

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Economic and Community Development (ECD) Policy Development Scrutiny Panel (PDS)
MEETING DATE:	Thursday 24 th May 2012
TITLE:	River Corridor Group
WARD:	ALL
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 – Bath Avon River Economy Report Appendix 2 – List of selected recommendations from the River Group Report Appendix 3 – Outline of possible future structure of River Group Appendix 4 – Terms of reference (2010)	

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The River Corridor Group (RCG) has produced a report, the *Bath River Avon Economy* (2011, see Appendix 1), which includes a number of recommendations. Following the Informal Cabinet meeting on 6th January the item was referred to the Economic and Community Development PDS Panel. The Panel is asked to undertake its review in its Policy Development role and to advise Cabinet on future decisions (if any) with regard to the Panel's recommendations. The Cabinet will then consider how to move any specific recommendations forward and the (financial) implications of doing so.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The panel is recommended to:

- 2.1 Review and discuss the RCG report as a referral from Cabinet.
An extract of recommendations from the report, showing the range of issues addressed, is provided in Appendix 2. The Appendix also provides page references to the pages on which the full set of recommendations can be reviewed.
- 2.2 Hear from speakers (invited or registered to address the Panel) including the Chair of the RCG, Mr Edward Nash.

- 2.3 Consider what role the Council could take, along with other agencies and organisations, to address the issues raised in the RCG Report. Special consideration needs to be given to whether the report recommendations align with the Corporate Agenda and the roles of the different council departments affected by the report (Development and Regeneration, Property Services, Environmental Services, Planning and Transport Development, Tourism, Leisure and Culture).
- 2.4 The panel to consider proposals from the River Corridor Group as to its future structure (refer to Appendix 3 for initial outlines of ideas).
- 2.5. The panel to provide outcome of discussion as feedback to Cabinet.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Panel is being asked to advise Cabinet whether any specific recommendations fit within the objectives of the Council and should be taken forward. A recommendation from the Panel to act upon recommendations made, does not cause a financial commitment for the Council to include the objectives within a Service Delivery Plan. Any decision to include recommendations will be taken by Cabinet and will follow the appropriate democratic procedure.
- 3.2 If a recommendation is not currently included within the Service Delivery Plans of the relevant service areas, inclusion could incur additional costs for the Council. Cabinet will have to take the financial impacts of potential recommendations into consideration when advised by the Panel. Any potential new financial commitments will have to be met from savings elsewhere.

4 THE REPORT

4.1 BACKGROUND

The River Corridor Group was set-up by former Cabinet Member Terry Gazzard and the Strategic Director for Development and Major Projects, John Betty in late 2010 (See Appendix 4 - Terms of Reference (2010)), following a Better Bath Forum debate in July 2010. The purpose of the group is to:

'advise the Council over a period of years on changing the present situation of the Bath Avon river corridor within the Council's area from making no or even a negative contribution to the economy, to one with a wide ranging, positive, sustainable and regenerative contribution.'

(River Corridor Group – Heads of Terms, 2010)

This group is a voluntary advisory group and members comprise:

Edward Nash (Chair) – For experience in urban regeneration and design management

Michael Davis – For experience in restoring the Avon & Kennet Canal

Jeremy Douch – For experience in transport planning

James Hurley – Representing Low Carbon South West and for experience in resource recycling

John Webb – Representing Inland Waterways Association and the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust and experienced in Waterways Management

Councillor Bryan Chalker – For experience in Bath's heritage and representing the Conservative Political Group

Councillor Dine Romero – Representing the Liberal Democrats Group

Councillor David Laming – Originally for experience in using the river for boating and now as River Champion member

Nikki Wood – For experience in environmental and ecological projects

The RCG has now been operating for over 12 months and has produced the report *Bath Avon River Economy (2011)* that evaluates the river economy, identifies potential improvements and outlines recommendations. The River Corridor Group is seeking a commitment by the Council and other statutory organisations including the Environment Agency, British Waterways and Bath Tourism Plus to realise the challenges and opportunities that the river presents and to explore in more detail what the River Corridor can do to change the economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of our district.

4.2 The *Bath Avon River Economy (2011)* provides evidence to the Council, other agencies, local organisations, other stakeholders and the residents of Bath that the River Avon has an environmental long term problem in many areas of the district and is not utilised as an economic resource.

4.3 The report highlights that a solution to these issues will not be found by the Council and River Corridor Group alone.
The improvement of the River environment is a complex issue and will be a long term process. The various agencies, organisations and stakeholders associated with the river and the multiple RIPARIAN owners create a complex scenario moving forward.

4.4 A pragmatic approach is needed to integrate organisations and individuals together to create an agenda to revitalise the River.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 If any decision on how to progress the River Agenda is made, a risk assessment, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance, will have to be completed.

6 EQUALITIES

6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been carried out as this is a report received from an external organisation.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 *Cabinet members; Council Officers; PDS Panel Chairs.*

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 *Sustainability; Property; Corporate; Health & Safety; Human Resources;*

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

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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Background papers	<i>none</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	