

Democratic Services

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Date: 11th November 2013

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To: All Members of the Housing and Major Projects Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Rob Appleyard

Councillor Nathan Hartley

Councillor Steve Hedges

Councillor Brian Simmons

Councillor Gerry Curran

Councillor June Player

Councillor David Veale

Councillor Douglas Nicol (Substitute for Councillor Nathan Hartley)

Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development: Councillor Ben Stevens

Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning: Councillor Tim Ball

Chief Executive and other appropriate officers

Press and Public

Dear Member

Housing and Major Projects Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel: Tuesday, 19th November, 2013

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **Housing and Major Projects Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel**, to be held on **Tuesday, 19th November, 2013 at 5.30 pm** in the **Council Chamber - Guildhall, Bath**.

The agenda is set out overleaf.

Yours sincerely



Mark Durnford
for Chief Executive

If you need to access this agenda or any of the supporting reports in an alternative accessible format please contact Democratic Services or the relevant report author whose details are listed at the end of each report.

This Agenda and all accompanying reports are printed on recycled paper

NOTES:

- 1. Inspection of Papers:** Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or a list of the background papers relating to any item on this Agenda should contact Mark Durnford who is available by telephoning Bath 01225 394458 or by calling at The Guildhall, bath (during normal office hours).
- 2. Public Speaking at Meetings:** The Council has a scheme to encourage the public to make their views known at meetings. They may make a statement relevant to what the meeting has power to do. They may also present a petition or a deputation on behalf of a group. Advance notice is required not less than two full working days before the meeting (this means that for meetings held on Wednesdays notice must be received in Democratic Services by 4.30pm the previous Friday)

The public may also ask a question to which a written answer will be given. Questions must be submitted in writing to Democratic Services at least two full working days in advance of the meeting (this means that for meetings held on Wednesdays, notice must be received in Democratic Services by 4.30pm the previous Friday). If an answer cannot be prepared in time for the meeting it will be sent out within five days afterwards. Further details of the scheme can be obtained by contacting Mark Durnford as above.

- 3. Details of Decisions taken at this meeting** can be found in the minutes which will be published as soon as possible after the meeting, and also circulated with the agenda for the next meeting. In the meantime details can be obtained by contacting Mark Durnford as above.

Appendices to reports are available for inspection as follows:-

Public Access points - Riverside - Keynsham, Guildhall - Bath, Hollies - Midsomer Norton, and Bath Central, Keynsham and Midsomer Norton public libraries.

For Councillors and Officers papers may be inspected via Political Group Research Assistants and Group Rooms/Members' Rooms.

- 4. Attendance Register:** Members should sign the Register which will be circulated at the meeting.
- 5. THE APPENDED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS ARE IDENTIFIED BY AGENDA ITEM NUMBER.**
- 6. Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

When the continuous alarm sounds, you must evacuate the building by one of the designated exits and proceed to the named assembly point. The designated exits are sign-posted.

Arrangements are in place for the safe evacuation of disabled people.

**Housing and Major Projects Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel - Tuesday, 19th
November, 2013**

at 5.30 pm in the Council Chamber - Guildhall, Bath

A G E N D A

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

2. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair will draw attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as set out under Note 6.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting declarations of interest are received from Members in any of the agenda items under consideration at the meeting. Members are asked to indicate:

(a) The agenda item number in which they have an interest to declare.

(b) The nature of their interest.

(c) Whether their interest is **a disclosable pecuniary interest** or an **other interest**,
(as defined in Part 2, A and B of the Code of Conduct and Rules for Registration of Interests)

Any Member who needs to clarify any matters relating to the declaration of interests is recommended to seek advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer or a member of his staff before the meeting to expedite dealing with the item during the meeting.

5. TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

6. ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

At the time of publication no notifications had been received.

7. MINUTES - 23RD JULY 2013 & 17TH SEPTEMBER 2013 (Pages 7 - 22)

8. CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member(s) will update the Panel on any relevant issues. Panel members may ask questions

9. CABINET RESPONSE TO POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS - BOAT DWELLERS AND RIVER TRAVELLERS TASK AND FINISH GROUP REVIEW (Pages 23 - 80)

At the Panel meeting on Tuesday 23rd July 2013 the Panel received a report and considered their draft recommendations. The agreed documents were forwarded to Cabinet members for their considered responses and they are now enclosed.

10. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS UPDATE (Pages 81 - 86)

The way social housing is allocated is key to creating communities where people choose to live and are able to prosper. The Localism Act 2011 gave new freedoms that allowed Council's to make significant changes to how social housing is allocated locally. Following extensive consultation, including with this panel, Cabinet decided to implement a range of changes to the local social housing allocation scheme, known as Homesearch. This report is provided to update panel on the implementation of these changes and to draw to the attention of panel a further recent Government consultation document on social housing allocations.

11. PANEL WORKPLAN (Pages 87 - 90)

This report presents the latest workplan for the Panel.

The Committee Administrator for this meeting is Mark Durnford who can be contacted on 01225 394458.

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

HOUSING AND MAJOR PROJECTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday, 23rd July, 2013

Present:- Councillors Rob Appleyard (Chair), Nathan Hartley (Vice-Chair), Brian Simmons, Gerry Curran and Mathew Blankley

Also in attendance: John Wilkinson (Acting Divisional Director for Regeneration Skills and Employment), Massimo Polacco (Senior Project Manager), Samantha Jones (Corporate Policy Manager for Equality), Katherine Coney (Senior Environmental Health Officer) and Emma Bagley (Policy Development & Scrutiny Project Officer)

Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development: Councillor Ben Stevens

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Steve Hedges and Councillor Tim Ball, Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning had sent their apologies to the Panel.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

6 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

Mr Clarke Osborne, Stanton Wick Action Group made a statement to the Panel on the subject of the Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocations Development Plan Document. A copy of the statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

At the last meeting of the Panel you resolved to a) call on the Cabinet to produce a list of feasible sites, according to the existing criteria and to produce a timeline as

part of their June recommendations and b) to request the Cabinet to ensure that adequate resources are provided to complete the work on this matter properly and expeditiously.

To date we have not seen any evidence of either of the resolutions being accepted by the Cabinet and the communities we represent remain concerned at the continued lack of progress on this most important matter which remains a key element of the emerging Core Strategy.

A number of issues were raised at the last meeting, including;

- Exclusion from the report of the September 2012 Cabinet Resolution to progress a planning application at Lower Bristol Road.
- Delivery timetable not provided, yet there should be sufficient information available for a firm estimate.
- Vague reporting on the site selection criteria now adopted. It is relevant information which should be made available to the Panel.
- No advice on the critical path timetable of the DPD and the Core Strategy examination.

The Chairman asked for the statement to be passed to the Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning to respond.

Mr David Redgewell addressed the Panel. He spoke of how a pedestrian crossing had not yet been put in place near the bus station and how a bus shelter had been recently moved but the appropriate service was still not able to use it. He also stated that the disabled toilets had not been working at the bus station for some months. He called upon B&NES, Multi, Network Rail and First Bus to progress these matters

He also said that a clear transport plan was required to support the Enterprise Area.

Councillor Gerry Curran commented that the issue of the bollards was mentioned at almost every meeting of the Development Control Committee under its update on Major Projects. He added that he was aware that the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council had also tried to resolve the matter.

Councillor Ben Stevens, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development replied that he would speak to the Cabinet Member for Transport on these matters.

7 MINUTES - 14TH MAY 2013

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

8 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Senior Environmental Health Officer was present on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning, Councillor Tim Ball.

Housing Services will be seeking a Cabinet decision in September to take enforcement action to recover 1 or 2 high priority empty properties. The properties have been picked after applying the risk rating that the Panel helped formulate.

In addition Housing Services & I am propose to use the Cabinet decision in September to make a minor change to the policy, required due to the localisation of Council Tax Benefit. At present Housing Services prioritise all properties than have been vacant for one year. Due to the changes from Council Tax benefit and the move to the new Council Tax premium this will be changed to 2 years. This change will have a relatively small impact but will mean that resources can be focused on the higher priority properties. In addition an exceptional circumstance clause will still allow us to take enforcement action deal with properties vacant less than 2 years if required.

The new drop-in service that Housing Services has been providing for housing options & advice which replaced the previous booking system, has proved very successful. Support agencies and other partners prefer this approach and last month they were able to offer advice & assistance to twice the number of people that they were seeing under the old system. As a result we are now looking to replicate this drop-in system at the Hollies and in Keynsham.

Councillor Ben Stevens, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development addressed the Panel. He informed them that the Keynsham Regeneration Project remains on time and on budget and that a key anchor retail development had almost been secured.

He stated that Phase 3 of Bath Western Riverside, Building B17 (55 further affordable homes) had now commenced.

The Chairman thanked them both for their updates.

9 GYPSIES & TRAVELLERS SITES UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning was not present to deliver his update to the Panel.

10 BOAT DWELLERS AND RIVER TRAVELLERS TASK AND FINISH GROUP REVIEW

Councillor Eleanor Jackson addressed the Panel. A copy of her statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

She spoke of how the Task & Finish Group were tasked with considering accommodation needs only, the quality of life for boat dwellers and travellers and the needs of those who are often marginalised from society for other reasons: age, infirmity, being a lone parent and peripatetic lifestyle.

She said that the group tried very hard to balance the positives of life out in the open with perhaps much lower accommodation costs than ashore, and the negatives – poor facilities in commercial moorings, lack of access to healthcare, homecare and

education and constantly being 'moved on' by the Canal & Rivers Trust (CRT), who seemed to have no understanding of equalities issues.

She believed the review was an important step between anecdotal and individual case histories and concrete policies, which is why it is so important to continue the research. She stated that they had uncovered alarming evidence of potential homelessness, with possibly 50-70 families at immediate risk (on the basis of CRT) figures.

To sum up she spoke of the groups aspirations;

- Ask the Council to establish a national standard of good practice,
- Provide proper mooring facilities itself where appropriate and encourage others to do so, especially developers,
- Communicate to boat dwellers what the Council can do for them.

She wished to thank all of the officers who helped with the review, the members of the public who contributed their stories and the review consultant.

The Chairman commented he felt it was an excellent piece of work that straddled across a number of Panel remits.

Councillor Gerry Curran commented with regard to recommendation 1. He stated that any full in-depth study / review on Boat Dwellers and River Travellers within our area should take into account the Council's bio-diversity and use of the river by the general public.

The Chairman commented that the Council should also be mindful of the work of the River Regeneration Trust.

Councillor Dave Laming addressed the Panel. He informed them that he had recently received a letter from the Canal & Rivers Trust that enquired how they could work with the River Regeneration Trust and have a joining of assets. He added that 1,000 residential moorings were required for the area.

Councillor Brian Simmons proposed that the recommendations as printed be passed to the relevant Cabinet Members.

Councillor Gerry Curran seconded the proposal.

The Corporate Policy Manager for Equality stated that as the recommendations were not going to be discussed by the Panel but were being forwarded, as written, to Cabinet, she needed assure herself that the Panel were fully aware of the implications of the report's findings.

The Chairman replied that at this stage it was the Panel's role to make recommendations and was confident of a fuller debate when the decision making element was played out.

Councillor Ben Stevens, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development suggested that as part of the process officers could be invited to a discussion at informal Cabinet.

Councillor Gerry Curran asked where the figure for 1,000 residential moorings came from.

Councillor Dave Laming replied that the figure came from the Canal & Rivers Trust.

Councillor Brian Simmons asked if a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) had been agreed with the Canal & Rivers Trust.

Councillor Dave Laming replied that a meeting had been agreed with the Canal & Rivers Trust and that a MoU had been agreed between Wessex Water and the River Regeneration Trust.

11 PROJECT DELIVERY UPDATE

Councillor Eleanor Jackson addressed the Panel on the options for the future use of the Victoria Hall, Radstock. A copy of her statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

She stated that two years ago the Major Projects department tried to get the building converted into a business hub on the strength of money allocated in the 2011 budget for economic regeneration in Radstock.

She said that this plan was abandoned in the face of general outrage, channelled by her, and a decision was taken at Cabinet on 11 July 2012 that it should remain in community use with 'meeting rooms, exhibition space and relocation of the town library into the building'. She welcomed the decision and waited for the full results of the public consultation (316 responses) which never came.

She informed them that on 14 November 2012 (Ref E2458) Cabinet authorised the necessary measures to achieve this, following a feasibility study, with the installation of a new lift, and relocation of the library and the sale of the caretaker's house. In December she said that she met the architect with Cllr Crossley and Cllr Bellotti and reminded them that Radstock Town Council were interested in moving back into the library.

She added that refurbishment to this plan would have cost about £875,000 and that she had found two potential purchasers for the library when she was told that community groups would be contacted 'in due course'.

She questioned why Cllr Crossley was mysteriously afflicted with amnesia and declared there was no alternative to the commercialisation of the priceless heritage building.

She acknowledged that a revenue stream from a commercial rent was an attractive proposition, but still felt that Radstock was the loser as the hours of availability and the facilities would be very limited compared with previous use.

She stated that there had been a total absence of any consideration of an Equalities Impact (especially on the young people using the garden, some of whom are

disabled) and it was not right to switch suddenly to a totally different (commercial) plan without reference to the community.

She concluded by requesting the Panel to monitor the project carefully – and for the Cabinet and officers to apologise for the destruction of a unique Victorian interior in the name of progress.

Councillor Gerry Curran asked why new bus shelters were not put in place while the previous work on the High Street, Bath took place.

The Senior Project Manager replied that they were subject to a separate future planning application.

Councillor Mathew Blankley asked if the plans for the extension to the Newbridge Park & Ride were due to be submitted by the end of the month. The Senior Project Manager replied that they were.

Councillor Ben Stevens, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development commented that the Co-working Hub situated at The Guildhall had 12 businesses currently using the facilities and were aiming to raise that number to 30. He added that a launch event was being planned for September.

12 BATH ENTERPRISE AREA / CITY DEAL

The Acting Divisional Director for Regeneration Skills and Employment gave a presentation to the Panel regarding this item. A copy can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

Policy target to deliver 6,700 new jobs in Bath city centre, most of this growth will be accommodated in the Bath Enterprise Area.

Enterprise Area Key Facts:

Covers 98 hectares

36 hectares of developable land, 25% of which is in Council ownership

65,000sqm of new office space in Bath Central Area

7,000 gross new jobs

£343m of GVA pa

3,600 new homes as contributing to Core Strategy targets

Protection for existing industrial locations at Locksbrook & Brassmill

Main focus for the Creative, ICT, and Financial and Business Services jobs needing new business quarters in and adjoining city centre

Emerging plans include:

New Residential Quarter – already delivering at Bath Riverside

Innovation Quarter – Three sites coming forward aimed at the city's creative and high tech businesses (Bath Quays North (BQN), Bath Quays South (BQS) and Manvers Street)

BQS: Developer interest to deliver creative workspace

BQN: Interest from Dyson Plc to deliver 200ksqm R&D (contribute over 1,300 new jobs and £110m in GVA pa)

BQN: Developer interest from Adapt Properties and Stirling

Manvers Street: Interest from Cubex to provide accommodation to retain BMT in the city

City Gateway – Plans are emerging for Green Park Station and BWR East

Sainsburys: Proposed new supermarket

Pinesgate: Ediston are developing plans

St James West: Plans are being developed to deliver student accommodation

Industrial Quarter – Aimed at the city's high value engineering and manufacturing sector

Roseberry Place: Developer interest to deliver residential/student accommodation on site next to BWR

Twerton Mill: Application for student accommodation

We have a plan to address challenges that includes:

Strategic flood mitigation

Land remediation

Transportation infrastructure

A more detailed strategy is being developed in the Placemaking Plan to enable delivery and secure funding.

Outcomes:

4,200 Homes = £38m in New Homes Bonus over 20 years

9,200 Jobs = £400m uplift in GVA per annum

New Commercial Floor Space under City Deal = Business Rate Uplift (£4.2m per annum uplift, £70.6m over 25years)

For the Council:

Delivery Corporate Policy and Aspirations

Align Council objectives

Greater certainty of income

For the Community:

Certainty of development

Reassurance of what is protected

Opportunity to contribute to shaping their place

For Developers:

Viable development opportunities

A clear vision, with specific design and infrastructure requirements

Reduced risk and greater certainty of delivery

Bath Sites:

Bath at the moment is a collection of sites with no inter-relationship

Brownfield land remediation – 200 years of contamination

Flood mitigation – significant parts of the EA within Flood Zone 3

Roads & bridges – to unify the area without contributing to congestion having regard to the extra 7000 vehicles in B&NES since 2001

Pedestrian routes & public realm – to increase permeability, pedestrian and cycle activity, access to the riverside and social interaction and dwell-time in public spaces

Park & ride expansion / transit routes – to encourage organic modal shift

Funding secured to date

Already secured funding through RIF to deliver:

£5m for flood mitigation works

£2m for pedestrian footbridge

£4m for removal of gasometers

However, further funding is required

Spatial Framework:

The strategy is essential to enable us to compete within the WoE and nationally for scarce Government funding

Example of other areas that have secured funding:

Bristol Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone

£20.9m of Revolving Infrastructure Fund

£2.8m Inward Investment Fund (BIS, HCA)

£11.3m HCA funding

Funding they have applied for include:

£70m for additional transport infrastructure to deliver the 17,000 jobs

£55m station enhancement from Network Rail to deal with capacity as a result of EZ (masterplan to begin in October)

£45m RGF money for Arena

£60m for an Energy masterplan from European Funding

Bristol are looking to appoint a Funding Strategist who will be a dedicated resource to find and apply for funding

Birmingham Enterprise Zone

£450m transformation project

Emphasis on creative industries, digital media, professional and financial services (similar to Bath)

£125m investment raised

Emerging Strategy:

Will pull emerging plans together

Provide planning certainty

Target funding
Provide developer certainty
Ensure delivery

Councillor Gerry Curran asked if he expand more on the term 'planning certainty' as the Council aspiration for sites does not always match up with the owners of those sites.

The Acting Divisional Director for Regeneration Skills and Employment replied that planning was at the heart of their work alongside the Placemaking Plan and the Core Strategy. He added that developers want certainty as much as the Council do so we are working with them to find a fit for our vision.

All nine of the developments sit along the river corridor

£100k been allocated provisionally to deliver River Strategy

A proportion of this could be used to deliver the objectives of the Bath Enterprise Area

Our strategy will be more integrated / aligned with:

River Strategy

Transport Strategy

Environmental Strategy

Connectivity Strategy including Broadband

Growth Incentive deal summary:

Government will:

"Provide a licensed exemption from the effects of the resets and levies of the local government finance system in five Enterprise Areas over 25 years (starting April 2014), enabling the West of England to retain 100% of business rates growth in these areas."

Local authorities will:

"Pool the business rate growth from these five Enterprise Areas alongside that from the existing Enterprise Zone, generating a significant financial contribution to the £1bn West of England Economic Development Fund."

LEP will:

"Deliver a £1bn programme of investment from the Economic Development Fund to unlock and accelerate economic growth in the West of England."

City Deal:

1. The pooled business rates from the EZ and EAs will have three primary calls upon it. To make sure, as far as is reasonably and practically possible, that no individual council is worse off under the growth incentive deal than they would be had it not taken place. To meet the costs of operating the pool and the growth incentive proposition and any contingency for safety nets. (Tier 1)

2. To invest up to £500m in the £1 billion Economic Development Fund, and through it unlocking the infrastructure investment required to generate additional economic growth. (Tier 2)
3. To support each council's budget in meeting some of the additional demographical pressures growth may bring with it to be distributed on a simple formula basis to support revenue pressures - such as in social care, arising from demographic changes. (Tier 3)

Economic Development Fund:

Provides up to £500M to fund projects which accelerate growth in WoE
 Total £1bn of investment with other funding streams e.g. RIF, Transport etc.
 All EDF Projects subject to Governance and Approval by LEP Board
 Subject to availability of funds in the business rate pool
 To Fund Approved Infrastructure and Related Borrowing Costs
 Projects to be put forward by Lead Authority (indicative list being developed)
 Borrowing underwritten by Lead Authority

Delivery Timetable: Needs to be appropriately phased in conjunction with other sites.

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones asked what level of stress was being placed upon the Council to achieve the aspirations of the Enterprise Area.

The Acting Divisional Director for Regeneration Skills and Employment replied that a fiscal boundary had been drawn up by the Local Authorities to assess risk and that the figures quoted were conservative.

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel thanked him for his presentation.

13 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel. He suggested that the reports on Council Land Availability and London Road Regeneration be added to the agenda for the September meeting.

The other members of the Panel agreed with this proposal.

The meeting ended at 7.15 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

HOUSING AND MAJOR PROJECTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday, 17th September, 2013

Present:- Councillors Nathan Hartley (Chair), Steve Hedges, Brian Simmons, Gerry Curran and June Player

Also in attendance: Derek Quilter (Divisional Director for Project Management), Graham Sabourn (Head of Housing) and Jessica Turner (Project Co-ordinator)

14 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

15 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Ben Stevens, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development sent his apologies to the Panel.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

18 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

19 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

David Redgewell made a statement to the Panel. He said that he was happy to report that the bus stops outside the train station were now operational, all of the signalled pedestrian crossings were working and the disabled toilets within the bus station were now accessible. He commented that it remained a minefield to resolve issues at the stations due to their convoluted management set-up and wished to thank the Chief Executive of the Council for her help in finding solutions to the problems he had raised.

The Chairman thanked him for his statement and asked for the minutes of the meeting to be passed to the Cabinet Member for Transport and the Chair of the Planning, Transport & Environment Panel.

20 MINUTES - 23RD JULY 2013

Councillor June Player asked for her apologies to be recorded for the meeting on July 23rd 2013.

The Panel were unable to confirm the minutes of the previous meeting and asked that they be deferred until the next meeting.

21 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning, Councillor Tim Ball addressed the Panel.

Customer Excellence Standard

He said that Housing Services had achieved the Customer Excellence Standard for the third consecutive year. He commented that achieving the standard was important because it demonstrated to the service, partners and customers that they place a lot of importance on getting things right for customers.

He added that the assessor found clear evidence that Housing Services actively use the Standard as a tool for continuous improvement. She said that the consultation on proposals for an Additional Licensing Scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation was an excellent example of how they are using customer insight to inform policy and strategy. She also praised the proactive approach taken in reviewing the 'Homesearch' Scheme which has led to considerable all round benefits and noted that across the whole service they put customers first.

Energy@Home Starter Project

He advised the panel of a new initiative by Housing services and partners, known as the Energy@Home Starter Project which aims to improve the energy efficiency of a number of homes across B&NES and is expected to run until August 2014.

The project includes grants towards solid wall insulation in parts of Twerton and Southdown and fully funded basic heating and insulation measures for residents on certain benefits across the Authority. The majority of funding for the project comes from a £200,000 grant from Scottish and Southern Energy Company which is targeted on the 15% most deprived areas in the Country – hence the focus on parts of Twerton & Southdown.

Housing Prosecutions

Housing Services recently prosecuted three landlords. The prosecutions were as a result of Council inspections which uncovered poor property conditions for tenants, dangerous fire precautions, inadequate heating, broken window panes, and mould, amongst many other problems. Bath Magistrates handed out a combined total of

£16,500 worth of fines and costs against the landlords. So far this year Housing Services have now prosecuted 6 landlords and given 2 simple cautions, which used to be known as a formal caution. This clearly demonstrates the Council's commitment to the national campaign of stamping out rogue landlords that the Council recently signed up to.

Homelessness Figures

He commented that colleagues may have read in the national press the number of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation by English Councils has increased by around 9% in the last year. He was pleased to confirm that this Council had not experienced this trend and indeed numbers had actually dropped. He informed them that while the national rate of households in temporary accommodation is 2.49 households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households, the rate in Bath & North East Somerset the rate is only 0.27 households. He said he would be keeping a close eye on these figures and would provide further updates if required.

Councillor Nathan Hartley asked if an update was available regarding the Core Strategy.

Councillor Tim Ball replied that the Inspector was to be provided with information on the 5 prospective Green Field sites. He added these were in South Stoke, Weston, Whitchurch and Keynsham (x2).

Councillor Nathan Hartley asked what the next stages in the process were.

Councillor Tim Ball replied that the Inspector was due to report next week if he felt the planned hearings for November / December could take place. He added that he hoped to be in a position to bring the matter back to Full Council in January.

Councillor Nathan Harley asked for a brief update on the issue of Empty Homes.

The Head of Housing replied that at the start of this piece of work there were around 650 – 700 properties identified and that the figure now has reduced to around 500. He added that due to a change in the way Council Tax data is recorded it was only now possible to collect information on properties that had been empty for two years.

Councillor Nathan Hartley asked for Councillor Ball to send his update to the Democratic Services Officer and suggested that Chairs and Vice-Chairs discuss the matter of Cabinet Member Updates further at their next meeting.

22 LOWER BRISTOL ROAD GYPSY & TRAVELLERS SITE UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning, Councillor Tim Ball gave an update to the Panel regarding this item. He stated though that this would be the last time he would do so as he would take any further updates solely to the Planning, Transport & Environment Scrutiny Panel.

He said that progress was being made and that an application relating to the site was nearing completion. He informed them that after further surveys were carried out

relating to the contours of the site and the need for vehicle turning space the application that will be submitted will be for five permanent pitches and 5 transit pitches.

He added that the Council had a legal responsibility for two families on site and that if possible the intention was to let them remain on the site whilst it is under development.

Councillor Nathan Hartley asked if any other sites had come forward.

Councillor Tim Ball replied that another site for two pitches had been proposed in Whitchurch.

Councillor Steve Hedges asked why the Council was not responsible for the other people on the site.

Councillor Tim Ball replied that there were very specific legal categories that the travellers had to be in to remain on the site. He added that a further survey of occupants would take place next week.

23 PROJECT DELIVERY UPDATE

The Divisional Director for Project Management introduced this item to the Panel.

Councillor Steve Hedges commented that he felt that the bollards that were in place on the road at St. Gregory's while the new 6th Form Centre was under construction worked really and would like to see them in place permanently.

The Divisional Director for Project Management replied that the main bollard was now in place on site and that the school was meeting with officers from Highways to discuss further options.

Councillor June Player asked why only a temporary measure appeared to be in place for the disabled access between Bath Western Riverside and the car park of Homebase.

The Divisional Director for Project Management replied that he would ask an officer to approach Crest on the matter.

Councillor June Player asked for best practise to be carried out during the next phase of the site, especially with regard to Curo properties.

Councillor Gerry Curran replied that the Council should be mindful of these issues when the reserve matters are brought before them.

He then wished to comment on the Bath Flood Mitigation. He commented that the removal of trees should always be considered the last resort in this process.

The Divisional Director for Project Management replied that he was conscious of that and the team were working with ecologists to limit this.

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones commented that some concern had been raised in Keynsham about a possible surge there due to the measures proposed for Bath.

The Divisional Director for Project Management replied that there should not be any concerns over a possible surge as the Environment Agency will not accept any measures unless they are completely satisfied. He added the planning application was due towards the end of 2013.

He said that as part of the Keynsham Regeneration Project a new consultation was underway to find a public piece of art with a steering group made up of members of the public.

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones asked how many accesses were planned for the Somerdale site.

The Divisional Director for Project Management replied that an application was due before the Development Control Committee later in the month and that one access to the site would be requested.

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones suggested that the homes planned on the former MoD sites should be built to a higher density.

Councillor Gerry Curran replied that that was a matter for the Local Development Framework Steering Group.

Councillor Steve Hedges commented that if the density was increased by 10% it would alleviate the need to use some of the proposed Green Field sites.

24 LONDON ROAD REGENERATION

The Project Co-ordinator for London Road Regeneration introduced this item to the Panel. She informed them that in June 2012 the Cabinet approved the project framework and governance structure for a £750,000 London Road Regeneration Project. She added that in 2013 an additional £250,000 was allocated to the project, this had been provisionally allocated in the 2014/15 budget, but was re-phased for 2013/14 to enable spend in line with the project programme.

In April 2012 the Gateway Group was formed, it includes local residents, representatives from the local business community and the two ward members. The group proposed two schemes to the project team, a landscaping scheme and a property improvement grant scheme. These schemes were both agreed for progression.

Councillor Nathan Hartley asked if there was a completion date for the project.

The Project Co-ordinator replied that the project had now entered the detailed design phase and that work was due on site in mid-January. She added that work was scheduled to take approximately five months to complete.

The Divisional Director for Project Management replied that there was no timeframe for the completion of the project in terms of spending the funds.

Councillor Gerry Curran asked if there had been a good take up of the property improvement grant scheme.

The Project Co-ordinator replied that 24 grants have been offered.

Councillor Gerry Curran commented that he hoped people would not be put off by the fact they would have to gain Listed Building Consent. He also asked if they anticipated much traffic disruption was anticipated.

The Project Co-ordinator replied that a dedicated Listed Buildings Officer had been assigned to the project to deal with queries from the public. She added that works involving the road will look to avoid peak hours.

25 COUNCIL LAND AVAILABILITY

This report was deferred to a future meeting.

26 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel. He suggested that the Homeseach Update be moved from future items to the November meeting.

The other members of the Panel agreed with this proposal.

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

| Bath & North East Somerset Council | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| MEETING: | Housing & Major Projects Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel | |
| MEETING DATE: | 19th November 2013 | EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: |
| | | E 2554 |
| TITLE: | Recommendations Response to Boat Dwellers & River Travellers Task & Finish Group | |
| WARD: | All | |
| AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM | | |
| <p>List of attachments to this report:</p> <p>Appendix 1: Final Report Appendix 2: Recommendations Response table Appendix 3: Equalities Impact Assessment</p> | | |

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 At the Housing and Major Projects Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (HMP) on Tuesday 20th November 2012 the Panel received an update on Boat and Mobile Home Dwellers from the Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning, which included a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and the Canals and River Trust.

1.2 The Panel were asked to consider if they wished to undertake any policy review work on this matter and if they would support the MOU. It was agreed at this meeting that there were a number of issues that still needed further investigation and that the Panel should undertake some Task and Finish Group work to explore some of these issues further and report back to the Panel.

1.3 At the Panel meeting on Tuesday 23rd July 2013 the Panel received a report and considered draft recommendations. The agreed documents were forwarded to Cabinet members for their considered response.

2 RECOMMENDATION

At the Housing & Major Projects Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel on the 19th November 2013, the Panel are asked to:-

2.1 Consider the Recommendations Response Table completed by Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning, Tim Ball; Wellbeing Cabinet Member Simon Allen, the Cabinet member for Sustainable Development Ben Stevens and Leader of Council Paul Crossley.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

3.1 The review was completed within the resources available to the Housing & Major Projects Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

4.1 Equalities issues were considered by the Panel as part of their work in formulating the scope of this proposed investigation and further equalities work was undertaken during the course of consultation and formulation of the final recommendations. Appendix 3 provides the full Equalities Impact Assessment for this work

5 THE REPORT

5.1 The full report for this review is attached at Appendix 1.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 Appendix 2 provides the Recommendations Response Table for this work

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 None

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 Ward Councillors; Cabinet Member; Parish Councils; Town Councils; Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels; Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Local Residents; Community Interest Groups; Stakeholders/Partners; Other Public Sector Bodies; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Contact person | Liz Richardson / Emma Bagley ext: 6053/ 6410 |
| Background papers | <p>Terms of reference agreed at the 22nd January HMP Panel meeting.</p> <p>Minutes from the 14th May Housing & Major Projects Panel Meeting</p> <p>Draft Memorandum of Understanding (Presented by Cllr Tim Ball at the 20th November 2012 Housing & Major Projects Panel meeting</p> |

| | |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Minutes from the 23 rd July Housing & Major Projects Panel Meeting |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format

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**Bath and North East Somerset Council
Boat Dwellers and River Travellers**

**Housing and Major Projects Policy Development
and Scrutiny Panel**

A Task and Finish Group review



July 2013

Review Panel Members

Cllr Eleanor Jackson
Cllr Brian Simmons
Cllr Gerry Curran
Cllr Dave Laming

Service Officers

Ann Robins
Samantha Jones,
Mark Minkley

Lead PDS Project Officer

Donna Vercoe
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Consultant

James Hurley
Director of Built4Life

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Foreword

The Task and Finish Group has undertaken a great deal of work since our terms of reference were formally agreed at the January 2013 Housing and Major Projects Panel. We began by consulting as widely as possible about the situation of those who live afloat, whether on the river or the Kennet and Avon canal. Due to the time constraints of delivery, the study was restricted to the Kennet & Avon canal and stretches of the River Avon between Hanham Lock, Bath and Dundas Wharf, and the panel's own restricted mandate, only considered the questions relating to accommodation and access to council services and facilities including education and healthcare. The Task and Finish Group uncovered significant evidence of how precarious life can be for boat dwellers and the potential for increasing numbers to present themselves to the council as homeless, but also learned of the joys of life afloat and how vibrant communities could be created or enhanced along the waterways. However, it is still unclear how many of the 1,000 or so B&NES residents afloat are there by choice, how many are traditional travelling families and how many are technically homeless, in sub-standard, badly insulated and unsafe boats.

A very useful piece of work undertaken by one of the Task and Finish Group members, highlighted the diverse meanings given to 'boat dwellers' by different organisations and the significance of this. It was important that the Group appreciated the differing definitions whilst also establishing what constitutes a Boat Dweller and River Traveller for this study (See p11)

Members of the Group met with senior executives from the Canal & River Trust (formerly British Waterways) and were disturbed both by their lack of awareness of equalities issues, and by their use of draconian powers to enforce the conditions of the licences they issue to the RU3 category (Page 12) for 'continuous cruising' (moving on every 14 days a distance further than from Bath to Devizes) The dialogue we attempted to establish has been compromised by their expectation that we would endorse their Memorandum of Understanding with boat users and incorporate it into the B&NES Core Strategy. We have serious questions about their MoU, of which they were informed, and consider that it would not be appropriate for B&NES officers to be policing their policies. However, the deadline for additions to the Core Strategy has now passed while their aspirations for a new marina are a matter for Development Control in due course.

One problem we have encountered in our dialogue with Boat Dwellers is their suspicion of officialdom, based on bad experiences in the past. However, a good cross-section of canal and river users came to the open session we held to hear their stories. Others have been in correspondence with us. A wide range of problems emerged from lack of information, lack of benefits (to which some of them are entitled), lack of moorings, exorbitant costs and difficulties with schooling and healthcare. We were disappointed to learn that there are only two designated disabled people's moorings on the Kennett and Avon canal. They also told us of many problems recognisable from the problems of land based tenants, and prejudice towards travelling people. We received detailed answers to our questionnaires which were distributed up and down the canal and river, and a good response from either phone or email. One thing that emerged clearly was how crucial the internet is to them.

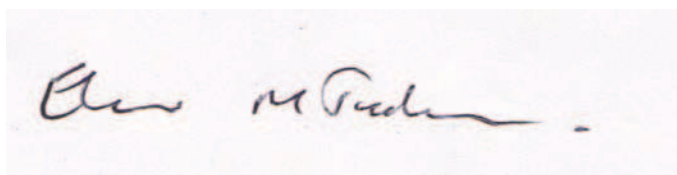
A limitation of the study is that we have not managed to address the problems that riparian residents have with boat users. We would have liked to meet Saltford Parish Council, who contacted us with their concerns, as well as the individuals who have emailed in their views. We visited moorings on the river but we were unable to fulfill our ambition of walking the Kennet and Avon canal. These limitations were a reflection of the time available to conclude the study.

All this has been balanced by excellent desk based research by officers into the existing legal position and conditions of life on our canals and rivers.

We hope that this study will provide a firm foundation for the formulation of a B&NES policy towards Boat Dwellers and River Travellers, including a code of good practice which the Council can use to support its dealings with its residents afloat and their 'landlords'. We believe that Through our research into best practice, we would also be the first Council to undertake future in-depth review work on Boat Dwellers & River Travelers.

We gratefully acknowledge the support we received from the various B&NES Departments who helped us collate the information that we needed and from all of the local Boat Dwellers and River Traveller respondents and participants. We would also like to thank the Canal & River Trust for taking the time to come and speak to the Task and Finish Group and the Kanda Boating Community for allowing us to advertise the work that we were doing though their website.

Once again, may we thank all of those who have participated in the production of this report, especially the council officers and the local Boat Dwelling Community who got in contact with us to share their views and experiences of living on the river and canal. We hope this will be only the start of a constructive dialogue with all stakeholders.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eleanor Jackson', written on a light-colored background.

Cllr Eleanor Jackson Chair of Task and Finish Group

Housing & Major Projects Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel

Tables & Charts

Tables

1. B&NES Residential Use Categories for aligning the definitions of Boat Dwellers and River Travellers
2. Canal & River Trust Boat Owners Survey (boat dweller profile trends)

Bar Graphs

1. The Working status of Boat Dwellers and River Travellers captured through case study research
2. The Canal & River Trust Boat owner survey (2011)

Recommendations

The recommendations below have been collated in a summary format. The supporting background evidence for each can be found within the report findings.

Note: for the purposes of the Task and Finish Group findings, the term 'access' refers to the needs and issues of requiring access to facilities and services, (Social, Economic, Health & Wellbeing etc.)

Recommendation 1

The Task and Finish Group recommend that to inform future Council Policy direction a full in-depth study/ review on Boat Dwellers and River Travellers within our area should be undertaken, using the supporting evidence and findings contained within this report as a baseline for further investigation.

and as part of that in-depth study and review the TFG recommend that :-

1.1 The Definition used by the TFG as part of their investigations should be consulted on as part of the next phase of in-depth review work and for consideration for future B&NES wider policy definition. This should include conversations with all the different Authorities within the AINA (*The Association of Inland Navigation Authorities*) to agree a standard terminology.

This would ensure that all stakeholders know what and about whom everyone is talking with the consequent benefits of there being shared common language.

1.2 That the best practice methods undertaken by both Oxford Council (mooring policy and partnership work) and Wiltshire Council (who have linked its policies directed towards River Travellers with those towards gypsy travellers) be introduced in order to inform future policy direction.

The Council should work together with them and any other interested neighbouring authorities to build a consistent approach through the development of a liaison committee or similar forum. This should be co-ordinated with our current Gypsy and Traveller Strategy Group work.

1.3 That the Council investigates and identifies the barriers to services and facilities for vulnerable people along the waterways

These findings could feed into the work the Council is doing on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Review, the Homelessness Strategy and the Gypsy and Travellers Strategy work but would be important in their own right.

1.4 That the Council continues to establish an open- ended dialogue between boat dwellers and the Council, to establish clear communication channels.

This should investigate whether improvements can be made to:-

- a.) Our current B&NES Website, to improve access to key information for Boat Dwellers, for example; greater advertisement of the Council Connect service.
- b.) Relations with the Canal & River Trust. (such as the opportunity to use of their notice boards to advertise Council services)
- c.) The communications between local Ward Councilors and Boat Dwellers resident in their wards.

Recommendation 2

B&NES Council should not support recommendations to endorse the Canal & River Trust Mooring Strategy, until and unless we have been assured they are compliant with their legal obligations under the Equality Act and will not conflict with Council policy.

This would need to be timely to feed into the current Mooring Strategy that is being developed and before there is any endorsement of the draft Memorandum of Understanding developed between the Council and the Canal & River Trust which was presented to the Housing & Major Projects Panel in November 2012.

Recommendation 3

Future B&NES Council spatial planning requirements to deliver more dwellings, which have so far been increased through major housing developments, should also include the needs of people living on the waterways in Bath & North East Somerset.

This should include the following:-

3.1 Further Investigations to determine the feasibility of all major developments along the river or canal incorporating a pontoon landing stage with ready access to potable water and 240volt power as well as in close proximity to a public footpath, highway and waste disposal for use by River Travellers (RU3 & RU4) for a maximum 2-day stay and policed by Canal & River Trust as part of an approved Mooring Strategy in B&NES. These will also serve as short-stay visitor moorings.

3.2 Request that all off-line marina and mooring basin developments incorporate a maximum 14-day stay pontoon for River Travellers (RU3) for a minimum of three average length narrow boats as part of the planning approval process and policed by Canal & River Trust as part of an approved Mooring Strategy in B&NES. These are in addition to short-stay visitor moorings.

3.3 Determine whether all off-line marina and mooring basin developments can could reasonably be required to include a minimum of 10% of total berths to be allocated to Boat Dwellers whether or not they are RU1, RU2, RU4 or RU5.

3.4 To determine the scale and scope of the need and numbers of types of moorings and establish the current and further demands of moorings in the B&NES area.

This will need to be timed to feed into the current Mooring Strategy which is currently being developed

Recommendation 4

The findings within this report support the work of the River Corridor Group's future vision of regenerating the river. We recommend that the planned future B&NES River Strategy includes:-

4.1 The consideration of the needs and issues of our local Boat Dwellers and River Travellers within its initial evidence base.

4.2 Representation from the Housing & Major Projects Panel on The River Regeneration Trust (formerly the River Corridor Group) to ensure clear lines of communication between the Council and the Trust.

Introduction & background to investigations

At the Housing and Major Projects Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (HMP) on 20 November 2012 the Panel received an update on Boat Dwellers from the Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning, which included a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and the Canal & River Trust. The Panel was asked to consider if they wished to undertake any policy review work on this matter and if they would support the MOU. It was agreed at this meeting that there were a number of issues that still needed further investigation and that the Panel should undertake some Task and Finish Group work to explore some of these issues further and report back to the Panel in 2013.

The issues surrounding Boat Dwellers & River Travellers impact directly on the wards through which the River Avon and canals flow; however these waterways are accessed by all sections of society and as they require schooling, medical care and utilities, their needs impact on other B&NES residents.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that there has been an increase over recent years in the numbers of people opting to become Boat Dwellers due to the lack of affordable housing available in certain areas and this has placed pressure on the River Avon and canals due to the lack of available mooring space within the district – the Canal & River Trust (CRT estimate this need to be more than 1,000 moorings. For example, a recent BBC news item focused on the problems of a family moored at Limpley Stoke and the rising costs of canal moorings. The TFG wished to verify this situation.

Purpose & Objective

The Task and Finish Group agreed to investigate the common needs and requirements of Boat Dwellers and River Travellers along the River Avon (*Hanham Lock to Dundas Wharf*) and the Kennet & Avon Canal in Bath & North East Somerset. This would provide the HMP Panel with enough information to make recommendations to Cabinet for both practical measures such as the development of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Boat Dwellers & River Travellers, through their representative organisations, and for future policy development.

The study set out to support the work carried out by the River Corridor Group (now The River Regeneration Trust) and their vision for the future River Avon and also link to the current Core Strategy¹, specifically the requirement to deliver more dwellings, which have so far been increased through large housing developments and not yet by marinas and increased moorings for people living on the waterways in Bath & North East Somerset.

It is also important that work on the river is integrated with B&NES other policies, such as tourism, education, social care, health, economic wellbeing and 'housing'. For example, in Birmingham and

¹ In the 2011 Core Strategy Draft as presented to the Planning Inspector, Policy CP10 Housing Mix para 6.80 page 124 applies though river homes are not specifically mentioned and it could also be argued that policy CP7 Green Infrastructure applies par 6.58 on p 119. The findings of the Group should be useful in the further development of policy in the Local Development Framework and Placemaking stages.

Oxford the canal and river systems contribute substantially to housing students, and reducing HMO problems.

The Task and Finish Group set out to produce a report that contributes to a better understanding of the issues presented by and facing Boat Dwellers and River Travellers. It sets out information currently available and what further data and information is still needed. This will then feed into the draft MOU and future policy development including the planned B&NES River Strategy.

Methodology

The Task and Finish Group attempted to gather as much research and provide as many engagement opportunities as possible within the allocated 3-4 months. Therefore the findings within this report simply provide a snapshot of currently available data from February – May 2013. The Task and Finish Group decided to do this by means of the following :

1. By researching what work has already been undertaken by other local authorities and statutory/ voluntary bodies to use as best practice for future review work i.e. reviewing the findings from the recent B&NES Gypsy, Traveller, Boater, Showman and Roma, Health Needs Survey (2012 – 2013)
2. By investigating the different definitions used by the different bodies who are linked to the local boating community
3. By Arranging a meeting to talk to the Canal & River Trust
4. By Submitting press release to the local boating community containing an invitation to engage with the Task and Finish Group
5. By undertaking a focus group with some members of the local boating community
6. By compiling a number of case studies which invited members of the local boating community to share their issues, concerns and positive things about living along the River Avon, which has helped to inform and shape the future recommendations for this review.
7. By inviting phone calls and emails from local boaters and River Travellers to share their views and experiences.
8. By visiting were undertaken along the stretch of the River Avon including a visit to Chandos Lodge near Hanham Lock.

Equalities Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was completed as part of the scrutiny process. Adverse impacts were identified and have been justified/mitigated (See Appendix 1 for the full Equalities Impact Assessment).

FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH & ENGAGEMENT

Recommendation 1

The Task and Finish Group recommend that to inform future Council Policy direction a full in-depth study/ review on Boat Dwellers and River Travellers within our area should be undertaken using the supporting evidence and findings contained within this report as a baseline for further investigation.

And as part of that in-depth study and review the TFG recommend that :-

1.1 The Definition used by the TFG as part of their investigations should be consulted on as part of the next phase of in-depth review work and for consideration for future B&NES wider policy definition. This should include conversations with all the different Authorities within the AINIA (*The Association of Inland Navigation Authorities*) to agree a standard terminology.

This would ensure that all stakeholders know what and about whom everyone is talking with the consequent benefits of there being shared common language.

There are a number of definitions of Boat Dwellers or River Travellers to be found in many sources and with occasionally conflicting terminology. It has been necessary for the Task and Finish Group to acknowledge these differing definitions whilst also defining what constitutes a Boat Dweller or River Traveller. This is in order to make sense of future policy, services and support to those people who use a vessel in B&NES for residential use, whether or not it is permanently or seasonally moored, or they are a temporary visitor travelling along the waterways.

Our research has identified a number of relevant waterway organisations with different definitions relating to people who live on their boats, whether or not they have a permanent residential mooring or are travelling the inland waterways: For example:

- Waterways World refers to **liveaboard boaters, boat dwellers, travellers** and **nomadic people**.
- The National Barge Travellers Association refer to **itinerant boat dwellers**, that is anyone whose home is a boat and who does not have a permanent mooring for their boat with planning permission for residential use, i.e. they are travelling boat dwellers without a permanent residential mooring.

- The Residential Boat Owners' Association represents **residential boaters**, that is people who have chosen to make a boat their home whether that boat is static or cruises; are based inland or on the coast; have a permanent or temporary mooring (whether residential or not) or continuously cruise.
- The Low Impact Living Aboard refers to **liveaboard boaters**.
- The Kennet and Avon Boating Community refers to **continuous cruisers, liveaboards, travellers, boaters, liveaboard boaters**.
- Canal & River Trust and Canal & River Trust Marina Limited both refer to **live aboard status** for **full residential** permanent moorings with residential planning permission for 365 days per year that may also have a CRT Houseboat Certificate. CRT also refers to **Grade 1 non-residential** moorings without live aboard status but where stays on boats summer and winter is an expectation.
- The Environment Agency (EA) only recognises recreational use of water and not for housing, residential use of vessels or residential craft. They refer to short stay and service moorings.
- The Broads Authority refers to **residential boaters**.
- The Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) refers to different types of **residential use** of vessels:

*“Although it is a minor use of inland waterways, **residential use** is recognised as making a valuable contribution to the multi-functional use and long-term sustainability of the waterway network, particularly on those navigations where it is part of the cultural heritage.” AINA, 2009*

The Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) has a membership that represents the collective views of the twenty one different navigation authorities who are responsible for navigation on the inland waterways of Great Britain, amounting to over 80,000 craft. AINA members include Canal & River Trust (CRT) and the Environment Agency (EA) which is especially relevant to the inland waterways of B&NES.

The Boat Dwellers and River Travellers Task and Finish Group believe that by adopting AINA definitions, we would be using the most appropriate terminology approved by all AINA members including the CRT and EA. This will logically differentiate between those people who live on their boats on the inland waterways as well as by temporary mooring type. It also represents the population that the Task and Finish Group are primarily interested in; ‘Boat Dwellers’ and ‘River Travellers’ whose main (primary) residence is a boat, vessel or floating structure, whether or not capable of navigation or on a designated mooring, or as a second home where they live for extended periods, or they are travelling the inland waterways continuously or seasonally.

The definitions of **residential use** that AINA refers to can be categorised into five types:

- RU1. Where someone lives aboard their vessel (**capable of navigation**) at a designated mooring base, basin or marina, who may periodically go cruising and return
- RU2. Where someone lives aboard their vessel (**not capable of navigation**) at a designated mooring base, basin or marina
- RU3. Where someone lives aboard their vessel and **continuously cruises** the network, with no designated mooring at a base, basin or marina
- RU4. Where someone lives aboard their vessel at a designated mooring base, basin or marina in winter, but continuously cruises in summer (**seasonal cruisers**)
- RU5. Where someone lives aboard a purpose-built floating structure (**not capable of navigation**) at a designated mooring base, basin or mooring

For the purpose of this review, the Task and Finish Group adopted the residential use categories above and attempted to align them with the differing definitions of relevant inland waterway organisations included in our survey:

Table 1

| B&NES Residential Use Categories | Alignment of Others' Definitions |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RU1 | boat dwellers, residential boaters, live aboard status, full residential |
| RU2 | residential boaters |
| RU3 | bargee travellers, itinerant boat-dwellers, continuous cruisers, live aboard boaters, live aboards, travellers, nomadic people, residential boaters |
| RU4 | residential boaters, live aboard boaters |
| RU5 | residential boaters |

2. Best Practice

Recommendation 1.2: That the best practice methods undertaken by both Oxford Council (mooring policy and partnership work) and Wiltshire Council (who have linked its policies directed towards River Travellers with those towards gypsy travellers) be introduced in order to inform future policy direction.

The Council should work together with them and any other interested neighbouring authorities to build a consistent approach through the development of a liaison committee or similar forum. This should be co-ordinated with our current Gypsy and Traveller Strategy Group work.

There is very little in-depth research or policy development work that has been undertaken by other Local Authorities on Boat Dwellers nationally, the only two that the Task and Finish Group could find, and use as a yardstick were the developments that Oxford Council have made within their mooring policy and partnership work, and Wiltshire Council who have linked its policies directed towards river travellers with those towards gypsy travellers:-

The developments that Oxford Council have made in developing their mooring policy for Boat Dwellers could provide some useful advice and guidance on the way forward for future policy direction within B&NES, particularly their Local Agenda 21 Mooring developed by the Boaters community which could offer some useful advice for developing our own Mooring Strategy further.

Oxford Council² proposed a submission for new residential moorings in appropriate off-river basins, after recognising that there was a demand for new residential moorings in Oxford, This was due to limited mooring space deemed suitable for permanent moorings and also a need to balance permanent residential moorings with short-stay visitor moorings, which have an important role in promoting tourism in the city of Oxford.

Oxford developed the Policy HP8 for boat Dwellers, which included an agreement that planning permission will only be granted for new residential moorings in Oxford waterways where;

- *they are provided in off-channel basins*
- *there is adequate servicing including water supply, electricity, and disposal facilities for sewage and rubbish,*
- *any car parking provision complies with the standards for residential development set out in Policy HS15, there is adequate access for emergency vehicles*
- *There will be no significant effect on the amenity, biodiversity or heritage interest of the waterway or surrounding land.*

Oxford City Council has also taken measures to tackle illegally moored boats on the Thames and Oxford canal by joining, and providing £44,000 towards, Unlawfully Moored Boats Enforcement Group -UMBEG. UMBEG is made up of Oxford City Council, the Environment Agency, the Canal & River Trust (CRT) and representatives from Thames Valley Police and landowners.³

The Oxford Local Agenda 21 Mooring⁴ (on the Oxford Canal in Oxford City) is a 'unique arrangement' between British Waterways (now CRT) and the Oxford Boaters' Co-op. These

2

<http://consultation.oxford.gov.uk/consult.ti/SitesHousingProposedSubmission/viewCompoundDoc?docid=2463028&partid=2463828&sessionid=&voteid=&clientuid>

³ (see Waterway Watch (5th March 2012) article: <http://waterwaywatch.org/oxford-illegal-mooring-clampdown-boaters-form-new-group-2/>)

⁴ (Information from: https://www.crtmoorings.com/view_rules.php?id=1803)

moorings were created in order to legitimise and safeguard the way of life which has been developed by the Boaters Community already mooring in the areas covered by the Agenda 21 mooring sites. The Boaters Community in Oxford is a low impact sustainable community that has created a statement of aspirations and guidelines. It is expected that all owners and/or occupiers of Boats on the Agenda 21 moorings will respect and take up these aspirations and abide by these guidelines.

Wiltshire Council has linked its policies directed towards River Travellers with those towards gypsy travellers through including the term “Bargee Travellers” in its Gypsy and Traveller Strategy. This has been looked upon favourably by the boating community as the Gypsy and Traveller Strategy seeks to ensure that travellers have adequate access to council services and that efforts are made to keep travelling communities engaged⁵.

The Kennet and Avon Boating Community (KANDA) believe that “*Wiltshire Council is leading the way amongst local authorities in including “Bargee Travellers” in its Gypsy and Traveller Strategy*”⁶ (published in May 2010). Wiltshire’s Strategy is about ensuring adequate provision of Council services – including the prevention of homelessness – and engagement with travelling communities, in line with the overall KANDA aims of creating strong and resilient communities.

The recent “Boaters’ Voices Project” undertaken by Wiltshire has helped the Council identify and meet the legally required needs of the boating community. One of the biggest concerns raised with Wiltshire Council is protection from enforcement by the Canal & River Trust, which is alleged to be designed either to force Boaters to move off the waterways by making it impossible for them to stay within reach of employment, education for their children etc. If they do not comply, they risk having their boat seized or removed from the water.

5 Demographics of Boat Dwellers within the B&NES area

The numbers of Boat Dwellers and River Travellers

National figures

Nationally there has been no comprehensive survey undertaken of the number of residential boaters as a household group, so we cannot establish the actual percentage of the total housing accommodation in England and Wales that this household group represents⁷. Findings from the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) do suggest that there are 88,267 boats

⁵ This is explained in an article on the Kennet and Avon Boating Community (KANDA) website: <http://kanda.boatingcommunity.org.uk/wordpress/wiltshire-council-traveller-strategy-includes-boaters/>.

⁶ Wiltshire Gypsy and Traveller Strategy 2010 states “*the Strategy therefore includes Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers, as well as Travelling Showpeople, New Travellers, Bargee Travellers, and any other groups with a nomadic lifestyle, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family’s or dependents’ educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently.*”

⁷ AINA Advisory Document on Residential Use of Inland Waterways, page 13

licensed to navigate the inland waterways operated by AINA members. However, only a relatively small proportion of these boats are used as primary places of residence⁸.

During our research we also discovered that the Government has reportedly excluded Boat Dwellers or River Travellers from the two-yearly caravan count which took place on 27 January 2011. This was due to the application of “the relevant Guidance Notes issued by Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

We did find some useful data from the Canal & River Trust bi-annual Boat Owners Survey (2012)⁹ which has been created to monitor the demographic profile of boat owners assess levels of satisfaction, obtain information on boating related behaviour and Identify key areas of improvement for the future.

Profile of Boat Dwellers, (Canal & River Trust) Boat Owners Survey,

The survey was carried out using the internet for the first time, which meant they could contact many more people and achieve a much greater response than in previous years – a total of 3,588. They identified the following information:-

- Two-thirds were aged 55 or over
- Three-quarters are couples, with only 15% travelling with children
- Just under half have annual household incomes under £30k
- Make 15 trips per year
- Travel up to 15 miles per day, cruising for 5-6 hours

Table (2) below indicates some useful national boat dweller percentage profile trends between 2006=2011:

| | | 2011 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|--------------------|------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Age: | 18 – 34 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| | 35 – 54 | 27 | 28 | 36 | 31 | 32 |
| | 55+ | 68 | 67 | 57 | 63 | 62 |
| | Not stated | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Gender: | Male | 79 | 78 | 79 | 81 | 84 |
| | Female | 18 | 21 | 20 | 17 | 14 |
| | Not stated | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Income: | Under £20K | 23 | 23 | 24 | 26 | n/a |
| | £20 – 30K | 18 | 18 | 17 | 23 | n/a |
| | £30 – 50K | 25 | 24 | 24 | 19 | n/a |
| | Over £50K | 23 | 23 | 22 | 18 | n/a |
| | Not stated | 10 | 13 | 13 | 13 | n/a |
| Boat is residence: | Yes | 15 | 17 | 18 | 11 | 13 |
| | No | 85 | 81 | 80 | 89 | 87 |
| | Not stated | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

Local
Figures

Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA), Advisory Document on Residential Use of Inland Waterways, page 12 (September 2010)
<http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/library/1902.pdf>

*Note: question wording change in 2011
 Base: All
 Source: 2009 (Q57, Q58, Q62, Q60, Q32), 2011 (Q52, Q53, Q55, Q14)

The Task and Finish Group found it difficult to determine the local numbers of Boat Dwellers and River Travellers, due to the limited timescale and funds that we had available to achieve a detailed data collection survey . This highlights the need for further survey work to be undertaken, which could provide B&NES Council with detailed demographic data on our area, This will be required before developing any future policy work.

Therefore the Group decided to capture a snapshot of findings which were based on a number of case study forms completed by local Boat Dwellers and River Travellers, alongside emails/phone calls received and visits undertaken. The Task and Finish Group also utilised findings on the Health needs of Boat Dwellers and River Travellers which have recently been captured through the B&NES Health Needs Survey (2012-2013). All of the above provided the Task and Finish Group with a baseline for capturing the demographics of some of the individuals and families living along our rivers in B&NES.



B&NES Demographics (Snapshot Captured April 2013) based on 11 case studies completed by Boat Dwellers and River Travellers (*Hanham Lock, Bath to Dundas Wharf*)

- **Gender:** Male (8)
Female (3)
- **Age:** (Range) 34yrs – 64 yrs
(Median) 38yrs

Family structure

The B&NES Health Needs Survey (2012- 2013) revealed that most Boaters (23/30 = 77%) reported having just one generation (single or couple) living in their boat. Six (20%) respondents were living with children (aged between 4 – 21 years) of which three such respondents were male lone parents with older (teenage-21) children. One family of Boaters reported having 3 generations on board. (No other ethnicities/cultural groups reported 3 generations living together.)

Graph 1 (working status)



Duration of residence - All 11 respondents currently live on a boat and have lived on a boat for longer than a year - 18 months to 17 years. Males overwhelmingly have a longer period of residence on a boat than do women.

Accommodation status

- 7/10 do not have a mooring whilst
- 3/10 have a permanent residential mooring
- 1/10 no response was provided

Findings from the recent B&NES Health Needs Survey found only 6 Boaters (20%) had moorings. Most who responded (14/25 = 56%) said that they move every 2 weeks, while 7/25 (28%) move every 3-4 weeks. Four (all of whom have moorings) said they move throughout the summer for leisure/work purposes. Most who responded (56%) reported a high degree of nomadism by their circumstances and the Canal & River Trust legislation, of moving every 2 weeks.

Lifestyle Choice

- 9/10 said that living on a boat was a lifestyle choice

(1) "Being able to live on the water is very important to me. The pace of life and the community help to keep me sane and the beauty of the changing surroundings means I don't have to worry that I can't afford to pay to go away on holiday, I can just go somewhere straight on the boat."

- 2/10 said that living on a boat was not a lifestyle choice the two reasons stated included

(1) "Too old for Mortgage"
(2) "In a sense it was a lifestyle choice but following a change in my arrangements for caring for my children, canal life became an option for me and certainly preferable to what I could afford in terms of housing in the private sector"

Comparative results with the recent B&NES Health Needs Survey identified that amongst the Boaters that they surveyed, 16/27 (59%) who gave reasons, said they had adopted their current lifestyle as a result of the high cost of living in housing.

4. What the Council and other statutory and voluntary bodies are doing to engage with Boat Dwellers

The Canal & River Trust (formerly British Waterways)

The Task and Finish Group met with senior Executives from the Canal & River Trust (CRT) on the 20th March to get a better insight into the legal obligations, rights and responsibilities and future policy development of the CRT, which could be shared with the group to inform this review.

Some of the key findings and recommendations developed from this meeting include:-

Rights & Responsibilities

- On top of maintaining 2,000 miles of canals and rivers that are often over 200 years-old, they are responsible for an enormous network of bridges, embankments, towpaths, aqueducts, docks and reservoirs alongside everything else that makes up our waterways.
- As part of its asset management plan, the CRT will risk assess all maintenance needs.
- The CRT carries out regular audits along the canal using license numbers. Its latest estimate is that there are 1,000 boats on the canal at any time.
- The CRT has identified a problem with non-compliant boats in B&NES and has a duty of care to sort out these problems. They estimate that about 5-7% have real housing needs, living below the poverty line.

Legal obligations

- The legal status, since its transfer to charitable status in July 2012, has changed the governance structure of the CRT, as it is no longer a public body. All British Waterways' functions and property were transferred to CRT by statutory order in 2011. It has the same responsibilities but a different system of governance because it has become a charity. A significant amount of public money (central government money) has been invested in it but as a charity it can build up local relationships and raise funds.
- The Canal & River Trust revealed that despite there being no duty to have consideration of equalities, CRT considers itself to be covered by the Equalities Act.

Canal & River Trust future policy development

- The CRT is still working on a 10 year vision of the waterways, Further work is needed to relate this vision to areas within the B&NES Core Strategy.
- The CRT has set up a number of advisory groups– Angling, Conservation and Freight.
- CRT is hoping to differentiate long-standing boat-dwellers from new arrivals, issuing Community Mooring Permits to allow longer stays. These cost roughly £1,000 on top of the license (typically £750 pa).
- CRT is also aiming to define ‘navigation’ for the Bath valley area. It is likely to state that a journey of less than 10 miles in one journey is not sufficient to be regarded as navigation. There would also be a requirement to move at least every 14 days.
- Waterways Partnerships have been established to ensure balance for local communities. The partnership covering the Kennet and Avon has been tasked with producing a Moorings Strategy. The first draft of the document is expected in the summer 2013.

At the meeting, the CRT asked that the Group consider endorsing the Moorings Strategy. However, the dialogue that the B&NES Task and Finish Group attempted to establish appears to have been compromised by their expectation that we would endorse their Memorandum of Understanding with boat users and incorporate it into our Core Strategy the Group raised serious questions about the MoU, of which CRT were informed.

Recommendation 2

B&NES Council should not support recommendations to endorse the Canal & River Trust Mooring Strategy, until and unless we have been assured they are compliant with their legal obligations under the Equality Act and will not conflict with Council policy.

This would need to be timed to feed into the current Mooring Strategy which is currently being developed, and before we endorse the draft memorandum of understanding developed between the Council and the Canal & River Trust which came to the Housing & Major Projects Panel in November 2012.

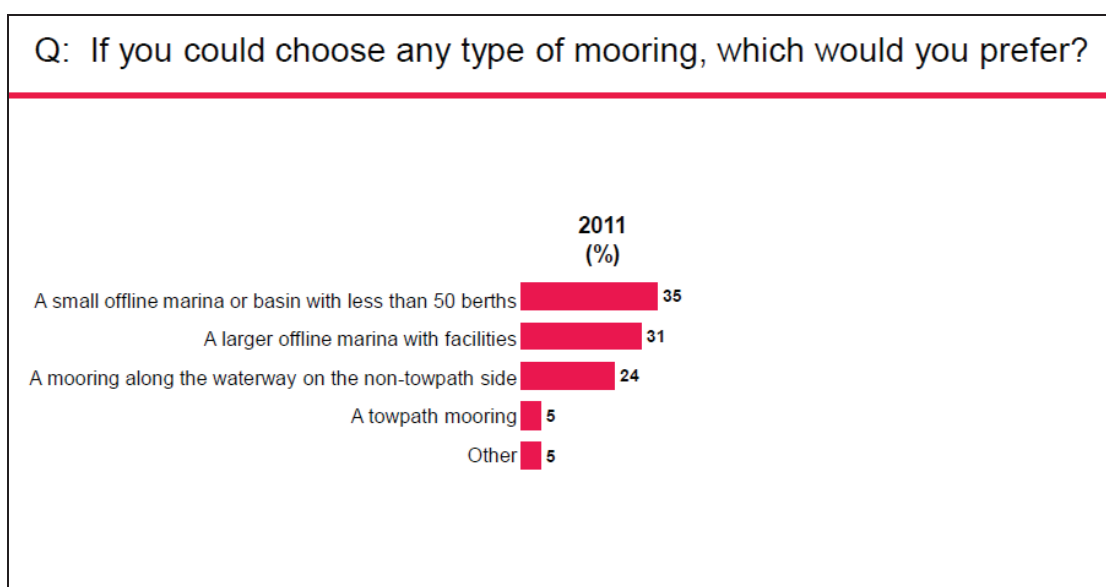
Broader issues discussed

- The CRT have over recent years, seen a significant increase in the number of people wishing to live on the canals and waterways for example, in 2011 the number of boats between Bath and Devizes grew from 434 to 534. Sally Ash (The head of Boating of the CRT) reported that they ‘do not wish to see ‘*ribbon development*’ along the canal banks. But in new marinas like those which have been built in the Midlands, though not enough to accommodate demand. Sally Ash, also explained that the CRT have the power to remove a vessel that is not navigating from their waters. This is in contrast to the 30% of boat owners who would prefer to be on a mooring along the waterway or towpath (Graph 2 below).

- Off-line (or marina) development is difficult in Bath & North East Somerset due to the Green Belt constraints and the high cost of land. This is not true, The River Regeneration Trust is working with landowners in greenbelt areas of Keynsham who are promoting an off-line flood compensation tank, marina and water ecology park in Keynsham as part of an overall sustainable community strategy that is inclusive and provides up to 150 permanent and seasonal jobs for local people.

The CRT is keen to resolve this problem and would want the moorings to be affordable (see below table of preferred mooring supplied by Boat Dwellers to the CRT Boat Dweller survey in 2011). The project being promoted by The River Regeneration Trust in Keynsham as part of the Bath Flood Conveyance Scheme includes state-of-the-art houseboats built and maintained locally that are built to passive design criteria and use a suite of affordable homes financial structures. This would take some of the pressure off the towpaths.

Graph 2: The Canal & River Trust Boat owner survey (2011)



- Long term residential moorings require planning consent; however CRT reports that most berths do not have planning consent. Water points, rubbish disposal and sewage disposal are all part of this licence. Consequently the CRT is struggling to manage demand on refuse and other services attached to their moorings.
- CRT does not have a means of communicating with boaters. Some are keen to establish a link and influence strategy whilst others are hostile to any approach that would limit their occupation of the waterways. This is not surprising given some of the approaches endorsed by CRT and their lack of commitment to the requirements of the Equalities Act.

We have included some of the comments and suggestions we received from local Boat Dwellers on improving their relationship with the Canal & River Trust, (see below)

- (1) *“Both to work with CRT and boaters on the delivery of services to better meet basic needs (e.g. hygiene) and to promote a fairer and less aggressive approach from CRT to boaters”*
- (2) *“For CRT to apply the 14 day rule, fairly and consistently, recognising that there maybe reasons for staying longer. That are covered by what they recognise as "reasonable in the circumstances" such as the need to access schools and services, disability and other reasons.”*
- (3) *“Although I initially trusted CRT, the last 2 years have demonstrated to me a combination of a genuine dislike of the whole idea of live-aboard boaters and a shocking inability to manage their place on the canal on behalf of CRT (or at least a dominant faction in CRT). I have experienced and witnessed the unfair treatment of sick/disabled boaters, including an elderly gentleman whose cruising was limited by a need to be close to his vehicle being suggested to go into care (along with threats of legal action if he stayed and could not cruise as per their expectations – despite doctor’s notes). I myself was pressured to move (again despite a note from my consultant) when I suffered a right hip fracture. Also I recently received blatant misrepresenting of CRTs terms and conditions in order to cause me loss and financial harm, which I find outrageous. Also I have noted the use of citing previous legal cases, in a misrepresented way so as to cause various individuals loss. It seems to me that CRT aggravates the situation rather than seek to promote understanding between and cohesion of the various canal users.”*

The Kennet and Avon Boating Community¹⁰

The Kennet and Avon Boating Community advertise various matters through their community boards. One in particular is letting the boating community know when Doctors surgeries are actively seeking NHS patients to register and encouraging all boaters to register with a GP to simplify their access to Health Services. The Task and Finish Group used this community site to advertise the work that we were doing and engage interest from the local boating community

The Council

During the course of this research the Group found little evidence of the Council engaging with Boat Dwellers and River Travellers, which suggests that there is a real need to overcome existing barriers and perception that some Boat Dwellers have of the Council, as was raised at our focus group.

¹⁰ <http://kanda.boatingcommunity.org.uk>.

5. Research – investigation of the needs of and issues faced by Boat Dwellers and River Travellers in our area

The findings below have been collated and analysed from a mixture of resources which include;

1. Information from case studies completed by Boat Dwellers (10) and phone calls / emails that we have received.
2. The key issues and concerns which were raised at our focus group have also been incorporated.
3. Visit to residents who live near to Hanham Lock near Keynsham
4. The recent B&NES Health Needs Survey, which investigated the needs and barriers to Health Services in our area. This was a chance for the boating community to have their say about how health services need to be changed to make them easier for boaters to access.
5. National work undertaken by the Canal & River Trust Boat Owners Survey, has provided a National overview of some issues for Boat Dwellers and has been useful in making a local comparison.

Due to the numbers of issues raised and for clarity we have grouped our findings under the following subheadings: -

- **Healthcare**

- ❖ Access to healthcare is an issue for all age groups and household types. Registration with GPs and dentists can be particularly problematical, but the ability to stay put long enough to receive longer term healthcare is a real issue for some people.
- ❖ B&NES Health Needs Survey revealed that *“Boaters in particular are likely to experience continual movement as a result of CRT regulations and in many cases GPs were in excess of 20 miles distant from the current place of residence. Boaters in particular reported experiencing numerous injuries associated with their way of life (spinal injuries, falls, cuts and chainsaw accidents)*
- ❖ *Health care staff and ambulances were not always able to identify or reach individuals at unauthorised locations and boaters in areas with limited towpath access could in effect be cut off from health care leading to ‘self-treatment’ or long journeys to A&E for treatment.*
- ❖ The B&NES Health Needs Survey has identified some of these key issues within its analysis of survey findings and has made a number of recommendations for practice some of these include:-
 - *trained community health advocates;*
 - *the development of culturally appropriate health resources for Gypsy/Traveller and Boater communities;*
 - *in-reach services to sites and towpaths;*
 - *urgent recommendations in relation to GP registration of itinerant boaters/Travellers who do not have a postcode/fixed residence; suggestions for cross-boundary working and the appointment of lead professionals for specific communities;*
 - *as well as the need to engage robustly with the Canal & Rivers Trust (CRT) to ensure that itinerant boaters/continuous cruisers are not subject to repeated movement when experiencing poor health.*

- **Children and Family needs**

- ❖ Families living on the waterways have a range of social and healthcare needs, but do not tend to come forward to access them.
- ❖ Access to education is a pressing concern as some anecdotal evidence has suggested that there can be difficulties in getting children to schools, particularly if they have to move after 14 days and every 10 miles. This often means that some local boat dwellers have to take their children out of school when having to move greater distances from schools¹¹. There is also the safeguarding risk for children, particularly if they have continually to move.

- **Housing needs**

- ❖ If people live on a boat, and their income and savings are low, they are eligible for Housing Benefit. They can claim Housing Benefit to cover the cost of the boat license, boat safety certificate and third-party insurance. If they have a mooring and/or if they rent their boat, Housing Benefit should cover the cost of the mooring fee and rent up to certain limits. However, it is the view of our housing officers that technically at least the 'bedroom tax' will be translated into a 'berth tax' if boats are rented and licensed with more berths than the family needs.
- ❖ Based on our research and consultation with Boat Dwellers there is a real concern that access to affordable or social housing is likely to increase and set to worsen with welfare reform. Therefore, the number of people resorting to living on the waterways due to financial circumstance rather than lifestyle choice is very likely to increase.
- ❖ There is a growing fear of homelessness due to the increasing pressure from CRT, the Environment Agency and with more evictions by private landlords where there is non-residential agreement and contract. The council's powers to investigate bad landlords do extend to bad moorings and accommodation, according to our officers.

- **Permanent address difficulties**

- ❖ Being able to get into work can prove difficult if one does not have a fixed address. One option available is to use a PO Box address but this is only available if you have a fixed address. The second option is to use a local point of interest e.g. pub on river or friend with a permanent address.
- ❖ There is also the risk that unlicensed and uninsured boats leads to a higher risk of boats being taken away by the Canal & River Trust.
- ❖ As Boat Dwellers and River Travellers often do not have a permanent address, it is difficult for some to register on the electoral role and vote, obtain credit, set up bank accounts etc. However, the group included people who use a post-restante address via the PO Sorting Office to overcome this issue.

¹¹ Taken from Wiltshire Council's 'Notes from Stakeholder Meeting 27 February 2012 at Corn Exchange, Devizes' for their Boaters' Voices Project

- ❖ There is also uncertainty of access to local schools, especially those popular and oversubscribed schools without a permanent address.
- ❖ Some found it difficult to register with a GP due to lack of postcode and had needed to use their parents' or other settled acquaintances post code.
- ❖ Boaters often have difficulty in getting health professionals to visit and some also claim that ambulances will not attend where they live. The major barrier was not having a postcode to give NHS services and lack of awareness of bridge numbers and location markers.

- **Mooring**

- ❖ There is an acute lack of residential moorings and moorings in general. This is commonly recognised by local marinas, Bristol Harbour managers and the Canal & River Trust (CRT) [CRT state that 1,000+ moorings are needed in B&NES]. Boat Dwellers felt that this was affected by the current CRT bidding process for available moorings which does not have a set rate but instead can go to the highest bidder, and often to someone looking for a second (holiday) home. Permanent moorings do not often become available and when they do they get taken up quickly, often debarring people in difficult financial circumstances from acquiring moorings.

There are people who do not want to move their boat far (because they need to keep their boat within reach of services and their place of employment, or because they cannot afford the cost of fuel), but who cannot get or afford an official residential mooring in their area. These individuals have to comply with the terms of the CRT licence and move location every 14 days; this makes their lives difficult.

- ❖ The cost of moorings and especially winter moorings can be expensive; £1,200 per 5 months K&AC. This is in addition to having to find the money to pay for the boat, CRT licence fee, insurance and a four-year boat safety certificate. The charge often does not reflect the quality of service provision, or lack of it. Boat Dwellers often have to make do with 'poor moorings' typically, these tend to be where there is a lack of access for emergency services, little access to public transport, no residential contract with the moorings, manager, etc.
- ❖ Marinas are often seen by Boat Dwellers and River Travellers as 'car parks' by design, because the boats are all lined up in rows without connectivity to nature and landscape, and rarely have permanent residential moorings. They can be 'unattractive moorings' to liveaboards.
- ❖ Boat Dwellers are at risk of being 'flooded off' when rivers overflow their banks. Constructing pontoons is an expensive matter as well.
- ❖ There is a conflict when landlords provide residential moorings, but require their clients to be officially 'continuous cruisers' so that they do not have to apply for planning permission for the facilities they provide.

Disabled needs and requirements; there is a lack of moorings and residential moorings for disabled people. There are only two known blue badge moorings in B&NES and no apparent provision for enabling access to moorings or facilities.

Recommendation 1.3

The Council investigates and identifies the barriers to services and facilities for vulnerable people along the waterways

These findings could feed into the work the Council is doing on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Review, the Homelessness Strategy and the Gypsy and Travellers Strategy work but would be important in their own right.

The Task & Finish Group asked Boat Dwellers for suggestions for improving their life along the river. 7/11 felt that we need to focus on the protection and regulation from rogue mooring operators and that of the regulations placed upon them by the Canal & River Trust. Below are some of the suggestions for improvement that we received.

(2) "Two things: 1. Increase the availability of official residential moorings to boaters, where the residential nature has little or no effect on the use of land compared to existing permanent non-residential moorings. 2. Increase regulation and prosecution of unscrupulous moorings operators who take advantage of the current weak position of boaters seeking residential moorings. The biggest problem for boat dwellers is the behaviour of some moorings operators. Stories of routine bullying behaviour, and "like it or lump it" policies directed at boaters by businesses holding a near monopoly on available mooring space, who know that the demand for residential moorings far outstrips supply leading to desperate boat dwellers compelled to bear treatment that would not be acceptable in any other sphere of residential occupancy"

(6) "I work in Bath and pay my taxes. I made a choice to live on the canal to reduce my carbon footprint. I adhere to the law and mooring of continuous cruisers policy in that I moor every 2 weeks. I respect that this is a public canal and it is used by holiday boaters, it seems to me that there is a drive to reduce the number of 14 days mooring sites so residents of the canal have to travel further each time making it harder to get to work. It seems it is very unclear what protected stretches of the canal is for residents or if this even exists."

- **Service provision along the river**

- ❖ On a scale of 1-10 respondents to the case study were asked to rate the importance of a number of possible daily issues. The most important were associated with Waterways Services (sewage/ Portable water), These included:-
 - Some of the waste receptors are poorly managed and often used by non-boating residents for dumping their own wastes.
 - There is a lack of service provision, of useable toilets, water stand pipes, showers and launderette services for continuous cruisers.
 - Boaters and others often misuse the services provided to boaters, such as facilities to empty their toilet cassettes and the cleanliness of the toilet blocks and shower rooms leaves much to be desired.
 - There are not enough regular points along the river to access freshwater

One solution recommended to us by a local Boat Dweller is that this could be a sense of ownership, either via actual community ownership or involvement and control through a resident's association-type set-up.

- (1) *Telephone call received: "There are not enough water points along the River, you have got to go and get a tank and fill it up (there is a distance to travel, to have a shower) There are some shower blocks along the Canal but none on the K&A. No opportunity to replace recycling, there is now an overflow and a rat problem"*
- (2) *Sewage: Sewage points (elsan/pumpout) are present at Dundas and Bradford-on-Avon). Elsan users frequently store full cassettes on their boats due to the distance to these points. Additional elsan points are much needed and should represent relatively cheap improvement. Where points exist even the provision of a simple hose for cleaning are shown to help in keeping these areas clean (this is not the case at Dundas).*

- (3) *WCs/public conveniences: "These are only present at Bradford-on-Avon. As mentioned, the boaters are somewhat restricted in their ability to store such waste so these facilities would be useful. It should also be considered whether the facilities are adequate for all the walkers/cyclists and anglers (many of whom are undertaking long journeys). Perhaps at least a facility at Dundas would be useful".*
- (4) *Showers and laundry: No such facilities exist. The boaters are somewhat restricted in their ability to store water and generate the requisite power, while numerous boaters simply do not have a shower on board (due to space or costs of repairing broken boilers etc). Undoubtedly, this frequently contributes to sub-optimal hygiene. It's not by any means impossible to clean clothes and keep clean; however, it is more difficult and a larger proportion of boaters struggle to meet these needs and I know of instances where this has led to health issues. Perhaps facilities at Dundas, Bath and Bradford-on-Avon would be useful. An empty building stands at Dundas which could be used. Perhaps a small charge levied at the point of use or via a pre-payment scheme would be necessary in view of the initial outlay and running costs*

Further key issues and concerns of service provision raised by Boat Dwellers and River Travellers have been included below:

- (1) *(written statement received) REFUSE: At present boaters are required to transport refuse to the refuse facilities (Bath [Darlington Warf], Bathampton, Dundas, and Bradford-on-Avon) either by regular trips on foot/bike or by storing them on board the vessel until passing these points. There are no free collection points for waste oil/batteries etc. Certainly the sites at Bath and Bathampton are inadequate and frequently full, which is causing issues. CRT is proposing to close the site at Bath due to "abuse" of the facility, which may in part be due to fly-tipping. Sites are not secure from the public yet boaters can purchase a waterways key to provide access to facilities that are currently locked. The facility at Bath only uses domestic wheelie bins and is infested with rats. Refuse facilities need to be adequate for the needs of all canal users (e.g. walkers, hire-boaters, anglers, etc). The security, capacity, and frequency of pick-ups need to be evaluated"*
- (2) *Electricity: Boaters are off-grid and either generate power using renewable (chiefly solar) or by burning fossil fuels (usually via the engine or a generator). For solar, the initial outlay can be a challenge and for fossil fuels the efficiency makes electricity relatively expensive to generate. CRT offers a reduced license fee for electric boats but, unlike other parts of the canal network, there are no standing power-points. Such points could be introduced to improve access to power, and schemes might be investigated to produce some power in a sustainable way. Additionally, some boaters might qualify for help with the costs of switching to more sustainable forms of energy production.*
- (3) *Diesel: At the moment we pump lots of diesel and have to drive to Bristol Marina to get Diesel a more local supplier would be more economically friendly and cost effective.*

- **Growth and overcrowding of boats**
- ❖ There is a continuous growth of narrowboat tourism and associated narrowboat hire companies who compete by having more narrowboats. There is a fear amongst some Boat Dwellers that problems and incidents are going to get bigger and more frequent. This also supports the 23% increase that the Canal & River Trust have found in the number of boats recorded between Bath and Devizes in 2011.

- **Safety**
- ❖ There are particular safety needs at hot spots along the waterways, such as Widcombe where the towpath is used as a short cut by vehicles, who need to reverse back up the towpath when discovering there is no exit. This is causing pot holes, dust and danger to residents / pets, as well as drivers themselves.

- ❖ Boaters suggested that there is a need for better education for boaters and tourist boaters about how to be a 'good boater' which should be better promoted by the marinas, boat hirers and the Canal & River Trust.

- ❖ There is a distinct lack of information on safety that should be addressed by a number of Council teams and the emergency services. For example, smoke alarms are often not effective, but with advice, could be. Using gas, with open flames is a hazard which should be addressed.

- ❖ There is no stipulation for a fire detection system by the boat safety certificate (renewed every four years); this could be addressed by the Council's grant system.

- ❖ Assistance with disrepair and poor living standards could be addressed by the Council's Housing Standards team. A number of grants and loans are available and officers would be happy to discuss them with any interested Boat Dweller.

- **Building relationships & Community Cohesion**
- ❖ What became evident from the research undertaken from visits and speaking to individuals and families who live on boats is that there is a strong sense of community with a number of families with children who enjoy the lifestyle along the river. Below are some of the comments that we received:



- (1) *“Particularly when decent, affordable and secure accommodation is lacking, living afloat offers tremendous and as yet largely unrealised potential to establish vibrant small communities across a wide range of ages, families and occupations”*
- (2) *“Visitors to our community today (there’s a footpath running through the land) are likely to enjoy the sight of a well-tended garden, encounter friendly characters, inquisitive chickens, or see children hunting Easter eggs. As boaters we already have something in common with our neighbours, and the formation of a healthy and happy community can soon follow, given the right encouragement and protection. The Local Authority can help with this by recognising the value of such communities and providing practical support through various channels like amenities, education and planning.”*
- (3) *“Life on the water has a lot to offer for those whom it suits. In particular, the community spirit here is thriving and contains a genuine variety of people who find themselves in varying circumstances”.*
- (4) *“We provide a lot of bread for the ducks, swans, duckling and moorhens which is wonderful and we have learnt a lot about the wildlife and is a great environment to bring up children.”*

Above is a photo of the vegetable patch shared by many of the residents who live along Hanham Lock

- ❖ Some Boat Dwellers are nervous of contacting the Council because of the risk of paying council tax, etc. but would like to build up future confidence with the Council to overcome these issues. Assurance was given to those Boat Dwellers attending the focus group that most liveaboards in Bath & North East Somerset are not liable for Council Tax. There also exists some confusion about the relationship between B&NES Council and the CRT, of which there is currently none.
- ❖ One of the areas that the TFG would like to investigate further but were unable to due to timescales, is the concerns raised by people living adjacent to the canal and river - we only received one email from a local resident. However, this is certainly an area that requires further investigation as part of a bigger review.

Recommendation 1.4: That the Council continues to establish open- ended dialogue between boat dwellers and the Council, to establish clear communication channels.

This should investigate whether improvements can be made to:-

- d.) Our current B&NES Website, to improve access to key information for Boat Dwellers, for example; greater advertisement of the Council Connect service.**

e.) Relations with the Canal & River Trust. (such as the opportunity to use of their notice boards to advertise Council services)

f.) The communications between local Ward Councilors and Boat Dwellers resident in their wards.

- **Future policy**

Overall, some of the key issues and concerns raised through our investigations for this Task and finish Group review suggest the need for Council policy to set out its approach to the waterways and how it enhances life in Bath & North East Somerset, indeed some of the key issues and concerns raised at the focus group session suggested the need for the Council to contribute to the development of a Moorings Strategy that either aligns with or can be included in existing or developing policies or protocols.

Recommendation 3

Future B&NES Council spatial planning requirements to deliver more dwellings, which have so far been increased through major housing developments, should also include the needs of people living on the waterways in Bath & North East Somerset.

This should include the following:-

3.1 Further Investigations to determine the feasibility of all major developments along the river or canal incorporating a pontoon landing stage with ready access to potable water and 240volt power as well as in close proximity to a public footpath, highway and waste disposal for use by River Travellers (RU3 & RU4) for a maximum 2-day stay and policed by Canal & River Trust as part of an approved Mooring Strategy in B&NES. These will also serve as short-stay visitor moorings.

The River Regeneration Trust report to Policy and Scrutiny Panel which has now been approved by Cabinet as the foundation for a future River Strategy and regeneration along the River Avon in B&NES, provides the opportunity for marina, basin and on-line facilities and services for Boat Dwellers and River Travellers. The meeting at B&NES Council offices between the Task and Finish Group and representatives of the boating community identified very different needs for boaters, Boat Dwellers and River Travellers. It was also apparent in the distinct lack of places where a boat could moor up, charge its batteries, fill up with fuel, fill water tanks, drop off rubbish, go to local stores to shop and engage with communities and services. Surely any major development along the river should be asked, if not required by policy, to provide basic services and provision for peoples using and navigating our river and in the same process encourage them to engage and shop with local communities.

3.2 Request that all off-line marina and mooring basin developments incorporate a maximum 14-day stay pontoon for River Travellers (RU3) for a minimum of three average length narrow boats as part of the planning approval process and policed by Canal &

River Trust as part of an approved Mooring Strategy in B&NES. These are in addition to short-stay visitor moorings.

It is clearly evident from our initial study that River Travellers, whether permanent or seasonal, are using our waterways to navigate, explore and enjoy life. They are a vital part of a sustainable and inclusive community that we should encourage and for which we should make proper provision. . With increasing use of a strategy to apply the 14-day rule by CRT and other waterways responsible riparian landowners (including B&NES at Poultny Weir), there is an urgent need to accommodate facilities and services to facilitate navigation and movement for River Travellers. B&NES should ensure through planning policy, that any major development, marina or off-line basin along the river or canal should incorporate the basic services on a floating pontoon that are needed by River Travellers for up to 14 days so that they can navigate our waterways safely. This will naturally incorporate a responsibility of the CRT to police this activity as part of the B&NES Moorings Strategy and be governed by a River Travellers Code of Conduct to make alternative and reasonable arrangements to ensure that the stay does not exceed 14 days.

3.3 Determine whether all off-line marina and mooring basin developments can include a minimum of 10% of total berths to be allocated to Boat Dwellers whether or not they are RU1, RU2, RU4 or RU5.

The B&NES Core Strategy will form Part 1 of the Local Plan. Part 2 of the Local Plan will be defined by the Placemaking Plan, which will define where housing and jobs are to be pursued and where required, Green Belt land will be released to achieve the number of homes and employment floors pace expected by The Inspectorate. There is a requirement in the Core Strategy that any major development makes appropriate consideration for affordable homes. As a component part of the Core Strategy, the B&NES Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) shows that an increasing proportion of the total dwelling stock is accounted for by the private rented sector. The SHMA estimates that around 36% of the requirement for overall housing between 2011 and 2031 is for affordable homes. The Council also included in the Core Strategy that in making provision for affordable housing, further guidance on the tenure split between social and affordable rent and intermediate housing will be sought by the Council and the circumstances in which different tenures will be acceptable will be set out in the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document. In addition, the former Housing Minister Grant Shapps has informed Councils that they can apply for New Homes Bonus for homes where people are living on boats. The New Homes Bonus matches the level of Council Tax raised by these houseboats for six years.

These intentions correspond to an increasing need to provide affordable homes through a variety of styles and financial agreements, be it private rented, social landlords or public supply. This also reflects an increasing demand in B&NES for residential moorings for Boat Dwellers (RU1, RU2, RU4 & RU5) revealed by the Task and Finish Group study; albeit their relevant numbers and types (Residential Use) requires a more detailed study and data collection. For health and planning reasons, residential houseboats should be built or refurbished to meet Inland Waterways' requirements, but should also be encouraged if not instructed to go beyond those core requirements; e.g. include a gas monitoring system. Certainly all new houseboats designed specifically for residential use should meet similar requirements of a house on land, such as Code for Sustainable Homes or Passive design. The marina project being promoted by The River Regeneration Trust in Keynsham is demonstrating this need, using Passive design for houseboats to meet energy efficiency requirements that are built and maintained locally. Other marina and off-

line basin developments, or improvements to existing marinas or off-line basins should be required to include a number of mooring spaces for residential boats and that the boats moored and lived on to meet a minimum standard; a B&NES Residential Use Code of Practice (to be defined).

3.4 To determine the scale and scope of the need and numbers of types of moorings and establish the current and further demands of moorings in the B&NES area.

Recommendation 4

The findings within this report support the work of the River Corridor Group's future vision of regenerating the river. We recommend that the planned future B&NES River Strategy includes:-

5.1 The consideration of the needs and issues of our local Boat Dwellers and River Travellers within its initial evidence base.

5.2 Representation from the Housing & Major Projects Panel on The River Regeneration Trust (formerly the River Corridor Group) to ensure clear lines of communication between the Council and the Trust.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Task and Finish Group commend their findings for further consideration and adoption. It has been a privilege to work together with officers and respondents and boat people in this way, and we urge Bath and North East Somerset Council to make the resources available for further study. This is a situation which has been overlooked for far too long, with boat dwellers and river travellers regarded at best as marginal to society and at worse unjustifiably as nuisances and 'scroungers'. It is a sad reflection on the state of things that it is only when there is a danger of significant numbers presenting themselves as homeless, that we have undertaken this study, and we hope that the positives are evident as well as the negatives.

We are conscious that there are parallels with the situation of gypsy and travelling communities, but without the same ties of ethnicity, belief systems and community, and without the same legal protections of a minority community. Nevertheless, the needs of boat dwellers should be included in the Core Strategy in future, and the place-making process. One fact continues to amaze and delight us is the diversity of people drawn together by life afloat. However, we also deplore the failure to adhere to the principles of Equalities legislation so that this lifestyle is more accessible to the disabled and the young. We have refrained from 'purple passages' about the beauty of the canal and river and the freedom of movement some find in mobility of home ownership, but we believe passionately that it should be accessible to all. We also believe that B&NES Council must be more proactive in making council services and public health available to its river and canal dwelling citizens.

This survey can of necessity only be a snapshot of the present situation. However, we believe it is virtually unique, and we trust more work will now be done, as we have established the need for it.

Next Steps

This report and recommendations table will be submitted to the full Housing & Major Projects Development Panel at their meeting on the **23rd July** and Panel members will be invited to make amendments to this report.

A final version of the report will then be submitted to the relevant Cabinet members for discussion and response to the individual recommendations. The relevant Cabinet Members will then have 8 weeks to consider and respond to these Recommendations. The individual decision and rationale will then be presented back to the Housing & Major Projects Development Panel at its meeting on the **19th November 2013**.

Appendix 1: Equalities Impact Assessment (included as a separate document)

Appendix 2: Recommendations response table (included as a separate document)

Review Title: **Boat Dwellers & River Travellers Task and Finish Group Review**

Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel: **Housing & Major Projects Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel**

Panel Chair & Vice Chair: **Cllr Appleyard & Cllr Hartley**

Policy Development & Scrutiny Project Officer(s): **Donna Vercoe / Emma Bagley**

Supporting Service Officer(s): **Samantha Jones / Ann Robins / Mark Minkley**

Process for Tracking PD&S Recommendations - Guidance note for Cabinet Members

The enclosed table lists all the recommendations arising from the above Policy Development & Scrutiny Review. Individual recommendations are referred to the relevant named Cabinet Members (or whole Cabinet in the case of a whole Cabinet referral) as listed in the '**Cabinet Member**' column of the table. Cabinet members are requested to seek help from your relevant service Officers within your portfolio to help complete the Rationale for your response. A copy of this has also been forwarded to your appropriate Lead Officer. In order to provide the PD&S Panel with a Cabinet response on each recommendation, the named Cabinet member (or whole Cabinet) is asked to complete the last 3 columns of the table as follows:

Decision Response

The Cabinet has the following options:

- **Accept** the Panel's recommendation
- **Reject** the Panel's recommendation
- **Defer** a decision on the recommendation because a response cannot be given at this time. This could be because the recommendation needs to be considered in light of a future Cabinet decision, imminent legislation, relevant strategy development or budget considerations, etc.

Implementation Date

- For 'Accept' decision responses, give the date that the recommendation will be implemented.
- For 'Defer' decision responses, give the date that the recommendation will be reconsidered.
- For 'Reject' decisions this is not applicable so write n/a

Rationale

Use this space to explain the rationale for your decision response and implementation date. For accepted recommendations, please give details of how they will be implemented.

Recommendations from the Boat Dwellers & River Travellers Task and Finish Group Review

| Recommendation | Cabinet Member | Decision Response | Implementation Date | Rationale |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group (TFG) recommend that to inform future council policy direction a full in-depth study/ review on Boat Dwellers and River Travellers within our area should be undertaken, using the supporting evidence and findings contained within this report as a baseline for further investigation.</p> <p>This should include the following:-</p> <p>1.1 The definition used by the TFG as part of their investigations should be consulted on as part of the next phase of in-depth review work and for consideration for future B&NES wider policy definition. This should include conversations with all the different Authorities within the AINIA (The Association of Inland Navigation</p> | <p>Cllr Ball Cllr Allen</p> | <p>Defer</p> | <p>Review April 2014</p> | <p>This is a significant piece of work, likely to need co-ordination and a good deal of officer time. It is not clear at this stage which team has capacity to lead such a piece of research. It is likely that this project would need to be delivered by a dedicated post, with further input from several teams across the Council. Should this work go ahead, the recently published 'Bath and North East Somerset Gypsy, Traveller, Boater, Showman and Roma Health Survey 2012-2013' includes valuable information and should be taken into account as supporting evidence.</p> <p>See above recommendation. This is also a significant piece of work.</p> |

| Recommendation | Cabinet Member | Decision Response | Implementation Date | Rationale |
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| <p>Authorities) to agree a standard terminology. This would ensure that all stakeholders know what and about whom everyone is talking with the consequent benefits of there being shared common language.</p> <p>1.2 That the best practice methods undertaken by both Oxford Council (mooring policy and partnership work) and Wiltshire Council (which hasve linked its policies directed towards River Travellers with those towards gypsy travellers) be introduced in order to inform future policy direction.</p> <p>The Council should work together with them and any other interested neighbouring authorities to build a consistent approach through the development of a liaison committee or similar forum. This should be co-ordinated with our current Gypsy and Traveller Strategy Group work.</p> | <p>Cllr Ball</p> | <p>Defer</p> | <p>Review April 2014</p> | <p>This is linked to Recommendation 1 above and relies on dedicated officer time. In order to address the need for better partnership working, members agree that a liaison or reference group should be established by the Strategy & Performance team, consisting of representatives from boat dwelling and riverside residences, the CRT, River Regeneration Trust, elected members and relevant officers. The aim of the group would be to create an arena where issues of concern can be raised and solutions identified.</p> <p>(Note: it is members' understanding that the Wiltshire officer with particular responsibility for canal and river issues sees his remit as working to reduce the impact of river-dwelling on householders on the river banks rather than people living on the water. There does not seem to be a best practice approach to working with this group in Wiltshire.)</p> |

| Recommendation | Cabinet Member | Decision Response | Implementation Date | Rationale |
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| <p>1.3 That the Council investigates and identifies the barriers to services and facilities for vulnerable people along the waterways</p> <p>These findings could feed into the work the Council is doing on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Review, the Homelessness Strategy and the Gypsy and Travellers Strategy work but would be important in their own right.</p> | Cllr Allen | Defer | Review April 2014 | <p>Again, this recommendation requires a significant commitment of officer time. We will defer a wholesale review but will respond to the elements picked up in the G&T Health assessment and continue to work with our NHS colleagues in the CCG to reduce health inequalities for Boat Dwellers.</p> <p>The Corporate G&T Group is a multi-disciplinary panel that aims to identify the issues faced by G&T households and to develop appropriate responses to address these issues. It should be noted that the group is not at this stage focusing on development of a strategy. However, the Planning Service, in liaison with the Corporate G&T Group, is currently preparing a statutory plan to address Traveller accommodation needs</p> |
| <p>1.4 That the Council continues to establish open- ended dialogue between boat dwellers and the Council, to establish clear communication channels.</p> <p>This should investigate whether improvements can be made to:-</p> <p>a.) Our current B&NES Website, to improve access to key information for Boat Dwellers, for example; greater advertisement of the Council Connect</p> | Cllr Tim Ball | Agree | December 2013 | <p>Members recommend that, in order to establish clearer lines of communication, one officer is identified as a single point of contact for all issues relating to boat dwelling. This officer would be responsible for ensuring that information on the Council's webpages is updated (with updates provided by the relevant team or officer) and would act as a contact point for in-person queries.</p> <p>Housing Services to improve access to information on housing standards and</p> |

| Recommendation | Cabinet Member | Decision Response | Implementation Date | Rationale |
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| <p>service.</p> <p>b.) Relations with the Canal & River Trust. (such as the opportunity to use their notice boards to advertise Council services)</p> <p>c.) The communications between local Ward Councilors and Boat Dwellers resident in their wards.</p> <p><i>Financial Assessment:</i></p> <p>There are no direct and specific financial implications at this stage. However, any costs associated with the specific delivery of the in-depth study/ review such as during the consultation/ engagement stage of the work could also look to the funding available through the agreed River Corridor Fund allocation.</p> <p>Therefore consideration will need to be given to the amount of officer time from all departments, functions and teams to achieve this. There is also the possibility that future resources could be shared with our neighbouring local</p> | <p>Cllr Paul Crossley</p> | <p>Agree</p> | <p>First meeting by January 2014</p> | <p>housing options. Web pages and a range of printed information to be developed specific to boat-dwellers' needs (a)</p> <p>Members also recommend that, once the River Regeneration Trust has secured accommodation, this be developed into an information leaflet point for all waterways related issues (b).</p> <p>Strategy & Performance to lead high-level cross-party group, as detailed above at 1.2, to develop a coherent approach to this. Also, link to Recommendation 2, below. See 1.2 above.</p> <p>See note above re the role and remit of the Wiltshire officer.</p> |

| Recommendation | Cabinet Member | Decision Response | Implementation Date | Rationale |
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| <p>authorities such as Wiltshire Council who currently have a dedicated officer for liaising with their local Boat Dwellers.</p> | | | | |
| <p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>B&NES Council should not support recommendations to endorse the Canal River Trust Mooring Strategy, until and unless we have been assured they are compliant with their legal obligations under the Equality Act and will not conflict with Council policy.</p> <p>This would need to be timely to feed into the current Mooring Strategy that is being developed and before there is any endorsement of the draft Memorandum of Understanding developed between the Council and the Canal & River Trust which was presented to the Housing & Major Projects Panel in November 2012.</p> <p>Financial Assessment:</p> <p>No direct financial implications as can be met within existing resources.</p> | <p>Cllr Tim Ball</p> | <p>Agree</p> | <p>January 2014</p> | <p>This recommendation could be addressed through the strategic group set out at Recommendation 1.4 above.</p> |

| Recommendation | Cabinet Member | Decision Response | Implementation Date | Rationale |
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| | | | | |
| <p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>Future B&NES Council spatial planning requirements to deliver more dwellings, which have so far been increased through major housing developments, should also include the needs of people living on the waterways in Bath & North East Somerset.</p> <p>This should include the following:-</p> <p>3.1 Further investigations to determine the feasibility of all major developments along the river or canal incorporating a pontoon landing stage with ready access to potable water and 240volt power as well as in close proximity to a public footpath, highway and waste disposal for use by River Travellers (RU3 & RU4) for a maximum 2-day stay and policed by Canal & River Trust as part of an approved Mooring Strategy in B&NES. These will also serve as short-stay visitor moorings.</p> | <p>Cllr Tim Ball</p> <p>Cllr Tim Ball</p> | <p>Defer</p> <p>Defer</p> | <p>September 2014</p> <p>April 2015</p> | <p>This would ideally entail including the existing boat dwellers in contributing to the accommodation supply (ie the Strategic Housing Land Availability Study). This should be achieved via the revised West of England SHMA currently underway. However, there is no commitment to allocating any resources to boat dwelling issues in any of the other WoE partner LA's, so inclusion in the SHMA is not possible. A different approach will be needed, which will require officer time commitment.</p> <p>This can only be included if CLG endorses this as an acceptable part of the Housing supply. Unless 'development' (as defined under the Town & Country Planning Act) is involved to create permanent moorings, this approach cannot easily be monitored or controlled. Agreement from CRT to police moorings also needs to be agreed.</p> <p>ACTION : raise this issue with CLG and CRT</p> |

| Recommendation | Cabinet Member | Decision Response | Implementation Date | Rationale |
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| <p>3.2 Request that all off-line marina and mooring basin developments incorporate a maximum 14-day stay pontoon for River Travellers (RU3) for a minimum of three average length narrow boats as part of the planning approval process and policed by Canal & River Trust as part of an approved Mooring Strategy in B&NES. These are in addition to short-stay visitor moorings.</p> | Cllr Tim Ball | Reject | | <p>In response to 3.1, if development is involved, as defined under the Town Planning Act, then this could be implemented through the Placemaking Plan currently under preparation. However consideration of this in the Placemaking Plan is dependent on the output of the Mooring Strategy.</p> |
| <p>3.3 Determine whether all off-line marina and mooring basin developments can or could reasonably be required to include a minimum of 10% of total berths to be allocated to Boat Dwellers whether or not they are RU1, RU2, RU4 or RU5.</p> | Cllr Tim Ball | Reject | | <p>There is currently no Planning Policy document or mechanism in place to enable this.</p> |
| <p>3.4 To determine the scale and scope of the need and numbers of types of moorings and establish the current and further demands of moorings in the B&NES area. This will need to be timed to feed into the Mooring Strategy which is currently being developed.</p> <p>Financial Assessment: No direct financial implications as can be met within existing resources. Therefore</p> | Cllr Tim Ball | Defer | <p>Review April 2014</p> | <p>See 3.2 This requires significant officer time. See Recommendations 1 and 1.2.</p> |

| Recommendation | Cabinet Member | Decision Response | Implementation Date | Rationale |
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| <p>consideration will need to be given to the amount of officer time from all departments, functions and teams to achieve the above investigations.</p> | | | | |
| <p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The findings within this report support the work of the River Corridor Group's (now the River Regeneration Trust) future vision of regenerating the river. We recommend that the planned future B&NES River Strategy includes:-</p> <p>4.1 The consideration of the needs and issues of our local Boat Dwellers and River Travellers within its initial evidence base.</p> <p>4.2 Representation from the Housing & Major Projects Panel on The River Regeneration Trust (formerly the River Corridor Group) to ensure clear lines of communication between the Council and the Trust.</p> <p>Financial Assessment: No direct financial implications as can be met within existing resources.</p> | <p>Cllrs Simon Allen & Tim Ball</p> <p>Cllrs Ben Stevens & Tim Ball</p> | <p>Agree</p> <p>Agree</p> | <p>April 2014</p> <p>December 2013</p> | <p>NOTE: as at August 2013, there is no plan to develop a River Strategy, though this is anticipated for the future.</p> <p>This could be considered for inclusion in the next Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.</p> <p>Discussions should be held with the RRT to explore the need for Housing & Major Projects Panel members to be included in the membership. There are currently 4 Elected Members on the RRT Board; none are H&MP Panel members.</p> |

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Equality Impact Assessment / Equality Analysis

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|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title of service or policy | Boat Dwellers & River Travellers Task and Finish Group Review |
| Name of directorate and service | Democratic Services (Policy Development & Scrutiny) |
| Name and role of officers completing the EIA | Donna Vercoe (Lead Policy Development & Scrutiny Project Officer) Samantha Jones (Corporate policy manager, Equalities, Policy & Partnerships) Boat Dwellers & River Travellers TFG supporting officer |
| Date of assessment | May 2013 |

Equality Impact Assessment (or ‘Equality Analysis’) is a process of systematically analysing a new or existing policy or service to identify what impact or likely impact it will have on different groups within the community. The primary concern is to identify any discriminatory or negative consequences for a particular group or sector of the community. Equality impact Assessments (EIAs) can be carried out in relation to service delivery as well as employment policies and strategies.

This toolkit has been developed to use as a framework when carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) or Equality Analysis on a policy, service or function. It is intended that this is used as a working document throughout the process, with a final version including the action plan section being published on the Council’s and NHS Bath and North East Somerset’s websites.

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| 1. | Identify the aims of the policy or service and how it is implemented. | |
| | Key questions | Answers / Notes |
| 1.1 | <p>Briefly describe purpose of the service/policy including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How the service/policy is delivered and by whom ● If responsibility for its implementation is shared with other departments or organisations ● Intended outcomes | <p>The Task and Finish Group will investigate the common needs and requirements of Boat Dwellers and River Travellers along the River Avon in Bath & North East Somerset (<i>Hanham Lock to Dundas Wharf on the Kennet & Avon Canal</i>) and provide the Housing and Major Projects Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel with enough information to make recommendations to Cabinet for both practical measures such as the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Council and Boat Dwellers & River Travellers, through their representative organisations, and for future policy development.</p> <p>The work will also set out to support the work carried out by the River Corridor Group and their vision for the future River Avon and also link to the Current Core Strategy¹,</p> |

¹ In the 2011 Core Strategy Draft as presented to the Planning Inspector, Policy CP10 Housing Mix para 6.80 page 124 applies though river homes are not specifically mentioned and it could also be argued that policy CP7 Green Infrastructure applies par 6.58 on p 119. The findings of the Group should be useful in the further development of policy in the Local Development Framework and Placemaking stages.

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| | | <p>specifically the requirement to deliver more dwellings, which have so far been increased through large housing developments and not yet that of people living on the waterways in Bath & North East Somerset.</p> <p>It is also important that this work is integrated with other B&NES policies, such as tourism, education, social care, health, economic wellbeing and 'housing'. For example, in Birmingham and Oxford the canal and river system contribute substantially to housing students, and reducing houses of multiple occupation (HMO) problems.</p> <p>Intended Outcomes</p> <p>The Task and Finish group have set out to produce a report that contributes to a better understanding of the issues presented by and facing Boat Dwellers and River Travellers. It will set out information currently available, what further data and information is still needed. This will then feed into the draft MoU and future policy development.</p> <p>The final report will be produced for the relevant Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel (Housing and Major Projects) with recommendations which will be made available to the relevant Council /Cabinet Member and/or other organisations to consider and make a response.</p> |
| 1.2 | <p>Provide brief details of the scope of the policy or service being reviewed, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is it a new service/policy or review of an existing one? ● Is it a national requirement?). ● How much room for review is there? | <p>To achieve the above objective the task and finish group will investigate the following areas:-</p> <p>(Mapping exercises)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish the number of Boat Dwellers and River Travellers in the area to gather a snapshot of current data available 2. Investigate what the Council is doing to engage with Boat Dwellers & River Travellers <p><i>Purpose:</i> To identify what more could be done and help to develop ideas to feed into the MOU, and future policy, ensuring that these are consistent and integrated i.e. such as developing a multi-disciplinary approach, similar to that adopted for work on the</p> |

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| | | <p>needs of gypsy & traveller households within B&NES Policy</p> <p>3. Investigate what other statutory and voluntary agencies are doing to engage with Boat Dwellers and River Travellers <i>Purpose:</i> To build a picture of what work has been commissioned, delivered under statutory regulations or otherwise undertaken externally.</p> <p>(Establish needs/ issues of boat dwellers)</p> <p>4. Establish the key issues faced by Boat Dwellers and River Travellers <i>Purpose:</i> Identify what information is already available and what is missing? I.e. who is the most vulnerable, how living on the waterways affects their lives² and inform future policy and the MOU.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Definition required of Boat Dwellers and River Travellers, b. Who lives on boats? Professionals, students, families, travellers, etc. c. What are the real issues/ risks: <i>i.e. Health & Social care needs, housing needs and aspirations, Dentistry, Employment, Education, and Democratic Services etc.</i> d. What are the concerns raised by people living adjacent to the canal and river? <p>Recommendations</p> <p>5. To improve the Council’s understanding of the scale and nature of boat-dwelling in Bath & North East Somerset;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to improve our knowledge of the issues and problems faced by people living on the waterways; • to make recommendations for practical solutions to identified problems; • identify areas in need of further investigation; • to contribute to a practical and workable Memorandum of Understanding signed up to by key stakeholders (to be agreed, but as a minimum, the Council, Canal & Rivers Trust, boat-dwellers representative organisations) |
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² Vulnerable “ fall between Services and policies and systems”

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| 1.3 | Do the aims of this policy link to or conflict with any other policies of the Council? | The work will also set out to support the work carried out by the River Corridor Group and their vision for the future River Avon and also link to the Current Core Strategy ³ . (which links the Gypsy & Traveller policy) |
| 2. Consideration of available data, research and information | | |
| <p>Monitoring data and other information should be used to help you analyse whether you are delivering a fair and equal service. Please consider the availability of the following as potential sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings ● Recent research findings (local and national) ● Results from consultation or engagement you have undertaken ● Service user monitoring data (including ethnicity, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation and age) ● Information from relevant groups or agencies, for example trade unions and voluntary/community organisations ● Analysis of records of enquiries about your service, or complaints or compliments about them ● Recommendations of external inspections or audit reports | | |
| | Key questions | Data, research and information that you can refer to |
| 2.1 | What is the equalities profile of the team delivering the service/policy? | The T&FG comprises 9 people; 4 women, 5 men |

³ In the 2011 Core Strategy Draft as presented to the Planning Inspector, Policy CP10 Housing Mix para 6.80 page 124 applies though river homes are not specifically mentioned and it could also be argued that policy CP7 Green Infrastructure applies par 6.58 on p 119. The findings of the Group should be useful in the further development of policy in the Local Development Framework and Placemaking stages.

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| 2.2 | What equalities training have staff received? | All elected members on the T&F group have attended equality briefings. All officers have attended equality updatr training. The external consultant has attended commercial equality & diversity training within the last three years. |
| 2.3 | What is the equalities profile of service users? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This EqIA covers all residents and visitors to the area. • The equalities profile of residents and visitors reflects a diverse population and is representative of all nine equalities strands. • A summary of our populations equality data from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2012 is found here: : http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/your-council-and-democracy/local-research-and-statistics/research-library/35364 |
| 2.4 | What other data do you have in terms of service users or staff? (e.g results of customer satisfaction surveys, consultation findings). Are there any gaps? | <p>Results of case studies (anonymised) Email/ phone call data received from Boat Dwellers Group meeting for boaters & river dwellers</p> <p>This is only a snapshot of data with the hope that a full review could be undertaken to capture a larger variety of boat dwellers and harder to reach families/ individuals who currently live on boats.</p> |
| 2.5 | What engagement or consultation has been undertaken as part of this EIA and with whom? What were the results? | <p>The TFG undertook a focus group with Boat Dwellers</p> <p>Received phone calls/ emails from Boat Dwellers as a result of sending out a press release and leaflets advertising the work that the TFG were undertaking.</p> <p>A number of case studies were undertaken which invited members of the local boating community to share their issues concerns and positive things about living along the river Avon and the Kennet and Avon canal, which has helped to inform and shape the future recommendation's for this review</p> <p>Meeting with the Canal and River Trust to get a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities along the waterways</p> <p>Notes from visits undertaken along the river</p> <p>All of the above issues raised by boat dwellers and river travellers regarding access have</p> |

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| | | been analysed and hope to shape the recommendations for this review. | |
| 2.6 | If you are planning to undertake any consultation in the future regarding this service or policy, how will you include equalities considerations within this? | As mentioned in 2.4 the TFG would like to see a full in-depth review carried out as a result of this snapshot finding of boat dwellers. This could then help inform the future direction of Boat Dweller and River Traveller policy for B&NES. The in-depth review would need to undertake a variety of different engagement techniques and methods to ensure that they have captured the views/ issues/ needs / requirements of our local boat dwellers and river travellers within the B&NES area (and all areas of equalities have been considered). Similar work undertaken by the TFG would need to be developed but on a larger scale and time frame. Any future work would need to consider the issues highlighted by boat dwellers through the TFG work, such as issues regarding access to services, and issues surrounding Health for boat Dwellers as key factors to determine the method that is used for future work and to ensure that equalities issues are considered fairly and consistently through the course of the review work. | |
| 3. Assessment of impact: 'Equality analysis' | | | |
| | Based upon any data you have considered, or the results of consultation or research, use the spaces below to demonstrate you have analysed how the service or policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets any particular needs of equalities groups or helps promote equality in some way. • Could have a negative or adverse impact for any of the equalities groups | | |
| | | Examples of what the service has done to promote equality | Examples of actual or potential negative or adverse impact and what steps have been or could be taken to address this |
| | All people | The T&FG has identified that boat dwellers and river travellers are a very diverse community and are likely to include people from all protected characteristic groups. The project is designed to determine the needs of boat dwellers specifically; the low number of | Rents for boats and moorings charges are considered as legitimate costs under Housing Benefit regulations. Whilst rent charges for boats tend to be low, single boaters under 35 living on board a vessel needing to claim would be subject to national legislation around the number of bedrooms they can include in the claim. Therefore, |

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| | <p>responses so far means we are not able to publish meaningful equality data; a full review would be able to address this in more detail.</p> <p>The T&FG aims to promote good relations between boat dwellers and local 'settled' residents</p> | <p>if they are living on a 2-bedroom boat, their claim would be considered at the rate of one bedroom only. This could leave the claimant with a shortfall in the rent. This regulation is not open to local interpretation.</p> |
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4. Bath and North East Somerset Council & NHS B&NES Equality Impact Assessment Improvement Plan

Please list actions that you plan to take as a result of this assessment. These actions should be based upon the analysis of data and engagement, any gaps in the data you have identified, and any steps you will be taking to address any negative impacts or remove barriers. The actions need to be built into your service planning framework. Actions/targets should be measurable, achievable, realistic and time framed.

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| Issues identified | Actions required | Progress milestones | Officer responsible | By when |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| A full review could be undertaken to capture a larger variety of boat dwellers and harder to reach families/ individuals who currently live on boats. | Formulate recommendations as part of Task and Finish Group Review which will be taken to Cabinet for a decision. | Update on findings to relevant PDS Panels 2014 | Democratic Services | Following PDSP July 2013 |
| Contribute to a practical and workable Memorandum of Understanding signed up to by key stakeholders (to be agreed, but as a minimum, the Council, Canal & Rivers Trust, boat-dwellers representative organisations) | Formulate recommendations as part of Task and Finish Group Review which will be taken to Cabinet for a decision. | Update on findings to relevant PDS Panels 2014 | Democratic Services | March 2014 |

5. Sign off and publishing

Once you have completed this form, it needs to be 'approved' by your Divisional Director or their nominated officer. Following this sign off, send a copy to the Equalities Team (equality@bathnes.gov.uk), who will publish it on the Council's and/or NHS B&NES' website. Keep a copy for your own records.

Signed off by: Samantha Jones (Corporate policy manager, Equalities, Policy & Partnerships) (nominated senior officer)

Date: June 2013

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| Bath & North East Somerset Council | |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| MEETING: | Housing & Major Projects Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel |
| MEETING DATE: | 19 th November 2013 |
| TITLE: | Housing Allocations Update |
| WARD: | ALL |
| AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM | |
| List of attachments to this report: | |
| None | |

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The way social housing is allocated is key to creating communities where people choose to live and are able to prosper. The Localism Act 2011 gave new freedoms that allowed Council's to make significant changes to how social housing is allocated locally. Following extensive consultation, including with this panel, Cabinet decided to implement a range of changes to the local social housing allocation scheme, known as Homesearch. This report is provided to update panel on the implementation of these changes and to draw to the attention of panel a further recent Government consultation document on social housing allocations.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Housing & Major Projects Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

2.1 Note the issues detailed in this briefing report, and comment in relation to the panel's view on the Government consultation detailed in paragraph 4.9.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4 THE REPORT

4.1 In November 2002 Bath & North East Somerset launched the Homeseekers Register. This was one of a number of Government funded pilots into the adoption of a "Choice Based Lettings" approach to the letting of social housing tenancies. This is an approach that balances customer choice and time on list with assessed housing needs as opposed to the traditional "needs only" based system. This provides a number of benefits including: transparency; improved customer satisfaction; reduced void times, particularly with low demand properties; and greater community stability and thus sustainability. Such was the success of the pilots that the Government of the day expressed a desire for all Councils to adopt such an approach. The current Government has reaffirmed their support for this approach.

4.2 In 2005 Housing Services commissioned an independent review of the Homeseekers Register. This review recommended a number of improvements, including a significant simplification of the scheme, marketing of all available properties and a significant investment in new IT systems, which achieved on-going efficiencies and associated savings in the administration of the register. These recommendations were adopted and resulted in the introduction of the current Homesearch Policy in 2006.

4.3 The scheme operates in partnership with 16 local Registered Providers, also known as social landlords, who between them manage 95% of all the social housing stock in the district. Depending upon the landlord between 75% and 100% of their vacant properties are allocated through the Homesearch scheme. In the last 12 months 385 general needs and 132 sheltered properties were allocated through the scheme.

4.4 The Localism Act 2011 and updated allocations guidance provided the Councils with greater freedoms in the drafting of their allocation policies to tackle local needs. The key changes were:

- (1) The Council has the power to determine what classes of people are or are not qualified to be allocated housing;
- (2) New requirement for a right of review of a decision on qualification and to be informed of grounds of decision.

4.5 Following extensive consultation Cabinet decided to implement the following changes:

- (1) Restricting access to the scheme to applicants who are resident within Bath & North East Somerset or have a need to reside here, for example, due to employment, social or medical reasons. This was a significant change and was expected to remove around 17% of applicants.
- (2) The Government are proposing to issue allocation regulations in regard to members of the Armed and Reserve Forces. The aim is to prevent local authorities from disqualifying a person on the grounds that they do not have a connection with a housing authority. Homesearch will comply with any

regulation in this regards as it becomes available, however, in the meantime the policy will continue to provide a relaxed local connection policy for current and ex-service personnel.

- (3) In accordance with Government guidance the new policy gave current and ex-service personnel some additional priority on the scheme. This was achieved by “backdating” eligible applications by 6 months.
 - (4) Applicants with sufficient financial resources available to meet their housing needs no longer qualify to join Homeseach. A combined income, savings, investments or capital of £60,000 or more is considered sufficient to buy a home or pay market rent in the district. A number of exceptions do apply including for applicants requiring supported housing (including sheltered accommodation).
 - (5) People who own a property also no longer qualify to join Homeseach. Exceptions apply for people in financial difficulty, such as their home is being repossessed or they are in significant and long standing mortgage arrears and those who need supported housing, (including sheltered housing) because of their age, disability or medical condition.
 - (6) Giving priority to applicants who are social housing tenants within Bath and North East Somerset and would like to move because their home is too large for their needs.
 - (7) Allowing the under-occupation of properties in rural villages where there is a shortage of properties of a particular size.
 - (8) There were also a range of smaller technical changes including: allowing eligible vulnerable residents to apply together as a single household; changing the age that children require their own rooms; reducing the number of Groups from 4 to 3; and incorporating Curo’s transfer list into Homeseach.
- 4.6 In addition to the above changes Housing Services also sought to undertake a cleanse of the database to coincide with the changes in policy. In addition an IT upgrade now allows for periodic application renewal so in future an on-going data cleanse will take place.
- 4.7 Backroom implementation of the changes was initiated during the latter part of 2012 and the policy fully implemented on the 15th May 2013, six weeks ahead of schedule. The following comprised of the key implementation milestones:
- (1) Backroom design & testing of new system questions and logic/algorithms began late November following Cabinet decision.
 - (2) New questions became mandatory for new applicants from 9th January 2013
 - (3) Letters sent to all existing applicants advising of new policy, implications, and if still eligible, requesting that they update their application either electronically or by contacting office. In addition information about the change was also advertised in local papers, on the website and through partners including the One-Stop Shop, housing providers and other agencies.
 - (4) In February a second letter was sent to those applicants who had yet to update their housing application. Further publicity through website & partners.

- (5) In March all applicants who had yet to update their applications had their accounts locked preventing them for bidding until they updated their account.
- (6) In April the scheme was closed for 1 week to allow for full IT and systems testing pending “going-live” date.
- (7) Change over completed in May and new system live from 15th May.

4.8 On 3rd January 2013, prior to the implementation of the policy changes and data cleanse, there were a total of 12,746 households on the register. On the 1st October 2013 this number now stands at 4,122 households, a reduction of around 67%. Detailed analysis of the data shows that the reduction in applicants was broadly similar between those requiring general needs accommodation and sheltered accommodation (67% and 70% respectively); and between those requiring 1,2,3,4+ bedroom accommodation (69%, 64%, 62% and 70% respectively). However, as anticipated there was significant difference between the reduction of those in higher housing need than those in lower need (30% and 70% respectively). It is also interesting to note that the current proportion of people on the register not describing themselves as white–British has increased from 11% to 13.6%. This data would imply that our extensive publicity and assistance prevented any group from being unfairly disadvantaged by the implementation of the changes.

4.9 On the 14th October the government issued a further consultation document on social housing allocations titled “Providing Social Housing for Local People: Strengthening Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations”. The document can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/providing-social-housing-for-local-people>. Deadline for comments is 22nd November. If the guidance is adopted it would “strongly encourage” that our existing policy should be amended in the following two areas:

(1) Eligibility: Local connection

- a) Introduce a 2 year residency test – At present we require residency of 3 out of the last 5 years or 6 out of the last 12 months, or
- b) Employed in the district for “a number of years” – At present we simply require permanent employment with no specified term, or
- c) Close family living in the district for a “number of years” - At present we require a person who needs to move to the area to receive or provide support to/from a close relative to support with no specified term

(2) Publishing information about the waiting list and letting outcomes

We currently publish a range of useful information about the Homesearch scheme including: numbers on scheme (according to group & required property type); numbers housed (according to group & property types); minimum, average & longest time to be housed (according to group & property types); the group & time on list of successful applicant for individual properties. However, the guidance would also require us to publish accurate, up-to-date and anonymised information on household characteristics, including the age, sex, ethnicity and nationality of applicants and new tenants.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has not been undertaken given the nature of this report.

6 EQUALITIES

6.1 The equalities impacts of the agreed changes were considered during the original policy development, however, the core objective of this scheme is to ensure that households who are unable to compete on the open market are provided with suitable and appropriate housing. An equalities impact assessment was completed on the original proposal which did not find any adverse impacts on protected groups.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 Cabinet Member; Overview & Scrutiny Panel; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Local Residents; Stakeholders/Partners.

7.2 This is report is merely providing an administrative update for panel and so no wider consultation has been undertaken.

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Sustainability; Young People; Human Rights; Other Legal Considerations

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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| Contact person | Graham Sabourn, Head of Housing, 01225 477949 |
| Background papers | None |
| Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format | |

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HOUSING AND MAJOR PROJECTS PDS FORWARD PLAN

This Forward Plan lists all the items coming to the Panel over the next few months.

Inevitably, some of the published information may change; Government guidance recognises that the plan is a best assessment, at the time of publication, of anticipated decision making. The online Forward Plan is updated regularly and can be seen on the Council's website at:

<http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/mgPlansHome.aspx?bcr=1>

The Forward Plan demonstrates the Council's commitment to openness and participation in decision making. It assists the Panel in planning their input to policy formulation and development, and in reviewing the work of the Cabinet.

Should you wish to make representations, please contact the report author or Mark Dumford, Democratic Services (01225 394458). A formal agenda will be issued 5 clear working days before the meeting.

Agenda papers can be inspected on the Council's website and at the Guildhall (Bath), Hollies (Midsomer Norton), Riverside (Keynsham) and at Bath Central, Keynsham and Midsomer Norton public libraries.

Housing and Major Projects PDS Forward Plan

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Anticipated business at future Panel meetings

| Ref Date | Decision Maker/s | Title | Report Author Contact | Strategic Director Lead |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| HOUSING & MAJOR PROJECTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL - 19TH NOVEMBER 2013 | | | | |
| Before 20 Sep 2013 | Cllr Ben Stevens, Cllr Tim Ball, Cllr Simon Allen | Policy Development and Scrutiny Recommendations - Boat Dwellers and River Travellers Task and Finish Group Review | Emma Bagley, Ann Robins Tel: 01225 396410, Tel: 01225396288 | Ashley Ayre |
| E2554 | HMP PDS | | | |
| 19 Nov 2013 | HMP PDS | Housing Allocations Update | Graham Sabourn Tel: 01225 477949 | Ashley Ayre |
| HOUSING & MAJOR PROJECTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL - 21ST JANUARY 2014 | | | | |
| 21 Jan 2014 | HMP PDS | Curo Development Update | | Ashley Ayre |
| 21 Jan 2014 | HMP PDS | Former MoD Sites | John Wilkinson Tel: 01225 396593 | Louise Fradd |
| 21 Jan 2014 | HMP PDS | Council Land Availability | Tom McBain Tel: 01225 477806 | Andrew Pate |
| HOUSING & MAJOR PROJECTS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL - 11TH MARCH 2014 | | | | |
| FUTURE ITEMS | | | | |

| Ref Date | Decision Maker/s | Title | Report Author Contact | Strategic Director Lead |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | HMP PDS | Somerset Valley | | |
| | HMP PDS | Bath Western Riverside | Derek Quilter Tel: 01225 477739 | Andrew Pate |
| The Forward Plan is administered by DEMOCRATIC SERVICES : Mark Durnford 01225 394458 Democratic_Services@bathnes.gov.uk | | | | |

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