

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday 13th November, 2012

Present:- Councillors Marie Longstaff (Chair), Caroline Roberts (Vice-Chair), Geoff Ward, Ian Gilchrist, David Martin, Brian Webber and Nathan Hartley (In place of Douglas Nicol)

Also in attendance: David Trigwell (Divisional Director for Planning and Transport), Matthew Smith (Divisional Director for Environmental Services), Andy Strong (Public Transport Team Leader), John Crowther (Service Manager for Neighbourhood Services), Jon Evans (Service Manager for Transport and Performance Improvement), Carol Maclellan (Waste Services Manager), Chris Major (Head of Parking Services) and Sue Green (Service Manager for Public Protection)

Cabinet Member for Transport: Councillor Roger Symonds

68 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

69 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

70 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Douglas Nicol had sent his apologies to the Panel, Councillor Nathan Hartley was present as his substitute for the duration of the meeting.

71 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

72 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

Pamela Galloway, Save Our 6-7 Buses campaign team addressed the Panel, a copy of the statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

'When we registered to speak here today, we were set to campaign until March. This is because, in June, we were horrified to hear on good authority, and I quote: "that in light of the many difficult financial decisions facing B&NES Council next year, it was going to be very hard for Councillors to justify continuing to subsidise the 6&7 Buses." That was followed by months of repeated statements by the Executive Member and other councillors that no commitment could be made until at least February to continue our bus subsidy. One councillor has recently termed our campaign "scare-mongering". What would you have done in our position? We re-launched the campaign to preserve the vital 30 minute frequency to keep our community vibrant and our elderly from becoming isolated.'

'It is with great relief that we learned at last week's Budget Fair, that a "myth was being dispelled" and that bus subsidies would not be cut. Although the Save Our 6-7 Buses campaign team, along with hundreds of residents in our area, suspect that the campaign was crucial in ensuring this, we are very grateful to the Cabinet for relegating the threat to a myth.

Since the Budget Fair we have had further assurances that the subsidy for our bus service is in the Cabinet's proposed public transport budget but, as other bus services are affected, this is subject to a Consultation with stakeholders. We, and the members of the community, look forward very much to giving our input to this Consultation.

We also had assurances at the Budget Fair and again since that the cabinet's proposed public transport budget is not under threat from any Central government cuts that might be announced in Dec.

We would like to thank the councillors and officers who have worked so hard to allocate funds within a limited budget. We realise there are a few hurdles yet to be overcome but we will continue to monitor any new developments and remain alert to any potential threats. Let us hope that the campaign will not have to be revived between now & February, or again in a year's time.'

The Chairman asked if she had seen the latest consultation document.

Pamela Galloway replied that she had and had emailed Cllr Symonds and Andy Strong to ask for it to be placed on the main consultation area of the website.

Amanda Leon, Radstock Action Group addressed the Panel, a copy of the statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

'The papers for this afternoon's meeting reflect the difficult situation faced by the council. We appreciate the current financial problems and would like to highlight some of the issues from the point of view of one component town, particularly as we feel that money could be saved by joined-up thinking.

Recently, Radstock has been subject to a very large number of road works, largely to do with water service improvements and resurfacing. At the same time, B&NES has been debating the future of the Victoria Hall, has commissioned a study

regarding the future of the railway link to Frome and has put out for consultation the proposals for spending £500,000 in the town. Meanwhile, with the at least temporary collapse of the Core Strategy, there are signs that developers will be taking advantage of the absence of planning overview to be making speculative proposals which could damage the character and long-term future prospects of the whole Somer Valley, particularly Radstock and Midsomer Norton.

There are positive signs – B&NES has finally accepted that many of the pedestrian routes are unsafe and speeding on local roads is a danger to all residents and road users. Funds have been earmarked to make welcome improvements to roads and pavements, though we question why these funds are not coming from Highways as they should. The Radstock and Westfield Economic Development Forum, having started up as a means of consulting local people and businesses about the future economic development of the town, has become a secretive group with very little local presence but B&NES wants to give it £100,000 of our money, without any public statements of what it is for.

Parking has become ever more difficult, bus services are expensive and of diminishing reliability, thus ensuring that more and more people either can't go out at all or use their cars to get to work.

We suggest that the budget could be used far more effectively and money saved, if only B&NES would look at the overall picture. Our overarching concern is that, whatever the intentions of the major Resource Plan you are considering today, plus the bus tender issues, on the ground there is a total lack of joined up thinking. And it is places like Radstock which experience the ensuing chaos and uncertainty.

Finally, we welcome the intention to save library services and are currently looking with interest at the proposal to move the Radstock library to the restored Victoria Hall. We also welcome the commitment to the Victoria Hall, and the support that has been given to Youth Services in the past year and we request that this spirit of listening is cultivated and that the council enters into a more regular and structured dialogue with people in Radstock to ensure joined up thinking is introduced.'

George Bailey had submitted a number of questions to the Panel that had been given a written response, a copy of these can be found on the Panel's Minute Book.

The Chairman asked if he wanted any further clarification on the answers he had received.

George Bailey asked what future road works were planned that warranted the movement of the Oak Tree.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that a scheme of road improvements had been agreed by the Cabinet, subject to planning permission. He added that the main reason for proposing to move the tree was that it is not thriving in its current position and that to move it in the timescales proposed gave it the best chance of survival.

Councillor Brian Webber addressed the Panel, a copy of the statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

'On 8 October 2012 the Panel received a presentation on the Council's parking strategy and the recent survey of residents' views on the controlled parking zones in Bath. The Panel asked for an update in May 2013.

Members commented on the presentation, but the Panel did not really give the officer a clear menu of issues for consideration, analysis and report back. I would like to suggest the following and invite the Panel to endorse them and remit them to officers for consideration.

The overarching strategy of encouraging people to visit Bath while reducing the need to travel into the city centre by car is obviously right. The work to identify an acceptable site for a Park and Ride to the east of the city and the enlargement of the existing Park and Ride sites need to be progressed with maximum vigour. The forecasts of the supply of/demand for Park and Ride spaces are presumably kept under review. Has there been any change from the forecasts in the February 2012 draft Parking Strategy? It is frequently complained that it is cheaper for a car with a full load of passengers (eg a family) to park in the city centre than to use the Park and Ride. Is the balance of charges right? If not, are any changes envisaged and what would be the financial implications for the Council?'

'Is it the Council's view that the primary purpose of the public highway is the safe and convenient movement of traffic, and that the use of the public highway for parking vehicles is a privilege and not a right? There are a number of ostensibly 2-way streets in Bath (and possibly other towns), which are reduced to single-lane carriageways without passing places because vehicles are parked solidly on both sides of the street (especially in the evenings). Has the Council a systematic plan for dealing with this problem by introducing into these streets double yellow lines at appropriate intervals, and, if so, has this been factored into the estimates of on-street parking capacity?'

The parking zones have been created piecemeal and vary in size, times of operation, balance of supply and demand. The northern mainly residential part of the Central Zone ('Lower Lansdown') was privileged to be included when that was the only Zone, but it is now disadvantaged because it is surrounded by new Zones in which Central Zone residents can no longer seek spaces. Elsewhere, some residents have been left without any on-street parking marooned in isolated 'pockets' between Zones.

The Zone boundaries need to be reviewed. Ideally, Zone boundaries should be natural; have few entry points (in order to minimise signage); be large enough to give residents a wide choice of streets in which to park, but small enough to enable residents to park reasonably near their homes; and have broadly the same ratio of permit holders to spaces.

Could residents of the Central Zone, who are not entitled at present to purchase visitor permits because of the shortage of on-street parking spaces, be permitted to purchase visitor permits exercisable in adjacent Zones?

There may be other aspects of controlled parking zones, which Panel members feel should be examined.'

The Chairman asked if he would like his statement to be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Transport.

Councillor Webber replied that he would.

David Redgewell addressed the Panel. He stated that he was concerned that the Council may be missing out on opportunities regarding the railway and that he was also surprised at the lack of the mention of the Greater Bristol Bus Network within the Medium Term Service & Resource Plan (MTSRP).

He said that the Council had been encouraged by Government Ministers to work closely with Somerset and Wiltshire yet he could find no evidence of that within the MTSRP. He added that cross boundary working was essential.

He also questioned when a report on matters concerning the West of England / Joint Scrutiny suggested by former Councillor Malcolm Hanney would be delivered to the Panel.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that the MTSRP was an overarching budget led report and did not go down into the level of detail specified by Mr Redgewell. He added that he would be happy to supply a further report if required.

He also stated that the Council is well placed for its future plans and that the Department for Transport has acknowledged that we have raised our game over the past few years.

The Chairman thanked all of the speakers for their contributions.

74 MINUTES - 8TH OCTOBER 2012

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

75 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Councillor Roger Symonds addressed the Panel. He informed them that he had met with the Councils of Wiltshire and Somerset alongside the Highways Agency to discuss the A46 and the use of HGV's. He said that the talks had been quite positive on how to improve some issues in the area.

He stated that through the work of the Bath Transport Package upgrades to bus stops and shelters were in progress and that the extension to the Odd Down Park & Ride would be in place by the opening of the Christmas Market. He added that it was hoped that the extension to the Lansdown Park & Ride would be ready by March 2013.

The Chairman asked if he could estimate when a Transport Strategy for the Council would be ready.

Councillor Roger Symonds replied that any strategy should be linked to the Public Realm & Movement Strategy and felt that one could be in place within six months to a year.

Councillor Geoff Ward commented that a resident within his ward was unaware that her home was on the site of the proposed interchange for the East of Bath Park & Ride.

Councillor Roger Symonds replied that it was his understanding that the home owner had been approached and that he would follow up on the matter.

The Chairman thanked him for his update.

76 BUS TENDER PROCESS

The Public Transport Team Leader introduced this item to the Panel. He informed them that a tender process was carried out recently for contracts that expire in March 2013, with a total annual value of roughly £450k. He added that in respect of certain contracts, operators advised the Council that they would operate them on a commercial basis after March 2013, so they were not put out to tender. For the remainder, bids were received from 7 operators and the average number of bids per contract was 2.

Analysis of the tenders and consideration of the value of the contracts that would be run commercially shows that the Council would make a saving of £108k per annum. This is a reflection both of competition in the local bus market and the growth of revenue on Sunday bus services, linked to the higher level of retail activity on that day.

The tender also provides an opportunity to improve Service 12 (Bath Bus Station to Haycombe Cemetery), on which the infrastructure is being upgraded as part of the Bath Transport Package, by restoring a peak hour timetable and converting it to low-floor bus operation.

Officers have been asked to consider ways in which revenue support can be provided to maintain the current half-hourly daytime intervals on two core bus corridors:

- (i) Services 6 and 7 (Bath Bus Station to Fairfield Park and Larkhall) – there has been very strong support from the local communities for these services and patronage has grown substantially since half-hourly services were restored in October 2011. However, the more frequent service is not commercially viable yet.
- (ii) Service 1 (Ensleigh to Combe Down) – patronage has declined as MoD staff have relocated from the sites at Ensleigh and Foxhill. If development of the sites is approved, it is likely that patronage will

grow as new dwellings become occupied. A “Section 106” contribution may be sought from any developer to support the bus service at that stage but, in the meantime, a half-hourly interval is not commercially viable.

To fund the measures outlined above it would be necessary to make further savings in the bus revenue support budget, over and above the level indicated. Officers have drawn up a package of options with a total value greater than the savings needed and it will be put out to consultation.

The consultation package will identify those supported services that are not well-used, those that offer poor value for money and those for which there are reasonable alternatives on other bus or train services. Consideration will be given to the opportunities for community transport providers to expand their flexible, demand-responsive services.

It is intended to carry out the consultation between 9 November and 14 December 2012. A summary of the responses will be appended to a Report for decision by the Cabinet in February 2013. A Report will be presented to the Cabinet Member for Transport for a single-member decision in December 2012 to recommend award of many of the new contracts and thus realise the savings from those in April 2013.

The Chairman commented that she felt that the consultation document could be construed as misleading as it was quite wordy and that it did not really stress the importance of the matter. She asked if the 6 / 7 service was still part of this consultation process.

The Public Transport Team Leader replied that he was optimistic that First would eventually pick up these services.

Councillor David Martin asked if he could explain part of the report that referred to ‘community transport’.

The Public Transport Team Leader replied that three dial-a-ride services currently operate within the Council and whether consideration could be given for them to replace some services through either current or additional resources.

Councillor Roger Symonds wished to congratulate the Public Transport Team Leader and associated staff for their work on this matter. He added that main public weekday services between 8.00am – 6.00pm should be at least every 30 minutes.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to;

- (i) Note the report
- (ii) Request that the structure of the introduction to the consultation document and its location on the website be amended.

77 PLACE DIRECTORATE - MEDIUM TERM SERVICE & RESOURCE PLAN

Councillor Eleanor Jackson addressed the Panel, a copy of the statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book, a summary is set out below.

'There are plenty of good reasons for coming along this afternoon and addressing the issues raised by the Medium Term Service Plan and Budget debate. In the plan we have proposals to reduce the amount of money spent on road maintenance, although previous cutbacks mean inferior materials are used now, and potholes are continually re-appearing. Yet thousands of pounds will be needed to top up the HCA grant for an unwanted new road through the centre of Radstock. We have pledged to re-negotiate contracts, though I am fairly sure Malcolm Hanney made these as tight as possible. We also face job losses which inevitably will reduce services to the public, though given the level of interrogation you face when you report a missed collection, I am pretty sure that already they only take action when it is their fault. You sing to Mr Pickles' tune on weekly collections, when the re-cycling is only necessary once a fortnight according to the Timsbury budget fair meeting.'

'Speaking on behalf of the Labour Group I want to draw you attention to the potholes in the policy, and name just a few of our objections:

Charging for car parking in B&NES car parks in important rural retail centres and Keynsham, which we know from sound research, will devastate the fragile high street economy.

The Labour Group will oppose all such moves because Cllr Bellotti's argument that this will get people out of their cars is fallacious given the present state of the bus service. Shoppers will simply go to Frome or Brislington or Cribbs Causeway....

Failing to provide adequate lighting in streets and car parks, so that people dare not go out at night could have a crippling effect on the night time economy.

Cuts in the Planning Department are always a mistake because applications are then not handled within the time limits, cases go to the planning inspectorate for non-determination and we land up with an unsightly, unwanted and uncontrolled development, or even worse, costly judicial reviews.'

'Trying to find toilets in Bath before 9am and after 6pm is a nightmare. Cutting public conveniences is not only a false economy, it means we are deterring tourists. The 'grey pound' is vital to our retail economy but the council is driving it away. The Labour Group is committed to campaigning for more toilets, not less.'

'Much here is half digested bright ideas – haven't the Lib Dems heard of elderly people being ripped off by private sector pest control people? - Whereas the B&NES officers who dealt with rats and wasps in Radstock recently won only highest praise. This sort of thing generates far more goodwill towards the Council than glossy publications. Much is woolly wishful thinking, as on revenue projections. Most is Bath centric and this is unacceptable.'

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that a range and complexity of services were included within the Plan, especially within Environmental Services. He reminded the Panel that where they wish to either increase expenditure or reduce savings targets, alternatives should be proposed.

He stated that all Local Authorities were facing a significant change in the way they operate and that B&NES needs to be innovative and support the priorities it has set itself. He added that a balance had to be struck between the statutory services required under national legislation and the ones deemed to be discretionary.

He suggested that services across the West of England should be more integrated.

He highlighted the three main priority work areas for the Service as follows:

- Core Strategy
- Gypsy & Traveller Site Provision
- Placemaking Strategy

He also spoke of the need to review the management structure of Planning and Transport to ensure that the structure reflects the current priorities of Place Directorate. This would involve close working with Environmental Services to deliver efficient management of services.

Councillor Geoff Ward commented that he felt too much officer time had been spent on the Gypsy & Traveller work because it lacked a clear process to be followed from the start.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that the rules regarding site provision for Gypsies & Travellers changed part way through the process and therefore it became apparent that we needed to start again. He added that with regard to the Core Strategy the Council was now entering a short, sharp period of time when cross party support was going to be vital.

Councillor David Martin asked what implications were there for the service in relation to the Localism Act and Neighbourhood Plans.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that there had been some indication from local groups that they wish to make progress in this area.

Councillor David Martin asked why external contractors were being used to process planning applications.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that the application fees accounted for around half of the budget re: the planning process and as such when the capacity reached a certain level it allowed them to employ external contractors rather than have a full team of staff in place. This was regarded as a flexible budget approach.

The Divisional Director for Environmental Services highlighted some of the elements from within his area of the Plan.

Public Protection

- Save £320,000 over the next two years.
- Reorganise Licensing and Environmental street-based inspection and enforcement staff into multi-functional teams which focus on geographical areas to better co-ordinate staff resources and match times of demand.

Neighbourhoods Services

- Cease providing pest control services where these are provided by Private Sector.
- Cease in-house plant production.
- Concentrate the resources available for public conveniences at locations where there is little alternative provision. This will result in a reduction in a number of Public Conveniences provided.

Waste Services

- Introduce “residents only” permits at Recycling Centres;
- Adjust opening times at Recycling Centres to reflect low use at certain times of the week and create financial headroom.
- Revert back to not collecting refuse at Bank Holidays and catch up in subsequent weeks.
- Confirmation of Government funding to support weekly collections is expected.

Highways Maintenance

- Achieve financial efficiencies through the renegotiation of the highway maintenance contract to secure a rate freeze.
- Verge maintenance programme to be restored.
- LED street lights programme due for completion in March 2013. This will reduce some of our energy costs.

Parking Services

- Freeze charges in the majority of our existing off-street car parks.
- Increase income to cover the cost of maintaining car parks and parking enforcement across by the district by introducing parking charges into car parks which are currently free of charge;
- Revise charge rates at premium on street locations and increase charges in evenings in order to provide additional funding to invest in environmental and highway initiatives and support the local economy.

The Service Manager for Public Protection, Food & Trading Standards addressed the Panel.

- **Air and Water Quality** – The team are involved in the Low Emission Zone work, declaring air quality action zones required by law where air quality is poor and air quality presents issues.
- **Food Safety and Standards** – Annually 1 million people suffer from foodborne illness in the UK at a cost to the economy of £1.5bn – the number of food businesses in B&NES now exceeds 2000, up 24% in the last 3 years, and up 6% in the last 6 months. For the team infectious disease notifications are increasing which the team investigate. Prevention is a key part of this role because a high % of food poisoning is caused in the home
- **Health & Safety** – Workplace accidents continue to increase - major injuries reported are up by more than 50%
- **Licensing** – This service is required to be cost neutral. The team issue some 3,500 licenses pa,
- **Trading Standards** – Work on under-age sales, and have a key role in safeguarding the vulnerable in particular rogue trader and doorstep crime initiatives. In B&NES we have experienced a 100% increase in rogue trader incidents and distraction burglaries in October.

Savings target – A 30% cut is required through external challenges however the Panel should be aware that Licensing are required to be cost neutral which means that savings made from the process should be returned to the applicant. Savings are not therefore equitable across the service.

Councillor Geoff Ward commented that he was worried by this proposed level of cuts. He asked what would happen if the Council were challenged over its level of resources.

The Service Manager for Public Protection replied that the Council would maintain its legal duty of service. She added that a neighbouring authority had been criticised recently for its lack of resources.

Councillor Geoff Ward asked how the Council would deal with a potential outbreak of food poisoning.

The Service Manager for Public Protection replied that it could potentially struggle if one occurred.

Councillor Geoff Ward asked given the number of new food outlets and the proposed reduction in officers, how would inspections be carried out.

The Service Manager for Public Protection replied that new and poorly rated businesses would be prioritised to minimise the risk of exposure.

The Service Manager for Neighbourhood Services addressed the Panel.

- **Pest Control** – This service will be re-shaped / reduced and will be means tested.
- **Parks Management** – This service will be streamlined. The Nursery will embark on a different way of plant procurement. Community involvement will be further encouraged.

Councillor Eleanor Jackson asked if the Council would consider entering a mutual grass cutting process with Curo.

The Service Manager for Neighbourhood Services replied that he had recently met with the Chief Executive of Curo regarding the confusion over the ownership of some areas of land to ensure both parties were clear. He added that consideration was being given to the possibility of some land swaps to aid this matter.

The Chairman asked if the Panel could be informed which public conveniences were being proposed for closure.

The Divisional Director for Environmental Services replied that he could not provide that information at the present time as the list was at a tentative stage currently.

Councillor Brian Webber asked if it was an advantage to the Council for Bath to be classified as a World Heritage Site despite the costs associated with developing a Management Plan.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport replied that he believed it was an accolade to be proud of and was seen as a benefit to the Council.

The Service Manager for Transport and Performance Improvement addressed the Panel.

- **MOT Service** – Expand this work area for fleet vehicles and the public.
- Utilise the in house passenger fleet / possible additional dial-a-ride service.

The Head of Parking Services addressed the Panel.

- **Car Parks** – introduce parking charges into car parks which are currently free of charge.
- **On Street Parking** – Introduce parking charges in Victoria Park.
- **Staff** – Smarter deployment

Councillor Geoff Ward commented that he still concerned at the lack of a proper Parking Strategy.

The Divisional Director for Environmental Services replied that the service now understands its business better than it did 18 months ago. He stated that the service had currently maxed out on its income potential, hence the proposals within the plan.

The Waste Services Manager addressed the Panel.

- **Recycling Centres** – The sites at Welton and Pixash Lane would close for 2.5 days each week. Staff at these sites would then work on rotation.

Councillor Geoff Ward proposed the following recommendation:

The Planning, Transport & Environment Panel have concerns over some of the proposals with the Medium Term Service & Resource Plan and it asks the relevant Cabinet Member(s) to look again at these particular areas;

- (i) Public Protection – What risk would there be to the public and the Council if the staffing levels were reduced as proposed?
- (ii) Public Conveniences – Would the number of available toilets be deemed adequate enough and in the most suitable locations to residents and visitors if the closure proposals were approved?
- (iii) Car Parks – Does the proposal to remove the free parking provision in some areas of the Council pose a significant risk to the viability of local businesses?

Councillor Brian Webber seconded the recommendation.

Three members of the Panel voted in favour of the recommendation, four voted against it and there were no abstentions. The recommendation therefore was not carried.

The Chairman thanked everybody for their participation in the debate.

78 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel.

Some members expressed their concern over the potential number of items listed for January 2013.

The Chairman said that in conjunction with the Vice-Chair and the lead Director they would attempt to streamline it during their discussions at the Agenda Planning Meeting.

The meeting ended at 6.10 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services