

Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

Date: Thursday, 2nd May, 2024

Time: 10.00 am

**Venue: Community Space, Keynsham - Market Walk,
Keynsham**

Councillors: Andy Wait, Grant Johnson, Michael Auton, Alex Beaumont,
Anna Box, Jess David, Ian Halsall, John Leach, Saskia Heijltjes and June Player



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NOTES:

1. **Inspection of Papers:** Papers are available for inspection as follows:

Council's website: <https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

2. **Details of decisions taken at this meeting** can be found in the minutes which will be circulated with the agenda for the next meeting. In the meantime, details can be obtained by contacting as above.

3. Recording at Meetings:-

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 now allows filming and recording by anyone attending a meeting. This is not within the Council's control.

Some of our meetings are webcast. At the start of the meeting, the Chair will confirm if all or part of the meeting is to be filmed. If you would prefer not to be filmed for the webcast, please make yourself known to the camera operators.

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4. Public Speaking at Meetings

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Further details of the scheme can be found at:

<https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=12942>

5. Emergency Evacuation Procedure

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**Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel -
Thursday, 2nd May, 2024**

at 10.00 am in the Community Space, Keynsham - Market Walk, Keynsham

A G E N D A

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
2. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair will draw attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as set out under Note 6.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting declarations of interest are received from Members in any of the agenda items under consideration at the meeting. Members are asked to indicate:

- (a) The agenda item number in which they have an interest to declare.
- (b) The nature of their interest.
- (c) Whether their interest is **a disclosable pecuniary interest** or **an other interest**,
(as defined in Part 4.4 Appendix B of the Code of Conduct and Rules for Registration of Interests)

Any Member who needs to clarify any matters relating to the declaration of interests is recommended to seek advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer or a member of his staff before the meeting to expedite dealing with the item during the meeting.

5. TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN
6. ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

7. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 18)

8. CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member will update the Panel on any relevant issues. Panel members may ask questions on the update provided.

9. SCHOOL STREETS (POLICY DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION)

A discussion with the Cabinet Member on policy opportunities with regard to school streets.

10. LOCAL FOOD GROWING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT (Pages 19 - 30)
11. PANEL WORKPLAN (Pages 31 - 34)

This report presents the latest workplan for the Panel. Any suggestions for further items or amendments to the current programme will be logged and scheduled in consultation with the Panel's Chair and supporting senior officers.

The Committee Administrator for this meeting is Michaela Gay who can be contacted on 01225 394411.

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

MINUTES OF CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Thursday, 21st March, 2024

Present:- **Councillors** Andy Wait, Michael Auton, Alex Beaumont, John Leach, June Player, Duncan Hounsell (in place of Jess David), Shaun Hughes (in place of Grant Johnson) and Sam Ross (in place of Saskia Heijltjes)

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Anna Box and Ian Halsall

53 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

54 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

55 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Halsall gave his apologies.
Councillor David gave her apologies and was substituted by Councillor Hounsell.
Councillor Johnson gave his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Hughes.
Councillor Heijltjes gave her apologies and was substituted by Councillor Ross.

56 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

57 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

58 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

Carey Gilliland, Chair of Oldfield Park Community Alliance made a statement regarding the 'Oldfield Park ETRO consultation and decision'.

Councillor Leach asked about permits for staff and customers. Mr Gilliland explained that there were standard business permits for some staff and some for visitors. Regarding how staff travel to work and park, Mr Gilliland explained that this was difficult, he has re-registered his car to the business. There are some temporary permits and some people use the Park and Ride – some have been put off travelling from a distance.

Councillor Player asked if there was the right balance of dual use places. Mr Gilliand stated that the balance needs adjustment and updates will always be required. There were 15 dual use spaces originally – a couple of tweaks would be useful.

59 MINUTES

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meetings as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chair.

60 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Sarah Warren, Deputy Council Leader (statutory) and Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel gave the following update:

Forest for the Nation

Forest of Avon, B&NES and Natural History Consortium have led on the development of a Forest for the Nation bid to DEFRA, submitted on 17th March. If successful at the first stage, we will be awarded £150k to develop a full business case alongside three other applicants. This will be announced in April. B&NES is the lead local authority in the bid. The area covers Western Gateway (Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and WoE) significant support from wide range of partners. The winner will be announced in the autumn, with the successful bid awarded £9m over 5 years.

UKSPF

B&NES facilitated a workshop to promote the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to Parish Councils and community groups in Bath & Northeast Somerset. Parishes and town councils in Bath & North East Somerset will benefit from a total of £260,000 to help install energy-saving measures like solar panels and air-to-air source heat pumps. Successful bids will be announced shortly and we're looking forward to seeing support for a range of retrofit, renewables and GI projects.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The Consultation Draft of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for the West of England (including North Somerset) was sent to B&NES Council for review, in its role as a Supporting Authority. The Sustainable Places Board, on behalf of B&NES Council has agreed to consultation on the LNRS proceeding, which is expected to begin shortly. The Consultation will provide the public with an opportunity to provide feedback on identified biodiversity priorities and mapped 'focus areas' for nature recovery across the region. Following consultation, an updated version of the LNRS will be produced for publication later this year.

Green Heritage Homes

The Green Heritage Homes project has gone live this week. The project is a partnership between Bath and West Community Energy, B&NES and Bath Preservation Trust, to enable retrofit of listed buildings in a way that is appropriate for their fabric and heritage, through practical advice and positive planning policies. We have a planning officer now focused on applications for retrofit of listed homes. They can provide "level 0" pre-planning advice, coupled with BWCE's bespoke retrofit assessments for households.

Clean Air Zone

Bath Clean Air Zone, the first charging CAZ in the country which reached its 3rd anniversary last week, is improving air quality. Government's Joint Air Quality Unit announced last week that we have achieved "State 3" of 4, the first CAZ in the country to reach this status, with an average reduction of 27% in annual mean NO2 concentration across all 125 local diffusion tube test sites.

Climate Engagement

Climate Hub are holding their Springtime Assembly this weekend 22nd-24th March, with a collective of green organisations gathering to share information and ideas for a low carbon, nature positive future. The event is free to attend.

Climate Youth Summit 8th March - I attended with officers working on the Active Travel masterplan and we took the opportunity to consult with a small group of young people from local schools on the barriers they experience to adopting active and independent modes of travel

Strategic Transport Updates

- Somer Valley Links

- *OBC was approved at the West of England Combined Authority Committee on 26 January 2024.*
- *an important step-forward in the development of a project that will improve the infrastructure for walking, wheeling, and cycling, as well as buses, bringing greater and more genuine travel choices to the region.*
- *Future stages of this project will be developed and delivered directly by B&NES, giving greater opportunity to work with our communities.*
- *Work is now ongoing to review the proposals following feedback from the public engagement undertaken in 2023 and we will look to engage with communities again later this year.*

- Midsomer Norton and Westfield

- *Work has started to develop proposals improve walking, wheeling, and cycling links in Midsomer Norton and Westfield.*
- *Improvements to two routes defined in the Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP) will be developed using £150k of CRSTS funding, with a total of £1.5m allocated to the project and its delivery, subject to approval of a Full Business Case.*
- *Public engagement will take place later in 2024.*

- A4 Bath to Bristol Strategic Corridor (A4 BBSC)

- *Approval given at the West of England Combined Authority Committee meeting on 15 March 2024 to begin the next phase of work to develop the proposals further.*
- *We will work closely with WECA to ensure that the views of communities along the route are heard and positive further development of important improvements to the corridor to provide alternative travel choices can be undertaken.*

- Scholars Way

- recently approved £2m of funding from the CAZ reserve to deliver the western section of the scheme.
 - We continue to investigate funding sources to deliver the eastern section.
- **School Streets**
- we recently approved £250k funding from the CAZ reserve to begin the development of a School Streets programme.
 - We anticipate being able to introduce a pilot scheme during 24/25 and are developing an engagement strategy to inform our prioritisation.
 -
- **Active Way** - The social prescribing pilot has now engaged over 550 people in activities such as inclusive cycling, wellbeing walks, led rides, 1-1 cycle training, buggy walks, and walk and talk sessions. The Willson Grant projects will be commencing in spring.
- **Local Plan** - A suite of transport documents have been developed to support the Local Plan. These reports include the following:
- **Transport Vision and Objectives** - We need to ensure that people can get to where they need to go and are able to access the facilities and services that they need, as sustainably as possible. This document sets how we can do this.
 - **Overarching Transport Context** - The Local Plan provides the opportunity to develop a set of transport interventions which respond to the forecast growth, whilst simultaneously benefitting existing residents and visitors to the district in delivering a step change to the active mode and public transport networks.
 - **Network Mobility Study** - defines existing transport characteristics, opportunities and challenges that exist within the B&NES district.
- **Transport Strategies (Journey to Net Zero Plans)** - Journey to Net Zero (JNZ) Transport Plans are being prepared for the following places as potential locations for growth:
- Hicks Gate
 - Keynsham and Saltford
 - Somer Valley
 - Whitchurch Village
- **Active Travel Masterplan** - set out the existing and future network of active travel infrastructure required to enable and provide for sustainable and healthy forms of transport, as well as addressing the climate emergency, reducing inequalities, improving air quality, tackling obesity and reducing traffic congestion across Bath and North East Somerset.

Panel members asked the following questions:

(Councillor Leach stated that he was a trustee of the Climate Hub)

Councillor Hounsell stated that he was promised a report on the outcomes of the public consultation regarding the WECA A4 corridor study. He asked if this feedback was available yet. The Cabinet Member stated that it had not been available but she would chase this up.

Councillor Ross asked about the Citizens Panel in 2022 regarding Claverton Down and asked if this project had been started. The Cabinet Member stated that all routes will be mapped out as a circulation plan for the city is being worked out. The priorities will be laid out but there is no funding at present.

Councillor Ross asked for an update on School Streets and suggested a Task Group to include Panel members from this Panel and the Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Panel. The Cabinet Member stated that she would be happy to work with the group but the projects would be dependent on funding.

Councillor Ross asked for an account of how the revenue from the CAZ (Clean Air Zone) is spent, especially regarding sustainable transport projects/car clubs etc. The Cabinet Member explained that this information was in the public domain and if not, she will provide it.

Councillor Ross asked if there could be discounts for blue badge holders and families for cycle hangers. The Cabinet Member stated that she could ask WECA as they lead the project.

Councillor Manda Rigby, Cabinet Member for Highways gave the following update:

Update from last meeting:

General update

A very busy period for all operational services dealing with the adverse weather and the impacts. Significant flooding events on and off highway stretched the available resources.

Proactive gulley cleaning in multiple areas covered 3730 gulleys with 30% of this number reactive response to flooding events on the network.

Long term impacts of the flooding events being assessed but a number of roads will require significant work to be undertaken.

• Traffic management, Network Management, road safety

Procurement of new systems for managing Traffic Regulation Orders to increase accessibility for all members of the public to the proposals 2023 – 3420 Traffic Regulation Orders processed and implemented (Temporary, Experimental and Permanent)

Submitted bid to DfT for traffic signals maintenance funding to help address aging and obsolete traffic signals infrastructure

Trialling new wireless technology for vehicle and cycle detection at traffic signals which, if successful, could mean fewer detection faults and cheaper

- maintenance compared to traditional detectors cut into the road surface that are cabled back to the traffic signal controller.*
- *Transport Improvement Programme*
 - Working on the completion of Traffic Improvement Programme for 23/24*
 - Pre-mobilisation work for 24/25 programme in progress – significant programme to deliver*
 - Resource planning in place for programme*
- *Parking*
 - Development of new parking charging proposals – paper submitted*
 - Continuation of new Pay & Display machines installation to replace our end of life technology.*
- *Liveable Neighbourhoods delivery*
 - Work progressing on development of 5 further ETRO schemes*
 - Comms*
 - 3k letters issued to community around NSP ETRO scheme*
 - Held meetings with stakeholders - National Highways, Holburne Museum, Macdonald Bath Spa Hotel, Bathwick St Mary Primary school- whilst there are mixed views, meetings were generally positive.*
- *Highway Maintenance*
 - CAZ funded resurfacing improvements around Queen Square, Old King Street and Queens Parade Place completed*
 - Footway paving improvements in Queen Square in progress.*
 - Resurfacing programme for 23/24 completed*
 - Winter maintenance and gritting work continuing –*
 - Our 9 gritters have completed 50 runs so far spreading nearly 2000 tonnes of road salt*
 - New salt barn completed at Pixash HWRC and filled with road salt stocks in line with DfT best practice*

Forward plan of work for next period

- *Traffic Management, Network Management, road safety*
 - Implementation of new TRO software system*
 - Complete procurement of temporary additional staff resource to enable delivery of 24/25 TIP*
 - Procurement of new bus stop maintenance contract*
 - Action plan for Vision Zero*
- *Transport Improvement Programme*
 - Commencement of delivery of TIP programme - £2.8m of work (compared to usual £1.1m)*
- *Parking*
 - Public consultation on new parking charges*
 - Implementation of outcomes*
 - Completion of machine instal programme*
 - Implementation of Moving Traffic Enforcement*
 - Complete procurement for ANPR camera enforcement system used to monitor bus lanes, moving traffic and support CEOs patrolling permit areas.*
- *Liveable Neighbourhoods delivery*
 - Guildhall event on 20 March.*
 - Further letter to follow later in March around road closures over Easter Holidays for work to be undertaken.*

- *Highway Maintenance*
Transfer of 5x gritters to Pixash HWRC to increase operational flexibility
Commencement of delivery of 24/25 resurfacing programme

Further information is available to view on the B&NES website where consultation is ongoing as part of the wider Local Plan Regulation 18 Issues and Options consultation.

The Transport Policy team have attended a number of public consultation events as part of the current Local Plan consultation which has provided the opportunity to discuss transport issues and opportunities with the wider community. Through these efforts, we aim to ensure that transportation considerations are thoroughly considered and integrated into the planning process, delivering sustainable and efficient mobility solutions for our community.

Panel members asked the following questions:

Councillor Hounsell asked if a process was needed for pavements to bring them in line with the good record on roads and streets. The Cabinet Member explained that work is being done on assessing pavements and there is a history of underinvestment. In Heritage areas, work can be expensive. In rural areas the plan is to put in sustainable materials. She asked the ward Councillors contact her with any issues that can be added to an ongoing list.

Councillor Player asked why workers cannot deal with all potholes in the same area rather than working on some and leaving others. The Cabinet Member stated that she would take the query back but she explained that the worst potholes had to be dealt with first.

Councillor Player made a plea for an upgrade to pedestrian friendly lights on the Lower Bristol Road as it is busy and polluted. The Cabinet Member stated that she would take the comment back and would ask an officer to get back to Councillor Player regarding road resurfacing in Westmoreland ward.

Councillor Ross asked about a review of paper parking permits. The Cabinet Member stated that this was not on the workplan list – the level of money saved on this set against the time it would take for a review means it is not the top priority.

Councillor Ross stated that the RUH had recently amended their staff parking, the Cabinet Member stated that BANES would be working on a similar scheme.

Councillor Ross asked what is being done to attract people to parking services enforcement jobs. The Cabinet Member explained that there is a monthly report which states where civil enforcement officers go. She is confident, regarding Residents Parking Zones, that enough enforcement is done within the budget.

Councillor Ross asked about two areas in Walcot that had requested reviews. The Cabinet Member explained that there would be an overarching RPZ review.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members.

61 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAR PARKING PROPOSALS AGREED IN THE BUDGET

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Councillor Manda Rigby gave a presentation which included the following:

- Parking Charges 2024/25
- Air Pollution and Air Quality
- Emission-based charges in BANES
- Proposals agreed in 2024/25 budget
- Outline timeline.
- Actions requested from the Panel

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Hughes asked for confirmation that Midsomer Norton car park scheme would include a 2-hour free period and shop owners permit. The Cabinet Member explained that no decisions had been made, options are being shown during the consultation, a TRO cannot be prejudged. She confirmed that a 2-hour free period has never been confirmed – it is an option in the consultation.

Councillors Hughes stated that he felt that residents of Midsomer Norton had been misled in that the report mentions only 30 minutes free, he asked how this would improve footfall. He also stated that clean air could not be an excuse as there is not a pollution issue in the area. The Cabinet Member stated that there is no safe level of pollution and everyone should be kept safe, especially vulnerable people.

Councillor Hughes stated that emissions-based parking charges penalise poorer people who cannot afford electric cars. The Cabinet Member stated that at some stage, when older cars are no longer driveable – we would like people to consider less polluting cars.

Councillor Ross asked if the consultation would involve the school in Midsomer Norton as the car park is used for drop off and pick up. The Cabinet Member explained that the consultation would try to capture as wide a population as possible and yes, the school would be contacted.

Councillor Auton stated that, when he started his 2-hour campaign he did not want there to be any charges but aspired to 2 hours free parking if there must be charging. He urged everyone to take part in the consultation. He stated that he had not claimed that his engagement was scientific and he is working on behalf of those he has spoken to.

Councillor Ross asked about 30 minutes on street parking in the city. She asked if charges could start at 1 hour. The officer stated that there is support for the higher turnover for on street parking in the city. Charging is driven by the amenity in the area.

Councillor Hughes asked about motorcycles and why they would have to pay £15 to park in Bath. The Cabinet Member stated that motorcycles take up the same space as a car and are as polluting as a car. The report shows the clear timeline on this.

Councillor Ross asked how Park and Ride charges are enforced for people who just park. The Cabinet Member stated that there would be a review of Park and Ride services and exciting future options. There is not constant enforcement. A new system could mean that people pay before they get on the bus and enter their registration number.

Councillor Ross asked if everything is based on air quality data rather than footfall data. The Cabinet Member explained that air quality data is used. We do take measurements but cannot always gather the more granular information. The officer explained that parking enforcement coverage in rural areas has been increasing and that new pay and display machines will help to monitor car parks. It is preferred that enforcement officers are in residential areas.

Councillor Hughes asked if there had been any modelling of the impact of parking charges in Midsomer Norton. He stated that some smaller car parks are now charging. Many people will start parking in the Sainsburys and the Sport Centre. The Cabinet Member stated that it will depend on the feedback from the consultation – wider impacts will be taken into account but it is difficult to predict how people will react to the changes.

Councillor Wait stated that it is useful to remember the philosophy and principle behind the work that is being done and that implementations can be difficult. He urged all to take part in the consultation and thanked the Cabinet Member and officer.

62 BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET LOCAL PLAN OPTIONS

Councillor Matt McCabe, Cabinet Member for Built Environment and Sustainable Development and Richard Daone, Deputy Head of Planning (Policy) introduced the report and gave a presentation which covered the following:

- BANES Local Plan Options
- Local Plan Purpose and Scope
- Local Plan Spatial Priorities
- Structure of Options Document
- Housing and Employment need
- Map – showing location of site options for consultation
- Development Management Policy Options
- Local Plan Preparation Programme

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Hounsell asked if the Cabinet Member was satisfied that a suitable amount of brownfield sites have been used and asked if Charmey Down Airfield site

been considered. The officer stated that a lot of work has been done regarding brownfield sites – the vast majority of housing is on brownfield sites. The initial view is that we will need some greenfield options. Regarding Charmey Down, the officer explained that this was in the green belt and also in the Cotswolds Area landscape and so would be controversial. The owners are Wessex Water.

Councillor Hounsell asked if sufficient sites are being consulted on. The officer stated that a wide range of sites are being consulted on – this is just the list of the large site options. He explained that a proportion of our growth arises through students, so student accommodation reduces the need for general accommodation.

Councillor Hughes stated that some of his residents are struggling to engage with the consultation (the extended time is appreciated). He has concerns that the feedback will not be a true picture. The officer stated that it is difficult to get representative engagement – there have been a mixture of drop in events in relevant places and videos on the website etc. Efforts have been made to make the information accessible, over 2,000 comments have been received and there are still over 3 weeks left.

Councillor Beaumont added that many of his elderly residents have struggled to access online consultation and asked if forms can be provided in the future. The officer stated that the Council is moving towards online based consultations. He accepted the comment about forms but added that the system of collecting and analysing feedback has to be efficient. Councillor Wait stated that Councillor MacFie is producing paper forms for his ward.

Councillor Leach stated that ‘reducing emissions’ is clearly the priority in the report where it should be ‘climate resilience’ in his view. He stated that future climate consideration should be built into the planned developments. The Cabinet Member stated that Wessex Water have raised the issue of extra water falling in the future and where it will go. He explained that he is looking to reduce emissions in the supply chain but there is a delicate balance to tread – the plan will be reviewed in 5 years so updates can be made. Councillor Leach stated that he agreed we should be driving to net zero but we need to make sure developments will be habitable in the future – developers will not have accountability in many years’ time.

Councillor Hounsell asked if the community strategy aim that developments should promote health and well being is being considered. The officer agreed that this was a factor that is looked at.

Councillor Hounsell spoke about some problems with the online consultation – there were no diagrams, it only accepted a few sentences and ‘submit’ did not work. He acknowledged that there had now been an extension but asked if public confidence had been undermined and a dummy run could be considered. The officer explained that systems had been tested and that there had been some issues with the main website for a few days. He acknowledged the point. The Cabinet Member apologised for the issues.

Councillor Player asked about the option of the 500 new homes in Farrington Gurney – she stated that this would be a huge increase and there could be issues with integration. The officer explained that this had only been presented as a possible

option and that a development must be on this scale to support a new primary school for example. He explained that all of the options have challenges.

Councillor Ross stated that parish councillors are finding it hard to access the online consultation and it does not show up on the home page. She further stated that as Chair of the 'Food Security' task group there are some key issues around allotments and food growing spaces. She stated that there was a lack of consistency in the Local Plan regarding this land use and asked if it was a mistake to include these food growing spaces in the options document. The officer stated that if these spaces have been assessed then they must have been submitted.

Councillor Hughes stated that the Farrington Gurney option is raising questions due to the lack of detail (information on nursery's/shops etc) and there is no data on the effects or transport modelling. The Cabinet Member stated that it was a chicken and egg situation – picking up local views and knowledge is what the consultation is for. The officer confirmed that we are at the options stage which is the early stage.

Councillor Hughes asked about the site options on the West of Bath, the Cabinet Member explained that the site came forward as the wish of the steering group but we would need to know the benefits of the area.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officer.

63 PANEL WORKPLAN

Panel members noted the future workplan and noted that they 'Food Security' task group would report back in May.

The meeting ended at 12.19 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

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Local Food Growing Scrutiny Task Group – Final Report

Purpose

1. To present to the Climate Emergency and Sustainability (CES) Policy Development and Scrutiny (PDS) Panel the findings and recommendations to emerge from the Task Group review of Local Food Growing.

Background

2. At its meeting on [14 September 2023](#) the Panel agreed to establish a task and finish group to consider local food growing. The review was asked to focus on policy development and contribute to a new Local Food Strategy for the organisation, being developed in parallel.
3. The review’s main driver was to explore how B&NES as a local authority can contribute positively to food security i.e. access to a sufficient quantity of affordable nutritious food, within the context of environmental pressures, competing priorities for land, and local food equality.

Membership

4. The opportunity to join the Task Group was extended to all non-executive councillors. The final membership is listed below:

Cllr Sam Ross (Chair)
 Cllr Michael Auton
 Cllr Jess David
 Cllr Eleanor Jackson
 Cllr John Leach
 Cllr Ruth Malloy
 Cllr June Player

Meetings

5. The Task Group met on the following dates:

Meeting date	Content
24 November 2023	Scoping of the review and to agree terms of reference.
15 December 2023	Local food insecurity and community involvement – Milly Carmichael – Health Improvement Officer Allotment provision across B&NES – Paul Pearce - Team Leader - Parks and Green Spaces
19 January 2024	Allotment Association/Bath Growers Network and Transition Bath – Jacky Wilkinson, John Ingram and Lyn Barham

2 February 2024	Planning update – Richard Daone - Deputy Head of Planning Policy
23 February 2024	Grow Timsbury – Deborah Griffin Allotment provision in Radstock – Sean Fletcher Grounds and Maintenance Supervisor Radstock Town Council
15 March 2024	To agree the final report's findings and recommendations
12 April 2024	Overview of the draft Local Food Strategy – Chrissy Storry – Project lead

Terms of Reference

6. To support the development of a new Local Food Strategy for B&NES Council through consideration of:
 - Allotment provision current and future within Bath and North East Somerset;
 - Community approaches in local food growing projects
 - The impact of planning policy on local food growing
 - Community engagement and the role of the B&NES Council in promoting local food growing
 - Local food insecurity and opportunities to promote food security locally.

Key findings

Legacy and a new Strategy for B&NES

7. The most recent document to articulate the council's position in regards to local food growing is the [Local Food Strategy 2014-2017](#). This legacy document is structured around three interlinking strands - food production, procurement and public health. Although the Strategy is seen as a positive document it was acknowledged that it requires updating, particularly in the light of the council's newly adopted [Corporate Strategy 2023-2027](#), which identifies the refreshed priorities for the authority.

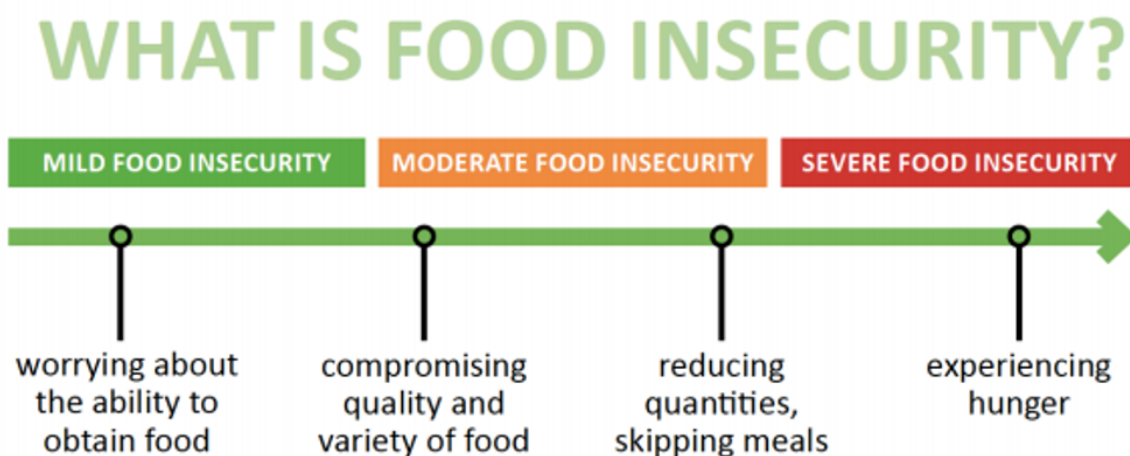


8. Consequently, work was taking place to develop a new Local Food Strategy in parallel to the Task Group review. This enabled the Task Group to adopt a policy-based approach to its work and for the review's findings to feed into the new Strategy. It also coincided with work on land use allocations for the new Local Plan and what obligations developers might have to provide space.

Food equality

9. The initial focus of the Task Group during information gathering was to consider local food insecurity across B&NES. Briefed by the public health lead, members learnt that local food insecurity is defined as **'lacking regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life.'**
10. As illustrated in **figure 1**, food insecurity is assessed on a sliding scale ranging from mild insecurity - worrying about obtaining food - through to the most severe insecurity, where people experience hunger.

Figure 1 – food insecurity sliding scale



11. When considering localised B&NES data, information obtained through the November 2022 council's voice box survey suggested that 3% of the population **sometimes or often do not have enough to eat**. The areas with highest food insecurity risk were identified as Whiteway, Whiteway West, Twerton West, Twerton, Fox Hill North and Westfield North.
12. Members were told that food poverty is not standalone and is shorthand for poverty generally. Also, it is often the case that unhealthy calories are cheaper leading to associated public health challenges e.g. white sliced bread can be significantly cheaper than its wholemeal equivalent.
13. The Task Group was introduced to the B&NES Fair Food Alliance (BFFA), which oversees and coordinates food insecurity work across B&NES. This group of more than 60 members represents a broad range of statutory, voluntary and education organisations. Members noted that around 4200 people per week in B&NES were in receipt from food from affordable food projects <https://www.banesfoodfinder.org.uk/>

14. Although BFFA had plans to address food insecurity, it was acknowledged that these did not currently sit within a wider strategy for local food growing. The Task Group discussed opportunities for addressing insecurity and chose to focus predominantly on the issues linked to allotment provision and food growing across B&NES.

Allotment provision

15. The Task Group initially focused on allotment provision within Bath, welcoming officers from the council's Parks Team to brief members. The Task Group learnt that the Parks Team currently manages 160 open spaces, including 24 allotment sites within Bath. Allotments in the parished areas within North East Somerset are managed by the respective parish and town councils. In addition, Bath also has private allotments such as Bath City farm, as well as local hosing provider - Curo offering a handful of allotment sites.

16. The 24 sites managed by the council comprises of 1200 plots. The standard size being 125 square metres, costing circa £75 a year. Prices had increased recently but a reduced fee of £30-£40 a year was available to people on low income. The fee was much cheaper than private sites which were charging circa £600 a year. The council was exploring offering a more diverse range of plot sizes, including starter plots.

17. The allotment service is run on a cost neutral basis with the £90k running costs met by allotment fees. Members were told that the waiting list for an allotment currently stood at 580 people within Bath, with several allotment sites including a 3 year + waiting list. A further issue flagged is that a number of people applied during the pandemic and when offered an allotment were uncontactable or had changed their mind.

Figure 2 – Bath allotments and waiting times

Locations and plots

Allotment site	Location	Plots	Estimated wait
Abbey View	Abbey View Gardens	63	3+ years
Avon Park	Avon Park	11	3+ years
Bloomfield Road	Bloomfield Road	153	2+ years
Brookfield Park	Eastfield Avenue	11	2+ years
Canal Gardens	Lime Grove Gardens	47	3+ years
Claremont Road	Claremont Road	51	3+ years
Combe Down	Church Road	64	2+ years
Corston View	Odd Down	18	3+ years
Eastfield Avenue	Eastfield Avenue	23	2+ years
Fairfield Park	Charlcombe View Road	55	1+ years
Fairfield Valley	Fairfield Park Road	19	2+ years
Foxhill	Bradford Road	10	3+ years
Hampton Row (organic site)	Bathwick	11	8+ years
High Common	Sion Hill	35	2+ years
King George's Road	Lansdown View	18 (10 raised beds)	3+ years
Larkhall	Charlcombe Lane	96	1+ years
Lower Common East	Upper Bristol Road	146	2+ years
Lower Common West (organic site)	Upper Bristol Road	58	2+ years
Lyncombe Hill Farm	Alexandra Park	52	3+ years
Lyncombe Vale	Lyncombe Vale Road	11	1+ years
Mendip Gardens	Banwell Road	15	3+ years
Monksdale Road	Monksdale Road	138	2+ years
Moorfields Road	Moorfields Road	31	1+ years
Ring Common	Cow Lane	73	2+ years

18. Recently there had been a shift in focus from growing (only) to 'growing and health', with the benefits on wellbeing and physical health from managing an allotment being recognised.
19. Members when exploring the potential flexibility around tenancies learnt that Bath's allotment tenancies were currently allocated to a named individual. The current arrangements did not allow formal sharing of tenancies/allotments but anecdotally officers were aware of informal sharing arrangements taking place.
20. The fundamental challenge to emerge during information gathering was the difficulty in identifying land/space for new allotment provision, particularly in Bath. One new allotment site had been established in Bath in the last eight years at Fairfield/Valley Park, consisting of 20 plots. The council receives money from developers as part of planning gain agreements, such as Section

106, but officers found it difficult to utilise, with allotments generating public opposition when proposed for an area.

21. Community gardening where people are allowed to grow in public spaces was cited as a successful initiative. [The Alice Park Scheme](#)- managed by Alice Park Trust – was given as an example. Other initiatives included Walcot Street (opposite the YMCA), recognised as ‘outstanding’ in the South West in Bloom ‘Its Your Neighbourhood’ Competition 2019.
22. In addition, several allotments included areas managed as a community space. This was given to an individual at a reduced rate and utilised for bees, orchards and ponds. Additional communal spaces were seen as a positive initiative that helps people on the waiting list have a taste of growing.
23. The neighbourhood nature scheme was launched last year. This encourages residents to approach the Parks Team with ideas to improve the verge near their home. A risk assessment is undertaken and then an agreement can be agreed. The focus had predominantly been towards wildflower meadows, but residents had started to look at growing food. Restrictions on sheds and planting trees were in place but the initiative had been received as a good opportunity to encourage local growing.

Allotment provision - Radstock

24. The Task Group welcomed Radstock Town Council’s officer with responsibility for managing the council’s 45 allotments at Haydon.
25. Each allotment holder was charged £25 a year with the allotment size on average 110 square metres except for the raised bed allotments for children.
26. Underestimating the volume of work required was identified as key challenge for new allotment holders. However, the town council with a dedicated resource was able to offer an induction for new tenants and would now clear allotments left overgrown when vacated.
27. Positively, the allotments were seen as a space to share knowledge since experienced allotment holders readily share advice with less experienced neighbours or residents whose garden soil is completely different. Also, surplus produce was donated to the local Swallows charity café where they also serve produce they grow themselves at their head office in Westfield. Some produce, especially russet apples go to Mercy in Action’s food club.
28. Once more one of the challenges for the town council was being able to identify new parcels of land for additional allotments. This overarching difficulty was explored when the Task Group met with planning officers. A further problem is accessing a water supply, a particular problem at Larch Court allotments.

Planning and implications for local food growing

29. Any planning application for development must be determined against the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. The current development plan for B&NES requires provision of new food growing space and it also protects allotments. For larger schemes the applicant has to either provide provision for food growing or make a form of financial contribution typically via a S106 agreement. However, the Allotments Act 1925 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 only protect council owned sites, and only require need to be assessed and registered, not actually met in full. Demand fluctuates, since the 1920s when allotments kept miners from starvation (the origin of the Haydon allotments, Radstock)
30. Members noted that within Bath the council was in receipt of developer contributions however, as discussed, the Parks Team found it challenging to utilise these contributions.
31. To provide context, over the last fifteen years the council has secured green space provision for £2m including circa 70k for allotments provision. This typically was required to be spent within 5 years (can be upto 10 years). There was no evidence that these contributions had been refunded.
32. The council's Green Space Strategy determined that planning gain for allotments needs to be spent within twenty minutes' walk or within 900m metres of the development.
33. Members explored possible solutions to this challenge. Questioning whether the council could appeal to socially minded landowners who may support local food growing? However, it was recognised that this type of approach would require the resources within the council to do something with the land.
34. A further opportunity discussed was whether the Local Plan could introduce design codes for developments in respect of local food growing. The difficulty being that the provision of land is a balancing process with competing priorities. The risk highlighted being that the Local Plan could be refused by the planning inspector if priority was given to food growing over housing provision. However, members felt the council could be creative in such instances by looking at raised beds, vertical designs and living walls etc.
35. Focusing on North East Somerset, the evidence suggested that town and parish councils would benefit from some form of support to help manage allotments, as they often don't have the experience or understanding to manage them sufficiently. Members felt that the Parish Liaison or Area Forums offered an opportunity to address this gap.

Community involvement in local food growing

36. The review then explored the role of the community in supporting local food growing, welcoming groups such as the Allotment Association and Grow Timsbury to provide evidence.
37. Bath's Allotment Association (AA) included 600 members, paying a membership fee of £6.50 a year. The organisation works with 2000 plots, forming a large community. The Association was witnessing younger people and females joining in increasing numbers but once more emphasised the challenge around waiting lists for plots.
38. Members noted that the AA in developing its Engagement Strategy was challenged by the lack of dedicated officers within the council to engage with to discuss progressing initiatives.
39. A similar issue around availability of land was noted in Timsbury. Grow Timsbury was formed in 2021 with the aim of acquiring a piece of land in the village to be used as a growing space to benefit the whole community.

Agriculture

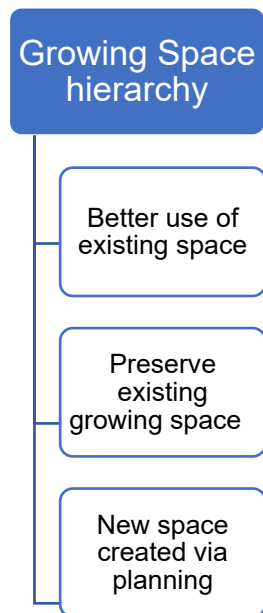
40. The review did not focus heavily on the role of local agriculture however, the Task Group did note that looking forward there was clear opportunity for B&NES as an authority to link better with farmers, including the Duchy re: Newton St Loe.
41. The role of agriculture as a local employer and contributor to the local economy was highlighted and it was felt that this should be recognised when determining development of agricultural land outside the green belt, and protective policies should be considered to safeguard this space.

Conclusions

42. The key conclusion to emerge from the review is that there is a huge enthusiasm for local food growing across the area with members hearing firsthand the demand in communities such as Timsbury, Radstock, Westfield and Bath. However, the availability of space is limited, and it is often the case that development opportunities for housing and employment (particularly in Bath) are at odds with the preservation or creation of space for growing. The Westmoreland Ward is a key example of this.
43. Members identified a hierarchy of space to summarise this key issue. The hierarchy consists of three layers based on enhancing, preserving and creating space for growing:

- i) **Level 1** - relates to being more flexible with existing space e.g. smaller allotment plots.
- ii) **Level 2** - considers preserving existing growing space, whether that be land for farming or allotment provision.
- iii) **Level 3** - creating new growing space using S106 funding, for example.

Figure 3 – The Space Hierarchy



- 44. The recommendations within the report look to support local food growing across all three tiers of the hierarchy.
- 45. From the evidence gathering it also emerged that there is lots of excellent work taking place across the authority around food security and food growing. However, the activities are not centrally coordinated through a lead officer/ coordinating group or active Strategy. Members welcomed the proposal in the developing Strategy to initiate a corporate approach and have reflected this within the recommendations.
- 46. As well as looking internally B&NES Council can build upon its strong community engagement focus to take on a major co-ordinating role and bring together community partners to ensure that the new Local Food Strategy is fully implemented in partnership with the community.

Recommendations

- i) **Better use of space** - To welcome the initiative of offering a more diverse range of allotment plots/community garden spaces and encourage the further development of this approach to help address waiting lists.
- ii) **Better use of space** - To invite allotment holders and the Allotment Association to contribute to a refresh of B&NES Council's allotment [rules and guidance](#)

To include consideration of:

 - Provision of starter plots, introductory lessons, a buddy system to help new tenants.
 - Varying the size of plots to allow sharing and to consider groups to be tenants rather than just individuals.
- iii) **Preserving growing space** – to invite the cabinet member with responsibility for planning to ensure the developing Local Plan and its supporting guidance complements the aims of the developing Local Food Growing Strategy, whilst also recognising the environmental and economic value of local Grade 1 agricultural land.
- iv) **Creating new space** -. To encourage the cabinet member with responsibility for planning to explore through Supplementary Planning Documents the potential of putting more responsibility on developers, particularly through larger developments to ensure local food growing opportunities are incorporated into submitted plans.
- v) The council to identify an officer lead for coordinating and leading implementation of the developing Local Food Strategy.
- vi) The Task Group welcomes and encourages the proposal to create a new Food Partnership – council led- which brings together community partners to implement the new Local Food Strategy.
- vii) The council through its community forums to initiate a ‘big food conversation’, inviting our communities to input into delivery of the Local Food Strategy, ensuring collective ownership.
- viii) The council through its Parish Liaison or Community Area Forums to facilitate support and the sharing of good practice for town and parish councils requesting support with the management of their allotments.

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CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY

This Forward Plan lists all the items coming to the Panel over the next few months.

Inevitably, some of the published information may change; Government guidance recognises that the plan is a best assessment, at the time of publication, of anticipated decision making. The online Forward Plan is updated regularly and can be seen on the Council's website at:

<http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/mgPlansHome.aspx?bcr=1>

The Forward Plan demonstrates the Council's commitment to openness and participation in decision making. It assists the Panel in planning their input to policy formulation and development, and in reviewing the work of the Cabinet.

Should you wish to make representations, please contact the report author or, Democratic Services (). A formal agenda will be issued 5 clear working days before the meeting.

Agenda papers can be inspected on the Council's website.

Ref Date	Decision Maker/s	Title	Report Author Contact	Director Lead
2ND MAY 2024				
2 May 2024	Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	School Streets (Policy Development discussion)		Executive Director - Sustainable Communities
2 May 2024	Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Food Task Group Report	Ceri Williams Tel: 01225 396053	Executive Director - Sustainable Communities
11TH JULY 2024				
11 Jul 2024	Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Annual Report on Response to Climate and Ecological Emergency		Executive Director - Sustainable Communities
	Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Circulation Plan		Executive Director - Sustainable Communities

Ref Date	Decision Maker/s	Title	Report Author Contact	Director Lead
12TH SEPTEMBER 2024				
14TH NOVEMBER 2024				

ITEMS TO BE SCHEDULED:				
	Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Housing Policy	Graham Sabourn Tel: 01225 477949	Director of Sustainable Communities
Page 31	Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Transport Action Plan		Executive Director - Sustainable Communities
The Forward Plan is administered by DEMOCRATIC SERVICES: Democratic_Services@bathnes.gov.uk				

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