

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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

Thursday, 12th September, 2024

Present:- **Councillors** Andy Wait, Grant Johnson, Alex Beaumont, Anna Box, Jess David, Deborah Collins, Saskia Heijltjes and Duncan Hounsell (in place of John Leach)

Apologies for absence: Councillors: June Player

87 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

88 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

89 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor John Leach gave his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Duncan Hounsell.

Councillor June Player gave her apologies.

90 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Collins informed the Panel that she is a member of Bath and West Community Energy which is mentioned in the item 'Annual Climate and Nature Progress Report'. Following the Monitoring Officer's advice, she will stay for the discussion on the item.

91 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

- Councillor Duncan Hounsell made a statement regarding the 'WECA A4 Corridor Project'
- Malcolm Baldwin regarding 'Future Proofing our Tourist Economy Sector'
- Ceris Humphries submitted a statement regarding 'Street Strategy' but could not attend the meeting.

All statements are attached to the minutes of the meeting.

93 MINUTES

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

94 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Chair explained that Councillor Paul Roper (Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development) and Councillor Oli Henman (Cabinet Project Lead for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel) were at the meeting to present items and could answer any relevant questions when their item is discussed.

95 STREETS STRATEGY

Councillor Paul Roper (Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development) introduced the report. He explained that the paper sets out the issues on this policy development item. The Cabinet Member asked for the Panel members views.

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

Councillor Johnson asked whether 'zoning' (eg Food Quarter) in Bath may impact other areas of the city. He stated that Bath is not easily quartered and asked how this will work. The Cabinet Member explained that this was not just for Bath but other towns. There will be work with the regeneration team, 'zone' is a buzz word.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that the paper is focused on retail and events rather than footways and highways etc. She explained that Bristol and other Council's are developing a 'kerbside strategy' which is a more holistic way to look at our streets and how we use them. The Cabinet Member stated that he would pass this comment on. Councillor Heijltjes explained the 'Lambeth Kerbside Strategy' which sets out how the kerbside should be used for people, not just for car parking. It includes policies like EV (Electric Vehicle) charging provision and green spaces.

Councillor Box stated that she is a rural Councillor and that this strategy is more for the towns. She asked what enforcement there will be (in terms of licenses). The Cabinet Member stated that enforcement does need to be considered, there are currently 3 environmental health enforcement officers. The officer explained that since Covid, enforcement officers have been permissive to help businesses but there must be a line. Councillor Box asked that consideration be give to people with disabilities.

Councillor Collins noted that the paper gave an outline idea of the strategy. She asked that the impact on businesses be considered as there are places in Bath with vibrant mini highstreets and outside tables and chairs add to this. The Cabinet Member stated that he would pass these comments on.

Councillor Johnson agreed that there should not be anything too restrictive to allow for vibrant streets. He asked about strategies for buskers and also how enforcement would work when this is very stretched. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that there is a tension and agreed that enforcement has to be part of this. He acknowledged that enforcement is an issue in rural towns. He explained that Bath (BID) Marshalls can be considered.

Councillor David stated that the desire to introduce more markets is a good idea especially local and neighbourhood markets. She asked about the environmental impact of the strategy eg. The effect of patio heaters. The Cabinet Member explained that the Regeneration Team are looking at the environment of the city in terms of the street scene and looking to improve urban landscapes. The issue is with the funding.

Councillor Wait stated that the strategy is for the whole of BANES. He stated that he would like to see more markets and events for Keynsham High Street and asked that the organisation of this be made as straight forward as possible eg. Road closures. He stated that High Streets are struggling so anything that encourages people to come along is good. He asked how the team will communicate with residents. The Cabinet Member explained that a cultural review is taking place which will include meetings with stakeholders and community groups. We have picked up that people feel it is difficult to arrange community events and we take that on board, but have to comply with rules on Health and Safety etc. The officer added that he working on stakeholder analysis and will talk to residents associations at different stages. He gave an example that he will be in Keynsham next week to talk about air quality.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that there is not a residents association in her ward. She asked that noise be taken into account as many places where events take place are also residential.

Councillor Box asked that Town Councils be included in terms of key stakeholders as they know the area and the issues. The Cabinet Member agreed.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officer and asked that the strategy be brought back to the Panel when it is in its later stages.

96 ANNUAL CLIMATE AND NATURE PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor Oli Henman (Cabinet Project Lead for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel) gave a presentation which covered the following:

- Clear Ambition for Climate and Nature
- First Joint Annual Progress Report
- Where are we now: BANES Council
- Highlights: Climate
- Highlights: Nature
- Highlights: Place-based Green Infrastructure
- Next Steps

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

Councillor Johnson asked about decarbonising Council operations and how much of the electricity decrease was a result of direct changes made by the Council and how much was down to the national picture. The Cabinet Project Lead stated that he understood it was a mixture of both. He stated that he would check this and see if it is possible in the future to separate these statistics.

Councillor Heijltjes asked about timescales and deadlines that were shown in the original action plan. She asked about progress on the Ecological Action Plan and asked about risk assessments in terms of not achieving core priorities. The Cabinet Project Lead explained that the report shows the ambition for 2030. He said that it was a challenging picture and that there had not been the level of investment that was desired. A lot depends on the national picture. He added that the Annex show the original aims and progress.

Councillor Box ask the following questions, the Cabinet Project Lead answers are shown in italics:

- Can public health be shown in terms of air quality. Councillor Box requested a written response regarding how many potential lives have been saved by clean air strategies. She commended the intervention. *The Cabinet Project Lead agreed that this was a good idea and explained that the map on the website shows each air quality monitor. He agreed that this is linked with public health.*
- Suggestion of practical support for farmers and landowners with regard to biodiversity in hedgerows. Maybe a campaign/training. *The Cabinet Project Lead agreed with this approach.*
- The school transport fleet is very old, this could be de carbonised. *The Cabinet Project Lead agreed to take this comment back.*

Councillor David ask the following questions, the Cabinet Project Lead answers are shown in italics:

- It is good to see information on the ecological quality of parks and green spaces, a number of interventions have benefited from funding. The funding needs to be sustained. *The Cabinet Project Lead agreed that community partnerships are a good way to give people ownership. We need to build on those.*
- The Corporate landlord model offers opportunities to improve nature – hopefully this includes parks and green spaces. *This point will be taken back.*
- It is good to see a level of detail regarding rivers and glad to see the issue of sunken boats being gradually addressed. Plea to allow continued funding for this in the budget process. *There are different responsibilities regarding rivers – the process with sunken boats has begun, there are currently 6 sunken boats in Bath.*

Councillor Collins ask the following questions, the Cabinet Project Lead answers are shown in italics:

- Green Open Homes – brilliant initiative.
- Regarding transport, it is an important target to get emissions down. Cycling and walking do not seem to be having a big impact. Is there a communication strategy regarding transport? There is a lot of disinformation. It is useful for Councillors to know what they can do to move the dial. *The Cabinet Project Lead acknowledged that it is a challenging area, a big shift is needed to make changes. 20% of the Council fleet is electric. Part of the picture is the Liveable Neighbourhood plans – this may mean encouraging people not to drive past a school.*

Councillor Hounsell asked about the second phase of 'Solar Together. He explained a blockage in the system regarding getting payment to people for energy sent to the grid. He suggested a guidance leaflet to break down the jargon. The Cabinet Project Lead stated that this could be looked in to.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that transport made up 32% of emissions and the target is a 25% reduction in car journeys. She asked for data to be included and for background information to be included/signposted. She highlighted that only 1 out of the 18 new actions for 2024/25 are for transport while road transport was such a large cause of emissions. She added that there must be safe infrastructure for people to make the change to cycling. The Cabinet Project Lead stated that reducing car use is the core aim which requires a cultural shift. Education and communication are key as is the Liveable Neighbourhood scheme. He stated that there are plans for cycle routes but a lot depends on funding.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that she was keen to see the active travel links reinstated as part of the Somer Valley Links project. Councillor Wait agreed.

Councillor Johnson suggested training to encourage behavioural change for Council fleet drivers regarding reducing fuel use. The Cabinet Project Lead took this idea on board. He explained that in 2017, 40 vehicles were brought back in house which has affected the figures.

Councillor Collins stated that it is important to have good communication around why we are changing infrastructure.

Councillor Heijltjes asked how the reduction in emissions compared with the national picture. The Cabinet Project Lead explained that the statistics are from national sources and the team would check on this.

Councillor Heijltjes asked about the possibility of using electric cargo bikes for some roles such as road inspection teams. The Cabinet Project Lead agreed that this would be a good idea and also explained that E cargo bikes are being used/tested for the general public in his ward as part of the WECA e-bike and e-scooter trials currently.

Councillor Wait stated that in his surgeries there were often complaints about plants growing on pavements etc. – we need to explain that we do not use poison now but heat warming devices. We need to take people with us. The Cabinet Member Lead

agreed and explained that the use of pesticides was stopped in 2021 and manual removal is now used which takes longer.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Project Lead and the officer.

97 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted that future workplan and that the November meeting would consider:

Vision Zero Transport
Housing Plan
(possible Waste Recycling provision)

Future items include: Active Travel and Movement Strategy

Panel members suggested future items on: Air pollution and Homelessness Strategy Update

The meeting ended at 11.45 am

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

WECA outline business case (OBC) for the Bristol -Bath Strategic corridor proposals: (BBSC).

WECA Vision – “The Programme focuses on improving access, reducing journey times and improving reliability for bus users, cyclists and pedestrians through the provision of: Y A high-quality, high frequency bus service between Bath and Bristol Y A continuous segregated cycling corridor between Bath and Bristol Y Cycling and walking connections between local communities along the A4 between Bath and Bristol and the new bus service, and strategic cycling corridor.”

This is a WECA project that has NOT been handed over to B&NES. However, I want to share some facts with you. Few would disagree with the OBC narrative about congestion, the need to reduced carbon emissions, and to seek a modal shift from car to bus and active travel. Few would disagree with the noble aims of addressing climate change. However, does this scheme match these ambitions? Does the proposed scheme represent value for money?

There is a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) stated of 1.5 i.e for every £1 there is 50p of benefit. Most of the benefits are not economic but monetised environmental and health benefits. Most of the claimed benefits are based on physical activity (I guess the walking/cycling). Despite that the cycle path alongside the Keynsham by-pass has, according to WECA press releases, been taken out of the proposed scheme contrary to the stated WECA vision of a continuous cycle corridor between Bristol and Bath. Who in WECA made that decision? What cyclist would take a detour into hilly Keynsham?

There is some benefit claimed for noise reduction. The OBC refers at one point, curiously, to reduction in night-time noise for a scheme that is about active travel and daytime bus time efficiency, and the OBC also claims greenhouse gas reductions.

This BCR has been subject to sensitivity tests. It rises to 1.8 in the most optimistic of outcomes but reduces to 1.2 based on comparative case studies and 1 if there is only a 25% active travel share.

The BCR is described as giving medium value for money.

To give a sense of perspective, a re-opening of Saltford Station had a BCR of 2 some years ago and that was before environmental factors considered

The A4 corridor BCR calculation gives a **NEGATIVE** effect for economic efficiency for business users and providers and consumer users (other). It is only positive for commuters.

The Phase 1 proposals are planned to be completed by March 2027.

The cost is about £26 million pounds of which £21 million is planned to be spent in one financial year 2026/2027.

Predicted average bus journey time savings in the two sections from Hicks Gate to The Globe: **Eastwards** 57 secs + 47 secs = 104 secs or **1 min 44 secs**. **Westbound** the figure is 41 secs + zero = **41 secs**. This is less time than I have been speaking.

Aspects of the A4 corridor proposals are unpopular, particularly those relating to the Keynsham by-pass. Concern for many is about the practicality of the proposals not the aims. Concern is also about value for money.

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Malcolm Baldwin statement:

Future-proofing our tourist economy sector.

(Part 1)

When I spoke at the last full Council meeting, although not my main theme, I alluded to the under-management of our tourist economy.

The main point of my presentation on that day related to Liveable Neighbourhoods and how important it was that such a concept should not merely be about traffic management interventions, essential though those are to some catchment areas such as my own, but be importantly about a wider context.....the improvement of our public realm to the benefit of residents, visitors, businesses and our key local tourist economy in particular.

Today you have the opportunity to scrutinise and support essentially needed changes, long-awaited by some of us, to potentially significantly improve our public realm in terms of the better design and management of our street-scape.

With this long-awaited but hopefully highly welcomed initiative by the current B&NES administration, we should be able to move some way to future-proofing essential aspects of our tourist economy whilst at the same time, correctly implemented, vastly improving our public realm for the benefit of our residents, visitors and local business community.

Let us make a bold assumption: Both residents and tourist/visitors will support a better looking and better managed street-scape for our city and its surrounding areas.

Bath has a beautiful and stunning architectural heritage, our parklands are second to no other city in this country, some of our local museums such as the Holburne continue to inspire and our aspirations for a new fashion museum has the potential to be nationally and world challenging.

The current aesthetics and management of our city's street-scapes are frankly dire and we should be, and some of us often are, embarrassed by their condition and what is allowed to occur on them.

The new strategy for improvement of that street-scape, before you later today, makes a start in potentially dramatically improving the condition of our city for its residents and begins the process of future-proofing the quality of our key tourist economy.

In this context, politically or non-politically, let's not forget it really is the 'E word' that's important. Any strategy for these absolutely vital improvements to our street-scape will only be effective with focused and maintained ENFORCEMENT.

Let's let's not re-invent the wheel and please, please no more external consultants on this one if resource-wise it can be avoided. A template potentially already exists, it's called "Creating the canvas for public life in Bath". (See end of this document).

Finally, it's also essential to get residents and NOT just business organisations involved. A document such as I have alluded to, overlaid and amended with a large amount of local knowledge and common-sense, will get our city to where we all should want it to be as an exemplar for the condition of the public realm for the benefit of our residents and visitors alike.

Malcolm Baldwin.

Circus Area Residents Association.

Statement to Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel

Ceris Humphreys (Bath resident)

The Streets Strategy report seeks the Panel's input on the principles of a Streets Strategy and its views on what issues should be identified, considered and addressed within the proposed coordinated approach.

Please consider this statement in your debate.

Fundamentally, sustainability has at its heart enabling people to live in the places where they can easily access the things they need. One thing Bath achieves much more successfully than many other cities is having many residents living in its centre. And the presence of a significant residential population is a key contributor to Bath's vibrancy, making it a living thriving place, not just another visit destination.

B&NES has long recognised the importance of this to the city and its economy, seeking to bring into residential use more unused accommodation above commercial units in the centre (eg Milsom Quarter Masterplan).

It's therefore surprising the report doesn't currently highlight the need for the Street Strategy to reflect the vital need to keep Bath liveable for residents.

The impacts of commercial activities in the City Centre on residents are many and development of the Street Strategy should take proper account of this.

But particular attention needs to be paid to noise – an impact which doesn't merely affect residents as they move around the streets but penetrates their living space, studies and bedrooms in buildings that often cannot be insulated effectively against noise. This needs to be considered in the context of a proper noise strategy covering not only city centre streets but other public spaces in the city include parks and green spaces, as the Federation of Bath Residents' Associations has raised with council leadership recently.

It's now well-recognised noise can impact adversely on public health in many ways, with a scientific pathway now being recognised as related to distress produced by increased physiological arousal because of recurrent stimulation of the endocrine system and autonomic nervous system induced by intrusive noise. It's also well-understood these impacts correlate with the number of occurrences, volume and time of day – poor sleep can cause daytime sleepiness and affect children's learning.

Consequences include reduced mental health, impaired learning and development in children and young people, increased behavioural problems, and many others.

It's essential the Street Strategy recognises the presence and needs of residents, with most importantly proper consideration of how noise will be managed so as to prevent adversely impacting on the mental health of local people and life chances of children and young people.

Please ensure this fundamental issue of liveability and sustainability is included in the Strategy going forward.

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