

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF INFORMAL VIRTUAL COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday, 17th November, 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, Chris Dando, Jess David, Tom Davies, Sally Davis, Douglas Deacon, Winston Duguid, Mark Elliott, Michael Evans, Andrew Furse, Kevin Guy, Alan Hale, Liz Hardman, Steve Hedges, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Dr Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Dr Kumar, Matt McCabe, Ruth Malloy, Paul May, Sarah Moore, Robin Moss, Paul Myers, Michelle O'Doherty, Lisa O'Brien, Bharat Pankhania, June Player, 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, Ryan Wills, David Wood and Joanna Wright

Apologies for absence: **Councillors** Hal MacFie and Chris Watt

46 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

48 MINUTES - 16TH SEPTEMBER 2021

The minutes were noted for approval at Council on 18th November 2021.

49 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 18th November 2021.

We will review this approach for any future Council meetings, in line with government and health guidance at that time.”

50 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

51 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Statements were made by the following members of the public;

Ellie Maher made a statement to Council in support of the Carbon tax motion on the agenda. A full copy of the statement is available linked to the online minutes.

Adam Reynolds made a statement calling upon the Council to set up a cross-party Climate Emergency Transport Board. A full copy of the statement is available linked to the online minutes. Councillor Grant Johnson asked Mr Reynolds why he considered that a cross-party group would succeed when the Council had taken action with the Liveable Neighbourhoods initiative. Mr Reynolds responded that the group proposed, being cross-party, would not be held up by the effect of election cycle.

Saskia Heijltjes made a statement to Council about cycling in Bath and welcoming the Liveable Neighbourhoods initiative. A full copy of the statement is available linked to the online minutes. In response to a query from Councillor Sarah Warren about meeting her to engage on mutual goals, Ms Heijltjes explained that she had politely declined that meeting, as she preferred to engage through democratic fora such as the Active Travel and Accessibility forum and other groups.

Barbara Gordon made a statement to Council in support of the Carbon tax motion on the agenda. A full copy of the statement is available linked to the online minutes. In response to a query from Councillor Robin Moss about whether Ms Gordon considered carbon pricing to be an adequate substitute for carbon tax, Ms Gordon replied that she did not.

David Redgewell made a statement to Council about transport issues. He remained concerned about accessing funds through WECA, but that was the necessary route. He called for action on bringing the current bus consultation to more residents' attention and for it to be extended until 20th. He highlighted the upcoming South Western Railway conference and consideration for how young people who don't have access to blue badges can get into Bath. There were no questions but Councillor Kevin Guy confirmed that he would ask for the consultation extension.

Vipul Patel made a statement to Council about the Administration's approach to the climate emergency. He praised the approach that had been taken for the first two years, for its clarity of thought, leadership and action but considered that, following the Administration change in June 2021, events had taken a negative turn. He called on those who shared his view to hold the Administration to account and ask for the cross-party climate group to be established. Councillor Kevin Guy referenced a mention that Mr Patel had made to Citizen's Juries and asked him whether he considered these undemocratic, to which Mr Patel replied that he did.

The Chair thanked all the speakers for their statements.

52 CONSTITUTION REFRESH

On a motion from Councillor Kevin Guy, seconded by Councillor Karen Walker, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to recommend to Council on 18th November 2021

- 1 To approve the formation of the Constitution Working group with the Terms of Reference, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- 2 To note the timeline for providing an updated Constitution, in accordance with Appendix 2 to the report; and
- 3 To approve the interim recommended Constitutional changes detailed in Appendix 3 of the report.

53 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION - PROPORTIONALITY REVIEW

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

RESOLVED to recommend to Council on 18th November 2021 to

1. Agree a revised political proportionality table, noting that the Liberal Democrat group have relinquished one place on the Children Adults, Health & Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel, and the Conservative group have relinquished a place on the Corporate Audit Committee; and
2. Instruct Democratic Services to make the necessary arrangements for those places to be filled.

54 AVON PENSION FUND ANNUAL REPORT

On a motion from Councillor Paul Crossley, seconded by Councillor Shaun Stephenson Mc-Gall, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to recommend to Council on 18th November 2021 to

1. Approve the Committee's revised Terms of Reference;
2. Note the Committee's Annual Report to Council; and
3. Note the Pension Board's Annual Report.

55 STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

On a motion from Councillor Duncan Hounsell, seconded by Councillor Sally Davis, it was

RESOLVED unanimously to recommend to Council on 18th November 2021 to note the Annual report of the Standards Committee for 2020/21.

56 TREASURY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021

On a motion from Councillor Richard Samuel, seconded by Councillor Mark Elliott, it was

RESOLVED unanimously to recommend to Council on 18th November 2021 to note

1. The Treasury Management Report to 30th September 2021, prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Code of Practice; and
2. The Treasury Management Indicators to 30th September 2021.

57 CORPORATE PARENTING - REFERRAL FROM CHILDREN, ADULTS, HEALTH & WELLBEING PDS PANEL

On a motion from Councillor Vic Pritchard, seconded by Councillor Liz Hardman, it was

RESOLVED unanimously to recommend to Council on 18th November 2021 to

1. Note the progress made to date in these duties; and
2. Note that this work will continue to be a priority within the Local Authority.

58 SAFETY FOR WOMEN - UPDATE REPORT

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

RESOLVED unanimously to recommend to Council on 18th November 2021 to

1. To note the progress being made on the implementation of the Council motion regarding safety for women and girls in public places; and
2. Request that the Chief Executive be asked to bring forward a report to the Cabinet on the most effective corporate response to this report.

59 RACE PANEL UPDATE

On a motion from Councillor Dine Romero, seconded by Councillor Yuktेशwar Kumar, it was

RESOLVED unanimously to recommend to Council on 18th November 2021 to

1. Note the update report;

2. Agree that the panel should continue to run for a further period to 30 April 2023; and
3. Note the panel's purpose and terms of reference.

60 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR WRIGHT - CARBON TAX

On a motion from Councillor Sarah Warren, seconded by Councillor Alastair Singleton, it was

RESOLVED to recommend to Council on 18th November 2021 that

This Council believes:

Man-made climate change is widespread, rapid, and intensifying, affecting every part of the globe. Since the second half of the 19th century, the release of greenhouse gases (GHGs) from human activities has warmed the planet by 1.1C. Rapid reductions in GHGs are needed immediately otherwise limiting global warming to 1.5C or even 2C will be impossible. These are the stark conclusions from the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, released in August 2021[1]. The report presents the findings from years of in-depth work from over 200 scientists in 66 countries. It provided key evidence for the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), which was hosted by the UK Government in Glasgow from October 31st to November 13th 2021.

This year has already seen record extreme heat in both North America and Europe, the hottest July globally since records began, catastrophic floods in Europe and China, and raging wildfires in Siberia, Europe, and California. And this is with only 1.1C warming. It will get worse, but how much worse depends on how quickly GHG emissions are reduced.

It is estimated that the UK will be responsible for ~800 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent in 2021[2]. We need mechanisms to reduce GHG use quickly. One potentially 'game changing' mechanism is carbon pricing, which could cover either carbon tax or an enhanced emissions trading scheme (ETS), covering all GHGs emitted in the provision of goods and services. The current UK ETS arrangement covers only around a third of industrial emissions and so falls some way short of an effective carbon pricing mechanism.

The moral and economic case for comprehensive carbon pricing lies in the 'polluter pays' principle:

- Currently the costs of climate breakdown are not borne by the industries and activities that are causing the damage, but by people and communities coming under increasing pressure and danger.
- Outdoor air pollution from fossil fuels causes 3 million deaths globally each year and up to 36,000 in the UK. [4]
- Carbon pricing, set at the right level, will drive fossil fuel consumption out of the economy and promote investment in clean alternatives.

This year's COP26 meeting in Glasgow failed to address an international carbon pricing framework, so the UK should introduce its own mechanism, including a carbon 'border adjustment mechanism' applied to goods imported into the UK to ensure that the GHGs emitted in their production are also subject to the pricing mechanism. A border adjustment mechanism would protect more cleanly produced UK made goods and incentivise other economies to lower emissions.

Carbon pricing would have a regressive effect in the UK, impacting the cost of transport fuel, electricity, heating, and food. Low-income households in the UK spend a greater proportion of their income on these carbon intensive goods. So, to ensure the fairness and equitability of a carbon pricing framework any inequality needs to be offset by a progressive mechanism of returning revenues to low-income households. In particular, carbon pricing must:

- Help deliver a just transition, which shares the burdens of decarbonisation equitably.
- Target the biggest polluters and those activities where emissions can most swiftly be reduced in a way that is fair to individuals and to businesses.
- Support and incentivise smaller emitters, such as households, to reduce emissions before applying carbon pricing to their energy bills.

Therefore, we propose

1. that this Council resolves to support calls for comprehensive and effective carbon pricing by writing to our leaders:
 - a. The UK Prime Minister, Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
 - b. Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, President of COP26 (the Glasgow 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference)
 - c. Rt Hon George Eustace MP, Secretary of State for Environmental, Food and Rural Affairs, and to
 - d. Our Bath MP and our North East Somerset MP

In our letter, calling for the UK government to:

2. Introduce a UK-wide carbon pricing framework by the end of 2025, to be applied to all sectors of industry and to imports as well as to domestic production.
3. Include a mechanism to use the proceeds fairly to ensure social justice and support a fair and equitable transition to a cleaner economy.

[Notes:

1. *The successful resolution above was an amendment to Councillor Wright's motion - agreed with 41 Councillors voting in favour, 6 Councillors voting against and 10 Councillors abstaining.*
2. *The amendment as substantive was subsequently agreed with 47 Councillors voting in favour and 10 Councillors abstaining.]*

61 MOTION FROM THE CONSERVATIVE GROUP - ENSURING PRIVATE CARS

ARE PROTECTED FROM CLEAN AIR ZONE CHARGES

This item was not moved.

62 MOTION FROM THE CONSERVATIVE GROUP - THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE

On a motion from Councillor Karen Warrington, seconded by Councillor Tim Ball, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to recommend to Council on 18th November that

1. This Council notes that the Queen's Platinum Jubilee will take place in 2022.
2. This Council notes that the 2022 May Bank Holiday Weekend will be moved to Thursday 2 June and an additional Bank Holiday on Friday 3 June will see a four-day weekend to celebrate the Jubilee - the first time any British monarch has reached this historic milestone.
3. This Council recognises the esteem in which the Queen is held by the British public and considers it highly likely that residents in B&NES would wish to see the authority mark the Jubilee in a significant way.

Council therefore:

4. Requests that the Leader of the Council takes steps to explore the feasibility of renaming a road, property asset or landmark in B&NES after Queen Elizabeth II to mark the Platinum Jubilee.

63 MOTION FROM THE CONSERVATIVE GROUP - THE IMPACT OF FIREWORKS

On a motion from Councillor Alan Hale, seconded by Councillor Paul May it was

RESOLVED to recommend to Council on 18th November 2021 that

Council recognises:

1. The unpredictable, loud and high intensity noises that many fireworks make can cause fear and distress to animals.
2. That debris produced by fireworks, if found on the ground, can pose a hazard to animals such as horses and farm livestock.
3. That noise from fireworks can make it difficult for the police or local authority officers to pinpoint locations and take actions.
4. That the RSPCA believes there is a real need to raise awareness among owners of animals about phobia of fireworks.

Council therefore resolves:

5. To recommend that all public firework displays within the local authority boundaries be advertised in advance of the event, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people.
6. Actively to promote a public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people in the lead up to relevant celebrations and cultural events through existing council communication channels.
7. To write to the Local Government Association to lobby for a limit to the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays.
8. To encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock quieter fireworks for public display.

[Notes;

1. *Councillor Hale had moved two further recommendations calling for reports back on progress and completion of actions to May and September 2022 Council meetings. A minor variation to wording to remove these extra recommendations was proposed by Councillor Richard Samuel, supported by Councillor Manda Rigby, and accepted by Councillor Hale, following assurances given during debate that the actions at resolutions 5 – 8 would be fulfilled.]*

64 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

A statement was made by Councillor Eleanor Jackson endorsing the work of SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education). A copy of the statement is linked to the online minutes.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

Chair

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

COUNCIL MEETING 17th NOVEMBER 2021

STATEMENTS

Public statements (item 7)

1. Ellie Maher *(statement attached)*
Re: Carbon Tax

2. Vipul Patel
Re: Administration's approach to climate emergency

3. Adam Reynolds *(statement attached)*
Re: Climate Emergency Transport Board

4. Saskia Heijltjes *(statement attached)*
Re: Active Travel Fund

5. Barbara Gordon *(statement attached)*
Re: Carbon Tax motion

6. David Redgewell
Re: Transport issues

Councillor statements (item 20)

7. Cllr Eleanor Jackson
Re: Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education
(statement attached)

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I would like to speak today in support of the much-needed Carbon Tax motion.

Man-made climate change is intensifying at an alarming rate, and while many of us are desperately aware of the need for urgent action to cut greenhouse gas emissions, the world's largest polluters continue to operate with few restrictions.

In recent years, rather than intervening against the biggest emitters, the emphasis for preventing climate meltdown has been on the individual. We should fly less, we should eat less meat, reduce, reuse, recycle. Undoubtedly, individual sacrifices we continue to make have great value, but where are the movements to stop the world's worst polluters?

It is acknowledged beyond doubt that fossil fuels are driving climate change, and so seemingly, the solution is simple. We must stop using fossil fuels. We must transition to a greener society. Since 1988, three quarters of global emissions have been produced by just 100 companies. It is these companies that need to act, and we must push them in the right direction.

Between 2018 and 2020, BP and Shell, two British companies which together produce more than 1.7 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases a year avoided paying a single penny in corporation tax on oil & gas from the North Sea. Meanwhile, they claimed tax reliefs of almost £400 million and paid their shareholders more than £44 billion in dividends. There is currently zero incentive for these companies to leave gas and oil in the ground, where it belongs.

It's estimated that the UK alone will be responsible for approximately 800 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions in 2021. We need a mechanism to reduce emissions quickly, and effectively. A comprehensive carbon tax would be the lever to finally drive the change we need. A carbon tax would target *all* polluters, particularly energy and oil companies. It would render coal, oil and gas financially unviable as affordable renewable energies rise to take their place.

A carbon tax that applies to all fossil fuel emissions could comfortably finance a dividend that would prevent the poorer members of society being hit with higher costs. It could be used to help society transition to a carbon free future and to help the UK become a genuinely equal society. A carbon tax is a win-win for both climate and social justice.

There are no technical or economic barriers stopping us acting against climate, just a lack of political will. In 2019, the Bath & Northeast Somerset Council declared a climate emergency and pledged to make the area carbon neutral by 2030. This cannot be empty political rhetoric. We have run out of time. The time to act is now; the time for a carbon tax is now.

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Adam Reynolds - Climate Emergency Transport Board

The council has declared a climate and nature emergency and has committed to a 25% reduction in road miles driven by 2030. To put this into context, 60% of car journeys in BaNES are under 5 miles, but only account for 20% of road miles driven. This is an extremely hard nut to crack.

The Government, through the Active Travel Fund, is providing the council yearly with £1m in funding for school streets, cycle lanes, and low traffic neighbourhoods (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gear-change-one-year-on-review>).

The Government has also provided the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) with a £540m Sustainable Transport Settlement (<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/West-of-England-Combined-Authority-CRS-TS.pdf>). This will deliver protected cycle lanes along the A4, A367, and A37. The settlement also provides £60m for further cycle infrastructure and £100m for Liveable Neighbourhoods across the region.

With £20m Levelling Up Fund being provided to each constituency (£40m in total for BaNES), and BaNES being a level 2 council, the bids that Wera Hobhouse and Jacob Rees-Mogg need to champion, will score highly ONLY for transport schemes. I have already approached Jacob, my MP, and proposed a North East Somerset Greenways Network.

The “new” council administration has bid £890k for a politically easy resurfacing of the *existing* traffic free Rainbow Woods walking/wheeling and cycling route with no effort made to connect it to Ralph Allen School or the Combe Down/Fox Hill communities.

This “new” administration has also stopped the delivery of a trial strategic North Road route against the rules of the Active Travel Fund which is likely to result in the Department For Transport reducing general funding for the council.

The previous Lib Dem administration under Cllr Dine Romero, had a much better strategic transport vision.

Sadly the opposition Conservative group is demanding that Liveable Neighbourhoods be abandoned, that a probable legally required shift to CAZ “D” which includes older cars, not be made, and has completely failed to tackle this administration’s “BaNES means Bath and No one EISE” approach to transport while directly going against their own governments national policies.

The council has just advertised for a Head Of Transport Strategy while WECA’s *final* Local Walking Cycling Infrastructure plan (<https://travelwest.info/projects/west-of-england-local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plan>) is still missing the regional strategic cycle network map required by the consultation report and a vital planning tool for every council and developer in the region.

Given the £200+ million to be spent on sustainable transport in BaNES in the coming five years, it appears that neither councillors or officers have any clear strategic plan for this region.

The result is that tribal politics directly impact the ability of this administration to act strategically and develop and deliver a nine year plan to reduce road miles driven by 25%.

Solving this is simple. I am asking the council to set up a crossparty Climate Emergency Transport Board where any councillor can attend, supported by council executives and invited experts. The role of this board will be to develop and deliver the necessary 25% reduction in road miles driven by 2030.

We do not have time for blah blah blah politics. We need decisive bold cross party action year on year and the current tribal nature of our politics and the election cycle simply fail Bath AND North East Somerset. Please urgently fix this.

Hello everyone, I am Saskia Heijltjes and I was recently appointed as the first Bicycle Mayor of Bath.

I've used a bicycle to get from A to B in Bath for nearly ten years now. Not much has changed on the roads, apart from an increase in traffic and me becoming a mum of two children. I applied to become Bicycle Mayor of Bath and founded Kidical Mass Bath because I see cycling as a non-polluting, cheap, and easy way to get where I need to be. I also applied because I became frustrated by the lack of cycling infrastructure in Bath.

You currently have to be a very confident person to cycle around Bath because there is no safe cycling infrastructure along key routes.

The traffic-free paths we have along the river and canal, and to Bristol, are fantastic, but are mostly for leisure, not for getting to the shops, library or friends. They are also unlit, so not useful after 4pm in winter.

Whenever a motorist overtakes me and my children on a busy road, I fear for our lives. On most roads in Bath, we are not protected from fast-moving traffic, which is obviously very dangerous.

This is not just about me and my family though.

It's also about my 60-something-yr-old friend who cycles into town because walking is too painful on their joints.

It's about the parents driving their children to the park to practise cycling, because there are no safe spaces to cycle where they live.

It's about the 13 yr-old school student cycling to Ralph Allen School and having to experience close passes every single day.

It's about my colleague driving to work because they think they'd be too slow cycling up the hill and drivers would not give them enough space.

It's about my other colleague, looking for a cycling buddy to cycle from Bristol to Bath because the railway path is not lit.

It's about the 17 yr-old girl not allowed to cycle home from town in winter because the river path is not safe because it's unlit.

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To reach the council's climate emergency targets, we need to reduce car miles by 25% by 2030. Cycling can play an important role in this, alongside better provision for walking and public transport.

Some good steps have already been taken to enable Bath to become a better place for walking and cycling in the future. But not much actual change has happened yet and I am concerned not enough will happen in the next 2 years.

I very much welcome the Liveable Neighbourhoods and look forward to finding out more about the plans and the consultation. Liveable Neighbourhoods would be a good step in the right direction. We also need safe cycling infrastructure along key routes.

Enabling more people to cycle could address the climate emergency while improving quality of life for everyone. There's strong public support for urgent action on climate change. You have a mandate. Please be bold.

Statement to Council regarding the Carbon Tax Motion – 17th November 2021

I'm here to ask you please to support the carbon tax motion that is before Council today.

In Glasgow representatives from 197 countries made commitments to take action to keep global warming to no more than 1.5°C. However, independent scientific analysis reports that those commitments will see global temperatures increase by around 2.4° C by the end of the century.*

The global south is expected to be most affected by climate change but COP26 was dominated by voices from the developed nations. Fossil fuel companies sent more than 500 delegates to the summit, whilst many indigenous people from nations most affected by climate change were not able to access the meetings in Glasgow.

The commitments made in Glasgow are pledges that are not legally binding. It is clear that targets are not enough and tough financial measures are needed to transform the economy.

Economists widely agree that introducing a carbon price is the single most effective way for countries to reduce their emissions. We need a global carbon tax to increase the relative price of everything that releases carbon. All proceeds from the tax should be returned to citizens in a way that improves lives for everyone. A **citizens dividend** in fact, because climate justice can't be separated from social justice. It shouldn't be the poor that pay for this. A carbon tax will force companies and suppliers to find ways to reduce their carbon output but in the meantime the tax could be used to provide a much needed improvement to public transport and energy efficient homes.

COP 26 has ended. Alok Sharma worked hard to accommodate the competing voices and interests in the final report but it is widely recognised that the resulting agreement falls far short of what is needed. The COP will reconvene next year in Egypt, so this is an ongoing process and efforts must be ramped up in the meantime.

The fossil fuel industries have the ear of the politicians, they are rich and powerful and our government needs all of us to put pressure on them to act decisively. I am concerned for the future of my children and grandchildren and I urge you to support this motion.

Barbara Gordon

* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-59220687>

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Adoption of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education's recommendations concerning the Updated Syllabus. The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is perhaps one of the more obscure council committees, but like the Planning Committee, it is a statutory body required by law and its functions are regulated by government. It is not quorate without the presence of council representatives, one of whom I have had the privilege of being since 2015.

Jesus said, 'And the first shall be last, and the last shall be first.' We have debated weighty and important matters tonight, some involving philosophy, if not ethics, but the last item on the agenda is the more important to me. The values, beliefs and visions which should undergird our conduct as councillors and in our personal lives have to be learnt and communicated, and the new RE syllabus is crucial for doing this. Following the decision of Cabinet last week to accept the new syllabus, I hope there will be no delay in fastening a signature and implementing it. I also hope that SACRE will receive the full amount it needs to function in the Council's upcoming Budget.

Some of you may be drifting away for cocoa and night prayers, others may have been saying prayers to get the important motions through, such as carbon tax and measures to prevent violence against women but I hope all understand how important spirituality and prayer are. Tolerance, empathy, selflessness and kindness are principles expounded in the syllabus, and are embedded in the Code of Conduct

Some members may have had very negative experiences of RE in Schools. The syllabus is an important tool in raising standards, but I hope there will be sufficient money in the Budget to allow SACRE to continue offering training to RE teachers – for example as we did on how to teach the Holocaust, and could do on Islamophobia, to get training ourselves at national and regional conferences and to monitor our local schools. One issue noted in our Annual Report just published is schools failing to advertise the right of parents since 1944 to withdraw their children from RE and school assemblies. We monitor this, and school websites in general. Please don't withdraw yourselves. With rising intolerance, tribalism and extremism we need RE so that children value diversity, explore their own beliefs and appreciate the underlying values which hold society together

Dr Eleanor Jackson
2021

17 November

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