

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, 30th November, 2023

Present:- **Councillors** Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, David Biddleston, Anna Box, Deborah Collins, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Alan Hale, Ian Halsall, Liz Hardman, Gavin Heathcote, Steve Hedges, Saskia Heijltjes, Oli Henman, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Dr Eleanor Jackson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, John Leach, Lesley Mansell, Matt McCabe, Sarah Moore, Ann Morgan, Robin Moss, Michelle O'Doherty, Manda Rigby, Paul Roper, Sam Ross, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby, Karen Walker, Sarah Warren, Tim Warren CBE, Andy Wait, David Wood and Joanna Wright

Apologies for absence: **Councillors** Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Sarah Evans, Dave Harding, Grant Johnson, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Paul May, Bharat Pankhania, June Player, Dine Romero and Alison Streatfeild-James

48 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure, as set out on the agenda.

49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared interests;

Councillors David Biddleston, Paul Crossley and Lucy Hodge declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 10 "Council Tax – Second Homes" and left the Chamber for the duration of this item.

50 MINUTES - 21ST SEPTEMBER 2023

On a motion from Councillor Kevin Guy, seconded by Councillor Michelle O'Doherty, it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of 21st September 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

51 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL OR FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

At the request of the Chair, Council stood for a minute's silence in recognition of the recent death of Peter Edwards, former B&NES Councillor for Publow & Whitchurch (2003 – 2015) and Council Chair.

52 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

53 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Statements were made by the following members of the public;

Kate Uzell, South West Area Coordinator of RoadPeace, a national charity for road crash victims, made a statement about preventing road deaths. A full copy of the statement is attached to the online record and added to the Minute book. Councillor Joanna Wright asked if the RoadPeace charity supported the Vision Zero motion on the agenda, to which Ms Uzell confirmed that it did.

Matt Cooper made a statement about accelerating the transition to a clean energy future. A full copy of the statement is attached to the online record and added to the Minute book. He reflected on progress that had been made since he spoke to Council a year ago and commended the process so far, but also reflected on the overwhelming extreme climate events and stressed that we must seek to phase out fossil fuels via the Fossil Fuel non-proliferation treaty. Councillor Saskia Heijltjes asked which other bodies had signed the treaty, to which Matt listed various states, cities and international organisations that had signed up.

Adam Reynolds made a statement about the Bath City Riverside Enterprise Area, a copy of which is attached to the online record and the Minute book. He highlighted some of the missing infrastructure links for the Sustainable Transport Route, which affected people cycling and walking in the area, and called for various actions to address these.

David Redgewell made a statement about the relationship between the Council and WECA and called for an urgent serious discussion about the transport levy and bus services. He expressed his disappointment that so many posts at WECA are filled on an interim basis, which were expensive and not conducive to achieving effective results. Councillor Sarah Warren asked Mr Redgewell if he was aware of other Combined Authorities where the Mayor listened to the unitary authorities, to which he replied that he thought this worked in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. Councillor Liz Hardman asked if Mr Redgewell considered that more money was needed in the transport levy, to which he agreed, and said that we need to look carefully at the Bus Service Improvement plan. Councillor Tim Warren asked whether, if money was prioritised differently and collaboration was better, that would mean there was enough money for bus services, to which Mr Redgewell responded he would welcome better collaboration but stressed again it came down to the calibre of officers and having permanent people in place. Councillor Joanna Wright asked what meetings were currently in place to agree a positive solution for buses in the region, to which Mr Redgewell replied that a meeting was needed as there had not been budget discussions or recent scrutiny meetings, and the meeting the following day was focussed on one issue, which would not address the urgent need for bus solutions for the area.

Callum Clafferty made a statement about young people and students' experience with regard to the Vision Zero motion, outlining the particular difficulties they may experience. A full copy of the statement is attached to the online record and added to the Minute book. Councillor Kevin Guy asked Mr Clafferty if he would like to meet the Cabinet Member to discuss the issues further, to which he responded that he

would find that helpful. Councillor Saskia Heijltjes asked if the measures in the Vision Zero motion would make journeys safer and encourage more walking and cycling, Mr Clafferty responded that he considered they would.

Lucy Taylor made a statement in support of the measures in the Vision Zero motion. As a cyclist in the city since 1982, she explained how she felt more vulnerable now, and called for a series of measures that would help deal with the inevitable rise in traffic numbers. A full copy of the statement is attached to the online record and added to the Minute book. Councillor Saskia Heijltjes asked if Ms Taylor considered that the measures in the Vision Zero motion would help her encourage more friends to take up cycling, to which Ms Taylor responded that they would, as currently they were too scared to consider cycling in the city.

Hanna Hajzer (Student Union representative for the University of Bath) & Jas Raymond-Baker (Student Union representative for Bath Spa University) made a joint statement about the poor quality of student housing. They referred to an increase in respiratory problems from mould and a rise in reported mental health problems related to accommodation issues. They explained that many landlords charged very high rents, but demonstrated little accountability for their properties. They aspired for students to be more integrated within local communities. A full copy of the statement is attached to the online record and added to the Minute book. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if they would like to meet the responsible Cabinet Member, which they welcomed. Councillor Robin Moss asked what support the Universities were able to give; to which Hanna and Jas explained that they can look over contracts and help with emergency housing and support. Councillor Shaun Hughes checked they were referring to HMOs, which they agreed was the case. Councillor Tim Warren asked for an amount for average rents, which was explained was typically between £600 and £1000 a month. In response to a question from Councillor Joanna Wright about the option of involving the Housing Enforcement team, the students explained that many students were too scared of jeopardising their housing by raising concerns.

Robbie Bentley made a statement calling for a solution to the current difficulties with WECA and the effect this was having on local transport and stressed the need for consistency of service provision, which was particularly important for people with Autism. Councillor Sam Ross identified with the issues raised by Robbie Bentley and asked if extended P&R sites could play a part. Robbie Bentley replied that they were worthy of consideration and gave the Portway P&R as a good example.

Nicola James made a statement condemning violence on both sides in the Israel/Gaza conflict and calling on Councillors to sign up to a permanent ceasefire. A full copy of the statement is attached to the online record and added to the Minute book. Councillor Lesley Mansell asked about the response from local Members of Parliament, to which Ms James responded that Jacob Rees-Mogg was not calling for a ceasefire, but Wera Hobhouse was. Councillor Joanna Wright asked which other Councils had passed a motion for peace in the Middle East, to which Ms James replied that Preston Council had done so, and they were hoping that more would follow.

The Chair thanked the Speakers for their statements which would be referred to the relevant Cabinet Members.

54 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT CHANGES 2024/25

On a motion from Councillor Mark Elliot, seconded by Councillor Toby Simon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to agree the proposals put forward in the report.

55 COUNCIL TAX - LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTY PREMIUM

In moving this item, Councillor Mark Elliott highlighted a minor technical amendment that was needed to the report in sections 3.3 and 3.6 from “section 72” to “section 79” of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (The Act) (numbering change from the draft Bill to the final Act receiving Royal Assent).

On a motion from Councillor Mark Elliott, seconded by Councillor Malcolm Treby, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to increase the council tax empty homes premium to 100% for properties empty for between one and five years (currently between two and five years), from 1 April 2024.

56 COUNCIL TAX - SECOND HOMES

In moving this item, Councillor Mark Elliott highlighted another minor technical amendment that was needed to the report in sections 3.1, 3.4 and 3.5 from “section 73” to “section 80” of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (The Act) (numbering change from the draft Bill to the final Act receiving Royal Assent).

On a motion from Councillor Mark Elliott, seconded by Councillor Matt McCabe, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to increase the council tax for all second homes by 100% from 1 April 2025.

57 HOUSING BENEFIT WAR PENSION DISREGARD POLICY (MODIFIED SCHEME)

On a motion from Councillor Mark Elliott, seconded by Councillor Kevin Guy, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that Council is asked to adopt the policy included in the appendix to this report which gives officers a direction to disregard War Pension income in the assessment of Housing Benefit.

58 TREASURY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023

On a motion from Councillor Mark Elliott, seconded by Councillor Oli Henman, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

1. The Treasury Management Report to 30th September 2023, prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Code of Practice, is noted; and
2. The Treasury Management Indicators to 30th September 2023 are noted.

59 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS & POLLING PLACES 2023

On a motion from Councillor Dave Wood, seconded by Councillor Ian Halsall, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to

1. Approve the proposed changes to polling districts and polling places, except for the proposed merger of polling districts B-BK4 and B-BK5; i.e. separate polling districts and polling stations to be maintained at University of Bath Library and Claverton Down Community Hall.
2. Authorise the Electoral Registration Officer to take the necessary measures to give effect to any new or amended polling districts, ensuring that the electoral register published on 1 December 2023 reflects the proposed changes.
3. Agree to hold a consultation on changing the name of Twerton ward to 'Twerton and Whiteway', as referenced in paragraph 3.8 of the report.

60 ANNUAL REPORT OF AVON PENSION FUND COMMITTEE

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

RESOLVED

1. To note the Committee's Annual Report to Council; and
2. To note the Pension Board's Annual Report.

61 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHARITABLE TRUST BOARD

On a motion from Councillor Tim Ball, seconded by Councillor Joanna Wright, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to

1. To note the Annual Report of the Charitable Trust Board for 2021/22; and
2. To note that, in future, the Annual Report of the Charitable Trust Board will be brought to Council before the end of the financial year.

62 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT RIPA (2000) & INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT IPA (2016)

On a motion from Councillor Tim Ball, seconded by Councillor Shaun Hughes, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to

1. Note the summary on the use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (RIPA/IPA) by the Council (Appendix 1);
2. Note the RIPA & IPA training module (Appendix 2); and
3. Adopt the Home Office Covert Human Intelligence Sources Code of Practice (revised December 2022) set out at paragraph C.1.13 of the Council's Policy on the use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) & Investigatory Powers Act (IPA) 2016 (Appendix 3).

63 MOTION FROM THE GREEN GROUP - ADOPT A VISION ZERO APPROACH TO ELIMINATE ROAD DEATHS IN BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

On a motion from Councillor Saskia Heijltjes, seconded by Councillor Joanna Wright, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

Council notes:

1. Statistics from the Department for Transport state that between 2017 and 2021 – the last period with complete data, 15 people were killed and 133 seriously injured by vehicle collisions within Bath and North East Somerset. On average, 292 are injured every year on B&NES Roads and 31 are killed or seriously injured. The number of all reported personal injury collisions on Bath and North East Somerset highways has reduced by 46% over the last decade, however vulnerable road users like cyclists and pedestrians are disproportionately affected.
2. Bath and North East Somerset's aspirations on road safety are included in the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (JLTP4), which contains a target: 'a vision of zero avoidable deaths on locally managed roads by 2036,' and an objective: 'Road safety for transport users is improved, particularly for those most at risk.' Progress against the targets in JLTP4 is monitored through the Combined Authority's annual Progress Reports. The council's current and recent efforts to make roads safer include:
 - More than 10,000 children in Bath & North East Somerset will receive some form of road safety education this year;
 - Recent road layout schemes, including the B3114 collision reduction scheme and the London Road cyclist safety scheme;
 - Numerous pedestrian improvements near schools;
 - A programme of 20mph speed limits.
 - Support for Community Speedwatch programmes in collaboration with the Police

3. As part of any highway scheme, Bath and North East Somerset Council undertakes a series of robust safety audits in line with national guidance, to provide a detailed independent assessment of a scheme. This ensures that safety aspects of design and implementation have been scrutinised and addressed. Reduction in the number and severity of casualties for all road users is supported through the following interventions:
 - Considering the needs of all road users in the design of transport and highway schemes, particularly vulnerable road users
 - Delivering road safety education and skills training to equip people with the knowledge and skills to travel in a safe and sustainable way
 - Working in partnership to build safer communities
4. Vision Zero is a proven strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all. Key principles include:
 - Safe speeds - encouraging speeds appropriate to the street;
 - Safe streets - designing an environment forgiving of mistakes;
 - Safe vehicles - reducing risks posed by the most dangerous vehicles;
 - Safe behaviours - improving the behaviours of people using our roads;
 - Post-collision response - learning from collisions and improving justice and care for victims.
5. B&NES council has recently launched the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Corporate Strategy which set out priorities for healthy communities as well as safe neighbourhoods.
6. Councils and organisations that have adopted Vision Zero include: Bristol, Kent, Devon, Cornwall, Brighton and Hove, Blackpool, Leeds, Hackney, Transport for London, National Fire Chiefs Council, The AA, and RAC.
7. The Vision Zero approach is endorsed by international organisations, including the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and is led by an ethical stance that it is not acceptable that people should be killed or seriously injured as a price for mobility. These are avoidable events – not accidents.
8. Actions that can be taken to achieve vision zero often include:
 - Road Design, including separation of cycle users and pedestrians from vehicles;
 - Enforcement of Speed Limits and the Highway Code;
 - School Streets;
 - Liveable (Low Traffic) Neighbourhoods;
 - Education;
 - A cohesive network of walking and cycling routes

Council believes that:

1. The vast majority of road deaths are avoidable, and the only acceptable long-term casualty target for road deaths and serious injuries in Bath and North East Somerset is Zero.
2. It is vitally important to provide consistent, accessible active travel infrastructure for people to use across Bath and North East Somerset, as outlined in the council's Journey to Net Zero strategy, as it is known that fear of injury suppresses the demand for walking and cycling, adversely affecting children, older people and people with disabling conditions.
3. Much of Bath and North East Somerset's active travel infrastructure is disconnected and does not meet the accessibility requirements of a modern diverse society in our region. Projects to create more connected active travel infrastructure across Bath and North East Somerset, providing greater separation of people walking and cycling from those in motor vehicles, such as the City Region Sustainable Transport Fund project "Somerset Valley Links", will reduce casualties and are to be welcomed. By separating people walking, cycling, and using vehicles, casualties will be reduced.
4. High-quality, consistent road design can reduce road deaths. Local Transport Note LTN 1/20, Cycle infrastructure design, is the current best practice design guideline for all transport schemes and is endorsed by Active Travel England and has been put in place by the UK Government.
5. There are a number of actions that will require joined-up work with partner organisations. However, there are some steps to reduce road casualties that B&NES Council could report on feasibility of in the short term, these include:
 - Encourage and investigate actions with partners, such as the Police, to enforce 20mph and safer driving practices as part of their operations;
 - Identify the ten most dangerous locations in B&NES and implement coordinated and evidence-based changes to make them safer;
 - Reduce risk through intelligence-led enforcement;
 - Increase further use of bicycles by Bath and North East Somerset officers while at work; accelerate the roll out of school streets;
 - provide a road safety forum for Schools.
6. The following actions are likely to cost money and, acknowledging the severe constraints upon all local authority budgets, should therefore be costed with a view to future implementation:
 - Speed Limiters in all council vehicles to act as pace vehicles for the whole City;
 - Roll out of 'vision zero' training to all council employees who drive as part of their role;
 - Re-deployable average speed cameras at hotspots;
 - A public awareness campaign on Vision Zero BANES with targeted education programmes that change road user attitudes and behaviour;
 - Run an "Exchanging Places" programme to make HGV drivers, bus drivers and cyclists more aware of one another;

- Investigate the use of safer HGVs based on the Transport for London (TfL) policy;
- Review and reduce wait times for pedestrians at the ten busiest signalised crossings or junctions;

Council therefore resolves to:

1. Set a Vision Zero target for road deaths and serious injuries by 2030.
2. Call upon WECA, as our transport authority, to fund and publish a plan to support achievement of the Vision Zero target adopted in JLTP4, to explore feasibility of bringing the target date forward to 2030, and to work with its constituent Unitary Authorities to promote a joined-up approach to Vision Zero across the region.
3. Include consideration of this target in all relevant council decisions and strategies e.g. road design and procurement, by implementing LTN1/20 when building any new walking, cycling and road projects, and adopting best efforts to meet LTN1/20 standards when providing diversions around highway maintenance work.
4. Work with partners and other organisations including West of England Combined Authority, Major Employers, Avon & Somerset Police, Avon Fire and Rescue, South West Ambulance Trust, First Bus, Faresaver, TIER, Developers and residents to achieve Vision Zero.
5. Recognise the need for ongoing support to implement this motion and ensure that, within the constraints of the approved budget and existing staffing resource, a Vision Zero approach is consistently used at all times.
6. Request the administration to report back to the relevant Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel on progress towards these steps in 12 months' time.

64 MOTION FROM THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP - CLIMATE COMMITMENTS

On a motion from Councillor John Leach, seconded by Councillor Anna Box, it was

RESOLVED that

Council notes:

1. The recent announcements by the Prime Minister, moving back the dates for the banning of sales of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030 to 2035, loosening the phase out of gas boilers and reducing the obligations on landlords to insulate their properties.
2. Delaying the ban on combustion engine car sales will mean that more petrol and diesel cars will be on our roads for longer, resulting in more harmful emissions for longer.

3. Cutting the budget for cycling and walking in England by more than 50% will mean that people will be relying on cars to get around, resulting in more harmful emissions for longer.
4. Loosening the phaseout of new gas boilers will mean that more gas boilers are in use for longer, resulting in more harmful emissions for longer.
5. Reducing the obligations on landlords to insulate their properties will also lead to higher emissions for longer and cost renters more in higher bills for longer.
6. Car and boiler manufacturers that have been working to the previous dates now have uncertainty over the investments there were making, creating doubt over their future strategy.
7. Even if the overall Net Zero target of 2050 is subsequently met, more greenhouse gases will have been emitted into our atmosphere, exacerbating the effects of Climate Change.

Council therefore resolves that:

1. The Leader of the Council should write to the PM expressing our concern at this change in policy, our frustration that it will increase the impact of Climate Change and our anger that it will undermine our country's climate change strategy, and to urge the government to reverse its announcement.
2. The Council should seek to join forces with other like-minded Councils to explore the best way to challenge the Government's change in policy, for example, via the LGA.

65 MOTION FROM THE LABOUR GROUP - SAFE TRAVEL HOME FOR NIGHT ECONOMY WORKERS

On a motion from Councillor Lesley Mansell, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

1. Council notes:

- the campaign initiated by Unite the Union called: 'Get me home safely' to ensure safe home transport is widely available for night time economy and shift workers who often struggle to find and pay for transport home after midnight.
- the campaign's call on employers to take all reasonable steps to ensure workers are able to get home safely from work at night
- that shift work is widespread in many industries, particularly hospitality, as well as health and care workers, retail, cleaning, security and porter staff, and can often entail late-night working;

- and that many workers, especially women, are increasingly worried about their safety when travelling to and from work at night;
- only 2% of victims report sexual harassment on public transport.
- the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) is the is the regional transport authority responsible for planning bus services, in cooperation with local bus operators.

2. Council believes that:

- while employers may feel their duty of care to staff ends when an employee finishes a shift, they should take into consideration journeys home, especially during unsocial hours;
- the weakness of enforcement of the law against sexual assault, including up-skirting, on public transport is appalling, and
- greater numbers of trained staff and stronger enforcement of the law against sexual assault and harassment on public transport are urgently needed;
- Such a move would significantly benefit the safety and wellbeing of hospitality workers, particularly women, who often cannot afford, or access, safe transport options late at night and will also benefit our community.

3. Council therefore resolves to:

1. work through business and partnership forums to highlight safe travel home concerns and to encourage sharing of best practice, and call on the Licensing Committee to review opportunities to use appropriate licensing processes to include additional criteria when considering late opening applications from licensed premises, such as encouraging venues to provide free transport home for night shift employees;
2. campaign for & encourage improvements to late night and off-peak transport service provision, as well the lowering of fares;
3. oppose any cuts to public transport funding and for our elected officials to use their powers and political platforms to achieve this;
4. reiterate its call for the WECA Mayor to develop a co-ordinated, long-term approach to public transport in our area, through bus franchising or equivalent, and to call on the Mayor to make better use of Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding in order to secure lower prices and improve service provision, including safety provision, especially for rural, night-time and off-peak services;
5. call on our local MPs to make representation to the Government and other appropriate authorities at regional and local levels of governance to bring forward national minimum standards for taxis and private hire as per the

recommendations of the Department of Transport independent Taxi & Licencing group, Unite's Get Me Home Safely campaign, in support of this motion and its demands on behalf of our local community.

[Notes;

1. *The above successful resolution incorporates the underlined wording proposed by Councillor Manda Rigby and accepted into the substantive motion by the mover and seconder.]*

66 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Councillor Eleanor Jackson made a statement about developments in the arrangements for future bus services in NE Somerset, a copy of which is attached to the online record and the Minute book.

Councillor Fiona Gourley made a statement about rural bus service provision discussions with WECA & recent developments with Westlink, a copy of which is attached to the online record and the Minute book. Councillor Sam Jones asked if local Councillors could be included in discussions.

Councillor Tim Warren made a short statement about the Charlton Park estate in Midsomer Norton and the lack of grass cutting which has continued since No Mow May. He acknowledged the ecological reasons for leaving meadows and patches of grassland uncut but explained that residents were upset about the state particularly of the entrance and exit and wondered why it was necessary to leave small areas such as this unmowed.

Councillor also noted the statements from the following Councillors which were circulated to Members;

Councillor Paul May - Care Leavers' protected status.

Councillor Shaun Stephenson-McGall – Pavement parking.

Councillor Sam Ross – Rural connectivity.

The Chair thanked the Councillors for their statements, before closing the meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm

Chair

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

COUNCIL MEETING 30TH NOVEMBER 2023

STATEMENTS FROM PUBLIC

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Kate Uzell | Road safety/Vision Zero |
| 2. Chad Allen | English Ivy |
| 3. Matt Cooper | Accelerating the transition to a clean energy future |
| 4. Adam Reynolds | Bath Enterprise Area and the £147m City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement - what went wrong? |
| 5. David Redgewell | Council tax levy to WECA and public transport network services |
| 6. Callum Clafferty | Vision Zero motion |
| 7. Lucy Taylor | Vision Zero motion |
| 8. Hanna Hajzer &
Jas Raymond-Baker | Quality of student housing |
| 9. Robbie Bentley | Public transport issues |
| 10. Nicola James | Global Humanitarian Concerns and Local Responsibilities |

This page is intentionally left blank

Kate Uzell statement

Hello, my name is Kate, I am South-West Area coordinator for RoadPeace, the national charity for road crash victims in the UK. We provide information and support to people bereaved or seriously injured in road crashes and engage in evidence-based policy and campaign work to fight for justice for victims and reduce road danger.

In 2008, a close friend was killed by a careless driver making a dangerous manoeuvre, leaving a wife and four young sons aged 12 to 17, my husband and I moved in with this family to help and support them. I thought I knew the pain of losing a friend in a road crash. But in 2011 my husband Martyn was cycling Lands End to John O'Groats for charity, when he hit a pothole and was thrown from his bike into the path of a car, sustaining fatal and horrific injuries. That day my life changed for ever, our future stolen. I was propelled into a world I knew nothing about, police investigation, coroner's court hearing, listening to all the reasons, excuses and details of how Martyn had been killed. This process took three years, all this time I was terrified to speak about what had happened to Martyn for fear of jeopardising the legal process and authorities' findings and judgment. Just wanting to understand how this had happened to such an active and fit person. The loss of a loved one on the roads has a far-reaching ripple effect, everyone is someone's child, partner, parent, friend. Martyn was a much-loved uncle and his nephews and nieces so young to feel such pain.

Nov to Oct	2021/2022	2022/2023
No fatal RTC	37	53
Fatalities	38	61
Pedestrian	9	11
Motorcycles	10	13
Cyclists	1	1
Vehicles	17	36 (30%. Drink/drugs)
E-scooters	Nil	Nil but a no. of serious injuries

In the Avon and Somerset police area the number of fatalities on the roads are rising. Those in charge need to engage with people that have been directly affected by road danger, this means statistics become real and that's critical in having conviction to make difficult or unpopular decisions that put road safety first. Vision zero approaches road danger with the view that no death or serious injury on the roads is acceptable. a world where road danger is not tolerated. Challenging society's complacency towards risk on our roads, highlights the devastating toll of road death.

This page is intentionally left blank

Matt Cooper statement

Accelerating the transition to a clean energy future

I'd like to start by acknowledging that this council has made significant progress on tackling the climate emergency, and I commend your achievements. However, when it comes to the climate crisis, I often think of a line by environmentalist Bill McKibben: "Winning slowly is the same as losing."

A year ago, I gave a statement to council about a global transition to 100% renewable energy. When I looked back at the 12 months since then, I was overwhelmed by the magnitude of extreme weather events around the globe, and the lack of proportionate action to tackle global heating. I've picked just one example to highlight how bad things are now: in September, average global temperatures were so far off the scale, one respected climate scientist went on record to describe it as "absolutely gobsmackingly bananas." We are in serious trouble, and as stated in your climate emergency declaration, we must take urgent action.

Burning fossil fuels is one of the main causes of global heating, and we must rapidly reduce fossil fuel emissions year on year. But this is not happening: global fossil fuel CO2 emissions hit a record high in 2022. Today is the start of COP28 in Dubai, where the head of an oil company presides over a process that has been captured by the fossil fuel industry, an industry described by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres as "planet wreckers." Today he has called for COP28 to seek the total phase out of fossil fuels. He's also said that fossil fuels are "incompatible with human survival", and that "we are in the fight of our lives, and we are losing." We must phase out all fossil fuels, yet the only global process that exists to achieve this, the COP, fails year after year to reach agreement on this existential issue. The situation seems hopeless.

And yet, there is a glimmer of hope. At COP28, a handful of small nations have got together to call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. The proposed treaty would complement the Paris Agreement by providing the global roadmap needed to halt the expansion of fossil fuel, manage an equitable phase-out of coal, oil and gas, and lay the foundations for a true just energy transition in which no worker, community or country is left behind. History proves that this is possible. Global treaties are successful in facing global threats like nuclear weapons or landmines, and can be negotiated quickly in the face of a crisis.

So how can you help? Well, the campaign has attracted huge support from local and regional governments, which in turn puts pressure on world leaders to negotiate such a treaty. I implore you to add BaNES to this growing list, by passing a motion endorsing the fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty, which will help to accelerate the transition to a cleaner energy future that's compatible with a liveable planet.

Thank you.

This page is intentionally left blank

In 2015, the Bath City Riverside Enterprise Area was launched within which was incorporated the Sustainable Transport Route, connecting Newbridge and Twerton all the way through to Green Park Station, removing cycle traffic from the inadequate and narrow river path. In the same year, due to the foresight of the then Liberal Democrat Councillor Nigel Roberts, the council worked with Walk Ride Bath, , to submit a successful £3.8 million bid to the Cycle City Ambition Grant 2 fund. This had three deliverables:

- 1) Upgrade the Kennet & Avon Towpath between Sydney Gardens, Bathampton and link to Larkhall.
- 2) Deliver a new sister bridge to Halfpenny bridge at the back of the Bath Spa Train Station.
- 3) Renovate Locksbrook Bridge, including building a new access ramp to connect the east and west sections of the Sustainable Transport Route removing all cycle traffic off the riverside path.

By 2018,, neither of the two bridges had progressed and money was at risk of being returned to the Department for Transport. Thankfully, with the support of Walk Ride Bath, the DfT permitted £3M to be spent on the Newark Quays Bridge with an extra £1.8M funding from WECA to complete it.

Since 2015, Walk Ride Bath members have been custodians of the Sustainable Transport Route engaging directly with private developers ensuring that the route is preserved with millions invested by them to incorporate the route in their plans to ensure its eventual delivery.

The Locksbrook Bridge requires £100s of thousands, not millions, to be delivered, a significant element of which DfT has confirmed is available as a dowry. It is a vital Active Travel link connecting Bristol, Keynsham, Saltford and the Bath Spa University Campus to the heart of Bath.

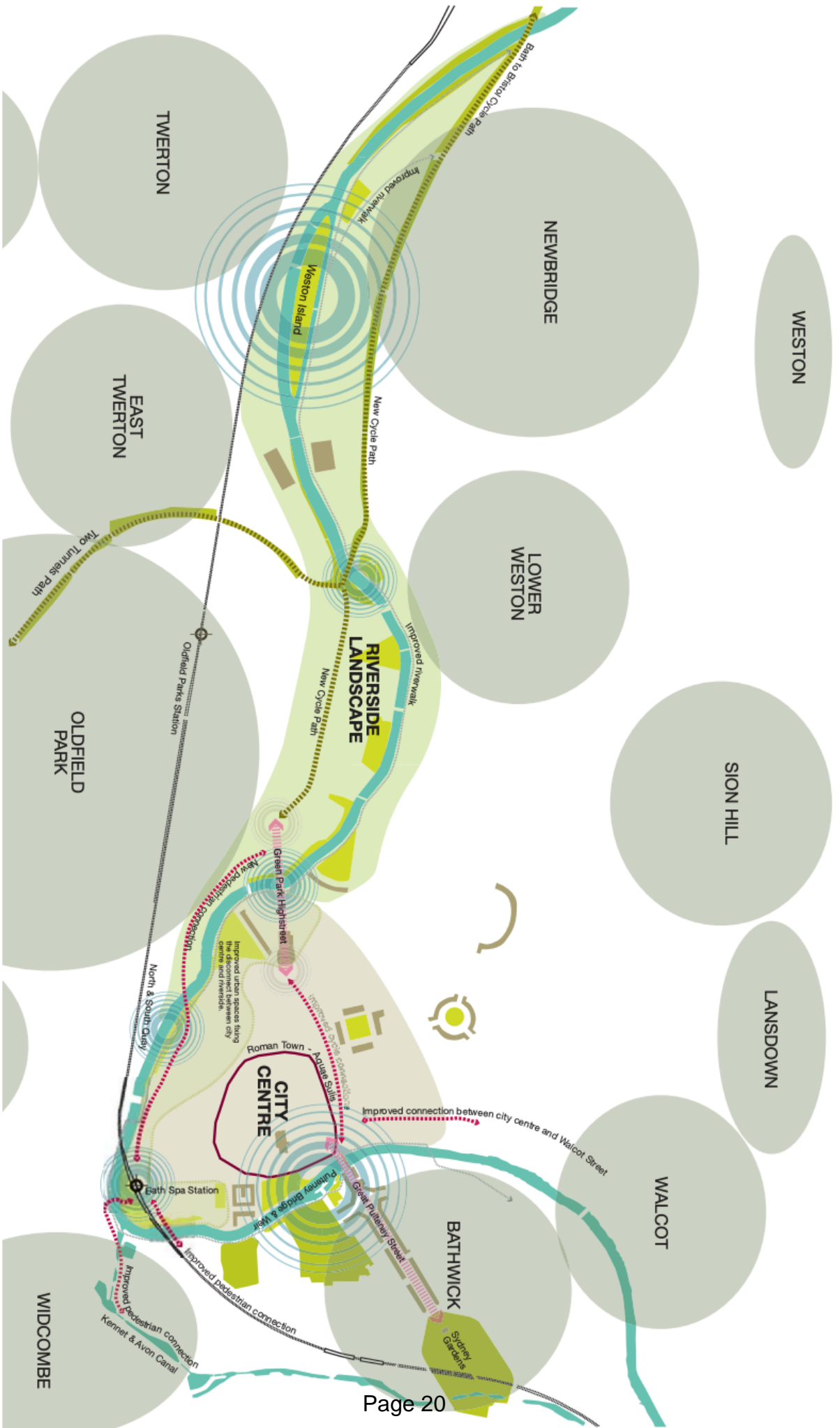
The Locksbrook Bridge is enshrined in the Bath City Riverside Enterprise Area Master Plan, and Local Plan ST2 and ST2A.

With details of the BaNES £147 million City Region Sustainable Transport settlement consultations now known it is concerning that key links are missing and we are failing to create good end to end routes that connect our communities to each other.

Walk Ride Bath requests that the council:

- a. Issues a statement of intent to deliver Locksbrook Bridge (e.g. as part of CRSTS2),
- b. assigns a project manager to take ownership of delivering the STR, and
- c. begins meaningful engagement with the DfT to take ownership of the bridge.

Thank you. Oh fantastic news on announcing the 4 new Liveable Neighbourhoods. Really well done! Can we have more please?



Show Map

Planning

search for an address

All
 Sustainable Transport
 Pollution, Contamination and Safety
 Parking Standards Zones
 Cycle Routes (ST2A)
 Highway Improvement (ST3)
 Rail Freight Routes (ST4)
 Safeguarded Rail Routes (ST1)
 Sustainable Transport (ST2)

Address search

Leaflet | Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database rights 2023

Follow us on social media



This page is intentionally left blank

I am here today to speak on the Vision Zero motion being introduced by Cllr Heijltjes and Cllr Wright, and to shed some light on the experience of young people and students in Bath and North East Somerset. Young people are some of the most exposed when it comes to unsafe roads and pedestrian infrastructure. Most of our journeys involve some sort of active travel, walking to bus stops, cycling into the city, sometimes along busy or poorly managed roads.

This is evident. If you google cyclist fatalities in Bath the top results are both people under the age of 30, some of them students coming to and from the University of Bath, where I am a student. One of them a cyclist on North Road, where there was recently a protest over the poor quality of the road surface. Many of our roads are used by an assortment of vehicles from buses and HGVs to bikes and mobility scooters. We need to be ensuring that these spaces are safe, accessible and usable for all of the diverse needs the roads in Bath and North East Somerset cater towards.

I have mentioned the reliance on active travel by young people on students but I will caveat this. Due to the risks experienced on roads many students and young people are reluctant to take longer journeys on bike and foot. I myself have experienced dangerous driving when attempting to cross Lower Bristol Road on multiple occasions, with drivers seemingly ignoring traffic signals and speed limits.

This has led to a difficult situation, an over-reliance on certain bus services such as the U2 or some feeling the need to bring their cars to Bath when starting University courses, increasing congestion and the cities carbon emissions. For other young people this might manifest as getting a lift to school rather than making the journey by foot or bike. Also increasing congestion around our cities, towns and villages. With a safer approach to our roads and pavements we might see an easing of pressure on buses, with more people taking up Tier scooters and cycling without the fear of injury or death.

We need to be ensuring that our cycle and pedestrian infrastructure is joined up so people are able to make longer journeys safely, we need to ensure there is enough space on our roads for the variety of users that encounter them, we need to be incorporating young people and our travel needs into wider plans on active travel infrastructure, and we need to make sure that those who use roads in an unsafe manner can learn how to go about their journeys without endangering others.

Whilst I will recognise the council for the work they have done so far to reduce road deaths it does not go far enough. For those that might think that zero is too ambitious, I want to ask how many deaths are okay? How many A&E hours need to be spent treating injuries from road accidents? And is it really fair that people have to take the risk of injury on our roads as a possibility in the journeys they take?

We need to be ambitious and future facing, or risk continued congestion, crowded buses, fear, and fatal accidents on our roads.

This page is intentionally left blank

Vision Zero

Whilst I greatly welcome the Councils press release to support road safety, it has to become a reality not just a statement.

I've cycled in Bath since 1982 and now more than ever feel frightened for my safety and the safety of other vulnerable road users.

To highlight my anxieties I am going to describe to you my most frequent cycle journey and propose what actions need to be taken to eliminate some risk.

Proposal 1 A school street for all school roads in Bath.

I cycle down Charmouth Road to join the A4. I am frequently met on Charmouth Rd by speeding drivers, on the wrong side of the road racing to the school for drop off/pick up. There is limited signage, no speed control or pedestrian refuge to encourage safe behaviours.

Proposal 2 Cameras to monitor / fine those vehicles driving dangerously.

I then cycle along the Upper Bristol Road to the Weston Hotel. Every day at least one driver shoots the red lights, usually more.

Proposal 3 When necessary works are carried out there must be provision in place for cyclists and pedestrians

The next part of the fairly hair raising journey takes me to the Windsor Bridge Junction. Once again I take my life in my hands as drivers race out of Tescos at speed and enter the site at a greater speed. Access to the river path has been halted twice for extended periods of time in the past few years.

Proposal 4 Appropriate signage to educate drivers about the Highway code.

Cycling from Windsor Bridge to Victoria Park is busy, however a pedestrian refuge does mean drivers have to slow down.

The designated cycle path is a positive addition until I get to the parking bays and frequently a passenger door is opened blocking any oncoming cyclist.

Proposal 5 Cycle lanes that start and finish safely.

The next part of the journey is probably the least well thought through. I have to join the traffic flow just before drivers turn a corner onto Charlotte Street. This is where I encounter the most threatening of behaviours.

From Queens Square it is almost impossible to negotiate cycle paths/roads without obstruction.

The most dangerous obstacle needs highlighting on my return journey. The cycle path comes to an abrupt stop before the refuse depot and cyclists are expected to continue their journey through a very busy 2 lane junction.

When I came to Bath in 1982 cycling/walking was a pleasurable experience. Whilst I accept that the volume of traffic has increased significantly what I don't accept is how incapable we are as a nation to promote Vision Zero – safe streets for everyone.

I cycled/walked with a young family and seldom felt intimidated. Today I am very reluctant to do the same with my grandchildren for fear of them being hurt.

I have fewer and fewer friends who will cycle with me for fear of being involved in an accident, however they will happily drive a car.

The vulnerabilities of pedestrians, cyclists and those with disabilities has to be taken seriously.

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed members of the local council, fellow residents, and concerned citizens,

We stand before you today to address a pressing issue that affects the very fabric of our community—the deplorable state of student housing. Our educational institutions attract over a quarter of our city’s population. However, the conditions in which these students live are simply unacceptable.

First and foremost, it has come to our attention that a substantial number- 68% of students in Bath- are living in accommodations where mould has become a persistent problem. This issue has the potential of leading to long-term respiratory problems alongside other health complications. 35% of students have reported worsened existing health problems, and 12% the development of new health issues. As a community that values the welfare of its residents, we cannot stand idly by while a third of Bath’s population face such health hazards. Mould growth in student housing is often a result of poor ventilation, leaks, and inadequate maintenance. Students brave the elements in poorly insulated dwellings, facing cold winters and sweltering summers. These issues do not only affect the physical health of our students but also their mental well-being. 56% of students reported being miserable and 46% of them reported feeling depressed or anxious due to their housing condition. This creates an environment that is far from conducive to learning. To put this into numbers, 31% of them reported to have experienced negative effects on their learning due to their housing situation.

Cramped living conditions exacerbate the challenges our students face. It is disheartening to see them struggling to thrive in spaces that fail to provide the basic comfort and privacy that every individual deserves.

Moreover, the unresponsiveness of landlords to the grievances of their tenants is deeply troubling. The lack of accountability leaves students feeling powerless and neglected, as their legitimate concerns about living conditions fall on deaf ears. They often feel as if they had no say or leverage when it comes to their own housing situation- a service they are paying an exorbitant amount of money for. We demand a higher standard of care from those who profit from providing essential housing services to our students.

On top of that, accessibility is another critical aspect that demands attention. Our housing should be inclusive and cater to the diverse needs of our student population. These barriers prevent some students from fully participating in the academic and social life of our community due to inadequate infrastructure and accessibility features. 31% of students have reported that they can’t invite family and friends over to their accommodation.

Our student population is vast and vibrant, but often quite separate from long-time residents. To strengthen that bond, collaboration is key. We’d like to picture a community where students enjoy free, warm, recreational spaces to foster that sense of belonging. By collaborating with universities, we tap into valuable insight that builds trust between students and residents. With a transparent and inclusive approach, not demanding excessive time or resources from the students who are often working over 20 hours a week (according to our recent survey) alongside their degrees, we hope to ensure our hard-working cohort feel heard and valued.

Let us work together to rectify these shortcomings and to create a community that values the well-being and future of every resident.

Thank you.

This page is intentionally left blank

Nicola James statement

Good evening, and thank you for this opportunity.

We unequivocally condemn all violence, express deep mourning for all victims, and call for the safe return of those illegally held on both sides in the Israel/Gaza conflict.

Bath & North East Somerset Council has a commendable history of addressing global challenges and must act on its moral responsibility to speak out against the "textbook genocide" in Gaza, as termed by a leading UN official, academics and humanitarian agencies.

The Local Government Act empowers action in the community's best interests, recognising global interconnectedness.

Past precedents set by this council—such as the Climate Emergency Resolution and lighting up council-owned buildings in Ukrainian flag colours—clearly illustrate a collective belief that our responsibilities extend beyond local boundaries.

The civilian death toll in Gaza is catastrophic, including over 6,150 children, thousands still lying under the rubble, and countless wounded in need of urgent medical attention and humanitarian support. This is particularly poignant for our community, with constituents directly impacted.

Each of you will receive a link to sign a public online letter calling for a permanent ceasefire. This visible commitment lets constituents know where each of you stands, contributing to building momentum for further actions, such as a council resolution.

Before concluding, we ask: How many of you, who wear a poppy with pride, want to show your commitment to 'never again'? We urge you to actively work towards a world where 'never again' is a reality. By signing, you declare commitment to justice and peace, standing with 76% of the British public supporting a ceasefire (YouGov poll).

In conclusion, there can be no neutral stance on war crimes—collective punishment, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Our local decisions impact globally, engaging your responsibility to compel just actions from the government. Take a stand against these injustices and position yourselves on the right side of history. In the words of Desmond Tutu, 'If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.'

Thank you for your attention and in anticipation of your commitment to peace, justice, and the rule of law.

This page is intentionally left blank

COUNCIL MEETING 30TH NOVEMBER 2023

STATEMENTS & QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Councillor Statements

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. Cllr Tim Warren | - Verges and lack of grass cutting |
| 2. Cllr Eleanor Jackson | - Developments in the arrangements for future bus services in NE Somerset |
| 3. Cllr Paul May | - Care Leavers' protected status |
| 4. Cllr Shaun Stephenson McGall | - Pavement parking |
| 5. Cllr Fiona Gourley | - Rural bus service provision discussions with WECA & recent developments with Westlink |

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - COUNCILLORS

M	01	Question from:	Councillor Robin Moss
<p>In a recent BaNES newsletter, the leader is quoted “We are providing traditional lights in Combe Down, Weston, Moorland Road and Larkhall as well as working in partnership with the three town councils on lights in Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock.”. Please can you detail what support Keynsham, Radstock & MSN were given, & what support was offered to Westfield & other parishes & towns?</p>			
Answer from:			Cllr Paul Roper
<p>In 2022 the Council entered into a four year framework contract for the provision of traditional Christmas Lights with Field and Lawn.</p> <p>All installation and removal of lights, testing of infrastructure, electrical switch on support to be provided by the Council’s Highways Electrical contractor (Volker Highways).</p> <p>The three Town Councils were offered the opportunity of receiving lights under this contract. Midsomer Norton Town Council were asked to arrange their own Christmas Tree going forward in line with Radstock and Keynsham. Midsomer Norton and Radstock Town Councils were informed that they would need to make an annual financial contribution from Christmas 2023 onward as well as Keynsham.</p> <p>The number of traditional Christmas Lights in Bath City Centre was reduced – particularly the cross-street displays. The Bath Communities continued to receive lights directly from B&NES. However, Weston had the number of motifs it received reduced from 12 to 6 and Moorland Road’s were reduced from 11 to 6. (Traders in Moorland Road also make their own Christmas lighting arrangements utilising power from private businesses).</p> <p>The parishes of Peasedown St John; Westfield and Whitchurch have street light columns adapted for Christmas Lighting and make their own arrangements. No other communities have street light columns adapted for Christmas Lights, although a number of communities have Christmas trees, displays in shopping areas etc.</p> <p>Annual requests are received from traders and communities for new or additional displays in their areas – they are currently advised that</p>			

they will need to fully fund any additional infrastructure/displays required.

M	02	Question from:	Councillor Chris Dando
----------	-----------	-----------------------	-------------------------------

The council's draft economic strategy reports that in 2021, at 5.8% BNES had the 8th worst rates of 16–17-year-olds not in education, employment or training or whose activity is not known (NEET)

- What measures can the Council take to address this major failing, given young people who fall through the gaps in this way will have impaired life chances?

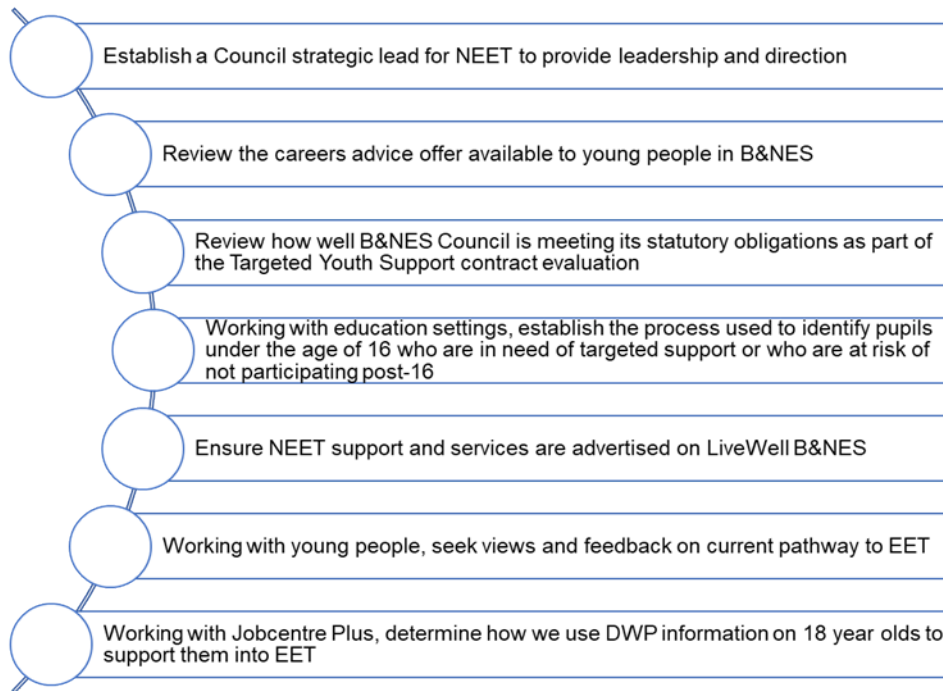
Answer from:	Cllr Paul Roper
---------------------	------------------------

Targeted early help for children and young people aged 13-19 years (up to 25 with SEND) is commissioned via the Targeted Youth Support (TYS) Service which is run by Youth Connect South West. The TYS Service seeks to improve outcomes for those with complex needs in order to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities by:

- Helping young people overcome barriers in order to fully engage in education, employment or training
- Providing support and interventions that will engage and challenge vulnerable young people to help them develop their resilience and make a positive difference to their lives and communities

One of the five overarching service outcomes is to ensure young people are in education, employment or training. The service also undertakes statutory returns on the Councils behalf – tracking and reporting the number of young people participating in education, employment and training, those who are not in education, employment or training and those whose current activity is unknown, all of which will be submitted to the National Client Caseload Information System in accordance with DfE guidance.

A 2022 B&NES Public Health and Prevention report (Participation of Young People: education, employment and training) highlighted the following areas of development:



The Business and Skills team are working endlessly trying to bring in additional funding into B&NES to support various residents including NEETs so we can look to offer additional services outside what is already commissioned.

Our ambition as a team is to set up a NEET network which will help us produce a NEET strategy for B&NES as we don't hold one. Recently we have been awarded UKSPF funding which we have partnered up with Bath Rugby Foundation and Little Lost Robot, our approach is to present a unique opportunity to engage young people through non-conventional routes into education and sector skills training, alongside confidence building and mental health support.

The breadth of the project spanning both sports engagement and arts and culture combined with young person led, collective design and support for young people creates new and game-changing support for young people in Bath and NE Somerset.

Both Arts and Sports sectors are spaces where young people who struggle in a school environment often thrive, supporting team building,

growth in self-discipline and group working, reducing social isolation, building confidence and creating new routes into FE, HE and employment for young people.

Both Sports and Arts and Culture offer unique opportunities to improve self-worth, make friends for life and create safe spaces to talk and share complicated feelings. This work is vital, particularly post pandemic where young people are increasingly struggling with complex mental health challenges, combined with an increased lack of options.

M	03	Question from:	Councillor Chris Dando
----------	-----------	-----------------------	-------------------------------

The same draft strategy reports that since 2010, while the UK economy has grown at a rate of 21.8%, BNES has only grown by a staggeringly low 3.8%. It also reports that BNES' 'gross value added' (GVA) – its hourly output value - is more than £10 lower than the England average at £28.45.

- When did BNES first begin to diverge from the English averages for GVA and economic growth, and to what do you attribute this gap?
- What measures in the draft economic strategy are intended to address this shortfall over the period concerned

Answer from:	Cllr Paul Roper
---------------------	------------------------

When did B&NES begin to diverge from English averages and what do we think is happening in B&NES?

Divergence from the English GVA growth trends began in 2003, after which GVA growth in B&NES has been sluggish. For example, by 2019, the economy in B&NES has grown by just 7% since 2001, whereas the South West and English growth in the same time period was 28% and 40% respectively. The below is based on our review of the Strategic Evidence Base, however we think this is an issue which could be explored at a WECA level to undertake further research to understand drivers of slow growth.

1. Workplace wages are lower than England average and the gap is widening

The largest sectors for employment are Health, Education, and Accommodation & food services, these have also grown quickly in the past 10 years for employment (health +20%, education + 9%, Accommodation & food +43%). If these jobs are lower paid (or have seen slower pay increases/freezes in the last decade) this will also translate into slower GVA growth. Resident wages are slightly higher, suggesting people may be commuting out of B&NES for higher wage jobs (and their contribution to GVA will therefore be calculated in places like Bristol or South

Gloucestershire stats). However it should be noted that both workplace and resident wages declined between 2019 and 2021, which is counter to the national average.

2. The sectors which are most prevalent in B&NES and that are growing are lower value add.

See above for the growth in the top 3 sectors by employment. Alongside this, in the decade to 2019 two higher productivity sectors saw slight declines in GVA – Manufacturing & Professional, scientific & technical activities. There's a question to think about the sector mix in B&NES. There are opportunities to encourage the growth of both productive service industries and manufacturing. Professional & Financial, and Service Industries will benefit from the developments on the Quays and the Innovation Corridor.

We also have a significant manufacturing history with Cross, RPI and global companies Rotork and Horstman. Many of these companies want to stay and grow in B&NES. We have over 60 industrial sites in B&NES. We have lost some to other uses, but are continuing to look at ways of strengthening protections, not just for strategic sites but also for smaller ones typically overlooked that are in neighbourhood and village locations, close to where people live.

We have opportunities to increase and attract manufacturing and R&D by the protection of employment land and by supporting our key manufacturers and pressing ahead with significant new land allocations for manufacturing, with allocations being proposed at Hicks Gate, Peasedown St John, Keynsham and Somer Valley.

3. Proportion of working age residents

B&NES has seen an increase of 17.5% in people aged 65+, and an 8.2% increase in people aged 15-64 which suggests that the population is still growing particularly older residents. Lower age group growth is likely driven by the student population, who are transient. Lower % of working age residents means less people available for work, which can have a negative impact on GVA. There's a high employment rate, which can be a positive, however it may also suggest a future shortage of workers. There are also a higher number of part time workers than in other areas.

What measures in the draft economic strategy are intended to address this shortfall over the period concerned?

The updated strategy calls for a new approach to local economic development, which draws on Doughnut Economics principles to deliver balanced action that ensures the future B&NES is one which operates in the safe space between the social floor (whereby the needs of all our residents are met) and the ecological ceiling to ensure we do not overshoot our planetary boundaries. As part of this we have developed

a holistic set of Key Performance Indicators to measure our success which look beyond GVA. However, the priorities and actions in the have been designed to address the drivers of slow growth as shown in the table below;

Factor	Relevant priority
Lower than average workplace wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good work – support businesses to be good employers (including encouraging the employers who pay the Real Living Wage) and residents to access inclusive skills and training opportunities • Resilient businesses – to diversify and grow businesses in B&NES which can pay higher wages and which create the types of jobs that match to the highly skilled residents who may be commuting out • Creativity & innovation – translating university strengths into new high value businesses and jobs • Stronger places – recognising that B&NES is part of a wider economy and should continue to improve and invest in regional connectivity to ensure residents and businesses can access those economic opportunities in the wider subregion
Sectoral composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and innovation - changing B&NES sector mix through the resilient businesses and creativity & innovation themes • Supporting all sectors to become more productive, in particular the focus on the visitor economy in Stronger Places and the foundational economy in Creativity and Innovation • Resilient businesses - invest in the infrastructure businesses need (employment space, digital) to attract and retain the business base
Proportion of working age residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing – to ensure that current and future residents can afford to live in B&NES • Stronger places – ensuring that all parts of B&NES flourish and create places people want to live and visit • Good work – support everyone who wants a job to access opportunities through inclusive live long learning offer

M	04	Question from:	Councillor Eleanor Jackson
<p>Given the financial difficulties in which Somerset Council finds itself, and with the 'school run' 404 from Grovewood Road, Haydon to Frome via Writhlington School having already been cut, what contingency plans is Bath & North East Somerset Council making so that cross border, outside WECA, community subsidised buses can continue? In March at Full Council, Westfield Waterside's Mrs Harrington addressed council on the plight of the passengers of the 82 Paulton to Tynning, Radstock, supported by representatives of the 140 daily 82 bus passengers. Has the Council made any progress on my suggestion to combine the two services 414/82, as is done on Saturday already, under a BANES/Somerset contract which still has two years to run?</p>			
Answer from:		Cllr Sarah Warren	
<p>We acknowledge the significance of Service 82, as we recognise that it serves areas in great need of connection by public transport, contributing significantly to social amenity. The proposal to replace it with service 414, sharing costs with Somerset County Council, is included in a proposal that B&NES council has presented to the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) for consideration. WECA is our transport authority and is in receipt of £57.5m from the Department for Transport specifically for the purpose of enhancing bus services.</p> <p>B&NES continues to emphasise to WECA the vital importance to our communities of supported bus services such as the 82. Indeed, B&NES Council Leader Cllr Kevin Guy proposed an amendment to the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) paper at the WECA Committee meeting of 6th October 2023, supported by the leader of S Gloucestershire council and the Bristol Mayor, proposing to spend an underspend on the BSIP budget on these important services. However, the WECA Mayor chose to use his veto to overrule this amendment and to prioritise instead enhancements to routes which are already well served, and an extension to the failing Westlink Demand Responsive Transport service, over the restoration of vital links to our smaller towns.</p> <p>I want to assure you that the 82/414 proposal remains an extremely high priority for B&NES, and this council will continue to fight for the restoration of vital service to all of our communities.</p>			
M	05	Question from:	Councillor Eleanor Jackson
<p>Bath & North East Somerset Council has enthusiastically embraced the Active Travel policy, and expended much officer time and money on cycle routes, yet when a virtually totally blind Westfield resident complains that he cannot get past hedges stretching almost the entire width of the pavement on both sides of a pothole strewn road, Highways officers allegedly refuse to enforce, beyond writing to the owners of the hedges. Why doesn't council policy include clearing pavements and filling potholes so that the disabled can safely walk, to the benefit of their</p>			

physical and mental health?

Answer from:

Cllr Manda Rigby & Cllr Sarah Warren

All publicly maintainable highways are routinely inspected and any safety issues found within intervention levels on the road or footpath are instructed for repair. Where private vegetation is found to obstruct or encroach significantly upon the highway. The Council as local highway Authority will write to the relevant owners under section 154 of The Highways Act 1980. The Council can if required, after expiry of a notice, intervene and seek to recover costs incurred.

M

06

Question from:

Councillor Liz Hardman

How many residential places did the council provide, in how many sites and in which wards, in 2015, 2019, 2022, and how many does it expect to provide in each of the next ten years?

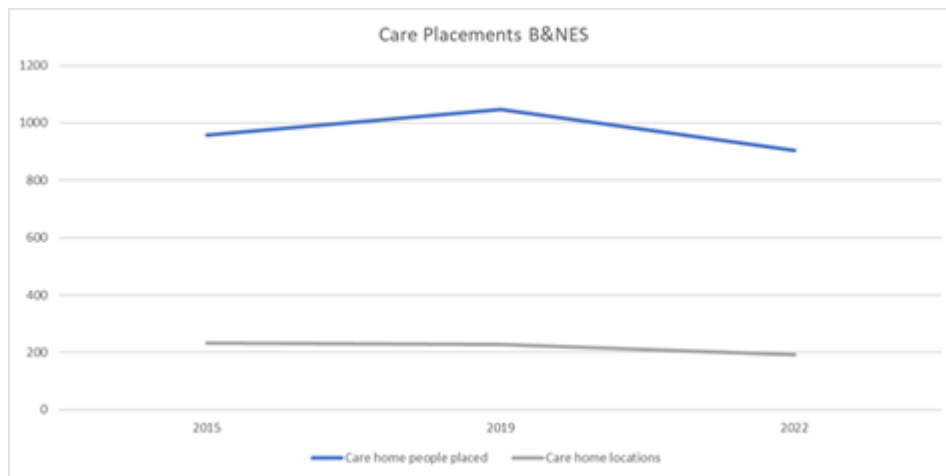
Answer from:

Cllr Alison Born

The council has collated the available information in response to the Cllr Hardman's question:

Figure 1. Residential care places provided by B&NES

Ward	Column Lal					
	2015		2019		2022	
	Sum of People	Sum of Locations	Sum of People	Sum of Locations	Sum of People	Sum of Locations
Bathavon North	38	5	18	2	13	1
Bathwick	40	6	54	7	41	3
Chew Valley	32	3	2	2	1	1
Combe Down	7	2	8	2	0	0
High Littleton	7	1	0	0	0	0
Keynsham East	0	0	1	1	0	0
Keynsham North	1	1	2	2	1	1
Keynsham South	0	0	3	2	2	2
Kingsmead	80	26	119	18	66	13
Lambridge	3	1	0	0	0	0
Lansdown	1	1	0	0	0	0
Mendip	24	3	2	2	9	2
Midsomer Norton Redfield	34	10	34	11	30	5
Moorlands	40	4	16	4	8	4
Newbridge	0	0	10	3	18	2
Odd Down	26	7	25	4	31	3
Oldfield Park	1	1	3	3	2	2
Out of area/unknown	439	112	556	117	537	118
Paulton	1	1	3	3	2	2
Publow & Whitchurch	41	1	1	1	0	0
Radstock	3	3	2	2	3	3
Saltford	18	5	63	8	43	4
Southdown	18	3	41	4	26	3
Timsbury	26	8	21	5	21	4
Twerton	32	8	25	7	22	6
Walcot	1	1	0	0	0	0
Westfield	18	10	11	8	8	3
Weston	20	9	23	9	15	7
Widcombe & Lymcombe	7	2	4	2	4	2
Grand Total	958	234	1047	229	903	191



This data is for all adults as no age was specified.

Reflections

There is a notable impact in the number of placements made in 2022 compared to 2019. This reflects data related to the impact of Covid and the reduction in number of placements needed for the older demographic in the direct post pandemic. The data suggests that numbers of placements in 2023 and 2024 is expected to return to pre pandemic levels and the figures seen in 2019.

Placements in care settings reflect the increase in population of older people within the B&NES authority area as well as the increasing numbers of people reported to experience frailty.

Placements across wards reflect where care homes are located, where there is availability, as well as those homes most suited to identified needs as often care homes offer specialist services.

We anticipate a 10-year projection to reflect the increasing ageing demographic and numbers of frail older people although there are broad and complex factors that may influence this projection of placements. For example, size, number, and type of care homes will vary over a 10-year period across wards. Given the 15% increase of 65+ population projected by 2042 in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment a broad brushstroke of a 15% increase over the next 10 years would be suggested as an authority level figure but would need further consideration at ward level.

Caveats to response

The Business Intelligence team have been able to draw together the data presented in figure 1, although reference to the data should consider the following key points:

- 2015 was prior to the migration to B&NES current system, so the data migration issues may mean that the figures are under-reported.
 - Ward-level information relies on matching postcodes to address details for service provision currently held in the system; changes in service provision addresses since the earlier reporting years (2015 and 2019) may impact on the accuracy of the ward-level reporting.
 - Some people were recorded as being in more than one location in the year in question. The totals in bold at the bottom of the table reflect the unique count of individuals and may be less than the sum of the rows above.
 - Out of Area placements are confirmed as placed with genuine providers and the data is affected by source of funding (council/CHC).
- In addition, some data errors may occur where postcodes have not been matched to designated wards within the system. Given the timescale for this request it has not been possible to investigate this data further.

M	07	Question from:	Councillor Liz Hardman
----------	-----------	-----------------------	-------------------------------

How many (a) individuals (b) families with dependents in BNES who are in work, have used food banks in each quarter since 2018, and what estimates or calculations have you made of projected use figures for the next 5 years?

Answer from:	Cllr Alison Born
---------------------	-------------------------

Research by the Trussell Trust estimates that 1 in 5 people using their food banks are in working households and that insecure work is correlated with food insecurity. The employment status of people using food banks is not systematically recorded by Trussell Trust affiliated food banks in the UK.

The employment status of people being referred to food banks in B&NES by Welfare Support or Citizens Advice is recorded on individual case notes however it is not recorded as an identifiable status on each record and therefore not easily accessible on local systems. In B&NES there are three Trussell Trust affiliated food banks operating from 10 venues in Bath, Keynsham and the Somer Valley. The table below show trends in their activity since 2017/18. Please note that these figures represent the number of parcels distributed rather than the number of individuals receiving them. Also note that data provided by the Trussell Trust on food bank usage is published by financial year rather than by quarter.

Period	Total number of food parcels given out	Number of parcels for adults	Number of parcels for children
April 2017 – March 2018	6870	4240	2630
April 2018 – March 2019	7755	4885	2870
April 2019 – March 2020	9935	5978	3975
April 2020 – March 2021	9706	6232	3474
April 2021 – March 2022	7106	4431	2675
April 2022 – March 2023	9028	5950	3078

The trend in Trussell Trust food bank usage in B&NES from April 2017 to March 2023 has been increasing overall, with a fall in 2021/22 likely due to Government financial support available during this period.

Figures from the Trussell Trust cannot be used to fully explain the scale of food bank use across the UK or locally as they do not include independent food aid providers and community groups also providing emergency food.

Food bank usage is sensitive to Government policy on social security and is therefore difficult to predict in the long term. B&NES food bank usage is estimated to remain high over the short to medium term.

M	08	Question from:	Councillor Liz Hardman
----------	-----------	-----------------------	-------------------------------

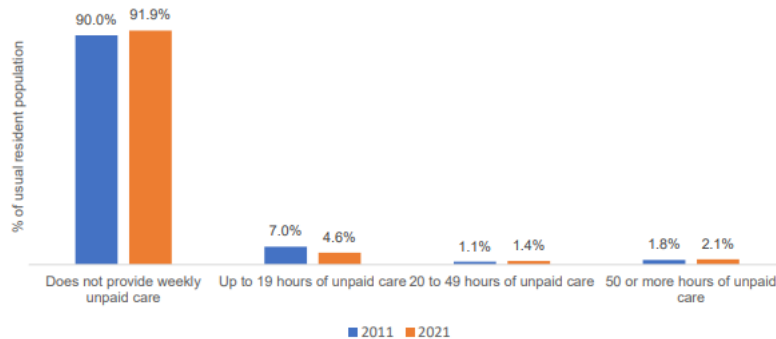
As the council's draft economic strategy emphasises, an estimated 19% of our children live in relative poverty and 42% of those claiming Universal Credit are in work. What plans has the council developed to ensure that our most vulnerable residents – often hungry, in unsafe and insecure homes, with associated physical and mental health implications – will be (a) safely housed (b) have equal and fair access to education and community services (c) nutritiously fed?

Answer from:		Cllr Paul Roper	
<p>GS Housing contribution: The Council provides a range of interventions to help ensure that our most vulnerable residents are safely housed. It is not possible to fully detail these here but as examples they include rigorously enforcing housing standards, ensuring that nominations to social housing are prioritised to those in greatest need; offering a range of grants and assistance to low-income, disabled and otherwise vulnerable residents to undertake essential repairs & adaptations; providing advice and assistance to those who are homeless or about become homeless and delivering a range of supported housing for those in greatest need. The Council is drafting a Housing Plan which will bring together and articulate these workstreams more fully.</p>			
M	09	Question from:	Cllr Lesley Mansell
<p>The 2021 census shows that across Britain, 9% of people provide unpaid care. All but ten of B&NES' wards are at this level or higher. Every single week, almost 4,000 people (3,848) in B&NES provide over 50 hours unpaid care work. Another 11,120 spend between 9 - 49 hours a week caring, unpaid.</p> <p>By ward and gender (female/male) how many B&NES residents have you calculated will provide more than 16 hours unpaid care a week in each of the next ten years?</p>			
Answer from:		Cllr Alison Born	
<p>This information (below) has been taken from the latest Strategic Evidence Base for B&NES available in full here https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk Projections of the numbers of unpaid carers for the next ten years are currently not available. We are working with B&NES unpaid carers to develop a new Carers Strategy which would include projections of the numbers of unpaid carers based on national and local data.</p>			

[Back to Section Contents](#)[Back to Main Contents](#)

Unpaid Care

Proportion of the B&NES population by hours of unpaid care provided, Census 2011 and 2021



Unpaid care	B&NES (2021)
Provides no unpaid care	169,418
Provides 9 hours or less unpaid care a week	6,485
Provides 10 to 19 hours unpaid care a week	2,085
Provides 20 to 34 hours unpaid care a week	1,282
Provides 35 to 49 hours unpaid care a week	1,269
Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week	3,849
Total	184,388

- In the 2021 census, **8.1%** of the usual resident population of B&NES reported providing **unpaid care**, an overall **decrease** from 2011 (9.9%).
- The largest decrease was seen in those providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care per week, down from 7.0% in 2011 to 4.6% in 2021.
- A slight increase was recorded in those providing 50 or more hours of unpaid care per week at 2.1%, up from 1.8% in 2011.
- **6,485** usual B&NES residents report providing 9 hours or less of unpaid care per week in 2021, representing **43%** of all unpaid care provision reported in B&NES.

Data Notes:

- Census 2021 was undertaken during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived and managed their provision of unpaid care, and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond.
- Caution should be taken when making comparisons between 2011 and 2021 because of changes in question wording and response options.
- Census 2021 question text asked: "Do you look after, or give any help or support to, anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems relating to old age? (Exclude anything you do as part of your paid employment)".

Sources:

1. ONS Unpaid Care Census 2021 Local Authority dataset <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/healthdisabilityandunpaidcarecensus2021inenglandandwales>
2. ONS NOMIS Unpaid Care Census 2011 dataset <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/ks301uk>

M	10	Question from	Cllr Lesley Mansell
<p>The South-West has the some of the country's highest rates of in-work benefit claimants. Among the highest for B&NES are in North East Somerset. (Source: Department for Work and Benefits Sept 2023)</p> <p>This month's autumn statement announced a cancellation of free NHS prescriptions for benefit claimants who don't engage with the work-seeking process. The process for in work benefit claimants insists they must attend appointments at given times or risk being refused benefits, when they may be at another place of work or, providing unpaid care. This now include losing free NHS prescriptions.</p> <p>By ward and gender (female/male) how many B&NES residents claim in-work benefits, and what work has been done to understand the overlap between people who are in-work claimants and those who are providing unpaid care, and what are the findings?</p>			
Answer from:		Cllr Alison Born	
<p>Current claimant count data is published by the Department for Work and Pensions on a monthly basis. Claimant counts for October 2023 broken down by ward and sex are attached.</p> <p>From a statistical perspective, whilst the Council holds data on those providing unpaid care who have made themselves known to services, this information cannot be linked to out of work benefits data. That data is held by the Department for Work and Pensions and is not available to the authority at a person level. The 2021 census collected information surrounding provision of unpaid care and economic activity status, this data is being reviewed as part of the carer's strategy.</p> <p>We are working with B&NES unpaid carers on developing a new Carers Strategy. As part of this work, we would explore the relationship between the caring role and in-work benefits and would use these findings to inform the strategy.</p>			
M	11	Question from	Cllr Lesley Mansell
<p>B&NES 2021 census data shows women in Westmoreland are expected to live 10.1 years longer than women in Publow and Whitchurch, while men in Midsomer Norton North live 6.5 years longer than men in Twerton.</p> <p>What specific interventions are being put into place to 'level up' quality of life, reduce health inequalities and when are they projected to deliver statistically significant improvements?</p>			

Answer from:

Cllr Alison Born

Life expectancy varies across B&NES. In general, the least deprived areas have higher life expectancy and the most deprived areas have lower life expectancy, with a gradient seen between them.

All of the work of the Council, the NHS and the third sector, not to mention local business and higher education, plays a role in improving the quality of life of people across our district, whichever area they live in. However, the Council's Corporate Strategy and the B&NES Health and Wellbeing Strategy set out plans that will reduce health inequalities and the conditions that contribute to them by focusing more support to communities or areas who currently have worse health and wellbeing outcomes. On top of the business as usual work some more specific interventions include:

- Improving intensive educational support for children eligible for free school meals, who are Looked After, who have special educational needs or are from minority ethnic groups.
- Working with B&NES social housing providers to provide low carbon affordable warmth for existing social housing to help prevent damp and mould, and cold related illnesses
- Delivering the new model of integrated neighbourhoods to provide more equal access for people to physical and mental health services for all ages
- Delivering the Community Wellbeing Hub with its accessible approach for people to find support for debt, housing advice, low cost food, support for mental health problems, etc.
- The B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care System published an Inequalities Strategy in 2023. To deliver against this, the Integrated Care Board has allocated £357,000 of funds to B&NES (with an intention that this becomes recurrent funding, subject to future budget pressures). It is overseen by the Director of Public Health as part of the B&NES Integrated Care Alliance. Starting in April 2024, the funding will go to a number of agreed projects and services that are specifically targeting our most deprived areas and excluded groups.

When are they projected to deliver statistically significant improvements?

This is a very good question but one that is difficult to answer. We expect to see programmes mentioned above being implemented over the coming 1-3 years. And these should have positive impacts on people's daily lives and health and wellbeing, which will be monitored. However, measuring how this work will have impacts on life expectancy is difficult. Partly because it takes a long time to influence an outcome such as life expectancy. And partly because many of these programmes contribute indirectly to life expectancy and so are hard to demonstrate their impact on that outcome. We also need to be honest about the scale of the task required to level up our communities and

opportunities in life, especially against a backdrop of national cuts to funding of public services which unfortunately drives outcomes in the opposite direction.

Statement by Cllr Dr Eleanor Jackson, Full Council. 30 November 2023
They say that as you get older, time runs faster. Certainly at my age, I am an 'angry old woman in a hurry'. I find it very hard to explain to residents why getting the facts about bus services, Westlink or even bus stop provision takes so long. On the other hand, standing here making yet another statement to council, I feel time has stood still. The problem is not a broken Tardis, but tardiness. Arguing about whose fault this is, is a waste of time, but I would plead with council at least to work with other unitary authorities to maintain the cross border services.

We also need inter-agency work to produce precise data on the savings to the health services and to the environment. And to speak plain Yorkshire, if the problems are not resolved, the reckoning will come in the forthcoming elections.

We need an up to date Equalities Assessment on the effect of the cuts, which from observation seem to have affected young and old disproportionately. Then the pre 2005 school children's bus pass should be re-introduced. Habits of a lifetime might develop.

Route combinations such as the 82/424 should be trialled.

Parish councils should be enabled to set up franchises.

'Better bus stops' campaign in partnership with parish councils.

Highways should introduce more bus lanes and remove road obstacles.

A levy on all developers of more than 10 houses created through an SPD and attached to the Local Plan to replace the present scattergun S106 and CIL demands. Developers should not be required to fund bus stops when there are no buses running past.

Today is St Andrew's Day, and while it is unlikely Andrew bar Jonas ever visited Scotland, or, as is rather more likely, followed St Thomas to India, it is hard not to interpret his fishing and ferry service as being more reliable than the various bus services in Bath & North East Somerset! While community supported public transport is vital for residents' mental health, for reducing our carbon footprint and enabling the rural economy, elderly people should not be driven to riding round and round a particular route to keep warm and have company, as happens now. Buses are only one element in a wider social context. I call on this council to show compassion and imagination and do everything it can mend a broken system.

This page is intentionally left blank

Cllr Paul May – Care Leavers’ protected status

Thank you Chair. I’m very glad to read this statement on behalf of Councillor Paul May, because the council’s support for care experienced young people is a very important issue.

As you all know, councillors share responsibility as corporate parents for children in care – this is currently about 240 looked-after children.

At the age of 18 children officially leave the care system and become independent, however – as with our own children – the parental role doesn’t end there and the council continues working with care experienced young people until the age of 25. As of last month, B&NES is supporting 110 care leavers who are allocated to a personal advisor and a further 90 people aged between 21 and 25 who can ask for support at any time.

The council and its partners are very aware of the need to continue to support care experienced young adults and we are doing so in a variety of ways. This includes advice, support in finding work or going into further education, accommodation and so on. These are all laid out in our Local Offer and in the Pledge to Children in Care, which colleagues will remember discussing in May.

This ongoing support is particularly in recognition of the challenges faced by care experienced people, which can include financial struggles, mental health problems, and sadly a higher chance of dying early or going to prison.

Colleagues, I know you are all very supportive of the Corporate Parenting Group meetings, which are the forum for discussing how we support looked-after and care experienced young people. One of the issues currently being discussed is for B&NES and its partners to treat care experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic. This would help to recognise that care experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination and disadvantage.

Other people have protected status by law but we can give our children and young people this commitment they have had to fight for in the past.

This issue has been discussed with Directors and Senior Leaders within the council and Councillor May is undertaking to bring an update to a forthcoming Corporate Parenting Group meeting with more information. If colleagues are agreeable, he intends that this proposal should come before Council as a formal and cross-party motion.

Care experienced young people are vulnerable and this is one way we can show them we care about them.

This page is intentionally left blank

Cllr Shaun Stephenson-McGall – Pavement parking

It's time for action on pavement parking! It has been three years since the Department for Transport's consulted on pavement parking in England.

Last week representatives from Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking, delivered an Anniversary Card to 10 Downing Street signed by thousands of people, including me, calling for a response.

In Scotland, a nationwide ban is being rolled out next month on the 11th December.

The Government consultation in the summer of 2020 proposed three options:

1. Improving the Traffic Regulation Order process, under which local authorities can already prohibit pavement parking.
2. A legislative change to allow local authorities with civil parking enforcement powers to enforce against 'unnecessary obstruction of the pavement'.
3. A legislative change to introduce a London-style pavement parking prohibition throughout England.

Parking on the pavement is illegal in London but elsewhere it is covered by criminal and civil law, with different rules in different parts of the country and vastly different experiences of enforcement. Theoretically the Police can act if a vehicle causes a hazard or an obstruction and causes pedestrians to enter the road but enforcement from the constabulary is rare.

This Council like many others has an adopted hierarchy of transport options which puts pedestrians first, and I shouldn't need to remind Councillors about our public sector equality duty under the Equality Act.

Pavement parking is dangerous and affects us all whether you're in a rural village like Timsbury or in sub-urban Bath. It makes streets inaccessible for older people, those with visual and physical disabilities, wheelchair users and those who use mobility aids, and forces families with pushchairs and young children into the road.

It's not only pavement parking which is an issue for pedestrians; street clutter and electric car charging leads are also a concern. Therefore, it is good to note that this Council is currently running a trial of on-street cable channels to enable residents to charge electric vehicles safely from their homes.

It's not just me who is concerned about pavement parking. YouGov polling commissioned by Living Streets found that 62% of adults over 65 in England were worried about obstructions on the pavement. 87% of parents have had to walk into the road because of pavement parking and that 80% would be more likely to walk their child to school if there wasn't pavement parking.

So ending pavement parking would be great for our children's health and fitness, help reduce 'school run' congestion and pollution, and also help tackle the climate emergency. Moreover, a Living Streets FOI request found that 93% of Councils in England have received complaints from members of the public about pavement

parking. I'm sure this is a topic that has filled the casework inbox of many councillors over the years.

The consultation was a welcome step, but three years is too long for a response. We need to know now how the Government intends to tackle pavement parking across England. It's not just Living Street who are campaigns for a nationwide ban but organisations and charities as diverse as Guide Dogs, RNIB, Disabled Motoring UK, Sustrans, Spinal Injuries Association, and the British Parking Association.

Pavement parking combined with far too many speeding vehicles through our communities is a very hazardous combination. Forcing the most vulnerable in our communities into the road and into oncoming traffic is dangerous, scary and needs to be stopped!

Clear pavements need clear laws. We need a nationwide default ban, with the option to allow pavement parking in certain circumstances, as is currently available in London. This would be much easier for everyone to understand.

There I would request that the Leader of the Council together with the Cabinet Member for Highways write to:

1. The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP, Secretary of State for Transport, pressing him to publish the results of the consultation without further delay and move ahead with the preferred option of "a legislative change to introduce a London-style pavement parking prohibition throughout England".
2. Our Local MPs in North East Somerset and Bath, asking them to raise this issue in Parliament.

Cllr Fiona Gourley – Rural buses

In October campaigners from across B&NES gathered in Keynsham to demand that decision makers restore regular local buses. This preceded an important transport meeting of the three Local Authorities and WECA. A petition signed by 1300 people, including cross party support, continues to gather momentum: www.bathnesbuspetition.org.uk

The three Local Authority Leaders signed the petition, and jointly presented an amendment which included restoring regular services to stranded communities.

Despite eloquent speeches from Cllr Kevin Guy, Cllr Claire Young from South Gloucestershire, and Bristol Mayor Marvin Rees, the WECA Mayor vetoed the amendment. He has unilaterally decided to use unspent funds from his vanity Birthday Bus scheme to extend the failing Westlink and to make frequent bus routes even more frequent.

B&NES Council was very grateful for the cross-party support to try to call in that decision. WECA again brushed it off, but we are pursuing the validity of that response.

Sarah Warren, I, and our excellent transport team continue to meet WECA staff to seek ways to implement the proposal we presented in July: to improve Westlink and to restore key bus routes to stranded communities. So, we welcome recent changes to Westlink: a trial to “tether” a minibus at fixed times to serve Salford and Keynsham commuters; tweaking the zones to make Westlink more efficient, and hopefully to include key stops such as Bath University and the RUH. We understand that there have been fruitful discussions with WECA, the Paulton Labour and Parish Councillors and redoubtable campaigner, Clive Turner, about a potential new route which could restore a service to communities in the Somer and Cam valleys. The 94 bus from Trowbridge to Bath via villages in Bathavon South continues to run for now, thanks to Wiltshire County Council, so I continue to try to persuade WECA to resume funding for it. However, the Chew Valley has no reliable public transport, despite the best efforts of Jackie Head and others to work with the WECA team. Other campaigners are having even less traction, with no commitment to reroute the 522, or even consider jointly funding the 414/424 from Frome to Westfield as advocated by Cllr Jackson.

We also continue to be disappointed by the Mayor’s behaviour and the decision-making on BSIP funding, which appears to be strongly influenced by politics. The overpromoted Birthday bus scheme is strongly skewed to urban areas where more potential voters live, whilst Westlink, which was meant to provide rural transport, was badly planned, unpublicised, and unreliable. Despite the government’s permission to use BSIP for regular buses, WECA continues to refuse to do so, to the detriment of all our rural residents.

The impact on our communities is already being felt. The loss of independence and camaraderie is taking its toll on young and old. We have heard about older people having to move away, villages no longer attracting families and working people, young people who cannot drive unable to get jobs, people with low incomes forced to buy a car, and children having to give up extra-curricular activities. These long-term losses are profoundly unfair when there is £57m which could be better spent.

Finally, I want to say that I have greatly appreciated the wisdom and experience of Cllr Eleanor Jackson as we have jointly tried to lobby WECA, to make better use of the BSIP funding for all our residents, and not waste it on vanity projects and photo opportunities by the Mayor and his dog.
(573)

Cllr Fiona Gourley, Bathavon South 29/11/23

This page is intentionally left blank

Rural Connectivity

I am speaking today on the need for better rural connectivity. For most of our rural residents, accessing essential services still requires the use of a private car. This will not change unless there is a clear commitment from the council to prioritise investment in three key areas that are vital in connecting our increasingly isolated rural communities:

1. Rural Buses

Life in a rural village is no longer sustainable without personal transport, and I have had to say goodbye to several residents over the past year who have been forced to make the difficult decision to move due to recent bus cuts. Years of underinvestment in buses means that our rural communities are becoming ever more isolated and fragmented, leaving residents facing ongoing challenges in accessing essential services, employment and education.

A reliable bus network is critical to bridge the gap between remote areas and urban centres, ensuring that everyone has access to services, opportunities and amenities.

2. Pavements

In my ward, pavements are the single-most requested piece of infrastructure. The lack of pavements in rural areas directly impacts the safety, mobility and physical health of residents. Providing new pavements, where there are currently none, along with replacing the poor substitute of 'false footways', would improve the lives of many residents who have no other option than to walk along dangerously fast and winding lanes to access their GP, shops, schools and other community facilities, often in a neighbouring village less than a mile away.

Investing in well-maintained pavements is not just a matter of safety; it is also an investment in the very fabric of our communities, fostering social interaction and a sense of community pride.

3. Safe Cycle Routes

I cycled to work from Farmborough to Bath along the A39 for over 10 years, but not everyone is so willing or able to cycle along A-roads, unrestricted lanes and potholed local roads. Investing in designated and well-maintained cycle routes that encourages more residents to adopt cycling as a means of transport, aligns with broader sustainability goals and contributes to the overall health and well-being of our communities.

A network of safe cycle routes connecting rural areas would allow residents to access a wider range of local services, promote physical activity and reduce traffic congestion.

In conclusion, this is not just about enhancing transport and travel options; but fostering accessibility, community well-being, and a sustainable and inclusive future that meets our collective responsibility to combat climate change.

Making a financial commitment to connecting rural areas is a fundamental step towards creating vibrant, resilient and thriving communities. By focusing on improving bus services, pavements, and safe cycle routes now, the benefits will extend far beyond the physical infrastructure; creating opportunities, enhancing safety and fostering stronger, more connected communities for generations to come.

Thank you.

This page is intentionally left blank