

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

CABINET

These minutes are draft until confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting.

Friday, 29th May, 2020

Present:

Councillor Dine Romero	Council Leader and Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Councillor Rob Appleyard	Cabinet Member for Adult Services
Councillor Tim Ball	Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning, and Economic Development
Councillor Neil Butters	Cabinet Member for Transport Services
Councillor Paul Crossley	Cabinet Member for Community Services
Councillor Kevin Guy	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Councillor Richard Samuel	Deputy Council Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources
Councillor Sarah Warren	Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services
Councillor David Wood	Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Joanna Wright	Cabinet Member for Transport Services

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting by explaining that this meeting is being held under The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. The Council has agreed a protocol to cover virtual meetings and this meeting will operate in line with that protocol. The meeting has the same status and validity as a meeting held in the Guildhall.

The Chair invited everyone to remember with a minute's silence all those who have lost their lives as a result of Coronavirus, and also in memory of two men who drowned in the River Avon on Thursday 28th May.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point the Monitoring Officer issued a dispensation in relation to any Councillors that were in receipt of any grants that had been awarded by the government under the COVID-19 Regulations, such as business grants or furloughing, to allow all Members of the Cabinet to take part in the debate and invited any councillors that this applied to identify themselves.

Councillor David Wood declared a disclosable interest in agenda item 11 'Covid-19 Update report and position statement' as he was on furlough leave.

4 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

None.

5 QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

There were 12 questions from Councillors and 4 questions from members of the public.

[Copies of the questions and responses, including supplementary questions and responses if any, have been placed on the Minute book as Appendix 1 and are available on the Council's website.]

Cabinet Questions and Answers sheet

6 STATEMENTS, DEPUTATIONS OR PETITIONS FROM PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS

David Redgewell sent a statement (*a copy of which is attached to the Minutes as Appendix 2 and on the Council's website*) where South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside have expressed their concerns about social distancing regulations within Bath and North East Somerset on the public transport network.

Councillor Neil Butters thanked David Redgewell for his statement and added that the Council had been in contact with WECA on issues raised in the statement.

Statement from David Redgewell for Cabinet meeting on 29th May 2020

7 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS CABINET MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 13th February 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8 CONSIDERATION OF SINGLE MEMBER ITEMS REQUISITIONED TO CABINET

There were none.

9 MATTERS REFERRED BY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY BODIES

There were none.

10 SINGLE MEMBER CABINET DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE PREVIOUS CABINET MEETING

The Cabinet agreed to note the report.

11 COVID19 - UPDATE REPORT AND POSITION STATEMENT

The Chair introduced this item by saying that it was important to share publicly what the Council's response has been to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council has been busy making sure that there was a plan in place to address what was needed to be done by all Council services and our partners.

The Chair informed the meeting that the COVID-19 update report and position statements have been presented to the Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel, on Wednesday 27th May 2020.

The Chair read out the summary report of the comments and recommendations made by the Corporate PDS Panel.

(A summary of the Panel's findings has been placed on the Minute book as Appendix 3 and are available on the Council's website).

The Chair thanked the Corporate PDS Panel for their comments and invited Will Godfrey (Chief Executive) to take the meeting through the report.

Will Godfrey said that it was important to recognise that the Council have been through some extraordinary set of circumstances which have required adoption of practices from middle of March, where everyone had to adapt and adopt to different ways of working.

The emergency was formally declared on 23rd March 2020 (by the Chief Executive). It was important to recognise that this Cabinet meeting would mark the end of that process in the sense of establishing all of the democratic processes and ensure full accountability for all of the decisions that have been taken during and since that time. Will Godfrey also said that the Council have been transparent about what has been happening during that period making sure that there were regular communications with every resident.

In the early parts of the Declaration of the Emergency, the Council was focused on issues around public health in particular (for instance, closing down the play areas to manage social distancing; temporary closure of the heritage sites and a number of other similar measures). The Compassionate Communities Hub was established to try to assist people who were shielding, and to provide a facility for those most vulnerable.

At the same time, from the Council's organisational perspective, a lot has changed. The Council had around 1,500 people working from home with interactions on Skype, Zoom and similar.

Will Godfrey took the Cabinet through the rest of the report by highlighting help to businesses and that the Council was now in the middle of the COVID-19 situation. Due to this unprecedented crisis, the Council would face huge financial challenges this year, and in years to come. The officers would continue to bring update reports to Cabinet and other Council meetings to ensure that everybody was aware on their ongoing work.

Will Godfrey reminded the Cabinet that the full COVID-19 financial recovery report would be presented to the Cabinet on 2nd July 2020.

The Chair thanked Will Godfrey for this summary and invited each member of the Cabinet to comment on Council's response to COVID-19.

Councillor Sarah Warren started her comments by expressing her sympathy for all those who have suffered or lost loved ones as a result of the Coronavirus crisis, and to congratulate Council officers for the magnificent way that they have risen to the

challenge at the initial phase of this crisis. The officers have been supporting vulnerable residents; businesses; collecting waste each week; taking difficult decisions whilst adapting to working from home and dealing with any personal difficulties they may have had to face. Councillor Warren also said that she would be looking forward to working closely with officers to help focus the Council's own activities around the climate emergency going forward, and also to ensure a green recovery of the wider Bath and North East Somerset community, building on issues such as a reduction in traffic and increase in cycling and walking. Councillor Warren also said that the Council would be looking to rebuild around energy efficiency in existing and future buildings; renewables and in achieving Council's objectives expressed in climate emergency declaration last year of achieving net zero emissions by 2030.

Councillor Tim Ball said that these were unprecedented times for the residents. Council officers, as well as Councillors, have been working in a new environment. Councillor Ball thanked senior Council officers for their dedication in ensuring that the Council have continued to deliver services to its residents. Councillor Ball also thanked housing officers who worked hard to keep rough sleepers off the streets. The Council would make sure that those people with no housing would continue to move into more permanent accommodations and live more settled life in the future. Councillor Ball concluded his statement by inviting residents to get in touch with the Council and local Councillors in case of any issues that may have.

Councillor Kevin Guy agreed with the comments made earlier and expressed his sympathy to those people who have suffered recently. Councillor Guy also thanked to all officers who have worked extremely hard in the very difficult circumstances. Councillor Guy gave an assurance that schools would only be opening once the head teachers, the teachers themselves, the governing bodies and the Council were happy that it was safe to do so. It would be parents' choice whether they wish to send their children to school; however, Councillor Guy encouraged people to do so. There would be more difficult decisions made in the future when the government decides for the rest of students to go back to school, which would require joint working to ensure support for teachers and officers, and safe environment for our children.

Councillor Richard Samuel thanked Chief Executive and his team for the comprehensive report on what has been happening over the last few months. It was the biggest shock/change to this Council in its existence, with impacts that would be felt over many years to come. The Council teams have engaged with the business community in getting the grants and money to businesses, which was followed up with the discretionary scheme launched on Wednesday 27th May, to give a further couple of million pounds to businesses that fell outside the government's original scheme. Councillor Samuel expressed his concern that the money provided by the government for business continuity was just a 'bridge', and not a long-term solution. Councillor Samuel thanked waste and cleansing staff who kept their services running well under difficult circumstances.

Councillor Richard Samuel also drew Cabinet's attention to the massive economic shock that COVID-19 would create not just for the local community, but also to the Council. There was an estimate of £50m of deficit in Council's budget for the end of this financial year. The money received from the central government has reduced that deficit, but that amount would go nowhere near meeting the challenge that this Council would face. Councillor Samuel added that this was quite a serious position

for the Council and urged local MPs and national politicians to listen what local governments across the country have to say in terms of the crisis on a local level. The Cabinet would receive a report for the meeting on 2nd July setting out how the Council would intend to achieve financial recovery and stability for the remainder of this financial year. The Council would not be able to meet the estimated deficit from its reserves, and unless the central government steps in to reduce that deficit, the Council would experience monumental financial challenge. Councillor Samuel concluded by inviting the Council's Scrutiny Panels to look at the plans and report coming before the Cabinet in July this year, and contribute with their views, proposals, suggestions and recommendations on the financial case.

Councillor Rob Appleyard highlighted the huge amount of work which was done by Council officers in the last few months within Adult and Social Services. Not only work done by officers from the Council, but also hard work from partner organisations such as the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Virgin Care. Those organisations, along with the Council, have maintained connection with the most vulnerable people in the area whilst also looking at different ways of providing essential services to all residents. Councillor Appleyard highlighted the setup of the Community Compassionate Hub, which has happened in a week or two after the emergency was declared, and the significant work of the volunteers in helping those in need in number of ways (i.e. food parcel delivery, prescription collection, running errands, etc). Councillor Appleyard also praised the services from the Royal United Hospital in Bath. Councillor Appleyard concluded his statement by thanking the community for following the COVID-19 social distancing guidelines, and with that putting less pressure on the Council, NHS and other partner organisations.

Councillor David Wood also thanked the officers for an amazing work they did during the most extraordinary circumstances, probably the most challenging times of their professional careers. Councillor Wood highlighted the work of the waste and recycling services during this time, especially when some of the staff members had to be away due to Coronavirus. Councillor Wood also thanked the staff from the frontline services who performed well above and beyond the usual, and also to the public who were incredibly supportive of Council's waste and collection teams. Councillor Wood concluded by informing the meeting that the recycling centres would start re-opening and invited the public for sensible behaviour at those centres which were expected to be re-open next week.

Councillor Paul Crossley thanked all residents of Bath and North East Somerset for being responsive during the crisis in terms of the lockdown rules. People have helped their neighbours, looked after elderly and also helped those vulnerable - the community got together. Councillor Crossley thanked all officers of the Council for their hard work during the unprecedented circumstances. Councillor Crossley particularly highlighted the work of Council's library staff, especially the way they made a range of products and innovations available to people across the authority. Unfortunately, this was mostly web based so it excluded people who do not have internet at home; nevertheless, it has brought new people to library services who were now looking at different ways of engaging with library facilities. Councillor Crossley also thanked Parks department who have done great work during extremely difficult circumstances, and Heritage services who would have a tremendous amount of work to implement social distancing measures in museums and other places of interest.

Councillor Neil Butters also thanked the officers of the Council for their hard work, and to the residents for following the lockdown guidelines. Councillor Butters also said that Transport, Highways and Emergency Planning have successfully continued with the provision of services to residents during these difficult times. Councillor Butters also said that bus and train users would face another reality in terms of their journeys built around social distancing measures. The Council have been working closely with the First buses and Great Western rail services in terms of the safe travel of their residents.

Councillor Joanna Wright commented that it was quite clear that we would have to adapt to 'new normal'. The recovery of the whole community would be a challenge which would require everyone to work together. The public transport would not be available in the same way it was before; there would be less passenger on the bus due to social distancing measures. However, that should not encourage people to increase usage of private cars. The Council would be working together with public transport providers and residents into looking at the best solutions for travel and for continuing encouraging people to cycle and walk to work, as much as they can. Councillor Wright also said that central government should help the Council in terms of free bicycle provision for key workers and thanked all the officers for the number of hours that they have put in providing services to the community.

Councillor Dine Romero thanked everyone and said that she has fully supported what was said by her Cabinet Members today. There was a need to focus on the future, and to look at what has happened during the crisis that worked really well, in particular around partnership working with the voluntary groups, and also with Virgin Care. Councillor Romero highlighted the improvement of air quality since the lockdown started, in particular down to having less cars on the roads.

Councillor Romero commented that the Council would need to make sure that businesses should not only recover, but also recover in a way around commitments to climate emergency.

Councillor Romero also said that the Council would review planning policies to make sure that future decisions could be taken within a strong framework of coordinated policies.

Councillor Romero concluded her statement by saying that there have been several new processes and number of new ways of working. Not everything has been perfect, but the Council has been transparent with regular communications to residents. The Council would to continue to work with the residents and community leaders for a better tomorrow.

Decision:

The Cabinet (UNANIMOUSLY) agreed to:

- 2.1 Note the report on the Council response to COVID -19 pandemic
- 2.2 Consider the comments and feedback from the Corporate Scrutiny Panel meeting on 27th May.

Corporate PDS Meeting Summary

The meeting ended at 3.20 pm

Chair _____

Date Confirmed and Signed _____

Prepared by Democratic Services

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CABINET MEETING 29th May 2020

**STATEMENTS FROM PUBLIC
AND COUNCILLORS**

1. David Redgewell
- 2.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - COUNCILLORS

M	01	Question from:	Councillor Grant Johnson
<p>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been increased pressure put on transport services and infrastructure in B&NES. Local residents, especially in my ward of Paulton, feel that they do not currently have adequate protection when opting to walk, cycle or use public transport as their primary mode of transportation. This problem is compounded by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor communication from B&NES on accessible Walking/cycling routes. - Having no links to the National Cycle Network for rural communities like Paulton. - Having no control measures in place to protect those using public transport. - There being little support for those who do not have adequate means for purchasing PPE and hand sanitiser, as recommended when using public transport. <p>What will the Council be doing to correct these important issues and keep our residents safe when they need to travel?</p>			
Answer from:			Councillors Joanna Wright and Neil Butters
<p><i>Following Government announcements on the measures suggested to enable people to travel safely we await the funding to be distributed from West of England Combined Authority (WECA) for a package of measures</i></p> <p><i>We recognise the need for greater connectivity across the WECA region and have asked that the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan includes a strategy to include rural links to urban centres. We have requested WECA include this in the plan.</i></p> <p><i>In advance of receiving funding we have already implemented a wayfinding scheme from Newbridge P&R to the RUH and amended signalised crossings (at signalised junctions) to avoid pedestrians needing to touch crossing buttons</i></p> <p><i>Officers have been asked to investigate and work up proposals for temporarily widening footways, providing additional cycle lanes, speed reduction measures and closures to motorised traffic that will ultimately help provide safe and environmentally sustainable travel corridors. These measures will be prioritised by Cabinet Members.</i></p>			

We expect WECA ,as the Transport Authority will be working closely with public transport providers to ensure measures are in place for residents who use public transport and staff from B&NES are carrying out an assessment on which bus stops may need additional traffic management to enable social distancing

We are aware that local bus operators take very seriously the issue of safety on board buses due to Covid-19 and the impact that the pandemic has had on their staff and customers and are working diligently to implement the correct measures that allow for social distancing and well sanitised buses.

Supplementary Question:

In the response you mention that the Council recognises the 'need for greater connectivity' and wants to help by prioritising 'safe and environmentally sustainable travel corridors'. A key 'travel corridor' in North East Somerset is Route 24 of the National Cycle Network, which partly runs alongside Midsomer Norton Enterprise Park. With the approved planning permission to build 3 fossil fuel burning gas generators in the area next to the route, do you believe that this will ultimately undermine the Council's priority to providing these 'safe' and 'sustainable' corridors and deter residents from choosing to cycle or walk in this area?

Answer from:

Councillor Neil Butters

I will provide an answer within 5 clear working days.

Supplementary Question:

So far, most of the measures that have been implemented to help make cycling and walking safe and sustainable for residents have only benefited those residents that live in and around Bath. However, with residents staying in their local communities to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, what proportion of the funding will be going to improving infrastructure in the rural areas of North East Somerset?

Answer from:

Councillor Joanna Wright

Thank you for your question. We are very concerned about the proportion of money that should be divided up. At present that money is coming through WECA to this local authority, and yet we have not received any funding from central government on this measure, or on any measures for walking and cycling and improvements to spaces so that people can carefully socially distance. We all have been working very hard behind the scenes, and I would like to pay my thanks to officers. The officers have worked under extreme circumstances and have been working very hard to deliver the new schemes that we're going to put in place. To date, we have identified 15 places that are based on high footfall. And those are the schemes that we are putting into phase one, and that many phases will have to come and until the government has delivered that funding, we are really finding it difficult to put in anything in place, as I'm sure many people are aware of our budget constraint. So, this is a work in progress. We would ask that everyone takes part in the new website that we've created called Common Place where we are asking residents and Councillors to tell us what their problems are and to put that information on the website so that we can take those ideas further.

M

02

Question from:

Councillor Chris Watt

The concerns I raised at the budget setting meeting in February about the impact of Coronavirus on Council income from tourism, parking and the commercial estate were dismissed out of hand by this Administration. We were specifically told that it "wouldn't be as bad as you think" by the Lib-Dem's internal virus expert. Whilst I might not have forecast the full scale of the resulting impact, it gives me no satisfaction to say I was right and that this Council had an opportunity to be better prepared.

It should be clear now that:

- There will be limited tourism income many for months and maybe years, BA are not expecting demand to be normal until 2022.
- There will be limited parking income for many months as shopping and commuting are reduced.

It is now also clear there will be no students until next year, possibly even Sept 2021. Houses will lie empty, the residential rental market will falter making many buy to let propositions unviable, in turn reducing house prices – something not seen in Bath in the early 1990s.

Retail, already challenged, is in shock and not getting any therapy, our commercial estate income will be affected.

Bath's economy, our economy, is reliant on tourism, retail and students, its market has gone and won't be back for a while.

This will all impact on the Council finances. With 80% of spending already committed to social care, and this area under obvious added pressure, it can't be right to repeat the budget approach hoping for the best.

Will the Administration now finally acknowledge that what is needed is an urgent financial re-forecast based on these scenarios and to be open with the public on what their plans are to manage financial expenditure going forward?

Answer from:

Councillors Richard Samuel

A full report setting out the council's current and projected budget position will be considered at the Cabinet meeting to be held on 2nd July.

M

03

Question from:

Councillor Paul Myers

The Leader of the Council was quoted in a Sunday Times article recently which listed councils considering serving a Section 114 Notice and effectively handing the Council to the government. Whilst recognising the Council faces a massive income shortfall, surely it would be a devastating dereliction of duty to the residents of Bath & North East Somerset to allow a third party to sell off the family silver in what would effectively be a fire sale at rock bottom prices in the current crisis. Surely the administration needs to buckle down, face up to its responsibilities and come up with a coordinated plan of action to manage the situation and now?

Answer from:

Councillor Dine Romero

The council is facing a significant financial challenge due entirely to external events outside our control.

It is absolutely right to highlight the danger we are now facing to ensure our communities and government understand the challenges we face.

The administration is now actively working on a financial recovery plan which will be presented to cabinet in July. This will be a considered and responsible approach reflecting the scale of the current situation. There is no intention to embark on a "fire sale" of assets. We will be guided by our intention to ensure our communities continue to receive the best possible support within our financial means.

Supplementary Question:		
In the response to Cllr Watt's question, Cllr Samuel replied that a full report setting out the council's current and projected budget position will be presented to Cabinet in July. However in Cllr Romero's response to me it would seem that the report will in fact be ready a month earlier in June. Which is it and given the gravity of the financial issues involved could I suggest that the two Councillors talk to each other please and let me know?		
Answer from:	Councillor Dine Romero	
<i>Thank you for your question. The next Cabinet meeting is on 2nd July 2020; however, the report will be publicly available (on Council's website) not later than 24th June 2020.</i>		
M	04	Question from:
		Councillor Paul May
The community elected the Liberal Democrat's to take responsibility on their behalf to manage the public finances of the council. It has reserves for the short-term emergencies and the ability to plan a medium term 3-year financial plan. What is the Administration planning to do in the short, medium and long term to replace/reduce reliance on additional income from heritage, commercial properties ownership and tourism car parking. Will the council now set its budgets formally through Council that match the needs of the community rather than the Administrations wishes to spend public money on unnecessary schemes?		
Answer from:	Councillors Richard Samuel	
<i>A full report setting out the council's current and projected budget position will be considered at the Cabinet meeting to be held on 2nd July.</i>		
M	05	Question from:
		Councillor Paul May
It is predicted that Covid 19 will create a recession world-wide and the need for individuals to re-train will become essential. Will the		

Council formally support its local Bath College in this process and reconsider why it has backed Wiltshire College for running its own training when that cannot be justified in terms of travelling, pollution and cost?

Answer from:

Councillor Kevin Guy

The staff training contract with Bath College finished on 31st Dec 2019, and we extended it for 3 months to the end of March 2020. The size/value of the contract over 4 years meant we were required to undertake a mini tender process. Wiltshire College's bid was evaluated as the best quality fit according to our set of criteria which included being able to offer a wide range of apprenticeships. Wiltshire College have currently moved all Apprenticeship training online using a blended delivery method including MS Teams, Skype and through Onefile, their e-portfolio programme. As this transition has proved so successful, they are planning to increase their virtual delivery to include Apprenticeship pathways which have previously had a classroom based element such as AAT Accounting and IT to be delivered predominantly on line. Previously where day release has been a necessary requirement the delivery has been from either Chippenham or Lackham campuses which are closest to Bath, and Wiltshire College were already our existing provider for some apprenticeships as Bath College did not offer the training.

We work closely with Bath College on a number of fronts including a WECA project called ISTART and on the wider skills agenda, as well as supporting them financially with a number of projects to deliver provision for children with SEND. The College's Community Learning Team is also delivering Maths and English upskilling courses for some staff. There is no reason why we would not work with and support Bath College in bidding for any future opportunities.

M

06

Question from:

Councillor Paul May

Despite most schools now being run by Academies within the B&NES area on behalf of local children, especially in deprived areas in Bath, will the Council take positive steps to get them back to school? The attitude that it is too difficult is harming our local children.

Answer from:

Councillor Kevin Guy

I would like to thank schools, academies and parents across Bath & North East Somerset for everything they have done during the Covid pandemic to support the ongoing education of pupils since lockdown began.

Officers are working closely with maintained schools to support them in planning and preparation for the return of more of their pupils, on or after 1 June. These plans need to take into account a proper assessment and understanding of the risks to pupils and staff and we will continue to advocate for a safely managed and phased return, which balances the health risks to children and staff and their

families as well as the impact that ongoing school closures will have both on children's education and development, and in limiting the ability of parents to work. We have to bear in mind that each school is unique and will have its own challenges in terms of the size and layout of physical space, the numbers of pupils involved as well as individual staffing considerations.

Officers are also working closely with academies to understand their plans and to ensure co-ordination across the schools' system and sharing of plans and good practice as appropriate. It is for Academy Trusts to make their own decisions about the pace and management of the return of pupils to their schools.

However, all schools have been operating throughout lockdown to provide on-going support for the most vulnerable and for the children of keyworkers. These efforts have been supported by the local authorities Education, Social Care and Virtual School staff and these efforts will continue into the next academic term.

M	07	Question from:	Councillor Vic Pritchard
This Council has been an exemplar and fully supported by the residents of Bath and North East Somerset in its commitment to the needs of those receiving Adult Social Care. With the loss of income, how Does the Council intend to continue that support to serving those at risk and the most vulnerable?			
Answer from:			Councillor Rob Appleyard
<p><i>The community have been tremendous in supporting the council in its service delivery to those most vulnerable, this has been typified in the creation of the Compassionate Communities Hub which has brought together the third sector organisations along with the council, NHS and Virgin Care to provide a truly joined up response to local residents with the most urgent needs, through a single phone number which can link them with everything from emergency food supplies to emotional support and help to stop smoking. The ask of the agencies has been extended during this period to support those who would usually not require social care support - including those most clinically vulnerable to Covid-19, who the government has asked to be "shielded"- and this has presented a new challenge.</i></p> <p><i>A full report setting out the council's current and projected budget position will be considered at the Cabinet meeting to be held on 2nd July.</i></p>			
M	08	Question from:	Councillor Karen Warrington

Given that Covid 19 has had a positive impact on Climate Emergency, but as lockdown eases potentially more people will be using their cars to avoid public transport, what plans does the Administration have to keep the Climate Emergency Objectives on track?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

The Council's Climate Emergency ambition and commitments will be central to the Covid 19 recovery plans currently in development. The new economic recovery partnership will use the Council's climate emergency objectives to help shape the approach to recovery and renewal in B&NES. This will include action to reinforce some of the positive travel behaviour change that the lock-down has caused. For example, temporary measures to widen pavements, remove traffic from roads and improve cycling will be introduced to help people social distance and to encourage a long-term shift in the way people travel, paving the way for permanent liveable neighbourhoods, with an emphasis on more walking and cycling.

Whilst some community engagement activity has been paused due to the crisis, I have been holding a series of webinars entitled Climate Conversations over a number of weeks and extending into late June, enabling dialogue on a range of climate actions and topics.

The priority actions identified in the Climate Emergency report to October 2019 Council will not only drive down carbon emissions, but have the potential to contribute to economic recovery through new green jobs, such as in energy efficiency work in buildings and renewable energy infrastructure and to improved local resilience in the future.

M

09

Question from:

Councillor Karen Warrington

There was an article in the Bath Chronicle that the Administration were reviewing the CAZ plans. Can you please tell us what you are reviewing and how it will potentially change from the original plans?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

In light of the Governments direction that all proposed CAZ's should not commence before Jan 2021, the Council is working with Government to confirm a new start date but no agreement has yet been reached. The Council is continuing to review the implementation plan for the project to accommodate the small delay that will be necessary. Notwithstanding this direction, the scheme is unchanged, and the Council remains fully committed to delivering the CAZ in the shortest, time possible in accordance with the full business case agreed in March 2019.

M	10	Question from: Councillor Liz Hardman
<p>Does the leader and cabinet member for children and young people believe it is safe to open schools on June 1st? We have been reassured by Gavin Williamson, Education Secretary, that schools would only open when the scientific advice indicated it was the right time to do so. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are also following scientific advice, but theirs is indicating that it is not safe to open on June 1st. How can we be assured that it is safer for children to go to school in B&NES than in other parts of the UK?</p> <p>The schools which are still under Local Authority control, such as the two in my ward of Paulton, are ones where Health and Safety is still the Local Authority's responsibility, do you think it is right that our schools should even be considering reopening? Have we given these schools adequate advice on carrying out Risk Assessments from our LA Health and Safety teams, so that they are prepared for reopening should it occur in June?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Kevin Guy
<p><i>The government has said schools could re-open from the 1st of June and when the conditions have been met. It is appropriate that schools are planning for the possibility of reopening and are risk assessing doing so and putting in place the mitigations and arrangements that would allow that to happen at the earliest appropriate opportunity and in a phased and managed way. We will of course continue to seek and follow scientific and government advice as this situation evolves. Life is never risk-free and whilst the Council must of course take seriously its responsibilities for the health and safety of children and of teaching staff (and their respective families) it must also consider the risks on the other hand for children not being in school and missing out on vital learning opportunities.</i></p> <p><i>The local authority has a duty to consider the advice provided by the DFE to deliver additional education for children in selected year groups. We have to bear in mind that each school is unique and will have its own challenges in terms of the size and layout of physical space, the numbers of pupils involved as well as individual staffing considerations. We have therefore ensured that our Health & Safety team have provided all maintained school headteachers with a checklist and risk assessment. This assessment takes into account the DFE guidance and planning document and has been created with advice from Health & Safety teams from across the South West. To support them further we have made sure they have access to on-going Health & Safety advice and support, as well as access to our facilities team to answer any questions they might have about their school sites. We have also provided each headteacher with the</i></p>		

opportunity to have one-to-one meetings to go through their plans with a school improvement advisor.

I would point out that all schools have been operating throughout lockdown to provide on-going support for the most vulnerable and for the children of keyworkers. These efforts have been supported by the local authority's Education, Social Care and Virtual School staff and these efforts will continue into the next academic term.

I would like to thank schools, academies and parents across Bath & North East Somerset for everything they have done to support the ongoing education of pupils since lockdown began.

M

11

Question from:

Councillor June Player

Due to there being some very large, significant and very long-lasting planning development applications being submitted and decided upon, do you agree that the public should receive the same right of say as before lockdown, to ensure that the democratic process is being fully implemented, and, if this is not the case, then the council should suspend planning applications until such time that it is?

Do you honestly believe that the council is genuinely giving the public their full rights in planning decisions?

After lockdown, will all the decisions that have been made stand up to full scrutiny?

How can we claim that everyone has had an equal opportunity to participate in these consultations considering site notices are unable to be seen by the public, site visits are unable to take place and consultations are only able to take place via a computer which not all the public has access to?

Answer from:

Councillor Tim Ball

The Government has emphasized on numerous occasions that it is important that Council continues to operate the planning system in light of the vital role that it plays in enabling the delivery of housing and economic growth that will support the UK's economic recovery. Moreover, the Council cannot prevent people submitting planning applications. In a recent survey only 98% of LPAs continued to process applications and 87% continue to issue decisions. In order to facilitate this the government has implemented regulations to enable LPAs to operate more flexibly such as virtual committee meetings.

Through the pandemic, the Planning Service has managed to continue to publicise the opportunity to comment on planning

applications as normal through site notices, neighbour notifications and newspaper advertisements. The Government has acknowledged the need for greater flexibility and has issued temporary changes to publicity arrangements. Planning applications will not be determined if the necessary publicity has not been undertaken and the Service is seeking to ensure that all decision making is robust and complies with regulations. We liaise regularly with other LPAs to ensure we are pursuing fair and best practice and continues to monitor all these arrangements.

In terms of access to the Planning Committee, the public and ward members were able to submit written representations to the May Planning Committee for their consideration. The June Planning Committee will be able to take verbal statements from the public and other Councillors. All our meetings that would normally be held in public have been streamed on the Council's YouTube channel.

M

12

Question from:

Councillor Robin Moss

There is a lot of public concern about the situation in residential care homes. Please can you report on the percentage of homes with a resident(s) who have contracted the virus, that B&NES is able to supply all care homes with PPE & what discussions have taken place concerning the financial stability (or fragility) of providers at present & into the near future? Also, are we seeing people withdrawing family members from residential care either to go back into the community or into another setting?

Answer from:

Councillor Rob Appleyard

Currently 16%, of our Care Homes have residents that are either suspected or positive cases. This has come down from 55% at the start of April and we have seen no deaths from Covid-19 for nearly 4 weeks.

Homes have been provided with guidance, support and information advising them to respond to every resident with symptoms that suggest they could have Covid-19, as though they actually do have it. All homes are called on a regular, often daily basis to check that they have adequate PPE supplies and to inform us should they be approaching 48hrs worth of supply. Homes are aware of the process to access PPE, using their normal supply routes, a national supply network or the Council, should these routes fail. We have had 7 homes requiring PPE in the last week, all of whom have been provided with a supply from the Council. We have also ensured cover for the bank holiday weekend where required. The position remains under close scrutiny and review.

Engagement around supplier relief is already underway following the process agreed by the Council. There are an increased number of vacancies in homes, but whether this continues to be the case is subject to a number of factors including the resurgence of Covid-19

or increased demand as the NHS begins a programme of restarting activity. Work is ongoing with colleagues across the health and care sector to assess the longer-term impacts. We will be continuing to discuss this and the implications for the future market stability with key providers and the market in general over the coming weeks and months.

In terms of families withdrawing members from residential care, we are aware of a small handful of recent cases. Reasons for withdrawal were not necessarily Covid-19 related. In one instance the resident decided to stay once options were discussed.

Supplementary Question:

Is there a risk assessment & contingency plan in place in case of financial problems for residential care providers?

Answer from:

Councillor Rob Appleyard

Thank you very much for that question. The risk of provider failure is what we are very conscious of and that is why supplier relief offer has been put in place, to help mitigate some of the financial impacts from Covid-19. We will continue to monitor the pressures on our providers so we can work with them on going forward. Any specific issue will be responded to on a case to case basis. I would also like to recognise the work of our own officers and other partners in bringing together solid platform for work within this particular sector, which is probably the most vulnerable during Covid-19 pandemic situation.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - PUBLIC

P 01	Question from:	Katharine Tylko
<p>Please, does BATHNES Council's published local plan for COVID-19 contact-tracing employ the essential local knowledge of all local GPs and Public Health officials and link this community expertise with national government contact-tracing?</p>		
Answer from:		Councillor Rob Appleyard
<p><i>The local Public Health England health protection units, of which ours is based in Bristol, are currently the main functioning parts of the Covid contact tracing system in England, and will remain the keystone, and most expert part of the wider system now being developed. Thus, their local expertise is and will remain to be, fully employed.</i></p> <p><i>GPs are in a different situation and do not currently have direct access to Covid tests and so, to date, have been less a part of the testing and contact tracing work. GPs are however key players in managing illness including Covid in care homes, and in the wider community and that role will remain as important as ever.</i></p> <p><i>One of the roles of local authority based public health and environmental health teams will be to aid and ensure that the different parts of the testing and tracing systems work effectively together.</i></p>		
P 02	Question from:	Katharine Tylko
<p>COVID-19 deaths in Bath most frequently occurred in care homes. To prevent further needless clusters of COVID-19 deaths in</p>		

BATHNES care homes and to enable all residents to have visits from loved ones, please what is BATHNES Council's published standard PPE protocol for residents, staff and visitors?

Answer from:

Councillor Rob Appleyard

Guidance for care homes on PPE is written and published by Public Health England. Two key pieces of this national guidance relate to PPE in care homes:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-how-to-work-safely-in-care-homes>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

From the two pieces of guidance above and others we have worked across BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire to produce and send to all care homes a COVID-19 Q&A document that includes information about PPE. Attached is the recently updated version of the guidance that has been sent to all care homes in B&NES.

P 03

Question from:

Hugh Dawson

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, what provisions does B&NES Council plan, in addition to those of the Clean Air Zone (now rescheduled, subject to government advice, for January 2021 at the earliest), to (a) reduce air pollution, measurably, and to (b) promote greater safety for pedestrians and cyclists and to enable social distancing for pedestrians and cyclists?

Answer from:

Councillor Sarah Warren

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council is taking a pragmatic approach, recognising the benefits in improved air quality which have occurred.

Specifically, the Council has declared air quality management areas in both Temple Cloud and Farrington Gurney and is in the process of drawing up air quality action plans for reducing the levels of nitrogen dioxide levels in these areas following a recent public

consultation.

The Council has also announced a range of measures to help people to socially distance and to encourage a long-term shift in the way people travel. This includes plans to temporarily widen pavements, restrict access to traffic in some city centre streets and a road safety campaign to increase drivers' awareness that pedestrians may step out into the road as they maintain social distancing.

In addition to implementing the urgent temporary social distancing measures, the Council is asking for views on a range of longer-term improvements, some of which could be introduced on an experimental basis, including allocating additional road space to improve cycling and walking for daily commuting and better signage across the area. This week we are launching a new Liveable Neighbourhoods website for residents to share views on where we can create more space for walking and cycling.

P 04

Question from:

Hugh Dawson

In light of on-going public disquiet since early March over the holding of the Bath Half Marathon and other major public events during the Covid-19 pandemic, will B&NES Council (a) publish, with dates, the records of its efforts to persuade the organisers of the Bath Half Marathon to postpone this year's race and (b) encourage the organisers of the Bath Half Marathon to publish, with dates, their account of those negotiations?

Answer from:

Councillor Paul Crossley

In order to provide some context, we can confirm that the Safety Advisory Group for Events (SAGE) met on Thursday 6th February, which included representatives from Traffic Management Team, Parking Services, Emergency Management, Waste and Cleansing.

The SAGE was also attended by Avon & Somerset Police and the Counter Terrorism Team. Avon Fire & Rescue did not attend and there was no representative from South West Ambulance Service Trust. However, both organisations had the opportunity to scrutinise Event Management Plans via our document sharing portal. Coronavirus was not raised at the meeting.

A further meeting was held on Wednesday 4th March with B&NES Public Health Team, Public Health England and Running High (the

organisers of the Bath Half Marathon) and a statement was agreed and published on the Bath Half Marathon webpage. See link for information <https://bathhalf.co.uk/2020/03/covid-19-update/> .

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Statement from David Redgewell for Cabinet meeting on 29th May 2020

Dear Councillors,

We (South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside) are concerned about social distancing regulations within Bath and North East Somerset on the public transport network; with government guidance to local authorities to transport operators and passengers' groups. We are concerned about the lack of social distancing notices on Bus shelters and stops. There are no clear social distancing markings on pavements at key locations for Bath city centre, Dorchester street, Keynsham Town centre, Midsomer Norton Town centre, Radstock Town centre, at Whitchurch, Pensford, Farrington Gurney, Salford, Paulton, and Peasedown St John.

Realtime information displays need to explain timetables and social distancing guidance, the importance of wearing face masks and CONTACTLESS payments on buses.

Buses are only allowed to carry 10 people on a single decker and 20 people on a double decker bus, which is 10% of existing capacity.

Clear destination displays must provide information on the front when the bus is full, for passengers' information. DISABLED ACCESS must be protected.

We also need to make sure there is a provision made for extra buses to layover in Bath City centre, Keynsham and Midsomer Norton.

Extra pavements' widening needs to be provided in Keynsham, Peasedown St John, Radstock and Midsomer Norton with adequate provision for cycle lanes.

Some bus stops and shelters may need to be relocated for social distancing. Extra bus stop cleaning is required. Hand gels are required at key interchanges; and public toilets need to be reopened in the district and at the block at Avon street coach station.

WECA Mayoral Transport Authority and Bristol City Council are looking at social distancing measures on Bus infrastructures in Bristol city centre and across the city.

Similar plans are required in south Gloucestershire and across Weston Super Mare and North Somerset.

At present all bus services are funded by the department for transport Covid-19 bus operators grant at £400 million, which is £17 million per week in England. This grant is funded by WECA Mayoral Transport authority and North Somerset Councils. Wiltshire and Somerset County councils are also funding DfT services.

Bus service provision: there is a need for improve the following bus services:

- Evening and Sunday services.
- Bus route 19 (Bath to Cribbs Causeway)
- 179 (Bath to Midsomer Norton via Timsbury and Marksbury).
- Access to south Bristol hospital at Hengrove by providing connections at Brislington and Knowle to route 96 (with weekend and evening service).

Social distancing is required by railway services on trains with just 45 passengers on a 3-car train and 60 on intercity train. Notices and signs need to be in place at Keynsham Oldfield Park, Bath Spa and Freshford. Enforcement on social distancing is required by transport staff including marshalling at key interchanges, with support from the British Transport Police and the Avon and Somerset Police.

We must also note the deaths of 61 public transport network staff who have died on the frontline including 2 local bus drivers. Key public transport workers are members of RMT and Unite union.

Kind regards David Redgewell South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside.

Corporate Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday 27th May 2020

Meeting Summary and Recommendations

The Panel acknowledged and welcomed the report that had been submitted to them and thanked the officers for their time taken to prepare it.

They also collectively thanked all staff for their work during this time, especially those that have undertaken new roles as part of the management of the crisis.

Rigorous and detailed questioning was undertaken by the Panel and they raised points on a number of matters during the discussion of the report including:

- Income to the Council
 - Can the loss of income be broken down by service department?
 - What % of activity may return and when?
- Staff survey / wellbeing
 - What actions are being taken to address the poor levels of wellbeing and anxiety expressed by some members of staff?
- Delivery of Social Care
 - How is the £2m allocation to the Council being utilised?
- Business Grants
 - Is the Council confident that all grants have been issued to legitimate businesses?
 - How many small businesses were declined a business grant?
- Recovery planning – Council
 - How are we preparing for matters such as safe spaces for walking (social distancing) around the city centre and our local shopping areas as we move towards exiting lockdown?
 - Is the Council preparing for a possible increase in applications for planning permission and licensing for the use of tables & outside of restaurants and public houses?
- Work From Home – Productivity / Capability
 - Has any evidence been gathered to say whether productivity has increased or declined at this stage or whether this is something that will be monitored?
- Test & Trace readiness
 - How prepared is the Council for this process and what funding / officer resources will be received to enable it?

- Council's Capital Programme
 - Which of the Council's Capital Programme projects are continuing, pausing or being stopped for the time being?
- Compassionate Community Hub
 - How long will this facility remain in place?
- PPE in Community Resource Centres / Volunteers
 - Is the Council recharging for the PPE it has procured at cost price or is it losing money as part of the current process?
- Revenue Capitalisation costs
 - The Panel would welcome more details on the figure supplied in the report.
- Council Governance / Decision Making
 - When will the emergency powers relating to decision making cease?
- The Council's Budget
 - How much of the agreed budget will be achievable?
- Engagement / Communication with the public
 - Will the Council seek to communicate with all members of the public on a more regular basis?

Further detail was requested from officers in a number of areas with a large part of the meeting given over to questions with pressure on time limiting the amount for debate. Given the very wide scope of the report it was felt that more time was needed to assimilate all the answers to questions and to review further information.

The meeting concluded with the Panel agreeing the following recommendations.

The Panel **RESOLVED** that;

- (i) A Task & Finish Group be convened with the membership of the current Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel Chairs & Vice-Chairs to feedback in more detail on these matters to the Cabinet and lead officers of the Council.
- (ii) Members of the Corporate Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel can email further comments on the report to Democratic Services by 5.00pm on Friday 29th May.