

Our Aims and Ambitions for Local People Explained 2013/14 to 2015/6

Bath & North East Somerset Council strives to deliver excellent services to local people and make our area *the* place to live, invest, and visit in the UK.

The foundations for how this vision will be achieved are a sensible management of our budget, effective partnership working with local, national, statutory and voluntary organisations, together with strong leadership from both elected councillors and our staff.

There are challenges the Council and its partners must overcome. These include Government funding reductions on a scale unprecedented since the Second World War to address the Country's financial deficit, the effects of the national recession, and demographic change.

This three-year budget reflects what matters most for local people as we plan for an area which offers opportunity and positive lives for everyone, whilst ensuring our most vulnerable residents are given the support that they need. In putting people first and communities at the heart of everything we do, our priorities are:

- Protecting frontline services;
- No increases in Council Tax;
- Investing in homes and jobs for local people.

Supporting the most vulnerable people and families

We want people to remain independent and living in their own home. The number of older people will grow incredibly over the next 20 years. From now until 2035, the over-65 population is likely to increase by 50%, and the over-85 population is likely to increase by 110% over the same timescale.

The £260 million over the next three years that we will spend on adult social care must be focused on the most vulnerable people, promoting their independence through improved community services to ensure that residents, where possible, stay at home. We must also recognise the increasing need for specialist care for people with dementia and those with the most complex needs, such as those with autism. We will continue to work closely with our partners to enable vulnerable people in our communities across Bath and North East Somerset to live fulfilling and rewarding lives.

This will mean refocusing some areas of our budget on people with the highest needs. An extra £3.25 million has been set aside for this purpose over the next three years.

In common with the national picture the Council is also experiencing significant population growth, which coupled with pupils generated from new housing developments, like the MOD sites, will require the provision of new classrooms at existing primary schools in areas where pressure is greatest. The capital funding

available for schools will be used to provide an additional 375 places over the next three years.

The money available for Children's Services will be targeted to address the needs of vulnerable young people and families. Our Children's Centres and Youth Centres will strive for excellence to support those people most in need and give them opportunities for their future. We will be working hard with families who are struggling to help them to have successful lives.

New responsibilities for public health from April 2013 will provide us with a greater opportunity to offer people information and advice about how to improve their quality of life, whether that be through health, fitness, or diet.

A better quality of life in our communities

The Council must play a strong community leadership role in creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and we want our residents to make a difference to their own quality of life, as well as their health and wellbeing. We cannot achieve this on our own.

We will be investing £500,000 in cycle routes, completing the £32 million Bath Transportation Package and a new community cycle track at Odd Down. But local people must make the lifestyle choice to use sustainable methods of transport.

There will be also be times when residents are in the best position to make a difference to the place where they live. For instance, our eight library branches will be supported by our Community Library Programme, encouraging more people to play a part in running their library.

Taking this principle a step further, the Council is looking to transfer some of its assets to local communities if we think they would be better run by local people.

We will also be working closely with local communities to encourage more environmentally sustainable behaviour through promoting our Biomass Energy Efficiency Fund, Schools Energy Invest to Save Fund, and continuing our efforts to reduce the Council's own carbon footprint.

New places to live and work

We want to build a strong economy supporting the community improvements necessary to sustain new houses – including affordable homes – and new jobs and so that local people can find a wider range of jobs, residents can share higher levels of prosperity, and the children and grandchildren that our excellent schools educate don't have to move away to progress the careers they aspire to.

Our budget plans include:

- Progressing the Bath 'City of Ideas' Enterprise Area through a combined total of over £27 million to regenerate key sites along the River Avon with employment space and places to live, including affordable homes;

- Completing a £33 million revamp of Keynsham town centre that will encourage private sector investment into the community;
- Regenerating communities, including Radstock where an upgrade of the road network will support new homes and jobs, and London Road, Bath;

These plans will take full advantage of our place as a leading location for the digital, creative, and technology sectors.

We will be proactive alongside our partners to develop worker skills, improve connections between employers and job seekers, and support the network of apprentices, interns, and undergraduate placement schemes. The area's greatest resource for economic prosperity is local people.

Making the best of opportunity

The Council values the views of local people when making decisions about the services we provide. We listen and act upon the things residents tell us are important. The coming years will test the area to address the challenges we face – but they also provide significant opportunities. The Council looks forward to working with local communities every step of the way.