

**PLANNING, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT
AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Minutes of the Meeting held

Tuesday, 24th November, 2015, 2.00 pm

Bath and North East Somerset Councillors: Rob Appleyard (Chair), Barry Macrae (Vice-Chair), Colin Blackburn, Lisa O'Brien, Fiona Darey, Cherry Beath and David Veale

Officers : Louise Fradd (Strategic Director for Place), Graham Sabourn (Head of Housing), Ben Woods (Group Manager for Economy & Culture), John Wilkinson (Divisional Director for Community Regeneration) and Tony Crouch (World Heritage Manager)

Cabinet Members in attendance: Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones and Councillor Charles Gerrish

22 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

23 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Liz Richardson, Cabinet Member for Homes & Planning had sent her apologies to the Panel.

25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Fiona Darey declared an other interest as she is tutor at the University of Bath.

Councillor Cherry Beath declared an other interest in relation to agenda item 11 (Cultural & Creative Strategy Review) as she is a member of the Cultural Forum Executive.

26 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

There were none.

28 MINUTES - 1ST SEPTEMBER 2015

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

29 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Cherry Beath asked if there was any further update on the Gypsy & Traveller Site at Carrswood.

The Head of Housing replied that the transit element of site was due to open any day now and that it was set to be fully occupied. The permanent element of the site has been fully occupied since March.

Councillor Fiona Darey asked if he was aware that the Office of Fair Trading had begun an investigation into high exit fees associated with retirement homes.

The Head of Housing replied that he was not and that he would look into the matter.

Councillor Cherry Beath asked if he had any comment to make on the Governments proposals relating to Affordable Housing.

The Head of Housing replied that it was rather a complicated Bill that relies on a lot of secondary legislation. He said that this was something that he would look to bring back to the Panel in due course.

Councillor Barry Macrae commented that he thought that the figure of an average of 45 weeks to complete adaptations for disabled facilities was not good enough and he asked that this be reviewed in some way.

The Head of Housing replied that Government good practise states that adaptations should be completed within 33 weeks and he agreed that our figures do look poor. He stressed though that a huge amount of work is involved in the process and that the time of recording commences from the very initial call for a request to be assessed to the works being finally completed.

He said that the process begins with the client contacting the Council; then the OTs would undertake an assessment; this would be referred to Housing Services; the assessment would then be used to form a schedule of works; quotes for the work are then sourced from at least two companies; a formal application including financial assessments and proof of title would need to be assessed and checked; and finally the grant can be approved and the works undertaken by the chosen contractor and finally signed off. He stated that he does want the Council to try to do better in this area of work.

Councillor Barry Macrae questioned whether the Council were being over optimistic to start recording the time of the process from the first phone call.

The Head of Housing replied that they try to look at the situation from the point of view of the customer and so choose a performance indicator that reflected the customer's perspective.

The Chairman asked if he had anything further to add regarding the Additional Licensing Scheme for HMOs.

The Head of Housing said that a Government consultation was underway to extend the criteria of the scheme by removing the need for the property to be three storeys or more high.

He estimated that this would require around 300 – 350 further properties to be licensed.

The Chairman asked if this would be an easy task to identify the properties.

The Head of Housing replied that it could actually be quite hard and that as previously they would hold a publicity campaign, engage with landlords and letting agencies and check Council Tax records.

Councillor Cherry Beath commented that it was good to see some of our empty properties coming back into use.

The Chairman asked if this was a resource hungry process.

The Head of Housing replied that they were struggling to identify new ones, but do have a current database of properties. He reminded the Panel of the facility to report an empty property through the Council's website.

Councillor Fiona Darey asked if he could inform the Panel of when Empty Property Week is.

The Head of Housing replied that he was not sure of the exact dates but that it was due to held before the end of the year.

Councillor Colin Blackburn asked if there were any incentives for residents to engage with the Council if they have an empty property.

The Head of Housing replied that they are able to offer a considerable amount of advice to the public on this matter and that early contact will more than likely deliver a better outcome.

The Chairman thanked him on behalf of the Panel for his update.

30 DIRECTORATE PLAN FOR PLACE

The Strategic Director for Place introduced this item to the Panel. She explained that a new Corporate Strategy was agreed by Cabinet at their meeting on 4th November 2015 and that it sets out the vision and the Council's direction of travel over the next four years. She added that it is shaped by and will deliver the 'Putting Residents First' manifesto commitments.

She stated that during November, the draft Directorate Plans will be presented to the Policy Development and Scrutiny (PDS) Panels and that each Panel should only concentrate on the parts of the plan relevant to their own remit.

She said that a number of Budget Fair meetings have been scheduled during November in order to provide people with the opportunity to hear about the Council's financial plans for the next four years. There will be an opportunity to ask questions and feed into the discussions on the budget proposals at the meetings.

She informed the Panel that in terms of workforce it is possible that there may be a small number of posts reductions as a result of the proposals put forward and there may also be requirements to amend working patterns. She added that there will be a shift in skills requirements towards a commercial skills focus in order to maximise income generating opportunities and there will be a refocus of skills usage to ensure most efficient and effective use of staff resources.

She stated that initial Financial Planning work to look at the future scale of financial challenge for the Council originally estimated that the likely savings, or additional income required, would be around £38M for this 4-year period. The position has been reviewed in light of both local and national decisions and announcements resulting in a reduction in the estimated financial planning target to just over £30M.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien asked with regard to the delivery of 2,880 new homes by 2018/19 whether developers would be penalised if they had not built the properties they had gained permission for.

The Strategic Director for Place replied that this was not a major problem in the District, but unfortunately the Council does not have any powers to penalise developers.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien asked if different social housing providers could be encouraged to take part in the planned delivery of 720 affordable homes by March 2019.

The Strategic Director for Place replied that they do work with various providers, but it is the case that Curo is the largest provider in the area.

The Head of Housing replied that it is the choice of the developer who they work with and that the Council works with a number of providers through the Homes West Partnership. He added that he would welcome further competition to the market.

Councillor Colin Blackburn stated that he was concerned over some of the proposed cuts and asked how income would be generated.

The Strategic Director for Place replied that she had identified a number of key risks within the report and that one of them was a lack of capacity and recruitment difficulties within specific service areas and that this was primarily within engineering. She added that income would be generated by developing the Digital and WIFI network across B&NES to provide WIFI and improved connectivity across the district to generate additional incomes of £100,000 in 2016/17, potentially growing by a further estimated £1,000,000 by 2019/20.

She said that the Bath Quays development of office, retail and residential spaces has the objective of generating substantial future year incomes estimated at £1,200,000 by 2019/20.

Councillor Colin Blackburn asked if the Council had considered moving to fortnightly waste collections.

The Strategic Director for Place replied that the current contract ends in 2017 and that matters relating to sites and vehicles are currently under review and this forms the main component for the funding in 2016/17.

Councillor Barry Macrae asked if some of the dates within the report were accurate and suggested that they may need some revision. He asked how many Neighbourhood Plans would be completed by December 2015.

The Strategic Director for Place replied that three had been completed and acknowledged that there were more to do, she said that she would review this part of the report.

Councillor Barry Macrae asked how many jobs would be created on the Bath Quays North and South development.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration replied that the intention is to create 2,500 jobs across the site. He added that services across the directorate would look to be procured more efficiently and that another 'market' type event may be held at another time of the year.

Councillor Macrae asked if this would be of benefit to the community.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration replied that it is the initial intention to involve the residents more in the event.

The Chairman asked if local salaries were likely to increase.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration replied that they are not as high as we would like them to be.

Councillor Colin Blackburn asked how they would make the planned efficiencies within the directorate.

The Strategic Director for Place replied that they were pursuing extending the conversion of street lighting units to LEDs and introducing dimming technology to reduce energy consumption and maintenance costs. She said that this is expected to result in recurring annual savings of £83,000 in 2016/17 growing to £106,000 by 2017/18.

She added that they intended to bring housing support services currently outsourced for Disabled Facilities Grant in house to maximise use of existing skills and reduce commissioning costs and that this was expected to generate budget reductions of £25,000 from 2016/17.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien asked for a little further information regarding the decision to stop printing & posting applications for Parish Consultations.

Councillor Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Finance & Efficiency replied that discussions have been held with the Parish Councils and that routine applications will be communicated electronically and that major ones will be distributed in hard copy.

The Chairman asked if an increase in income could be generated by increasing the fees within Homesearch.

The Head of Housing replied that there is currently a charge of £50 per letting applicable to the relevant Housing Association and that the Council was looking to increase that figure.

Councillor Fiona Darey asked how the pre application review service for Planning Services was working.

The Strategic Director for Place replied that it was working well currently and resulting in shorter reports.

Councillor Colin Blackburn commented that he would like to know of any changes to staff as a result of the plan.

Councillor Charles Gerrish asked for the Panel to contact him if they have further comments on the plan.

31 ECONOMIC STRATEGY UPDATE

The Group Manager for Economy & Culture explained that the context of the review was cross cutting to include the areas of; A Whole Economy Approach, External Governance, Public Service Board, Welfare.

He said that the Economic Strategy Review document was developed with a group of key partners and stakeholders and that together with the Health & Wellbeing and Transport Strategies it forms a suite of high level strategies to guide the future of the B&NES area.

He stated that the updated Strategy was agreed by the Council's Cabinet in September 2013 and subsequently published in November.

He spoke of how the review identifies eight priority sectors which will be the focus for future economic and employment growth, these are split into Key and Core sectors:

- Core sectors currently employ significant numbers of people locally and will continue to be important in employment terms. They cover: tourism, leisure,

arts and culture / retail / health & wellbeing / finance & professional business services

- Key sectors are generally smaller in employment terms but higher value added and offer the potential for significant future expansion. They cover: creative & digital / ICT / advanced engineering & electronics / environmental & low carbon

He informed the Panel that Appendix one to the report sets out progress against the Success Measures for the period 2010 – 2014. It shows:

- That against the key measures of growth in jobs / GVA / productivity the area's economy has performed well and running ahead of target
- That employment growth in the Priority Sectors is ahead of target but with a focus on growth in the Core Sectors including retail, the visitor economy and health
- That because of the focus on the Core Sectors and the increase in part-time employment:
- The average productivity (GVA) per worker has not grown as much as projected to date
- The average annual income per employee has fallen, however in contrast resident earnings have risen by 2.3% between 2010 – 2014 reflecting the fact that the B&NES resident workforce has above average qualification levels

He explained that the Digital B&NES project was seeking to support all residents and businesses to be able to use the best technology. He added that a pilot Wi-Fi system was being trialled across the duration of the Christmas Market and that the Panel could expect to receive further information regarding this work at a future meeting.

Councillor Colin Blackburn what the level of business space demand was.

The Group Manager for Economy & Culture replied that there was a 250,000sqft unmet demand which equates to a size bigger than the planned Enterprise Area.

Councillor Colin Blackburn asked what the Council does when people or companies choose to work in Bristol because they cannot wait until the Enterprise Area is ready.

The Group Manager for Economy & Culture replied that they do work hard with those that have identified a desire to be here and keep them informed of progress.

Councillor Colin Blackburn asked how the demand for space will be broken down into the right elements for the area.

The Group Manager for Economy & Culture replied that it will be office orientated with a focus on financial services and technology firms attempting to create a pathway of growth.

Councillor Barry Macrae asked where & how all of the proposed / encouraged new City of Bath employment outlined by the officers would be able to park, even get into the currently overheated & gridlocked central area.

The Strategic Director for Place replied that the Placemaking process would show what we intend to do with regard to growth.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration added that purpose built offices had not been built in B&NES for twenty years and that as the Council owned much of the land involved in the Enterprise Area it could retain the usage that it desired.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien commented that she wanted the Somerdale site to reach its full potential and not be diluted by construction of a care home on the site.

Councillor Barry Macrae called for the market towns of B&NES to be protected and allowed to develop alongside Bath and agreed with Councillor O'Brien that the Somerdale application was not entirely what we were expecting.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration replied that the Economic Development team would be making a strong case in this respect through the planning process.

Councillor Fiona Darey encouraged officers to recognise the value of sustainable developments.

The Group Manager for Economy & Culture replied that firms able to provide a low carbon facility are encouraged. He added that the Council looks to provide sustainability options through pedestrian travel / cycling.

Councillor Barry Macrae asked how we could look to achieve more sustainable communities and enable people in villages to have jobs nearer their homes.

The Group Manager for Economy & Culture replied that from the point of view from a lot of companies Bath is the attractor. He added that as part of the Enterprise Zone application there was a focus on Bath, but that other areas of the Council would be highlighted.

Councillor Colin Blackburn asked how city housing was being addressed as part of the Placemaking Plan.

The Strategic Director for Place replied that conversations were ongoing with regard to Affordable Housing and that the Council still planned to deliver the figures set out within the Core Strategy. She added that expansion plans were also being had with both of the local universities.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the progress against the Key & Strategic Measures of Success included in the Economic Strategy Review 2014 – 2030.

32 CULTURE & CREATIVE STRATEGY

The Group Manager for Economy & Culture explained that the Cultural and Creative Strategy Review 2015-2020 was developed in 2014 and adopted in April 2015. It was launched on 19 October 2015 with an event attended by approximately 100 people representing the cultural and creative sector.

He said that a series of workshop-style meetings were held throughout 2014, enabling the priorities to be developed in a collaborative manner, ensuring maximum engagement from the whole sector.

He informed the Panel that four core priorities have been identified for creativity and culture in B&NES.

1. Increase the quality and visibility of our creative activity
2. Increase the availability and range of workspace and exhibition space
3. Grow and deepen public engagement and providing opportunities for transgenerational creative and cultural engagement

4. Maximise economic and social value

He explained to the Panel that the new Culture & Creative Investment Board brings together senior representatives from the funding bodies for culture: Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund, Visit England, Creative England, Local Enterprise Partnership. He added that the Board acts as an advisory group to the Council, supporting and guiding the implementation of the Cultural & Creative Strategy Review priorities and that information and input from these bodies will enable the Council to plan for future investment in cultural and creative development.

The Divisional Director for Community Regeneration added that this was a very positive initiative as the Arts Council had withdrawn some funding previously and encouraged the Council to embrace this opportunity.

The Chair asked how the Council will empower residents to take part in more events.

The Group Manager for Economy & Culture replied that it was the intention to of the Council to make it as easy as possible for the public to access events and were considering amongst a number of initiatives a 'Cultural IPlayer'.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the report and officers' planned actions.

33 WORLD HERITAGE CITY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The World Heritage Manager introduced this item to the Panel. He said that alongside the report he wished to update them on three main areas.

- Emerging draft replacement WHS Management Plan
- Great Spas of Europe project
- Proposed World Heritage Site Interpretation Centre

He said that the key challenge to be addressed in the forthcoming plan (2016-22) was to deliver a further phase of considerable growth and change whilst sustaining the Outstanding Universal Value for which the site was inscribed. He explained that this plan is currently under production and that it is an optimistic and ambitious plan that seeks to 'raise the bar' and ensure that Bath is viewed as an exemplar of urban heritage management.

He stated that the five draft priorities of the emerging replacement plan are managing development, transport, the public realm, interpretation and education and environmental resilience.

He informed the Panel that a full draft plan will be issued for public consultation in April 2016 and presented to Council for adoption in June 2016. He added that the approved plan will subsequently be sent, via the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), to UNESCO in Paris.

He reminded the Panel that Bath is engaged in a project entitled the 'Great Spas of Europe' following the Czech Government approaching UNESCO in 2007 with a proposal to have three of their spa towns inscribed on the World Heritage list for the contribution that they had made to European culture. He explained that UNESCO welcomed the idea, but asked that the best examples of spas across Europe be identified to demonstrate this cultural contribution, subsequently a group of leading European spas was formed and Bath sits within this group.

He stated that early in 2016 the numbers in the group are expected to be reduced in an inter-governmental meeting with the decisions based on comprehensive analysis of the contribution each spa makes to the value of the nomination. He added that we are confident that Bath will progress (on merit) through this selection process.

He said that at the same time as the Great Spas are being assessed collectively the Bath nomination is also being assessed by the UK Government. DCMS are conducting a 'technical evaluation' of UK tentative World Heritage bids and Bath was tested on the 3rd November 2015. He added that a report from the evaluation panel will be sent to the relevant minister (Tracey Crouch MP) and that feedback should be shared with the Council before Christmas this year.

He said that assuming the above hurdles are successfully cleared, the group will progress with developing a common management plan and other necessary documentation in advance of a formal nomination to UNESCO in 2018. He stated that a successful nomination would lead to a second (over-laying) World Heritage inscription for the City and make it the only such site in the UK.

He informed the Panel that the Roman Baths is engaged in a project to deliver a new learning centre within the grade II listed Victorian former laundry buildings immediately south of the Great Bath (off York Street and Swallow Street). He explained that as part of this 'Archway' project, the current retail unit on York Street will become a World Heritage Interpretation Centre.

He said that the centre will seek to explain to local people and visitors alike why the City of Bath is of global heritage importance. It will be designed to act as a hub, greeting people, explaining to them our widespread heritage offer, and sending them out to explore.

He stated that the Heritage Services led Archway project has received stage 1 Heritage Lottery Funding and will submit the full stage 2 application in June 2016. He added that there is an element of match funding also required and this is currently underway, led by the recently formed Roman Baths Foundation.

Councillor Cherry Beath wished to thank the World Heritage Manager for all of his hard work on this matter. She asked how long former Councillor Peter Metcalfe would remain in his role on the World Heritage Site Steering Group.

The World Heritage Manager replied that he would be in post until Spring 2016, but that they were hopeful to encourage him to stay on until the Summer.

Councillor Barry Macrae asked how much being a member of UNESCO costs the Council.

The World Heritage Manager replied that it was his salary plus a small operating budget.

The Chair asked when the Interpretation Centre was due to open.

The World Heritage Manager replied that it was scheduled for completion in 2018. He added that it was one of the priorities of the Management Plan to provide a purpose built learning environment.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the report contents.

34 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chair introduced this item to the Panel, he asked if they had additions or wished to move any items on the plan.

Councillor Barry Macrae asked that when future reports cover the topics of employment and skills that there is more of a focus on the human / public element.

The meeting ended at 5.00 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services