



**Note of the meeting of the Bath City Forum
held on Thursday, 26th November, 2015
in Banqueting Room - Guildhall, Bath**

Meeting Attendance

In Attendance
Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones
Councillor Rob Appleyard
Councillor Cherry Beath
Councillor Paul Crossley
Councillor Fiona Darey
Jo Farrar
Councillor Andrew Furse
Councillor Charles Gerrish
Councillor Bob Goodman
Mark Hayward
Councillor Alison Millar
Councillor Michael Norton
Councillor Lin Patterson
Councillor Joe Rayment
Councillor Dine Romero
Andy Thomas
Councillor Peter Turner
Councillor Martin Veal

1. B&NES Budget Fair including Question and Answer session

Question 1 – Where will the investment for the Batheaston Park and Ride Scheme appear?

Response – There is a level of funding included in this year's budget as well as funding in future years.

Question 2 – Investment has been mentioned for flood prevention work in the Bath Quays area of the river. What funding is being put into the river upstream from

Pulteney Bridge?

Response – The Environmental Agency have carried out initial works into the flood elevation works. The Council will be making a contribution to support this project.

Question 3 – How will cuts to services over the next four years affect communities such as Twerton, Whiteway and others where there is a lot of social need and economic deprivation?

Response – The plans that are being put forward are unlikely to have an impact on frontline services. However the current Draft Directorate Plans highlight a number of initiatives which will help improve the lives of those most in need, including:

- Continuing our nationally recognised Connecting Families programme to support workless families to gain training and employment.
- Continuing to invest in the Welfare Support team, which provides support for those in need and also helps to develop skills and sustainable employment.
- Continued investment in sustainable energy initiatives including Energy @ Home to provide insulation and energy saving measures and tackle fuel poverty. People who live in specified areas of need (which includes Twerton and Southdown) may qualify for a free home energy assessment through the scheme. This will help 50-60 households in or at risk of fuel poverty and vulnerable.
- Delivering new Early Help Strategy for children, young people and families - promoting early identification of need and swift intervention.
- Providing advice and information through an integrated approach using our One Stop Shops and libraries, working closely with the Connecting Families initiative.
- The Council will continue to provide free access to the internet and training in libraries, including for those that can't access Government services online at home. Securing education, training and employment opportunities for our Care Leavers.

Question 4 – The proposals that will allow the Council to raise council tax by 2% to cover the greater needs in social care is insufficient. What is the plan to cover any shortfall?

Response –The projections made will have a minimum impact on health and social care services. It is impossible to predict an increase in pressures and needs in this area but the requirements that have been set out are the best estimates that can be made. The recent ‘your care, your way’ consultation is looking into better methods to improve the delivery of care for our communities. No decision has yet been made to increase the council tax.

Question 5 – It is pleasing to see the change programme has helped to deliver a position where there will not be an impact on front line services. What are the areas in this budget that will see spending cuts?

Response- There are savings in children’s services revenue budget worth £50K. There are changes to the way that music services are delivered. The drugs and alcohol prevention services will carry out more targeted work, and by working closer with other services should also see an enhancement to the individual service users.

Question 6 – The figure of £7 million as an increase in revenue does not seem very ambitious. More could be done to put residents first and reduce pollution. What is being done by the Council to bring in a ‘tourism style tax’ to the City?

Response- The Council do have additional ideas for bringing in higher levels of funding for the City. There is work taking place on the West of England devolution deal that would bring more flexibility to the regions from Central Government and potentially an additional £1 billion over ten years to the WoE area. A tourism levy would be something that the Council would be keen to explore if the power to do this is given to us.

Question 7 – In the Chancellors statement the percentage cut to local authorities was 24% and not the 40% that was expected. How does the Council see this impacting on the £38 million in cuts it was expecting to make?

Response- The details on the revenue support grant will not become clear until late in December. There will be additional costs to find for public health. However the news was better than expected.

Question 8 – Bath is a wealthy city but ordinary people can’t afford to live here. As all the Council houses have been sold off, where will housing for ordinary people come from?

Response- The Council transferred its housing stock to Curo, former Somer Community Housing Trust in the 1990s. The Council are bound by Government legislation to deliver levels of new housing to the area; this will include affordable housing. The Council aims to deliver new homes through property company.

Question 9 – What measures are being taken with neighbouring authorities to avoid

conflicts when business rates are used to attract new employers to the City?

Response- The government has not yet provided the detail on how this scheme will work. The Council will work with its neighbouring authorities and continue to have discussions with the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Question 10 – The Council appears to be comfortable with the savings it has to make and is looking at the income generation as a positive. Will the Council make a formal response to the Government to oppose the level of funding cuts?

Response- The Council recognises that there is still a lot of work to do as only half the £38 million in cuts have been so far identified. The Council will be looking to other Local Authorities to see where services can be shared. The Council are networked with the LGA and will lobby on issues where necessary.

Question 11 – What flexibility is there on capital and revenue expenditure?

Response- There are specific budgets, for instance Education, that is ring-fenced therefore can't be spent on anything else. There are specific rules that the Council must follow when setting out the revenue and capital budgets spending plans.

Question 12 – What will be the impact on staff in the redesigning of services? If you find savings through reductions in salaries/jobs won't there be an impact on those people not having money to spend or pay their council tax?

Response- Any changes to the level of staff will always go through formal consultation. There have been minimal number of compulsory redundancies this year and this is expected to stay low which is positive for staff. If any roles are cut the Council supports staff through its redeployment programme.

2. West of England Joint Spatial Plan including Question and Answer session

Comment / Question 1 – The first page of the presentation shows a picture that has no cars. Health and wellbeing is important and this is more effectively achieved if people need to make shorter journeys. Walking, cycling and using the bus are all better options to achieve better health benefits and we should look to local centres with ten minutes or less walks to eliminate the need to use the car.

Response – The Council's Transport and Fit for Life Strategy identifies the need to ensure we create a healthy and active community. This is also brought together in the Placemaking plan, the principles of which are to create places, shifting away from piecemeal development. The Cil monies will help

make improvements.

Comment / Question 2 – B&NES appears to have a Core Strategy, a Transport Strategy and Placemaking Strategy that have been adopted. Does this mean that B&NES are ahead of its West of England partners?

Response – Yes, B&NES are the only local authority that has adopted its Core Strategy.

Question 3 – Out of the 85,000 new homes by 2036 how many are expected to be in B&NES?

Response – Approximately 13,000.

Question 4 – How is the new homes figure reached, does this come from existing need or is this due to the economic growth?

Response – The Government has gone through a process to identify the projected housing needs (85,000) for the region, 30,000 will need to be affordable homes.

Question 5 – There can be a very conservative approach that is taken with the options that are created. When looking at the locations across the whole area has there been consideration given to wider examples elsewhere in Europe?

Response – The importance of placemaking where there is an expansion of needs and therefore more people/ local authorities are incorporating local plans to fit in with the set criteria.

Question 6 – Are the principles of the B&NES strategic transport plan being adopted in principle by the three other local authorities?

Response – The plan has been adopted by the Council. Additional commitments from the JSP will need to be incorporated.

Question 7 – What creative organisations are being asked to take part in the consultation?

Response – The WofE JSP are keen to hear the views from all sections of the community.

Question 8 – What are the revised dates for the Placemaking plan?

Response – The plan goes to Cabinet on 2 December, although this will mean the consultation takes place over the Christmas period it has been extended to eight weeks to allow for this.