

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

MINUTES OF CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Monday, 25th July, 2022

Present:- **Councillors** Karen Walker, Joel Hirst, Shelley Bromley, Paul Crossley, Grant Johnson, Ruth Malloy, Lisa O'Brien and Dr Kumar

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Ryan Wills

13 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

14 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Ryan Wills sent his apologies.

16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

17 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

David Redgewell registered to make a statement regarding net zero but was unable to attend. The statement was circulated and is attached to these minutes.

David Redgewell statement

19 MINUTES

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

20 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Manda Rigby, Cabinet Member for Transport's update was circulated. The update is attached to these minutes.

Cabinet Member Statement

21 ENERGY EFFICIENCY RETRO-FITTING

Councillor Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate and Sustainable Travel, and Jane Wildblood, Strategic Manager: Climate & Environmental Sustainability, gave a presentation which covered the following:

- Introduction
- Update on current action
- Energy @ Home – advice service
- Sharing householder experience
- WECA Retrofit Accelerator Hub
- Exploration of B&NES level approach
- The Panel asked to consider...

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Hirst asked the following questions (*Officer/Cabinet Member replies shown in italics*):

- Have we got enough expertise and relevant strategic leadership within the Council? *The leadership has been building over the last year, we now have a Director of Sustainable Communities and Head of Green Transformation.*
- How soon until we can drill down and set clear targets, for example setting out the number of households within a timeframe. *There is currently a lot of discussion around this – certain issues are being discussed such as what depth of retrofit constitutes a retrofit. There are also issues around the type of housing (some need deep retrofit).*
- Regarding funding – do we have partnerships with funding organisations to help people? *The authorities with large projects on this are the ones with housing stock. There is the Energy at Home Scheme for advice and signposting to available funding for householders. We have proposed to WECA Retrofit Accelerator Hub to try to develop an energy loan scheme.*

Councillor O'Brien asked the following questions (*Officer/Cabinet Member replies shown in italics*):

- Do you have raw data to feed into the new software? *The tool uses national data on Energy Performance Certificates. 60 thousand homes in BANES have EPC's and this number is gradually growing as people buy/sell properties.*
- Some of the jargon used such as 'retrofitting' and 'low carbon heating' could be amended to 'cost saving' – this language may make it appeal to people more and be more accessible. More should be done to get solar panels on roofs, they can repay faster than expected. *The officer stated that this makes sense and is a good point. Every household is different and we need to be flexible.*

- Curo are starting work, this is a massive task due to the condition of some of the properties.

Councillor Johnson asked the following questions (*Officer replies shown in italics*):

- The main problem is the cost to households. The cost-of-living crisis means this is not everyone's priority.
- Is there a cost for the assessor part of the process – do the Council provide this? *We will feed this into the development process, the WECA Retrofit Accelerator Hub will be looking at assessors.*
- Could we fund EPC's on houses that we do not already have them for? *These are great ideas and will be fed into the process.*

Councillor Bromley asked about engagement with the private sector and suggested that maybe people don't always know what 'retrofitting' means or what it involves, it can feel overwhelming. We could suggest small steps to begin with. Maybe community engagement would help to show people different types of property and examples of the possible costs savings. The Cabinet Member stated that she liked the idea and gave an example of Bathford Parish Council who did a study with thermal imaging cameras which showed heat leakage in different properties.

Councillor Crossley asked the following questions (*Officer replies shown in italics*):

- What are the festival dates? *24th September – 2nd October 2022.*
- Are all libraries involved? *Agreed that it should involve all BANES libraries, we are in conversation about this.*
- Is the traffic increasing on the energy webpage? *This is variable, if we are promoting it, traffic increases.*
- I do not think housing surveys should be free, they have a value. How can we sell them? *We will consider a different angle.*
- Retrofitting should be seen as an aspirational career, there is a heritage element and it is a skilled job. *Yes it should be aspirational as a career as it is highly skilled. We need to get this message into schools.*
- Heritage organisations should be on the list of organisations to work with. *Planning policies are being upgraded which will bring more advice on listed buildings as does the recently published updated Supplementary Planning Document.*
- We should sort out our own buildings, such as the Guildhall, so that they have the best rating that they can. *We are tackling our own buildings with renewables and retrofits where possible. We are in conversation with Property Services to make this part of their maintenance programme. An example of a current project is Pixash Lane Recycling Centre.*

Councillor Dr Kumar asked why the solar panel scheme was closed to new customers and asked why grants were not available for people to install solar panels. The officer explained that the solar scheme was a WECA scheme – it is now closed and in the installing phase. There will be a review mid Autumn after installation. The officer agreed that solar panels should be promoted as part of retrofitting.

Councillor Malloy asked how people who are not online would know about Hub activities and offers/schemes. She asked about a possible physical hub. The officer

stated that this was a useful idea, she explained that there was a show home in Bristol and pointed to the Bath Green Homes scheme.

Councillor Malloy asked if advice could be given to promote porches regarding heat retention. The officer stated that this advice could be added.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the presentation information and that officers had taken on board their comments.

22 LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL UPDATE

Simon de Beer, Head of Planning, and Richard Daone, Deputy Head of Planning Policy, gave a presentation which covered the following:

- Background
- Progress so far
- Key changes 1
- Key changes 2
- Accompanying Supplementary Planning Documents
- Key Issues arising at the Examination in week 1
- Key Issues arising at the Examination in week 2
- Next steps

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

In response to a query from Councillor Walker, the officer explained that in line with the core strategy there are 3.5 – 4 thousand houses planned over the next 5 years.

Councillor Crossley asked the following questions (*officer responses are shown in italics*):

- Student accommodation is an issue for residents, what is the occupancy rate of student housing? *We do not have information from University's on this. Officers will seek to get more information on this to Panel members.*
- What is being done to protect family homes being turned into HMO's? *The partial update seeks to ensure sufficient accommodation is made for students, preferably on campus, and extra controls are included in the SPD.*

Councillor Hirst asked the following questions (*officer replies are shown in italics*):

- Can we go further around green belt development and the impact on ecology? *The Local Plan accelerates the biodiversity net gain requirement.*
- Regarding HMO's – have we gone as far as we can to protect family homes? *We are pushing 'on campus' accommodation, university's say they need to grow as businesses, we need to balance the restrictions.*

Councillor Dr Kumar asked the following questions (*officer replies are shown in italics*):

- Upper Bathwick Hill – query about planning permission for 3 new blocks of flats. *We are working closely with the University on a revised masterplan.*
- Park and Ride – will you close sites? *The officer explained that the Park and Ride sites on the green belt would still function but would have wider uses.*
- LPPU – why no mention of rugby stadium? *The officer explained that it was not appropriate to review the policy as part of the LPPU but it will be reviewed via the new Local Plan.*

Councillor Johnson asked the following questions (*officer responses shown in italics*):

- Do we have a figure for HMOs across BANES and what percentage of them pay Council Tax. *We can provide the number of properties occupied as HMOs but cannot provide an accurate figure in relation to Council Tax payers. We can estimate and provide that figures to Panel members.*
- A university would be more successful if accommodation is based on campus.

Councillor Malloy asked the following questions (*officer responses shown in italics*):

- Are there any major changes in how hotel provision is calculated? *The officer stated that, based on visitor accommodation study, this probably needs to be updated. We will look at demand for hotels and project forward the needs for visitor accommodation (this includes Air B&B).*
- Is Air B&B controlled by national legislation? *The officer confirmed that the Planning system provides little controls over short stay holiday lets, but the Government is being lobbied to introduce greater controls.*

The Panel RESOLVED to note the presentation.

23 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the future workplan

The meeting ended at 5.50 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services