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BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, 15th September, 2011

Present:- **Councillors** Simon Allen, Patrick Anketell-Jones, Rob Appleyard, Sharon Ball, Tim Ball, Colin Barrett, Gabriel Batt, Cherry Beath, David Bellotti, Sarah Bevan, Mathew Blankley, Lisa Brett, John Bull, Neil Butters, Anthony Clarke, Nicholas Coombes, Paul Crossley, Gerry Curran, Sally Davis, Douglas Deacon, Michael Evans, Paul Fox, Andrew Furse, Charles Gerrish, Ian Gilchrist, Francine Haeberling, Alan Hale, Katie Hall, Malcolm Hanney, Liz Hardman, Nathan Hartley, Eleanor Jackson, Les Kew, Dave Laming, Malcolm Lees, Marie Longstaff, Barry Macrae, David Martin, Loraine Morgan-Brinkhurst MBE, Robin Moss, Paul Myers, Douglas Nicol, June Player, Vic Pritchard, Manda Rigby, Caroline Roberts, Nigel Roberts, Dine Romero, Will Sandry, Brian Simmons, Kate Simmons, Jeremy Sparks, Ben Stevens, Roger Symonds, Martin Veal, David Veale, Geoff Ward, Tim Warren, Chris Watt and Brian Webber

Apologies for absence: Councillors Bryan Chalker, David Dixon, Steve Hedges and Bryan Organ

27 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as set out on the agenda.

28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Brian Chalker, Dave Dixon, Steve Hedges and Bryan Organ.

29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Malcolm Hanney declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in agenda items 9 and 10 as Chair of NHS Bath & North East Somerset.

Councillor Eleanor Jackson declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 12 as a Member of the Standards Committee.

30 MINUTES 14TH JULY 2011

On a motion from Councillor Francine Haeberling, seconded by Councillor Paul Crossley, it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of 14th July 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

31 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OR FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chairman;

1. Congratulated Councillor Manda Rigby on her appointment as Chairman of Bath City Football club.
2. Explained the reason for the meeting taking place in the Banqueting room due to the Council Chamber refurbishment.
3. Informed the meeting that item 13 "Policy Development & Scrutiny Panels – Role of Vice-Chair" had been withdrawn from this agenda to allow for further discussion.
4. Indicated that he proposed to waive Council Rule 37 so as not to permit Councillors seconding motions or amendments being able to reserve their right to speak until later in the debate, but to require all seconders, if they wished to speak, to do so when they seconded the motion or amendment. The Council indicated its agreement.
5. Informed Council that he proposed to announce a 10 minute comfort break at an appropriate point if the meeting continued beyond 8.00pm.

32 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no items of urgent business.

33 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The following statements were made at this item:

Amanda Leon from Radstock Action Group made a statement regarding the Cabinet deferral of the decision on the TROs for Radstock – a copy of which is held on the Minute book and published on the Council's website with the draft minutes of the meeting. In response to a question from Councillor Eleanor Jackson regarding how the TROs relate to the planning application, Amanda responded that it was unclear. The slippage in the planning application has meant that the highway works were extracted from the full application which came with the 106 agreements and so the TROs should fall as they are outside of what was agreed.

John Spratley made a statement regarding the proposed diversion of the A362 in Radstock and the effect it would have on Radstock. He spoke as a long-standing resident and lorry driver and set out reasons for his opinion that the scheme would have a negative impact on local businesses and lead to job losses. He also queried where the money for Norton Radstock Regeneration scheme had gone over the last 11 years. In response to a question from Eleanor Jackson regarding the relationship between the TROs and the 2009 traffic data which may or may not have been analysed, John said that it was 'not understandable'.

The following statements were made at item 8:

Jill Britten from Whitchurch Village made a statement in support of preserving the green belt at Whitchurch and setting out reasons why the area was inappropriate for development; – a copy of which is held on the Minute book and published on the Council's website with the draft minutes of the meeting.

Jo Tinworth from Newton St Loe Parish Council made a statement seeking to protect the unique setting of Bath, prioritise housing development on brownfield sites, make more use of empty properties and protect the green belt for food production; – a copy of which is held on the Minute book and published on the Council's website with the draft minutes of the meeting.

Gwen Edwards made a statement regarding the Core Strategy. She queried the forecasting for additional housing and whether it was accurate with the impact of the global economic situation on housing need. She also stressed the importance of keeping Keynsham distinct from Bristol, and pointed out that there was not the appropriate infrastructure to support large development at Hicks Gate.

Martin Farrell made a statement regarding the Hicks Gate part of the Core Strategy raising issues regarding the ridge development, the impact of the A4 and the large volume of traffic it carried, and querying the how the 'principle of the green belt gap' could be maintained if housing was built there.

Roger Busby made a statement against including a housing contingency within the Core Strategy and set out his reasons to support this view; - a copy of which is held on the Minute book and published on the Council's website with the draft minutes of the meeting

The following statement was made at item 12:

Terry Reakes had registered to make a statement regarding the proposed changes to the Standards regime which was read on his behalf by Councillor Eleanor Jackson; – a copy of which is held on the Minute book and published on the Council's website with the draft minutes of the meeting.

34 CORE STRATEGY - POST SUBMISSION CHANGES

The Council considered a report regarding the post-submission changes to the Core Strategy which is now under examination. The Inspector had raised a number of concerns requiring a response from the Council – some of which might require an amendment to the Strategy and subsequent community engagement.

The Chief Executive was absent for the duration of this item.

An addendum to Annex A had been circulated in advance of the meeting and copies were available at the meeting. This document replaced pages 13 and 14 which had featured the wrong Site Assessment table for Contingency Option 3 (Whitchurch).

Following statements from members of the public (as set out at minute number 33) and debate, an adjournment was called at 8.10pm; the meeting re-convened at 8.38pm.

The Monitoring Officer then advised that the vote on recommendation 2.1 be taken in two parts so that the meeting would not fail to come to a decision on this item. The first vote would be on approving the changes to the Core Strategy as shown in Annex G with the exception of item 1.36, and the second vote on the identification of a Contingency Housing allocation at Hick's Gate. [Part 1 of the vote became the successful resolution, part 2 of the split motion is shown at Note 3 below.]

On a motion from Councillor Tim Ball, seconded by Councillor Paul Crossley, it was then

RESOLVED

1. to agree;
 - a. that changes are made to the Core Strategy as outlined in the composite schedule of changes attached as Annex G, with the exception of paragraph 1.36 regarding a contingency allocation and any other reference thereto;
 - b. that these changes are published for community engagement;
 - c. that public consultation is undertaken on the technical investigations into potential sites for the proposed upstream compensatory flood storage needed to facilitate the redevelopment of the Bath river corridor sites; and
2. to note the potential changes to the Core Strategy arising from the Government's Draft National Planning Policy Framework (set out in Annex F to the report), agree that they should be subject to community engagement and sent to the Examination Inspector for consideration as part of the Core Strategy examination process.

[Notes;

- 1) *The above motion was carried unanimously following a proposal, moved by Councillor Gerry Curran, seconded by Councillor Nigel Roberts, that the matter should be dealt with by way of two votes, the first of which was successful.*
- 2) *An amendment was moved on behalf of the Conservative Group by Councillor Tim Warren, seconded by Councillor Charles Gerrish, to move the recommendations as printed subject to the deletion of paragraph 1.36 of Annex G together with any references to a contingency location, and the deletion of the words 'including the identification of a Housing contingency location' in paragraph 2.1 'a' of the recommendations. A named vote was taken on the amendment which was lost by 27 in favour and 34 voting against and no absentions: **For** - Councillors Patrick Anketell-Jones, Colin Barrett,*

Gabriel Batt, Matthew Blankley, Tony Clarke, Sally Davis, Peter Edwards, Michael Evans, Charles Gerrish, Francine Haerberling, Alan Hale, Malcolm Hanney, Lew Kew, Dave Laming, Malcolm Lees, Marie Longstaff, Barry Macrae, Paul Myers, Vic Pritchard, Brian Simmons, Kate Simmons, Martin Veal, David Veale, Geoff Ward, Tim Warren, Chris Watt, Brian Webber.
Against – Councillors Simon Allen, Rob Appleyard, Sharon Ball, Tim Ball, Cherry Beath, David Bellotti, Sarah Bevan, Lisa Brett, John Bull, Neil Butters, Nicholas Coombes, Paul Crossley, Gerry Curran, Doug Deacon, Paul Fox, Andrew Furse, Ian Gilchrist, Katie Hall, Liz Hardman, Nathan Hartley, Eleanor Jackson, David Martin, Loraine Morgan-Brinkhurst MBE, Robin Moss, Doug Nicol, June Player, Manda Rigby, Caroline Roberts, Nigel Roberts, Dine Romero, Will Sandry, Jeremy Sparks, Ben Stevens, Roger Symonds.

- 3) *The second part of the split motion was to approve the identification of a Housing Contingency location as set out in paragraph 1.36 of Annex G. A named vote was taken on the proposal which was lost by 27 voting in favour, and 34 against and no abstentions.* **For** – Councillors Simon Allen, Sharon Ball, Tim Ball, Cherry Beath, David Bellotti, Sarah Bevan, Lisa Brett, Neil Butters, Nicholas Coombes, Paul Crossley, Gerry Curran, Paul Fox, Andrew Furse, Ian Gilchrist, Katie Hall, Nathan Hartley, David Martin, Loraine Morgan-Brinkhurst MBE, Doug Nicol, Manda Rigby, Caroline Roberts, Nigel Roberts, Dine Romero, Will Sandry, Jeremy Sparks, Ben Stevens, Roger Symonds.
Against – Patrick Anketell-Jones, Rob Appleyard, Colin Barrett, Gabriel Batt, Matthew Blankley, John Bull, Tony Clarke, Sally Davis, Doug Deacon, Peter Edwards, Michael Evans, Charles Gerrish, Francine Haerberling, Alan Hale, Malcolm Hanney, Liz Hardman, Eleanor Jackson, Les Kew, Dave Laming, Malcolm Lees, Marie Longstaff, Barry Macrae, Robin Moss, Paul Myers, June Player, Vic Pritchard, Brian Simmons, Kate Simmons, Martin Veal, David Veale, Geoff Ward, Tim Warren, Chris Watt, Brian Webber.]

35 YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN

The Council considered a report presenting the annual Youth Justice Plan which is a statutory requirement. It sets out work planned to prevent youth offending and re-offending within Bath and North East Somerset. The Plan will be submitted to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.

On a motion from Councillor Nathan Hartley, seconded by Councillor Dine Romero, it was

RESOLVED to agree that;

1. the Youth Justice Plan fulfils the requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and can be submitted to the Youth Justice Board; and
2. the Youth Justice Plan is adopted as part of the Council's Policy and Budget framework.

36 UPDATE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMUNITY INTEREST

COMPANY FOR THE PROVISION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

The Council considered a report which updated Councillors on progress in establishing a Social Enterprise to provide integrated community health and social care services and to commission health, social care and housing for the benefit of patients, clients and taxpayers on behalf of the Council and NHS Bath & North East Somerset.

On a motion from Councillor Simon Allen, seconded by Councillor Vic Pritchard, it was

RESOLVED

1. To note the progress against the conditions set out by the Council and the NHS B&NES Board in approving the transfer of community health & social care services as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
2. To confirm the extent of the authority delegated to the Chief executive as outlined in paragraphs 5.1-5.2 as amended in paragraph 5.6 of the report;
3. To confirm the funding for Non-Delegated Statutory Functions be agreed as a priority commitment for the purposes of the 2012/2013 Budget Planning process;
4. To agree to provide a guarantee to the Avon Pension Fund in respect of pension liabilities for Council TUPE transferred staff;
5. To confirm the intent, from October 1st, to transfer the provision of adult social care services to Sirona Care & Health Community Interest Company ("Sirona"/ "the CIC"), subject to agreement of recommendations at 2.3 of the report and signing of both the Business Transfer Agreement and the Community Services Contract by the Chief Executive under delegated authority as outlined in paragraphs 5.1-2 as amended in paragraph 5.6 of the report; and
6. To note the intention of NHS B&NES to enter simultaneously into the same agreement, to transfer the provision of community health services to Sirona Care & Health, and to sign both the Business Transfer Agreement and the Community Services Contract.

[Note; The above resolution was agreed with 3 Councillors voting against and 2 abstentions.]

37 FUTURE COUNCIL - STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

Council considered a report seeking approval to a number of specific recommendations of the Restructuring Implementation Committee regarding implementing the proposals for the future organisational model of the Council – specifically, the strategic leadership role and senior management structure.

On a motion from Councillor Paul Crossley, seconded by Councillor Francine Haeberling, it was

RESOLVED that

1. The post of Director of People and Communities is designated as the Council's Director of Adult Social Services and Director of Children's Services in accordance with section 6 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 and section 18 of the Children's Act 2004 respectively with immediate effect;
2. The post of Head of Paid Service/Chief Executive is retained within the new senior management structure;
3. When the Chief Executive exercises his option to retire, all necessary steps be taken to appoint a successor in accordance with the decision at resolution 2. Above, and Council Standing Orders; and
4. One-off costs associated with the recruitment and selection of the post of Head of Paid Service/Chief Executive of up to £50k is met from the Revenue Budget Contingency.

38 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE STANDARDS REGIME

In May, Council asked the Standards Committee to review its procedures for investigation of complaints with the intention of submitting proposals for the implementation of the Localism Bill currently before Parliament (in respect of the Member conduct aspects of the Bill), and making the system fairer to those people who are the subject of a complaint. This is the report of the Standards Committee.

On a motion from Councillor Nigel Roberts, seconded by Councillor Sally Davis, it was

RESOLVED to agree that:

1. The Council adopts a non-statutory Code of Conduct based on paragraphs 3 - 7 of the current model or a model to be issued by the Local Government Association;
2. A Standards Committee is established;
3. The Committee's membership includes Independent Members and an Independent Member chairs the Committee;
4. Parish/Town Councils within the Council's area which adopt a non-statutory Code of Conduct should, if possible, be offered an opt-in to deal with complaints against Parish/Town Councillors;
5. The current Local Standards Framework should be reviewed with the aim of making the system fairer and streamlining the current processes and procedures, in the following respects:

- i. The Monitoring Officer or his/her deputy should assess complaints to decide whether the alleged conduct breaches the Code in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee;
- ii. Subject councillors should be given details of the complaint, including the name of the complainant and which parts of the Code they are alleged to have breached. They would be invited to submit comments before the allegation is considered by the Committee;
- iii. If the Committee considers that there has been a breach which is trivial or has been corrected, it would be dealt with at the meeting. Only serious breaches would be referred for investigation;
- iv. The complainant should also have the right to address the Committee concerning their grievance in order to respond to the investigating officer's report;
- v. The pre-hearing meeting should be abandoned;
- vi. The notice could be posted in the complainant's local free newspaper or other local media, or in the case of a Town Council complaint, the Town Council's noticeboard; and
- vii. The Standards Committee should agree with the Monitoring Officer a time line for responses since it is unacceptable to have cases drag on for over a year, as at present. A decision should normally be made within 13 weeks of the initial complaint.

[Note; 1) The above resolution was agreed unanimously. The underlined wording was suggested by Councillor Eleanor Jackson and accepted by the mover and seconder of the original motion.]

39 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANELS - ROLE OF VICE CHAIRS

This item was withdrawn from the agenda for further discussion.

40 DRAFT SCHEME FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY ALDERMEN AND HONORARY ALDERWOMEN OF BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

This report asks Council to consider the comments of the Resources Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel, and the published report, regarding a scheme for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen of Bath and North East Somerset to recognise the contribution to the community made by former long serving Councillors.

On a motion from Councillor Paul Crossley, seconded by Councillor Francine Haeberling, it was

RESOLVED that a scheme for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen be approved with the following criteria for qualifying;

1. the number of years qualifying service should be 12;
2. that cumulative, rather than continuous, service should be counted;
3. service be counted on Bath & North East Somerset Council and its predecessor principal authorities, provided the Councillor had served a full 4 year term on Bath & North East Somerset Council;
4. that the scheme should apply to all former Councillors with some service on Bath & North East Somerset Council, irrespective of the date on which they left office; and
5. that the scheme be approved as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

41 TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT

The Council considered a report giving details of performance against the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment plan for 2010/11.

On a motion from Councillor David Bellotti, seconded by Councillor Paul Crossley, it was

RESOLVED

1. To note the 2010/11 Treasury Management Annual report to 31st March 2011, prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Code of Practice; and
2. To note the 2010/11 actual Treasury Management Indicators.

[Note; 1) The above resolution was carried with 32 Councillors voting in favour, none against and 24 abstentions.]

42 ANNUAL REPORT OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Council considered the Annual report of the Corporate Audit Committee which is required to report annually to Council under its Terms of Reference.

On a motion from Councillor Andy Furse, seconded by Councillor Brian Simmons, it was

RESOLVED to note the annual report of the Corporate Audit Committee.

[Note 1) – The above resolution was carried with 2 abstentions and no Councillors voting against.]

43 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

One Councillor question had been received from Councillor John Bull. The Chair drew attention to the question and response which had been circulated to Councillors and at the meeting. [A copy of which is available on the Council's Minute book and on the website.]

The meeting ended at 9.55 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

Bath and North East Somerset Council Meeting 15 September 2011

Amanda Leon on behalf of Radstock Action Group

CORPORATE PRIORITIES, CREDIBILITY GAPS AND DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

Whilst any stay of execution is to be welcomed, Radstock Action Group sees last night's Cabinet vote to defer a decision on the TROs for Radstock as an inadequate response to the crisis which would unfold in the town if the TROs were to be adopted. We hope that this latest move will turn out to be something more than a moment of cynical window dressing to make B&NES look like a 'listening council'. The TROs should be thrown out and we urge the full council to do so when given the opportunity, particularly as they are at odds with the Corporate Priorities underpinning the Core Strategy.

Four of them are particularly relevant in this debate:

- Building communities where people feel safe and secure
- Sustainable growth
- Improving the availability of affordable housing
- Improving transport and the public realm

The TROs provide the latest evidence of a scheme which would be contrary to these priorities:

- People in Radstock will feel less safe when the main (A362) road through traffic is introduced via a new bit of road into the town centre. Shoppers, children, visitors to the library, doctor, churches, working men's club, Victoria Hall and many other amenities will be overwhelmed by two way traffic in the Street, including eight axle lorries and other HGVs which are simply trying to get past the town. Air and noise pollution will increase and people's health and safety will be diminished.
- The inevitable traffic gridlock will possibly/probably lead to the closure of the sorting office and the subsequent loss of 60+ jobs, thus cancelling out any alleged job creation from the scheme.

Shops which rely on people being able to visit the town centre by car as well as on foot will be at serious risk of loss of trade and possible closure, as was shown when Wessex Water set up temporary traffic lights in the town last week and provoked total chaos. This will lead to further loss of jobs.

Potential new businesses will be very reluctant to set up in an area subject to traffic gridlock; others may well move away.

- According to the Royal Institute of British Architects' newly published *Case for Space* (www.architecture.com/HomeWise/RIBAresearch/RIBAResearch.aspx):

'Space is an important factor when people are choosing a home, but many feel that newly built homes aren't big enough. Existing research suggests that consumers are right to be worried. A lack of space has been shown to impact on the basic lifestyle needs that many people take for granted, such as having

enough space to store possessions or even to entertain friends. **In more extreme cases, lack of adequate space for a household has also been shown to have significant impacts on health, educational attainment and family relationships'** (my capitals).

The NRR proposed housing development for Radstock must be re-examined in the light of this authoritative report, since there is a high proportion of questionable affordable housing which will not meet B&NES declared Corporate Priorities.

- Finally, we know that the impact of the proposed new road layout in Radstock will result in poorer transport as the town centre will be un-negotiable by all the traffic which will be introduced to it and the public realm will be diminished.

If the Core Strategy is to be meaningful, it must be based on transparent, democratic relations with the community. The Council is well aware of the consistent, long-lasting and widespread opposition to the current plans for Radstock. Will you have the determination to rethink?

Minute Annex

Jill Britten. Whitewood Farm, Norton Lane, Whitchurch

We are farmers running an organic beef suckler herd within the Green Belt around Whitchurch and have lived and farmed in the area for over 40 years so have an understanding of what is at stake here, if you'll pardon the pun. I am here to tell you about the Green Belt at Whitchurch Village. The visual entry into Bristol on the A37 is the envy of all other routes in and surpasses most other city accesses. The land is farmed right up to the City boundary giving the area a rural "cared for" and "involved" feel unlike others often referred to as "edgelands" where the land is neglected, owned by developers waiting for their chance to maximize on their assets from their Land Banks. This is a fact.

The Green Belt at Whitchurch Village truly is special. Here we have the most fantastic example of why Green Belts exist and the huge benefits it brings to people's lives. It has a network of footpaths readily available for people to walk out and enjoy space and fresh air. All local people have access to:-
2 Rugby Clubs, A Cricket Club, 2 Football Clubs, Children's Playground, Allotments
A Cemetery, Equestrian Centre, Garden Centre, Horse World Visitor Centre and lastly
Farming. Not only is this good agricultural land with trees and greenery, it must be remembered it also provides man's only true means of Carbon Capture.
This impressive list represents diverse land uses and will be fought for vehemently.

Whitchurch Village only survives because of the Green Belt. Without it, it will become just another outer extension of Bristol, losing its identity. In August the folk at Whitchurch Village organize and run their own Village Fete, which is one of the largest in the South West, with thousands of people enjoying a lovely family day out, on Green Belt Land of course.

**Your required "Robust Evidence Base" cannot be fulfilled here on three counts –
to stop unrestricted sprawl of large built- up areas ie Bristol,
to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another ie Whitchurch Village being swallowed up with Stockwood
to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.**

Localism is supposed to be on the Government's Agenda and recently, when asked about possible development on their Green Belt, 70% of households took an interest in their surroundings by saying they wished it to stay undeveloped. Over 800 letters were submitted to your Council. An astonishing response saying no to development here. Full support for maintaining this Green Belt comes from my ward Councillor, Malcolm Hanney, my neighbouring Ward Councillor Peter Edwards, my MP Jacob Rees Mogg and three Parish Councils, namely Whitchurch, Norton Malreward and Publow with Pensford. Localism says No.

At Whitchurch, the infrastructure is poor with roads already congested. The local Village Primary School is already over-subscribed. To access facilities such as Post Office, Doctors and Dental Surgeries, Shops, Employment and Comprehensive Schooling all new developments will require cars because Public Transport is very limited. This area is inappropriate for sustainable development.

You have given yourselves the difficult task of choosing one out of the four sites for the District's extra housing requirements. All are on Green Belt, which we were told would not be built on by both Bath & North East Somerset Council and the Present Government. In the House of Commons in April 2011, Bill Esterson Labour MP for Sefton Central asked Eric Pickles MP Secretary of State:-
"Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to confirm whether the new legislation will make it harder for developers to build on the Green Belt?" and the reply from Secretary of State, Mr Eric Pickles, was this
"Our general policy is this: we intend to ensure that the Green Belt is held SOLID AND ABSOLUTELY INVIOLATE by this Administration. We are not going to follow the tenets of the former Labour Government by concreting over the Green Belt"

I am confused – are you?

On behalf of Whitchurch Village, I ask that this Green Belt Jewel be treasured, valued and maintained.

On behalf of all the Green Belt I ask you all to scrap these ideas. Where is your promise of using Brownfield Sites? How can we trust our votes with you if you renege on your promises.

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**Statement made on behalf of Newton St Loe Parish Council by
Jo Tinworth:**

Introduction.....

The question over housing revolves largely around the issue of numbers. **B&NES** proposes 11,000 houses and this seems to fit with current perceptions, regarding available jobs and projected growth. The issue of increasing the numbers of houses, is that it will put the question of an Urban Extension back on the agenda. The Urban Extension that was originally proposed would certainly have destroyed farmland and greenbelt land around Newton St. Loe.

Much is made of the need to provide new housing for people on housing lists. Indeed, the main argument used to increase housing numbers across the country and to push for development on greenbelt land, is dependent on the numbers of people on social housing waiting lists. Locally, the number of houses needed here would have to satisfy not just us, but many stakeholders in and around Bath, who see no justification to destroy the green setting of Bath. What is not discussed is the actual numbers that would be removed from the housing list, if such houses were built in an urban extension of Bath.

- (a) How many of these people are already housed, but are simply seeking cheaper or more secure accommodation?

- (b) What numbers would be **socially** housed and what numbers are considered as potential candidates for affordable housing– which is not the same thing? It is accepted that few people on housing lists can afford ‘affordable’ housing.

Somer housing (in conjunction with The Duchy), claim that building a larger number of houses in one area, reduces prices! Where, in this country, has that ever proved to be true?

The average price in Poundbury – the other Duchy urban extension – is approximately £375,000. Given that a large proportion of jobs in Bath are all minimal wage, how will housing on a development of this kind, assist many workers in Bath? Houses in the proposed Urban Extension would only be within the reach of commuters or second-home owners.

We, in Newton St. Loe, are against an Urban Extension and are pleased that the previous proposal has been removed from the Core Strategy. We see no reason for it to be reintroduced and believe that the development of Western Riverside, the MOD sites, empty properties and limited regeneration of small villages, will provide an adequate number of properties in the projected timescale. Also, the developments proposed or underway in Keynsham and Bristol will more suitably provide executive homes.

Alarmingly, Bath and Bristol, via Saltford, could create the beginning of a mega-city. Would B&NES allow a decision to be taken in this direction before all other potential solutions have been thoroughly explored? Surely not!

Regarding food: the United Nations predict increasing levels of world-wide food prices. Also, as fuel prices increase, it is ever more likely that the United Kingdom will have to seek its own solutions for food security and further-develop farmland and green areas to produce more food. Bristol has already developed a significant study towards becoming more self-sufficient in food production. Where is Bath's study and commitment towards the area's food security? And what is our strategy?

As a priority, why are we not focussing on this important issue and protecting green fields that could produce food? Surely, this must be as important for our sustainable future as the reduction of our carbon emissions?

To sum up:

- (1) We want to protect the unique setting of Bath and to retain its distinct identity - certainly not risk a merger with Bristol.
- (2) We want housing development prioritised on brownfield sites and utilisation of empty properties.
- (3) We want the greenbelt protected for food production.

We must not allow developers to prevail over these aspirations.

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Core Strategy - Post-submission changes with respect to a contingency for housing.

A great deal of effort has gone into producing what is a thorough, consistent and robust Core Strategy. The proposal to add a contingency with respect to housing undermines all the work that has gone into this document.

The suggestion that this contingency should be at Hicks Gate is flawed on a number of counts:

- The site is greenbelt and we should resist its 'concreting over' at all costs.
- Similarly we should resist the loss of good agricultural land at a time when we are concerned about the future of food supplies.
- Any development on that site is likely to result in people commuting from there into Bristol - it will have no beneficial effects for either Keynsham or Bath, where the real need exists for more housing.
- The A4 at Hicks Gate is already severely congested at peak times and development there will only add to atmospheric pollution.
- If Bristol were to go ahead with their contingency, this proposal would see the urban sprawl extend to the boundary of Keynsham.
- In no way could this be described as 'sustainable development'.

The Core Strategy as it stands represents a prime example of "localism". We should not allow ourselves to be dictated to by an Inspector.

The Keynsham Civic Society strongly recommends that the Council rejects the addition of this housing contingency.

Roger Busby
Keynsham Civic Society
15 September 2011

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Minute Annex

Statement to Bath & North East Somerset Council Thursday, 15th September, 2011 6.30 pm

Reference Agenda Item 12:- **PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE STANDARDS REGIME**

Chair, Councillors

The coalition government's proposed changes regarding Councillors Code of Conduct has not inspired me with confidence inter- alia primarily it removes the right of the authority to impose sanctions on councillors who fail to comply with voluntary code.

Consequently, one could argue the new regime will be, 'a toothless tiger'. I quote, 'The Government proposes that the suspension sanction is removed from standards committees for the transitional period.

Hence the most a standards committee could do is, for instance, is to issue a councillor with a censure or a request that they undergo training. This is a farce, without having the power to impose penalties on miscreant councillors. It could be seriously argued that it will be a waste of public funds to set up such a committee.

A better use of ratepayer's monies in this economic climate would be maintaining cash strapped public services. So why have such an impotent structure within the council?

However, if the council decides to adopt a non-statutory Code of Conduct it should be based on nothing less the general principles as outlined in the authorities present code of conduct.

I would welcome a review of the present Local Standards Framework, knowing from personal experience that complaints to the Standards Committee take an enormous amount of time to be processed. Nevertheless, I suspect the reason is not a lack of will; but rather a lack of resource's to run the committee efficiently and fairly.

The proposal to abandon the pre-meeting is alarming as it gives elected members an input to whether a councillor has breached the Code of Conduct. In the interests of democracy, accountability and transparency the monitoring officer should not have the sole right to decide whether the alleged conduct breaches the code. Such decisions should be taken by a special panel (i/e pre-meeting) of selected members of the Standards Committee under the monitoring officers / legal guidance.

To argue that the result of hearings should not be advertised is contrary to the authority's commitment regarding equality of service. I quote, 'We aim to provide appropriate, accessible and effective services and facilities to all sections of the community without prejudice or bias'. However, councillors and officers should remember everyone is not computer literate. Then there are the housebound, people with disabilities... whose source of information is often only through the press, this is a cut that must not be tolerated. I would suggest if any savings have to be made look no further than Council Connect, or refreshments served to councillors during council meetings, rather than depriving all the electorate the right to information regardless of their status.

The practice of only allowing a councillor to submit comments in private session before the allegation is considered by the committee is biased. As it gives him/her unfair advantage over the complainant.

Therefore, in the interests of natural justice this facility should be offered also to the complainant and that all correspondence regarding details of the allegation is sent to both the councillor and complainant.

In conclusion, I urge that the council strongly lobbies government for co-opted members to have voting rights, which in my opinion would go some way to address the perception of councillors judging councillors.

Terry Reakes

Saturday, 10 September 2011

I have added to my statement the authority's present principles of the Code of Conduct for member's deliberation.

BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

PREAMBLE

THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Selflessness

1. Members should serve the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

Honesty and Integrity

2. Members should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.

Objectivity

3. Members should make decisions on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.

Accountability

4. Members should be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities, and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.

Openness

5. Members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority, and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.

Personal Judgement

6. Members may take account of the view of others, including their political groups, but should reach their own conclusions on the issues before them and act in accordance with those conclusions.

Respect for Others

7. Members should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority's statutory officers, and its other employees.

Duty to Uphold the Law

8. Members should uphold the law and, on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.

Stewardship

9. Members should do whatever they are able to do to ensure that their authorities use their resources prudently and in accordance with the law.

Leadership

10. Members should promote and support these principles by leadership, and by example, and should act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence

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Councillor Questions for Council 15th September 2011

(NOTE: The following question and answer will be published on the Council's website as soon as possible after the meeting and linked to the published draft minutes of this meeting.)

1. Question from Councillor John Bull

What assurances have been given to the Sirius Wood Free School Steering Group regarding the availability of the Culverhay site for their use in the event of their proposal for a Free School being approved by the Secretary of State?

Answer from Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Youth, and Leader

The Cabinet decision on 14 July refers to two solutions i.e. a sponsored academy or a Free School. The preference is for a sponsored academy and this is now with the Department for Education. However, if this option were not agreed by the Department for Education the administration would consider the allocation of the school site to Fleet Comprehensive Ltd., the organisation which has proposed the establishment of Sirius Wood Free School.

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