

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

### **MINUTES OF CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING**

Thursday, 2nd May, 2024

Present:- **Councillors** Andy Wait, Michael Auton, Jess David, Ian Halsall (in place of Anna Box), Saskia Heijltjes, Shaun Hughes (in place of June Player), Hal MacFie (in place of Alex Beaumont) and Toby Simon (in place of John Leach)

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Grant Johnson

#### **64 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **65 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### **66 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Player sent her apologies and was substituted by Councillor Hughes

Councillor Beaumont sent his apologies and was substituted by Councillor MacFie

Councillor Leach sent his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Simon

Councillor Johnson sent his apologies

#### **67 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

#### **68 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN**

There was none.

#### **69 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING**

- Adam Reynolds made a statement regarding Road Danger Reduction Strategy. *A copy of this statement is attached to the minutes.*

There were no factual questions.

- Talia Kelly (Governor for parent voice/safeguarding at Freshford School) made a statement regarding School Streets. *A copy of this statement is attached to the minutes.*

Councillor Heijltjes asked if the school would be interested in a trial. Talia Kelly stated that there is a group who are willing to support this.

Councillor David asked what support from the Council was given regarding walking buses. Talia Kelly explained that if it is initiated by the school, there are insurance implications and concerns around budget impact. We are trying to get parents to do it informally, but it can be difficult to organise.

In response to a question from Councillor Wait, Talia Kelly stated that, on the whole, parents are in favour – there is a community who are concerned with active travel - but there is more work to do.

- John Taylor made a statement regarding School Streets. *A copy of this statement is attached to the minutes.*

In response to a question from Councillor Heijltjes, John Taylor explained that not all residents prioritize the school and children. He stated that parking enforcement have insufficient resources. He explained that Active Travel will give children a lifelong habit to walk or cycle.

- Alice Boden made a statement regarding School Streets and child health. *A copy of this statement is attached to the minutes.*

Councillor Heijltjes asked if she would support School Streets for secondary schools. Alice Boden stated that she would and there could be a bigger impact.

Councillor Wait stated that he had been in education for 40 years and certainly agreed with the concept of School Streets.

## **70 MINUTES**

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

## **71 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE**

Councillor Manda Rigby, Cabinet Member for Highways, gave an update which covered the following: (a copy of the full statement is attached to these minutes).

- General update from last meeting
- Traffic management, Network Management, road safety
- Local Highway Improvement Programme
- City Centre Security

- Highway maintenance
- Parking
- Liveable Neighbourhoods delivery
- Forward plan of work for next period

Panel members asked the following questions:

Councillor David stated that there had been good feedback regarding the resurfacing works on Moorland Road. She asked about levels of staffing regarding parking enforcement. The Cabinet Member explained that around 90% of the roles have been filled – shift patterns have changed and there is a zero abuse strategy which has made the job more attractive. We are doing the best we can.

Councillor Heijltjes asked how the Cabinet Member thought the scheme at Lyme Gardens would enable modal shift. The Cabinet Member explained that the scheme had come forward from ward Councillors and is moving towards an ETRO which will tease out the issues. The area may fit the School Streets criteria.

Councillor Simon asked for an update on the Devonshire Tunnel. The Cabinet Member explained that this was operated by SusTrans and not the Council but some of the work to fix the issue was on Council land. She understands that it would not be a simple fix and that the plan involved pumping out water. In terms of the relevant Cabinet portfolio – it was confirmed that it was within the Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development.

Councillor Heijltjes asked about the removal of physical barriers on a public rights of way. The Cabinet Member stated that there was one rights of way officer and there is a programme of work which includes looking at accessibility and checking for barriers.

Councillor Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel, gave an update which covered the following: (a copy of the full statement is attached to these minutes).

- Green Transformation
- Energy
- Climate and Engagement
- Nature
- Sustainable Transport
- Active Travel Masterplan
- Consultation and opportunities to engage

Panel members asked the following questions:

Councillor Heijltjes asked for an update on Tier (E Scooters). The Cabinet Member explained that there are plans to expand the zone. In response to a question from Councillor Hughes, the Cabinet Member explained that the Government set the terms of the trial, it will currently run up to March 2026 (it has been extended 3 times so far).

Councillor David stated that she welcomed the plan for parking slots for the E Scooters – she stated that locally there was some support but others did not like them on the pavements. She asked if there were any other methods of funding. The Cabinet Member explained that she was hopeful of a move (with WECA) to have a share of the income.

Councillor Halsall asked about the training for officers regarding the retrofitting of historic buildings and also progress on the challenges regarding building consent. The Cabinet Member stated that this was an ongoing challenge.

## **72 SCHOOL STREETS (POLICY DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION)**

Councillor Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel, introduced the discussion on School Streets and gave a presentation which covered the following:

- School Run
- Aims of School Streets
- Policy Basis
- Step approach to mode shift
- Objectives and Benefits
- Work done so far in BANES
- Enforcement – options
- Qualifying criteria
- Table – School Streets prioritisation criteria
- Outline programme

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Hughes asked why information was not circulated in advance on this item. The Cabinet Member explained that this was a discussion around policy development rather than scrutiny.

Councillor Hughes asked if LTNs (Local Traffic Neighbourhood Schemes) and School Streets schemes are sitting separately and asked how School Streets could be similarly prioritised. The Cabinet member explained that, if a request for a School Street scheme comes forward, there would be scope for inclusion into an LTN. She added that a pot of funding has now been allocated for School Streets (from the CAZ – Clean Air Zone).

Councillor Heijltjes stated that she would like to see a reference to social and community aspects in the objectives. She also asked if School Streets would be promoted in the next tranche of LTN schemes. The officer explained that it is important to identify which policy intervention is needed at what point in time for which problem. Councillor Wait stated that LTN and School Street schemes could work in unison.

Councillor David stated that she agreed with the objectives in the presentation. She stated that there had been a car free day (and week) at Widcombe school – there had been good community engagement and positive feedback. She stated the importance of working with local businesses to provide locations for park and stride. She added that it was good news that there is funding for a school travel officer and asked if this officer could support walking buses. Councillor David also suggested that some messaging about sustainable transport be mentioned at the application and admissions stage regarding schools. The officer explained that there is a walking bus tool kit and that there is mostly no additional (insurance) premium, but schools will need to do a risk assessment. She added that secondary schools are a natural disruptor event and there has to be a stepped approach when it comes to these schools – such as level 3 bike ability courses. Councillor Wait advised to start any scheme like this after Easter as year groups are fading out, it is best not to start in September.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that schools are under pressure and it is important that they know our vision. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the point.

Councillor David stated that the call should go out as widely as possible and it is useful to have some flexibility in the criteria (for example a bus route should not preclude a scheme). She explained that mode shift stars provides a framework but schools are doing things outside the administrative system of the scheme. She also stated that nurseries are often near schools.

Councillor Auton stated that Multi Academy Trusts could be contacted as they often cover many schools.

Councillor Hughes asked that the difference between rural and city schools be kept in mind as car dependency can be different.

The Cabinet Member thanked that Panel members for their points and asked them to communicate any further thoughts on how to approach School Streets.

## **73 LOCAL FOOD GROWING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT**

Councillor Sam Ross, Chair of the Food Growing Task Group, introduced the item. She explained that, if the Panel accept the report, it will be forwarded to the relevant Cabinet Member/s for response.

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Wait commented that the report was helpful in moving towards the development of a strategy. Councillor Auton thanked Councillor Ross for chairing the group well and highlighted the good participation.

Councillor Wait noted that there was nobody from Keynsham on the Panel. Councillor MacFie stated that the number of allotments in Keynsham differs from that of Bath and asked about allotment space coming through building developments.

Councillor Ross acknowledged the point about Keynsham but pointed out that a lot of similar issues were covered in the report – the group could not cover every area.

Regarding the planning developments Councillor Halsall stated that developers are generally encouraged to allow suitable areas for food growing. Councillor Ross stated that the location is important as some allotments (through 106 agreements) are not in or near the development.

Councillor Simon stated that commercial allotments are not mentioned. He added that allotments in Combe Down are under threat and would like Cabinet Member comment. Councillor Ross explained that the group did touch on commercial allotments. She added that these are expensive (can be £600 annually as opposed to £25).

Councillor Hughes stated that from a parish/town Council perspective, allotments can be challenging, they must be self-sustaining as they can be expensive to manage.

Councillor Halsall commented that it is a good idea to create more diversity in size with existing Council owned allotments.

Councillor Ross stated that support could be limited in terms of support staff - responsibility was with the Parks Team.

The Chair invited Adam Reynolds to add a comment. Adam Reynolds commented that in Timsbury, he had an allotment plot and it had been a valuable community connection as well as a hobby.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that a lot of schools are involved in food growing. Councillor Ross commented that only 7 schools are now under Local Authority Control (not academized), she stated that the recommendations do mention 'partnerships' which could include schools. Councillor Wait commented that this generally worked best if there is an enthusiast on the staff.

The Panel agreed to refer the report to the Cabinet Member (the recommendations are set out below).

- i) **Better use of space** - To welcome the initiative of offering a more diverse range of allotment plots/community garden spaces and encourage the further development of this approach to help address waiting lists.
- ii) **Better use of space** - To invite allotment holders and the Allotment Association to contribute to a refresh of B&NES Council's allotment [rules and guidance](#)

To include consideration of:

- Provision of starter plots, introductory lessons, a buddy system to help new tenants.
- Varying the size of plots to allow sharing and to consider groups to be tenants rather than just individuals.

- iii) **Preserving growing space** – to invite the cabinet member with responsibility for planning to ensure the developing Local Plan and its supporting

guidance complements the aims of the developing Local Food Growing Strategy, whilst also recognising the environmental and economic value of local Grade 1 agricultural land.

- iv) **Creating new space** -. To encourage the cabinet member with responsibility for planning to explore through Supplementary Planning Documents the potential of putting more responsibility on developers, particularly through larger developments to ensure local food growing opportunities are incorporated into submitted plans.
- v) The council to identify an officer lead for coordinating and leading implementation of the developing Local Food Strategy.
- vi) The Task Group welcomes and encourages the proposal to create a new Food Partnership – council led- which brings together community partners to implement the new Local Food Strategy.
- vii) The council through its community forums to initiate a ‘big food conversation’, inviting our communities to input into delivery of the Local Food Strategy, ensuring collective ownership.
- viii) The council through its Parish Liaison or Community Area Forums to facilitate support and the sharing of good practice for town and parish councils requesting support with the management of their allotments.

**74     PANEL WORKPLAN**

The Panel noted the future workplan.

The Chair asked for a verbal update on the Food Group to the July meeting and a further update item in September.

The meeting ended at 12.09 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**