

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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

Monday, 20th January, 2020

Present:- **Councillors** Karen Walker, Tom Davies, Alison Born, Shelley Bromley, Sue Craig, Joel Hirst, Lisa O'Brien and Dr Kumar

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Grant Johnson

32 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

33 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

36 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

There were none.

38 MINUTES

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13th January 2020 as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

39 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE - COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING PROGRAMME (VERBAL UPDATE)

Graham Sabourn, Head of Housing gave a short verbal update on the Council House Building Programme on behalf on the Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Economic Development.

He explained that, since reporting to this Panel in September 2019, there had been a facilitated meeting with the Vice Chair Councillor Davies at which several clear aspirations were identified, including

- that any housing should be genuinely affordable, including using social rent or similar;
- that any housing should strive to be as energy efficient as possible;
- that we should work in partnership with ADL & focus on our own land;
- that we should provide a mix of housing including housing for rent, shared-ownership and supported housing;
- complement existing delivery mechanisms.

The officer explained that a high-level feasibility plan had been developed following the above meeting which demonstrates that:

- That by using our existing sites & combined some innovative tenure models we have the potential to deliver around 100 homes over the next five years;
- This would include a combination of:
 - Supported housing (temporary accommodation)
 - Specialist low-cost young persons shared housing
 - General for rent housing;
 - Traditional shared-ownership accommodation (ie new build);
 - DIY Shared-ownership accommodation (where applicant selects property from the used market).
- This programme would also look to utilise any suitable recovered empty properties.

The officer concluded that officers are now working with the finance team to develop an appropriate business plan which will go for further consideration and will report back to this Panel at the relevant time.

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

Councillor Hirst asked how the Panel can help officers with the plan to deliver 100 houses over five years or indeed to be more ambitious. The officer explained that the Panel can help by being clear about what aspirations and requests are. He explained that this first stage should provide a springboard for future ambitions.

Councillor O'Brien asked if land all over BANES will be used for these houses and added that she hopes that residents benefit from these properties rather than students. The officer explained that sites were mainly in Bath but he is mindful of looking at other schemes and the DIY shared ownership model can take place anywhere. He confirmed that these houses would be for people on the housing register and not students.

In response to a query from Council Craig regarding low cost young persons shared housing, the officer explained that the YMCA manage some properties where rooms are rented out to young people, it is a transitional scheme and needs some support. The officer explained that three similar schemes are being considered. In response

to a query from Councillor Bromley the officer explained that this is a hybrid scheme run with the YMCA and that emergency accommodation is managed by the authority.

Councillor Bromley asked if ward Councillors could feed back information regarding empty properties. The officer explained that there is a list being worked through at present and that it would be helpful if ward Councillors passed on any information regarding empty properties. He explained that empty properties can be reported on the Council's website and a 'Fix my street' App will be launched shortly.

Councillor Davies asked when the first of the 100 houses would be on stream. The officer explained that it should be on the latter part of this year and will be spread over 5 years. He explained that it can depend on when ADL bring the sites forward.

Councillor Davies asked if there was reassurance of increased resources regarding the full business case for the Council House programme. The officer explained that there has been an offer of an increase in the budget but that there was a challenge to find the right people to help.

Councillor Born stated that the Council had not had housing stock for some time and asked why we are going back to this. The officer explained that this was a clear political ambition and that the Council has a responsibility to provide people with housing including some people that are challenging to house.

Councillor Walker thanked the officer for the update and noted that progress on the Council House Building Programme would be reported to the Panel at relevant times.

40 DRAFT CORPORATE STRATEGY

David Trethewey, Director of Partnership and Corporate Services, introduced the report.

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

Councillor Craig raised the following points. *Officer responses are shown in italics:*

- Transport infrastructure is mentioned throughout but we are dependent on third parties in terms of improving bus and rail. *The officer explained that the Corporate Strategy shows the intention of the Cabinet is to influence WECA where possible in terms of improvements to bus and rail services.*
- How do you measure residents' views? *The officer explained that a randomized Voicebox survey is used. The Panel will be sent a link to this.*
- Allowances must be made for people who cannot use digital services. *The officer explained that the Council is working towards making as many services digital as possible which will free up staff to help people who cannot use the digital services. There is recognition that not all residents are online.*
- Council tax is spent on recycling, but we have limited control on buying things without excess packaging. We should lobby businesses so that they use less packaging. *The officer explained that clarity of strategic goals makes lobbying easier. The Panel will have a role when looking at the Environmental Bill.*

- Can we commit to look favourably at sustainable businesses who want to occupy our shops. *The officer explained that property is usually let on best consideration regarding the commercial estate.*

Councillor Hirst commented that the Corporate Strategy is a useful, clear and helpful document. He had the following queries. *Officer responses are shown in italics:*

- Query on inclusion of 'nature' in the Climate Emergency wording. *The officer explained that this is a recognition that there is also a nature emergency and that these are connected. The Cabinet are working across both agendas.*
- Supportive of the three bullet points on the climate and nature policy but concerned about what can be achieved and delivered in four years. There should be clear and achievable aims with quarterly reporting on performance statistics. *The officer explained that there is a target of carbon neutrality by 2030. There is a session in March to review the relevant strategies with a work programme cycle for these reviews.*
- Regarding 'giving people a bigger say' – the current consultation on Entry Hill golf course may not meet the criteria. *The officer explained that the aim in the Corporate Strategy are based on learning from current and past consultations.*

Councillor Davies stated that the document is clear and the core policy of 'addressing the climate and nature emergency' is great. He made the following points. *Officer responses shown in italics:*

- The Council cannot do this alone, we need to shift behaviours and it would be good to see more in the Corporate Strategy about how the Council can play a wider leadership role in how everyone can help to address the emergency. *The officer explained that there are a series of measures planned to tackle this, the challenge is what to focus efforts on. There are web pages and tools for parish councils.*
- Regarding the 'prevention' principle – the Clean Air Zone could be included as an example of this as it will help to prevent future ill health.
- Regarding growth and enterprise (part of the Panel's remit), some of our high streets are in a difficult place, it would be good to have recognition of this. *The officer explained that there will be a discussion on this issue at the March meeting of the Corporate Panel.*
- We need to make sure there is congruence with work being done by WECA and BANES and that this is made clear to the public. *The officer explained that work is being done to coordinate the activity across the West of England.*

Councillor Born welcomed the draft strategy, it is accessible and a good size. She made the following points. *Officer responses shown in italics:*

- There should be robust tracking to measure what will be implemented and by when. *There will be more details in the delivery plan.*
- It is almost a year since the Climate Emergency was declared. The aim of carbon neutrality by 2030 is very ambitious - it does not feel like we are working fast enough to achieve this. An example is planning decisions which are made on guidance which may now be out of step. *The Council required*

that progress be reported back to this Panel in their March meeting where members can influence the policies to review timescale of the review.

- It is important to have access points for people who do not have digital access. It is surprising how many people do not use computers. *This point is acknowledged and was discussed above.*

Councillor Karen Walker asked how residents can reserve books from the mobile library service if they are not online. *The officer explained that he did not know the details of this service but that access points are available.*

Councillor O'Brien raised the following points. *Officer responses shown in italics:*

- The two core policies 'Giving people a bigger say' and 'Addressing the climate and nature emergency' may not support each other and the 'emergency' should be more of a priority. *This comment can be fed back to the administration, the strategy reflects the manifesto.*
- The diagram is sensible – 'improving people's lives' is a good purpose.
- The Council should use its position as a landlord to eliminate needless packaging. This could also be promoted by the BID and Chamber of Commerce. *This comment can be fed back to the administration.*
- We need to be dynamic, forceful and focused on the climate emergency – there are vast numbers of homes that need retro fitting, we should work with Curo on this. Also, new build applications should include tree planting. *Some of these points were discussed at Council in October.*
- The 'Your Care Your Way' model should be used by other services. *This is an area-based approach. Community areas are different.*

In response to a question from Councillor Bromley, the officer explained that there is a skills mismatch in the area and there is a question of how we address this, for example - there are not always the people with the skills to retro-fit houses.

Councillor Hirst stated that the word 'emergency' suggests that we are working in a different way to 'business as usual'. We have to merit the word 'emergency' and show what we are doing. The officer explained that this will be clear through the budget proposals.

Dr Kumar stated that 'emergency' suggested radical action but the Council works very slowly. The officer explained that language used can raise a number of issues and that sometimes the use of more dramatic language can lead people to think that there is nothing they can do.

The officer reminded the Panel that they (along with members of the Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing PDS Panel) are invited to the Corporate PDS Panel meeting on 3rd February 2020 where the budget proposals will be discussed.

Note – there were two comments from members of the Panel that fell into the remit of the Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing PDS Panel. These comments will be passed on to that Panel.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to pass the following points on to the Cabinet for their consideration of the Draft Corporate Strategy at their February 2020 meeting:

- The word ‘emergency’ suggests a different pace to ‘business as usual’ – we must merit the word emergency in the pace of our work.
- More information about the Council’s leadership role which enables everyone to help towards the Climate Emergency. We cannot do all of this work alone.
- Use our position of landlord to encourage the elimination of needless packaging.
- Fast track the process of policy reviews such as updating the planning guidance so that decisions are in step with our Climate Emergency pledge.
- Regarding the ‘prevention’ principle – include the Clean Air Zone as an example of this as it will prevent future ill health.
- Make allowances for people who cannot use digital services.
- Be clear about what can be achieved (regarding the Climate Emergency) in 4 years then report back quarterly with performance statistics. Clarity of aims and robust tracking is needed.
- Some recognition in the Corporate Strategy about the difficult time for the High Street.
- More focus on the ‘Climate Emergency’ and the scale of work to be done – fast track retro fitting of homes (working with Curo) and new builds to included tree planting etc..

41 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted its future workplan.

The Panel noted that any items suggested within the meeting would be considered at the Chairs and Vice Chairs meetings and also at the agenda planning meeting with the Chair of the Panel.

The meeting ended at 5.54 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services