

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday, 18th March, 2013

Present:- Councillors John Bull (Chair), Manda Rigby (Vice-Chair), Colin Barrett, Paul Myers, Charles Gerrish, Barry Macrae and Nigel Roberts

Also in attendance: Andrew Pate (Strategic Director, Resources), David Trethewey (Divisional Director , Policy & Partnerships), Jane Wildblood (Corporate Sustainability Manager) and Jonathan Mercer (Communications & Marketing Manager)

59 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that that item 11 – ‘Community Assets Report’ would be taken after item 7 and item 9 – ‘Member Training’ would be deferred until the next meeting of the Panel on 10th June 2013.

60 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

61 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

62 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

63 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

There were none.

65 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 11TH FEBRUARY 2013

Following the amendment shown below, the Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

Page 11, paragraph 5 should read "... Councillor Bellotti explained that if the Council took over the plot of land, the swimming facility will be re provided."

66 COUNCIL WEBSITE UPDATE

Jonathan Mercer – Communications and Marketing Manager, gave a presentation to the Panel on the following:

- Website Update
- Performance of Website
- What are the next steps?
- How can members make best use of the website?
- Car permits?

The officer also gave a demonstration of the website along with the mobile phone version.

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

Councillor Roberts commented that it would be useful if the system asked if a user would like to move to the mobile site rather than being automatically directed to it. Councillor Rigby asked for some information on how many people use the site successfully as she had has some negative comments. Councillor Rigby suggested that staff in libraries could receive some training on the use of the website so they can help people with it.

Councillor Gerrish said that he was frustrated during the period of bad weather as members had previously got copies of press releases but this year they had not as all the information was put onto the website. He asked if members could be informed when new information was posted. The Communications and Marketing Manager acknowledged the point but pointed out that during bad weather conditions, the website was being updated frequently. He further explained that bad weather is the exception. Andrew Pate, Strategic Director Resources stated that the point was logged and that there is a facility on the site to give people regular updates.

Councillor Macrae stated that he felt that the search engine could be improved. He stated that he wanted to log his comment that, while he was impressed by the technology, the website does not deal with what his residents ask for and they have to pay for it. The Director stated that, as a Council, front house services were still very important.

Councillor Roberts stated that the website was much improved, useful and positive. Panel members noted that the authority had moved up in the rankings for Local Authority websites.

The Panel noted the update.

67 MEMBER TRAINING

This item was deferred until the next meeting of the Resources Panel on 10th June 2013.

68 CARBON MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Jane Wildblood – Corporate Sustainability Manager, introduced the report.

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

Councillor Gerrish asked if the Green Living Fair would be taken to Keynsham and Midsomer Norton, he explained that Waste Services go along to farmers markets to promote the recycling message. The officer explained that the project is a joint one with Bath Preservations Trust and Transition Bath and is linked to Bath Green Homes, which was started by those two groups. It would be possible to explore this sort of joint working with Transition Keynsham and other groups who might be interested in this sort of activity in the future.

Councillor Gerrish mentioned that there were bulk buying arrangements for heating oil in some of the rural parishes where discounts had been negotiated, this could be extended to Bath.

Councillor Barrett asked if the officer had been consulted on the 20mph speed limits schemes and if the effects would be monitored. The officer stated that the air quality officers would have been consulted. Following a comment from Councillor Barrett, the officer said she would check if lower vehicle speeds did result in lower carbon emissions.

Councillor Barrett asked if the spa water was used in Council buildings. The officer explained that it is used in the heating for the Pump Room and there were investigations about its use in the Abbey. She explained that there was a high mineral content in the water so it was only used for certain things.

Councillor Macrae stated that he would like to see the results of work done on carbon management in terms of how much money had been saved compared to how much had been spent. He quoted an article stating that global warming is not happening. Councillor Roberts stated that the scientific facts proved that global warming and thus climate change is happening and that he would prefer to listen to the scientists. Councillor Bull pointed out that it was not just the financial outcomes that are important but also the benefits in terms of carbon emissions.

The officer gave some examples where results could be seen in numbers such as the replacement of street light bulbs with LED lights which had saved £135k per year and resulted in a 2.9% reduction in carbon emissions. She also explained that green projects in schools helped to offset the increase in energy usage in schools that has been seen in recent years.

Councillor Roberts explained that the Government had woken up to a win/win tax regarding carbon emissions. He stated that he found the dashboard (Appendix 1 to the report) useful and asked about the next steps towards meeting the Council's targets. The officer explained that it is hard to see the results of carbon reduction strategies quickly as there is a time lag with the data. She stated that there was an expectation that energy use would drop when the Keynsham project is complete. She stated that there was a plan to replace street lights on side roads and also there

would shortly be a detailed energy efficiency programme for schools, following completion of the surveys. She further explained that a local community partnership was developing regarding the Green Deal in order to ensure maximum benefit to local residents.

Councillor Gerrish asked if academies would be included in the future projects for schools. The officer explained that they had been surveyed but were not part of future work.

Councillor Rigby stated that there had been a survey in Abbey Ward regarding the street lighting and the LEDs may have to be removed. She also stated that lighting on pedestrian routes is poor and she had had complaints about this. The officer offered to report this back to the relevant officers in the street lighting team.

The Strategic Director stated that there had been a lot of information discussed some of which goes beyond carbon reduction. He explained that the Panel can request that any points outside this remit be put to the relevant officer.

The Panel noted the report.

69 COMMUNITY ASSETS REPORT

Councillor Paul Myers presented the Panel with the information from the Task and Finish Group which covered the following:

- Recent Visit Schedule
- Community Campus Strategy – Wiltshire County Council
- Bath City Farm
- Community 67
- Beacon Hall – Peasedown St John
- Conclusions
- How do we currently deal with Assets?
- Recommendations

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

Councillor Macrae stated that this was a good report. He asked if all the organisations that shared the building in Wiltshire also worked together or still as separate organisations. Councillor Bull explained that he thought they worked separately at present but there could be scope for rationalisation. He further explained that the Wiltshire scheme was different from this report in that it had come from the top in Wiltshire. Councillor Gerrish suggested that it was not a fair comparison due to the difference in approach. He explained that there had been a session run by Property for the business tenants in Keynsham that was proactive and worked well.

Councillor Bellotti thanked the task and finish group for the report. He explained that an organisation can approach the Council at any time. He stated that

recommendations 1,2 and 5 were sensible and that recommendation 3 and 4 needed some thought. He stated that he did not want to set this Panel up as the place to bring all requests.

Councillor Macrae asked that when an asset is leased but still on Council books – what are the impacts on finance for the Council. The Director explained that this links to the report to Cabinet and Council in February 2013 where a number of assets are listed. He stated that needs vary within groups and safeguards must be in place. There had to be a balance of subsidy and benefit to the Council.

Councillor Barrett asked about the Children’s Centre in Weston, Councillor Bellotti explained that this asset is corporately owned by the Council and subject to Council decisions and that the proposed rent increase was part of the indicated budget that did not go through, it was not directly connected to the asset. The Cabinet Member said he would get back to Councillor Barrett on his query.

There was some discussion around recommendation 3. Councillor Myers stated that groups just need somewhere to go, it did not have to be this Panel. Councillor Gerrish pointed out that there was a standing item on the Panel agenda ‘Items from the Public’ which could be used.

The Panel accepted the following:

Recommendation 1: Develop a Community Building Value Index which brings together the following three elements:

- Financial return on an asset (annual commercial rent £)
- Community benefit (discount rating 0% no benefit to 100% maximum benefit)
- Measure of organisational sustainability (High, Medium, Low probability that organisation will exist in 1,3, 5 over 25 years)

Recommendation 2: Encourage the use of flexible leases for community asset transfer projects rather than just long term leases for 25 years and over, these could be small leases of 3-6 months initially and once a project becomes established longer term leases of 6-10 years could be made available.

Recommendation 3: We suggest developing an Officer Group which brings together key representatives e.g. Property Services, Policy and Partnerships, Health and Safety, Business Continuity to assess the feasibility of community asset proposals, similar to the way the existing Safety Advisory Group operates for events.

Recommendation 4: The Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel could receive a regular update on progress with Asset Transfers.

Recommendation 5: Facilitate community asset projects with the creation of a self-help group. This would allow ‘successful’ community asset projects and newly established projects to share information and develop best practice. This could perhaps be done via the Run A Club (<http://www.runaclub.com>) website or similar

The Council should work with existing community groups to develop an 'offer' for community asset groups by working with them to identify what support groups would most benefit from e.g. flexible leases, access to legal/health and safety advice or the opportunity to seek support from other groups. A suggested self-help system of regulation and support should include:

- Empowering volunteers and allowing them to share information and best practice (see recommendation 2)
- Allowing the Council a light touch to ultimately ensure the proper use of public assets, efficiency savings for the Council, presenting advice and bringing in specialities
- Avoiding large amounts of office time and money being required to micro manage such a diverse estate
- Possibly instituting a voluntary quality standard based on self-inspection akin to the old Hallmark system

70 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Bellotti updated the Panel on the following:

- Regarding the **Budget**, Councillor Bellotti thanked the Panel for their input on the budget process. He reported that work on children's centres would be done by the Early Years, Children and Youth Panel; there would also be work on the provision of public toilets and parking spaces in Keynsham. He added that the increase in rents included in the original budget proposal did not go in the final budget.
- On the **Procurement Strategy** Councillor Bellotti reported that the new 'Think Local' strategy would be helping local businesses. In response to a question from Councillor Rigby about the 'Bath Oliver' currency, The Cabinet Member said he would consider it.

71 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel members noted the future workplan.

The meeting ended at 7.50pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services