

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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

Wednesday, 22nd January, 2025

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

108 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

109 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

110 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Anna Box gave apologies and was substituted by Councillor Toby Simon.

Councillor Alex Beaumont gave apologies and was substituted by Councillor Duncan Hounsell.

111 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

112 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

Sol Green (Vineyards Residents' Association) made a statement regarding 'London Road and Snow Hill Liveable Neighbourhood'. The statement is appended to the minutes for the meeting.

David Redgewell (South West Transport) made a statement regarding Transport. The statement is appended to the minutes for the meeting.

114 MINUTES

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

115 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The update from the Cabinet Member will be covered in the item on the agenda.

116 HOUSING PLAN UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development – Councillor Matt McCabe introduced the report, he underlined that the item related to the Housing Plan rather than the Local Plan. The officer gave a presentation which covered the following:

Bath & North East Somerset Housing Plan 2025-2030

Background: The Council's Ambition for Housing

Key Focus Areas: 5 Pillar Approach

Pillar 1: Releasing Land for Housing

Pillar 2: BANES homes and affordable housing

Pillar 3: Affordability Across the Housing Market

Pillar 4: Housing Support

Pillar 5: Housing Suitability

What does the Housing Plan do?

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

Councillor Collins stated that she was pleased to see the report which covers the important areas and outlines the excellent work being done regarding supported housing and BANES homes. She also stated was disappointed about the lack of measurable targets. She asked that, when the report comes back to the Panel it would be good to see progress, but it is hard to see how we can hold the Cabinet Member to account regarding progress. Councillor Collins referred to page 41 that mentions 'slowly' which she stated is not the approach we would like to see. She concluded that there is a real housing crisis, we need urgent and dedicated action and we want reassurance on this. The officer explained that there is a suite of KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) for the area. He explained that 'slowly' means incrementally (re page 41).

Councillor David stated that this was a useful document and framework. She agreed with the point made above regarding measurable targets. She asked about the shortage of 4-bedroom homes in the social rented sector and any challenges around the delivery of them. The officer explained that if a family is on the Housing Register for a 4-bedroom property, they could in principle be waiting 200 years so this is a major issue. He explained that that 4-bedroom properties have been very attractive in the right to buy scheme, and they are also expensive to build. He explained that work is being done to make sure 4-bedroom properties are efficiently used and that people can be incentivised to move on if they do not need 4 bedrooms. He added that he is working with Housing Associations to provide a proportion of 4-bedroom properties and also regarding projects where houses can be converted.

Councillor Heijltjes asked how long families (and children) wait for houses on the search register and how many social houses have been made available since 2019. The officer explained that around 1000 families (on the search register) are in urgent need and around 4000 wish to move (but have adequate housing). The Cabinet Member added that the target is that the Council own 1000 units by 2033.

Councillor Johnson stated that we are moving in the wrong direction on waiting times and asked how this relates nationally and against other authorities. The officer explained that we compare well nationally. The trend in the wrong direction is a national issue. We have the highest number of people (and children) in temporary accommodation as we have every had nationally. In term of reasons for this – he explained that families are coming in with multiple challenges (eg. Rent arrears, bigger number of larger families and also chaotic lifestyles). This matches patterns in other authorities as well as the national picture.

Councillor Wait asked if the referrals from outside BANES was a reciprocal arrangement. The officer explained that people fleeing domestic abuse often need to move out of the area. There is roughly a balance.

Councillor Simon asked about loft conversions in 3 bed houses. The officer stated that individuals are engaged with this rather than it being a strategic issue.

Councillor David asked if we track levels of HMOs (Houses of Multiple Occupation) and do they affect the housing stock. She asked if we incentivise landlords to offer properties to families rather than HMOs. The Cabinet Member explained that the planning system states that HMO density cannot be more than 10% and that family homes cannot be sandwiched between HMOs. The officer stated that it is harder to track HMOs since the cessation of the smaller HMO licensing scheme. He stated that landlords must register their properties online now but there is not a level of detail. The Cabinet Member added that we had a small HMO registration scheme to bring up the standard but we cannot run another registration scheme at present.

Councillor Collins asked if we liaise with Bath Universities to make sure students have enough accommodation. She also asked what we do to incentivise older people to downsize. The Cabinet Member stated that this was a planning consideration which can be discussed in another context. He explained that there are planning rules on student accommodation.

Councillor Johnson stated that infrastructure is important with large developments for the current community as well as new residents. He explained that there is an example in Paulton where infrastructure was promised but not delivered. The Cabinet Member agreed.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers.

117 AEQUUS BUSINESS PLAN REFRESH

The Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development, Councillor Matt McCabe introduced the report. Aequus officers Tim Richens

(Managing Director) and Andrew Johnson (Director of Operations) gave a presentation which covered the following:

Aequus Group Strategic Business Plan 2024-2030

Short/Medium/Long Term Objectives

Our Purpose

Company Analysis

Aequus Construction Ltd – Pipeline Analysis

Aequus Construction Ltd – Property Analysis

Financial Forecast

Financial Overview

Revenue Analysis by Workstream

Sensitivity and Scenario Planning

Overhead

Profit Growth

Key Dependencies/Key Risks

Cash Management

Capital Loan Requirements

Strategic Forecast Summary

Shareholder Returns

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

Councillor Johnson asked why there was such an emphasis on non-affordable housing as this does not align. The officer explained that there was a balance between social and market housing. Some schemes are 100% affordable. Social housing must be paid for with market homes. Market homes are driven by Council aims. We deliver a financial return to the shareholder (Council). The Cabinet Member added that normal commercial companies would extract 20% but Aequus extracts 4%. Funds are need to subsidise affordable housing.

Councillor Collins asked how the risk is managed. The officer explained that the scale being delivered is ambitious and there are many different types of project. We are developing a more standard house/apartment style.

Councillor Leach asked how much of a drag is the financial return to the shareholder on the outcomes. The officer explained that there is an element of impact. The Cabinet Member added that the money to the shareholder does effect the delivery of units. It is complex, the Council is responsible for land supply. He added that, once the company is delivering bigger volumes then the pressure of shareholder payment is not so much.

Councillor David asked if there was confidence that large projects will move forward. The officer explained that there is a clear vision on the pipeline and the development stages are frequently monitored.

Councillor Simon asked how much use there is of windfall sites. The Director explained that there are around 1000 assets (plots of land), asset reviews are carried out. The land supply pipeline is really important. In terms of privately owned sites,

the Cabinet Member explained that he meets with officers biweekly so sites are monitored.

Councillor Heijltjes asked if the £1million financial return to the Council is ringfenced for anything. The Director explained that the return goes into the Council balance sheet as an income stream, it is not ringfenced.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members and officers.

118 BUDGET REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development, Councillor Matt McCabe, introduced the report.

Councillor Wait stated that there was a small amount of information in the report and he would give this feedback at the Corporate Panel on 28th January 2025. The Executive Director explained that the Budget Report for the Corporate Panel had now been published which contains more information. Councillor Wait stated that he understood the pressures, but more information was needed for scrutiny.

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

Councillor Simon explained that Corporate Panel (14th January) had been told that the process was around 2 weeks behind for various reasons. The budget will be revisited next week at Corporate Panel (28th January).

Councillor Heijltjes asked about National Insurance costs regarding highways and climate emergency. The officer stated that the National Insurance cost for the Council is £2.6m and the Government pays £1.3m.

Councillor Johnson asked about the 22% increase in the cost for green waste collection (per year) in the light of the service often being cancelled or delayed. The Executive Director explained that the increase is benchmarked and reflects the cost of the service. She stated that she would take the comment on the quality of the service back.

Councillor Johnson asked how much the likely income to the Council would be from the producer responsibility regulations. The officer reported that it will be £2.7m for the 2025/26 financial year.

Councillor Wait asked about the sickness/holiday cover increases in Waste Services. The officer explained that the overspend on salary is no longer being mitigated.

Councillor Wait asked about the Corporate Estate reduction. The officer explained that budgets are being centralised and efficiencies made. We hold a lot of estate that is not utilised, some of which can be released to reduce running costs (Lewis House as an example). Also, land can sometimes be reused or redeployed.

Councillor Hounsell mentioned that 'Saltford for Nature' had been doing some clearance work in the area. He noted that BANES only does basic maintenance now

but no beautifying parks and green spaces. Are we happy that enough funds are available for this. The Cabinet Member stated that this was very important to every ward Councillor and hopefully this issue will be addressed in the next week.

Councillor David asked about basic play equipment deterioration. The Executive Director explained that there will be funding in the Capital Budget over the next few years.

Councillor Collins asked that benchmarking be included in the papers in the future as it is hard for the Panel to consider what isn't being presented and see comparisons with other authorities. The Executive Director explained that there are conversations throughout the year on benchmarking.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers.

119 PANEL WORKPLAN

Panel members noted the future workplan and the following suggestions for future items:

Movement Strategy – Councillor Heijltjes

The meeting ended at 12.02 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

Statement to Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel, 22 January 2025 by Vineyards Residents' Association

London Road and Snow Hill Liveable Neighbourhood.

Good morning. I'm Sol Green and I'm speaking on behalf of Vineyards Residents' Association about the London Road and Snow Hill Liveable Neighbourhood.

Despite its name, this scheme aims to divert large amounts of traffic *onto* London Road. As nearly all of this is headed to or from the west and north it will go via Paragon/Vineyards, Lansdown Road and the historic core of Bath. It is up to 7,000 vehicles a day, according to a Council estimate, that would be added to already congested streets – an increase of up to 40%. When Camden Road was closed for resurfacing in 2022, we suffered heavy traffic all day long. Given the lack of a Park and Ride to the east, poor bus services, and the topography of Bath, many drivers have few alternatives. Camden Road is an important local access road.

Paragon is not suitable for heavy traffic. It lies in the historic central area of Bath¹, is Grade 1 Listed and comprises mainly multi-occupancy houses, much of it social housing, with some of the highest residential density in Bath. London Road is also densely residential.

This scheme:

- Is contrary to the Journey to Net Zero transport plan, which has the Vision of "reducing carbon dioxide emissions and the intrusion of traffic *particularly in the historic core*".
- Will divert traffic from one residential area to others which already have higher residential density, traffic volumes and air pollution.
- Will lead to longer journeys and delays and so to increased CO₂ emissions.
- Is likely to put London Road back over the legal limit for NO₂ air pollution.
- Will delay ambulances going to the RUH, fire service and police response times, and bus services using London Road.

The scheme is totally misconceived. It has been developed without regard to wider impacts, and without wide consultation. We were not involved despite Vineyards being in the LN area. At least, it should be modelled and consulted upon before making any ETRO – as was the much smaller Queen Square traffic light scheme. Given the widespread impact, the design should be considered in line with a city traffic circulation plan.

We have been told by the LN team that there will be a consultation when the detailed design is completed. This should be a full and transparent public consultation, in line with B&NES's own Community Engagement Charter² and DfT rules³ on LTNs.

Before making an ETRO, you should take full account of the wider impacts of the scheme and the public response. Going ahead without doing so would risk much unnecessary disruption and waste of public money.

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1. Paragon is within the historic central area covered by the Public Realm and Movement Strategy, p.9
<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Bath%20Pattern%20Book%20Volume%201%20Public%20Realm%20Framework.pdf>
 2. <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/community-engagement-charter>
 - 3 . Department for Transport statutory guidance on implementing LTNs
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/implementing-low-traffic-neighbourhoods/implementing-low-traffic-neighbourhoods> and the DfT Stage 2 Further Appraisal Process.

Statement - David Redgewell South west transport Network and Railfuture

With the draft Base budget item. for Banes and the office of the police and crime commissioner Clare moody and Avon and Somerset police.

We concerned that the west of England mayoral combined Authority under the west of England mayoral combined Authority act .

There is no reference to the bus services section of that act that puts a joint duty with the council's of City and county of Bristol Bath and North East Somerset council. South Gloucestershire county council and North Somerset council as a joint Transport Authority.

To raise a Transport levy via the councils to pay for supported bus services jointly with the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council.

The Report today makes no reference to the Transport levy to the combined transport Authority mayor Dan Norris.

Which we believe to have been frozen

Since 2020 by the Bath and North East Somerset council, Bristol city council south Gloucestershire county council.

But with the cost of bus services inflation the cost of running buses and coaches Drivers wage maintenance and cleaning staff and new buses.

With no Precepting powers for the west of England mayoral combined Authority

With over 50 support bus services.

In the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority area And North Somerset council.

Such as services 10 11 Avonmouth Lawrence/ shirehampton Westbury on Trym Southmead hospital bus station uwe bus and coach station, Bristol Parkway station.

Services 515 Stockwood Hengrove hospital knowle Imperial Park

Services 19 Bath spa bus and coach station to weston Kelston Swinford Bitton oidland Common Warmley Kingswood Staple Hill Downend Bromley Heath Uwe bus and coach station and Bristol Parkway station.

But only operates to Downend in the Evening not Bristol Parkway and no via stoke Park Stapleton and Frenchay.

Services 17 Keynsham Town Centre keynsham Railway station Hanham Kingswood Staple Hill Fishponds Eastville park Ashley Down station Southmead hospital bus station.

Southmead hospital bus station Cribbs causeway bus station Portishead and Clevedon

Ferry services around Bristol Harbourside Hotwells to Bristol city centre Castle Park Bristol Temple meads station and St Anne's park and Natham.

Bath city centre to Bathampton waterbus service.

To show an example of bus services that services that operate in 4 unitary council areas of Greater Bristol and Bath city region

There is a need to raise the Transport levy and consult the residents of Bristol city council Banes council south Gloucestershire county council and North Somerset council.

As part of the Budget process

Whilst we welcome the clean air zone £4 million pounds in revenue support for Bristol services in partnership with the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority mayor Dan Norris.
For East and south Bristol.

We hope this can be matched by the Department for transport funding of
£13.716.185 to the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and £4,810,390 to North Somerset council.
and £7.573.329 Gloucestershire county council
Swindon Borough Council £2.718.695

£6.359.343 Wiltshire Council
Somerset council £6.395.824

Working together through western Gateway Transport Board and Peninsula Transport Board

This will also improve Greater Bristol connectivity.

376, 375, 374 operate through south Bristol as the main Bus service

From Yeovil bus and coach station 376 375 from Bridgwater bus and coach station
374 from Taunton bus and coach station to street, Glastonbury Wells bus and coach station
Chewton Mendip, Farringdon Gurney Clutton Pensford, Whitchurch
, Hengrove, Knowle Totterdown, Bristol Temple meads station, Bristol bus and coach station

Gloucestershire county council and stagecoach west are looking at a cross
Gloucestershire service from Bristol bus and coach station to Yate park and ride site
Yate railway station Yate bus and coach station, Chipping Sodbury Wickwar Charfield
Wotton under Edge and Stroud Merry Walk bus and coach station.

Bath spa bus and coach station to Bathampton Winsley Bradford on Avon
Trowbridge Westbury Warminster for Salisbury. D1 D2x 24

Service x31 231 Bath spa bus and coach station to Batheaston Box Cosham
Chippenham bus and coach station for Swindon bus and coach station.

271 272 Bath spa bus and coach station to Batheaston Box Melksham and Devizes
bus and coach station.

Service D2 D2 x Bath spa bus and coach station to Peasdown St John Radstock
Writhlington Mells and Frome

Bath spa bus and coach station to Midford, Norton St Philips Rode Beckington and
Frome Town centre and Railway station Sainsburys.

So working with the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and
North Somerset council, this should allow Bristol city council South Gloucestershire
county council and Banes to improve the city Region transport Network
With a raising the Transport levy to the west of England mayoral combined transport
Authority mayor Dan Norris.

and set a Precepting power in future when North Somerset council become a full
member of the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority