

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday, 14th January, 2014

Present:- Councillors Marie Longstaff (Chair), Lisa Brett (Vice-Chair), David Martin, Douglas Nicol, Liz Richardson and Geoff Ward (In place of Les Kew)

Also in attendance: David Trigwell (Divisional Director for Planning and Transport), Matthew Smith (Divisional Director for Environmental Services), Peter Dawson (Group Manager, Planning Policy & Transport), Cathryn Humphries (Neighbourhood Environment Manager), Kelvin Packer (Service Manager for Highways & Parking), Richard Smith (Senior Public Transport Officer) and Liz Richardson (Policy Development & Scrutiny Lead Officer)

Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning: Councillor Tim Ball
Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods: Councillor David Dixon

45 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

46 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

47 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Roger Symonds and Councillor Les Kew had sent their apologies to the Panel. Councillor Geoff Ward was present for the duration of the meeting as a substitute for Councillor Kew.

Councillor Caroline Roberts, Cabinet Member for Transport also sent her apologies to the Panel.

48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

49 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

Mr David Redgewell wished to address the Panel regarding agenda items 9 and 11 and chose to speak directly before those items were debated.

51 MINUTES - 20TH NOVEMBER 2013

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

52 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor David Dixon, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods addressed the Panel.

Waste – He announced that there had been an increased uptake in the gull proof waste sacks in New King Street and that no enforcement action had yet been required. He added that some members of public in the street had set up a local waste management committee.

Trade Waste – He informed the Panel that the Council had secured a three year contract from March to collect trade waste.

Public Conveniences – Healthmatic commenced their contract with the Council in January and have said they will liaise with Ward Councillors that have public conveniences in their area. He added that they have offered to retain all of the automatic toilets that are currently in place.

Recycling – He said there had been a slight dip in recycling figures last year, but it looked like those were improving for this year. He added that recycling recovery rates were looking to be in excess of 70%.

Food Waste – He said that good progress had been made in this area with regard to flats and schools, but felt a general reminder of the service might be required at some point as participation wasn't as high currently as it had been.

Council's MOT Testing Facility – He wished to remind the Panel of this service that the Council now provides and the fact that they refer customers to garages approved by their 'Buy with Confidence' scheme. He added that it was hoping to be able to provide tests for Motorbikes from the end of March 2014.

Licensing – He welcomed the involvement of the Panel in the upcoming Statement of Principles (Licensing Policy).

Public Protection – He wished to make the Panel aware of the business support element of this work area in terms of food hygiene ratings.

Urban Gulls – In advance of the agenda item later in the meeting he said that he was pursuing Property Services to take up the offer of the egg replacement service.

Councillor Liz Richardson asked if it was true that the Council could no longer recycle leaves.

The Divisional Director for Environmental Services replied that leaves collected from the road could no longer be recycled and must be sent to landfill. He added that leaves collected from parks & green spaces however could still be recycled.

Councillor Lisa Brett asked if the Council still retained capacity to carry out enforcement work.

Councillor Dixon replied that licensing enforcement was funded and so would continue as normal and that street trading was incorporated within the team.

Councillor Lisa Brett asked how the Council compared in the national figures for recycling.

Councillor Dixon replied that he had not yet seen the figures for this year, but was aware that all authorities will have faced significant challenges in this area with regard to funding.

Councillor Geoff Ward wished to commend the work of the Council staff that keep the streets clean. He also asked how the budget cuts of previous years were impacting on the department.

Councillor Dixon replied that a great deal of the work within Public Protection was statutory services that could not be cut. He added that there was now a focus on education rather than enforcement.

The Divisional Director for Environmental Services added that a large amount of the cuts were delivered in a reduction of staff which has led to multi-agency teams being set up. He said that he would not want to have staffing reduced further.

Councillor Geoff Ward asked if the department were able to keep up with the frequency of inspecting with regard to food hygiene.

Councillor Dixon replied that they were.

Councillor Geoff Ward asked if the new contract for public conveniences would achieve better value for the Council.

Councillor Dixon replied that he felt that the Council's relationship with the contractor was key and their ambition to seek innovative solutions to keeping sites open.

Councillor Geoff Ward asked if the number plate recognition system now used at Waste Management sites had affected the number of people using the sites.

Councillor Dixon replied that there had been a decrease in users of the sites and that this had been expected. He added that the advantage to this was that queuing times were therefore shorter.

Councillor Geoff Ward asked if an officer within the department had responsibility for monitoring buskers.

Councillor Dixon replied that an officer was working on this particular area and that it was work they were looking to explore.

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

Gypsy & Traveller Sites – He informed them that two planning applications would soon be debated by the Development Control Committee on this matter. One site would be in Batheaston and the other would be in Twerton. He said that the Twerton site would have space for 13 / 14 pitches.

He added that a list of sites would still be held while the process remains on-going.

Core Strategy – He said that the Inspector had accepted the Council's proposed housing figures of 13,000 and that around three weeks of hearings were now expected to take place from March 25th 2014. He added that he was hopeful of the strategy being fully adopted later this year.

The Chair asked if he knew when the Gypsy & Traveller site allocation for the West of England would be announced.

Councillor Ball replied that he expected that to be announced in the Autumn.

Councillor Charles Gerrish asked if there were contingency plans for any displacement of people from the Twerton Gypsy & Traveller site.

Councillor Ball replied that only three families were on site currently and the plan was to develop the site with them in residence. He added that no site exists within the authority on which they could be placed while the development takes place.

The Chair thanked them both for their updates on behalf of the Panel.

53 BATH TRANSPORT STRATEGY UPDATE

Mr David Redgewell, South West Transport Network addressed the Panel.

He said that part of the strategy must include bus priority measures on the Lower Bristol Road. He also called for bus shelters to be improved across the Council and said that residents should not be allowed to veto this work, such as dropped kerbs or shelters.

He said that he expected the Council's transport links to be debated heavily at the Core Strategy hearings and urged work to be pursued on an East of Bath Park & Ride and Saltford Train Station as soon as possible.

He also asked the Panel to read and comment upon the West of England Strategic Economic Plan.

The Chair asked for clarification as to whether the Panel could comment upon the Plan.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that the West of England Joint Scrutiny Committee were due to debate the Plan later in the month and advised that Councillor Brett was a member of the committee and so Panel members could feed their comments through to her. He added that LEP funding would be sought as a result of the Plan.

Councillor Brett commented that she was happy to convey comments from the Panel to the Joint Scrutiny Committee.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport introduced the item to the Panel. He explained that the Joint Local Transport Plan was still in existence and that this piece of work would focus on Bath issues because of its planned growth. He added that it would look to identify key investment areas, such as car parking, bus improvements and cycle provision.

He commented that the Council had only scratched the surface of their Public Realm work and said that as a significant number of residents walk to work, could this made any easier for them?

He informed them that a vision would be produced as part of this work and that consultation across all relevant departments was key.

He stated that transport solutions were required in the advent of 9,000 new jobs within the city and that the Council would work with a number of agencies, including First Bus to identify improvements.

The Chair asked when any consultation on the strategy would take place.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that it was planned to take place in the Spring in conjunction with the Enterprise Masterplan.

Councillor Geoff Ward if the vision of the strategy was going to be big enough. He also commented that rail links to London must be improved and that the strategy must gain cross Council support.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that he did think the vision would be big enough and emphasised that this strategy was to be more precise about the work required for Bath.

Councillor Liz Richardson commented that rural residents need help in travelling to Bath as adequate public transport is not available.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that work will focus on the important areas within the Council and that bus services should improve as a result.

Councillor David Martin acknowledged the large amount of work required for the strategy and asked if the resources were available to undertake it.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that enough resources were available and that having the correct infrastructure in place will enable the planned growth.

The Group Manager for Planning Policy and Transport added that the Strategic Economic Plan would enable funding to the LEP to develop long term plans.

Councillor Lisa Brett commented that she welcomed the one Council approach, but asked if that had meant any tensions had needed to be managed.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that he was not aware of any current tensions and added that officers had a clear message from Councillors of the work required through the debates on the Core Strategy.

Councillor Lisa Brett called for projects to be listed and lined up ready to go once the strategy had been finalised.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that a list of projects will be made within the document when it is published.

Councillor Lisa Brett commented that all Councillors should be briefed on their equality responsibilities in relation to bus stops.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that most bus stops have been updated without any problems and that the Council's consultation process was judged to be sound in one case that had been the subject of a Judicial Review.

Councillor Charles Gerrish commented that he was concerned this work would delay in planning a strategy for Keynsham. He added that he felt there was a huge hole in the West of England Strategic Economic Plan as it contained no transport proposals for the planned growth of the area.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that work relating to Keynsham was not being delayed as part of this process and that work involving the Somer Valley would follow on after that.

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones commented that he had concerns over the levels of congestion that may arise through expected level of growth.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that the intention is to provide opportunities for the public to travel in a number of different ways. He added that more homes will be available closer to the city and therefore have a positive effect on congestion.

Councillor Geoff Ward commented that he was concerned that Transport policies were driving the Housing Strategy of the Council and called for more of a focus along the guidelines of the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework).

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that work was being driven by the Economic Strategy and that the NPPF supports sustainable growth.

Councillor Anthony Clarke said he was pleased that the needs of the city had been recognised, but also called for support to the rural residents.

Councillor Dave Laming commented that the NPPF supports sustainable integrated development and that integrated communities must also be created.

The Chair thanked the officers for addressing the Panel and repeated the view from a previous meeting that the Panel would like to see the results of the work carried out by the consultants before it is consulted upon.

54 URBAN GULLS - DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Policy Development & Scrutiny Lead Officer introduced the item to the Panel. She stated that over 50 people attended the meeting held in November and represented a wide range of sources. She added that a great deal of information was received on the day and workshops were undertaken in the afternoon to provoke suggestions of what to do next.

She said that in the time since the meeting officers had met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel to form the recommendations presented today.

She added that the lead Cabinet Member for the review, Councillor David Dixon had agreed to a shorter response time of 4 weeks in an attempt to speed up the process of delivery.

Councillor Lisa Brett said that the Council should promote the legal rights and responsibilities that businesses and property owners have in relation to gulls.

The Policy Development & Scrutiny Lead Officer replied that recommendation 4.2 could be strengthened.

The Chair thanked her for all her hard work and said that she felt more informed at the conclusion of the day. She added that she wanted the work to be seen as very much a joint responsibility document.

The Policy Development & Scrutiny Lead Officer replied that she could elaborate that point further in recommendation 5.1.

Councillor Geoff Ward stated that it must be a co-ordinated plan that involves residents, traders and property owners. He added that the risk of economic damage to the city should not be taken lightly. He also asked for officers to log calls from the public on incidents involving gulls.

Councillor David Martin commented that he felt it was a very good report and asked for the recommendations to be strengthened slightly.

Recommendation 1.1 – Replace ‘Encourage’ with Require.

Recommendation 2.1 – Replace ‘Encourage’ with Urge.

He also questioned whether the section of the report entitled Resource Implications should say none and felt that some level of funding would be required over the next six months.

The Divisional Director for Environmental Services replied that following this meeting talks will take place with the Cabinet Member and officers regarding the recommendations and then a better idea will be known regarding the funding of any future work.

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones asked if a licence was required for either individuals or the Council to intervene personally with the gulls.

The Neighbourhood Environment Manager replied that land owners were able to apply for such a licence.

Councillor Lisa Brett commented that it was her understanding that no licence was required if you operate within the terms of the General License.

The Chair summed up by saying that the recommendations would be strengthened following comments from the Panel and it would be emphasised that joined up action is required. She added that the information relating to licences should be made available to the public.

The Policy Development & Scrutiny Lead Officer said it was intended that the Cabinet response would be back by February 14th and then discussed at the next Panel meeting on March 4th.

55 CROSS BOUNDARY BUS SERVICES (WILTSHIRE / SOMERSET)

Mr David Redgewell, South West Transport Network addressed the Panel. He spoke of his concern that bus services were stopping at the border to the Mendip hinterland and that some services were looking to be changed by neighbouring authorities. He cited the lack of a Sunday service to Shepton Mallet Hospital as one particular problem.

The Senior Public Transport Officer introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that the report had been written at the request of the Panel to inform them of the current provision of services across the Council and its borders into Wiltshire & Somerset.

He informed them that the tender for the 267 service between Bath – Frome via Midford was currently out to tender. He added that a proposal has been made to remove that last service in the evening to Frome and that Parishes were contacted on the matter in August 2013. He stated that an option to keep the service as it is still remained.

Councillor David Martin asked how the analysis of sections 5.5 and 5.6 of the report are done.

The Senior Public Transport Officer replied that various models had been used and data such as car ownership in the area concerned, level of social housing and number of concessionary passes in use were used in the analysis.

Councillor Liz Richardson commented that she would like to see hub type services in place as she found it difficult to travel to Keynsham.

The Senior Public Transport Officer replied that if a hub service were put in place for instance to the A37, access to it is good, but the return journey is much more difficult. He added that direct services are put in place with regard to user preference.

He also said that an opportunity for services to expand in the Chew Valley area exists over the next 12 -18 months.

Councillor Lisa Brett suggested the Panel could be part of the decision making process as set out in section 6.1 of the report with regard to making recommendations to Cabinet on cross-boundary bus services.

The Chair thanked him for the report on behalf of the Panel and said they would discuss Councillor Brett's comment further under their workplan agenda item.

56 FLOOD DRAINAGE MANAGEMENT

The Service Manager for Highways & Parking introduced this item to the Panel. He spoke of the actions taken since the last meeting in November 2013 that were listed in the report and the fact that the Chew Valley Flood Forum (CVFF) had canvassed 69 properties for feedback on the installed flood barriers. He stated that they had received 35 returns and of those, 20 properties identified defects.

He added that the CVFF continues to work with officers and is proactively endeavouring to obtain a return from the remaining properties to establish a complete picture. He informed the Panel that in December 2013 a constructive meeting was held with the supplier of the flood barriers to discuss the extent of, and costs of any remedial works, as well as providing a maintenance scheme for residents. It is anticipated that a further meeting will take place in February 2014.

He explained to the Panel that a meeting took place in Chew Stoke in December 2013 to brief the community on the outcome of the flood investigation. A survey of the sources of surface water flooding and a number of improvement works to the highway drainage system have been identified and as a result a works order for improvements has been issued to our Contractor. These works will be completed prior to 31 March 2014.

He reminded the Panel of the concern expressed by the CVFF that surface water run-off from farm land was a contributory factor to flooding and that officers were requested to contact the NFU to discuss whether contour ploughing etc. could make a difference.

He said that in order for a meaningful dialogue with the NFU officers had reviewed the impact of farming on flooding, as well as the flood investigation results for Chew Stoke and had concluded that farming had a negligible impact on the flooding due to the degree of ground saturation present, intensity of the storms and rapid response nature of the catchment.

He added that drainage staff are planning to hold a meeting with the NFU to discuss farming and land management issues in February 2014.

He informed the Panel that a meeting had also been scheduled with Cllr Charles Gerrish, the Council's representative on the Wessex Flood Defence Committee, to review the proposed actions for inclusion in the operational Highways and Drainage Service Plan 2014/15. He added that there is already a proposal for an additional £200k investment planned for flood mitigation/enhanced PLP. Officers will brief the relevant Cabinet Members once the action plan is formed and any required funding will be sought through the normal budget approval process.

Councillor Charles Gerrish wished to thank the work of the Service Manager for Highways & Parking and associated officers for all their work on this matter. He also wanted to highlight the need to inspect bridges on a more regular basis

The Service Manager for Highways & Parking thanked him for his comments and said he was aware of the need to pursue this work.

Councillor Liz Richardson also wished to offer her thanks to the team and the Environment Agency as no domestic flooding had occurred over the past couple of weeks in her local area. She also asked how the meetings of the Flood Risk Board would take place.

The Service Manager for Highways & Parking replied that they would take place in two parts. The first would be a technical meeting with representatives from the Environment Agency, Bristol Water, River Regeneration Trust etc. and the second part of the meeting would be public engagement.

Councillor Geoff Ward asked who would be leading on plans to address problems within Bathford, Bathampton and Batheaston.

The Service Manager for Highways & Parking replied that the Environment Agency would lead on this and then discuss it with officers.

The Chair thanked him for the update and all his work on behalf of the Panel.

57 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chair introduced this item to the Panel. She said that they would discuss the Cabinet Response to the Urban Gulls recommendations and review the Alcohol Harm recommendations at their March meeting.

She also stated that it was the Panel's intent to debate Council's Statement of Principles (Licensing Policy) at their July meeting.

She said that further discussion would be had at the agenda planning meeting between her and the Vice-Chair to see how matters relating to public conveniences, the Bath Transport Strategy and Cross Boundary Bus Services could be pursued.

The meeting ended at 12.40 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

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*Statement from South West Transport Network for
BaNES PTSE on 14 Jan, BaNES Major Projects on 21 Jan,
Bristol Cabinet on 16 Jan,
West of England Partnership Joint Scrutiny on 20 Jan,
South Gloucestershire PTSE on 31 Jan*

Greater Bristol Supported Bus Network and its role within the Strategic Economic Plan

We are extremely concerned about proposals to take £700K out of the Greater Bristol Bus Network funding. This 33% cut is a very serious threat to the survival of the network as a coherent set of routes. We would also insist that the Bristol Mayor and Council acknowledge the cross-boundary nature of the network and accept that cuts in Bristol will inevitably entail severe disruption to services in South Gloucestershire, BANES and North Somerset. In particular there will be knock-on service-reduction (potentially large-scale withdrawal) of services through Filton, Patchway, Cribbs Causeway, Bradley Stoke, Emerson's Green, Staple Hill, Kingswood, Longwell Green, Keynsham, Bath, Nailsea, Clevedon and Portishead. This will also likely kill off the Mayor's and BANES newly established and very well received 6-days-a-week Night Bus Network. This project was originally funded by central government to the tune of £70m from the DfT and £20m from First Group to improve the bus network including investment in new vehicles which is ongoing.

Whilst we understand that cuts have to fall somewhere, it seems extremely short-sighted to jeopardise one of the most successful and high-profile developments in local public transport in recent years (including the investment in new vehicles by First and Wessex, the dropping of fares by both companies and the campaign by the WEP to get more people onto the bus and rail network).

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The proposed network reductions, especially in the South Gloucestershire/Kingswood area, would make a mockery of the current government funded projects through the Better Bus Area and the Local Sustainable Transport Fund in the city region. Having plans to invest in bus routes 6 and 7 as well as a new bus interchange in Kingswood whilst First is replacing out-of-date vehicles on Kingswood Town services means that we may be left with lots of shiny new infrastructure which has no worthwhile bus service to justify it. That is a guaranteed way of losing public confidence in transport delivery.

It might be possible to look for significant savings in renegotiating or commercialising the Park and Ride network, especially as MetroWest Buses are supposed to run subsidy-free (including the Park and Ride services). We remain somewhat sceptical of the subsidy-free plans as no other city in Europe manages this feat at the moment. It must also be said that there is a strange lack of coherence in making the currently proposed cuts whilst pushing ahead with plans for the Metro Bus Network across the city region which is likely to leave the public with a confused and unconvincing feeling about the region's transport planning.

We are also concerned at the proposals to slash £470K from the Community Transport budget, particularly as there are still more than twenty buses providing services across the city which are non-low-floor and disability-unfriendly, thus making the Community Transport service all the more necessary.

It is essential that we have a clear policy on access for all to public transport in the Greater Bristol area and this will necessitate the

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commitment of WEP to a clear date and planned program for the removal of the remaining non-low-floor vehicles from the network in Bristol, Bath, Wells and Weston-super-Mare. The Bristol and Bath city region is lagging well behind comparable urban centres across the UK and Europe in modernising its bus and rail fleets to achieve proper access for all. This issue also has clear implications for the modernisation of the region's rail stations, many of which have limited, partial or absolutely no disabled access. With the forthcoming Intercity Electrification Program, this is the perfect opportunity for WEP to bid with FGW for Access for All grants from the DfT.

The proposals for wholesale closure of public (and disabled) toilet facilities across the region should be approached quite differently by "translating" standalone facilities into shared units within cafes, shopping centres and transport interchanges. This requires a coherent policy and a structured plan (similar to the Bath model) to ensure that these facilities do not simply disappear to the detriment of the travelling public. (Notwithstanding the fact that the Bath Bus Station toilets and café are presently closed due to a flood!)

The recent discovery of large amounts of drug paraphernalia at the toilets at Bristol Bus station led to the temporary closure of the facilities whilst they were cleaned and made safe, pending extensive repairs. In the meantime, bus passengers have had to use the toilets in the "Bear Pit" and disabled passengers have been redirected to the Subway café. It should be remembered that the facilities are owned by Avon and Somerset Support Services (a PFI company consisting of the four greater Bristol authorities and Somerset County Council) with an operating lease

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to First Group and National Express. At the moment the problem is being managed by First Group but they feel that the origins of the drugs issue at the toilets are related to the closure of other facilities across the city and that responsibility for staff and passenger safety and comfort needs to be a joint agency approach with Bristol City Council, the West of England Partnership, the PCC, Avon and Somerset Chief Constable and Safer Bristol. Ideally this should be set up as a working group under Safer Bristol.

The following remedial precautions should be considered:

- CCTV fitted to the washroom area
- more PCSO/police officer coverage
- painting out graffiti on exterior of and approaches to bus station
- missing and expired timetables should be replaced with up-to-date information.

Within the bus policy there is a very urgent need to upgrade the interchanges and bus stations. At the moment this seems to represent a very serious omission in the city region's transport strategy. A corresponding lack of policy in Wiltshire has allowed the closure of the bus stations in Salisbury and Amesbury with no adequate replacement facilities. In the Bristol and Bath city region the sites most in need of upgrading and development are Bristol Parkway, Filton Abbey Wood, Kingswood Town Centre (partially completed), Locking Road and Weston-super-Mare station, Bristol Temple Meads (the Friary), Portishead and the proposed Ashton Gate station, Nailsea and Backwell, Keynsham Ashton Way, the City Centre and Broadmead, Cribbs Causeway and Radstock town centre.

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These interchanges need to be upgraded with waiting shelters, CCTV, good quality timetable displays and real-time information and (where possible) toilets and catering. An interchange audit for the city region needs to be carried out and government funding sought for the implementation of these improvements as part of Metro Bus and Metro Rail.

As a result of decisions taken by Somerset Council a number of Cross-boundary bus routes into Bath and Weston-super-Mare are under threat: 184 Bath to Frome via Mells, 267 Bath to Frome via Hinton Charterhouse, 768 Farrington Gurney to Bath, 102 Weston to Bridgwater, 668 Lower Langford to Street (connection with 121 Bristol to Weston service), 670 Burnham to Wells, 19 Bridgwater to Street, 376 and 377 Bristol to Yeovil and Bridgwater via Pensford, Glastonbury and Street. Amongst weekly (shopping) services under threat are 754, 636, 683, 757, 752, 185 and 640 which provide in some cases the only public transport access for smaller population centres around Bath. Rather than considering withdrawal of service, the 636 route should be upgraded to provide hospital access from Keynsham.

BaNES needs to raise with Wiltshire Council the implications for passengers to and from Bath which follow from the closure of Salisbury and Amesbury bus stations.

In summing up we would like to emphasise the importance of coherent public transport policy and planning within the WEP/LEP's Economic and Strategic Plan. Linking communities, access to services and facilities, jobs, education and employment are all tightly bound up with the

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provision of adequate and locally appropriate public transport. These issues are fundamental to the prosperity of the city region and should not be compromised.

David Redgewell

South West Transport Network – Tel 07814 794953

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Need for Urgent Progress on MetroWest as a core element in the West of England LEP's Strategic Economic Plan

The final plans for Phase One of MetroWest are due to be completed later this year and concurrently to work their way through the Network Rail GRIP stages 1 to 9. As of writing, there remain serious questions about some elements of the plan. In particular, the retrenchment over the siting of Portishead station is very concerning as this will undoubtedly have a serious negative impact on future take-up of rail services. We need to know if pressure has been brought to bear on Network Rail and the ORR to look at a "Stop and Proceed" arrangement into the station, similar to the Barnstaple branch. The rail authorities need to be made aware of the detrimental effect of applying over-rigid safety protocol. We understand that £7m for a bridge is unaffordable in the current climate, but we equally need to be assured that the economic and social success of the Portishead project is not jeopardized by "red tape". In addition to optimum siting, the plan must include bus-rail interchange facilities and become the focus for transport in the town.

We have not yet seen evidence of a realistic MetroBus/MetroRail interchange at the proposed Ashton Gate station or integration with the Stadium, though we understand that this is currently out for consultation with the MetroBus plans.

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The current proposed service pattern for the Portishead line still does not include stops at Bedminster or Parson Street which for a headway of 17 minutes end-to-end as against 22 minutes does not seem to be especially critical, especially when set against bus timings and rush-hour car journey timings of an hour or more. There is also the question of integration with the Weston and Taunton line which the current service plan ignores. And finally, it should be pointed out that stopping trains in Bedminster and Parson Street provides gateway access from otherwise ill-served areas of South Bristol.

With the final adoption of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan, it is essential that a clear and defined provision is made for station sites on the Henbury Loop around Henbury, Filton (at North Platform) and Charlton Halt, and protect sites at Hallen and Chittening for future halt/s — which may not be required in the first two phases of the Metro. Park-and-Ride and Bus-Rail interchanges must also be built into the plans to ensure the maximum benefit to the local populace and the greatest uptake of services. In the case of Charlton Hayes, it would be highly beneficial to the development of the emergent community if the building of the station and transport interchanges preceded the construction of the area (in very much the opposite way to how Bradley Stoke was allowed to develop without any public services).

It is also imperative that work is commissioned with Network Rail for extra holding sidings for freight trains around Hallen/Chittening, and to the north of Bristol Parkway.

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South Gloucestershire PTSE on 31 Jan*

The signalling on the Henbury line also needs to be upgraded as part of the Thames Valley Signaling Centre when Bristol signal box is transferred to Didcot.

We welcome the local electrification study of the Greater Bristol Metro and Filton Bank and the proposed new stations at Ashley Down and Horfield/Lockleaze, but this needs to be broadened to ensure that the study encompasses not only EMUs but tram-train operation for Henbury, the Severn Beach Line and Portishead once the 165 units are cascaded.

For future transport strategy, extensions to Taunton, Frome, Westbury, Warminster, Swindon and Gloucester/Cheltenham should be put on the agenda.

Within BaNES the emphasis needs to be on ramps and CCTV at Keynsham, a new station at Saltford, CCTV at Oldfield Park and new stations at Bathampton and Corsham with appropriate bus-rail interchanges and onward links (for instance from Keynsham to Whitchurch, South Bristol Hospital and the proposed Whitchurch Park-and-Ride)

The inclusion of stations at Charfield (for Wotton-under-Edge), Stonehouse Bristol Road (Bristol-Gloucester line) and Royal Wootten Bassett need to be built into neighbouring local authority and LEP economic plans.

Intermodal interchanges need to be prioritised at Bristol Temple Meads, Bristol Parkway, Filton Abbey Wood, Lawrence Hill, Clifton Down, Weston-

*Statement from South West Transport Network for
BaNES PTSE on 14 Jan, BaNES Major Projects on 21 Jan,
Bristol Cabinet on 16 Jan,
West of England Partnership Joint Scrutiny on 20 Jan,
South Gloucestershire PTSE on 31 Jan*

*super-Mare, Yatton, Nailsea and Backwell, Bath Spa and Oldfield Park. In
the case of Temple Meads, "Intermodal" should include ferry services as
well as local and Metro buses. Any new ferry services at Bath or along
the Bristol Channel should also be dovetailed into the MetroWest system.*

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