

Botus Fleming Parish Plan

A sustainable parish

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Executive summary

Planning in an era of austerity

“Cornwall Council today confirmed it is facing a budget gap with £75 million savings needing to be found over the next four years.”¹

Cornwall Council has already made cuts of £300 million and more cuts are on the way. We have seen the evidence of these cuts in the state of our roads and the management of green spaces. The Police, schools and care services are struggling to cope. So, the challenge faced by the PC is to look for ways to maintain and improve our parish in a difficult financial environment. One option would be for the PC to accept responsibility for some of these services but this would require a massive increase in the amount that residents pay as part of the Council Tax known as the parish precept, effectively charging people again for services previously funded by the general Council Tax. We wish to avoid doing this and this plan sets out the steps we feel will allow our communities to develop and prosper.

This plan looks at the structure and function of the PC with the intention of continuing our efforts to improve our governance, probity and effectiveness, so it can deliver the vision identified by residents during the Neighbourhood development Plan (NDP) consultations. It covers areas such as transport and connectivity, services in the parish and our natural and built environment. The NDP, once accepted by the residents and approved by CC, will determine any future spatial development in the parish and will be an annex to this Parish Plan.

All aspects of this plan are underpinned by a need to create sustainable communities for the future. We want to see vibrant communities, with a robust local economy and opportunities for everyone to contribute to the future of the parish. This Parish Plan lays the foundations on which we can all develop our sustainable parish, fit for the future.

¹<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news-room/media-releases/news-from-2017/news-from-november-2017/cornwall-council-confirms-further-savings-will-be-needed-in-budget/>

Parish Plan 2018 – 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Town and parish councils are the first level of local government. They provide communities with a democratic voice and a structure for taking community action. Prior to the passing of the Localism Act in 2011, PCs had very limited powers. The Act has enabled PCs to extend their role and have more say about issues that affect the daily lives of residents.
- 1.2. The Act also promotes the concept of sustainability and this is something that should be considered in all actions and decisions taken by the PC
- 1.3. So, with increased powers and freedoms, and the need to provide sustainability, it is no longer appropriate for the PC to adopt a reactive role by merely responding to issues as they arise. We should be looking at both the present and the future, and have a clear vision of what our sustainable parish community will look like, and have robust plans for turning that vision into reality.
- 1.4. This plan contains a review of the factors that contribute towards a sustainable community and reflects the views of the residents as expressed in the Neighbourhood Development Plan community consultations.
- 1.5. Progress will be evaluated and the plan updated on an annual basis if necessary.

2. Sustainable Communities

- 2.1. The concept of sustainability is not new and there is now a wealth of literature relating to the subject. While this covers many different communities around the world, facing different challenges in diverse cultural settings, there are some threads that run through the different perceptions and definitions of sustainability. For the purposes of our plan we have taken the overview produced by the Institute for Sustainable Communities.²
- 2.2. “A sustainable community is one that is economically, environmentally, and socially healthy and resilient. It meets challenges through integrated solutions rather than through fragmented approaches that meet one of

²<http://www.iscvt.org>

those goals at the expense of the others. And it takes a long-term perspective – one that’s focused on both the present and future, well beyond the next budget or election cycle.”

- 2.3. “A sustainable community’s success depends upon its members’ commitment and involvement through:
 - Active, organized, and informed citizenship.
 - Inspiring, effective, and responsive leadership.
 - Responsible, caring, and healthy community institutions, services, and businesses.

- 2.4. As a result, a sustainable community manages its human, natural, and financial resources to meet current needs while ensuring that adequate resources are equitably available for future generations. It seeks:
 - A better quality of life
 - A better quality of life for the whole community without compromising the wellbeing of other communities.
 - Healthy ecosystems.
 - Effective governance supported by meaningful and broad-based citizen participation.
 - Economic security.

3. From here to there

- 3.1. In making the journey towards a more sustainable parish we have made an assessment of where we are now, including the opinions and assessments of parish residents. We have also identified issues that we need to address to move us in the direction of sustainability. However, it is not possible to identify a destination in the journey towards sustainability. While embracing the overall concepts that define the destination we have to accept that the pace of change may be slow and that circumstances and priorities may change in the future. The aim of this plan is to lay the foundations for sustainability and promote the resilience that will enable us to grow and develop as a parish to meet the challenges of the present and the future.

4. Community vision

- 4.1. During the engagement process for the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), the open-ended nature of the consultation demonstrated a broad range of views and not all of these could be addressed through the NDP. Those comments that could be addressed through planning policies were used as the basis of the NDP. The remainder were used to inform the Parish plan.
- 4.2. The following vision statement was distilled from the evidence gathered throughout the engagement process.

- The Parish of Botus Fleming will be defined by its quiet, rural nature by protecting the distinct character of both our villages by maintaining our rustic boundary, by preserving our countryside, and protecting our fauna and flora for recreation and community wellbeing.
- We will have responded to the housing needs of our community when necessary with sympathetic development. All development would have been undertaken only to satisfy demonstrable local housing needs, and conform to the rural character comprising of only small developments in keeping with their surroundings.
- Any new housing development would have provided a level of affordable, starter homes and other appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of our community.
- We will have obtained funding to construct a permanent recreation area together with a community centre with changing facilities. Sporting and recreational facilities for young and older people would be available. The community centre would be available for all to utilise in a diverse range of activities, encouraging varieties of leisure, cultural and sporting facilities and activities to enable opportunities for all age groups.
- There would be integrated public transport (with associated pedestrian walkways and cycle routes) and safer roads (through effective traffic management; traffic calming, cameras etc) in order to serve the growing and changing population.
- There would be more opportunities for small businesses and assistance for parishioners to work from home by making high speed broadband available for all members of the community.
- Our community would be cleaner with appropriate recycling, refuse and dog mess-depositing facilities. All would assist in keeping our environment clean and tidy by becoming active in the collection of litter. More proactivity, through community involvement and neighbourhood watch, against fly tipping and anti-social behaviour.
- Improved services, facilities and amenities will have improved our quality of life, created a sense of well-being, promoted community safety and enabled active and healthy lifestyles for all members of the community.
- The sense of community spirit and cohesion will have been promoted, fostered and increased. We will have a stronger and vibrant neighbourhood and rural economy, improved community safety through neighbourhood watch, amenities and facilities for all users, and ensure that our parish remains a special place to live.

5. Governance

- 5.1. The development of a resilient and sustainable parish will depend to a large extent on the Parish Council's ability to be well run with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership.
- 5.2. Botus Fleming Parish Council (BFPC) is a democratically elected body.
- 5.3. BFPC is working towards recognition by the national accreditation scheme for local councils.
- 5.4. Since being elected in May BFPC has introduced a range of policies that aim to ensure proper governance.
- 5.5. BFPC is committed to working with residents of the parish and has adopted an engagement strategy that tries to ensure that all parishioners are informed and able to contribute to the process of local decision-making.
- 5.6. Councillors are committed to a program of continuous development through education and training.

Botus Fleming Parish Council will be run to the highest standards of governance, will represent the interests of all of our residents and will encourage parishioners to work with the PC.

6. Transport and connectivity

- 6.1. It is important that our communities are well connected with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, health and other services and amenities.
- 6.2. Widespread use of private cars leads to congestion, air pollution and increased risk of accidents.
- 6.3. Ideally, many of our transport needs should be met by an efficient and affordable public transport system and be less dependent on private cars.
- 6.4. An increase in services and amenities available in the parish would reduce the need to travel to other centres.
- 6.5. Improved pedestrian and cycle routes would create easy access to these facilities and amenities with the added benefit of encouraging activity and improving health status.

Improvements will have been made to public transport, and walking and cycling will be safer and more enjoyable. This will reduce congestion and improve air quality. Zero emission vehicles will be encouraged

7. Services

- 7.1. The parish should be well served with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to peoples' needs and accessible to all.
- 7.2. Development of the existing garage site at Hatt will be encouraged and will include provision for the existing businesses plus enhanced provision for services that meet local needs.
- 7.3. Any development of a sports and community hall on the recreation field will create an opportunity for the development of services to meet some of the needs of all age groups.
- 7.4. Local producers will be encouraged to sell their products in the parish.

Botus Fleming Parish Council will encourage the development of services and amenities that meet the needs of our residents and reduce the necessity to travel to other areas to meet these needs.

8. Environment

- 8.1. BFPC will strive to conserve and enhance our natural environment which gives a *sense of place* to our communities.
- 8.2. The NDP will contain policies that aim to conserve our landscape and biodiversity.
- 8.3. The move away from fossil fuels and increased use of public transport will reduce the carbon footprint of the parish.
- 8.4. BFPC will work with the agricultural industry to encourage the reduction of greenhouse gasses generated by animal husbandry.
- 8.5. BFPC will support appropriate community initiatives to generate electricity from renewable sources.

The quality of our natural and built environment will be maintained and enhanced as far as possible, without compromising the need to tackle climate change. The natural environment of the area will remain outstanding and improved green infrastructure will contribute to local food and energy production and enhanced biodiversity

9. Equity

- 9.1. BFPC will act fairly for everyone, including those in other communities.
- 9.2. All residents in the parish have equal status and no group or individual will have undue influence on our decisions
- 9.3. Although we do not have marginalised sections in our communities we do have an ageing population and frailty due to age can lead to exclusion from involvement in PC matters. The voices of young people are also not often heard.
- 9.4. Each person is expected to have equal ability to influence the decisions his or her PC makes and therefore equal access to the resources required to take part in the political process and make informed decisions.

Botus Fleming Parish Council will be inclusive and encourage all members of our communities to have a say in our decision-making and implementation processes.

10. Economy

- 10.1. High-speed communications are essential for rural businesses and home-workers.
- 10.2. The parish already benefits from high-speed broadband. BFPC will encourage the introduction of new technologies as they become available.
- 10.3. BFPC will support the development of any development on the site of the Hatt Garage providing that this provides for the existing businesses, new retail and office space, and affordable accommodation for both young people and elderly wishing to downsize.
- 10.4. BFPC will support the development of a sports hall on the recreation field. This will create opportunities for businesses such as pre-school nursery and after school clubs. There would also be space for local growers to hold a weekly produce market.
- 10.5. The parish already has a team of enthusiastic volunteers who undertake tasks to keep the parish clean and safe. BFPC will encourage this group to form a Social Enterprise and bid for contracts to provide services in the parish.

Botus Fleming Parish Council will encourage and support initiatives that contribute to our local economy, especially those that promote working from home and local employment opportunities.

11. Housing and the built environment

- 11.1. Development in the parish will be guided by the NDP and will reflect the future needs of the parish.
- 11.2. The use of sustainable materials and renewable energy will be encouraged.
- 11.3. BFPC will ensure that the opinions of all residents are heard during any planning application process.

Our Neighbourhood Development Plan will pave the way for appropriate and sustainable development fit for the 21st century.

12. Social and cultural

- 12.1. BFPC wishes to promote active, inclusive and safe, fair, tolerant and cohesive communities with a strong local culture.
- 12.2. Voluntary and community sectors including social enterprise will be supported to allow them to thrive, flourish and deliver innovative services
- 12.3. Further development of the recently formed Community Action Team will be encouraged. BFPC will invite tenders from the CAT for maintenance work in the parish.
- 12.4. BFPC will continue to support the annual Big Event and will investigate the possibility of organising other community events.

Botus Fleming parish will have communities where everyone contributes and everyone takes responsibility.

13. Heritage

- 13.1. BFPC will work with other agencies to ensure that our historic structures are maintained.
- 13.2. The BFPC NDP will encourage and support the retention and use of our listed buildings.

Botus Fleming Parish Council recognise the importance of our heritage as evidenced by our historic buildings and structures and the patterns of our countryside. We will encourage the retention and maintenance of these assets.

14. Discussion

The previous sections set out the direction of travel for both the PC and the whole parish. They also demonstrate the need for a change in the way we think about our parish and its future sustainability. The challenges we face are significant - climate change, dwindling oil production and reduced public services as a consequence of centrally driven austerity. But within these challenges there are also opportunities to find solutions that are good for the individual, good for our neighbourhoods and good for the country. Vibrant and resilient neighbourhoods and a booming local economy plus ample opportunity for leisure activities are more than just a fantasy. But these are not things that the PC can deliver on your behalf. The PC cannot do things to the community. It can do some things for the community but, to bring about the biggest changes, it needs to do this with the community, and support initiatives generated from within our communities.

The parish has already taken the first steps. This year will see the second Big Event on the recreation field. Residents have come together to arrange this and the PC has supported the endeavour by making the organising group a sub-committee of the PC and by contributing both financial and practical support. Likewise, the NDP process has benefitted from the involvement of 25 parishioners contributing to the steering group. We also have the Community Action Team and this too has been made a sub-committee of the PC. And there is an endless list of possibilities to consider; here are a few:

Parish swap and trade group. We have already seen examples of unwanted items changing hands on the Hatt Chat and Botus Banter Facebook page. Recycling and upcycling items cuts costs and reduces waste. These items could be swapped for others or for services such as hedge trimming or dog walking.

Parish library. This is something that could be accommodated in a new sports hall. For the present it could be a trust-based lending service operating from the bus shelter in Hatt. There must be plenty of people who would donate their old books to such a scheme.

Community shop. The PC are pleased that the village shop is up and running again and wish the proprietor every success. But, if we find ourselves with no shop in the future then there would be an opportunity for the community to take-over the running of the shop, restock it to meet the needs of local people and reinstate the Post Office.

Car-sharing. How many cars set off from the parish with empty passenger seats? With a little planning and administration we could have a car-sharing scheme that would make travelling cheaper for those who use public transport and subsidise the cost of driving.

Energy Club. We all consume energy and prices keep going up. It could be possible to negotiate preferential deals through bulk purchasing. This system is tried and tested in the making of deals for oil deliveries. Savings on gas and electricity could also be possible.

Emergency Plan. The parish could develop a coordinated response to adverse circumstances such as severe weather conditions or a natural disaster.

Allotments. The development of allotments in the parish would provide the opportunity for local food production.