

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF 'INFORMAL' VIRTUAL COUNCIL MEETING**

Wednesday, 15th September, 2021

Present:- **Councillors** Rob Appleyard, Tim Ball, Sarah Bevan, Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Shelley Bromley, Neil Butters, Vic Clarke, Sue Craig, Paul Crossley, Gerry Curran, Jess David, Tom Davies, Sally Davis, Douglas Deacon, Mark Elliott, Michael Evans, Andrew Furse, Kevin Guy, Alan Hale, Liz Hardman, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Dr Kumar, Matt McCabe, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Paul May, Sarah Moore, Paul Myers, Michelle O'Doherty, Lisa O'Brien, Bharat Pankhania, Vic Pritchard, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, Mark Roper, Richard Samuel, Bruce Shearn, Brian Simmons, Alastair Singleton, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, Karen Walker, Sarah Warren, Karen Warrington, Andy Wait, Chris Watt, Ryan Wills, David Wood and Joanna Wright

Apologies for absence: **Councillors** Chris Dando, Winston Duguid, Steve Hedges, Dr Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson and Robin Moss

#### **29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations made.

#### **30 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL OR FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Chair made the following statement;

Due to a desire to retain a level of social distancing after restrictions have lifted, we are holding this 'informal' virtual Council meeting to enable all Councillors to take part. The comments and indicative decisions from this meeting will help to inform the physically reduced, quorate decision-making meeting tomorrow on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021. We will review this approach for any future Council meetings, in line with government and health guidance at that time.

The Chair then invited Councillor Kevin Guy to make the following two updates about the latest Covid situation in B&NES and Afghan refugees in B&NES,

Councillor Guy explained the latest situation with schools in B&NES having started the Autumn term under new arrangements. He outlined the measures now being taken and the testing and safety measures. He acknowledged that some families may have mixed feelings about returning to school and that the new term may lead to a rise in cases. He made reference to the recent Government announcement regarding vaccinations for 12–15 year old children and encouraged take up. He explained that vaccinations have been promoted locally, with drop-in clinics and pop up sites and the green testing van will continue touring the district until the end of the month. He explained that there are also schemes that enable companies to hold vaccinations clinics on their own premises. He acknowledged, however, that a challenging period lay ahead moving into Autumn and Winter and encouraged residents to have vaccinations to protect themselves and others.

Councillor Guy explained that the Council's role was to provide a safe haven for refugees through the coordinated resettlement schemes, along with over 100 other Local Authorities. B&NES has a good track record in this area, working with excellent local partners such as Julian House, Bath Welcomes Refugees and others. He thanked them for their efforts. Councillor Guy acknowledged that many local people were also keen to help and he encouraged landlords and residents with suitable accommodation to come forward. The response from our warm and welcoming community has been fantastic so far. The Home Office will match families to properties and there is no specific number as that is dependant upon offers received. Properties need to be self-contained with their own entrance, bathroom and kitchen. Councillor Guy expressed pride that B&NES was one of the first Local Authorities to come forward, and hoped that more would do so in future.

### **31 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

There were no items of urgent business.

### **32 MINUTES - 22ND JULY 2021**

On a motion from Councillor Vic Pritchard, seconded by Councillor Kevin Guy, it was

**RESOLVED** to recommend the approval of the minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2021 to Council on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

### **33 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

David Redgewell raised various transport issues of concern. He mentioned the impending loss of certain train services to Keynsham without proper consultation having taken place. Mr Redgewell also expressed concern about cuts to various local bus services and called for improved funding packages through WECA and the Bus Back Better strategy. He urged the Leader to speak to Dan Norris MP about these concerns. Councillor Pritchard asked specifically about buses in the Chew Valley area, to which Mr Redgewell agreed that Chew Valley bus services were scant and any reduction was unacceptable. The Chair thanked Mr Redgewell for his statement which was referred to the relevant Cabinet Member.

Ben Reed made a statement about the Approach Golf course, which he has raised on 2 earlier occasions with the Council. It is yet to re-open since the first lockdown in March 2020, despite a petition on Change.org raising around 5,000 signatures. He expressed regret that such a beautiful central open space was not being enjoyed by the community and outlined a number of ways in which it could be used. Councillor Kevin Guy asked Mr Reed if he would welcome a diversification of uses of the site, to which Mr Reed responded that he would; it was a large space so there was room for a range of uses including picnic areas, a café, a re-wilded section alongside golfing activities. Councillor Karen Walker asked if there was data on numbers of users, to which Mr Reed responded that, despite his requests, this information did not seem to be available but from his personal observation, on a good day there would have been over 100 people playing golf, along with walkers and others enjoying the outdoor space.

The Chair thanked Mr Reed for his statement which was referred to the relevant Cabinet Member.

**34 CHARITABLE TRUST BOARD ANNUAL REPORT**

The Council considered the annual report of the Charitable Trust board.

On a motion from Councillor David Wood, seconded by Councillor Liz Hardman, it was

**RESOLVED** to recommend to Council on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 that the report be noted.

**35 POLICY DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21**

The Council considered the annual report of policy development and scrutiny activity for 2020-21.

On a motion from Councillor Karen Warrington, seconded by Councillor Karen Walker, it was

**RESOLVED** that the annual report be recommended to Council on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 for noting.

**36 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

The Chair made reference to the question from Councillor Joanna Wright and response from the Leader, which had been circulated to the meeting and is available as an attachment to these minutes.

Councillor Joanna Wright made a statement calling on Councillors to sign the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons pledge. A full copy of Councillor Wright's statement is available as an attachment to these minutes. Councillor Liz Hardman asked Councillor Wright to confirm if her request was to the Council as a whole or to individual Councillors, to which Councillor Wright responded that she was asking individual Councillors to take this up.

The Chair thanked Councillor Wright for her statement.

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm

Chair .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

Prepared by Democratic Services

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## COUNCIL MEETING 15<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

### STATEMENTS & QUESTIONS

#### **Public statements (item 5)**

- David Redgewell  
Re: Transport issues
- Ben Reed  
Re: Approach golf course

#### **Councillor statement (item 8)**

- Cllr Joanna Wright (statement overleaf)  
Re: Nuclear Ban Communities Pledge

#### **Councillor question (item 8)**

Question from Councillor Joanna Wright to Councillor Kevin Guy;

“At the Policy Development and Scrutiny panels under our own constitution and expected ways of working, it is assumed that the Cabinet Member responsible for papers will be present to answer questions and debate with the panel about the policy. At the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy and Development and Scrutiny Panel on the 7th June 2021 the Cabinet Member for Transport was not present to debate with the panel the Liveable Neighbourhood paper. Please note that the use of TROs is a key element of delivering Liveable Neighbourhoods. Will the Leader of Council ensure in future that all relevant Cabinet Members attend the PDS panels and be answerable to the papers in the public forum?”

Response from Councillor Kevin Guy

“Cabinet members attend PDS meetings at the invitation of the panel Chair and will always attend when they are able. With regard to the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel on 7 June, the Cabinet member with lead responsibility for Liveable Neighbourhoods attended and introduced the report. The Cabinet member for Transport wanted to attend, but was unable to do so, due to the Covid precautions in place at the time.”

## Statement from Cllr Joanna Wright

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is asking that all Councillors pledge a commitment to promote the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons within their elected chamber. I am therefore proposing that this Chamber pledges that B&NES Council commits and signs the ICAN pledge and calls on the British Government to sign and ratify the Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear Weapons.

In the first resolution in 1946 of the UN General Assembly, it called for “the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.” Advocating the importance of nuclear disarmament and nuclear weapon free world

The Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 was awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) "for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons."

In a statement from the Noble committee they said “We live in a world where the risk of nuclear weapons being used is greater than it has been for a long time. Some states are modernizing their nuclear arsenals, and there is a real danger that more countries will try to procure nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons pose a constant threat to humanity and all life on earth. Through binding international agreements, the international community has previously adopted prohibitions against land mines, cluster munitions and biological and chemical weapons. Nuclear weapons are even more destructive, but have not yet been made the object of a similar international legal prohibition.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) has been the leading civil society actor in the endeavour to achieve a prohibition of nuclear weapons under international law. On 7 July 2017, 122 of the UN member states adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. As soon as the treaty has been ratified by 50 states, the ban on nuclear weapons will enter into force and will be binding under international law for all the countries that are party to the treaty.

Five of the states that currently have nuclear weapons – USA, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China – have already committed to this objective through their accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of 1970. The Non-Proliferation Treaty will remain the primary international legal instrument for promoting nuclear disarmament and preventing the further spread of such weapons.

All life on earth is still under the shadow of nuclear bombs and the calamitous environmental impact that dropping them would and does cause. I therefore call upon all Councillors in Bath and North East Somerset Council to sign the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons pledge.