apology was a point of principal.

## **5 UNITARY AUTHORITIES**

The Corporate Head of Sustainable Communities, Teena Twelves gave a presentation on unitary authorities as requested at the last meeting.

Mrs Twelves outlined the history of local government reorganization since 1945 and the many structural changes that had taken place since then. She also focused on more recent developments and their implications locally including the Lincolnshire Pathfinder approach.

- She explained that councils had been invited to become unitary authorities or alternatively to improve two-tier working. It was voluntary not mandatory.
- Any bid had to be supported by a broad cross-section of partners and stakeholders.
- Lincolnshire councils agreed to bid for 'pathfinder' status to enhance two tier working as the county / district model was deemed the most

- appropriate for a county the size of Lincolnshire
- The pathfinder route offered the councils the opportunity to increase efficiency by joining up service delivery for customers / sharing some services. Mrs Twelves gave examples of where SKDC had already used the pathfinder status to work with other authorities and gain benefits for the district.

Mrs Twelves emphasized the point that SKDC would only be signing up to joint projects and services where there was seen to be a benefit for the residents of South Kesteven. For instance, SKDC did not join up to the Lincolnshire Legal Service, as South Kesteven already have a legal team in-house, and it would have cost the council more to join the joint service.

The Chairman read a letter from Bob Neill MP (Shadow Minister for Local Government and Planning) with regard to the Conservative Party's stance on unitary local government. The Conservative Party would not support any further unitary restructuring as they believe it to be time-consuming and expensive.

Members of the forum asked questions regarding costs involved with reorganizing into a unitary authority.

- Mrs Twelves advised that no specific costs for the total reorganization of Lincolnshire had been calculated, as the councils had decided not to explore that option.
- She reiterated that it was voluntary for councils to nominate themselves to become unitary authorities, and they needed a broad cross-section of support from stakeholders and partners. I.e. SKDC could not have applied to become a unitary without the support of Lincolnshire County Council plus a broad cross section of the other district authorities in Lincolnshire.
- In response to questions by members of the forum, Mrs Twelves advised that the decision to volunteer for the pathfinder route rather than the unitary authority option was made by the Leaders and Chief Executives of all the relevant councils.

It was **Agreed** that the Leader of SKDC, Linda Neal, be asked to explain the decision not to volunteer to become a unitary authority.

It was also **Agreed** that the costs involved with joining the Lincolnshire Legal Service, and the benefits of remaining with a separate legal department are brought to the next meeting and explained.

## **6 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS - AN UPDATE**

The Corporate Head of Sustainable Communities, Teena Twelves gave a brief update on Housing Allocations.

- SKDC were in discussions with another Lincolnshire authority to create a shared Housing Allocations Policy.
- A local cascade would remain, but an element of choice would be introduced that was previously lacking.

- Cabinet would be making a decision on this shortly.

## **7 SOCIAL HOUSING - SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS**

The Corporate Head of Sustainable Communities, Teena Twelves gave a presentation on the improvements to Social Housing.

- In July 2008 the council had received zero stars for the service.
- The council had been working really hard to turn the service around for customers.
- Mrs Twelves gave examples of improvements to the service.

Mr Roberts asked how a single person could occupy a three bed council house.

- Mrs Twelves explained to Mr Roberts and the other forum members that statutory tenancies came under the law of the land. Policies could be changed going forward for future tenancies, but current tenancies signed under old policies could not be amended, and people could not be removed from their homes unless they contravened their tenancy agreement or any other just cause.

Members asked questions of Mrs Twelves regarding the service improvements to Social Housing, and choice based lettings. Mrs Twelves was thanked for her presentation.

## **8 MATTERS THAT THE FORUM WOULD LIKE TO CONSIDER AT FUTURE MEETINGS**

- Unitary authorities – a response from the Leader of the Council and an explanation of the costs involved with joining the Lincolnshire Legal Service and reasons why South Kesteven District Council did not opt to join.
- The role of Parish and Town Councils – what does ‘Quality Status’ actually mean?

## **9 DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING**

It was proposed that the next meeting be held at Long Bennington. The meeting would be held in January, and a specific date would be confirmed by the Committee Support Officer at a later date.

On behalf of the forum Mr Andy Roberts thanked the Chairman. He noted that despite the poor attendance at the meeting, the presentations had been really useful and the meeting had been a success. He advised the Chairman and officers that forum members really did appreciate the opportunity to have their say at these local forums.

The meeting concluded at 8.55pm.