

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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

Monday, 25th January, 2021

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

82 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

83 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

84 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

85 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

There were four statements to the Panel:

1. Christine Brittijn made a statement on Climate Emergency issues in Midsomer Norton.

Councillor Hirst asked what one thing the Council should focus on that it is not currently looking at. Christine stated that the Council should follow the advice in the Climate Emergency Study – Synthesis of Evidence.

A copy of the statement is attached to the minutes for the meeting.

Councillor Walker informed Christine that the March meeting of the Panel would be considering issues regarding Climate Emergency. She asked that the statement be passed to the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Councillor Sarah Warren for a response (Panel members to be sent a copy).

2. David Redgewell made a statement on Transport issues and covered three main points:

- He spoke about the use of buses to transport people to have their vaccinations.
- He also urged the Council to dig down into the WECA transport plan.
- He asked that officers set out clear plans for the barrier designs for the city centre – he stressed the need for the designs to take into account the needs of disabled people accessing the city centre.

It was agreed that these issues be sent to the relevant Cabinet Member and a written response to the Panel be requested.

3. Cllr Karen Warrington made a statement on Climate and Nature Emergency in rural areas. A copy of the statement is attached to the minutes for the meeting.

The Panel agreed that the statement be sent to the relevant Cabinet member for a written response regarding the issue of light pollution.

4. Cllr Jackson made a statement regarding Homelessness. A copy of the statement is attached to the minutes for the meeting.

Councillor Walker thanked Councillor Jackson for the statement and stated that officers are present in the meeting and will note these points.

87 MINUTES

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chair.

88 DRAFT ROUGH SLEEPERS AND HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVE

Graham Sabourn, Head of Housing introduced the report covering issues of statutory homelessness and rough sleepers.

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

All Panel members thanked the officers for their work.

Councillor Hirst asked the following questions: *(Officer responses shown in italics)*

- Of the 10 rough sleepers who refused accommodation, do we have enough outreach resources to reach them. *The officer explained that outreach workers know the names of individuals sleeping rough, some would rather stay out than stay a hostel. Support workers offer them coffee etc.*
- How confident are you that we are aware of all rough sleepers. *The officer explained that he is fairly confident and works closely with Julian House.*

Councillor Craig asked the following questions:

- When will the property upgrades become available. *The officer explained that one property has come online which will be used for former homeless people. Two further schemes should be complete by the end of the financial year.*
- Should boaters be included, what have we done for them. *The officer explained that boaters are self-accommodated but we do deal with them through the statutory homelessness process if boats are removed.* Councillor Craig asked if the Panel could receive an update on Boaters in the future.

Councillor Davies asked the following questions:

- Have we ever seen such an upsurge in registers of homelessness before – such as during other historic events. *The officer explained that there had not been such an increase in the last 20 years.*
- Are we prepared for a potential hike in evictions over the next few months. *The officer explained that there are different views on this. There are constraints in the system such as in the courts so there may not be a big bubble of evictions. We have thought about it and can use some of our learning from the pandemic and replicate some of those systems.*

Councillor Dr Kumar stated that it was good to know that the number of people in temporary accommodation in BANES is lower than the national average. He asked why some people are refusing temporary accommodation. *The officer explained that it is a transient group and people move on. Also some people do not want to stay in a hostel.*

Councillor Bromley asked the following questions:

- What happens when the winter shelter closes in March? *The officer responded that there are a couple of months to get people into specialist accommodation.*
- Numbers of rough sleepers might go up due to the housing crises – do we have enough support workers? *The officer responded that we are lucky to have specialist mental health workers.*

Councillor Alison Born asked about placements with Housing First. *The officer responded that there have been mixed results with Housing First. A traditional response is not to offer accommodation until there is a reasonable chance of success whereas Housing First turns that around. A range of solutions are needed, there is no single answer.*

Councillor Johnson asked what the plans are post March and what the capacity is for re-housing and how much is utilized. *The officer responded that the system needs to be made as efficient as possible. We are good at turnover (will get the exact figures to Panel members). Regarding post March – there are transition schemes for April. There are 38 individuals, they will be transitioned into 2 schemes. We are losing a couple of places, not a big drop. We do not believe there will be a cliff edge on 1st April.*

Councillor O'Brien asked whether a physical count may need to be done each month. *The officer responded that there is a physical count every month and intelligence is also used. Also, people can report rough sleepers online. We will know about the majority.*

Councillor Walker asked about support for individuals' needs and the next steps for those in temporary accommodation. *The officer responded that the support packages are bespoke, there are personal housing plans – support workers build relationships with people and try to understand their issues. There is a solution in place for 1st April, there will not be a cliff edge.*

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the report and asked for an item on this issue on an annual basis.

89 CORPORATE AND BUDGET PLANNING 2021/22

David Trethewey, Director of Partnerships and Corporate Services, gave a presentation which covered the following:

Lisa Bartlett, Director – Development, was also present.

- The Budget Challenge 2021/22 Headlines
- The Budget proposal 2021/22 – 25/26
- New 2021/22 budget pressures/Covid impacts
- Strategic Financial planning themes
- Areas of strategic priority and focus over the next two years
- Service Achievements 2020/2021
- Portfolio Savings Summary
- Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services Savings Proposals
- Community Services Savings Proposals
- Housing, Planning and Economic Development Savings Proposals
- Transport Savings Proposals

Panel members asked the following questions and raised the following points:
(Officer responses shown in italics)

Councillor Born stated that she was concerned about the impact on fly tipping if charging for building materials is introduced at the tip. *The officer explained that benchmarking has been done and she is confident that it can work. It will be kept under review.*

Councillor Bromley asked how we reduce reliance on commercial income. The Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Samuel explained that this would be a gradual process. We do not get the revenue support grant anymore, the system is based on rates which has been hugely affected by the pandemic. We receive income through Heritage (Roman Baths) but the pandemic has also affected this income. We need to reduce reliance on this and get the property estate to perform.

Councillor Grant Johnson asked the following questions:

- Where has the increase in income in the waste and fleet operation come from? *The officer explained that the team operates on a commercial basis and works with neighbouring authorities. There is a lot of experience within the team. We have put forward the savings – this will be monitored.*
- How is a reduction in plant maintenance possible? *The officer explained that there is always a bit of tolerance, there is experience within the team. We will review this on a regular basis.*

Councillor Craig asked about the waste depot and if finding an alternative solution for the residents of Bath city centre, many of whom do not own a car, has been taken into account. *The officer explained that this work is underway.* Councillor Walker asked about the early morning and late evening suggestion. *The officer responded that this was based on modelling – it will allow for more efficient routes if the day is lengthened. In response to a query from Councillor Walker about the effect on elderly people, the officer responded that impact assessments will be carried out.*

Councillor Davies commended the Cabinet Members and officers that work on net zero has not been cut despite incredibly difficult circumstances.

Community Services (slide)

Councillor Crossley updated the panel that the Urban Gulls issues has been deferred to 2022/23. A meeting with Government will look at piloting a license.

Councillor Johnson asked if the same level of service, which is higher than neighbouring authorities, will continue regarding Parks and Bereavement. Can the level of service be maintained with a staffing reduction. *The officer reassured the panel that the aim is to continue to provide the level of service.*

In response to a query from Councillor Walker regarding Entry Hill, Councillor Crossley (Cabinet Member) explained that the tender process finishes this week and a report will be considered by Cabinet on 11th February.

Housing, Planning and Economic Development (slide)

No questions

Transport (slide)

Councillor Hirst asked the following questions:

- Regarding the proposed savings on inspection gangs – can this be mitigated by encouraging community reporting? *The officer explained that there would be a promotion of 'Fix my street' App and other ways of reporting. There may be an impact on complaints.*
- Will pay and display machine be replaced with an App? Councillor O'Brien added that she had concerns about removing credit card payments in car parks as we have many visitors to the area.

Officer to get a more information on this to the panel. (The following information was sent to the panel after the meeting: The removal of credit card payments within the car parks has been considered based on usage statistics, convenience and national trends. Current statistics suggest that 84% of population own a smartphone (with much higher rates in all age categories under 55) and over 95% of the population has access to a basic mobile phone. As the MiPermit cashless parking service offers payment by telephone and text as well as the App we are confident that a great majority of users will be able to access the system. Cash will continue to be offered in many locations for those who chose not to pay by mobile or App.

- Regarding coach parking at Oddown – there will be an impact on traffic on Wellsway? *Officer to get a note on this to the panel. (The following information was sent to the panel after the meeting: The removal of use of the Weston Island site for coach parking will have a negligible impact on the amount of coach traffic going to Odd Down Park and Ride site during the majority of the year. However, this impact will be larger during the peak periods such as the Christmas Market period where the numbers of coaches coming into the city is higher.)*
- Could there be unintended consequences of a reduction of security in car parks? Councillor Johnson added that he was also concerned about security in car parks, we encourage the use of Park and Ride and we do not want to jeopardize this.

Officer to get a note on this to the panel. (The following information was sent to the panel after the meeting: The Park & Ride security contracts specified currently provide an opening and closing service for the main entrances of the Lansdown and Odd Down Park and Ride sites between 9pm and 5am. The Park & Ride service does not prevent entry of the site before this time of closure or exit from the site post the closure time and as such is deemed not to provide value for money. Further consideration of the long term overnight security of these sites will be undertaken and business cases developed as appropriate.

After consideration and analysis the car park patrol is considered to provide limited value and deterrent to ASB and community issues raised are better served by the response of the Police who have powers to deal with the issues on the spot or through their wider powers.)

- What is the latest situation regarding Terrace Walk? *The officer explained that staff marshalling was cancelled during the pandemic. We may have to review this as things start re-opening.*

Councillor Craig stated that she was concerned about maintenance savings regarding flood and drainage issues and stated that 'Fix my street' did not always give a quick response. *The officer explained that any emergency flooding issues would be dealt with.*

Councillor O'Brien asked the following questions:

- Are new developments not going to be adopted? *The officer explained that there are a series of assets that we traditionally maintain, we are being stricter about what we maintain.*
- Is gully emptying being reduced or just the inspections? *The officer confirmed the reduction applies to inspections.*

Councillor Johnson stated that a lot of working hours are going adrift – who is picking up these hours and what about the stress that falls on others. *The officer explained that the Council is conscious of the impact on other staff. There has been consultation. This is a fair point but we are comfortable that we have covered this. We will review the impacts. We have systems in place.*

Annex 3 (a)

Councillor O'Brien asked what the £900k capital expenditure under Climate Emergency 2021/22 refers to and where the funding for the implementation of LTN would be - in Climate emergency or Transport- as it wasn't highlighted in the capital spend figures shown. *The officer explained that this was primarily for energy schemes not transport schemes. Regarding the Renewal Energy Development Fund, this is about working with communities to enable schemes.*

Councillor Johnson asked about tree planting – more detail on streams of funding - *Officer to get a note on this to the panel.*
(The following information was sent to the panel after the meeting: £60k Tree and Woodland Strategy + £75k from CIL (One off)).

90 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted their future workplan, noting the suggested future items below:

- Update on boater dwellers
- Annual update on Homelessness and Rough Sleepers
- Tree planting – update on where we are on the strategy
- Item on Light Pollution

These items will be noted and discussed at the next agenda planning meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair.

The meeting ended at 6.50 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

This page is intentionally left blank

Hello,

And thank you to the chair for allowing me three minutes of your time. My name is Christine Brittijn and I am a resident of Midsomer Norton.

I found out about this panel when doing research for the NOGASPs campaign that protested against the planning permission granted for a gas peaker power plant in Midsomer Norton.

I actually requested to be allowed to speak to this panel regarding this campaign at your previous meeting, but was denied this opportunity by the strict application of your rules. I think it was rule E subsection 32 that you threw at me and I realized that my input was not welcome.

And that got me interested in the work of your panel on climate change and BANES' target to get to net zero carbon emissions by 2030, a target which I fully support. I have spent quite a bit of time over the last few weeks going through the minutes of previous meetings, reading through the reports and plans that have been submitted to you and looking at the level of 'scrutiny' that you have given.

And I am very worried about what I have found.

I have found that the measures that are being proposed in these plans and reports, are nowhere near enough to reduce the net emissions of BANES to zero by 2030. In fact, these plans will probably not have any effect on emissions at all.

I have come to this conclusion after comparing the measures that are being proposed by BANES to those that are suggested in a report that has been published by Banes in September 2019. I trust that you are all very familiar with this document called 'Climate Emergency Study: synthesis of evidence'. It is a document that lays out very clearly the scope and type of measures that are needed to get as close to net zero as possible.

There are very large discrepancies between what this document suggests is needed to reach net zero, and the plans of the council.

I will bring three of these gaps to your attention:

Gap number one. The local plan update, which is currently out for consultation and on which you were asked to comment in August 2020, sets aims for housing emissions, transport and clean energy that do not even come

close to the type and scale of measures that are needed, according to the Climate Emergency Study.

In point 2.6 of the local plan update, it is stated for example that the council aims for a target of 110MW of renewable energy by 2030, when in the Climate Emergency study clearly indicates that a capacity of nearly 3 times that size is needed.

Another discrepancy is regarding electric vehicles (in point 2.37), where the council aims for half of new cars to be electric by 2030 when according to the Climate Emergency study, we should be looking at more than 75% of all cars electric, and all busses, and the rest hybrid.

In July 2020 you scrutinized the liveable neighbourhood plan, where the council states that it aims to reduce the number of car journeys by 25%. In order to have any chance of reaching net zero by 2030, that should have said a 25% reduction in car miles per person.

None of these discrepancies between the council's aims and what is actually required according to the Climate Emergency Study where picked up by the panel.

Gap number two: the panel does not seem to have noticed that there are areas that badly need a policy, but where the council has not created one at all. One of these areas is emissions from industrial processes. There are no plans to tackle industrial emissions, when these are actually a significant part of the emissions of this area.

The only mention of industrial emissions is in relation to gas fuelled peaker plants, and that is an addition, I would like to point out, that has been made in response not to your scrutiny of plans, but as a result of the hard work of a group of committed residents.

Similarly, the pathway that will take us as close as possible to net zero, suggest that 50% of all homes should be fitted with solar PV. There is no policy plan to facilitate this.

Gap number three: The panel also seems to have failed to notice that are no plans to reduce the Scope 3 emissions in the area, which account for the lion share of total emissions of BANES. There is hardly a word on these emissions in the plans that have been put before you and those that are currently out for consultation with the public, even though they are clearly mentioned in the Climate Emergency Study.

It has become obvious to me that both the council officers and this panel do not have the expertise or the drive required for the enormous tasks that bringing net emissions down to zero is. The council's plans and the scrutiny of these plans that has so far been provided by this panel are at best naïve, at worst, negligent.

I would urge the members of this panel to educate themselves much, much better as to the causes of climate change, the type and scope and the scale of measures that are needed and the urgency with which these measures need to be implemented.

Climate change is the most important issue of our times. By agreeing to sit on this panel, you shoulder the responsibility for Banes' response to this crisis. As it stands now, you are badly letting the side down

Thank you for your time.

This page is intentionally left blank

Statement at Council 21/1/21

I made a statement at Council regarding some of the issues that rural residents face which have a direct impact on Climate, Ecology and Sustainability.

I asked questions at Cabinet which were quite frankly, just dismissed. It is a real shame that there is a Can't-Do attitude.

I am here to ask you to assist and recommend that these issues are discussed and moved towards a Can-Do attitude.

The issues are:

1 Light pollution both commercial and residential.

Some commercial premises have high wattage lights on 24/7 spewing out light across the valley. Not ecologically or environmentally friendly. It has a real affect on humans – keeping them awake at night, let alone the impact this has on ecology, including some rare bats species..

Residential buildings also spewing out light. I'm told we cannot put on conditions for small extensions, it is too expensive to add mitigation. 7 rural parishes have a Neighbourhood plan with dark skies policies that cannot be rigorous implemented.

2 Tarmac/block paving drives –rural villages have drives where there is little greenery. There is massive water run off into our major arterial routes.

I would like to suggest where differences can be made in the spirit of helping:

1. Ensure that commercial premises comply with their conditions and prioritise enforcement. Ensure that pressure is kept up so Planning applications are put in without delay. Utilise Parish/Town and Ward Cllrs to help.
2. Put in conditions for extensions on the edge of villages or where they overlook green fields/ecological areas to include automated blinds and velux blinds in roof lights. Not expensive.
3. Recommend to Cabinet to include grass drives with grids when lowering curbs so that our rural village drives aren't tarmacked over.

4. Please add your voices to support small market gardens with viable living spaces to make them more sustainable. I know of planning applications turned down on Green Belt issues.
5. I urge you to ensure that huge renewable energy solutions are not situated in one locality in rural areas. We already know of about 3 potential sites and they are enormous 58 hectares plus. Just because they are big, outside Bath and meet our Climate Emergency targets doesn't make it right.

I said on Thursday that policies shouldn't be all or nothing or predominately borne by one locality, but they **should** be very creative.

Statement and questions on the homelessness and rough sleeping update report

Eleanor Jackson (Cllr)

18 January 2021

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to commend the officers on their excellent work during the pandemic, which is no more and no less than I would expect from my long association with the team, beginning with the survey of youth homelessness in the Somer Valley in 2010, and subsequent studies, as well as the work the O and S panel for Housing and Economic Development did on boaters, Roma and travellers. On two occasions since March I encountered a homeless street person, and a team from Julian House were talking to them within hours. We uncovered then the role that mental health issues and addiction play in reducing people to homelessness, and I am proud that this council has put measures in place to assist veterans of the armed forces, whose itinerant past has left them with nowhere to call 'home', and who so often have a degree of post-traumatic stress disorder. There are many uncertainties in the current crisis, but three things can be said with confidence:

- 1) The causes of homelessness are complex affecting each individual differently, often in a lethal combination of relatively minor solvable problems
- 2) Lockdown has aggravated health problems, domestic violence and child abuse and relationship breakdown, and even the practical problems of finding rented accommodation.
- 3) Working with charitable agencies like the Big Issue Foundation and the YM is essential, as this report shows.

What is becoming clearer to me from my Westfield casebook is that people are becoming homeless (and will do in increasing numbers) because they can no longer pay their rents or mortgages, which were computed on two salaries. Now the family may be jobless or on very low wages as skilled work disappears. Others, especially self employed 'white van man', have slipped through the cracks of the government covid aid – or they find the forms too complicated to navigate, in the case of small businesses.

I referred two families to the housing team, but they could not help because the families were homeless because they could not get the keys of the shared equity properties the housing association had promised them 10 months ago. Their deposits counted as savings, and hence the ineligibility. I predict far more 'white collar homelessness' – which usually means staying with relatives in our area - as building slows due to covid smiting the workforce or the lack of building materials.

At the other end of the scale, I have single elderly residents in their old family homes who ought to look for residential accommodation, but cannot because such a traumatic move is difficult with the shortage of care home beds, and their fear of contracting covid .

I appreciate that the council is short of resources for this kind of work, but I would request the council to do a more indepth study before the storm of homeless bankrupt families is upon us. I think the policies outlined in this report are excellent, but they will only cover the tip of the iceberg.

This page is intentionally left blank