

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, 15th January, 2015

Present:- **Councillors** Patrick Anketell-Jones, Rob Appleyard, Sharon Ball, Tim Ball, Colin Barrett, Cherry Beath, David Bellotti, Sarah Bevan, Mathew Blankley, Lisa Brett, John Bull, Neil Butters, Bryan Chalker, Anthony Clarke, Nicholas Coombes, Paul Crossley, Gerry Curran, David Dixon, Peter Edwards, Michael Evans, Paul Fox, Andrew Furse, Terry Gazzard, Charles Gerrish, Ian Gilchrist, Alan Hale, Katie Hall, Liz Hardman, Steve Hedges, Eleanor Jackson, Les Kew, Dave Laming, Malcolm Lees, Marie Longstaff, Barry Macrae, David Martin, Loraine Morgan-Brinkhurst MBE, Robin Moss, Paul Myers, Douglas Nicol, June Player, Vic Pritchard, Liz Richardson, Manda Rigby, Caroline Roberts, Nigel Roberts, Dine Romero, Will Sandry, Brian Simmons, Kate Simmons, Jeremy Sparks, Ben Stevens, Roger Symonds, Martin Veal, Geoff Ward, Tim Warren, Chris Watt and Brian Webber

Apologies for absence: **Councillors** Simon Allen, Sally Davis, Douglas Deacon, Francine Haeberling, Nathan Hartley, Bryan Organ and David Veale

52 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as set out on the agenda.

53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chief Executive declared an interest in item 10 "Proper Officer Designation and Allocation of Statutory roles" and withdrew from the meeting for the duration of this item.

54 MINUTES - 13TH NOVEMBER 2014

On a motion from Councillor Paul Crossley, seconded by Councillor Tim Warren, it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of 13th November 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

55 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OR FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chairman made the customary announcements regarding mobile phones and the meeting being webcast.

He also offered congratulations to the following residents of Bath and North East Somerset Council who had received honours in the Queen's New Year list;-

MBE - Peter Capener, co-founder and chair, Bath and West Community Energy. For services to sustainable energy.

MBE - Sarah Alice Hunter, vice-captain, England women's rugby union team. For services to Rugby.

British Empire Medal - Ann Garner, Artistic director, The Mission Theatre. For services to theatre in Bath.

56 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no items of urgent business.

57 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Statements were made by the following people;

Janet Marton made a statement regarding Alice Park on behalf of the residents in and around the area. She raised four issues of concern about the way the charity was being run. The full statement can be viewed via the link from the minutes. In response to a question from Councillor Paul Crossley about whether she had taken part in the 2 week consultation period at the end of November/beginning of December, Ms Marton responded that she had, but that she had been disappointed with the quality of the consultation. In response to a question from Councillor John Bull about whether she had taken up her concerns with her local Councillor and the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Ms Marton responded that she had e-mailed them and been told that her complaints had been forwarded to Councillor Paul Crossley. The Chairman thanked Janet Marton for her statement which would be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and the Leader.

Pam Jones made a statement also regarding Alice Park and issues relating to the skate park. The full statement can be viewed via the link from the minutes. In response to a question from Councillor David Dixon as to whether Ms Jones was aware that the skatepark was viewed as a gift to the trust and that the beneficiaries of the park were wider than just the residents in and around the park, Ms Jones responded that information had not been forthcoming, despite some requests being brought under Freedom of Information procedures. Councillor Eleanor Jackson asked whether she had looked into the impact of skateparks in other areas and Ms Jones responded that she was aware of problems in other areas and mentioned some specific examples. The Chairman thanked Pam Jones for her statement which would be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and the Leader.

Ian Cowie made a statement entitled 'Listening Council' expressing his view that the Council had not carried out effective engagement and consultation on various schemes he listed, including the Alice Park skatepark, and other traffic safety issues being brought to this meeting. Consultation meetings were often badly timed and seemed not to allow for alternative proposals. In response to a question from Councillor Tim Warren as to whether Mr Cowie considered that his suggestions for an alternative layout for the skatepark had not been taken seriously, he responded that he felt they had not. In response to a question from Councillor Dave Laming

asking if Mr Cowie had attended an event in the summer to give his views, Mr Cowie responded that he hadn't known about it but had the impression that it had been stage managed. The Chairman thanked Mr Cowie for his statement which would be referred to the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and the Leader.

David Redgewell made a statement entitled 'Public Rail governance; Devolution not Centralisation'. He called on the Council to work with all the surrounding areas to find sub-regional transport solutions. The full statement can be viewed via the link from the minutes. In response to a question from Councillor Paul Crossley as to whether Mr Redgewell was aware that all the Group Leaders from this Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council were working together on devolution of powers and responsibilities but that the principal block to this was the Mayor of Bristol George Ferguson, Mr Redgewell responded that it was for the Councils to sort this out and find a way forward. The Chairman thanked David Redgewell for his statement which was referred to the Cabinet Member for Transport.

Wera Hobhouse made a statement to Council calling for them to look again at highways safety in Peasedown St John following a recent serious accident. The full statement can be viewed via the link from the minutes. In response to a question from Councillor Sarah Bevan, who passed sympathies to all those involved in the accident, and enquired as to whether Ms Hobhouse was aware that in addition to the eastbound filter, contrasting road surface and other alterations, she had also implemented a speed reduction and that, at that time, no serious accidents had been reported, Ms Hobhouse responded that she was aware, that maybe now was the time for a further speed reduction and she was just asking for it to be looked at again. Councillor Dave Laming passed on a question from Councillor Nathan Hartley about whether Ms Hobhouse would be happy to meet Cllr Hartley, she responded that she would. In response to a question from Councillor John Bull as to whether Ms Hobhouse was aware of the current petition gaining signatures (so far over 900) about traffic calming in Paulton, Ms Hobhouse responded that she was aware, but was keen to stress this wasn't about politics but about making everyone safer. The Chairman thanked Wera Hobhouse for her statement and referred it to the Cabinet Member for Transport.

58 ESTABLISHMENT OF AVON PENSION FUND BOARD

Richard Orton made a statement on behalf of UNISON and Unite unions, asking for parity in membership on the Board between employer representatives and scheme member representatives; his contention being that the B&NES Members counted as employer representatives.

During debate, the Chairman called for a brief adjournment to allow for legal and technical advice to be sought on the membership aspects that had been raised. Following this, the Chief Executive informed Council that advice indicated that these proposals were not in conflict with the draft regulations and further advice could be sought when the final regulations were laid, before representatives were appointed.

On a motion from Councillor David Bellotti, seconded by Councillor Charles Gerrish, it was

RESOLVED

1. To approve the proposed Terms of Reference for the local Pension Board;
2. To approve the appointment process for Pension Board members;
3. To agree the delegation of authority to the Strategic Director for Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Community Resources to provide appropriate officer resource to support the Pension Board; and
4. To approve the amended Terms of Reference for the Avon Pension Fund Committee.

[Notes:

1 - An amendment was moved during debate by Councillor John Bull, seconded by Councillor Eleanor Jackson, to defer consideration of this item until confirmation was secured that the proposals were in line with the regulations. The amendment was lost, with 4 Councillors voting in favour, 4 abstaining and the rest voting against the amendment.

2 – The successful resolution was passed with 3 Councillors voting against, 2 abstaining and all remaining Councillors voting in favour.]

59 POLLING DISTRICTS & PLACES REVIEW

This item concerned a review of the current arrangements for polling places and districts.

On a motion from Councillor Paul Crossley, seconded by Councillor Tim Warren, it was

RESOLVED that, in view of the fact that there remain some unresolved issues, authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with Group Leaders and the relevant ward Members, to make the necessary decisions on behalf of the Council.

[Note; The above resolution was passed with all Councillors voting in favour except for Councillor Nicholas Coombes who voted against.]

60 PROPER OFFICER DESIGNATION AND ALLOCATION OF STATUTORY ROLES

The Council considered a report seeking approval for the arrangements for proper officer designations and various statutory roles.

The Chief Executive left the Chamber for consideration of this item.

On a motion from Councillor Paul Crossley, seconded by Councillor Tim Warren, it was

RESOLVED

1. To approve the arrangements set out in Appendix 1 to the report;

2. To authorise the Monitoring Officer & Divisional Director (Legal & Democratic Services) to update the Constitution to give effect to the arrangements approved; and

with regard to the arrangements relating to Elections and Scrutiny;

3. That under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and all related legislation with effect from 1st June 2015, Dr Jo Farrar be appointed as Electoral Registration Officer;
4. That under Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1972 and all related legislation, and with effect from 1st June 2015, Dr Jo Farrar be appointed as Returning Officer for the Council, with authority to act in that capacity for elections to the Council and all or any parish and town councils within the Council area;
5. That the Council's Electoral Registration Officer be authorised to act in respect of all related electoral, poll or referendum duties, including in relation to parliamentary elections, elections to the European Parliament and national and regional polls or referenda;
6. That it be agreed that, in relation to the conduct of local authority elections and polls, and elections to the United Kingdom Parliament, and all other electoral duties where the Council is entitled by law to do so, the Council shall take out and maintain in force insurance indemnifying the Council and the Returning Officer against legal expenses reasonably incurred in connection with the defence of any proceedings brought against the Council or the Returning Officer and/or the cost of holding another election in the event of the original election being declared invalid (provided that such proceedings or invalidation are the result of the accidental contravention of the Representation of the Peoples Act or other legislation governing the electoral process, or accidental breach of any ministerial or other duty by the Returning Officer or any other person employed by or officially acting for her in connection with the election or poll);
7. That it be agreed that in the event of such insurance carrying an 'excess' clause by which an initial portion of risk is not insured, the Council will indemnify the Returning Officer up to the value of such excess.
8. That the Head of Legal & Democratic Services (with effect from 1st June 2015) and the Electoral Services Officer be appointed as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers;
9. That the Policy Development and Scrutiny Lead Officer be designated as the Statutory Scrutiny Officer under Section 31 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

[Note: - The above resolutions were carried with all Councillors voting in favour except for Councillor Loraine Morgan-Brinkhurst who voted against, and Councillor Caroline Roberts who abstained.]

61 MOTION FROM THE LABOUR GROUP - QUALITY CONTRACT SCHEME

On a motion from Councillor John Bull, seconded by Councillor Eleanor Jackson, it was

RESOLVED

1. Council notes that buses are a key part of the B&NES Transport Strategy yet the current services often do not serve the needs of residents and are viewed as expensive and unreliable.
2. Council further notes the powers contained within the Transport Act 2000, as amended, to set up a Quality Contract Scheme (QCS) which would allow the Authority to plan the bus route network, set the fares and award contracts to run services or local networks.
3. Council recognises, however, that under a QCS there is a revenue risk to the Council in that it would be responsible for meeting any shortfall in fares income to cover the operating costs of the contracts.
4. Council also recognises that where a decision has been made to proceed with a QCS in the North East, this has been a joint decision between multiple local authorities.
5. For the reasons outlined in 3 and 4 (above), Council believes that significantly more work is required to determine whether a QCS is the best way forward for the provision of buses in B&NES.
6. Council therefore asks, in the first instance, the Planning, Transport and Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel to undertake further work into the potential, including advantages and disadvantages, as well as cost implications and any financial risk to the Council, of a QCS in B&NES with a report back to the new Council preferably by July 2015 but by the end of the calendar year at the latest.

[Notes;

1 – An amendment to the motion was moved by Councillor Caroline Roberts and seconded by Councillor Lisa Brett to introduce a paragraph noting the good relationships with providers and listing various positive initiatives that had been introduced. This was lost, with 27 Councillors voting in favour and 29 voting against.

2 – The successful resolution above was carried with all Councillors voting in favour except for Councillors Gerry Curran, Andy Furse and Doug Nicol who abstained.]

62 PETITION FOR DEBATE - A SAFE CROSSING FOR ST SAVIOURS SCHOOLS

Richard Young presented a petition calling on the Council to take immediate action and install a pedestrian crossing to safeguard pedestrians at St Saviours schools and nursery. He asked for a safety audit of the wider area covering all crossing

points, solutions for illegally parked cars at various locations and action to deal with the behaviour of drivers.

Following debate by Councillors, it was moved by Councillor Anthony Clarke, seconded by Councillor Bryan Chalker and then

RESOLVED that

This Council:

- Notes that the need to improve road safety outside St Saviour's Infants and Junior Schools has been recognised by both local residents and parents, as well as the Council, for a number of years.
- Believes that progress with finding a solution to this issue has been unacceptably slow.
- Believes that funds should be allocated to enable an appropriate safety scheme to be agreed and implemented as a matter of priority.
- Notes that in the Council Budget last February (2014), the Conservative Group tabled a proposal to invest an extra £200,000 in Safer Routes to School schemes such as a safety scheme outside the St Saviour's Schools, but that this failed to gain the support of other political groups.
- Notes that, in the November Budget Monitoring Report, the Council forecast an underspend of £672,000 for this financial year, with £20.66 million of slippage in the Capital Budget from this financial year to the next.
- Notes that there is a precedent for unspent contingencies from a particular capital project being used for another urgent capital scheme.

Council resolves:

1. To ask that the Cabinet Member for Transport instruct officers to work with residents, ward Members, the school and parents of children at the school to agree an appropriate safety scheme as a matter of priority.
2. To ask that the Cabinet allocate whatever funding necessary to enable this scheme to progress in this financial year, noting the available resources mentioned above as potential sources of funding.

[Note: - The above resolution was carried, with 30 Councillors voting in favour, and the rest abstaining.]

63 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The Chairman referred to the question from Councillor Nathan Hartley and response from the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development which had been circulated.

Councillor David Martin made a statement regarding sustainability. A full copy of the statement is attached to the online minutes. The Chairman thanked Councillor Martin for his statement, which he referred to the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development.

The meeting ended at 8.46 pm

Chairman

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

Alice Park: Developments and Processes

Statement from Janet Marton on behalf of residents living around Alice Park

Council Meeting 15 January 2015

I am making this statement on behalf of residents living in and around Alice Park. We have 4 key issues:

1) How the Alice Park Charity is being run

- a) Alice Park is a registered charity. Originally there had to be at least 7 trustees. Today, Bath and North East Somerset Council is the trustee, and the leader of the council acts as the sole trustee, responsible for decisions about AP.
- b) But, the lines between the affairs of the charity and those of BANES appear to have been blurred:
 - i) Information about Alice Park is held in different departments of the Council
 - ii) A sole trustee means no trustee meetings, no minutes of decisions or priorities and no transparency/accountability
 - iii) Nobody can explain variations in revenue reported to the CC.

2) Failure to comply with the law

- a) The council as trustee has a **legal** duty to produce annual accounts for the Alice Park charity, and make them available to the public on request.
- b) The Council as trustee has failed to prepare these accounts. This is a major failing!
- c) We do not know how much revenue has been raised, or whether the money has been spent in accordance with the trust deed on park maintenance.
- d) This raises serious questions about competence and oversight.

3) Existing facilities have been neglected

Any park visitor can see the neglect. e.g.

- i) the tennis courts
- ii) the pond
- iii) the memorial garden and flowerbeds

4) Failure to consult with residents and address their concerns

- a) The proposed skate park is just the latest example of ignoring local residents.
- b) Since 2009 BANES has consistently failed to consult local residents **in advance** about developments in AP e.g.
 - i) music and events license for the café
 - ii) Gifford's Circus for a week around the August Bank Holidays
- c) The council has consistently failed to deal with the annoyance and problems caused by their decisions,

- i) regular loud music from the café
 - ii) loud noise and music from the circus
 - iii) major parking problems
 - iv) road safety problems.
- d) With a single trustee and blurred boundaries, conflicts of interest can arise when political decisions (such as the skate park) and charity decisions are both involved.

5) To sum up

What we would like is:

- i) A number of councillors acting as a board of trustees for Alice Park immediately
- ii) Production of accounts for the last 5 years within 1 month
- iii) Money to be found this financial year to address neglect of existing facilities.
- iv) A commitment **today** to **advance** consultation for significant developments in Alice Park

Alice Park: Proposed Skateboard Park

Statement from Pam Jones on behalf of residents living around Alice Park

Council Meeting 15th January 2015

I also represent the residents living in the neighbourhood of Alice Park and wish to speak about the proposed siting of a skateboard park in Alice Park. There are a number of major concerns:-

- First a decision has been taken to site a skate park in Alice Park with funding committed without any factual **demonstration of need**. There are no **statistics or market appraisal** to show that skateboarding should receive £400k of funding over other sports or indeed projects. There is already a large skateboard park in Victoria Park set for major refurbishment work. Freedom of Information requests regarding Alice Park show that **basic need has not been established** and that seemingly decisions have been taken to pander to a vocal and persistent minority at the expense of **best practise and due diligence**.
- Secondly there has been a failure to execute **competent project appraisal** for capital expenditure with £100k of funding committed to the project prior to any consultation. This could be construed by some as a **misuse of public money**.
- Thirdly what is being referred to as a **“Consultation Process”** does not adhere to the key principles issued by the Government and moreover is **biased and unfair**.
 - Biased in so much as a number of informal discussions between Councillors and the pro skate park group have taken place over many months but none have taken place with local residents of Alice Park
 - The on line survey was also biased and did not ask objective questions but concentrated on establishing which design was better and what elements were desired
 - In terms of Unfairness it is unfair that the residents of Alice Park have not been asked to voice their views at a public meeting for residents only, unlike the residents at Larkhall Rec. perhaps afraid of the same outcome – namely that local residents do not want a skate park in Alice Park.
 - Information has not been forthcoming or transparent but sketchy, tardy, and what at best can only be described as “poorly communicated” to local residents.
 - Moreover how can the Leader of the Council on the one hand take politically motivated decisions dispensing Council Funds and on the other act impartially as sole trustee of the Alice Park Charity. There is a conflict of interest and this position is untenable with political decisions potentially being taken at the expense of the local community

- Lastly there has been **no Impact Assessment** in terms of
 - noise
 - road safety
 - toilet facilities
 - parking
 - vandalism
 - intergenerational conflict
 - residents
 - other park users
 - or indeed deprivation of the only flat play area in Alice Park currently used for traditional group ball games and imaginative play

- Therefore we are asking you to **start consulting with us immediately – start listening** to what we are saying regarding the skate park and **vote no to siting a skate park in Alice Park.** We hope that we have demonstrated today, with our supporters, that we are passionate about this and **are quite prepared to take this further.**

There have been proposals by various groups to renationalise both the infrastructure and the operational aspect of the railways nationally and locally. In many ways this attempt to return all transport decision making to London is not only short-sighted, but likely to work against any local interest. What the South West of England needs is a devolved railway and public transport administration with sub-regional transport authorities covering Devon and Cornwall, and the Greater Bristol and Bath travel to work area. Like MerseyRail, Transport for Greater Manchester and Centro (West Midlands PTA), the local transport authorities need to be able to specify rail services, set timetables and rolling-stock capacity, specify Network Rail works to track and stations for local services, design and build interchanges and car parks, lease rolling stock (jointly with the DfT), set franchise specifications including fares, staffing levels on local stations and trains. This is also the model which the Welsh and Scottish Governments operate.

In due course it is to be hoped that the South West will set up a series of Combined Authorities to manage and budget many aspects of local planning, governance and operation. This is already the case (or soon will be) with the Northern and West Midlands Regions who will subsume the transport authorities referred to above.

Handing back all control of our local networks to the DfT makes absolutely no sense whatever either in terms of local responsiveness, or responsibility. What the South West needs is both local and locally answerable planning and operation of its rail networks. Neither part is good enough on its own and a Combined Authority with responsibility for delivery of local rail and bus services is without question the goal we should have in our sights from the outset.

As we have seen with Transport for London, the ownership of the contractor delivering the specified services is not an issue of any real significance. What matters is not whether First Group is running and staffing the trains or whether that is done by a publicly owned body called WestRail, but who is specifying the standards, service levels, fares, rolling stock and staffing.

Unlike Manchester where massive investment is going into both Piccadilly and Victoria stations, it was not until a recent Leaders Board meeting for the Bristol/Bath City Region that the proper significance of Temple Meads station as a regional transport focus and interchange was realised and funds allocated by the four Greater Bristol councils. As pointed out in recent articles in the Western Daily Press, Bristol Post and Western Morning News, this region is starting from a much lower base than comparable regions in the south east, the north and the midlands. Temple Meads in particular has not had the kind of investment which similarly sized stations elsewhere have enjoyed. In terms of commerce, passenger facilities and intermodal interchange options Temple Meads has a long way to go.

With rail fares rising by 2.5% from 2nd January 2015, West Country commuters are struggling to pay higher fares on a very fragmented national rail network. The rail network is one of the most complicated in Europe in terms of structures where the Government sets all the standards but the train operating companies deliver the services under contracts. This means that in the South West of England, Network Rail is responsible for the tracks, signalling and stations being wholly owned as a Government agency and the private train operators deliver the service in the form of South West Trains (owned by Stagecoach) between London Waterloo, Salisbury, Bristol, Yeovil, Exeter, Bournemouth and Weymouth with rolling stock leased from leasing companies wholly owned by a number of international banks.

The other main train operating company is First Great Western where the Government is reletting a four year contract from March 2015 to allow the Great Western Main line between London, Reading, Swindon, Bath Spa, Bristol Temple Meads, Bristol Parkway and Newport, Cardiff and Swansea to be upgraded. This Government scheme, whilst very much welcomed, involves electrified Intercity Express trains, built in Japan by Hitachi, and electrification of the main line, but only as far as Bristol in the South West. This is costing the taxpayer £7.5 billion but what is being spent in the rest of the South West region compared with the North? Local railways around Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Newcastle are being devolved to a new railway executive whose decisions will be made locally with proposals from the Government for new rolling stock and devolved budgets. Whilst train fares in the North are also rising, more of the money is being kept for station improvements, station interchanges like Manchester Victoria and a new build of local trains and expanded electrification or railway lines around Manchester and Liverpool.

The £4 billion which the DfT spends annually on the rail network includes a subsidy to Network Rail as well as franchise payments (operational subsidy) to First Great Western, South West Trains and Cross Country Trains. Network Rail also has an accumulated debt of £38 billion which is causing constraint on further investment. Whilst other regions and in particular InterCity and the South East of England have been major beneficiaries from the investment which has helped to build up this debt, the South West has so far only benefited from the IEP with little investment in our local train fleet and no local electrification of the line from Bristol to Taunton, Exeter, Plymouth and Penzance. Local electrification for the Bristol-Severn Beach line and routes to Henbury and Portishead is only at feasibility study stage.

With taxpayers paying 40% of the railways' costs and 60% coming from passenger fares, only 3 pence in every pound goes to the Train Operating Companies: Stagecoach (South West Trains), Deutsche Bahn (Cross Country Trains) and First Group (First Great Western). The remaining 97% goes to the train leasing companies (international banks) known as ROSCOs and Network Rail. Passengers in the South West are demanding a fare share of national rail funding.

Why can't services be delivered locally, as is happening in the North with its new railway executive, and in Wales where the Welsh Government runs the services? We need to set up a transport boards within regional Combined Authorities to manage and devolve the Greater Bristol Metro Project (MetroWest), the Devon Metro, to reopen the line between Exeter and Plymouth via Oakhampton and Tavistock, to provide disabled access to stations such as Lawrence Hill and Stapleton Road, Patchway, Pilning and Nailsea and Backwell, to provide booking offices at stations like Avonmouth (currently threatened with demolition) and to restore train services between Taunton and Minehead.

There are many future options which need to be included in the new West of England Transport Plan and Spatial Plan. These include protection of the rail routes to Thornbury (via Tytherington), between Frome and Radstock, from Frome to Shepton Mallet and Wells, from Barnstaple to Bideford and the sites of several stations which could be reopened as the local Metros develop.

David Redgewell, Martin Cinnamond, Ian Beckey, South West Transport Network, Rail Futures (Severnside)

Chairman, Councillors, Members of the Public

Last Friday afternoon a serious accident happened at the junction of the A367 towards Radstock and the entrance into Peasedown St John. Over the years Councillor Bevan ensured that a number of measures were put in place to improve road safety at this junction like a filter into the village and a different road surface on the approach to the junction. A couple of years ago following renewed concerns by residents the two ward councillors met with Highways officers to discuss the issue again. The advice of officers was that the safety of the junction was adequate. The basis of that advice was a survey that measured vehicle movement, traffic flow and speed in the area; as well as accidents statistics by the police, visibility and the general condition of the road. I fully accept that the advice of officers, the professionals who we depend on to make informed decisions, was followed and no further action was taken.

Calls for a round-about at this junction continued as you probably know and there might have been a good dose of politics in it.

However, politics aside, we all agree that the safety of our residents is of the utmost importance and when a major accident occurs we have to reconsider if necessary. People often ask whether there has to be “blood on the road” before something is done; and unfortunately there is a reason why this is often the case. When we spend public money we need to base our decisions on evidence, and accident statistics are evidence.

Therefore based on this new piece of evidence could I ask that officers and councillors look at the situation again, that officers prepare a report that looks at different options to make the junctions safer, specifically for those motorists who are trying to exit the village and go onto the A 367. Based on what I hear from residents this report should include the cost of either traffic lights or a round-about or just a simple reduction in speed and the pros and cons of any of these different options. This report would then form the basis of any future decision.

Thank you!

Wera Hobhouse

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Councillor Questions for Council 15th January 2015

(NOTE: The following question and response will be published on the Council's website as soon as possible after the meeting and linked to the published draft minutes of this meeting.)

1. Question from Councillor Nathan Hartley

For almost ten years, consecutive council leaders, cabinet members and senior officials have taken part in 'trade visits' to China. The most recent was over the summer months.

Can the Leader of the council tell us what benefit these trips have brought to Bath and North East Somerset? In particular, to the residents that live in our local authority?

Can the Leader also tell us how these trips have been funded (covering all costs, flight, accommodation, etc)?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development

Bath and North East Somerset is home to circa 1900 Chinese with nearly 1000 students currently attending the local Universities creating significant income for the local economy and strong ties between China and B&NES. Great value is placed in China on a high quality education and in particular there is great attention on university education in England.

Following exploratory discussions during late 2008 Bath and North East Somerset Council hosted a delegation in July 2009 from officials of Jiangxi Province. Two outcomes resulted;

- i. The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding dated 6th July 2009 that crystallised both parties' intentions to formalise a Friendship Agreement.
- ii. An invitation from Jiangxi Province to visit the City of Jingdezhen (in Jiangxi Province) for its International Ceramic Fair and also to visit Nanchang (the capital of Jiangxi Province).

A full report was put to Council and agreed on 10th September 2009. The report recognised the economic importance of China, that Chinese made up the biggest Minority and Ethnic Group within B&NES and that there was Chinese interest in pursuing a Friendship link with B&NES.

The report set out the purpose of any Friendship Link, namely;

- Economic Development
- Development, Regeneration and Sustainability
- Education

- History and Culture

Jiangxi province covered the expenses of delegates during all visits. Travel costs between the UK and China were borne by the Council.

A further conference in 2011 at the 2nd Jiangxi International Conference of Friendship Cities showcased investment opportunities and presented a forum to exchange ideas, follow business leads and allow Bath & North East Somerset to show it is 'open for business'.

The visit opened doors for a range of business opportunities in B&NES and provided direct links and information about available contracts and a forum to exchange ideas around future challenges related to climate change, development and regeneration. A Business delegation from The West of England also attended - including local companies - and all costs of the business delegation were borne by themselves.

In October 2014 a formal visit was made to the Pearl River Delta as part of a UKTI sponsored trade mission with companies from Somerset and a detailed report was provided to the Council's Economic and Community Development Policy and Scrutiny Panel.

Subsequently a group of businesses and education establishments in B&NES has met with the Council to explore further the opportunities to create more formal economic ties to that region. The feedback from businesses attending was that stronger links would be beneficial for export and knowledge exchange and a programme will be developed in 2015 to take this forward.

This year has seen strong progress on sustainability.

In terms of Home Energy Efficiency

- We won a grant of just under a million pounds from Government to support the first year of our Energy@Home scheme, which includes a capital top up grant of up to £7,000 to enable residents to insulate their homes.
- the full scheme will be launched in April, when the retrofitting provider contract has been let and will enable the council to support local people, regardless of income or tenure, to make their home more energy efficient

In Renewable Energy

- The Planning Inspector has approved our renewable energy targets in the Core Strategy, so we can more strongly encourage renewable energy through the planning process.
- In this year's budget, the Council allocated £1m for a Green Investment and Jobs fund. We have invested half of that so far in Wilmington Farm Solar Array. This project will deliver a contribution to our energy targets, increase the size of the Community Fund and generate a healthy return on investment for the Council.

We have also won Government funds (£95K) to develop an energy strategy for the Enterprise Area to help it become an innovative, low carbon development

For carbon reduction by the Council

- The Keynsham Civic Centre has been built to very high energy standard and includes solar panels and natural ventilation.
- Solar panels have also been installed on Lewis House, helping to cut energy costs for that office
- Our LED Street-lighting replacement programme on main roads is saving the Council £200k a year

- Electric charging points have been installed in three of our car parks
- Through our Corporate Travel Plan, pool cars and bike, including electric vehicles, are in place and business and commuting mileage has been reduced.
- Our schools energy efficiency programme involves all 71 schools and has already resulted in a 30% gas saving compared to last year.

The B&NES Environmental Sustainability Partnership has provisionally approved a new Community Energy Strategy, subject to completion of public consultation. This strategy aims to provide leadership and a framework for action to achieve the Core Strategy targets

These are only a few highlights from a very successful year. In recognition of our success, I am pleased to report that in November 2013 we won the Most Proactive Public Sector Body Award at the South West Green Energy Awards. And at the end of 2014 we were awarded the large employer Outstanding Achievement Award at the West of England Carbon Challenge awards. Well done to all our officers across many departments who were involved, and I look forward to more accomplishments in 2015.