

## **Statement to the 11.9.2014 meeting of Bath and North East Somerset Council**

*[The italicised text in footnotes overleaf, was not part of the spoken statement but for the information of the cross party Member led project team and/or other project stakeholders, has been included here.]*

"Thank you Chairman for allowing me to preface the Council's discussion of how best to progress its work on the governance of Bath and the representation of its communities - an **important subject<sup>i</sup> with wider implications** for the future direction of our local democracy at a point in history when constitutional changes both nationally and locally, are gathering momentum.

Bath and North East Somerset is fortunate not only to contain **many different communities** but also, that many of these have **able and dedicated participants**, and many more who could and would like to participate, as evidenced in the 56 such people who, notwithstanding their holiday commitments, contributed to appendix 2, and without whose informed insights and detailed feedback, the recommendations of this report would be much less persuasive.

We, the residents are also fortunate in having such hardworking elected representatives and I for one would like **this particular cross party working group to continue for the remainder of this Council year.**

**However**, and I wouldn't be here tonight if there were not a however, I am concerned about the approach that has been taken thus far and is proposed for the completion of this review. This is not the place to explain in detail how these concerns might be addressed, but in short, I would like recommendation 2.2 of this interim report to require future work overseen and done by the Working Group to include:

1. **A strong terms of reference<sup>ii</sup>**;
2. **Impartial strategic evaluation of the issues and evidence** - essential if the work is to be more than just a rhetorical flourish and actually make a difference to the standing, governance and vibrancy of our city - and be assured this won't happen<sup>iii</sup> by chance;
3. **Rigorous stakeholder engagement and consultation**, for as our national political leaders now know only too well, securing a particular outcome requires popular as well as political support. This means engaging with the "harder to reach" stakeholder groups such as those alienated by the political and business elite, and time-poor individuals, rather than over rely on existing Parish Councils and other ready organized business and community groups;
4. **Resource commitment commensurate with the demands of the work<sup>iv</sup>**.

So with these provisos, please give your support to the motion that is about to be put before you, and thereby **ensure that in May 2015, Bath and North East Somerset Council is well placed to resolve this important issue, getting it right first time round, for the future as well as the present and for all the communities that comprise this locality."**

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- i for how best to secure the social, economic and environmental outcomes we desire in our locality*
- ii The 8.5.14 Council resolution instigating this Member Working Group was tagged on at the meeting itself, as the fifteenth resolution to a much longer report on non-executive and regulatory committee arrangements, and consequently without first securing agreement to the objectives, scope, approach, or resource required for the work.*
- iii To empower the 2015-9 administration to make such a difference, this 6 month review (a short period of time relative to the task) needs to target the collection and interpretation of evidence on areas and aspects critical to the effective and efficient resolution of the issue, and to then be reported in a manner most likely to catalyse the required change.*
- iv In addition to the expert officer advice and secretariat support already made available to the Working Group, as indicated in my second bullet point above, impartial expert strategic project direction is also critical to the success of this review. Members also need to be assured that staff resource is being allocated to the review on the basis of the functional demands of the work, rather than just on the capacity remaining in over-stretched divisional budgets.*

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