



**Note of the meeting of the Bath City Forum
held on Thursday, 21st January, 2016
in Banqueting Room - Guildhall, Bath**

Meeting Attendance

In Attendance
Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones
Councillor Rob Appleyard
Rob Armstrong-Haworth
Lisa Bartlett
Simon De Beer
Jeremy Boss
Councillor Paul Crossley
Councillor Fiona Darey
Van DuBose
Jo Farrar
Councillor Andrew Furse
Councillor Bob Goodman
Patricia Griffin
Sally Harris
Mark Hayward
Michael Hill
Matt Humberstone
Caroline Kay
Nicky Kemp
Robin Kerr
Councillor Shaun McGall
Penny McKissock
Councillor Michael Norton
Councillor Lin Patterson
Councillor Christopher Pearce
Paul Pennycook
Rosie Phillips
Councillor June Player
Councillor Joe Rayment
Dr Christopher Roche
George Samios
Nigel Sherwen
Kevin Thatcher
Andy Thomas

Apologies Received from
Councillor Peter Turner

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Rayment declared an interest as an employee of the University of Bath

Cllr Darey declared an interest as a tutor at the University of Bath

(As this is not a decision-making body, Cllrs Darey and Rayment were not required to withdraw and therefore could take part in the debate)

1. Public Open Session

The Chair of the Forum, Cllr Goodman, welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Chief Inspector Kevin Thatcher to update the Forum on local policing matters.

Chief Inspector Thatcher updated as follows:

- The “face- to-face” police enquiry desk in the city centre has relocated from Manvers Street to the B&NES Council One Stop Shop, from the end of January 2016. Operational duties have now been relocated to offices at Redbridge House on the Lower Bristol Road. It is important to get the message out to people in the city so people are aware of the new arrangements.
- Bath is a safe place to live and crime numbers are low. There have however been a small number of recent crimes that have been of particular concern, including:
 - Two sexual assaults in the city and reports of indecent exposure.
 - A pattern of dwelling burglaries in the Twerton area. An individual has been arrested.

Chief Inspector Kevin Thatcher then responded to questions as follows:

Question 1 - Cllr Norton - What have been the challenges in moving away from the Police Station based in the city centre?

Response - There have been adjustments but operationally things are working well. It is important to remain an active and visible presence in the city centre.

Question 2 - Cllr McGall - Where there have been pressures on the Police budget, what is the current position with regard to PCSOs on the ground.

Response - There is a commitment to maintain neighbourhood policing and daily prioritisation of officer deployments takes place depending on circumstances and demands.

Question 3 - Cllr Patterson - Can problems associated with multiple use of the canal towpath to the east of Bath could be addressed, in particular the conflict between cyclists and pedestrians. Would be possible to patrol the towpath?

Response - Working relationships are now well established in this area and regular patrols are carried out. There are times when other operational requirements will mean patrols do not occur every day.

Question 4 - Cllr Rayment - Why are we seeing a reduction of 17% in police numbers in Avon and Somerset when London has seen the reduction at 5-6%?

Response - Staffing across the force area has reduced by 600 people and there have been a number of Police officers leaving within that number. There has been a recent drive from the force in recruiting new officers.

Question 5 - Cllr Darey - What support is given to the victims of crime, particularly the types of crime with the Chief Inspector had highlighted earlier?

Response - The Lighthouse Team provides dedicated support to victims of crime and is located at the Keynsham Police site. This is an innovative service which provides a wide range of help and support including access to specialist services for victims of serious crime.

Question 6 - Cllr Player - What is your definition of a "regular patrol" in the outer wards in Bath as well as the city centre?

Response –The Police neighbourhood team covers the city and beat officers are expected to be in their local areas for most of their time. However, other commitments may at times means they are not always on the streets. There is a beat officer specifically covering the Twerton area and an additional PCSO will be added soon. There 6 PCs and 10 PCSOs dedicated to the city centre.

Question 7 - Cllr Player - Who looks after public safety where there are problems with lighting on Network Rail land?

Response - This is not a Police responsibility and should be reported to Network Rail. Where public safety reported as a danger the Police may temporarily plug the gaps.

Question 8 - Cllr Furse - Having PSCOs in cars defeats the object of the visual foot patrol. Is this a result of the move away from the city centre?

Response - We want to keep Police out of cars when possible. The distance from the new office to the Centre of the City is a 15 minute walk. Having a local presence in Lewis House will keep Police in the City Centre.

Question 9 - Jeremy Boss - Where residents report incidents such as vandalism they expect to see patrols in these areas and have contact from the Police.

Response - Where reports are made of incidents occurring, reassurance can be given that an investigation will take place and action will be taken.

Question 10 - Caroline Kay - My impressions of the work of Bath Police is fantastic. What would make life easier for you?

Response - More staff, less crime, and a greater ability to get key messages out to the public. We have the support of a number of volunteers and the work they carry out in the background often goes unseen.

Question 11 - Robin Kerr – Was the relocation and streamlining services to a hub in Keynsham after one year deemed a success or failure, particularly relating to the concern that arrest processing would mean more travel to Keynsham?

Response – We have set up a dedicated detainee investigation team which has helped free up other staff and that this had streamlined the process.

Question 12 - George Samios - With the present issue of extremism having a high profile, what concerns should Bath have?

Response - The Police work with partners through the Prevent Strategy which regularly assesses any changes in risk. Bath like any other city will have risks associated with extremism; however there was not a major series of risks in Bath in this regard.

Question 13 – Cllr Goodman asked for an update on what would happen in the case of a terror attack in the City?

Response – Kevin Thatcher explained that Bath was in a similar situation to other comparable Cities and that response plans were in place.

2. Minutes of the last meeting - 13th October 2015

The minutes from the meeting on 13 October 2015 were agreed subject to the following amendments:

The numbering contained two points numbered 5.5. This section will be renumbered.

Correction to the wording in 5.15 to read: “Patrick Rotheram from FOBRA asked to speak. He felt that the number of students in Bath is a hot topic: the Forum’s observations were welcome and the Forum should take a position”.

Correction to the wording in 6.5 to read: “Cllr McGall asked about personal budgets being moved to individual patients. This could see them having to make their own choices for their care. Jane Shayler explained that whatever model is used it will have to meet statutory responsibilities in adult social care; we do not have the option to say how the money is spent out.”

3. Welcome to co-opted members

Cllr Goodman welcomed the co-opted members to their first Forum meeting. He explained that the applications received had been of a high quality and the selection that has been made represents a wide group of knowledge, skills and experience from across the City.

Robin Kerr suggested that a dedicated website was required for the Forum as he had found it difficult to find the relevant pages on the Council website. Cllr Goodman noted that the pages had been recently updated with a photograph and all of the relevant paperwork.

Cllr McGall requested that at future meetings the Forum considers inviting representatives from youth groups such as the Youth Parliament. Cllr Goodman noted that later on the agenda consideration would be given to establishing a Task and Finish group to examine the overall working of the Forum including representation.

4. The Council's approach to student accommodation in Bath (Placemaking Plan)- Presentation

A presentation on the Placemaking Plan was given by Simon De Beer, Policy & Environment Manager. Following the presentation the Forum were invited to put questions, as below

Question 1 – Cllr Goodman - How are HMOs managed through the Article 4 direction?

Response - The Council sets out thresholds in the specific area and when HMO concentration rises above this permitted development rights are lifted for HMOs and planning permission must be sought.

Question 2 - Cllr Rayment asked what further restrictions can we expect to see on HMOs in Bath?

Response - There is an understanding of where there is high HMO concentration in Bath; the Council will work to prevent HMO's in areas that have a high concentration.

Question 3 - Robin Kerr - Why does B&NES Council not look to have a stand-alone Student Accommodation Policy? There are clear examples of other authorities such as Leeds and Loughborough where plans are working and other examples where no planning has allowed greater problems with student numbers.

Response - The Council is open to an improved approach and it is suggested that this be submitted as part of the consultation.

Question 4 - Jeremy Boss - What powers does the Local Authority have over the numbers for student HMOs: is it just the Placemaking Plan?

Response - Planning permission powers exist where there is high saturation.

Question 5 - Cllr Patterson - Is new student accommodation following what we would expect to see in design standards and principles?

Response - The Core Strategy and The Placemaking Plan cover the agreed standards.

Question 6 - Rosie Phillips - Is there any information about the impact on equality for the groups that the HMO restrictions capture? It appears that this would impact on the poorest in society disproportionately

Response - In areas where saturation reaches 25% a judgement has to be made whether to make restrictions, although refusal for HMOs is not an automatic default position. Where we have licensing in place we should see better standards being achieved.

Question 7 - Caroline Kay - What agreements have been sought with the Universities? A "standoff" with them is an uncomfortable position.

Response - Engagement with the Universities is the preferred position, and we need to evidence any changes that are agreed and open up new conversations to find solutions

Question 8 - Cllr McGall – The Article 4 direction does not appear to be working. There has recently been a HMO that was given planning permission to expand from 4 to 6 in an area where HMO concentration is at 47%. Where concentration levels increase we are missing the point of achieving what Article 4 sets out, in building mixed and balanced communities.

Response – Simon de Beer suggested that this individual application would best be discussed separately as he did not have full specific details of it to hand.

Question 9 - Cllr Player - There are plenty of examples in Bath where students have to put up with low standards when living in HMOs. Why when full rent is being paid are landlords allowed to get away with not meeting the criteria?

Response - Housing officers will investigate any cases that are brought to their attention.

The Chair thanked the officers for their presentation and then introduced Nicky Kemp from the University of Bath and Rob Armstrong-Haworth from Bath Spa University (presentations attached)

Following the presentations the Forum was invited to put their questions.

Question 1 - Cllr Goodman - Why is it that so many residents in Bath think there are too many students in the City?

Response – Nicky Kemp explained that it is accepted that there is a high density of student housing in certain areas and this the ratio of students to other residents can feel uncomfortable.

Question 2 - Cllr Appleyard - There appears to have been a lack of information from the Universities. Although I support the Universities it appears a time has arrived where a cap is needed the numbers that the City can take in. How do you intend to have this conversation with the City?

Response - Nicky Kemp explained that the numbers have been at the upper end of the growth projections. Due to uncertainty from the Government there has been a drive to recruit the numbers whilst we are able to do so. The Government increased choice and removed the cap on the intake for high achieving students. We will need to look at our policy and circumstances as the challenges have only recently arrived. There had been little feedback with regard to lack of availability accommodation until very recently. The recent problem of lack of accommodation had been mainly due to students coming through the clearing process at late notice. This led to having to find ways to get the additional accommodation that was needed on a temporary basis.

Question 3 - Cllr Rayment declared an interest as an employee of the University of Bath. Cllr Rayment asked: With the numbers that you need to achieve, what would happen if restrictions on additional student housing were to be put in place? Also, would it be possible to convert University office space to student accommodation space?

Response - Nicky Kemp explained that the issues with HMOs are a new challenge: we will need to look at how on- campus residences can be increased. It was identified that some office space had been converted to bed space recently.

Question 4 - Cllr Furse – It is appreciated that engagement with the Universities was now taking place but that we should not forget that the Universities are businesses and that student numbers represented income and security. This issue had been growing for at least 10 years and the Universities were seeking to underpin their security with increasing student numbers. 1000 students are coming in to Kingsmead alone: where does it stop?

Response - Rob Armstrong-Haworth explained that Bath Spa University is looking at possibilities in Wiltshire and the numbers that have been mentioned are not all focused on the City of Bath (ie, BA1 & BA2 postcodes). We recognise that some areas are getting full and need to look at what alternatives are available; HMOs have historically been popular as sharing in this way has been more affordable than purpose-built accommodation. We need to find ways of changing this balance. Consideration also needs to be given to the transport routes where locations are away from the City.

Question 5 - Christopher Roche – Has the evolving national policy framework and in particular the HE Green Paper created levels of uncertainty for the Universities?

Response - Nicky Kemp explained that the University of Bath agrees that there has been an uncertain period but are in a robust position. This is not the same for all organisations; there are some that are in a fragile position. Rob Armstrong-Haworth explained that Bath Spa University has marketed themselves ahead of the potential market changes and feels the right investment has been made at the right time. There is work now needs to take place with the Council to find the right housing solutions.

Question 6 - Michael Hill - When a city feels that there is not enough room for everything that different people want, there is a need for joined-up solutions. Where do you draw the line?

Response - Nicky Kemp felt that it is not in anybody's interest if no solutions can be agreed on. The University of Bath are keen to continue dialogue and look to alternative methods for delivery, the way we move forward with our international profile can unblock some of the difficulties.

Question 7 - Caroline Kay - The numbers we have heard tonight from the two Universities have a combined total of around 4000 beds still being required. This is still a very challenging figure, where are we going to find the sites for these numbers?

Response - Rob Armstrong-Haworth felt that we have to look beyond BA1/BA2 postcodes and consult with B&NES on suitable ways to move forward, dialogue continues to enable us to find a way to work this out.

Question 8 - Cllr Darey declared an interest as a tutor at the University of Bath
Cllr Darey asked could we hear more about what is meant by accommodation outside of the city. Pressures on other facilities such as transport will be a knock on effect of displacing student.

Response - Rob Armstrong-Haworth explained that different models of delivery can see a number of activities taken on at other sites outside Bath. Some students from Bath Spa University were now based in Corsham and some courses now featured short bursts of study rather than constant travel demand. Nicky Kemp added that the University of Bath have a number of online courses so increases in student numbers may not impact on student accommodation needs in the city.

Question 9 - Cllr Norton - What is being done to look for local students from B&NES? Are there relationships with local schools and local students and co working with universities to encourage local children to apply for undergraduate studies? Is there adequate focus on "STEM" subjects?

Response - Outreach work is carried out although there are not significant numbers at the University of Bath from the local area. STEM outreach programmes were in place with a focus on gender and equality issues in these subjects.

Question 10 - George Samios - When looking for solutions to accommodation needs could an approach be taken where the Universities look at mixed use, using space for offices and shops (eg on the ground floors) as well as flats so developments are not exclusively student accommodation and life is brought to areas?

Response - Rob Armstrong-Haworth explained that there have been examples of this in Carpenter House where the Innovation Centre was placed on the ground floor; there is also business space included in the Green Park development.

Question 11 - Cllr Anketell-Jones - It is encouraging that there are sites outside Bath being examined: what stage are you at with these propositions?

Response - Nicky Kemp explained that the University of Bath is engaged in an International Partnership where links are being forged and the strategic direction is being aligned. Rob Armstrong-Haworth added that Bath Spa University has some plans in the early stages where further consideration needs to be given to these.

Question 12 - Cllr McGall - As the number of properties in Bath that house students increases, there is an impact on the amount of Council Tax that can be collected by the Council. Where a property is occupied by students the tax collected is lost completely.

Response - Cllr Goodman confirmed that no Council Tax is collected from wholly student dwellings. Jo Farrar explained that this needed to be seen in the context of the overall local government finance system which, until recently, did to a degree compensate for this. However, this was frozen in 2013/14 so the Council's general grant funding will continue to reduce in line with government spending reductions.

Rob Armstrong-Haworth noted that there is also virtuous circle whereby students stay in Bath after their studies and the city benefits from the Council Tax they then start to pay.

Question 13 - Cllr Appleyard - There is a "jigsaw" that arises from these discussions and we need to find how to put the pieces together. There will be an Overview and Scrutiny panel in May and the Universities are invited to come long to this meeting. There is a case for the Universities to look at their housekeeping on these matters and to stop committing to additional numbers.

Cllr Goodman thanked the participants and said that the detailed discussions would then be collated and analysed.

5. Requests for Forum Representation

The Chair highlighted two opportunities for involvement:

- 'Our Health, Your Voice' – It was agreed that Cllr Lin Patterson represent the Forum on this body.
- Local Flood Representatives – these need not be Forum members and members were asked to seek others who might be able to fulfil these roles. Those interested are encouraged to contact Mark Hayward

6. Current Consultations

The Forum Members agreed to note the following consultations:

- The Joint West of England Spatial Strategy
- The Draft Placemaking Plan
- Bear Flat Residents Parking

7. Establishment of Task and Finish Groups

Forum Members considered proposals for two Task and Finish Groups, proposed Terms of Reference for which had been circulated. These were:

- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Constitution

Robin Kerr suggested a Task and Finish Group on enforcement, utilising the capacity of residents to help with this.

Cllr Rayment suggested that 6 was the right number for membership of the groups; if possible to include 3 elected members and 3 co-optees.

Cllr Rob Appleyard asked for clarity on the purpose for these groups. Cllr Bob Goodman explained that the Task and Finish groups would report back to the Forum with their recommendations: he would like to see pressure applied upwards from the Forum.

Cllr Darey suggested a Task and Finish Group on major developments and planning issues for the city.

Van DuBose set out his view that he would like to see the groups examine a range of issues specific to the city. The Forum's Terms of Reference can be refined for this purpose. Sub-groups need to carry out some work and make recommendations that help and support the Cabinet in its role.

Caroline Kay asked that the groups find the right people who can represent professional views that area-political. The discussions can become restricted if limited to political "tramlines".

Cllr Norton felt that a mission statement should be produced that sits outside of the political remit.

Cllr Goodman explained that the group that looks at the local proportion of the CIL funding will need to consider a process for how best this is spent in the city. This group may develop as the development of CIL moves forward. The Task and Finish groups may decide to co-opt additional expertise where it will be beneficial to do so.

It was agreed that Forum members would put their names forward for the Community Infrastructure Levy and Constitution Task and Finish Groups and that the composition of the groups would be agreed by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Forum.

8. Future Agenda and Forum Dates

A draft Agenda Plan based on suggestions received so far had been circulated.

All Forum members are invited to put forward their suggestions for future agendas, these should be submitted to: Mark Hayward- mark_hayward@bathnes.gov.uk . Suggestions raised at the meeting were:

Robin Kerr asked for higher priority be given to the Bath Transport Strategy and Flooding when considering future agendas

Cllr McGall suggested that Shops and Retail should be looked at for the wider Bath sector not just the city centre. Additionally the Forum needs to look at diversity and how it gets the opinions of underrepresented groups to feed into the meetings including young people. Cllr Michael Norton highlighted an example of good practice in relation to this in Basildon which he was happy to share..

Cllr Player asked for a full discussion on the impact of HMOs and Article 4.

Cllr Patterson asked for a discussion on divestment from fossil fuels.

Cllr Norton asked for youth representation on the Forum.

Jeremy Boss asked for a discussion on Bath as an “employment hub”.

Cllr Darey suggested the Forum looks at ‘What Bath Wants’.

The next meeting of the Bath City Forum will take place on 26th April 2016