

Bath and North East Somerset Council

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the Meeting held

Thursday, 20th January, 2011, 10.00 am

Councillors: Chair 2010-2011 Councillor Caroline Roberts

Councillor Steve Hedges, Councillor Brian Simmons, Councillor Roger Symonds and Councillor Gordon Wood

Cabinet members:

58 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

59 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Democratic Services Officer drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as set out on the Agenda.

60 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apology for absence was received from Glen Chipp (Strategic Director for Service Delivery).

61 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There were none.

62 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There were none. The Chair used this opportunity to inform the meeting that the Panel agreed to have the 'Community Safety Plan: Water Safety' immediately after the agenda item 7 'Minutes of the last meeting'.

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

David Redgewell addressed the Panel about the service reduction plan for bus services (document 'Forthcoming changes to local bus services in Bath and North East Somerset – January 2011' is available on the minute book at Democratic Services). He asked for this to be urgently reviewed. David Redgewell also highlighted the importance of Government funding for electric buses and stated that there was a danger for losing out on this funding if the steps were not taken. David Redgewell concluded his statement by informing the Panel about the meeting between the Police and bus services providers regarding Anti Social Behaviour on buses and the urgency of getting on with the Bath package.

The Chair said that the credit for the initiative for transport safety should also go to the Community Safety team in the Council and that the other issues were within the remit of the Enterprise and Economic Development O&S Panel.

The Chair thanked David Redgewell for his statement.

Councillor Roger Symonds (Combe Down Ward Councillor) read out a statement regarding the recent severe weather. He said that the Council managed to keep main roads free and gritting was done very well. However, there were some suggestions and criticism from local residents. One resident asked if the footpath in Ralph Allen could be gritted; another resident commented that in other European countries grass cutting machinery had been used to grit pavements in winter; two groups of local people in Combe Down gritted their roads and one resident bought his own grit salt; Council should provide more grit bins or deliver bags of grit to local people; no grit bins in Foxhill; in Wilmington none of the roads in or out of the village were gritted where 10 of the residents are over 60; and that the bus companies should contribute towards gritting. Councillor Symonds concluded his statement by asking the Council to issue gritting instructions to local people on how much to use and how to disperse it.

Councillor Gerrish responded that the Council had been very good with gritting during the severe weather. All Local Authorities had been supplied enough grit from the Government to meet the demand. If the grit was provided to all people then the Council would not be able to supply the grit to the further network. Council's contractors had the responsibility to fill empty grit bins. If grit bins are empty, people should contact Council Connect. Although the contribution from bus companies was not an unreasonable request people should be aware that bus companies were also threatened with all sorts of cuts.

Matthew Smith also responded by saying that weather extremes were becoming more common and the expectations of the public seem to be in the increase but that this was at a time of public sector financial restraint. As our response was evolving over time and Members had not formally had the chance to agree Council policy on this, he suggested for the Panel to have an update on the current "winter maintenance" policies and procedures at the next meeting in March so that these could be reviewed.

The Panel **AGREED** to have 'Winter Maintenance Policies and Procedures' for March meeting.

RESOLVED that minutes of the above meeting be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

65 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES ACTION PLAN (45 MINUTES)

Matthew Smith introduced the report.

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

The Chair asked about the effect that the new crematorium built in Shepton Mallet would have on Bath and North East Somerset area.

Matthew Smith replied that the catchment area for Bath crematorium includes Shepton Mallet, and that the new facility could affect demand.

Councillor Hedges asked about the staff views on these cuts.

Matthew Smith responded that although the morale was not at its highest level, the staff's attitude was very good as a result of investing in personal development and allowing staff more freedom to decide how they do their work.

Councillor Wood asked about the vacant position for Head of Parking Services and the future structure of the Parking Enforcement team.

Matthew Smith replied that the intention was to change the structure of Parking Services and also to recruit more staff for that service to improve performance and productivity.

Councillor Symonds asked if there would be a reduction in waste trucks in near future.

Matthew Smith responded that anticipated savings would be from reduced mileage (and the number of vehicles) collecting the domestic refuse. The service also anticipated an increase in amounts of food waste collected.

The Chair asked about the intention to charge for toilet usage in the Avon Street coach park.

Matthew Smith responded that the Panel had previously agreed to this proposal but that the facilities would need to be improved first and that this would be carried out together with the Property Services. If all goes to plan toilets should be improved and charges made March-April.

The Chair said that, following the work of the Cleansing Task and Finish Group, there was still a need to carry out promotional and education work as planned.

Matthew Smith responded that the work on public involvement was in progress and that the Cleansing Task and Finish Group need to be long term campaign.

The Chair suggested that an update on the Cleansing Task and Finish Group be on the agenda for March meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Note the Environmental Service Action Plan and pass the comments to the Corporate Performance and Resources O&S Panel; and
- 2) Have an update on the Cleansing Task and Finish Group for March meeting (to be confirmed).

66 TOURISM, LEISURE AND CULTURE SERVICE ACTION PLAN (30 MINUTES) - LATE REPORT

David Lawrence introduced the report and also the statement of purpose for Tourism, Leisure and Culture Service.

The Panel asked the following questions and made the following comments:

David Lawrence said that there would be no intention to close any of the libraries due to the Council's responsibility to provide those services.

Councillor Wood asked about the volunteers participations in library services. David Lawrence replied that the volunteers would be involved in library services but not to replace professionals.

Councillor Symonds said that David Lawrence's services had been fantastic income generator and that he would not support any cuts in services. He expressed his concern about the events and festivals in Bath.

David Lawrence replied that the city had the highest volume of visitors for the past two years. The aim of the Council was that the visitors leave Bath with the feeling to come back again and also to encourage them to spend. Councillor Jackson asked about the improvements of the Midsomer Norton and Radstock libraries.

David Lawrence replied that there were severe damages due to flooding on those buildings. The buildings would soon be upgraded and the stock would be replenished. There were no plans to close those two libraries or to increase charges.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Note the report and pass the comments to the Corporate Performance and Resources O&S Panel;
- 2) Recommend that no cuts or closures of libraries should take place; and
- 3) Recommend to build on use of volunteers for libraries.

67 POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS SERVICE ACTION PLAN (30 MINUTES)

David Trethewey introduced the report.

The Panel asked the following questions and made the following comments:

Councillor Symonds said that the Community Safety had been a success in Bath and North East Somerset area. He also said that the Anti Social Behaviour team had been a real leap forward and that he was glad that there were no severe cuts for this service.

The Chair agreed with the comments from Councillor Symonds. She also said that the Council would want an increase in volunteering and asked how we would be able to co-ordinate it.

David Trethewey replied that the part of the solution was to use more intelligently the resources that we already have and also listen to what the community asks for.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report and to pass the comments to the Corporate Performance and Resources O&S Panel.

68 COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN: WATER SAFETY (30 MINUTES)

The Chair invited Dennis McCann (Bath and North East Somerset, Avon Fire and Rescue Service Unitary Manager) to give a presentation on Water Safety.

Denis McCann highlighted the following points in his presentation:

- The river and other open water is a valuable asset for Bath and North East Somerset from the visual amenity however there are some risks attached to any open water, and tragically a number of water related incidents each year.
- The Fire and Rescue Service do not have a statutory duty, nor do they receive government funding to provide the water rescue measures conducted in Avon – the capability is provided to deal with community risk and is another example of Avon Fire and Rescue investing in the safety of the community.
- Thankfully water related deaths are not an everyday occurrence in the area, but there is a low level of incidents that is continuing to cause concern.
- The impact on the families who lost their loved ones is incalculable – and Dennis McCann offered his condolences to anyone who has lost loved ones in similar circumstances.
- The issue of the management of open water falls to a number of agencies and individuals – but water related incidents directly impacts many more services.
- Last year Avon Fire and Rescue were directly involved with 11 incidents involving injury in water in Bath and North East Somerset, and a very small proportion of those will tragically result in deaths.
- What is the impact of river and open water related incidents?
- What Avon Fire and Rescue are doing about it?
 - Recognising this as a community safety issue and work proactively with the partners in raising awareness of the issue.
 - Work with the Community Safety Team and other partners such as the Police.

- Poster and media campaign during the summer months of 2010.
- Avon Fire and Rescue paid to place adverts in the resilience manual being sent to homes and businesses by the council.
- During 2011 to start to deliver a program into schools based on water safety and basic emergency resuscitation.
- During 2011 to repeat the awareness campaign during the summer months where recreational swimming is more attractive due to improved weather.
- Avon Fire and Rescue will continue to look for opportunity and methods to raise awareness and to reduce risk, whilst keeping a balance on the positive aspects and benefit the river, canal and other open water in Bath and North East Somerset.

Dennis McCann asked that the Council continue to offer what support they can in helping us reduce the number of water related incidents.

A full copy of the presentation is available on the minute book in Democratic Services.

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

Councillor Gordon said that he is the Council's representative for Fire Authority and this issue had been discussed. He asked what equipment had been used for water rescue.

Dennis McCann responded that every frontline pump had life jackets and specialist inflatable equipment. He also said that the crew had been trained with level 3 rescues.

Councillor Hedges asked if there was enough safety equipment and whether the equipment gets vandalised.

Denis McCann responded that it would be difficult to say what the right provision of the safety equipment is. He also said that the crew did not report that the equipment was missing.

Councillor Pritchard congratulated Avon Fire and Rescue Service for their work considering that the Fire and Rescue Service did not have a statutory duty, nor did they receive government funding to provide the water rescue measures.

Councillor Hedges asked about the ways of having further support for water safety and rescue.

Dennis McCann responded that the main issue was to raise the awareness and the best way to do that was via Council's media, newspapers, website and similar.

The Chair said that the Panel would recommend use of media. She also said that a lot of publicity related to water incidents seems to be around young people and students but the other people also got affected (i.e. those with bad sight, mobility issues, etc). There should be the best use of the resources available including the provision of lighting on specific places around the river.

Councillor Wood agreed with the Chair's comment and asked the Panel to have a review on the work of Fire and Rescue Services at one of the future meetings. The Panel agreed with that suggestion.

Matthew Smith suggested that the Council also does a lot of work in this area and the Panel might in the future wish to consider a joint report on this area.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Note the report and presentation;
- 2) Recommend that the Fire and Rescue Authority work closer with the Communications and Marketing Team on use of Council's media in order to raise the water safety awareness; and
- 3) Have a report about the work of the Fire and Rescue Services and all involved partners (for one of the future meetings after local elections in May).

69 LITTER ENFORCEMENT BRIEFING REPORT (30 MINUTES)

Cathryn Humphries introduced the report.

The Panel asked the following questions and made the following comments:

Councillor Hedges expressed his concern that the PCSOs' involvement in the litter enforcement might distract them from their regular duties. He also asked if the dog fouling falls within the litter enforcement.

Cathryn Humphries replied that the Council receives a lot of useful information from the PCSOs about littering. She also said that dog fouling falls within litter enforcement with a Fixed Penalty of £50.

Councillor Symonds asked if information from the police and others about dog fouling would be passed to dog wardens.

Cathryn Humphries replied that the information would be passed to dog wardens who have close working relationship with the PCSOs.

The Chair asked whether dog wardens could issue the fines and if there was the age restrictions for litter fines.

Cathryn Humphries replied that dog wardens could issue fines. Litter fines would not be issued to young people under 17 but a letter would be sent to their parents and school.

The Chair asked if any other people could report the litter on streets and how much of the coverage litter enforcement would have.

Cathryn Humphries replied that the Council welcomes any information from the public about the unauthorised litter disposal, whether via Council Connect or email.

She also said that the litter enforcement applies for the whole Bath and North East Somerset although the city centre has the most of littering problems.

The Panel suggested that the information about dog fouling should be publicised and that the subject should be discussed at PACT meetings.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report and for officers to take on board comments and suggestions made by the Panel.

70 BUS SERVICES UPDATE (30 MINUTES)

Adrian Clarke introduced the report.

The Chair invited Lin Patterson to read out her statement.

Lin Patterson highlighted two issues on her statement. The first was on the revival of a Public Transport Liaison Panel (PTLP). Lin Patterson thanked the Panel for the support and asked if the PTLP would be adequately resourced and also the frequency of meetings for that Panel. The second issue was the need for Council support for one of the buses taken off in May in north east Bath. She asked if a 40 minute service was considered acceptable and whether the other bus routes in Bath would also be reduced.

A full copy of the statement from Lin Patterson is available on the minute book in Democratic Services.

The Panel asked the following questions and made the following comments:

Councillor Symonds said that the Halcrow review should come to this Panel in near future. He supported the request from the speaker that the bus waiting time should be 30 minutes and not 40. Councillor Symonds welcomed the update from officers but he also wanted to see the following: level of complaints, punctuality and real time information. He also suggested that the bus shelter at the Grand Parade should be replaced.

Councillor Gerrish responded that there were 2 sources of funding for real time information on different routes. He also said that local equivalent to Oyster Card would be available soon.

The Chair said the concern was that the Oyster Card would not be accepted by all bus operators.

Adrian Clarke responded there were a number of bus operators in the area. Oyster Card was very popular in London but only because there was one operator there.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the update and to suggest that the bus shelter at the Grand Parade be replaced.

71 CABINET MEMBERS' UPDATES (30 MINUTES)

Councillor Charles Gerrish informed the Panel that first meeting of the Public Transport Liaison Panel (PTLP) would be happening soon. The frequency of the meetings was yet to be decided.

Councillor Vic Pritchard informed the Panel about the Taxi Marshal scheme and added that the number of people using taxis proves the need for this scheme to continue. He also updated the Panel about the CCTV operational room move from Guildhall to Lewis House. Councillor Pritchard expressed his concern about the CCTV cameras installed at Tesco in Keynsham. He felt that the CCTV should be concentrated on town and city centres rather than across the whole area.

72 PANEL FUTURE WORKPLAN

- It was **RESOLVED** to note the workplan with the following additions:
- Winter Maintenance Policies and Procedures for March meeting
 - Cleansing Task and Finish Group update for March meeting
 - Fire and Rescue Services report for one of the future meetings

The meeting ended at 2.20 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services