

# BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 21st November 2024

Present:- **Councillors** Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, David Biddleston, Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Anna Box, Deborah Collins, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Sarah Evans, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Alan Hale, Ian Halsall, David Harding, Liz Hardman, Gavin Heathcote, Steve Hedges, Saskia Heijltjes, Oli Henman, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Dr Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, George Leach, John Leach, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Matt McCabe, Paul May, Sarah Moore, Ann Morgan, Robin Moss, Bharat Pankhania, June Player, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, Paul Roper, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby, Karen Walker, Tim Warren CBE, Andy Wait, David Wood and Joanna Wright

Apologies for absence: **Councillors** Michael Auton, Mark Elliott, Samantha Kelly, Hal MacFie, Michelle O'Doherty, Sam Ross, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, Alison Streatfeild-James and Sarah Warren

### 37 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

### 38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair announced that the Monitoring Officer had issued a dispensation for all Councillors with regard to agenda Item 13 "Report of the Independent Remuneration panel" to enable members with potential disclosable pecuniary interests in relation to allowances in their role as Councillors, to take part in the debate and vote. Failure to grant a dispensation would impede the transaction of the business of the meeting.

Declarations were made by the following Councillors;

#### Minute 29 – Statements from the Public

- Cllr Matt McCabe, Community Director and Shareholder of Komedia, in relation to a statement being made.

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#### Minute 37 – Green group motion on Tackling the Housing crisis

- Cllr Tim Warren – landlord
- Cllr David Biddleston – landlord
- Cllr Matt McCabe – landlord
- Cllr June Player – landlord
- Cllr Shaun Hughes – landlord
- Cllr Ruth Malloy – landlord
- Cllr Oli Henman – landlord
- Cllr Lucy Hodge – landlord

## Minute 38 - Liberal Democrat group motion on Bus Services

- Cllr Dave Biddleston as Keynsham Town Council has applied for and received BSIP funding from WECA for West Local bus services.
- Cllr Alex Beaumont as Keynsham Town Council has applied for and received BSIP funding from WECA for West Local bus services.
- Cllr Grant Johnson as Paulton Parish Council has applied for and received BSIP funding from WECA for West Local bus services.
- Cllr Liz Hardman as Paulton Parish Council has applied for and received BSIP funding from WECA for West Local bus services.
- Cllr Dave Harding as a member of a local community group receiving funding from WECA for West Local bus services.

### **39 MINUTES - 19TH SEPTEMBER 2024**

On a motion from Councillor Grant Johnson, seconded by Councillor Matt McCabe, it was

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> September 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

The Chair referred to the presentation Councillors had received from the Somerset Lieutenancy and reminded Councillors of the nomination process for King's Awards and National Honours.

The Chair made the usual housekeeping announcements about phones and microphones.

The Chair asked Councillors to stand for a minute's silence as a mark of respect following the recent death of former Councillor Rob Appleyard.

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

The Chair informed the meeting of an item of urgent business which she had accepted – "Appointment of Interim Executive Director (Section 151 Officer)" – which would be taken as the first substantive item after the Items from the Public. The report had been circulated to all Councillors.

### **42 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Statements were made by the following members of the public;

Tim Spratt made a statement about the Winifred Lane Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO), a copy of which has been added to the Minute book and online record. Tim outlined the problems with the ETRO and called upon the Council to listen to concerns and find a solution that is safe and works for local people. Councillor Colin Blackburn asked whether WECA might be liable for approving

ineligible funding, and B&NES forced to repay the CRSTS if it's not complying with Department for Transport guidelines. Tim replied that could be the case. Councillor Joanna Wright asked what data the Council had from before and after the ETRO, to which Tim replied that he did not know. Councillor Tim Warren asked for clarification that Tim had said that the ETRO was illegal, to which he replied that it was.

Susan Charles made a statement about accessible homes, a copy of which has been added to the Minute book and online record. She added to the comments she had made at the last meeting, calling for 5 changes to Planning regulations that could make a huge difference to accessible housing. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if Susan would be happy to meet with the Cabinet Member for Housing to discuss these issues, to which Susan replied that she would. Councillor Saskia Heijltjes asked what the 5 changes are, which Susan explained were; level access, wider doorways, moveable bathroom walls, good lighting in stairways and joists and rafters placed so that lifts were possible.

Joanne Laishley made a statement about the commitments the Council made in the Peace motion at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024. She expressed frustration about her perception of lack of progress and suggested further dates on which it would be appropriate to fly the UN flag.

Marie Duffy made a statement about the situation in Gaza and its effect on B&NES residents, a copy of which has been added to the Minute book and online record. She asked what steps were being taken to communicate the Council's support set out in the July Peace motion. The admirable support that had been shown to Ukrainian refugees did not appear to be being offered to Palestinian members of the community. Councillor Kevin Guy asked Marie if she would be interested to meet the Council's Refugees Officer, to which she said she definitely would.

Polly Campbell-Preston made a statement about the Council commitments made in the Peace motion in July and in particular those in resolution 7 which called on Government to ensure safe routes, a copy of which has been added to the Minute book and online record. She asked how this request had been communicated and what response had been received.

Benazir Jatoi also made a statement about the Council commitments made in the Peace motion in July, a copy of which has been added to the Minute book and online record. Whilst acknowledging this was a step in the right direction, he stated that it was not forceful enough. He asked why a permanent ceasefire was not being called for. Councillor Joanna Wright asked Benazir if he was aware of the Green group's efforts to push for firmer actions, which had not been successful. He replied that he was aware and found this bemusing.

Jane Samson made a statement about the Council commitments made in the Peace motion in July, a copy of which has been added to the Minute book and online record. She questioned whether any actions were being taken arising from the Peace motion and said that people were losing trust in the Council. Councillor Kevin Guy asked Jane if she would like to meet with the Council's Refugees Officer, to which she replied that she would. Councillor Joanna Wright asked Jane if she had been aware before this meeting that the Council had a Refugees Officer, and she replied that she had not.

Candice Streeter, a Bathampton resident, made a statement about the Liveable Neighbourhoods programme, a copy of which has been added to the Minute book and online record. She outlined the negative impact of road closures, increasing pollution and hindering residents and added that the programme was damaging trust in the Council.

Hakan Aysan on behalf of the Ensleigh Residents Association made a statement on the Park & Ride Service and highlighting the lack of bus provision. He asked if the operating hours could be extended to enable easier access to the night time economy and referred to a petition currently at 165 signatures calling for this. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if Hakan would like to meet with the Cabinet Member for Transport to discuss options, to which he replied that he would. Councillor Saskia Heijltjes asked Hakan if he was aware that the Green group had been requesting an extension of the Park & Ride service, to which he replied that he had not been aware.

Gennie Widick, a pupil at the Royal High school, also spoke in support of extension of the Park & Ride hours. A copy of Gennie's statement has been added to the Minute book and online record. Gennie outlined how this would benefit all the community, but particularly the safety of women and elderly and disabled people.

Richard Daws made a statement about the Komedia entertainment venue, a copy of which had been circulated to Councillors and has been added to the Minute book and online record. Richard set out a number of ways the Council could assist regarding access to the venue and business rates discounts. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if Richard would like to meet with the Finance Cabinet Member and the relevant officer to discuss this, to which Richard replied that he would. Councillor Robin Moss asked if the business rates relief applied to sporting venues too, to which Richard replied that he understood it did. Councillor Shaun Hughes asked for clarification about the access issues and Richard explained that they were asking that coaches be treated the same as transit vans. Councillor Joanna Wright asked what benefits this would bring and Richard explained that standard rates were about £45k so it would be 80% of that. Councillor Tim Warren asked if this was just about access, to which Richard replied that it was becoming a reputational problem if word spreads that it's difficult to come to Bath.

The Chair thanked all the speakers for their statements which will be referred to the relevant Cabinet Members.

**43 URGENT ITEM - APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RESOURCES (\$151 OFFICER)**

The Chair had agreed to take this urgent report regarding the appointment of an Interim Executive Director for Resources, following a recommendation from the Restructuring Implementation Committee.

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

**RESOLVED**

1. To approve the appointment of Interim Executive Director Resources and Section 151 Officer, Mr Christopher Kinsella, from 4 January 2025 to 31 March 2025, 3 days per week, in the first instance.

#### **44 USING COUNCIL LAND FOR BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN: DELEGATION OF PLANNING ENFORCEMENT FUNCTION TO SECURE A LEGAL AGREEMENT**

The Council was asked to agree arrangements arising from Biodiversity Net Gain legislation.

On a motion from Councillor Matt McCabe, seconded by Councillor Oli Henman, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that

1. Subject to resolution 3, to endorse the arrangement for delegating the planning enforcement function to neighbouring authorities (Bristol City Council, North Somerset, Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Wiltshire) solely for the purposes of entering into a S106 legal agreement for use of specific council owned land as a biodiversity net gain habitat bank.
2. Subject to resolution 3, to endorse the arrangement for accepting a delegation of planning enforcement function from neighbouring authorities (Bristol City Council, North Somerset, Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Wiltshire) for the purposes of entering into a S106 legal agreement for use of their land as a biodiversity net gain habitat bank.
3. To note that no delegation of the enforcement function or acceptance of such a delegation from/to another Council shall take effect until that other Council has made a reciprocal Council decision and shall end as between B&NES and the reciprocating Council as from the date either council revokes its delegation of function save that any delegation or acceptance of the enforcement function entered into before the date of revocation of the enforcement function shall remain valid.
4. To note that a site specific S106 agreement will need to be agreed by officers for each habitat bank and the Council is under no obligation to enter into a legal agreement following the endorsement of the proposed arrangement by Council.

#### **45 AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

The Council considered the annual report of the Corporate Audit Committee, noting that it was to be re-named as the Audit Committee.

On a motion from Councillor David Biddleston, seconded by Toby Simon, it was

**RESOLVED** unanimously that

1. The Annual Report of the Corporate Audit Committee is noted, and Council confirm that it has received 'assurance' that the Committee are fulfilling the responsibilities as stated in the Committee's Terms of Reference.
2. The Local Code of Corporate Governance is noted following the endorsement of the revised Code at the Corporate Audit Committee's meeting on the 1st May 2024; and
3. The revised Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee at Appendix 2 of the report (including the Committee's change of name) be approved and updated in the Council's Constitution.

#### **46 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AVON PENSION FUND COMMITTEE**

The Council considered the annual report of the Avon Pension Fund committee.

On a motion from Councillor Paul Crossley, seconded by Councillor Toby Simon, it was unanimously

#### **RESOLVED**

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

#### **47 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2024**

The Council considered a report giving details of performance against the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for the first six months of 2024/25.

On a motion from Councillor Lucy Hodge, seconded by Councillor Toby Simon, it was

#### **RESOLVED** unanimously

1. to note the Treasury Management Report to 30th September 2024, prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Code of Practice; and
2. to note the Treasury Management Indicators to 30th September 2024.

#### **48 CONSTITUTION; MINOR UPDATES**

The Constitution Working Group (CWG) had made some recommendations to Council. The report also brought to Members' attention some minor textual amendments that had been made by the Monitoring Officer.

On a motion from Councillor Dave Wood and seconded by Councillor Shaun Hughes, it was unanimously

#### **RESOLVED** to

1. Agree the amendments in Appendix 1 considered and proposed by the Constitution Working Group;
2. Note the changes made by the Monitoring Officer; and
3. Note the timetable for Constitution Working Group items.

#### **49 REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL ON MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES**

The Council considered the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Members' Allowances, following their recent review of the scheme.

In moving the report, Councillor Kevin Guy placed on record his thanks to the Panel for their work, and emphasised the independence.

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

#### **RESOLVED to**

1. Note the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) on Members' Allowances and agree with their recommendations;
2. Agree that any changes be implemented from the start of the next financial year, aside from the changes to the Council Chair and Vice-Chair which would take effect from May 2025 Council AGM;
3. Appoint the IRP with effect from May 2027 to review the Basic Allowance in accordance with recommendations 1,2 & 3 of their report; and
4. Formally thank the Panel for their work.

[Notes;

1. *The above resolution was carried with 45 Councillors voting in favour and 3 Councillors voting against.]*

#### **50 MOTION FROM THE GREEN GROUP - TACKLING THE HOUSING CRISIS**

The Council considered a motion from the Green group moved by Councillor Joanna Wright and seconded by Councillor Saskia Heijltjes. Following a vote, this motion was

#### **NOT CARRIED**

#### **Council Notes:**

- Bath's status as a UNESCO World Heritage city attracts tourists, generating nearly half a billion pounds annually. However, the rise in short-term rentals,

such as over 1,000 Airbnb listings, has reduced housing availability and pushed up rents by 5.2% from February 2023 to 2024.

- House prices in Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) have surged by over 72% in the last decade, making it increasingly difficult for residents to buy or rent affordable homes.
- The Right to Buy scheme has diminished social housing stock nationally by 165,000 homes over the past decade, further reducing affordable options in B&NES.
- The government has proposed new rules for property owners to register short-term lets and require planning permission for rentals exceeding 90 days per year.

#### **Council Believes:**

- Housing costs are forcing residents out of the area.
- Government regulations on short-term lets are essential to freeing up homes for long-term renters.
- Tackling the housing crisis in B&NES requires more social housing investment and rent controls.

#### **Council Resolves to:**

1. Request the Cabinet Member for Built Environment and Sustainable Development to write to the government, asking for local authorities to have the power to introduce rent controls in B&NES.
2. Develop local measures to limit the impact of short-term holiday lets, including:
  - Consulting on capping the number of short-term rentals in high-demand areas.
  - Strengthening planning permission requirements for properties rented over 90 days a year, aligning with government proposals.
3. Request the Leader of the Council to write to the government calling to:
  - End the Right to Buy scheme to protect social housing.
  - Allow councils to borrow and build more social housing.
4. Improve policies on empty homes by:
  - Exploring incentives for refurbishing and renting long-term empty properties.
5. Requests Cabinet to
  - Monitor and expand the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) pilot scheme to reclaim under-utilised homes in B&NES.

*[Notes;*

1. *The above motion was lost with 4 Councillors voting in favour, 40 Councillors voting against and 4 abstentions.]*

## **51 MOTION FROM THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP - BUS SERVICES**

Council considered a motion from the Liberal Democrat group.

On a motion from Councillor Fiona Gourley, seconded by Councillor Jess David, it was



**RESOLVED** that

Council notes that:

1. The £2 bus fare cap scheme was introduced in January 2023 to encourage people to use buses and to help tackle the cost-of-living crisis.
2. The government has recognised the need to continue capping bus fares but has decided to increase the cap to £3 in 2025.
3. This 50% increase in single adult fares is likely to disproportionately affect the least well-off, particularly in rural, isolated and disadvantaged communities.
4. The increase is likely to suppress bus patronage, lead more people to choose to drive, and put 'uneconomic' routes at risk of being cancelled.
5. The West of England Combined Authority's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) includes specific funding streams dedicated to making bus fares more affordable. These BSIP-funded initiatives currently support local bus fare subsidies in the region and are already set to continue until March 2025. Additionally, the Mayor's "Birthday Bus" scheme, also funded through BSIP, will run until the end of 2025.

Council believes that:

6. Affordable bus services are essential to enable residents to get to work or access services, shops and schools.
7. Making bus travel the first choice for more residents is essential to reducing congestion, improving air quality, and tackling the climate crisis.
8. The government budget showed skewed priorities with only £151m allocated to the bus fare cap compared to £3bn support for cheaper motoring.

**Council therefore:**

9. Asks the Leader of Council to write to Government ministers, sharing Council's views and calling for the £2 bus fare cap to be restored.
10. Calls on the West of England Combined Authority Mayor to allocate Bus Service Improvement Plan funds towards maintaining the £2 fare cap across the West of England.
11. Calls on the West of England Combined Authority Mayor to urgently progress work towards bus service franchising in the region, as the only long-term solution to securing essential bus routes, achieving greater fare structure control, and providing more stable, predictable service levels for residents across the network.

*[Notes;*

1. *The above successful resolution was carried with 37 Councillors voting in favour, 7 Councillors voting against and 2 abstentions.]*

**52 MOTION FROM THE INDEPENDENT GROUP - PARKING CHARGES FOR MIDSOMER NORTON & RADSTOCK**

The Council considered a report from the Independent Group, moved by Councillor Shaun Hughes and seconded by Councillor Tim Warren. Following a vote, this motion was

## **NOT CARRIED**

### **Background:**

1. The introduction of parking charges in both Midsomer Norton and Radstock was first proposed at the February budget meeting with the objective of raising £195,000 for the Council.
2. Following a public consultation the decision is to introduce emission-based charges in January 2025.
3. The decision made is now 2 hours free car parking with a reduced hourly rate.
4. Justification is now to improve air quality.

### **To Note:**

1. **PARKING SURVEYS** - No parking surveys have been undertaken within the towns to understand demand and usage patterns, equally no figures have been produced for the implementation, management, maintenance and enforcement costs therefore profit or loss to the local taxpayers cannot be established.
2. **FINANCIAL VIABILITY** - No financial viability reports are available and no financial benefits to BANES Council, Midsomer Norton businesses or residents can be identified. With the amendment to 2 hours free parking the budget target of £195k cannot be achieved and could result in the scheme losing money.
3. **IMPACT ASSESSEMENT** - No impact assessment has been undertaken to understand the harm to local businesses, sustainability, footfall and effect on the local workforce. No analysis has been undertaken to understand the potential negative impact created by vehicle displacement to air quality and residential developments close to the high street.
4. **EFFECT ON LOW INCOME FAMILIES** - The charges unfairly discriminate against low-income families and residents on minimum wage. Many currently employed within retail and hospitality sectors, emission-based charges further penalise those on low incomes that are car dependent but cannot afford the latest fuel efficient or electric vehicles.
5. **PUBLIC TRANSPORT** – As we are all very aware our public transport in North East Somerset is abysmal, lacking funding and investment. Without a car many residents would be stranded and without access to council offices, libraries, banks, pharmacies or professional services, facilities that residents in Bath can take for granted.
6. **AIR QUALITY** - No Air Quality studies have been undertaken to establish current levels in relation to government standards, therefore it is not possible

to set targets for air quality improvements as current levels are unknown. There is no evidence of any issues with current Air Quality levels within our towns. Claims made of 77% support through the public consultation are flawed due to the multiple-choice question pre-determining the response.

7. PUBLIC CONSULTATION - There is evidence to indicate that the public consultation multiple choice questionnaire was designed to provide a pre-determined outcome in favour of the parking proposal. The objections received from 4000 residents through the public consultation have not been given sufficient weight contrary to the core policy "giving people a bigger say".
8. HIGH STREET REGENERATION – Midsomer Norton High Street is struggling for survival through years of neglect and lack of investment and our businesses are in genuine fear of losing their livelihoods, this decision completely undermines all of the regeneration projects and shop local initiatives.
9. OLD BREWERY MASTERPLAN – South Road car park is currently part of the WECA funded review of Midsomer Norton town centre, this includes South Road car park and is reviewing the regeneration options for Midsomer Norton.
10. SUMMARY – All council decisions must be evidence based however no evidence has been produced to demonstrate any benefits whatsoever in Council income or Air Quality. It fails to provide any improvements for businesses or residents and creates an irreversible risk to a fragile local economy and a potential Council income net loss at a time when the Council is making £8.41 millions of savings in the budget.

**Council therefore requests the Cabinet to:**

1. Suspend the introduction of parking charges in Midsomer Norton and Radstock until an informed decision can be evidenced and implement only if a positive outcome for residents and businesses can be justified.

*[Notes;*

1. *The above motion was lost, with 16 Councillors voting in favour and 29 Councillors voting against.]*

**53 MOTION FROM THE LABOUR GROUP - FREE SCHOOL MEALS AUTO-ENROLMENT**

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

**RESOLVED** unanimously that

**Council notes:**

1. It's hard to concentrate, learn or interact when hungry – especially as a child.

2. Food insecurity impairs the growth of body and mind, as well as relationships. Such disadvantages can have lifelong impact.

**Council welcomes the work of, amongst many others,**

3. BNES' Director of Public Health, whose Annual Report (Sep '24) estimates 5% of our population, over 8,000 residents, sometimes or often don't have enough to eat;
4. The Trussell Trust, who say over 3,000 local children were supported by emergency food parcels last year;
5. St John's Foundation, who are funding free school meals for 700 children in six local primary schools until July 2025, and B&NES Fair Food Alliance (BFFA), made up of over 60 organisations, who developed the 'B&NES food equity action plan 2022-25'.

**Council acknowledges that:**

6. Free school meals (FSM) are government-funded, and administered by councils.
7. To qualify for FSM, **families must receive certain income-related benefits, or if they receive Universal Credit their annual household income must be below £7,400 after tax.**
8. Estimates say FSM can save a hard-pressed family £1,400 a year.
9. For each FSM-registered child, a school gets pupil premium funding for wider support: £1,455 in primary schools; £1,035 in secondaries.

**Council is concerned that:**

10. The numbers of eligible children in BNES leapt by 27% between May '20-May '23.
11. This January, 17% of children in B&NES state schools (4,715) were eligible – nearly 2,500 were at primary school.
12. Too many eligible families aren't claiming FSM because of administration, language, literacy issues and stigma.

**Council is alarmed that:**

13. Across all age groups, the gap between the attainment of children on FSM and not in BNES is consistently larger than the gap across the rest of the country.
14. For 7-11 year-olds (key stage 2), the gap is the worst in the country
15. For 0-5 year-olds, (early years foundation) BNES is the third worst in the country.

**Council notes that**

16. A large number of local authorities have introduced FSM auto-enrolment for eligible families – Sheffield, Lambeth, Wandsworth, Lewisham, Bedford, York, Coventry, to name a few.

- 17. Reported benefits include better health, concentration and achievement, and reductions in stigma, absence, and under-achievement. School funding increases and everyone gains from the benefits throughout the child's lifetime.
- 18. In implementing auto-enrolment, officers will look to capture data from several systems and ensure we do not contravene any legal access rights. We will also provide opportunities to families to opt out of the process should they wish to do so for personal reasons.**
- 19. The Household Support Fund has been used to provide vouchers for children who receive income-related free school meals during school holiday periods, but this is dependent on parents claiming free school meals for their children. Some low-income households could be missing out on this additional support during school holiday periods.**

**And therefore resolves to:**

- 20. Request Cabinet **and council services continue** to **investigate** and implement auto-enrolment to tackle the lack of take-up by eligible families across BNES before September 2025, learning from the work done by York University, FixOurFood, The Food Foundation and experienced local authorities.
- 21. Subject to Cabinet implementing FSM auto-enrolment then Council requests the **Children, Adults**, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel receives and scrutinise progress updates from the auto-enrolment project in 2025.
- 22. Ask the Leader to write to the government and our local MPs to request a national rule change so that all families on the relevant benefits can be auto-enrolled, rather than councils seeking to implement this project individually.**

[Notes:

- 1. *The above successful resolution contains sections in bold proposed by Councillor Paul May and accepted into the motion by the mover and seconder.]*

**54 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

The Chair noted that statements had been registered from Councillors Bharat Pankhania and Joanna Wright and, when provided, have been accepted into the Minute book.

The meeting ended at 9.35 pm

Chair .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**

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## COUNCIL MEETING 21<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2024

### STATEMENTS FROM PUBLIC

#### Public (item 7)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Tim Spratt                               | Winifred Lane ETRO  |
| 2. Susan Charles, Corston Parish Councillor | Accessible homes  |
| 3. Joanne Laishley                          | Council commitments made in the Peace motion  |
| 4. Marie Duffy                              | Situation in Gaza and its effect on B&NES residents   |
| 5. Polly Campbell-Preston                   | Council commitments made in the peace motion in July  |
| 6. Benazir Jatoi                            | Council commitments made in the peace motion in July  |
| 7. Jane Samson                              | Council commitments made in the peace motion in July  |
| 8. Candice Streeter                         | Liveable neighbourhoods programme   |
| 9. Hakan Aysan                              | Petition on Park and Ride service (Lansdown ward residents)   |
| 10. Gennie Widick                           | Petition on Park and Ride service (Lansdown ward residents)   |
| 11. Richard Daws                            | Komedia, Bath – suggestions for ways BANES might be able to assist in retaining a vibrant and flourishing mid-scale venue in the future |

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## **BANES Council meeting 21.11.24**

### **Tim Spratt submission**

I'm here on behalf of over 300 hundred residents who live on or close to Winifreds Lane and some 3500 people who've signed a petition against the ETRO the council has imposed on the Lane.

I'm here on behalf of people who have an innate understanding of the locality they live in. People who are now **scared, frightened and deeply upset.**

These are residents who have **never** been consulted on the Winifred Lane ETRO including those on Sion Hill, Julian Road and Morford Street who walk their children to St Andrews School, go to the shops and nearby doctors' surgeries, and who now face bumper to bumper traffic and increased pollution where they live.

In the High Court – at a cost of some £50 thousand pounds to the council – the ETRO was shown to be illegal. We say it remains illegal today. The Council's own safety report is deficient. It fails to confirm that the ETRO complies with either DfT guidance on cycling infrastructure LTN 1/20 **or** the Active Travel England check tool. So it's questionable if the WECA funding from CRSTS is legal.

In short, the second Lower Lansdown ETRO is unsafe, it's unlawful, local residents don't want it, and it wasn't the outcome of the co-design process. Even your current Public Consultation Questionnaire doesn't fairly take into account those potentially affected outside the LTN.

Instead what your ETRO **has** achieved is more congestion on residential roads within and close to the Liveable Neighbourhood, delays to bus timetables, longer car trips, raised pollution in front of schools and is a danger to the very people it's supposed to benefit - pedestrians and cyclists. **The trial itself is unsafe.**

Is this really how LibDem councillors want to behave? To be perceived? To not seek compromise with those that you apparently represent?

Paddy Ashdown said:

*“I believe passionately in the middle ground, in civilised negotiation, in compromise. **Politics is about people, not ideology.**”*

You said to us in your 2023 manifesto that, and I quote:

*“Local people know their areas best”*

You said you’d:

*“Put residents first and actively listen to them”*

**So why have you broken your promises to us?**

Please talk with us. Seek compromise and find an ETRO and LTN for our area that are safe, work as they’re meant to, and which help rather than hurt us.

ENDS

At the Full Council meeting in September, I spoke of the need for 'Accessible Housing planned at the Onset'. I was asked how many accessible homes were available; I did not have the answer. I only get to hear the difficulties that people are having.

But thanks to our principal planner, Steve George, and having read "Banes Local Housing Needs Report", I am still none the wiser. There are some figures for accessible affordable housing but not for Market Housing. But it does say that 8.8%, that's 1 in 12 households, have one or more persons with a health problem that requires adaptation.

That can require planning permission, building contractors, upheaval and in a case I heard of recently where a couple hired an accessible AirBnB at £1,000 per week for FOUR weeks whilst a shower and toilet was added on the ground floor of their house under the stairs, as the wife had broken her hip. It's been 10 months while she lives on the ground floor, and sleeps eats and entertains in one room ... still waiting for the operation. They are both in their 80's.

Statistics say 50% of the population will have a short or long term disability in their life time.

Illness and disability does not discriminate age or life style.

I was having to use a wheelchair at 48 and possibly for the rest of my life, I'd be needing accessible accommodation.

A young couple late 20's buying their first house, their first son born with severe mental and physical disabilities, so as well as a new mortgage they had to find another £47,000 to make their home accessible for the whole family to live together. It took nearly three years to complete. That boy is now 30 years old.

**WE ARE ALL ONLY ONE DIAGNOSIS AWAY FROM NEEDING ACCESSIBLE ACCOMMODATION.**

We talk about sustainability, health and safety, improved insulation, planning for climate change but as I've explained, illness and disability can strike at any time, any age and in any type of housing.

All that is needed is FIVE CHANGES TO THE PLANNING REGS that could save the NHS, Social Services and the Client, money, time and not having to move house.

So my question still is :

Accessible planning is needed at the onset of new build and  
IF NOT, WHY NOT?

Susan Charles Cllr

Corston Parish Council.

Access Banes Chair.

Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the councillors for the opportunity to speak.

In July, this council passed a motion pledging to express deep sympathy and offer solidarity to those affected by the conflict in Israel and Palestine, including those impacted within the B&NES community. I am here today to ask how this pledge has been translated into action, particularly in line with councillors' responsibilities to their constituents.

The council's constitution clearly outlines your role: to respond to queries, investigate concerns, communicate council decisions, and represent the views of the community. For residents in B&NES who feel the impact of this conflict—whether personally, through family or friends, or due to heightened fears of division and discrimination—this pledge of solidarity is not just words on paper; it is a **commitment**.

What steps have you taken to ensure that those affected know they are supported? Have the same councillors who facilitated sanctuary for & assisted the 350 Ukrainian families in their hour of need, proactively engaged with our local communities to understand their concerns, or reached out to relevant groups and organisations to foster dialogue and provide reassurance? I ask because from conversations that I personally have had with Palestinian members of our community, **no one has reached out to them, despite being fully aware of their personal stories, some made right here in this very room.**

I raised this matter to council in May & also asked why the same hospitality that was shown to the Ukrainian refugees has not been extended to the desperate people of Gaza. I did not receive an adequate response. Why is their suffering viewed as non-urgent given that the death toll in Gaza is comprised of at least 22,000 children, mainly in the 5-9 age group. This is not only a humanitarian disaster - it's a genocide that has been 76 years in the making in abetted by Britain & the United States. Right now, there are traumatised Palestinian and Lebanese people working and studying in Bath who need to be supported, to be heard. They have families - or to be precise, whoever may be still alive in their immediate families, still living under the threat of being burned alive in their tents or blown to pieces by Israeli rockets.

To conclude, I urge the council to reflect on the promises made in July & to uphold those pledges. Bath Council has the opportunity to show compassion & be an example to other councils. Again, the offer for the council to contact

myself or any of the speakers from Bath Campaigns for further information or how we can assist in the process, remains. True solidarity requires consistent effort, and our community deserves to see this council living up to the values it has declared. Thank you.

## COUNCIL MEETING 21<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2024

### Question posed by Polly Campbell-Preston

Good evening,

As both a Bath resident and a member of the human race, I would like to address point 7 of the measures, which the Council pledged to undertake in July, when the Peace motion was unanimously passed, whereby it

*calls on the government to ensure that there are safe and legal routes for refugees and to reform the UK resettlement scheme to allow a route to safety for the most vulnerable in Gaza with emergency pathways for those seeking refuge from the conflict and emphasises our readiness as a community in Bath and North East Somerset to provide support and open our arms to innocent people displaced and affected by these events, as the community did for refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine.*

I wouldn't like to pour cold water on any part of this statement, but I haven't formed quite the same impression of the help bestowed upon fleeing Syrians and Afghans, in relation to that offered to their Ukrainian counterparts. This is only subjective conjecture on my part, and it is arguably possible that quantitative data could dispel this. Indeed, the level of support, welcome and solidarity shown to Ukrainians, fleeing the invasion of their country, has no doubt set a truly wonderful precedent for how we will, henceforth, be honouring our duty towards ALL those fleeing oppression, occupation and imminent danger to life. I can only imagine the frustration and helplessness you must be feeling - as are we - at not being able to offer the same open arms to those, desperately trying to escape the unimaginably barbaric horrors being meted out on Palestinians in Gaza.

My question is this: To whom was the plea for emergency pathways conveyed and what was their response? I fervently hope the reply wasn't filled with platitudes and faux concern. Whilst, as elected representatives, you might be feeling as demoralised as we the public are, you have the unique opportunity of being able to communicate directly with central Government.

The late Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said: "Do your little bit of good where you are. It's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world". Were all local councils to overwhelm Government channels with their voices, imagine what good could come from it. Can we therefore take it as read that the Council is clamouring as loudly as it is able, through all available channels; and is leaving no stone unturned, to ensure implementation of these measures?

Thank you.

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I stand here today as a Bath resident and a U.K citizen to express concern that the 18<sup>th</sup> July commitments made through a peace motion passed by this Council are **A** weak and watered down attempt to address the genocide in Gaza and the impact it has on Palestinian and Muslim residents of Bath.

So, while I acknowledge this Council - and thank the Greens for bringing this motion - to allow BANES to join the growing number of Councils around the country demanding a ceasefire – this motion is not forceful enough.

One of fundamental flaws - and why I call it a watered-down motion - is the amendment made to the title – from a ceasefire motion to a Motion on Peace. I would like to ask the Council why the title of the motion was changed?

I ask this is because language matters.

Calling it a peace motion under the current circumstances of a live streamed genocide reveals an attempt to be passive, neutral, A-political, moderate and dare I say, safe.

An estimated 180,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel<sup>1</sup>, 70% being women and children.<sup>2</sup> According to the UN famine has set in<sup>3</sup> over 70,000 tons of bombs<sup>4</sup> (worse than Dresden, London and Hamburg put together in WW1<sup>5</sup>) have been dropped on a strip of land no bigger than 360 km. 80% of schools<sup>6</sup> and 32 out of 36 hospitals destroyed.<sup>7</sup>

In this context, advocating and calling for peace is not the same thing as you saying you oppose violence, you oppose the killing of civilians, you oppose destruction, you oppose sending arms to Israel and you oppose injustice.

Under these circumstances a motion titled peace motion is the beginning of a cop out as it does not even mention Palestinians, Gaza or permanent ceasefire in its title. It is similar to when the slogan - Black Lives Matter distorted to All Lives Matter – it becomes vague and hollow.

And if my words don't convince you to question how as a Council you remain relevant to the residents of this city and remain on the right side of history when it judges you in the future I quote the words of the Martin Luther King, where in a letter from a Birmingham jail in 1967 he said: the moderate has been gravely disappointing. The moderate is more devoted to "order" than to justice; the moderate prefers a negative peace - which is the absence of tension - **to a positive peace** which is the presence of justice.

I end with questions to this Council: I seek an explanation as to why a ceasefire motion has been reworded to a peace motion? Why also has there been a lack calling for a permanent ceasefire? Why is there no commitment to demand Central Government end arms sales to Israel? Or has this motion been passed as mere tokenism and another box to tick?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2824%2901169-3>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn5wel11pgdo>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/11/9/strong-likelihood-of-imminent-famine-in-north-gaza-food-security-experts>

<sup>4</sup> Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/amount-of-israeli-bombs-dropped-on-gaza-surpasses-that-of-world-war-ii/3239665>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/jun/08/israel-destroying-schools-scholasticide>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/05/21/gaza-hospitals-attacks-bombed-israel-war/>

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**Statement to council      November 21<sup>st</sup> 2024.      Jane Samson**

**Actioning commitments made to local Palestinians in the July 18<sup>th</sup> Peace Motion**

Good evening.

On a side note – last week a UN Special Committee stated that Israel’s warfare methods in Gaza are consistent with genocide, including the use of starvation as a weapon. Today the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for President Netenyhu and Gallant, the former Israeli Minister of Defence. I wonder if councillors here recognise that a genocide is being perpetrated? Or do you not see the UN as a valid frame of reference anymore?

Moving on - today we are calling for a meeting with Kevin Guy to discuss the commitments made in the Peace Motion passed on 18th July. Though absent at that vote, as leader of the council with executive power, it is Mr Guy we wish to speak to.

Where are the Palestinians? Where is the Islamic Community? It is sad indeed that Ameerah, Majdi, Lara and Mohammed, hardworking residents of Bath who pay taxes and support our economy, who have spoken repeatedly in council, with courage, eloquence, grace, integrity and patience about an issue which is tearing them apart have given up on you.

Why?

Because you have lost their trust.

Because your words and promises are empty and your double standards are eye watering.

Because they have been disrespected by you.

Neither does the wider Islamic community see the point in turning up to give support.

You voted for a motion that was dressed in words of compassion and solidarity and that promised local action - but none of this has materialized.

What events have you ‘supported and facilitated’ that enable people to come together to ‘express sadness and solidarity’ in response to what is happening in Gaza?

What have you done to 'assist and nurture' our residents during these challenging times?

What have you done to 'combat racism and discrimination' in our communities?

Perhaps you are not aware of any issues? In that case what have you done to find out?

Several weeks after the motion was passed, a group of us met with the Equality and Diversity Officer.

We were shocked that she had been told nothing about the motion or the commitments made to local communities.

She has worked a lot with Ukrainian refugees – but the news that there are Palestinians and other residents impacted by the genocide and in need of support had not been conveyed to her.

You have made no attempt to put Palestinians on your radar. Talk of addressing racism and discrimination has been swept under the carpet.

On July 18<sup>th</sup> the Peace motion was passed unanimously. A massive turnaround from previous occasions when it had been brought but rejected out of hand.

The council acted as one – as if a prior agreement had been made between group leaders. A council strategy.

Therefore, I am asking you as individuals, with consciences and minds of your own, do you think the council should meet the commitments that it made in July?

Please raise your hand if your answer is 'yes'.

.....

Thank you

A few weeks ago a dog in my care became suddenly very unwell and began hemorrhaging. I needed to get him to Rosemary Lodge Veterinary Hospital as a matter of emergency. My journey was delayed by 20 minutes because I had to sit in heavy traffic caused by the closure of Sydney Road.

Whilst sitting in my car, waiting, the following thoughts went through my head:

Firstly that I was really very angry

Ziggy was lying bleeding in the back of my car for longer than necessary so that 26 Sydney Road residents could be freed from "the tyranny of the motor car".

That almost almost 4000 signatures from other residents against this LTN were of no consequence to this Council.

That 779 formal complaints against the scheme during the trial period were of no consequence to this Council.

That the reasoned arguments and observations of engineers, doctors, lawyers many 100's of residents and even our Liberal Democrat MP were of no consequence to this Council.

That extensive press coverage regarding the injustice of the scheme/ its totally inadequate consultation process/and fundamentally flawed trial period has been of no consequence to this Council.

That most recently ... First Bus said "Any LTNs push traffic out onto main roads and increase traffic, this delays bus services and is making cars the most attractive option" - this was also of no consequence to this Council.

That I would no longer feel safe walking home after dark on Sydney Road - again no consequence.

I would remind you that as a council you are supposed to serve, enhance and protect the local environment and its residents - these particular LTNs are increasing pollution and hindering people from going about their lawful business of work, education and recreation. You do not disappear traffic by closing roads, you just divert it on to other roads. To disappear traffic you have to offer a viable alternative. Where have you done that? There are no criteria that could judge this scheme successful unless of course you are one of the 26 supporters on Sydney Place.

My work means I meet people from many different walks of life and I can tell you that right now, trust in this council and its integrity have been massively damaged. You might want to reflect on

the principle that it never ends well when institutions are allowed to mark their own homework - as both the Post Office and the Church of England have discovered to enormous cost. This entire regime flies in the face of democracy.

So now I leave you with this final thought,

Whilst you are listening to the 6th speaker after me this evening, you will have spent the same amount of time as Ziggy and I did, in traffic, waiting, bleeding..... to free 26 residents from the tyranny of the motor car, but I guess that too will be of little consequence.

Good evening

Thank you for having me, my name is Gennie Widick, I'm thirteen and I attend the Royal High School.

My parents do not drive, we don't have a car, so improving access to public transport is crucial to our family and others like ours. I have been walking to school since I enrolled in year five, as well as taking the bus in colder months due to asthma. I will often take the bus in and out of town, for school, social and any other activities, including buying groceries and other necessities or going to the library.

We have already seen our council make an amazing difference to the safety of residents, with the closing of Winifred's Lane. I, myself have experienced a dangerous amount of close calls with vehicles on that intersection. The trial of LTNs like that one is already making our neighbourhood safer for walkers like me.

Building upon that, I believe the council can take further consideration of residents' safety and accessibility needs by extending park and ride hours later into the evening. This is a critical change, taking into account the safety of women in particular who do not always feel safe walking unaccompanied into the later hours of the evening. My sister, for example, comes home from school on the weekends, and has to either walk up Lansdown Road from the station with her bags or pay for a taxi if she leaves London on a train with non-peak fares.

Having accessible, affordable and reliable transport options is required for Bath residents, especially considering the needs of the elderly and disabled parts of our community. After eight thirty pm, our only two options are to walk or take a taxi. One being a challenging and even dangerous trip for those who are more vulnerable, while the other can be prohibitively expensive. All in all, extending park and ride times will benefit not only school children such as myself but also the entirety of our community, residents of all ages and visitors alike.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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As Chairman of Komedia Bath I am making a short statement on behalf of the community owned venue. The Beau Nash Limited trading as Komedia Bath occupies one of Bath and the South West's key historic entertainment venues. We redrew the model for mid scale venues when we became 100% community owned in 2019 and have navigated all the challenges since with greater resilience. The cultural impact and community benefit offered to the city and the region has been huge and recognised with the venue winning the Bath Life, Creative Bath and Bath Bid awards in 2024. Over the years Komedia Bath has developed a strong partnership with BANES, as a long term tenant and one of the key cultural operators in the city. There are a number of issues that BANES has oversight of that will directly impact the quality of shows on offer in the city and on the long term sustainability of the venue.

Access to Komedia by smaller scale touring acts, typically arriving in small vans, functions well. Larger scale acts, who tour the county in coaches, have ongoing major issues visiting Komedia which are untenable in the long term. We are requesting that access to Westgate Street is offered on the same basis to larger scale artists as it is currently to smaller scale acts. If this is not possible Komedia Bath will no longer be able to host big name music acts.

The other factor under BANES control is the discretionary 80% charity discount on business rates to not-for-profit organisations. Many councils across the country offer full 80% discount to not-for-profit organisations on business rates. With the current discount business rates being reduced in March 25, we ask that BANES consider taking a similar approach to other councils. That being to offer the Komedia Bath the full 80% business rates discount. This ongoing relief will go a long way to safeguard the long term future of Komedia Bath, which currently operates successfully and sustainably for the benefit of the community in a key BANES asset.

**Richard Daws**

**Chairman**

**The Beau Nash Limited t/a Komedia Bath**

[www.komediabath.co.uk](http://www.komediabath.co.uk)

**Telephone: 01225 489070**

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**22-23 Westgate Street**  
**Bath**  
**BA1 1EP**

## **Speech to Council on the Future of Our NHS**

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to address this council on an issue that affects every single one of us at some point in our lives: the future of our NHS.

We have a unique opportunity to shape the direction of our health service through the current consultation on the NHS. This consultation is open now but closes imminently on **December 2nd**. Time is short, and action is urgent.

The NHS is one of our nation's greatest achievements, embodying the principles of compassion, equity, and care for all. However, it faces significant challenges, many of which stem from austerity measures over the last 14 years. If we are to preserve and enhance this cherished institution, we must tackle these issues head-on.

In my brief time, I will focus on four key areas: **Primary Care, Community Services, Social Care, and Privatisation.**

### **Primary Care**

Primary care is the foundation of the NHS. It is where most people first seek help when they are unwell. It is where trusted relationships with GPs are formed and where early interventions can prevent more serious health problems. Yet today, our primary care system is overstretched and under-resourced.

We urgently need investment to increase the number of GPs. Shockingly, there are qualified GPs currently unemployed—by deliberate design. We must address this waste of resource. We need to expand multidisciplinary teams and ensure practices have the tools and technology to deliver accessible, high-quality care.

As someone whose first qualification was in General Practice, I know what effective primary care looks like. I also know how vital it is to protect it. Diversions like NHS 111 and Pharmacy First, while potentially helpful, would be far more effective—and cost-efficient—if integrated into General Practice. This requires investment and commitment, not temporary fixes or fragmented solutions.

### **Community Services**

Community services are another critical pillar of our NHS. From district nurses to mental health teams, these services provide localized, personalized care that keeps people healthy and out of hospital.

Strengthening community care allows us to deliver the right care, in the right place, at the right time. Decades ago, during my time in South Wales, it was clear that patients thrived when managed locally by professionals who understood their needs and circumstances.

Over the years, however, community services have become fragmented and, in many cases, privatised. This has undermined the continuity of care that patients value—especially those with chronic conditions or complex needs. Fragmentation leads to duplication, delays, frustration, and poorer outcomes. We must reintegrate and strengthen these services to deliver seamless, effective care.

## **Social Care**

Social care is often treated as an afterthought, but it is fundamental to the health and well-being of our communities—particularly as our population ages. Bath and North East Somerset have a higher-than-average proportion of older residents, many of whom live with long-term conditions and rely on social care to maintain their independence and dignity.

Yet our social care system is underfunded, understaffed, and struggling to meet demand. Reforming social care isn't just about increasing funding; it's about recognizing its critical role in preventing hospital admissions, enabling timely discharges, and improving overall quality of life.

## **Privatisation**

Finally, I must address privatisation. While I am not opposed to enterprise in general, when it comes to healthcare, the motives of for-profit enterprises often conflict with the principles of the NHS. Private companies tend to focus on the most profitable services, leaving the NHS to shoulder the burden of less profitable but equally essential care. This erodes the NHS's ability to provide equitable, comprehensive services and undermines the principle of cross-subsidization that makes the system work.

## **Conclusion**

By prioritizing investment in primary care, community services, and social care—and by resisting further privatisation—we can create a resilient, cost-effective NHS that delivers world-class care for all.

As I conclude, I urge our council to engage, please make a formal submission to the NHS consultation. I also encourage my fellow councillors to make personal submissions and to remind our constituents of the importance of their voices in this process and I urge them to also make their submissions, it is our opportunity. .

The NHS is one of the best healthcare systems in the world. Together, let us ensure it remains a beacon of compassion, equity, and efficiency—not just for today but for generations to come.

Thank you.