

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

CABINET

These minutes are draft until confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting.

Thursday, 13th February, 2025

Present:

Councillor Kevin Guy (Ch)	Leader of the Council, LD Group Leader, Member Advocate for Armed Forces and Veterans
Councillor Alison Born	Cabinet Member for Adult Services
Councillor Mark Elliott	Cabinet Member for Resources
Councillor Paul May	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Councillor Matt McCabe	Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development
Councillor Manda Rigby	Cabinet Member for Highways
Councillor Paul Roper	Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development
Councillor Sarah Warren	Deputy Council Leader (statutory) and Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel

66 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

67 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Senior Democratic Services Officer read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

68 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Tim Ball and Dave Wood.

69 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that the Monitoring Officer has granted the following dispensations to enable members present to participate in the debate and to vote on item 12 (Budget and Council Tax 2025/26 and Financial Outlook).

- Cllr Sarah Warren – dispensation granted due to a family member being in receipt of an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- General dispensation for all Councillors who pay Council Tax.

A copy of the dispensations is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

70 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was no urgent business.

71 QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

There were 21 questions from Councillors and 72 questions from members of the public.

[Copies of the questions and responses, including supplementary questions and responses if any, have been placed on the Minute book as an Appendix and are available on the Council's website.]

Cllr Sarah Warren made the following statement regarding the questions that had been received in relation to the Bath Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Links (BWWCL) scheme.

“Active travel schemes create a lot of discussion, and I welcome the input from communities, which is important as part of our commitment to 'giving people a bigger say'. For the BWWCL scheme in Bath we recently consulted and had over 1700 comments, suggestions and questions back which we are now considering. I received a further range of questions in advance of this meeting. To ensure that the Council replies properly and considers all the feedback raised I have asked my team to bring those questions into the formal Engagement Report that will be published/brought to Cabinet in the coming months. This means that we as Cabinet have full and detailed information on the community views with which to make decisions on the scheme. It also means that the same information is provided transparently to everyone with an interest in the scheme. Thank you again for the comments and questions raised on this scheme, which I passionately want to get right for our communities.”

72 STATEMENTS OR PETITIONS FROM PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS

Members of the public and Councillors made statements as follows:

- Charlie Knight – Growth Proposals around Clean and Green Funding and Bus Services
- Mark Bradley – Road Safety by St Gregory's Catholic College
- James Chalmers – Alexandra Park Leisure
- Rosie Phillips – (CEO of Developing Health and Independence) – The Future of Local Service Provision, Accountability and Sustainability
- Cllr Jess David – Breathing Space Support Line

(Copies of the statements are attached as appendices to these minutes).

73 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS CABINET MEETING - 14TH NOVEMBER 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 14th November 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

74 CONSIDERATION OF SINGLE MEMBER ITEMS REQUISITIONED TO CABINET

No single member items were requisitioned to Cabinet.

75 MATTERS REFERRED BY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY BODIES

No matters were referred by Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels.

76 SINGLE MEMBER CABINET DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE PREVIOUS CABINET MEETING

The Cabinet agreed to note the report.

77 BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2025/26 AND FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

Cllr Mark Elliott, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation and made the following points:

- The budget reflects ongoing uncertainty, despite moving away from the previous chaotic Tory regime.
- The Labour government has been slow to implement the significant reforms needed for local government stability.
- The promised multi-year settlements are not yet confirmed; only 50% of the direct costs from the Employers' National Insurance increase are funded.
- Successful bids for new schools are still pending central government funding, causing additional costs to the Council.
- The government's review into social care, set to complete in 2028, shows a lack of understanding as to the urgency of the issues facing local authorities with social care funding.
- The starting point for the 2025/26 budget was a £14m shortfall, addressed through £6.7m in income generation and £7.31m in savings.
- Unpredictable financial pressures, especially in Children's Services, have impacted the budget.
- An increase of £6.5m in social care funding is proposed, following an £8m increase last year. It is important to ensure that those who need care have the funding in place to meet their needs.
- Significant contingency and provision budgets are included to mitigate risks, including £2.6m for contract inflation and £4.3m for high-risk service demand and cost increase provision.
- Funding is being provided for "clean and green" initiatives, electric waste and recycling vehicles, new school street schemes, pedestrian crossings, and extended park and ride hours.
- There is also investment in new technology to improve customer service and coordination.
- The budget aims to protect the most vulnerable while managing unpredictability and uncertainty.
- The council has healthy reserves and is not at risk of financial difficulty, unlike some other local authorities.
- The budget reflects the council's commitment to improving lives and maintaining stability despite many current challenges.

Cllr Paul May seconded the motion and made the following points:

- Children's Services have been under intense pressure, but the administration has supported the service and openly and consistently backed the most vulnerable in our community.
- Through this budget the children's base budget of £36m has increased to nearly £41m following the previous year's commitment of a 10% increase.
- Reviews and inspections have consistently shown that the children's services the Council provides are good with outstanding features delivered by dedicated staff.

Cllr Manda Rigby spoke about the new proposal to extend the hours of the Park and Ride scheme on a trial basis from April, to run until 11.30pm Monday to Saturday. This will help the nighttime economy and will be beneficial to tourists visiting the city. The importance of marketing this extended service was noted.

Cllr Alison Born stated that the decision to bring adult social care services back in-house has allowed for more skilled and compassionate care, early intervention, collaborative decision-making, and better resource allocation. Despite rising demand, costs, and staff shortages, progress is being made on transformation plans with continued investment from the administration. However, the council must also develop universal services, balancing investment in adult social care with necessary savings. Long-term, central government must address the increasing costs of adult social care, as local authorities cannot bear this burden alone. The forthcoming review by Louise Casey is welcomed but needs timely action.

Cllr Sarah Warren welcomed the funding that has been provided in the budget for the School Streets initiative. This scheme will reduce traffic in and around schools during drop off and collection times to create a safer environment for children and to encourage active travel to improve health and wellbeing.

Cllr Matt McCabe highlighted the additional funding that has been secured for housing initiatives.

Cllr Kevin Guy thanked Cllr Elliott and officers for their excellent work to produce a balanced budget in difficult financial circumstances.

RESOLVED, unanimously:

(1) To recommend Council to approve:

- The General Fund net revenue budget for 2025/26 of **£151.71m** and the individual service cash limits for 2025/26 as outlined in Annex 1 of the report.
- The savings and income plans outlined in Annex 2(i), funding requirements 2(ii), in conjunction with the Equalities Impact Assessment Report in Annex 3 of the report.
- An increase in Council Tax of 2.99% in 2025/26 (an increase of £51.92 per Band D property or £1 per week).
- An increase of 2% to Council Tax for the Adult Social Care Precept in recognition of the current demands and financial pressures on this

service. This is equivalent to an increase of £34.72 on a Band D property (67p per week).

- The movement in reserves outlined in section 5.6 and the adequacy of Un-earmarked Reserves at £12.58m within a risk assessed range requirement of £11.8m - £13.0m.
- To note the Children's Services management plan update set out in section 5.2.6 of the report.
- The Efficiency Strategy attached at Annex 4 of the report.
- The Capital Programme for 2025/26 of £76.41m including new and emerging capital bids outlined in Annex 5(i), planned sources of funding in 5.8.3, and notes the programme for 2026/27 to 2029/30 and that any wholly funded projects coming forward during the year will be added to the Capital Programme in line with the Budget Management Scheme.
- The delegation of implementation, subject to consultation where appropriate, of the capital programmes set out in Annex 5(i) to Annex 5(iv) to the relevant Director in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Portfolio Holder.
- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocations and amendments outlined in Annex 5(v) of the report.
- The Capital & Investment Strategy attached at Annex 6 of the report.
- The MRP Policy attached at Annex 7 of the report.
- The Capital Prudential Indicators outlined in 5.8.7 of the report.
- The Annual Pay Policy Statement at Annex 8 of the report.
- The Community Contribution Fund extension outlined section 5.5 of the report.
- The Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025/26 shown in the following link: <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-01/Bath%20%26%20NE%20Somerset%20S13A%20202526%20FINAL%20.pdf> and referred to in 5.3.5 of the report.
- The Fees and Charges schedule for 2025/26 at Annex 11 of the report and support its publication following approval of the budget, with delegation to amend individual costs within the schedule in line with market needs, to the Director of Place Management, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

(2) To agree that the Council include in its Council Tax setting, the precepts set and approved by other bodies including the local precepts of Town Councils,

Parish Councils, and Charter Trustees of the City of Bath, and those of the Fire and Police Authorities.

- (3) To note the S151 Officer's report on the robustness of the proposed budget and the adequacy of the Council's reserves outlined in 5.7 of the report.
- (4) To note the budget consultation responses in Annex 10, and the PDS Panel feedback in Annex 12 of the report.
- (5) To authorise the Council's S151 Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources, to make any necessary changes to the draft budget proposal for submission to Council.

78 REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING, CASH LIMITS AND VIREMENTS – APRIL TO DECEMBER 2024

Councillor Mark Elliott, Cabinet Member for Resources, presented the report, moved the officer recommendation and made the following points:

- In Children's Services there is a significant predicted overspend of £5.51m.
- The main pressures which are leading to the overspend are: Residential care, increased care packages particularly in the Disabled Children's Team, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children, and home to school transport.
- Long-term mitigation measures include building in-house provision.
- The aim is to reduce reliance on the open market.
- There has been an improvement since the quarter two position of just under £4.6m.
- The current predicted overall overspend is just under £1m.
- This is a better position compared to the same point in the last financial year.
- Cllr Elliott thanked officers for their hard work in improving the financial position and noted that a balanced budget was expected by year-end.
- 77% of the £16.4m planned savings have been delivered.
- The remaining 23% of savings is expected next year or will be mitigated by one-off underspend or income in-year.
- This has been a challenging situation but there is a commitment to approve a balanced budget each year.

Cllr Manda Rigby seconded the motion and commended Cllr Elliott and the officers on their ability to make mid-year adjustments as required. She also noted the importance of regular budget monitoring.

RESOLVED, unanimously:

- (1) To note the 2024/25 revenue budget position (as at the end of December 2024).
- (2) To note the revenue virements listed in Appendix 3(i) of the report.
- (3) To note the capital year-end forecast detailed in paragraph 3.33 of the report.

- (4) To note the changes in the capital programme including capital schemes that have been agreed for full approval under delegation listed in Appendix 4(i) of the report.

79 BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET HOUSING PLAN

Cllr Matt McCabe, Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development, introduced the report, moved the recommendation and made the following points:

- It is acknowledged that there is a housing and affordability crisis.
- The housing waiting list is currently over 5,500 with only 500 properties available annually.
- There is a long wait time for larger homes due to loss of stock through the Right to Buy scheme.
- There is reliance on market sales to subsidise affordable and social housing.
- It is increasingly important to utilise Council assets to enable affordable housing development.
- We can then deliver more affordable and social rental units through Aequus and B&NES Homes.
- It is important to spread tenures widely to address various needs (e.g. Temporary, Supported, Social Units).
- This will enable us to support vulnerable individuals and families, enhance lives and allow people to maintain community ties.
- Aequus products will be required to meet EPC A standards for new builds and retrofits.
- This will contribute to our Net Zero goals and will reduce heating bills for tenants.
- The appendices give a complete picture of the plan's impact on vulnerable people.

Cllr Alison Born seconded the motion emphasising the critical need for warm, secure, and affordable housing. She highlighted the inadequacy of current provision in B&NES, particularly for low-cost, energy-efficient, family-sized, and specialised housing. She supported the housing plan's clear strategies to improve availability and address market failures. This plan has the potential to transform lives.

Cllr Paul May also welcomed the Housing Plan and was pleased to note that care leavers would be a priority. He also noted that that plan is linked in with other corporate strategies.

RESOLVED unanimously:

To approve the following documents, attached as appendices to the report, for publication and implementation, subject to minor textual updates including confirmation of the final governance structure:

- (1) Bath & North East Somerset Housing Plan 2025-2030;
- (2) Domestic Abuse Accommodation Strategy 2024-29;
- (3) Housing Services Charging Policy 2025.

80 ACTIVE TRAVEL MASTERPLAN

Cllr Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel, introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation and made the following points:

- The Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019 and remains committed to enabling the district to be net zero by 2030.
- Transport accounts for nearly a third of carbon emissions in B&NES.
- Decarbonising transport is crucial for health and environmental benefits.
- The Active Travel Masterplan sets out a 20-year vision to promote walking, wheeling, and cycling.
- The aim is to make these modes of transport the natural choice for more journeys.
- There is a comprehensive plan for interconnected walking, wheeling, and cycling routes.
- The plan focuses on safety, reducing inequalities, improving air quality, tackling obesity, and reducing traffic congestion.
- The target is to reduce car mileage by 25% per person. Safe infrastructure is necessary to achieve this goal.
- E-bikes make cycling more accessible, even for medium-length journeys.
- The Plan identifies current barriers to active travel and proposes connected infrastructure and public education.
- The Plan addresses the needs of residents without cars and ensures travel accessibility for all, regardless of income, age, gender, or physical ability.
- Adoption of the masterplan as council policy will open doors to external funding sources.
- The next steps will be further analysis and prioritisation of proposed routes.
- There will also be collaboration with West of England Combined Authority and Active Travel England.

The motion was seconded by Cllr Matt McCabe. Cllr McCabe noted the difficulty of cycling and walking on country lanes between local villages which could be dangerous. He felt that this scheme would assist those people who wished to be more active.

Cllr Alison Born stated that it is essential for the Council to invest in this project. There are multiple benefits of active travel such as improving air quality, fitness, health and wellbeing.

RESOLVED unanimously:

To formally adopt the Active Travel Masterplan.

81 CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES IN NORTH EAST SOMERSET: THE JOURNEY TO NET ZERO

Cllr Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel, introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation and made the following points:

- The "Journey to Net Zero: Creating Sustainable Communities" transport strategy outlines our vision and strategic approach to sustainable development amongst the towns of North East Somerset and its larger villages.
- The Strategy is based on extensive research and community engagement in collaboration with key stakeholders.
- The vision is to create great places for living, working, and raising families and to offer healthy, low-carbon travel choices to reduce car dependency.
- It builds upon ideas put forward in the 2022 Journey to Net Zero strategy for Bath.
- It addresses transport's role in climate change, social inequality, and economic resilience.
- It puts forward a vision of high-quality, frequent public transport links seamlessly integrated with active travel infrastructure.
- There should be access to essential services and affordable housing without needing to drive.
- There will also be support for drivers to reduce their environmental impact by providing improved car charging facilities and the provision of car clubs to reduce the need for car ownership.
- There will be continued collaboration with local stakeholders and communities and an emphasis on building consensus for a healthier, lower-carbon future.

The motion was seconded by Cllr Matt McCabe. He highlighted the challenge of reducing vehicle mileage per person by 25% while accommodating the construction of 29,000 new houses over the next 20 years, potentially adding 60,000 new cars to the roads. The Council will seek to build homes with adequate infrastructure and job access, secure developer contributions for active travel routes, and provide diverse transport options. Recent public transport initiatives such as Westlink have not been fit for purpose, and it will be important to work with WECA to make public and active transport attractive choices. Serious action needs to be taken to reduce car journeys, tackle the climate emergency, and improve residents' health and fitness.

RESOLVED unanimously:

To formally adopt the Creating Sustainable Communities in North East Somerset: The Journey to Net Zero.

82 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT TO 31ST DECEMBER 2024**

Cllr Mark Elliott, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation and made the following points:

- The return on operational investments is 5.05% (just above the benchmark rate).
- The return on strategic investments is 4.32% (slightly higher than the benchmark rate).
- Capital financing costs are running at £1.05m lower than budget due to higher investment returns and capital spend reprofiling.

- This helps to alleviate the revenue budget pressures highlighted in the quarter three performance report.
- All indicators are favourable and well within borrowing limits.
- Our portfolio credit rating is A+.
- We had a minimum of £15.3m in liquid cash.
- The interest rate exposure risk is low as is the refinancing risk.
- Early repayment risks are on or below limits and we are under-borrowed by about £9m for the rest of the year.
- The Council is in a robust underlying position and Cllr Elliott commended officers for their work in maintaining this position.

Cllr Paul Roper seconded the motion and stated that these good solid investments enable the Council to proceed with its ambitious plans for the future.

RESOLVED unanimously:

To note:

- (1) The Treasury Management Report to 31st December 2024, prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Code of Practice; and
- (2) The Treasury Management Indicators to 31st December 2024.

83 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2025-26

Cllr Mark Elliott, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation and made the following points:

- The Treasury Management Strategy guides the council's treasury activities and ensures prudent financial management.
- Borrowing at the end of December was just under £270m.
- Investments were just over £43m.
- There is exposure to financial risks like loss of invested funds and changing interest rates, so it is important to identify, monitor and control financial risks.
- Risk management is conducted within the CIPFA Code of Practice framework which requires approval of a treasury management strategy before each financial year.
- The Strategy sets out:
 - Treasury limits to control risk and activities.
 - Treasury Management Indicators.
 - Current treasury position.
 - Borrowing requirement.
 - Prospects for interest rates.
 - Borrowing strategy.
 - Investment strategy.

Cllr Paul Roper seconded the motion.

RESOLVED unanimously:

- (1) To recommend the actions proposed within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (Appendix 1 of the report) to Council.

(2) To note the Treasury Management Indicators detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm

Chair _____

Date Confirmed and Signed _____

Prepared by Democratic Services