

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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

Monday, 10th October, 2022

Present:- **Councillors** Joel Hirst, Shelley Bromley, Paul Crossley, Grant Johnson, Ruth Malloy, Lisa O'Brien and Dr Kumar

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Karen Walker and Ryan Wills

24 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

25 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillors Karen Walker and Ryan Wills sent their apologies for the meeting.

27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

28 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

29 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS

Mr Tim Newark made a statement to the Panel on the subject of Gulls.

There were no factual questions.

Mr Robin Kerr made a statement to the Panel on the subject of Gulls.

There were no factual questions.

30 MINUTES

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

31 RENEWABLES

The Chair invited Councillor Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate and Sustainable Travel, Jane Wildblood, Strategic Manager - Climate & Environmental Sustainability and Robin Spalding, Renewable Energy Programme Manager to give a presentation to the Panel which covered the following:

- Renewable Energy Update – Introduction from Councillor Sarah Warren
- Targets and Policy Context
- Current Funding Opportunities
- The Corporate Work Programme and Project Pipeline
- The Council's Corporate Estate
- Corporate Project Pipeline
- Corporate Pipeline Next Steps
- The District Wide Challenge
- The Role of Community Energy
- Tackling the Challenges - Next Steps
- Useful Reference Material

It was explained that this was a policy development item and officers and the Cabinet Member welcomed the Panel's input and ideas on how to encourage more renewables.

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

Councillor Dr Kumar asked how realistic the net zero aim was with so much challenge still outstanding. The officer acknowledged that there was a challenge but reported that there had been a real increase in the last two years. Also the outcome of discussions with commercial and public sector means that others will come online which will see a further increase. In response to a query regarding Bath University, the officer reported that her team works closely with the University, meeting with them regularly to look at opportunities for bids and projects and also to share expertise.

Councillor Crossley stated that the Council's job was to show that the challenges are not undeliverable. He suggested some sites for solar and renewables such as private car parks and other landowners and also owners of large buildings such as churches. The officer explained that her team was focused on delivering in-house first (Council Estate buildings) and the next stage will be looking further afield – she agreed on the suggestion about roof spaces.

Councillor Bromley stated that local energy provision would give us more security. She also asked about community buy in – allowing people to buy shares. The officer stated that this was the model of Community Energy Projects. Councillor Singleton added that a minimum investment was £100.

Councillor O'Brien noted the solar/renewable ideas with regard to rural areas but stated that she supported the idea of using roof space in Bath (warehouses, community centres etc) also there would be more people to invest.

Councillor Johnson noted that 4 solar projects had been delivered by the Council so far with 2 of the 4 Council schools included. He asked why it takes so long to deliver these projects. The Cabinet Member explained that it takes time to get the right officers in the right posts and to get the policy framework in place and also that technology is coming down in price. She explained that we can now start to move faster and that it is often about getting things in place at the right time, especially regarding schools. She added that the Pixash Lane development was a template.

Councillor O'Brien asked about water (river) and wind power. The officer explained that, regarding water, surveys had been done and so far, most sites would not have enough 'head' (power) to justify it. Technology development may change this with time. Regarding wind, the Government is talking about relaxing rules on this. There has to be landscape assessments and community acceptance.

There was some discussion around using spa water to heat buildings. The officer explained that while the system works for the Abbey, it would not have worked for the Guildhall but this was considered at the time.

Councillor Hirst asked about financial models – partnerships with residents who want to invest. The officer explained that this had been explored in the past and that some Local Authorities used 'green bonds'. This will be revisited.

32 GULLS STRATEGY

The Chair invited Aled Williams, Environmental Protection Manager to introduce the item. The officer gave a presentation covering the following:

- Gulls overview
- Gulls Strategy and Action Plan
- 2022 Actions

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

Councillor Crossley asked how we justify the support given to single households regarding Gulls. The officer explained that work would be carried out on a number of properties at the same time which shares the cost of equipment. There is a limited budget so we look at areas where we can make the best use of the resources we have often based on a demonstrable threat to public health or public safety.

Councillor Johnson asked how we will manage the increase in Gull numbers if the numbers have not been cut down by measures taken so far. The officer explained that Council's are restricted by National Health England's licensing regime. He explained that there is a section of society who disagree with any interference at all.

Councillor Dr Kumar asked what the numbers showed as a result of the counting in May. The officer explained that that had been a 4% increase. He explained that if Local Authorities and society wish to control these numbers, licensing changes would be needed which would require lobbying the Government/National Health England.

Councillor Hirst asked if there was a role for community volunteers and also asked if other ideas had been considered such as hawks. The officer explained that there were community champions such as the public speakers at the meeting today. He also explained that there has been a scrutiny day on the issues in the past looking at many ideas.

33 HERITAGE SERVICES STRATEGIC APPROACH

The Chair invited Robert Campbell, Head of Heritage Services to give a presentation to the Panel which covered the following:

- Introduction/Business Context
- Vision
- Mission
- Strategic Priorities
- Overall outcomes
- 2021/22 Review
- The Fashion Museum – Re-fashioning Bath
- A National Treasure
- The Situation
- Inequality in BANES
- City Centre Regeneration
- Opportunity: Sustainability and Fashion
- Our Vision
- Fashion Collection Archive
- The New Museum
- Hubs for inclusive cultural engagement and levelling up
- Current Status
- Residents Discovery Card
- Main Project Goals
- Systems and the process of applying
- Roll out
- Key Benefits and Challenges

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

Councillor O'Brien asked about the reasons and process of moving out of the Assembly Rooms. The officer explained that the National Trust owned the building and was taking it back for business reasons – a National Trust immersive experience.

Councillor Dr Kumar asked where the items will be kept in the interim and also if the new building would be fully accessible. The officer explained that the items would be kept in Dents (A Heritage Glove maker based in Warminster). He further explained that the new building would be accessible, accessibility standards would be exceeded where possible.

Councillor Johnson praised the presentation and asked about how the strategy fed into the content of exhibitions – for example in the Victoria Art Gallery which did not

have many contemporary artists. The officer explained that the quality of any exhibition is subjective but there will soon be a new senior curator and we will be looking at a new strategy including content of exhibitions.

Councillor Malloy asked about a visitor centre in Bath – information will be sent to Panel members on this.

34 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate and Sustainable Travel, gave the following update:

- The Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU) is rolling through the phases and near completion, this will make bringing in renewables more straight forward.
- A Climate and Biodiversity Festival was held last month.
- Liveable Neighbourhoods – work is progressing. We are working through consultation and co-design with the community.
- Active Travel schemes – successful bid for funding. There are new officers in post and work is progressing.
- Regarding buses – not such good news. As of today there are new timetables and BANES has been let down by First Bus and WECA. We continue to campaign hard.
- E-scooters – there has been geographical expansion, they can now be used to travel to the University.

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

Councillor O'Brien asked how many Liveable Neighbourhoods would be on stream shortly. The Cabinet Member explained that there would be 3 pilots shortly and they would be working through the programme.

Councillor Bromley asked if the University is promoting use of E-scooters. The Cabinet Member stated that she believed there had been promotions.

35 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the future workplan and noted that Mayor Dan Norris would be attending the November 2022 meeting.

The meeting ended at 6.00 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

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Seagulls - statement to Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel - 10 Oct 22

I speak for the Bath Alliance for Transport and Public Realm, as our current Seagull situation is a Public Realm problem for this World Heritage City. I support the Council's efforts to lessen the birds' impact. Aled Williams, from whom we shall hear shortly, has been doing his very best to serve the people of Bath, but under the current draconian restrictions, there is a limit to what he can do. Gull numbers will continue to rise unless there is a change of policy nationally.

Bath, in common with an increasing number of inland towns, suffers from an infestation of seagulls in the breeding season. These cause damage to the Georgian buildings, and affect the health of our citizens due to their prolific faeces (often infected) and disturbance to citizens' sleep in the early mornings. Many people believe they come here for food, scattered on the pavements, but in reality they began nesting in towns long before they began feeding in them. Georgian rooftops provide perfect nesting sites: sheltered, and immune from predators. The adult birds can range 50 miles to find food, though if we leave rations for them in our public realm they will certainly take advantage.

Their numbers are still increasing. Natural England does not accept this, despite ample scientific evidence, much of it collated by the noted biologist and scientific author, Linda Gamlin, who lives near St James's Square (and we're very lucky to have her).

Until 2019, the 'General Licence' allowed eggs of herring gulls and lesser black-backed gulls to be removed or treated by Local Authorities, at their discretion. The current 'Organizational Licence', as granted to BANES, drastically curtails the number of eggs that can be prevented from hatching. It also requires Councils to justify each action on a specific health-risk basis. The gull team at Natural England, despite having no medical expertise, decides what constitutes a health risk, and has set the bar very high. Across the country, urban gull numbers are rocketing as a result. So impractical and ineffective is this procedure, that the Council in Gloucester (one of the places most affected) has refused to have anything to do with it.

Accordingly, Linda has been campaigning specifically for 'roof-nesting gulls' of the two pest species to be put back on the General Licence. This is a simple decision that DEFRA could make, putting an end to all Natural England's red tape.

On the bright side, I can report that our MP, Wera Hobhouse, has been campaigning to have DEFRA acknowledge that these gulls are not Endangered Species, and to have them better controlled. She has joined with her fellow MPs in a host of other historic places, similarly affected, including Gloucester, Worcester, Devizes, York, Cheltenham, Canterbury and others, to lobby the DEFRA Secretary of State. Some progress is now being made.

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