

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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

Thursday, 27th March, 2025

Present:- **Councillors** Andy Wait, Alex Beaumont, Anna Box, John Leach, Saskia Heijltjes, Ian Halsall (in place of Jess David) and Hal MacFie (in place of Deborah Collins)

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Grant Johnson and June Player

127 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

128 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

129 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor June Player gave apologies

Councillor Grant Johnson gave apologies

Councillor Deborah Collins gave apologies and was substituted by Councillor Hal MacFie

Councillor Jess David gave apologies and was substituted by Councillor Ian Halsall.

130 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

131 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

- Sol Green made a statement regarding 'The February 2025 cancellation of the London Road and Snow Hill Liveable Neighbourhood (LR&SH LN) scheme'. A copy of the statement is attached to these minutes.

Councillor Heijltjes asked if Ms Green was aware of the current status of the Movement Strategy. Ms Green stated that she was aware that it is under development.

Councillor Leach asked about the conditions that made something a 'key decision'. Ms Green explained her understanding of the constitution.

The Chair stated that the statement would be forwarded to the relevant Cabinet Member.

- Cerys Humphreys made a statement regarding Flood Resilience/Planning. A copy of the statement is attached to these minutes.

Councillor Box asked if Ms Humphreys was aware of the flood warden/officer and stated that she would pass on the contact details. In response to a further question from Councillor Box, Ms Humphreys stated that he had been to the Chew Magna flood resilience group but had not been able to see the flood response plan which was not made public.

Councillor Halsall asked if Ms Humphreys was aware of the Student/Community Partnership, Ms Humphreys stated that she was and felt that improvements in oversight had been made.

The Chair thanked the public speakers.

133 MINUTES

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

134 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel updated the Panel on the following:

- BANES has been part of a collaborative effort to bring Weston Forest to the area which is good news.
- During the budget setting, funding was allocated to: Somer Valley Rediscovered; Chew Valley Recreational Trail; Bath Riverline phase 1 (Weston Section) and Water Space Connected Project.
- In terms of travel – the Active Travel Masterplan has been adopted
- Consultation has now been closed on Somer Valley links

Councillor MacFie asked about the Water Space Bridge. The Cabinet Member explained that discussions were underway with the landowner.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member.

135 LOCAL RIVER SYSTEMS

The Chair invited Simon Hunter – Chief Executive of Bristol & Avon River Trust – to speak about the work of the Trust. Mr Hunter explained that the Trust had been

running since 2012 and had three strands of work: monitoring and land management; river restoration/flood management and community engagement and education. He explained that the Trust sits under the National Rivers Trust body and has around 60 staff.

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

Councillor Box explained that she was ward Councillor for Chew Valley which had had a lot of problems with flooding. There is no jurisdiction to control agriculture and crop rotation in terms of run off. She asked if the Council or Trust could affect this. Mr Hunter explained he is aware of the issue and believes the solution to be working collaboratively with farmers. It is early days but the Trust is raising awareness of the issue with farmers and helping with access to grants to help with nature based solutions.

Councillor Leach stated that he had spoken to Wessex Water who assured him that, as long as sewage flow does not make things worse, it was all ok. He asked if this is the accepted position for water companies. Mr Hunter said the key is when the spills are happening as when there is less water, spills are more concentrated. It depends on the weather conditions.

In response to a query from Councillor Wait about lobbying for tighter permits, Mr Hunter stated that would be useful to challenge especially in light of the government aims of more housing which means more potential pollution.

There was some discussion around atlantic salmon, re wilding - otters and beavers. Mr Hunter stated that, if the environment/habitat around rivers is improved, this would help.

Councillor Heijltjes asked what BANES can do to support beavers. Mr Hunter explained that buffer strips on rivers across BANES would help and making sure footpaths are protected from dogs.

Councillor Box asked if the Council network/communications links to landowners would be helpful. Mr Hunter stated that it would be helpful as if farms join in a cluster there could be one point of communication with them.

In response to a query from Councillor Box regarding Worcester Fish Gate and Harptree Combe, Mr Hunter stated that he did know of the fish window and referred a project in Keynsham which would involve resculpting the weir. Regarding Harptree Combe, Mr Hunter stated that the charity would love to buy the land but the funding model means it does not own assets.

Councillor Halsall asked if the Trust would work with the Council in terms of creating a safe habitat for beavers. Mr Hunter stated that the Trust is always open to work with others. The officer informed the Panel that there is a huge opportunity in Keynsham park and weir and that a bid is being worked on at the moment. The Chair thanked Mr Hunter for attending and informing the Panel about the Trust.

136 AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN

Councillor Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel gave a presentation which covered the following:

- Bath Air Quality Action Plan Update
- Background
- Differences between Local Air Quality Management Framework and Local NO2 plan initiative
- Map – Bath Air Quality Management Area 2013
- Revised AQAP
- Source Apportionment
- Key Actions
- Consultation feedback
- Future Actions

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

Councillor Heijltjes asked why particulate matter is not included in the action plan. The Cabinet Member explained that this related to a different piece of legislation. The officer explained that there are particulate monitors across the city and we meet the standards. We will include particulate matter in the wider strategy. In response to a query from Councillor Leach, the officer explained that the hourly objective is 200 and we are unlikely to exceed this.

Councillor Halsall asked if the Council could be penalised for having the AQMA. The officer explained that there is a duty to declare an AQMA and to have a plan. If all is ok for 3 years, it is revoked but we continue to monitor.

Councillor Box explained that she works in respiratory physiotherapy and that evidence is piling up around connections between pollution and preventable diseases. She asked what impact we are having on our residents specifically. The officer explained that the public health team has been focusing on monitoring and that through the strategy, the local effect will be monitored.

Councillor Heijltjes asked about the KPIs in the table of measures. The officer explained that these will be filled in as we get the information.

Councillor Wait asked about the 35% (reference to the pie chart in the slides) diesel car fumes and how we can stop this affecting poorer members of the community. He mentioned that Bristol Council had stopped diesel cars in the city centre. The Cabinet Member explained that the Bath CAZ (Clean Air Zone) was funded by the Government. She stated that measures would continue to be taken on sustainable travel.

Councillor Leach referred to the pie chart and 0% against motorcycles. He asked if we are encouraging motorcycles in terms of parking. The Cabinet Member stated that this was maybe something to look at. Councillor Heijltjes stated that it would be better to enable more people to cycle and stated that a lot of cities are now banning

motorcycles/scooters. The Cabinet Member stated that the Active Travel Plan has now been adopted and published.

Councillor Leach asked about other sources of background pollution, the Cabinet Member stated that a factor is domestic heating. The officer explained that we do not have much control over the regional background pollution but have more control over the local issue in terms of gas heating/wood burners.

Councillor MacFie asked about the E Scooter/bike trial and if there is a safety comparison to bicycles. The Cabinet Member stated that she would enquire what information exists on this. She stated that any expansion in this scheme would depend on WECA and DOT.

Councillor Box asked if there was a plan for clean air monitors in North East Somerset. The Cabinet Member explained that a diffusion tube can be placed anywhere that residents raise a concern. She stated that the Air Quality Action Plan covers the whole district. She stated that all monitoring is reported on the website.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officer.

137 FLEET TRANSITION PLAN

Councillor Lucy Hodge, Cabinet Project Lead for Council Priorities & Delivery and for Neighbourhood Services introduced the report. She explained that there was a positive picture in terms of the electrification of Council fleet vehicles.

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

Councillor Beaumont commended the reduction of emissions that has been made. He asked if collections would become more difficult with electric vehicles. The Cabinet Lead stated that we are currently trialling vehicles and we are confident that 'range' would not be an issue.

Councillor Leach asked if hydrogen is an option. The officer stated that manufacturers are going down the electric route so that is our option at the moment. There is not a supply of hydrogen at present.

Councillor Heijltjes asked what percentage of the fleet is LGVs. The officer explained that there are 50 (the fleet is 200). There are a variety of vehicle sizes. The long term plan is for larger vehicles to do the recycling collections.

Councillor MacFie asked about solar. The officer stated that there is solar in the Pixash facility in Keynsham from which there is an approximately £120k benefit in terms of not purchasing off the grid. There is approximately £1k of solar benefit per truck. There is still capacity with roof space at present.

Councillor Box asked about the life span of trucks and the officer explained that the life span is longer than for diesel vehicles and also batteries can be repurposed.

In response to a query from Councillor Box regarding the fire risk with trucks and single use vapes, the officer explained that there has been a publicity campaign on this issue.

Councillor Leach asked if the fact that there will be less vehicles affects the resilience of the service The officer explained that there is always a ratio of spares to front line trucks.

In response to a query from Councillor Halsall, the officer explained that there is enough range/chargers to enable us to get to all areas of the district.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Lead and officer.

138 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the workplan and the following suggestions for future items:

- Using BANES communication network for flood resilience and biodiversity net gain. Improving communications policy (Councillor Box)
- Movement Strategy (Councillor Heijltjes)
- CAZ funding – forecast deficit (Councillor Heijltjes)
- Process by which LNs are being taken forward (Councillor Leach)

The meeting ended at 12.00 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services