

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

### **ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Thursday, 13th March, 2014

**Present:-** Councillors Robin Moss (Chair), Cherry Beath (Vice-Chair), Patrick Anketell-Jones, Brian Simmons, Andrew Furse, Geoff Ward, Dave Laming and David Martin

#### **62 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **63 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### **64 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Ben Stevens (Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development) sent his apologies for this meeting.

#### **65 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

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

The Chairman informed the meeting that, not so long ago, he circulated an email to the rest of the Panel informing them that he would allow a discussion on River Safety. A reason for having River Safety under Urgent Business was due to the tragic incident that happened a few weeks ago, where a young man drowned in the river. The Chairman also said that Councillor Dave Laming had informed him about an incident that happened over the weekend, where a young girl and her father fell in, and, fortunately, they managed to get themselves out of the river.

The Chairman reminded the meeting that the Panel had received a report and presentation in November 2011 about the River Safety, which included a focus on a need for safety ropes on the side of the river and repairs needed on safety ladders coming out of the river. The report from November 2011 suggested that the safety ladders needed to be painted clearly so the public who would fall in the river could see them.

The Chairman expressed his concerns that those safety measures, as suggested in the report and presentation on November 2011, did not appear to have been put into place.

The Chairman suggested that the Panel should receive a report, from the relevant Cabinet Member and officers, on what had happened in regard of implementation of the safety measures recommended in November 2011 report.

The Chairman requested that the report should have detailed information on how decisions/recommendations from the November 2011 report had been put into action, and if they had not been put in action, the reason for that.

Councillor David Dixon, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, commented that the Council has been working with the police, the fire service, the Environment Agency and the Canal and River Trust on a list of work that has to be done, and the next meeting between the Council and all of these agencies is scheduled for 24<sup>th</sup> March. Councillor Dixon said that he could not reveal all information at this point due to on-going investigation. Councillor Dixon also said that he would be quite keen to share findings of that meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> March and also an action plan. Councillor Dixon concluded by saying that the Panel should understand that the role of the Council was to bring all agencies together for multi-agency discussion on the River Safety.

The Chairman requested that findings of that meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> March be circulated to the Panel as soon as possible and also to be included in the report for May 2014 meeting of the Panel. The Chairman also suggested that relevant partners from the Responsible Authorities should be invited at the next meeting and participate in questions and answers session. The Chairman also requested that Councillor Dave Laming be included in those multi-agency discussions, in his capacity as Member Champion for the River and also as Member of this Panel. The Chairman added that Councillor Laming has had many years of operational experience around the river and that he would feel comfortable if Councillor Laming would be invited and involved in those discussions.

Members of the Panel welcomed requests made by the Chairman.

Councillor Laming said that he could not see, or find, evidence that any of the recommendations from the November 2011 report had been carried out.

The Chairman concluded this matter by asking the Panel to agree with his recommendations, as above. The Panel unanimously agreed.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Invite all of the relevant Responsible Authorities to come along at the next meeting and participate in questions and answers session;
- 2) Request that an action plan, as soon as it is available, be circulated to all Panel Members;
- 3) Receive a report for May meeting of the Panel which should include an action plan from November 2011 report showing timescales, responsibilities and financial accountabilities;

- 4) Strongly advise that Councillor Dave Laming should be included in the operational group that would be looking into the progress on the River Safety, as Member Champion for The River and also as a Member of this Panel.

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

The Chairman informed the Panel that two speakers had registered to speak at the meeting.

Nicolette Boater would address the Panel just before 'B&NES Economic Strategy Review: Update Report'.

The Chairman invited Susan Charles to address the Panel at this point.

Susan Charles informed the Panel that she and the Chairman of the Panel had visited Keynsham Leisure Centre in regards of (quote) 'the lack of specified disabled parking for users of the Keynsham Leisure Centre, which was removed in 2007 and with no suitable alternative being offered' (quote finished).

The Chairman confirmed that he had visited the site in question. The Chairman said that, following a visit, he could not understand why no suitable alternative had been offered to the public.

Councillor David Dixon reminded the Panel that this was an officer decision, and it would not be appropriate for Members of the Panel to influence decisions made at that level.

The Chairman commented that this was also an issue concerning the Council's legal obligation to facilitate access to public buildings, which was a matter for scrutiny.

The Panel felt that the best way forward would be to pay a site visit to the Keynsham Leisure Centre and investigate specified disabled parking spaces for users of the centre.

The Panel also agreed to have the next meeting in Keynsham in order to accommodate a site visit just before the meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Set a site visit to Keynsham Leisure Centre in order to investigate specified disabled parking spaces for users of the centre.
- 2) Set the site visit time at 1pm (exact meeting place to be communicated to all invitees).
- 3) Invite the whole Panel, Councillor David Dixon (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods), relevant officers (including Matthew Smith – Divisional

Director for Environmental Services), Susan Charles and Jenny Shrubsall for the site visit.

- 4) Start the next meeting of the Panel right after the site visit, at around 1.30pm, with the meeting venue somewhere in Keynsham.
- 5) Instruct Democratic Services Officer to look for alternative date of the meeting considering that European Elections were set for 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014.

## **68 MINUTES**

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

## **69 CABINET MEMBERS' UPDATES (10 MINUTES)**

The Chairman informed the meeting that the Panel received written updates from Councillor Ben Stevens (Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development) and Councillor David Dixon (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods).

*Cabinet Member updates are attached to these minutes.*

Councillor Beath said that the Big Belly bins had been seen by some to not give the message about the importance of recycling, however she was aware that these bins enabled less waste going into Land Fill, and asked Cllr Dixon to outline the recycling process..

Councillor Dixon replied that all of the waste goes to the mechanical biological treatment plant in Avounmouth, out of which only 5% of goes to the landfill. Councillor Dixon added that Wi-Fi connection points would be included in thirty (30) new bins.

Councillor Beath asked about visual feedback from the public on Big Belly bins.

Councillor Dixon responded that there had been a lot less litter since Big Belly bins were in use.

Councillor Furse praised Councillor Dixon with Capital programme initiatives/projects and asked if the Council would have officers in place to drive these schemes.

Councillor Dixon replied that the Council would have officers in place for all of these schemes. Councillor Dixon also said that he would prefer to invest more into these projects, for example new facilities for skaters, rather than spending money on project management.

Councillor Ward felt that Big Belly bins become filthy after some use and asked about the cleaning process for the bins. Councillor Ward also said that food recycling in the city centre was a massive problem, mainly from traders.

Councillor Dixon responded that the bins were looked after and officers were using anti-bacterial wipes to wipe the top and inside of bins. Councillor Dixon also said

that the Council would be rolling out food waste recycling at recycling centres and also rolling out food waste to trade operators.

The Panel, along with Councillor David Dixon, thanked Sue Dicks for her huge contribution as Community Safety Manager over the past five years, and the support she has given to this Panel in particular. Sue would be leaving the Council at the end of April, having successfully managed our partnership during a period of huge change, including the introduction of PCCs and Government funding reductions. Sue Dicks would leave behind a robust framework of partnership working which “mainstreams” community safety across all our services and partners as well as a long list of projects which would continue to benefit local people.

## **70 AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE - NEW OPERATING MODEL (20 MINUTES)**

The Chairman invited Chief Superintendent Geoff Spicer to introduce the report.

The Panel made the following points:

Members of the Panel welcomed the report and also an assurance that numbers of officers on streets would not reduce as initially thought. The Panel also praised an initiative for a new custody suite.

Members of the Panel suggested that this message from the Police should be communicated to the public by means of road shows or some sort of contributors/stakeholders open sessions. The public would be worried with closures of two stations (Manvers Street and Radstock) and they would need to get a proper explanation why this would be happening and what the new arrangements would be.

Members of the Panel felt that there would be a need for some sort of parking for Police Officers, and also some sort of changing facilities close to the city centre.

The Panel questioned an idea of using Council’s ‘One Stop Shop’ as a possible replacement for Manvers Street station, especially because the ‘One Stop Shop’ is closed at 5pm on workdays (4.30pm on Fridays). The Panel also asked if the Keynsham Police Station would stay open.

Chief Superintendent Geoff Spicer responded that the Manvers Street Station had not been open 24hours a day for some time now and that the Keynsham Police Station had been closed for 18 months.

The Panel commented that the public would want an increase in police presence on streets once the Manvers Street Station is closed.

Peter Duppa-Miller addressed the Panel as the Secretary of the B&NES Local Councils Association and as the Chairman of the Radstock Sector Police and Parishes Forum.

Peter Duppa-Miller said that, following on from the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Town and Parish Councils in North East Somerset were most

willing and eager to support the new Operating Model in any and every way that they could.

The intention to align the new Operating Model with the emerging “Connecting Communities” programme was very warmly welcomed.

The Chairman said that this report would start a number of conversations. The Chairman fully understood the re-evaluation of resources although the main discussions would be around new custody suites and also on closures of two stations – Manvers Street and Radstock.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report and to receive a further update at one of the future meetings and also to organise an additional Panel meeting if the level of public concern made it appropriate.

## **71 HERITAGE SERVICES MUSEUMS' VISITORS 2013 (20 MINUTES)**

The Chairman invited Stephen Bird (Head of Heritage Services) to give a presentation to the Panel.

Stephen Bird highlighted the following points in his presentation:

- Fashion Museum
- Victoria Art Gallery
- Roman Baths performance in 2013
- Graph showing Roman Baths visitors, per month
- Graph showing Roman Bath visitors for period 1973-2013
- Association of Leading Visitor Attractions
- Performance of UK visitor attractions in 2013
- Reasons for record visitor numbers in 2013: national factors
- Reasons for record visitor numbers in 2013: local factors
- Accolades so far for Bath
- Things that influence the business
- Unpredictables
- Predictables
- Quality benchmarking
- Financial benchmarking
- Visitors from China
- Graph showing non-English audio guide use at the Roman Bath in 2006
- Graph showing non-English audio guide use at the Roman Bath in 2013
- Increase in basket price against December 2003
- Issues of concern: wear and tear
- Issues of concern: congestion
- Graph showing crowding at Roman Baths
- Stonehenge

*A full copy of the presentation is available on the Minute Book in Democratic Services.*

The Panel highlighted the following points:

Councillor Laming felt that the river should be recognised as another significant tourist attraction to the city.

Councillor Furse commented that he was pleased with the figures though he had slight concerns on the quality of visits.

Stephen Bird replied that Heritage Services had been investing in tourist attractions all the time and that visitors' feedback had been collected on a monthly basis. Stephen Bird also said that Heritage Services had been looking into the best solution to reduce congestion at heritage sites.

Councillor Anketell-Jones asked about cultural tourism. Stephen Bird replied that 66% of people coming to Britain were here because of heritage and culture. Stephen Bird also said that Heritage Services had been working closely with Bath Tourism Plus to build on what Bath can offer to tourists coming to see heritage sites.

Councillor Martin asked about the economic 'pull' on heritage sites and also on nationalities that were visiting the sites.

Stephen Bird responded that the economic 'pull' for last year was around £107m. Heritage Services would know which audio guides (which language) had been in use most of the time but that would not necessarily give a true picture about nationalities visiting the sites (i.e. Spanish language is spoken in many countries).

It was **RESOLVED** to note the presentation and report.

## **72 LICENSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY (20 MINUTES)**

The Chairman invited Cathryn Humphries and Sue Dicks (Community Safety manager) to give a presentation to the Panel.

Cathryn Humphries and Sue Dicks highlighted the following points in the presentation:

- Our role as a licensing authority
- Work with partners
- Chart showing how many organisations are involved
- Next steps in 2014

*A full copy of the presentation is available on the Minute Book in Democratic Services.*

The Panel highlighted the following points:

Councillor Martin asked if the Council, and other relevant agencies, have been working with universities in Bath.

Sue Dicks described how 'Student Watch' was set up, a scheme created between the Council and two universities. There were 10-15 volunteers from both universities and the best way of passing the message, in terms of alcohol safety, was by talking directly to students.

Councillor Ward commented that this would be an interesting area of work, especially when considering that many organisations shown on the chart in presentation were not statutory. Councillor Ward asked what would have to be done to improve this area even further.

Sue Dicks replied that the best way forward would be to speak and listen to the community. The best example where the community had their say was in Midsomer Norton, with the Community Alcohol Partnership scheme.

Councillor Anketell-Jones asked what would be an impact on involving Public Health into licensing.

Alan Bartlett (Public Protection Team Leader) responded that currently there were four objectives for licensing, and Public Health was not one of them, though that would have to be looked at as soon as possible.

The Chairman commented that national legislation had been limiting what Local Authorities could, or couldn't, do in this area. However, recently, some authorities did use some initiatives to involve Public Health into licensing.

Cathryn Humphries commented that she would be quite keen to work with Public Health Consultants and involve Public Health with licensing.

The Chairman welcomed that Licensing Services have been making a step forward by addressing what the Council can do to prevent alcohol harm rather than explaining what the Council cannot do, as had been the case in the past.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report and presentation and for the Panel to receive a further update in near future.

### **73 B&NES ECONOMIC STRATEGY REVIEW : UPDATE REPORT (20 MINUTES)**

The Chairman invited Nicolette Boater to read out her statement to the Panel.

The Chairman invited John Cox (Business Support and Development Manager) to introduce the report.

The Chairman disagreed with the geographical spread in the External Partnership Group. The Chairman commented that only universities from Bath had been included in the group, though Radstock College had been omitted, as well as some other organisations from North East Somerset. The Chairman felt that the External Partnership Group (EPG) seemed to be Bath-centric.



Councillor Furse commented that the EPG should have representatives from the technology sector.

Councillor Martin commented that sustainability element of economy would have to be included in the strategy, with particular link with climate change.

John Cox responded that issues about a sustainability element of the strategy had been discussed and the relevant officer would be looking into it.

Councillor Ward commented that the Strategy would need to support entrepreneurship in order to support employment of young people.

Councillor Laming commented that the River Corridor was not included in the EPG, and highlighted economic importance of the river to the region.

Councillor Anketell-Jones asked if the Local Enterprise Partnership Strategy and B&NES Economic Strategy had been aligned, to which John Cox replied that they were.

It was **RESOLVED** to note report/update and for officer to take on board comments made during the debate.

#### **74 ALCOHOL HARM REDUCTION SCRUTINY INQUIRY DAY - CABINET MEMBERS' RESPONSES (15 MINUTES)**

The Chairman invited Liz Richardson (Policy Development and Scrutiny Lead Officer) to take the Panel through the responses, which were within the Panel's remit, from the relevant Cabinet Members.

Members of the Panel debated responses from the relevant Cabinet Members and felt that strong emphasis should be placed on the recommendation 6.a., which read: 'Refresh the B&NES licensing policy to acknowledge prevention of alcohol harm with such inclusions as: Incorporate health into licensing policy at a local level.'

The Panel felt that Licensing Services have been making a step forward by addressing what the Council can do to prevent alcohol harm rather than explaining, as it was the case in the past, what the Council cannot do.

It was **RESOLVED** to note responses from the relevant Cabinet Members with strong emphasis on the recommendation 6.a. - 'Refresh the B&NES licensing policy to acknowledge prevention of alcohol harm with such inclusions as: Incorporate health into licensing policy at a local level.'

It was also **RESOLVED** that the Panel requested an update in six months from the Police and Crime Commissioner's office on the Community Safety aspect of recommendations in the response table (recommendations 9 and 10).

**75 PANEL WORKPLAN**

It was **RESOLVED** to note the Workplan with the following additions:

- River Safety update – May 2014
- Avon and Somerset Police: New Operating Model update – tbc in 2014
- Economic Strategy – May 2014
- Tourism in North East Somerset – the Chairman would discuss this at the PDS Chairs meeting

The meeting ended at 4.45 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

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