

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

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

Thursday, 11th January, 2024

Present:- **Councillors** Andy Wait, Michael Auton, Jess David, John Leach, Alex Beaumont, Saskia Heijltjes, Grant Johnson and Shaun Hughes (in place of June Player)

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Anna Box

#### **35 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Councillors Manda Rigby and Joel Hirst who were joining the meeting remotely (*the Chair thanked officers for making this possible*).

#### **36 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### **37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Player gave her apologies, she was substituted by Councillor Hughes.

Councillor Box gave her apologies

#### **38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

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

There was none.

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

Mike Earle made a statement regarding 'The three initial trial Liveable Neighbourhood Schemes (LTNs) and the public availability of relevant data'.  
*A copy is attached to the minutes.*

Cllr Duncan Hounsell - B&NES ward councillor (Saltford ward) made a statement on Liveable Neighbourhoods with reference to Queen Charlton.  
*A copy is attached to the minutes.*

Adam Reynolds made a statement regarding 'Low Traffic Neighbourhoods'. *A copy is attached to the minutes.*

Ceris Humphreys made a statement regarding 'My experience of the area in which the New Sydney Place and Sydney Road Liveable Neighbourhood is proposed'.

Racheal Hushon regarding 'Liveable Neighbourhoods'. *A copy is attached to the minutes.*

Professor Christine Harrington made a statement regarding 'Liveable Neighbourhoods' - Lead Person of the New Sydney Place and Sydney Road Action Group, and author of the submission of the New Sydney Place LTN Proposal in February 2021. *A copy is attached to the minutes.*

Robert Hardman made a statement regarding 'Liveable Neighbourhoods - the one way system in Lyme gardens'

Malcolm Baldwin, Chair - Circus Area Residents Association made a statement regarding 'The importance and context of the Circus Area/Catharine Place Liveable Neighbourhood implementation'. *A copy is attached to the minutes.*

## **41 MINUTES**

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

## **42 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE**

Councillor Sarah Warren, Deputy Council Leader (statutory) and Cabinet She explained that the Cabinet have been working on the Budget proposals; Economic Strategy; Local Plan and SVEZ (Somerset Valley Enterprise Zone) along with the following:

- Sustainable Transport – consultation on schemes
- Bid to WECA regarding EV (Electric Vehicle) charging
- Transport Plan
- Social prescribing – Active Way Project Somerset Valley
- Renewable Energy – 2 care homes have solar panels which makes 5 buildings this year and 12 on the Council Estate.
- Retro fit – 'Green Homes' event was run in November
- Heritage retrofit
- WECA rural funding – applications have just opened.

### Panel member questions:

Councillor Hughes asked if EV (Electric Vehicle) charging would be on roads rather than pavements. The Executive Director - Sustainable Communities explained that

this would be explored with the provider – it will be a partnership and will depend on the location. There will be engagement with ward members.

Councillor Johnson asked about the capacity regarding EV charging – will people have to leave cars charging overnight, potentially in a different street. The Executive Director stated that this was a useful consideration.

Councillor Heijltjes asked for an update regarding on street parking for E bikes and E scooters. The Cabinet Member confirmed that an officer will be visiting her ward as introducing E bikes has changed the parking arrangement.

Councillor Johnson asked for an update regarding solar panels on maintained schools. The Executive Director stated that she would update the panel on the pipeline for this.

Councillor Wait updated the Panel regarding solar panels in Keynsham – there is a meeting next week on this.

Councillor Heijltjes asked if the Transport Action Plan could be added to the workplan for the Panel. She also asked if there could be a School Streets audit. The Cabinet Member stated that work is currently being carried out on School Streets. She agreed to the Transport Action Plan update for the Panel.

#### **43 LIVEABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS UPDATE**

The Cabinet Member for Highways - Councillor Manda Rigby and Cabinet Project Lead for Highways: Councillor Joel Hirst gave a presentation which covered the following:

- Liveable Neighbourhoods programme
- Liveable Neighbourhoods programme funding
- Existing Liveable Neighbourhood trial schemes
- Existing Liveable Neighbourhood trial schemes – key outcomes from surveys and monitoring
- Existing Liveable Neighbourhood trial schemes – some public comments
- Proposed Liveable Neighbourhood trial schemes for Spring 2024
- Development of the Full Business Case
- Future development of the Liveable Neighbourhoods programme

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

Councillor Leach stated that Liveable Neighbourhood schemes must be well designed so that they do not have to be reversed. He asked how the preliminary designs are put together after the co-design workshops with residents. The Cabinet Member explained that the original suggestions come from the community which is then put through Highways Engineers and our consultants.

Councillor Heijltjes asked what the point of the scrutiny session is if the Single Member Decision will be made tomorrow. She asked that the decisions go to the Cabinet and that the business case be shared with the Panel. The Cabinet Member

stated that the Panel are scrutinising whether the Cabinet are doing things in line with what was laid out, individual decisions on separate schemes were not planned to come to the Panel.

Councillor Johnson (Paulton ward) stated that he did not know Bath as well as some others so it would have been useful to see some more detail (maps) showing before and after data from the current trials. The Cabinet Member stated that the Panel are checking that plans are in line with policies that have already been decided and stated that all information will be available on the website regarding the Single Member Decisions.

Councillor David explained that she had been involved in some community work which had identified a crossing point/traffic calming/pavement widening and asked if this type of work would still be taken forward if there are funding methods available. The Cabinet Member stated that none of the community work would be wasted and it is identifying funding streams that is the key determinant. Some of the schemes score highly due to the traffic restriction criteria. She stated that maybe some unspent money could forward such schemes. The overarching policy was about health and wellbeing and making it easier to walk and cycle.

Councillor Leach asked if several designs were considered for each scheme. The Cabinet Member explained that the officers and consultants got a shopping list of potential interventions. They did not have a 2/3 year period to look at every scheme possible. With the ETRO's – the trial is, in effect part of the consultation. We have done all we can to take in all evidence and tweaks can be made to the schemes on the ground.

Councillor Leach asked if other options were considered where modal filter location options were assessed. The Director of Place Management explained that the officers and consultants consider the best area for the modal filter based on feedback from the community.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that some of the 15 schemes include through traffic restrictions (eg Lyme Gardens) and other do not. The Cabinet Project Lead stated that the Lyme Gardens scheme is a proposal as part of a bigger piece. He stated that he is keen to explore the 'school street' element. Not all schemes could be worked up in the time so schemes that were deliverable in the timeline were identified. We tried to include a range of geographies.

Councillor Hughes asked if the Cabinet Member was happy with engagement in terms of the consultation response being balanced between residents and those living in areas of displacement. The Cabinet Member stated that some people will say we do too much engagement and others say not enough. We went out of our way to have drop-in sessions. We decided to go down the trial route which in effect is the consultation. We have to balance the responses such as the comparison between somebody having to drive 3 minutes longer and health and safety of the wider area.

Councillor Leach asked about the level of traffic analysis for each of the designs. Cathryn Brown - Senior Project Manager, explained that in the wider Liveable Neighbourhoods scheme the approach as been the trial and monitoring. Some have

had baseline monitoring before a pilot and then continued monitoring to allow comparison.

It was explained that Councillor Leach's further questions (with answers supplied by officers and the Cabinet Member) would be circulated to Panel members and appended to the minutes.

Councillor Heijltjes asked if the circulation plans could be brought to the Panel.

#### **44 DEVELOPMENT OF DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25 - PROPOSALS WITHIN PUBLIC CONSULTATION (RELEVANT TO THE PANEL REMIT)**

The Deputy Council Leader (statutory) and Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel - Councillor Sarah Warren and the Cabinet Member for Highways - Councillor Manda Rigby introduced the item and answered the Panel questions along with Sophie Broadfield - Executive Director of Sustainable Communities and Chris Major – Director of Place Management.

Councillor Warren stated that local government is facing challenges in managing intense pressures on budgets and recently a number of councils have issued S114 notices. In 2013 our Revenue Support Grant from central government was £31m, this year, it's £800k. She explained that we can bid for government grants for one-off specific purposes but this involves working up competitive bids which takes a lot of officer time, and makes it difficult to plan. The pressures on spending, particularly in social care (statutory service), accounts for a large portion of the budget. This means discretionary areas - such as Green Transformation – have less available.

Councillor Warren stated that on Green Transformation - the proposed budget for next year we will sustain levels of funding to support the corporate priority on climate and ecological emergencies. Many of the new posts across Green Transformation and Strategic Transport teams are in place. She stated that the Council will: invest in renewable energy generating infrastructure on the Council estate, contributing to our 12MW target for Council-generated energy; work with partners to develop new renewables projects contributing to our district-level targets of an additional 300MW generating capacity by 2030; work with WECA and with local partners to support scale up of retrofit activity across the district; increase work with communities to raise awareness and support local action for climate and nature; implement biodiversity net gain through the planning system and continue to take action on sustainable transport.

(Delivery of significant improvements in public transport infrastructure through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, A4 Bristol to Bath Corridor and Somer Valley Links projects. Developing an active travel masterplan to help shape and inform future roll out of active travel infrastructure. Working with the combined authority to develop and deliver electric vehicle charging points across the district. Earmarking £2m of our CAZ reserve to commence the build out of the Scholars' way cycle route, as well as a supplement for local highways improvement schemes

aiming to improve pedestrian safety around the district in support of our recent vision zero declaration).

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

Councillor David asked if there was any more information regarding the parks teams' operational strategy. The officer commented that the importance of open spaces is acknowledged, however these spaces cost £2.5m per year to maintain and a few options are being considered that would save money – this would be a small percentage of the overall spend. He further explained that the entirety of the model will be looked at and there may be some tough decisions regarding future development but there is a recognition of the importance of green spaces. He agreed to give the panel more information on the review.

Councillor Johnson asked about the additional top up payments regarding WECA and strategic transport. The Executive Director explained that there is a proposal to not provide the uplift to the transport levy as was done last year in recognition of the significant underspend regarding concessionary fares. The Cabinet Member added that she will continue to lobby the WECA Mayor to restore bus services. The Executive Director explained that it was a decision for the WECA Mayor on how to spend the top up.

Councillor Hughes asked about proposed changes to recycling centre opening times. The officer explained that there is consultation on a proposal to reduce opening hours in terms of opening on certain days of the week (while the Pixash site would remain open 7 days per week). He stated that there may be a reduction in hours to certain sites but that this is not a redundancy issue as there would be reallocation to other sites. He explained that the booking system works well and people will book on the days where sites are available (or if they have an urgent issues, use the Pixash site). He assured the Panel that there is still capacity to maintain the number of bookings and that this model is mirrored in other authorities.

Councillor Rigby – Cabinet Member for Highways – explained that there are two major proposals under this portfolio as set out below:

- Line painting – we have assets that require investment. We have fallen behind on resurfacing, potholes, line painting etc. and are trying to get back to a certain level. Health and safety is the priority regarding the programme.
- Extending emissions-based parking charges to other authority car parks. This is the sliding scale regarding car emissions. There are currently no charges in some car parks within the authority. She stated that there is a need to make places healthier and safer and offering free parking does not help us to maintain the asset. She stated that a turnover of car parking spaces is good for the high street. This is an extension of the principle in Bath of 'polluter pays'. She ended by stating that very few places up and down the country offer free parking.

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

Councillor Johnson stated that this is a U-turn on a decision on parking charges from 2 years ago. He stated that the arguments are counterproductive – parking is

restricted to 4/5 hours anyway, so people do not park all day every day. He added that the high street is fragile and charges would make this situation worse. He asked where there was detailed research as to why this should happen. The officer stated that there is limited data around overstays where there are no charges in the car park. It is difficult to prove a negative. He stated that there was formal consultation.

Councillor Hughes stated that Midsomer Norton high street cannot be compared to Keynsham high street where there has been significant investment to improve footfall. Bath also has a lot of money spent on it and by comparison, Midsomer Norton is neglected and some businesses will not survive. People will park in the Tesco car park which offers free parking. He added that there is not an issue with air pollution in Midsomer Norton and that cars are often a necessity and not a luxury. The Cabinet Member stated that she did not compare Midsomer Norton to Keynsham. She explained that the authority is under significant financial pressure and therefore has to look at all of its assets. We also want to reduce emissions and we want to be fair and equitable across the whole authority. She stated that communities will be listened to and this is being consulted on. Councillor Wait pointed out that car parking charges were in place in Keynsham before the developments in the high street and that there is a small car park in Keynsham which is free for two hours.

Councillor Leach stated that, in speaking to many residents in his ward, he had picked up a lot of support for emissions-based parking charges.

Councillor Auton stated that he shared the frustrations of the Councillors speaking on this issue and thought it was very important for towns to have free parking. He explained that he had spent 3 mornings and spoken to 80 people on the parking issue. 80% of those people were parking for less than 2 hours. He stated that if there must be charges, would the Cabinet consider allowing the first 2 hours free of charge. He stated that he is concerned about the impact on businesses and asked if there could be a permit for staff to park for the day. The Cabinet Member thanked Councillor Auton for his work in speaking to people about this and agreed that this could be discussed. She explained that there would be a TRO and full consultation and there could be a discussion on how to structure charges. Councillor Wait stated that, in Keynsham there was currently 30 minutes free parking.

Councillor Hughes stated emissions-based parking charges may work in Bath but he saw the method as punishing the poorest in Midsomer Norton.

Councillor Johnson asked about the 'TBC' in Annex 3 and also asked if a Housing Revenue Account was needed if the authority builds 300 houses. The Executive Director stated that she would get further information regarding the 'TBC' and that yes, the Council is committed to expand Council House building and confirmed that a Housing Revenue Account is needed over a certain number of houses.

## **45 PANEL WORKPLAN**

The Scrutiny Officer Ceri Williams updated the Panel on the progress in the Task group.

The Panel noted the future workplan with the following suggested additions:

- Transport Action Plan
- Circulation Plan

A site visit to Pixash Recycling site was discussed. The local Councillors group will extend the invite to Panel members.

The meeting ended at 12.24 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**