

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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

Thursday 3rd July 2025

Present:- **Councillors** Andy Wait, Grant Johnson, Alex Beaumont, Anna Box, John Leach, Deborah Collins, Saskia Heijltjes and Karen Walker

139 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

140 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

141 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

The Chair noted that Cabinet Members Councillors McCabe and Roper had sent apologies as they were unable to attend.

142 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

143 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

There were none

145 MINUTES

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meetings as a true record.

146 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

There was none.

147 HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

The Chair invited the Head of Housing and Homelessness Response Manager to introduce the report.

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

Councillor Leach asked what 'support' consisted of. The officer explained that a person can move into a building and agree to engage with a support worker in terms of plans to move on/medical/family/employment and aim to regain independence. There can also be a Personal Support Plan with targets. 'Support' does not mean personal care.

Councillor Heijltjes asked if the Council is supporting Julian House. The officer explained that we have had to tighten our belts but the Council is working closely with Julian House. He explained it is a pathway rather than about supporting individual organisations.

Councillor Walker asked how many people are currently in refuges. The officer explained that she could get numbers in terms of refuges.

Councillor Johnson asked if an increase in pressure was expected given the annual housing trajectory. He also asked if there was a way to give ambitions on where we want to be on homelessness. The officer explained that there are many reasons why people become homeless and a key issue is now the cost of living. We also take in account legislative changes – if there are more developments, there will be more housing. In terms of ambitions – the officer explained that there is a Housing Plan which lays out the plan for growth. There are also two performance targets around the number of people in temporary accommodation (this authority is in the top 3rd of local authorities on this) and rough sleeping, the aim for this would be zero. The officer further explained that we are guided by Government Homelessness and Rough Sleepers guidance. The Government are currently reviewing the formula so our grant may be reduced.

Councillor Collins asked about the challenges around people who do not want to move off the street. The officer explained that there is a small core of people who find it impossible to engage with support services. There is a task and targeting group to try to address cases on an individual basis. This has currently reduced from 15 to 13 but this can change daily. We have an approach of 'housing first' which is a different approach. There is a 'Next Steps Accommodation Panel' which works with cases referred by support workers. We have strong partnerships.

Councillor Box asked if the service for young people stops when they reach 18. The officer explained that no, it does not as this would undo good work done. There is a 'homelessness pathway' solely for young people as their needs are specific.

Councillor Heijltjes asked about the effect of the disability benefit cuts. The officer explained that this was very new and need to be digested.

Councillor Leach asked what officers would attribute to the low numbers regarding usage rates. The officer stated that the prevention first approach means the service is more accessible and open. People can speak to someone on the same day. The officer further explained that, as a unitary authority, there are some benefits. We are also small enough to have good partnerships.

Councillor Johnson asked if representations were being made regarding adjustments to the grant. The officer explained that the potential cut was part of a consultation exercise, we have not had confirmation.

The Chair thanked the officer for their report.

148 CULTURE STRATEGY (ENVIRONMENTAL FOCUS)

The Chair invited the Head of Heritage to introduce the item and give a presentation.

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

Councillor Box asked about the costs around local charity events such as the Chew Valley 10k run. She asked that, in developing the strategy, could consideration be given to reducing the costs of road closures around such events. The officer explained that fees and charges need to be seen in the context of the Council budget as a whole but that the authority was definitely minded to consider this issue.

Councillor Collins asked about opportunities in the visitor economy around the wider area of BANES. She also asked about creative work spaces. The officer stated that a lot of work has been delivered by the regeneration team (creative works strategy). He stated that there is a plan to use culture to regenerate areas and mentioned 'locally loved, nationally known' plan to create culture loved by local people.

Councillor Beaumont mentioned the successful exhibition held in Keynsham. The officer agreed and also mentioned the Keynsham Music Festival which is one of Europe's largest free festivals. Councillor Wait stated that, as a trustee of the festival, he has found the relationship with BANES to have got worse and commented that the costs to hold such events makes it very difficult. BANES charge to use the park. He stated that he was pleased to say there had been an improvement this year and he embraced the idea of culture moving away from just the city. The officer explained that he had met with an organiser of the event in Keynsham. He acknowledged the issue but stated that this has to be seen within the context of the wider Council budget.

Councillor Johnson stated that he was surprised to see a political element in the presentation. He shared the frustrations of other members regarding the costs of events held in Paulton in that BANES could be negative regarding issues such as road closures/barriers/health and safety. He added that the local library has to pay interest rates. He stated that he had no problem with the strategy but that maybe it did not get to the root causes of problems. The officer stated that this is not political and that the presentation was just a descriptive narrative. He stated that it was vitally important for the strategy to deliver for the whole region and that there will be an emphasis on the Somer Valley and Radstock. We are in the consultation period, and it is vital we hear these issues.

Councillor Walker stated that Peasedown St John has potentially 250 more houses coming. The community library was run with a grant to start with, how will it continue to be supported. She also agreed with the points raised above about the costs of putting on local events. The officer stated that there could be conversations with

parish councils around the implications of fees. This will be a key part of the actions going forward.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that the major festivals are dominated by a couple of organizations. How can we work towards the local offer being more vibrant and inclusive. The officer explained that this comes down to criteria which will come from the action plan.

Councillor Johnson asked about creative workspaces. He explained that he used to have an art studio and asked how BANES could support this and provide spaces which could generate revenue. The officer stated that this would not be a quick fix as spaces would have to be re purposed. The groundwork will be laid over the next two years.

The Chair thanked the officer and asked that this item come back to the Panel later in the year.

149 PANEL WORKPLAN

Panel members noted their future workplan and the following items that were suggested for future meetings:

- Culture Strategy (Autunm)
- Waste Collection in the city centre
- Active Travel masterplan

The meeting ended at 11.52 am

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services