

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 16th May 2024

Present:- **Councillors** Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, David Biddleston, Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Anna Box, Deborah Collins, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Sarah Evans, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Ian Halsall, Liz Hardman, Gavin Heathcote, Steve Hedges, Saskia Heijltjes, Oli Henman, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Dr Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, George Leach, John Leach, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Matt McCabe, Paul May, Sarah Moore, Ann Morgan, Robin Moss, Michelle O'Doherty, June Player, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, 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** Alan Hale, Dave Harding, Shaun Hughes, Samantha Kelly, Bharat Pankhania and Alison Streatfeild-James

1 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

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

2 ELECTION OF CHAIR 2024/25

It was proposed by Councillor Gavin Heathcote, seconded by Councillor Kevin Guy and supported by Councillors Robin Moss, Tim Warren and Joanna Wright and then

RESOLVED unanimously that Councillor Karen Walker be elected Chair of the Council for the Council year 2024/25.

Councillor Karen Walker made and signed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office, received the Chain of Office from Councillor Sarah Moore and then addressed the Council. She thanked Members for their support and confidence in her and expressed her huge honour at being given the chance to chair for a second time in 9 years. She explained that she passionately believed that everyone should have the same opportunities and so her theme for the year was inclusion for all living life to the full.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR 2024/25

It was proposed by Councillor Robin Moss, seconded by Councillor Kevin Guy, and unanimously

RESOLVED that Councillor Liz Hardman be elected Vice Chair of the Council for the Council year 2024/25.

Councillor Liz Hardman made and signed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office, received the Chain of Office from Councillor Karen Walker and thanked the Council for her appointment.

4 MINUTES - 14TH MARCH 2024

On a motion from Councillor Eleanor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Michelle O'Doherty, it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of 14th March 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

[Notes;

- 1. The above resolution was carried with one councillor abstaining and all other councillors voting in favour.]*

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Robin Moss declared a non-pecuniary (other) interest during the Items from the Public (minute number 10) as reference was made to the Homes for Ukraine scheme, which he has participated in. This declaration was made during that item.

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

Councillor Karen Walker presented Councillor Sarah Moore with her past Chair's badge.

It was proposed by Councillor Kevin Guy, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss and supported by Councillors Colin Blackburn, Joanna Wright and Tim Warren that the Council places on record its appreciation of the services performed by Councillor Sarah Moore in the office of Chair of the Council for 2023/24.

Councillor Sarah Moore then addressed the Council and, in so doing, highlighted a number of the key moments of the year and made particular reference to welcoming 250 new UK citizens to the country. She had been struck by the number of communities and people within them who give up their time. She thanked the Lord Lieutenant of Somerset and his deputies, B&NES staff, family and friends for their support during her year.

The Chair then;

1. Reminded everyone to switch off/to silent their mobile phones and laptops;
2. Reminded Members to use their microphones so that their comments are picked up for the webcast, and to turn them off when finished speaking; and
3. Announced that the meeting was being webcast and invited anyone who did not wish to be filmed to make themselves known to the camera operators.

7 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

8 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS & OTHER ANNUAL BUSINESS

On a motion from Councillor Kevin Guy, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to

1. Approve the structure for non-executive and regulatory decision making and Policy Development & Scrutiny working (set out in current form in Appendix 1 of the report);
2. Accordingly, appoint those bodies with membership, terms of reference and delegated powers as set out in the Constitution (with the correction to the proportionality table of 3 not 4 independent members on the Avon Pension Fund Investment Panel);
3. Approve the allocation of seats on those Committees and Panels (such seats to be filled in accordance with the nominations made by the political groups);
4. Appoint to chair each committee and panel those Councillors as may from time to time be nominated by the political group to whom the chairmanship of the body is allocated;
5. Authorise the Monitoring Officer to fill any casual vacancies in membership of all the bodies constituted and vacancy in the office of Chair of such bodies in accordance with the wishes of the political groups;
6. Determine the bodies on which co-opted and independent members are to have seats, as either voting or non-voting members and appoint such members accordingly (current arrangements are set out in Appendix 1 to the report);
7. Note the arrangements for the conduct of Cabinet business, as set out in section 5 of the report;
8. Note the activity of the Member Advocates, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report;
9. Instruct the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make appointments on non-executive outside bodies and note that the Leader or Cabinet Members will do so for executive outside bodies, where such vacancies arise;
10. Note the calendar of meeting dates that has been prepared up to May 2025 which is available on the Council's website;

11. Authorise the Monitoring Officer to make and publicise any amendment to the Council's Constitution required, or take any other necessary action, as a result of decisions taken at this meeting on this and other reports within the agenda, or otherwise as required by law.

9 CONSTITUTION: ESTABLISHMENT OF CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP & MINOR UPDATES TO NOTE

On a motion from Councillor Dave Wood, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to

1. Agree the Terms of Reference and scope of the Constitution Working group at Appendix 1 of the report and invite each political group to put forward their nomination(s) in due course, with the intention of bringing proposed changes to November 2024 Council; and
2. Note the minor amendments made by the Monitoring Officer, as part of his delegated authority, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

10 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Chair made reference to the Question and Answer document which had been circulated to Councillors and provided to the members of the public who had submitted questions.

Statements were made by the following members of the public.

Lara Amro spoke to Councillors about the conflict in Gaza and its impact on her life in Bath. She made reference to the Nakba of 1948 and explained her family's experience. She explained that 17,000 children had been separated from their parents during the current conflict and called for support. Councillor Guy asked what Lara considered the Council could do to help. Lara replied that anything that helped advocate for the children in Gaza and possibly facilitate them coming to the UK for support would be helpful.

Ameerah Lebaqa described the UK's proud tradition of settlement schemes and asked why Palestinian lives were not seemingly worthy of protection. She called on the Council to put pressure on the Government to launch a scheme similar to the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Councillor Guy asked if Ameerah would be happy to meet the relevant Cabinet Member to discuss further, to which Ameerah replied that she would be. Councillor Ross asked Ameerah whether she was aware that the Green group were planning to bring a motion for peace to Council, to which she replied that she was aware, and was grateful.

Jane Samson made a statement calling on the Council to explain what practical support it had offered to Gaza since its statement in March, and to use its power to lobby Government to implement a resettlement scheme. A full copy of Jane's statement is attached to the minutes. Councillor Wright asked Jane if she was aware that the B&NES Constitution incorporates reference to the Human Rights Act

1998. Jane replied that she was glad to hear it, and would like to know what practical steps have been made to reach out to Palestinian residents in B&NES since the statement was made in March.

Marie Duffy addressed Councillors about the situation in Gaza and referred to the admirable work that the dedicated B&NES team had done supporting Ukrainian refugees and called for a similar arrangement to be put in place. A full copy of Marie's statement is attached to the minutes. She stressed that the Council must engage with its Palestinian residents about supporting their family members in Gaza. Councillor Moss asked Marie if she was aware that it was the Home Office that granted visas and that the Council could only step in and support once that had happened. Marie replied that she had heard such positive feedback about the Council support to Ukrainians, via the dedicated team, and hoped that the same kindness and hospitality could be offered to Palestinians.

Mohammed Alrozzi addressed Councillors about the situation in Gaza and explained that, since he had spoken to them in March, he felt ignored. He had not been offered any help or support for family members in Gaza and commented that the government action contrasted markedly with support that has been given to Ukrainian refugees. A full copy of Mohammed's statement is attached to the minutes. Councillor Joanna Wright asked Mohammed, as a resident of B&NES, whether the Council had done anything to support him, to which Mohammed replied that they had not.

Majdi Lebaqa spoke about the Gaza situation and implored Councillors to help bring Palestinian families to safety as there is nowhere safe for them to be. No more time can be wasted.

Malcolm Robinson spoke in support of the Sydney Road Liveable Neighbourhood scheme and outlined some of the positive changes the area had seen in terms of safety, pollution and community feel. He urged the Council to make this a permanent change. Councillor Blackburn asked Malcolm how many households had benefitted from the scheme compared to the hundreds of households being impacted from displaced traffic and increased pollution. Malcolm replied that he did not have that number. Councillor Heijltjes asked if Malcolm would welcome a crossing on Beckford road for people walking and cycling in an already congested area, to which Malcolm replied that he did not live there but residents there could request one.

Richard Andrews made a statement supporting the Sydney Road Liveable Neighbourhood scheme. Richard explained the positive benefits he had noticed and presented information from the South West Ambulance service that the road closures did not cause a significant delay. A full copy of Richard's statement is attached to the minutes. Councillor Blackburn asked the same question as he had to the previous speaker, to which Richard replied around 60/70 households.

Mary Allan spoke in support of the Sydney Road Liveable Neighbourhood scheme setting out a number of positive benefits she had spotted. A full copy of Mary's statement is attached to the minutes.

The Chair thanked everyone for their statements, which would be considered by the relevant Cabinet Members.

11 STATEMENTS FROM COUNCILLORS

Councillor Anna Box made a statement about supporting the No Mow May campaign. She explained the wildlife and biodiversity advantages of leaving patches of lawn un-mowed and urged her fellow Councillors to have a go with this low key but impactful action. Councillor Moss asked Councillor Box if she agreed that grass verges near junctions did still need mowing, for safety reasons, to which Councillor Box agreed.

Councillor Ruth Malloy made a statement about voting rights for EU citizens. She wanted to bring this back into the spotlight as the Election Act 2022 had led to the disenfranchisement of some residents for local, Mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections. Councillor Guy asked if the councillor agreed that Brexit had significantly damaged local democracy, to which she replied that it had. Councillor Heijltjes asked how many EU citizens in B&NES would be affected by this, to which Councillor Malloy replied that she did have that figure, but it is a disenfranchising and inconsistent move, as it depends on their country of origin.

The Chair thanked the Councillors for their statements, which would be considered by the relevant Cabinet Members.

The meeting ended at 8.02 pm

Chair

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - PUBLIC

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P	01	Question from:	Dave Dixon
<p>The council built two new build three-bedroom homes delivered by Aequus construction Limited (ACL), the council's construction and development company, at St Joseph's Terrace, Sladebrook Road which were celebrated as a major accomplishment at the time.</p> <p>The photo of the leader of the council, ex Lib Dem Cllr Davies, ex Lib Dem Cllr Samuel and ex Conservative Cllr Charles Gerrish truly demonstrated the spirit of cross party working to deliver two affordable homes for our district!</p> <p>Can the Council please confirm exactly which two properties they were and the current tenure of those two properties?</p>			
Answer from:			Cllr Matt McCabe
<p>Aequus delivered 9 family homes comprising of 6 semi-detached houses and 3 detached houses on the Sladebrook site. The address of these properties being 1-9 St Joseph's Terrace, Sladebrook Road, Bath. However, two of the homes were sold as shared-ownership homes with the initial rent set at 1.5% of the retained equity (60%). These remain, in perpetuity, as shared-ownership properties. Given the public nature of this meeting, I have not provided the address of the shared-ownership properties.</p>			
P	02	Question from:	Dave Dixon
<p>What concrete plans does the local authority have in place to increase the availability of affordable housing in our area, and what strategies are being implemented to ensure that these housing options remain accessible to residents with varying income levels?</p>			
Answer from:			Cllr Matt McCabe

The Council is fully committed to increasing the availability of affordable housing in our area, including 100's of Council homes. To deliver on this commitment the Council has established B&NES Homes, a Registered Provider and Homes England Investment Partner. B&NES Homes has already delivered 53 units of accommodation, including social rent and shared-ownership homes and various supported housing units. Many more homes are under construction or currently going through the planning process. However, the Council wants to do much more and so is currently producing a Housing Plan to ensure that we have a pipeline of sites and efficient processes in place to support this step change in delivery. This plan will be going through the corporate governance processes, including Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel, where I would welcome the member's input.

The Local Plan, which is currently being prepared, is a key corporate strategy in helping to ensure that through the planning system housing that is more affordable is delivered. This is one of the key priorities underpinning the Local Plan and we are testing a series of site allocations and policy approaches that will be aimed at maximising affordable housing delivery, of various tenures and to meet varying needs. The next stage of the Local Plan is preparation of the Draft Local Plan which it is currently anticipated will be considered by Council in early 2025 for approval to consult.

Finally, we also continue to work with partners to ensure that they also deliver the affordable housing that we need. As part of this collaborative approach we have recently supported a Register Provider to move from a policy compliant scheme of 30% affordable housing to a 100% affordable housing scheme, resulting in an extra 51 affordable homes.

These are all concrete measures that will deliver affordable housing for our residents.

P	03	Question from:	Dave Dixon
Please advise net costs for tonne detailed for the following household waste and collection types.			
Green Box Food waste Blue bag Black bin/residual waste bags Garden Waste			
Answer from:			Cllr Tim Ball

Answer

1. The figures indicated for the Green box material represents an average “basket price for these materials” during 2023/24
2. The blue bag figures indicate an average price for card over the year which is subject to the monthly variability of the markets.
3. * please note the disclaimer below for the contract subject to competitive tender which would otherwise identify the commercially sensitive information

Material type	Annual Tonnage 23/24	Income / cost 23/24	Income / cost per tonne on average
Green Box	9027	£ 1,083,174	£ 119.99
Food waste	6680	please see note *	please see note *
Blue bag	5603.76	£ 431,489	£ 77.00
Black bin/residual waste bags	please see note *	please see note *	please see note *
Garden Waste	please see note *	please see note *	please see note *
Total cost / income		£ 1,514,662	
<p>*Local authorities must ensure they obtain best value for the council taxpayer in the contracts they enter and operate. The pricing information for these items, is commercially confidential and sensitive, and its disclosure would adversely affect the economic interests of the parties.</p>			

4.

*Due to the fixed cost per tonne for recycling food waste and garden waste, as well as the disposal of domestic waste, we are unable to provide the specific income/cost per tonne for those items. Local authorities must ensure they obtain best value for the council taxpayer in the contracts they enter and operate. The pricing information for these items, is commercially confidential and sensitive, and its disclosure would adversely affect the economic interests of the parties.

P	04	Question from:	Chad Allen
Would the Council consider putting in taps to graveyards and public spaces that it owns?			
Answer from:		Cllr Tim Ball	
<p>For the burial grounds that the Council own:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four sites already have a tap – Haycombe, Harptree, St James & Bellotts Road. • Locksbrook Road has three rainwater troughs. • St Michaels and Smallcombe do not have any water supply. <p>Unfortunately, we do not have any funding available to install or operate taps in the sites that currently do not have them.</p>			
P05		Question from:	Matt Corner
<p>I would like to ask this council to consider installing a pedestrian crossing on Weston lane outside the ‘Snapdragons Nursery’ in the Weston area of the city of Bath. This crossing could serve the aforementioned nursery and a nearby school with a joint attendance of over 120 children. Currently, due to an unusual junction nearby, vehicles can drive past the nursery without slowing down and without their indication being visible to pedestrians. Because of this unique issue, it’s an unfortunate and regular occurrence for children and their parents to be at risk when half way across the road as a vehicle passes them at speed. For the safety of those children and their parents, I would like the council to consider the installation of a pedestrian crossing on this part of Weston Lane. I have been in direct contact with Cllr Ruth Malloy who has greater detail on the location of this risk area itself. I am willing to visit the site with engineers and councillors to explain the situation in more detail as I am conscious expressing this concern is difficult in this forum. I trust the council will prioritise local children’s safety and consider this question.</p>			
Answer from:		Cllr Manda Rigby	
<p>The council recognises the importance of providing safe routes to schools and nurseries. In recent years as well as this year we are providing new crossings across B&NES. Our 2024/25 active travel and safety improvements programme is full but we have made a record of this request for Weston Lane so that it can be considered for funding in a future year’s programme. If added to the programme we would</p>			

undertake a feasibility study to determine what type of crossing is feasible, where it should go and to calculate the cost. We receive many requests for these types of improvements and we prioritise them according to factors such as whether they help people walk, cycle and use public transport, how deliverable they are such as considering if third party land is needed, and the estimated cost of undertaking the scheme. Our annual programme is confirmed as part of the February budget-setting process.

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COUNCIL MEETING 16TH MAY 2024

STATEMENTS FROM PUBLIC & COUNCILLORS

Public (item 11)

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Lara Amro | The conflict in Gaza and its impact on my life here in Bath |
| 2. Ameerah Lebaqa | The devastating impact of the Gaza war on Palestinians living in Bath and North East Somerset, particularly those with family living in terrible danger in Gaza |
| 3. Jane Samson | The impact on Palestinians living in Bath and North East Somerset of having loved ones living in terrible danger in Gaza |
| 4. Marie Duffy | The impact of the crisis in Gaza on residents of B&NES |
| 5. Mohammed Alrozzi | His experience as a Palestinian resident in the city and the impact of the ongoing situation in Palestine on my experience and overall wellbeing |
| 6. Majdi Lebaqa | The effect of the Gaza war on Palestinians living in Bath and North East Somerset who have family in Gaza |
| 7. Malcolm Robinson | The positive impact and community benefits of the Sydney Place/Road Liveable Neighbourhood scheme |
| 8. Richard Andrews | Sydney Place/Road Liveable Neighbourhood scheme |
| 9. Mary Allan | Sydney Place/Road Liveable Neighbourhood scheme |

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Statement to full council meeting 16th May 2024 - Jane Samson

“Run! the Israelis demand.

“Run for your lives!

Run from Rafah the way you ran from Gaza City, the way you ran from Jabalia, the way you ran from Dare-al-Balah, the way you ran from Beit Hanoun, the way you ran from Bani Suhaila, the way you ran from Khan Yunis.

Run or we will kill you.

We will drop 2,000-pound bunker - buster - bombs on your tent encampments.

We will spray you with bullets from our machine-gun-equipped drones.

We will pound you with artillery and tank shells.

We will shoot you down with snipers.

We will decimate your tents, your refugee camps, your cities and towns, your homes, your schools, your hospitals and your water purification plants.

We will rain death from the sky.

And we will laugh.

Run for your lives.

Again and again and again.

Run. Run. Run.

And when you run in terror to one part of Gaza we will make you turn around and run to another.

Trapped in a labyrinth of death.

Back and forth.

Up and down.

Side to side.

Six. Seven. Eight times.

We toy with you like mice in a trap....

Then.... we will deport you so you can never return.

Or we will kill you.”

So what has this got to do with Bath and North East Somerset council?

With the Balfour Declaration, the UK was responsible for giving away Palestinian land to Zionists. The UK is directly responsible for the ruthless persecution of the indigenous Palestinians and for the facilitation of the Nakba, a reign of terror which has gone on for 76 years.

The Nakba didn't end in 1948. It is an ongoing campaign of ethnic cleansing, violence and occupation.

On 14th March this year, BANES council published a statement from which I quote:

“We would like to express deep sympathy for all those affected by the conflict in Palestine and Israel. To those in the Bath and North East Somerset area who have been affected by this conflict, we offer our support during this difficult time.”

Please tell us what practical support you have offered to the people affected since the statement was made?

Words are not enough.

As far as we are aware you have made **no** attempts to follow through on your statement.

Are you aware of the abuse that people with brown skin living in Bath have received since October 7th last year?

This abuse happens on a regular basis coming from racists and Zionists. The residents of Bath are proposing that BANES councillors pass a resolution to lobby the government.

We would like the government to implement a refugee scheme for Palestinians similar to the Ukrainian Scheme.

It's been done before. It can be done again. It's the very least we can do.

Guildhall Speech 16th May 2024 – Marie Duffy

Good evening.

The UK has a long and proud history of welcoming refugees to its towns and cities.

Bath can rightfully take pride in itself on how swiftly it rolled out the Homes for Ukraine scheme and how those families benefitted from having a dedicated team to help arrange their visas, to being hosted by local residents or fast tracked to secure housing as well as help with enrolling their children into local schools. The support from the council has been admirable.

I understand that the govt and that BANES Council was allocated a percentage of the set up £150 million pound fund million pounds that was set aside by the government to assist the Ukrainian people with settling into the UK. What was the amount allocated to BANES and how was it implemented?

(I just want to see a bigger picture and there is no disrespect within my question.)

Will the Council support our MP, Wera Hobhouse who has joined cross party MPs striving for peace and the urgent need to get aid into Gaza? BANES Council is part of the governance of this country and I feel that it should act in a humanitarian manner in the same way it did for Ukrainians fleeing the war in their country. Without wishing to minimise the suffering of the Ukrainian people, I must point out that Palestinian people and children are not at war with Israel, they are victims of genocide. If anything these people should be treated as asylum seekers as they are being terrorised in their own country.

Will the Council commit to rolling out a similar scheme for Palestinians who have managed to escape the country & need sanctuary or who have relatives right here in Bath or the South West ready to support them?

Surely we should be leading the way and opening our hearts and homes to these poor people? There are Bath residents with family members trapped in Gaza, suffering the most unimaginable horrors, some have lost many, many members of their immediate family in ways that are too horrific to repeat. Whilst they continue to live and work and study in Bath, paying taxes and contributing to society, their voices seem to go unheard. The Council must engage with Palestinian residents of Bath and commit to assisting them in the same way that they did for Ukrainians. .

We all have a moral duty to help the Palestinians in whatever way we can, no matter how small. We are global citizens with plenty of information at hand, minute by minute news and graphic footage of the massacres pumped into our living rooms through our tv screens.

As a LibDem Council you should be supporting Wera and listening to the people of Bath as she has done regarding the atrocities that are happening to their families in Gaza.

Bombing innocent civilians & children that have already been displaced is not self defence. It is genocide.

It's not eviction it's ethnic cleansing.

It's not merely a conflict it's 75 yrs & 7 months of occupation, land theft, & apartheid & massacres by the IOF.

This was a planned genocide. Now is the time to choose which side of history you want Bath to be remembered for: it's humanitarian spirit or for being a bystander & ignoring the cries of the desperate.

Thank you

Mohammed Alruzzi

Today, I stand before you to ask a fundamental question: How much do you truly care about Palestinians?

Last time I addressed this council, I spoke of the plight of the Palestinians—left alone in their struggle for survival. Yet, paradoxically, they are not alone; this government is complicit in their ongoing suffering. No sanctions, no arms embargo, no ceasefire—nothing has been done to alleviate their pain.

In a previous council meeting, when I expressed these concerns, the response was dismissive. A Question about my experience living in Bath under these circumstances was brushed aside in favour of adhering strictly to the agenda. This disregard speaks volumes about the invisibilization, dehumanization, and hypocrisy we face. It reveals a chilling indifference not just to me, but to the regular protests in Bath—a cry for attention and help that goes unheard.

Yesterday, people around the world commemorated the 76th anniversary of Al-Nakba, the events of ethnic cleansing undertaken by what became Israel in 1948, which resulted in the displacement of more than 700,000 people from their homes. My family was among them.

Al-Nakba occurred also because of the British promise to establish a homeland for Jewish groups in Palestine, at the expense of its indigenous population. Would you contest this fact? The position of the UK has not changed since then, despite international law, hundreds—yes, hundreds—of UN resolutions affirming Palestinian rights, and the plausibility of genocide in the ICJ ruling in the South Africa vs. Israel case.

How many of you have truly asked about our daily lives? How do we cope each minute, watching the news with dread, our phones buzzing with updates about our families back home, struggling to secure basic necessities like food, water and medication?

Despite numerous e-petitions, calling for family reunion schemes for those affected by the genocidal acts of Israel in Gaza, this government remains passive. Their inaction contrasts with their response to other global crises, like the war in Ukraine, revealing a selective empathy based on geopolitical interests.

This stance shatters any illusion of a democracy. It erodes the belief in a society that values pluralism and diversity. Today, you have shown us that there are no universal standards of humanity—only those dictated by political convenience.

So, I ask you now: What will it take for you to change your stance in regards to justice for Palestine?

I'd like to conclude by quoting the Palestinian writer and activist, Mohammed Al-Kurd
Quote

To see the picture with all of its details. As deadly and treacherous and unrelenting as it is, the Nakba will not last forever. The world is changing because it must. If

seeds can germinate in the inferno, so can revolution. On the phone, my mother tells me, rain is coming and God is almighty

End of quote

The question to you, where do you stand?

BANES Council Meeting, 16 May 2024

I live in Sydney Road and have some comments in support of the recently installed Liveable Neighbourhood Trial at New Sydney Place and Sydney Road.

Our house fronts Sydney Road and I have an excellent view of the traffic flow up and down the Road. Prior to the Trial we endured constant through traffic, and constant traffic noise, starting around 6.30am and easing off around 6.30pm. Few drivers appeared to observe the speed limit of 20mph, probably none during the rush hours, and very few drove below 30mph. BANES has now provided a much safer environment, free from speeding traffic, for both residents of the area and the many visitors to Sydney Gardens.

The Trial has closed Sydney Road as a through road, and through traffic must use Beckford Road as the route to and from the Warminster Road and the A36. As residents of Sydney Road, we also must take this route to and from the A36, which we have done many times. Outside the rush hours and at weekends we have found that journeys to and from home take little or no time more than before the Trial. There are still the usual delays in the rush hours, but these are not excessive.

Prior to the Trial, ambulances, sirens wailing, would come down Sydney Road on a regular basis. I contacted the South Western Ambulance Service as I was concerned that a traffic filter would impede emergency services. I was told that the closure of Sydney Road would not cause significant delays as ambulances would simply use Beckford Road.

Our neighbourhood has been transformed since the Trial began. There are more pedestrians and cyclists on the Road, instead of traffic noise we now hear birdsong, and we live in a quiet environment, which I believe is a reasonable expectation in a residential area.

I fully support this Liveable Neighbourhood, and at the end of the Trial would recommend that the level of any inconvenience to through traffic be weighed carefully against both the major safety considerations and the re-creation of what is now, and should continue to be, a quiet residential neighbourhood.

Richard Andrews

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I'm Mary Allan. I live in New Sydney Place and I am a Friend of Sydney Gardens.

This is very much a personal statement, which I hope you'll agree is appropriate. When we are talking about a Liveable Neighbourhood it is more important to hear from those who actually live in that neighbourhood than it is from those who just drive through it.

Liveable Neighbourhoods look, amongst other things, to encourage active travel and improve the public realm. I would like to talk this evening about the importance of protecting Sydney Gardens as a public space at the heart of our neighbourhood.

We are still in the early days of the ETRO trial but I'd already like to declare it a success. Others will be monitoring footfall, traffic flows and pollution levels, perhaps identifying issues and suggesting improvements. The evidence of my own eyes shows that Sydney Gardens has been triumphantly restored to the community in which it sits.

The gardens and the surrounding built landscape were designed to work together. This connection had been eroded by dangerous 'rat running', creating a hazardous divide between the gardens, local residents and visitors. Now, it is a pleasure to see parents with young children on bikes, scooters and in buggies have easy, stress-free access to the gardens and the wonderful playground, as well as the elderly and less able moving freely about in this reclaimed safe space.

If there isn't space on the rather narrow pavement for buggy, bike, scooter or wheelchair or walking aid, then walking or riding on the road is an option. Dog walkers like myself are no longer forced to dodge speeding traffic. People can linger on the pavement without fear of losing their head to debris bouncing off a speeding flat bed truck (this so nearly happened). Cyclists now have a safe through-route. Distressingly, we have seen too many of them injured on our doorstep.

We have been freed from the tyranny of the Motor Vehicle.

Restricting through traffic has proved the only way to achieve this. The 20 mph speed limit was ignored routinely and flagrantly. Motorists who were using Sydney Road and New Sydney Place to avoid a red traffic light and save 10 to 30 seconds on their journey time are the very least likely to observe a 20 mph speed limit. Our brave SpeedWatch volunteers have witnessed cars racing through at twice or even three times the speed limit.

Sydney Gardens is entering its third century. It's a glorious asset to the city of Bath. It's an historic Pleasure Garden, now, after major investment and the efforts of volunteers, offering the new pleasures of a fabulous playground, tennis and petanque courts as well as open green spaces, imaginative planting, restored pavilions and of course the Holborne Museum.

Thank you, BANES for putting this space at the heart of the community, where it belongs.

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Cllr Anna Box statement

I think we can all agree that there are many pressures on us as residents, nah humans, in this modern era.

So the campaign from Plantlife, adopted by Bath and North East Somerset Council, to encourage those of us with the privilege of a lawn, to simply not cut it, is fantastic on many levels.

I discovered the wonders of No Mow May by accident last year. I was mother of a young toddler, pregnant again, with my NHS job and just being elected to this lovely institution after an exhausting campaign - I'll be honest, I hadn't cut the lawn. Ours is tiny, maybe 10 paces long but we had decided to plant it when we bought the house and prevent the labradors from using it as their toilet.

And that's when we discovered the beauty of this campaign. As the grass grew, all these little critters had hiding places and new homes. We had some different and interesting wild flowers to enjoy. Then the memorable evening of the resident frog making his first appearance! That summer, the toddler got obsessed with looking for "snugg". We were graced with newts, bumblebees, even a slow worm. I truly think one of my sons first words was "woodlice."

This year, the toddler and I have planted wildflower seeds, the grass is already to his chest. I'm excited to see what we will find this time around

I absolutely love this campaign and I'm so grateful as a council we have adopted it. The importance of biodiversity in this climate catorstophy has long been understood by scientists but only now possibly coming more into the public eye. The recent state of nature report remains damming for the UK in regard to our biodiversity loss. If we are face the challenges we have ahead of us, we need to consider wildlife as well as greenhouse gas emissions.

Sadly, we as individuals can often feel powerless to the man made change in our environment. But No Mow May has been shown to make a positive impact on our local ecosystem, with even a small section of a lawn. And it's so wonderful to discover nature rapidly reclaiming that lawn. But perhaps the cleverest bit is that you just have to sit back, watch and enjoy. Please try it yourself if you can!

Thank you

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Ruth Malloy Statement on VOTING RIGHTS FOR EU CITIZENS

This Council has been interested in the issue of voting rights for some time.

We've also been interested in the situation faced by EU citizens in Bath and North East Somerset, following the UK's departure from the European Union.

I want to bring the issue of voting rights and EU citizens back into the spotlight, because changes brought in very recently, as part of the Elections Act 2022, will have a negative impact on local democracy.

(The Elections Act 2022 has, among other changes, also meant the introduction of compulsory photo ID at polling stations.)

I wish to express my concern about the disenfranchisement of some of our residents, which will clearly reduce their ability to engage in our local democracy.

Unless they also have UK or Irish nationality, or that of a Commonwealth country, EU citizens cannot vote or stand as a candidate in UK Parliament elections. This is not new.

However, since the 7th of May 2024, the rights of many EU citizens to engage in our local democracy has been further curtailed.

For EU citizens residing in England, this new legislation applies to local elections, mayoral elections and Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

From now on, the only EU citizens living in Bath and North East Somerset who will be able to register to vote - or to stand as a candidate - in these elections, will be:

Citizens of Denmark, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and Spain who here here permanently, and have permission to enter or stay in the UK;

citizens of the Republic of Ireland - because of the Common Travel Area arrangements between the two countries, which predate their membership of the European Union;

and citizens of Malta and Cyprus - because in addition to being member states of the European Union, these are also Commonwealth countries.

Any citizen of another EU member state, who on or before 31st December 2020 was legally resident in the UK and has continued to reside here without a break, (someone, in other words, with 'settled status') may also continue to vote and stand as a candidate in any of the afore-mentioned elections.

HOWEVER, if you are an EU citizen who arrived here on or after 1st January 2021, and you are not from one of so-called eligible EU countries already mentioned, with which the UK has a reciprocal agreement, you will no longer be able to vote (or to stand as a candidate) in local elections, mayoral or Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

This reduced political participation cannot be good for our local democracy: we need a fair and just system of representation.

In the meantime, we should always remember that we are here to serve and help everyone living in the district, whether or not they are able to vote and participate in the democratic process.