

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday, 14th May, 2012

Present:- Councillors John Bull (Chair), Manda Rigby (Vice-Chair), Colin Barrett, Charles Gerrish, Chris Watt, Nigel Roberts and Geoff Ward

Also in attendance: Michaela Gay (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Angela Parratt (Head of Transformation), Andrew Pate (Strategic Director, Resources), Tim Richens (Divisional Director, Finance), David Trethewey (Divisional Director , Policy & Partnerships), Micaela Basford (Corporate Sustainability Officer) and Jane Wildblood (Corporate Sustainability Manager)

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Councillor Geoff Ward declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 10 (Retention of Business Rates) as the owner of a building in Batheaston.

Councillors John Bull and Charles Gerrish declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 9 (Carbon Management) as shareholders in Bath and West Community Energy Company.

5 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

There were none.

7 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 26TH MARCH 2012

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record with the following addition:

Minute 62, page 31, end of paragraph 6 – “including information contained in the agendas” to replace “including the agendas for the Development Board and Property Board”.

There was some discussion around how the information regarding Property could be communicated to the Panel. It was noted that the Cabinet Member would share non-confidential items with the Panel as part of the ‘Cabinet Member Update’ item. It was also noted that Development Board information is reported to the Housing and Major Projects Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

8 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Bellotti – Cabinet Member for Community Resources updated the Panel on the following:

KEYNSHAM REGENERATION - CPO

- He explained that, with regard to Keynsham Town Centre Regeneration, a CPO (Compulsory Purchase Order) had been agreed by the Cabinet at its meeting on 9th May 2012. In response to a question from Councillor Gerrish, Councillor Bellotti explained that negotiations with the fire brigade were taking place at officer level and that there were other sites that they may decide to utilize.

WORKPLACES PROJECT

- Councillor Bellotti updated the Panel on the Workplaces Project – he explained that Trimbridge House and Plymouth House had now been vacated and that plans were on target for Northgate House and Palace Yard Mews. He updated the Panel on the plans for the Guildhall – 30 planned workers had been increased to 100. He explained that half an office block in Keynsham had deleted to make way for parking and other development.

Councillor Gerrish asked about the working environment in the Guildhall such as the heating issues. Councillor Bellotti assured the Panel that working conditions in the building would be improved.

Councillor Gerrish asked about funding, Councillor Bellotti explained that money had in part been saved by deleting half an office block. He explained that the workplaces project was on budget.

Councillor Ward asked if ICT developments had been built in to the plans for future workplaces. Councillor Bellotti explained that it was and he had asked both officers and partners to evidence their office needs. He explained that the business hub is being provided in the Guildhall to enable private sector initiatives and support economic development using new ways of working. He

explained that a lot of Council office accommodation is old and not fit for purpose and the programme was addressing this.

Councillor Barrett asked about the Bath Sports Centre office accommodation in the basement which has poor ventilation, Councillor Bellotti explained that Councillor Dave Dixon had the Aquaterra contract in his portfolio and he would pass this comment on to him.

Councillor Barrett asked if there were proposals for a Casino in the Guildhall, the Cabinet Member and Strategic Director for Resources explained that there were no proposals at this time.

ONE STOP SHOP

- Councillor Bellotti explained that the One Stop Shop in Manvers Street opened next week. He described the facilities that would be available. He explained that there would be a celebratory event to which Members would be invited later in the month.
- Councillor Bellotti referred to the Consultants Working Group Report and thanked the members of the working group for their work on this. He explained that he accepted the first major recommendation that future use of consultants should be shown in Service Action Plans. He stated that he was happy for the Staff Survey to be looked at. He explained that the recommendations that were relevant to the Corporate Audit Committee had been referred to them with his recommendation for approval. He explained that he would be considering the other recommendations. He stated that, regarding working with other authorities on procurement, there were other issues he would want to consider such as prioritising local businesses as part of these considerations. He explained that he would be happy to share his thinking on this.

Councillor Ward asked that work experience placements and internships be considered along with apprenticeships.

Councillor Bull asked when there would be a conclusion on the procurement criteria. Councillor Bellotti stated that this should be completed by the turn of the year, he explained that there is a lot of analysis to be done and that there was already some good practice in place.

9 CARBON MANAGEMENT

The Panel received a presentation from Jane Wildblood – Corporate Sustainability Manager and Micaela Basford – Corporate Sustainability Officer which covered the following:

- Council role in delivering national carbon reduction targets
- BANES CO2 emissions in context
- Health and Wellbeing Impacts
- Twin track carbon reduction strategy

- BANES CO2 emissions 2009
- Environmental Sustainability Partnership Strategy and Action Plan
- Break down of BANES carbon emissions
- Progress against target to date
- Key factors affecting emissions
- Cost of energy
- Key Trends
- Reduction in progress
- West of England Low Carbon Initiative, Total Place
- Issues identified by Divisional Directors
- Example of 30% approach – Schools

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

In response to a question from Councillor Bull, the officer explained that the department had worked with academies on the issue of Carbon Management.

Councillor Bull asked if all the capital set aside had been spent. The officer explained that not all the 'invest to save' money had been spent as it depended on projects coming forward. An example of one such project was the driver fuel efficient training.

Councillor Bull asked if street light switch offs had been investigated. The officer explained that they had investigated turning off street lights for certain periods of time but that now most were being converted to LED.

Councillor Rigby asked if the high proportion of listed buildings in the area added to the emissions of the authority. The officer stated that this is a factor and explained that the Council works closely with Bath Preservations Trust.

Councillor Gerrish asked about use of the transhipment depot. The Cabinet Member stated that he would look in to this.

Councillor Ward explained that there were ways to get quick wins in educating the right people and maybe monitoring managers on carbon management. He stated that there was learning to be done on the true energy costs of things.

Councillor Barrett asked about the use of the hot springs. The officer explained that there had been a study into this and the springs are used for part of the heating for the Pump Room but that maintenance of the pipes involved high costs. The officer explained that there was a European Bid regarding under floor heating at the Abbey, which would be an effective use of the waste heat from the springs.

Councillor Roberts asked that figures are brought back to the Panel in September showing the latest position on the achievement of Council carbon reduction targets and that if the trends are going in the wrong direction, the Cabinet Member be invited to explain the plan to turn this around.

The Chair thanked officers for the presentation.

10 RETENTION OF BUSINESS RATES

The Panel received a presentation from Tim Richens – Divisional Director for Finance which covered the following points:

- What is the Resource Review?
- Localisation of Business Rates – How will it work?
- Business Rates Retention
- Growth and the Government Tariff
- BANES Council – NNDR Contributions to the National Pool 2006/07 – 2009/10
- Projected Business Rates Growth – 10years 2013/14 to 2022/23
- Formula Grant and the Baseline
- The Risks
- Timetable

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

Councillor Roberts asked if something positive could be done such as investing in infrastructure; increasing business rates or enhancing sites with potential in the local plan. The Strategic Director explained that there were some revolving funds backed by Government to support this such as Growing Places and opportunities were being looked at, albeit the funds had to be paid back. He agreed on the need for the Council to consider prioritising business rate growth.

Councillor Watt spoke about opportunities for businesses to locate in Keynsham and the Somer Valley.

Councillor Ward asked about the effects of the ICT revolution and stated that maybe there would not be the need for so much shop space. The Cabinet Member added that online shopping was growing and it is an issue as a lot of capital is tied up in retail.

The Cabinet Member stated that there was a risk that after a general election, the rules on business rates would change so it was hard to plan too far ahead. He explained that he felt that borrowing for development is not something that should happen in the public sector.

Councillor Watt said that he was disappointed that the new administration was using the new homes bonus to support revenue spending yet in his view this should be used for investment in infrastructure.

11 EMERGING INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) STRATEGY

The Panel received a presentation from Angela Parratt – Head of Transformation which covered the following:

- Strategy challenges

- Progress to date
- How we are developing the strategy
- What are we aiming for
- Request for Panel input

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

Councillor Roberts stated that a key aspect of IT was around training and whether staff knew how to use equipment. He added that it was important to assess whether we are getting enough benefit from IT upgrades. He stated that an increase in staff productivity can be achieved with IT. The officer explained that she is looking at differentiating training needs.

Councillor Watt stated that we held a lot of data which should all be made available. There was some discussion around the benefits of developing applications in house in order that appropriate domain knowledge is not lost. The officer explained that a new customer management system is being brought in and domain knowledge is being led by staff but external expertise is bought in to do the configuration. She added that she would discuss the suggestion about publishing more data with colleagues. Councillor Roberts explained some advantages for getting software written externally, for example an in-house person may leave and there would be a knowledge gap.

Councillor Bull summarized the Panel's views with the following general points on ICT Strategy:

- Simplification
- Flexibility
- Applications – implementations led by people with domain knowledge
- Differentiating training
- Data publication

The Chair asked that the ITC Strategy be brought back to the Panel within one year.

12 PANEL FUTURE WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the future workplan with the following additions:

Items to be scheduled:

- Procurement
- Recruitment/retention/stress rates

September 2012

- Carbon Management Update

May 2013

- ICT Strategy

The meeting ended at 8.45 am

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services