

Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

Date: Tuesday 12th May 2026

Time: 4.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber - Guildhall, Bath

Councillors: Robin Moss, Toby Simon, Malcolm Treby, Colin Blackburn,
Duncan Hounsell, Jess David, Gavin Heathcote and Stuart Bridge



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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.

To comply with the Data Protection Act 1998, we require the consent of parents or guardians before filming children or young people. For more information, please speak to the camera operator.

The Council will broadcast the images and sound live via the internet www.bathnes.gov.uk/webcast An archived recording of the proceedings will also be available for viewing after the meeting. The Council may also use the images/sound recordings on its social media site or share with other organisations, such as broadcasters.

4. **Public Speaking at Meetings**

The Council has a scheme to encourage the public to make their views known at meetings. They may make a statement relevant to what the meeting has power to do. They may also present a petition or a deputation on behalf of a group.

Advance notice is required not less than two full working days before the meeting. This means that for meetings held on Thursdays notice must be received in Democratic Services by 5.00pm the previous Monday.

Further details of the scheme can be found at:

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

5. **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

When the continuous alarm sounds, you must evacuate the building by one of the designated exits and proceed to the named assembly point. The designated exits are signposted. Arrangements are in place for the safe evacuation of disabled people.

6. **Supplementary information for meetings**

Additional information and Protocols and procedures relating to meetings

<https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13505>

Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel - Tuesday 12th May 2026

at 4.00 pm in the Council Chamber - Guildhall, Bath

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 - 12)
 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. DEBATE NOT HATE UPDATE (Pages 13 - 18)
 10. PANEL WORKPLAN (Pages 19 - 22)

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 officers.

The Committee Administrator for this meeting is Michaela Gay who can be contacted on michaela_gay@bathnes.gov.uk, 01225 394411.

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Tuesday 17th March 2026

Present:- **Councillors** Robin Moss, Toby Simon, Malcolm Treby, Colin Blackburn, Duncan Hounsell, Jess David, Gavin Heathcote and Stuart Bridge

197 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Note: Councillor Treby (Vice Chair) chaired the meeting.

198 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

199 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none

200 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

201 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

Councillor Joanna Wright made a statement on the following:

- Council Tax Support Scheme software – Councillor Wright asked that the Panel supports this request. Councillor Elliott, Cabinet Member for Resources confirmed that the software could be purchased. Councillor Treby noted that an item on the scheme is scheduled for the July meeting of the Panel.
- ‘Debate not Hate’ – Councillor Wright asked the Panel to request a cross-party working group and take up the matter of what and when a review will be carried out.
The Panel agreed that this be added as a future agenda item on the Panel workplan

203 MINUTES

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

204 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Elliott, updated the Panel on the replacement of the Household Support Fund with the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) resulting in a funding reduction and a national rule change prohibiting blanket free (holiday) school meal vouchers after summer 2026. There will be transitional arrangements to avoid a “cliff edge”, using part of the new CRF for Easter, May half-term and summer 2026. There will be a detailed report to the Panel in May 2026.

Panel members asked the following questions:

Councillor Blackburn asked what percentage of the 1.9m budget was used for the meal scheme? The officer reported that this was just under 42%.”

Councillor Simon asked that the Citizens Advice Bureau be consulted, given that the HSF funds fuel vouchers. The Cabinet Member agreed.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member.

205 AI UPDATE (IN RESPONSE TO COUNCIL MOTION)

Councillor Mark Elliott, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the item.

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

Councillor Bridge asked if we are monitoring the cost of AI (licenses etc) and value for money. The officer explained that we track usage and efficiency, though not netted against staffing reductions.

Councillor Bridge asked if we keep a register of where AI is being used. The officer explained that we do, but we do not manually review every prompt.

Councillor Bridge asked if we are surveying staff about AI impacts on job satisfaction. The officer stated that yes—examples from social care show improved experience with Magic Notes. He added that staff are not forced to use AI.

Councillor Hounsell asked who would be responsible for checking and monitoring the ethical dimension. The officer explained that the Executive Director of Resources has responsibility and that there is an AI Ethics Committee—the membership is expanding and the terms of reference are in development. He added that transparency is intended—an external AI usage report will be published.

Councillor Blackburn raised concerns about the accuracy of multiple AI notetakers. The officer stated that accuracy varies by tool. Monitoring is done through Heads of Service and use of templates, configuration and training.

Councillor David stated that she would welcome further information on governance procedures and an annual AI Update. The officer stated that the policy review is due in June and an update can be reported to this Panel in July/August.

Councillor Blackburn raised issues regarding Councillor access to AI tools. The officer stated that online licences can be provided. The Cabinet Member stated that he supported Councillors being considered as a cohort.

In response to a query from Councillor Blackburn regarding usage, the officer explained that some outside tools are blocked as they have to meet our policy and standards.

Councillor David asked how environmental issues are taken into account. The officer explained that the AI review includes information on this including information on carbon neutral/negative companies.

Councillor Treby asked about Agent AI and whether the policy would be updated in this respect. The officer confirmed that this is not currently being used within the council.

Councillor Treby asked about the governance arrangements for the use of AI, in particular HR due to the potential impact of AI on our people. The officer confirmed that the usage is reviewed by the IT Steering Board that he chairs, and HR is represented.

The use of AI to analyse submissions was discussed, the officer explained that we must always be clear and transparent about this.

The Panel noted the update and agreed to include future reporting within the workplan.

206 QUARTER 3 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

Councillor Mark Elliott, Cabinet Member for Resources introduced the item.

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

Councillor Hounsell asked about staffing pressures across waste, fleet, legal and project delivery and asked what this meant. The Cabinet Member explained that this meant the use of temporary staff where recruitment has been difficult.

Councillor David asked about nature of the £1m disputed invoices with the ICB. The Cabinet Member explained that it is not definite that they will all be written off. He explained that the invoices were raised via joint work with other Councils on packages of care. Not all invoices have been paid, and the balance is now in dispute with the ICB. He added that there are now more robust systems in place.

Councillor Blackburn asked what is meant by increased income from network and traffic management. The Cabinet Member stated that he would come back with the detail on this.

Councillor Blackburn asked about the regeneration shortfall and an update on Bath South Quays. The Cabinet Member stated that Councillor Roper could provide detail as the portfolio holder.

Councillor Blackburn asked for clarification on the significant drift from the £4.5m savings planned regarding the 'Being Our Best' Programme. The Officer (151) stated that he could provide a full reconciliation. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that the savings were lower than expected; that process prioritised fair job evaluation over savings and that 60% of the workforce received a pay rise.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers

207 CORPORATE STRATEGY PERFORMANCE

Councillor Mark Elliott, Cabinet Member for Resources introduced the item.

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

Councillor Blackburn asked about renewable energy installation and if we are on track for 2030? The Cabinet Member stated that an update will be provided.

Councillor David asked that where indicators are consistently on target, do the targets tighten automatically. The Cabinet Member stated that targets can be reviewed and adjusted and that this could be brought back to the Panel.

Councillor Treby asked about the impact of the Local Outcomes Framework. The Cabinet Member stated that significant changes are expected and that this will be brought back to the Panel.

Councillor Blackburn asked for an update on progress toward 'good jobs' commitments. The Cabinet Member stated that the portfolio holder (Economic Development) can provide an update.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member.

208 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the future workplan and the following suggestions:

- Annual AI Update.
- Follow-up on (Debate not Hate) Member Safety processes.
- Local Outcome Framework – new monitoring data
- Q4 Year End Budget Monitoring
- Replacement of the Household Support Fund with the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF).

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

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Bath & North East Somerset Council	
MEETING	Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel
MEETING DATE:	12th May 2026
TITLE:	Debate Not Hate Update 2026
WARD:	All
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report:	

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 This paper is to provide an update to Corporate Policy Development & Scrutiny (PDS) Panel on the actions since the Debate Not Hate motion agreed by Council on 14th March 2024.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel / Committee is asked to;

- 2.1 Note the update on the actions taken since May 2024.**
- 2.2 Provide input and a steer on the proposed plans to provide further support for members and officers on their safety and wellbeing.**
- 2.3 Agree to take further reports and recommendations following a regular review of support available to members and officers in respect of abuse, intimidation and safety.**

3 THE REPORT

Motion agreed at full Council meeting

- 3.1 On 14th March 2024, the Council unanimously agreed the Debate Not Hate motion proposed by Councillor Lesley Mansell. The full debate can be found [here](#). Based on the Local Government Association's (LGA's) national Debate Not Hate campaign toolkit information, the motion included ten points of action, all of which have been addressed.

Examples from members and officers

- 3.2 During the Council meeting, councillors recounted their experiences of feeling threatened and intimidated by members of the public.
- 3.3 Since May 2024 there have been 317 reported incidents of violent, aggressive, and threatening behaviour towards officers. Breakdown by years.

May 2024 – Apr 2025 – 163 incidents

May 2025 – Apr 2026 – 154 incidents

- 3.4 Since May 2024 there have been 4 reported incidents of violent, aggressive and threatening behaviour towards members.

Actions taken up to May 2024

- 3.5 **Public statement:** The Council has signed the LGA's Debate Not Hate public statement [here](#) which aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in local communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the response to and support for those in public life facing abuse and intimidation.
- 3.6 **Press release:** The Council issued a press release ([here](#)) on 3rd April 2024 to share news of the Debate Not Hate campaign and to raise public awareness.
- 3.7 **Letter to Ministers:** At the end of March, a cross party letter was sent to local MPs asking them to support the campaign and to the Government to ask it to work with the LGA to develop and implement a plan to address abuse and intimidation of people working and holding office in local government.
- 3.8 **Meeting with MP:** Group Leaders met with Wera Hobhouse MP on 12th April 2024 to discuss these issues. She has since raised the issue in Parliament (see [here](#)) and has issued her own press release. She has also written to Chief Constable Sarah Crew at Avon and Somerset Police to request further support from local police.
- 3.9 **Policy:** The Council launched a Violence, Aggression and Threatening Behaviour (Staff Safety) Policy ([here](#)) in April 2023 covering both members and officers. This was underpinned by work carried out through focus groups and analysis in 2022. A set of powerful campaign messaging was launched as part of this campaign and have been used by the Council on posters and on social media ([here](#)). A new Health & Safety incident reporting system ([here](#)) was also launched at the same time. Further work to promote both of these is needed.
- 3.10 **Standards Committee:** On 23rd April 2024, the Council's Standards Committee supported the Monitoring Officer's proposal to take a more understanding approach to requests by members to withhold from publication their home address, as a sensitive interest, where that member has concerns about violence or intimidation. Further information was circulated to members and co-opted members on 26th April 2024 and since then 9 councillors have requested their addresses are withheld.
- 3.11 **Operation Ford;** An online briefing was held for Members by Operation FORD officers (Simon Bishop) on 17th April 2024. 13 Councillors attended.

Actions taken since May 2024

- 3.12 **Virtual briefing:** An online virtual briefing for all councillors was held on 19th June 2024 to provide further information on personal safety and lone working, (including technology available) online safety and signpost the resources, e-learning and support available. Avon and Somerset Police supported this initiative and Police Officer Will Ayliff participated in the briefing. It was recorded and shared for any that cannot make the date. Only one councillor attended the briefing. This briefing was timed to support the LGA
- 3.13 The briefing was timed to promote the LGA Guide to handling intimidation and the Councillor Safety Guidance
- 3.14 **Parish liaison:** This was included as an agenda item for the Parish liaison meeting on 26th June 2024 to raise awareness and highlight support and resources available.
- 3.15 **Wellbeing:** We have in place a wide range of resources to support officer and member wellbeing, and we promote and publicise where possible, ensuring that there is a nominated officer to support member wellbeing.
- 3.16 **Member incident reporting:** There have been 4 formal reports of incidents of violent, aggressive, challenging or threatening behaviour reported by Elected Members since 2024 on the council's HWSB online incident reporting system. Incidents reported were verbal aggression or challenging behaviour in nature. Following feedback from a councillor in late 2025, a new "Initial Notification Form" was launched on 7th April 2026 to reduce the current reporting process into a short report form which is reviewed by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing team to identify next steps and the appropriate level of investigation required.
- 3.17 **Updates through Political Assistants:** Member safety is raised with Political Assistants at their quarterly meetings and Nick Hancock and Tracy Curtis (H&S) presented at their meeting on 5th November 2025.
- 3.18 **Police liaison:** Each elected member has a nominated police officer who is responsible for their ward area. Elected members are encouraged to report any incidents directly to their nominated officer to be found here: <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/your-area/>. Police have also encouraged elected members to use the electronic reporting system here: <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report/>
- 3.19 **Operation Ford:** National and local policing are addressing elected member intimidation harassment and violence through Operation Ford. Avon and Somerset (Bath) police force have nominated a Force Elected Official Adviser (FEOA) who has formally contacted all local political parties to attend their group meetings with briefing on Operation Ford, to advise on intelligence collection plans, creation of intelligence logs and providing security briefings. The FEOA will escalate security initiatives especially around election time.
- 3.20 **HWSB Steering Committee:** As portfolio holder, Councillor Rigby attends the Council's quarterly Health, Safety and Wellbeing Steering Committee meetings chaired by the Chief Executive. This group receives reports and updates on incidents of violence and threatening behaviour towards officers and members.

Proposed future action

- 3.21 **Regular updates:** We will arrange regular email updates for all members and officers to remind them of all of the resources, information and support available. These updates will be when there is a need to share information.
- 3.22 **Communications:** We will also designate one specific day annually where we raise awareness through our communications of the work that we are doing.
- 3.23 **Annual report to PDS:** We will bring an update back to Corporate PDS in May each year to include the number of incidents reported by members and officers and any lessons learned.
- 3.24 **Specific session in Member Induction programme:** We will ensure that specific training is provided as part of the Member Induction programme following elections in May 2027.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Legal duties fall under The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASWA), Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSW), The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) and the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 (as amended) and Health and Safety (Consultation with Staff) Regulations 1996 (as amended) and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. These frameworks require that the Council ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of staff at work.
- 4.2 It is recognised that elected members benefit from an enhanced level of protection in relation to freedom of expression in a political context under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), meaning that they are able to say things that would ordinarily be unacceptable and are also required to have a higher threshold of tolerance to criticism and comments. Whilst acknowledging this, and that the above Health and Safety duties do not relate to councillors as they are not employees, the Council is clearly committed, through this piece of work and more generally, to protect and maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of its councillors.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 There are no significant resource implications as a result of these proposed actions.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken relating to this work. It should be noted that abuse and intimidation can happen to any councillors

and we have heard of the impact of abusive and threatening behaviour towards both male and female councillors, of a variety of ages and from every political group.

7.2 We will monitor the incidents and reports of abusive and threatening behaviour to see if any protected characteristic group is affected more or less than any other.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 N/A

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 N/A

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 The actions in this report have been developed by a small group of officers from across the Resources Directorate with support from Political Assistants.

10.2 The S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer have cleared this report for circulation.

Contact person	<i>Cherry Bennett, Director of People & Change 01225 477203</i>
Background papers	Debate Not Hate motion to Council here
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

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CORPORATE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

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
12TH MAY 2026				
12 May 2026	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Debate not Hate Update		
21ST JULY 2026				
21 Jul 2026	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Inclusion Strategy		
Page 18 21 Jul 2026	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Council Tax Reduction Scheme TBC		
21 Jul 2026	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Budget consultation discussion TBC		Director of Financial Services, Assurance & Pensions
21 Jul 2026	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Commercial Estate Update	Richard Long Tel: 01225 477075	Executive Director - Resources

Ref Date	Decision Maker/s	Title	Report Author Contact	Director Lead
21 Jul 2026	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Q4 Budget Report		Director of Finance (S151 Officer)
29TH SEPTEMBER 2026				
12 May 2026	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Aequus Update	Simon Martin Tel: 01225 477407	Executive Director - Sustainable Communities
29 Sep 2026	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Economic Strategy		Executive Director - Resources
17TH NOVEMBER 2026				
FUTURE ITEMS				
	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Library IT System Update TBC		Executive Director - Chief Operating Officer
	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	People Strategy		

Ref Date	Decision Maker/s	Title	Report Author Contact	Director Lead
	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Crisis Resilience Fund Update		
	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	AI Council Motion - Update (annual)		
Page 20	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Local outcomes framework - new monitoring data		

The Forward Plan is administered by **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES:** Democratic_Services@bathnes.gov.uk