

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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

Monday, 19th February, 2024

Present:- **Councillors** Andy Wait, Jess David, John Leach, Alex Beaumont, June Player, Saskia Heijltjes and Fiona Gourley (in place of Michael Auton)

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Grant Johnson

46 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

47 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

48 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Auton gave his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Gourley.

Councillor Johnson gave his apologies.

49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

50 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

The following members of the public made a statement to the Panel. Panel members asked some questions.

Mike Earle made a statement regarding the data from the trial and access to information on this issue.

Councillor Heijltjes asked if Mr Earle lived in Southlands, Mr Earle stated that he did not and that his concern was with the democratic process.
Councillor Player asked if Mr Earle had been refused data when he had requested it. Mr Earle stated that yes on several occasions, he was advised to submit a Freedom of Information (FOI) request.

Angie Paddock (*statement attached to these minutes*)

Councillor Player asked why Ms Paddock thought the 3 weeks of the data collection period was particularly quiet. Ms Paddock explained that during those 3 weeks there was only 1 event at the RUH (Royal United Hospital) when there were usually 3 or 4 per week.

Councillor Heijltjes asked if Ms Paddock felt supported by the ward Councillors. Ms Paddock stated that the ward Councillor is listening.

Councillor Player asked why Ms Paddock thought groups of cyclists appeared when the cameras were installed. Ms Paddock stated that she believed the cycling group had been contacted.

Councillor Player asked if the aim of the scheme of a safer, healthier environment had been achieved. Ms Paddock stated that it worked for one side of Southlands but was a two-tier situation.

Meg Collin (*statement attached to these minutes*)

Councillor Heijltjes asked if Ms Collin believes the outcome of the survey would be different if parking issues are resolved. Ms Collin stated that she does not know but would like to say yes.

Councillor Wait asked if she believed 21 cyclists per day is reasonable, Ms Collin stated that she had not counted but his seems reasonable.

Councillor Gourley asked about the public transport in Weston. Ms Collin stated that it was a better service than anywhere else she had lived but could still be improved.

Peter Heywood - Chair – Future Weston (*statement attached to these minutes*)

Councillor Heijltjes asked how Future Weston would suggest the streets could be made safer. Mr Heywood stated that this was not a problem in the first place. Restricted parking may be looked at.

John Chapman made a statement mentioning that, in his view, the scheme had created an 'unliveable neighbourhood'. He explained that there are now reversing vehicles and it is the wrong scheme in the wrong place. It has caused division.

In response to a question from Councillor Player, Mr Chapman stated that the planters should be removed and the money spent on the High Street.

In response to a question from Councillor Wait, Mr Chapman confirmed he was not a resident.

Councillor Wait confirmed that members of the public are able to register to make a statement at Panel meeting. Nobody was stopped from making a public statement.

Councillor Malcolm Treby made a statement and urged the Panel to uphold the call in and recommend removal.

Councillor Heijltjes asked how Councillor Treby had supported his residents. Councillor Treby explained that he held a monthly surgery, public meetings and email correspondence.

Councillor Halsall asked if any of the 71% could be non-residents. Councillor Treby explained that the second report did ask if people were residents, and this showed 57% against the scheme.

The Chair thanked the speakers.

52 CALL IN OF DECISION - LIVEABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS: SOUTHLANDS TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER (WL)

Lead Call in Councillor statement – Councillor Robin Moss

Councillor Moss explained that of the three schemes, this one had been called in due to public opposition. He stated that he was not against measures to make neighbourhoods cleaner and safer but schemes do need to have public support. He stated that a traffic circulation plan for the whole of BANES is needed. He asked for a reset on this decision and a conversation with the local community.

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

Councillor David asked Councillor Moss how confident he was that the majority oppose the scheme currently. Councillor Moss pointed to the statistics in the Council papers which state that 71% of the local community oppose the scheme.

Councillor Heijltjes asked why the call for a BANES circulation plan had not been called for sooner. Councillor Moss explained that, as ward member for Westfield, he had called for this many times for his area.

Councillor Halsall stated that if this scheme is scrapped, funding could be lost for the wider scheme. Councillor Moss stated that this has been a concern but that the WECA Mayor would not allow single schemes to effect overall policy.

Councillor Player asked if a decision should be based on money, we should put resident's views first as that is who we represent. Councillor Moss explained that this is one of the smaller schemes and it should be about spending money wisely.

Cabinet Member for Highways, Councillor Manda Rigby, statement

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Councillor Rigby stated that the aim of the programme is safer, quieter more equitable streets. She explained that the issues of through traffic and parking were identified at the start of the process, the scheme had not attempted to address parking. She explained that there have been 6 engagement/consultation opportunities – 3 prior to the trial, 2 during the trial and 1 afterwards. In terms of the 71% figure – this refers to the open public consultation which was not restricted to Southlands residents. It is intended that monitoring will take place in April 2024 which will take into account different routes.

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

Councillor Leach asked why respondent's addresses were not taken in the public consultation. The Cabinet Member explained that the wider public view was taken first.

Councillor Heijltjes asked how much was spent on consultants. The Cabinet Member stated that she did not have a specific number for this.

Councillor Halsall asked that, if the scheme goes ahead, would there be funding for other things in the community. The Cabinet Member stated that, if the scheme does not go ahead, we cannot do other things such as barriers for reversing. She explained it was not an intention to split the community. She stated that the number of people who have engaged has declined, a lot of people have not expressed an opinion. She added that the issue of parking needs to be looked at – we would like views on Residents Parking Zones (RPZs).

Councillor David asked about the resident's concern on the quality of consultation and how it could be improved. The Cabinet Member explained that there were 6 attempts at engagement which included letters and meetings, but people have busy lives, there is a silent majority. She added that the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Panel could undertake a study on getting engagement rates up.

Councillor Beaumont asked if the scheme has done what was intended. The Cabinet Member stated that it has stopped 100% of through traffic.

Councillor Player asked about data collection, the Cabinet Member explained that no notice is given when data is collected (via cameras) – it is representative and proportionate.

Councillor Player stated that the aim is safer and healthier streets, she asked if that had been achieved. The Cabinet Member explained that there is some validity that the scheme seems to have worked better on one side than the other but taking everything into account, she believed the area was safer and healthier.

Councillor Heijltjes asked why parking issues were not being addressed during the experimental TRO. The Cabinet Member explained that RPZs (Residents Parking Zones) could not be joined with the first trial of the scheme.

Councillor Heijltjes asked if the voices of young people had been sought. The Cabinet Member stated that social media had been used and the school had engaged.

In response to a question from Councillor Wait regarding pollution, the Cabinet Member stated that the neighbourhood roads are still within the normal boundaries.

Closing statement – Cabinet Member for Highways, Councillor Manda Rigby

Councillor Rigby stated that there was competition for trials and that it was impossible to accommodate all wishes. She assured the Panel that every decision has been made in accord with policy, mandate and process. Councillor Rigby stated

that there is limited road space and the aim was to put pedestrians at the top. She accepted the needs for more improvements if the scheme was made permanent, she believes that more interventions can be brought forward. She urged the Panel to dismiss the call in.

Closing statement – Lead Call in Councillor, Councillor Robin Moss

Councillor Moss stated that the call in had given the opportunity for discussion regarding Southlands and the bigger picture and he hoped that this have given the opportunity to see the woods not just trees. He asked for a conversation on traffic schemes and hoped there would be reconsideration on this decision.

Panel debate

Councillor Leach stated that he was surprised to hear reference to the bigger picture when this meeting is concerned with a particular scheme. He noted the discussion on whether the consultation responses represent the wider community. He noted the difficulties on raising the levels of engagement. He stated that he would assume overall that the large majority are broadly happy.

Councillor David stated that it had been helpful to hear strongly held views and was concerned that the call in was based on feedback from the first consultation. She noted that there are issues to be addressed regarding parking and noted that there is a basis for wider improvements to the area.

Councillor Halsall stated that the Panel had heard views from people against the scheme. There had not been a referendum but a survey. All want cleaner air, safer and more equitable travel. He noted that this had been a temporary experiment and if it is made permanent – there is the option to make improvements.

Councillor Player stated that there should be a review and necessary solutions put in place before it is made permanent, not afterwards.

Councillor Gourley stated that the call in was led by a Councillor outside of Bath, some rural areas would also like to stop rat running which has been achieved in Southlands. She noted the importance of working closely with WECA on funding.

Panel decision

Following a proposal from Councillor Halsall, seconded by Councillor Gourley, the Panel **resolved** to dismiss the call-in: the decision shall then take effect immediately. (7 for, 1 against and 0 abstentions)

The meeting ended at 12.00 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services