

Bath & North East Somerset  
**Corporate Plan**  
**2012 - 2015**

**Promoting  
independence and  
positive lives for  
everyone**



**Creating neighbourhoods  
where people are proud  
to live**



**Building a strong  
economy**

**Making Bath and North East Somerset  
an even better place to live work and visit**

**Bath & North East  
Somerset Council**





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# Foreword

**Paul Crossley - Leader of the Council**

**‘Working to make Bath and North East Somerset an even better place to live, work and visit’**

Over recent years, the Council has helped create a unique place in the heart of the West of England and has consistently delivered a high standard of local services that demonstrate good value for money.

Our challenge is to build on our successes and continue to deliver high quality services during tough economic times. We are well placed to do this. Whilst other councils have made deep cuts to front line services, we have taken steps to become more efficient and have protected frontline priority public services. 90 per cent of our overall reduction in spending is in ways other than service cuts.

In light of the new challenges we face, a refreshed vision for our area will guide the services we deliver. This vision puts people first and communities at the heart of everything we do.

To build a stronger economy, we are investing over £80 million in projects including the regeneration of Bath Riverside, Keynsham and Radstock, and the Bath Transportation Package. These will help create new jobs, more homes, and greater prosperity for local people.

To create neighbourhoods where people are proud to live, we are investing £1.2 million over two years to ensure there are decent and affordable homes in the private and social sector, improving community facilities at Odd Down Playing Fields and Paulton Library, and helping people to live resource efficient lifestyles whilst tackling the causes and effects of climate change.

To promote independence and positive lives for everyone, an extra £520,000 in 2012/13 will support older people to live independently and an extra £200,000 to cover care placements and support young care leavers. £7.5 million is available to further improve the standard of school buildings.

We have listened to the views of local people on what matters most to them: jobs and economic growth, new schools, good quality care, safe communities, opportunities for young people, clean streets and decent and affordable homes. This is reflected in our vision for B&NES and in our plans for service delivery.

We will always put people first and at the heart of the services we provide. We are determined to reach everyone and to ensure that all of our residents have the opportunity to live life to the full.

# Introduction

**The plan sets out the Council's objectives for Bath and North East Somerset and describes how we will make progress towards our vision.**

These objectives help us to improve the services we deliver; making sure we reach and support the most vulnerable, deliver high-quality local services, whilst providing value for money.

The plan is framed around 3 objectives and describes how we will deliver them, as well as how we are responding to the key challenges ahead.

These objectives cannot be delivered by the Council alone. Together with our partners – local town and parish councils, the police, schools, the health service, community organisations, local businesses – we will champion 'joined-up' services that are efficient and that meet local need.

Other strategies and plans provide more detail about specific service areas. Our performance will be measured through our Service Delivery Programme.

## The Objectives

- **Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone.**
- **Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live.**
- **Building a Stronger economy.**



# Local picture



## **Bath and North East Somerset is home to nearly 180,000 people.**

Within our population there is a high percentage of young people, some of which are attracted by our 2 world renowned universities. It is less ethnically diverse than the rest of England.

The local workforce is highly skilled with 35.9 per cent of the population educated to degree level or equivalent, compared with a national average of 31.3 per cent. Benefit take-up rates are also lower than the national average at 1.8 per cent of the working age population compared with 3.5 per cent nationally.

House prices within the area are relatively high, with the average house price at £288,282, compared to the national average of £160,780.

The health of people living in Bath and North East Somerset is generally better than the England average and our overall mortality rate is low. Priority crime rates are down and our residents' survey tells us that people feel safe.

The city of Bath forms the main urban area, acting as the commercial and recreational centre. It is home to approximately 50 per cent of our population and is one of the few cities in the world to be named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The economy in Bath is performing comparatively well and the number of visitors to the city is higher than ever before.



Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock are small historic market towns located in the west and south and are home to approximately 21 per cent of our population. Midsomer Norton and Radstock have a strong heritage of mining and industry stemming from the North Somerset Coalfield.

The rest of the area consists of 69 diverse rural communities of varying sizes and characteristics, including the line of villages along the foothills of the Mendips, the Chew Valley, Whitchurch and the Cotswolds villages around Bath.



# Challenges and opportunities



**Our vision for Bath and North East Somerset will help us to overcome the challenges ahead, whilst making the most of the opportunities.**

## **The financial climate**

The economic slowdown is creating many challenges for the Council. Our financial capacity to deliver services, in the same way as the past, is being put under pressure. The Government's Spending Review included reductions of 28 per cent in local spending and in the Government's statement in the autumn of 2011 they confirmed the need for spending reduction measures to continue to 2016/17.

We will also seek to make the most of new Government funding through initiatives such as the New Homes Bonus and the return of future business rate growth (from 1 April 2013) which will provide the funding to support council services.

## **Inequalities**

Bath and North East Somerset is one of the least deprived authorities in the country. However, our wealth is unequally shared and there are 5 areas within Bath and North East Somerset which experience deprivation. This creates difference, and people living within these areas are more likely to experience ill health, lower educational attainment, unemployment and a lower life expectancy. Access to education and employment is one of the most important paths out of poverty and will form a core part of our commitment to reducing the economic gap.





## Complex families

The Government estimates that there are around 200 families with complex needs living within the B&NES area. These families experience 5 or more of the following problems: unemployment, poor quality or overcrowded housing, no parent has any qualifications, mental ill-health, longstanding limiting illness, disability or infirmity, low income, unable to afford food and clothing items. This is unacceptable and we will be taking steps to ensure that these families enjoy the same quality of life experienced by others.

## The young unemployed and vulnerable unemployed

There has been an increase in 18-24 year olds looking for work and over 200 16-18 year olds are not in education, employment or training. While this is lower than national levels this still represents 5 per cent of all our 16 – 18 year olds. We know that being young, out of work and not in education or training will have a negative impact on future employment prospects and life chances.

Unemployed vulnerable people aged 25-60 can experience a wide range of difficulties

such as accessing housing and training, suffering mental ill-health, as well as facing additional challenges if they are lone parents.

Our new vision will help us to support young unemployed and vulnerable unemployed people not just through re-igniting an enterprise culture and stimulating employment opportunities, but by providing a package of support including training in employability skills, work experience, apprenticeship opportunities and mentoring support.

## Growth

We are proud of our heritage, our historic conservation. However this should not be seen as an obstacle to growth but as an incentive for high quality, contemporary development that reflects the needs of today's residents.

As population numbers grow there will be an increase in demand for housing, education places, jobs and transport. We will invest in sustainable housing development and modern office accommodation, support schools and colleges through the provision of additional teaching and research space and enable safe and practical travel options in order to keep our roads moving.

## Ageing population

The number of older people within the B&NES area is increasing. Statistical projections suggest that this will continue and by 2026, people over 75 will represent 11 per cent of the local population, compared with 9 per cent in 2011. This will create challenges in services such as social care, health and housing. We will continue to invest in good quality services for older people.

## Climate change

Climate change poses significant challenges for the area. Changing weather patterns and rising energy prices mean that we will need to consider different choices in how we live our lives.

Making homes more energy efficient and investing in local renewable energy is important to achieving our carbon reduction target and to tackling fuel poverty. Our challenge is to help local people and communities reduce carbon emissions and promote more environmentally-sustainable lifestyles.

The Council has been a good steward of public resources. However, as we move forward the Council faces some very tough challenges and will need to radically redesign and potentially reduce some types of service in response to the financial and policy climate.

## Changes in legislation

New legislation such as the Academies Act, Localism Act, Police and Social Responsibility Act, Health and Social Care Act and Welfare reforms are all having a significant impact on the way we work and how we deliver services in the future. We are responding well to the legislation and listed below are some of the changes we are making:

- **Academies Act:** We are helping some of our schools to become academies. Seven out of our thirteen secondary schools have already made the change and more of our schools are likely to follow in the next few years.
- **Localism Act:** We are supporting a range of mechanisms to facilitate greater community involvement in the planning of local services, such as neighbourhood plans.
- **Police and Social Responsibility Act:** Local police will become more accountable to local people through the election of a Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset in November 2012.
- **Health and Social Care Act:** We will give local people a greater say in the way health services are delivered through a new Health and Wellbeing Board.

# Our Vision

**The Council's vision is to make Bath and North East Somerset an even better place to live, work and visit.**



This means that we will put people first and do everything in our power to make sure that everyone fulfils their potential and has equal opportunity. We want people to be happy, healthy and proud of where they live.

The area is a rich mix of different communities and people; each place has its own history and identity. We will support people to be active citizens, and help them to help us change the way services are delivered, for the better. We value the contribution of local people, communities, businesses, students and tourists and are committed to listening to what our residents tell us about their neighbourhoods and local services.

We want Bath and North East Somerset to be a leader in green innovation and achievement. We are working with the community to reduce our carbon emissions by 45 per cent by 2026, through a range of programmes that promote resource efficiency.

We will preserve and enhance our natural and built environment that makes Bath and North East Somerset an enriching place to live, work and visit. One of the ways we can make living in the area better is to make the most of our parks, leisure and sports facilities.

To ensure Bath and North East Somerset's continued economic success we will support a strong and sustainable economy. To be resilient we must have a diversified market and to this end we will promote local business, innovation and enterprise.

We will address with determination the challenges that lie ahead and deliver our vision to make Bath and North East Somerset an even better place to live, work and visit.

This plan is framed around 3 key objectives that will enable us to deliver our vision. The next section describes some of the things that we are doing to meet these objectives.

# Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone



**Our aim is to improve the life chances of everyone living in Bath and North East Somerset.**

This means that we are investing in services for children and young people, leading a dedicated programme of care for older people, and reducing health inequalities.

We are determined that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. For this to happen we will work with our partners in schools, colleges, local businesses, health services, social care and voluntary organisations to ensure the best possible outcomes for local people. We are already working closely with our local GPs who will soon be responsible for commissioning local health services.

Our population is changing. People are living longer and this will create challenges in social care and health. We are investing in these services and our commitment is to provide good quality care for older people, disabled people and vulnerable adults. We know that people want choice, dignity and the respect to make their own decisions, as well as assistance to live independently. We will develop services that meet these needs from

meals on wheels to a fully accessible door to door minibus service, making previously difficult journeys to the doctors, dentists or the shops much easier.

It is important that children and young people enjoy their childhood and are prepared for adult life. In partnership with schools, families and other children and young people's services we are committed to creating an environment that is nurturing, safe and sets high expectations.

Schools are often at the heart of our local communities, which is why we are investing £7.5 million to improve our school buildings. Recent legislative change has affected the way we manage and fund our schools and we now have academies. We are working collaboratively with our new academies to ensure that every child receives a high standard of education. Regardless of its status, we believe that every school must continue to play a pivotal role in nurturing young people and instilling a sense of community.



## Here are some of the ways we are delivering this objective:

- Over £7.5 million to improve the quality of our school buildings. This is in addition to projects already underway at Western All Saints Primary School, Wellsway Sports Hall, Ralph Allen Applied Learning Centre, and Oldfield School.
- An extra £520,000 in 2012/13 to manage the increase in the elderly population to support people to live independently.
- An extra £200,000 in 2012/13 for services that cover care placements and support young care leavers enjoy their childhood and prepare for adult life.

We are committed to activities and opportunities that help young people make a positive difference to their lives and communities. It is through these activities that young people improve their confidence as well as develop self-esteem, resilience, and important life skills. We will provide targeted support to our young people who are not in education, employment or training. It is important to us that everyone has the opportunity to develop their skills and use them to improve their community.

Youth clubs in village halls, village football teams, and theatre and music groups all play an important part of our local culture and community life. We want to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in sports, leisure and cultural activities which is why we are investing in better sports facilities and local community leisure projects.

# Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live



**Our aim is to create safe and healthy communities which have decent, affordable homes and clean streets.**

Our residents' survey tells us that 86 per cent of residents are satisfied with Bath and North East Somerset as a place to live. However, we know that there are differences in economic success, the quality and availability of housing and the way people experience services across the district. We need to ensure that this inequality is reduced by sharing our strengths amongst all communities and neighbourhoods.

Bath and North East Somerset is a safe place to live, work and visit but we want to reduce even further the number of people that fall victim to crime and anti-social behaviour. We particularly want young people to grow up confident and safe and for people to feel safe in their streets and shared public spaces. We will make sure that people have a say in community safety in their local areas, through local partnership meetings with the police.

We believe that everyone should have access to a decent and affordable home and so we are investing £1.2 million, over the coming years, to improve the supply and quality of affordable housing. We are investing in clean streets, open public spaces and neighbourhoods and encouraging people to

take care of their local areas through schemes such as the Eco Schools project that promotes sustainability and tackles litter and waste.

We will support communities to be resilient to change and to overcome challenges such as threats of flooding or loss of a local facility such as a corner shop. We will help local people and groups to get involved and support them to make improvements within their local neighbourhoods and communities.

There are already thousands of inspirational people and groups working across the area. These make an invaluable contribution to community life through initiatives such as Community@67, a dedicated community space offering a range of activities to local people; the Somer Valley Adventure Play Park and Skate Park in Midsomer Norton, which actively involves service users in the running of the park and the 'Proud of Your Doorstep' initiative in Whiteway, which involves local residents in keeping areas clean and tidy. We want to build on these successes and do more to support local people to make positive changes within their communities.



## Here are some of the ways we are delivering this objective:

- £1.2 million over 2012/15 to help ensure that there are decent affordable homes in the private and social sector.
- An increase in frontline staff to improve the cleanliness of our streets and open public spaces.
- Providing a taxi marshal service that prevents trouble occurring at night, relieving the strain on police and NHS services. Each year they help over 100,000 people get home safely from Bath City Centre.

Local opinions are invaluable to the decisions we take and we are committed to ensuring that decisions are made as locally as possible. We will not adopt a single approach for involving communities but will instead recognise their diverse nature ranging from the urban areas in Bath to rural villages at the foot of the Mendips. We will work with community groups to identify the best means of addressing local concerns and needs, using tools such as neighbourhood and community plans.

We want to help people adapt to changes in our climate. With our partners we are developing a network of community volunteers who will identify local environmental risk such as flooding or isolation caused by snow. Our Snow Warden scheme has enlisted local people as volunteers to spread salt and clear snow.

It is important to make our homes more energy efficient, since rising energy costs mean that some people cannot afford to heat their homes properly. With the support of community groups, neighbourhoods are being helped to save energy through a variety of schemes such as home insulation and solar panels on schools. We want to encourage care towards our local environment by supporting people to reduce waste and recycle more.

We want everyone in Bath and North East Somerset to be proud of where they live.

# Building a strong economy



## We want Bath and North East Somerset to enjoy a thriving economy.

High levels of public sector employment, the area's popularity as a tourist and retail destination and a highly skilled local workforce have so far helped to protect our economy from some of the harsher impacts of the economic slowdown.

However, we are determined to do more. We will encourage strong local business sectors, protect and grow our thriving tourist and retail industries as well as take steps to create a more diverse economy that encompasses the knowledge, creative, sustainable energy, environmental and ICT industries. A strong, resilient and diversified economy that promotes enterprise will create economic prosperity as well as a broad range of employment opportunities for local people.

We cannot tackle the challenge of economic growth alone. We need to harness the knowledge and commitment of the private sector to support growth and employment opportunities for local people. We will also encourage local businesses to play an active role in community life, through investing in apprenticeship schemes.

Among the ways we are promoting local business growth is through investment in key development sites and regeneration schemes. With our regional partners we are leading the exciting transformation of Bath Western Riverside, a former industrial site. Work on Bath Western Riverside began at the beginning of 2011 and the first 48 affordable homes were delivered to the Somer Community Housing Trust in September 2011. Phase 2 of the plans include mixed use development sites and workspaces for business.

We are also investing in Keynsham, Radstock and Midsomer Norton Town Centres. Our plans include the redevelopment of Keynsham Town Hall, the Somerdale site, new housing, traffic management schemes and the modernisation of high street facilities to attract larger national retailers.

Through these redevelopment schemes and others we are committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality of our local environment. This will not only attract larger national businesses to the area, but will inspire local people to start up new enterprises.





A strong economy relies heavily on an effective transport system. People need to be able to travel easily to their place of work. We are working to reduce traffic congestion and pollution through a range of programmes, from safer road schemes for cyclists and pedestrians to an increase in park and ride spaces. We are committed to making people's experiences of travelling in Bath and North East Somerset as convenient as possible.

## Here are some of the ways we are delivering this objective:

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- Over £81.5 million over the coming years into economic regeneration projects to support a broad range of employment opportunities for local people, deliver key development sites to increase the number of local businesses, provide new homes, and help create a sustainable low carbon economy. These projects are:
  - Regeneration of Keynsham town centre;
  - Bath City Riverside and development of its Enterprise Area;
  - Regeneration of Radstock town Centre;
  - Bath Transportation Package.
  - Public realm improvements in Bath city centre;
  - A Creative Hub for the digital, knowledge and creative industries.
- £4.8 million in 2012/13 on highways maintenance to ensure the quality of the highways network is maintained.
- Freezing all parking charges in 2012/13, retaining free parking in other Council car parks, and holding Park and Ride fares in recognition of the tough trading environment and squeeze on incomes.

# Change Programme

**Through our Change Programme we are becoming more efficient and improving the way we deliver services. This is to make sure that we continue to provide the right services to local people, when and where they need them.**

Our aim is to provide priority public services at a lower cost, so we are working across the Council and with other partners to improve, simplify and standardise the way we do things.

The Change Programme is now in the third year of a five year work programme. It has already delivered £3m of savings each year and by the end of 2015/16 it will have delivered almost £9m of recurring annual savings or a total saving of £32m. This is making a real difference and helping to protect services.

However, this programme is not just about making financial savings; we are determined to improve the way we work and deliver services.

We are creating a stronger, more efficient Council that is making a real difference to the way we do business and prepare for the future. Efficiencies include our new One Stop Shops, which will bring us and our partners together

under one roof and improve our face to face contact with residents on a range of local services from housing to family tax credit.

Through our Workplaces programme we are also making sure we use expensive office space more resourcefully, whilst cutting our Carbon footprint.

We are looking at how we buy services more efficiently and our Procurement Team have already identified over £1.7m of savings, without compromising on service delivery.

Through these projects and others, the Change Programme will ensure that we not only adapt to local and national change but make sure we are at the forefront of local government exploring new and exciting ways of delivering high quality services.





