
Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

COUNCIL: TUESDAY FEBRUARY 24TH 2026

AMENDMENTS RECEIVED;

- Labour group budget amendment
-
- Green group budget amendment

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This Council notes that:

1. **B&NES' motto is "Being our B-E-S-T"**, where BEST stands for Bold, Empowered, Supportive and Transparent. This is an expectation of B&NES staff at every level, and council staff continue to deliver quality services in challenging environments. Staff repeatedly rise to, and welcome, the challenge.
2. In July, this Council unanimously voted to conduct a full review of its Public Toilet Provision Strategy which would:
 - i. engage with communities and partners
 - ii. include needs assessments and
 - iii. prioritise better provision of clean, accessible public toilets across B&NES.
 - b. This was in recognition of Bath's over-six million annual visitors, the half a billion pounds that tourism brings to our economy, and the importance of public toilets for dignity, hygiene, public health, social interaction, and economic activity.
 - c. Although Cabinet member Cllr Roper seconded the motion, after seven months, Council and the public have still not had an update, or been asked to engage with any work.

This Council further notes that:

3. The administration's 2024-25 budget proposals for cuts of £802,000 to community contracts put our local charity and voluntary sector through a prolonged period of uncertainty, contract review and negotiation.
4. December's 2026-27 Budget consultation referred to £250,000 savings from 'Contract Management - Delivering Greater Value' but did not include the list of the "top 25 contracts" that it said would be subject to cuts.
 - a. The Equality Impact Assessment for this work asserts there will be "no material effect" on any of groups covered by the Equality Act, including the socioeconomically disadvantaged, the old or young, disabled, or women.
 - b. Officers reported in Scrutiny that some contracts in this list would be protected, but although the Official Opposition has repeatedly asked which these are, no detail has been given.
5. It is fair to expect that large commercial firms on the list, such as Suez, Volker, HCRG, Mercer or HP, are more likely to fend off fresh contract negotiations than third sector organisations.

6. If they are successful, that will drag more, smaller, third sector contracts into the target list, as B&NES tries to find the £250,000 of contracts savings. The further down the list you go, the smaller the contract, and £10,000 becomes a greater and greater proportion of the contract's value.
7. Many of these contracts are for services for our most vulnerable residents, including domestic abuse survivors, children with autism, early years, teenagers who need support, the infirm and elderly at home. Many individuals will rely on several of these services.
8. The administration has not yet finalised this list; the work is "ongoing".

This Council further notes that:

9. The Labour Government's planned 'tourist levy' – as currently planned – will not itself generate income from day-trippers, who make up the majority of B&NES' visitors.

This Council therefore calls on the administration to:

10. **Exempt** the public conveniences contract from the list of "top 25 contracts" targeted for savings
11. **Exempt** all charity and voluntary sector contractors from the from the list of "top 25 contracts" targeted for savings. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Southside's Early Help Family Support & Play Service, and their Independent Domestic Abuse Support Service
 - Fosse Way's Specialist Autism Support Service
 - First Steps' Specialist Early Years Education Service
 - The Welfare Advice Service from Bath and District Citizens Advice Bureau
 - The Targeted Youth Support Service from Youth Connect South West
 - Mentoring Plus's Student & Family Support Service, and their Early Help Targeted Support Mentoring Service
 - Age UK BaNES's adult social care Support at Home Service
 - Vision West of England's adult social care Sensory Impairment Support Services
 - Off The Record's Children's Advocacy (SEND and Social Care) and Independent Visiting Service, and their Children and Young People's Participation Service
 - Bath Area and Play Project's Short Breaks Targeted Holiday Provision
 - DHI's Homelessness Prevention Pathways: Reach, Barton Buildings, and Burlington Street
 - The Nurture Outreach Service from Three Ways Brighter Futures
 - Julian House's Manvers House Homelessness Prevention Pathway Services

Exemption of these contracts will not result in any change to the Budget.

12. Dedicate officer time, without incurring additional cost, to scope a business case for “B&NES PRIORITY” – a two-part evolution of the Discovery Card, giving both modern tourists and B&NES residents the kind of modern services they expect.

a. The scoping work should investigate creating an evolved and largely digital ‘Discovery Card’, – B&NES PRIORITY – which will:

- Protect residents from the increasing pressures of our (B&NES’) lower than average pay and higher than average housing and daily costs, by offering them residents’ rates on a range of council services alongside accurate, up to date information on services, democracy, infrastructure, waste, roads, buses, news and so on. This part of the system – B&NES RESIDENTS PRIORITY – would operate along the lines of the “South Glocs” residents’ app, but with additional features. This would be free to all residents.

And which will also:

- Generate significant amounts of revenue from partnerships, ticketing bundles, promotions, sponsorship and advertising, while offering reliable information and discounted rates for off “standard” rates. This part of the system – B&NES VISITORS PRIORITY – would operate like city passes used by tourists in popular destinations across the world. This would be purchased by visitors.

b. The scoping work should clearly investigate the opportunities of such a balanced system: how an increase in commercial opportunities can offset benefits for residents, for the reasons set out above. As a cross-cutting piece of work, it should engage with experts in other locations, across B&NES’ staff expertise and with stakeholders. A range of public policy models should be examined.

c. It should take account of additional yields and their metrics, looking at the longer-term commercial and civic gain for B&NES, residents, partners and stakeholders. These include but are not limited to:

- i. The value of communicating with visitors before and after their stay, as well as while they are here,
- ii. The ability to encourage repeat trips, and prolong stays
- iii. The potential to build, and impact upon, local businesses across the district,
- iv. The chance to promote green travel into and across B&NES.

d. Initial reporting on the first stages of this work should come to the Corporate Scrutiny Policy Development Panel within no more than six months.

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Council 24th February 2026

Green Group Budget suggested amendment items

SUGGESTED AMENDMENT

1. Additional software to accurately model changes to Council Tax Support Scheme

Costs: £4.5k

Savings from: Commercial Income Risk Reserve

1. Additional software to accurately model changes to Council Tax Support Scheme

Costs: £4.5k

Detail: Additional software to accurately model changes to Council Tax Support Scheme requires the investment of £4.5k for a one-year licence to allow officers to gain better knowledge of recipients' position within bands of the Council Tax Support Scheme and model potential changes to benefits and the scheme.

Recent and upcoming changes to benefits result in some residents receiving less council tax support than previously, which in some cases means they're financially worse off, due to no action or fault of their own.

Carers Allowance was updated by the Government in spring of 2025 and the two-child benefit cap will be lifted later this year. Our Local Council Tax Support Scheme is aligned with the Universal Credit standard allowance and certain elements such as the housing element but it isn't taking into account other Universal Credit elements. Increases in benefits can therefore lead to residents being worse off, due to them being moved to a lower band in Council Tax Support. The two child benefit cap will be scrapped later this year, resulting in further benefits changes for Local Council Tax Support Scheme recipients.

The additional software would allow officers to explore and review how we can support the most vulnerable people in our community better by ensuring our Council Tax Support Scheme is reviewed and brought in line with recent and upcoming changes.

As an example, suppose Ms Smith used to receive an 85% discount on council tax. Ms Smith receives Carers Allowance and this was recently uplifted by the government by £35 per month. This resulted in Ms Smith being moved to a lower band of council tax support, i.e. a 60% discount. Her council tax bill therefore increased by £75 per month, while her income increased by £35 per month, leaving her £40 per month worse off.

To be funded from the existing service budget. Officers have confirmed that this piece of software has been purchased on occasion in previous years when required and this was managed within the existing service budget.

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