

SPEAKER NOTES – DRAFT 3

I'm pleased to introduce this paper, which sets out the aims and priorities of my Cabinet over the coming years.

The aims and priorities in this paper are closely aligned to those we set out prior to the local elections, and demonstrate our commitment to delivering on the promises we made before May.

I'm immensely proud to lead this Council – Bath and North East Somerset is a wonderful place, with talented people and incredible potential. There will be challenges ahead – in particular the need to find significant financial savings over the coming years. However, I'm confident and optimistic that with the right vision we can continue to make Bath & North East Somerset an even better place to live, work and visit.

This paper sets out three core aims of our administration:

- A Council which is efficient and well-run;
- A Council which invests in the future of our area; and
- A Council which puts the interests of residents first.

To achieve this, we will step up support to help our communities grow, providing services that enable them to do more for themselves. We will work with local businesses to support the delivery of new jobs. And we will support the vulnerable individuals who need our help earlier – with the aim of preventing problems becoming worse.

Working in this way will allow us to be more effective, make best use of taxpayers' money and build the foundations for growth and prosperity.

Beyond these three core aims, we also have six more specific main priorities, which will guide our policies in the years ahead.

First, tackling waste and increasing efficiency:

Our new administration aims to:

- We have put in place a strategic review to look at where we can save money, how we can generate new income and how we can support people to do more for themselves. It will also identify areas where we can cut bureaucracy for the benefit of our residents and businesses, so that, as far as possible, we can best protect the vital services upon which our residents rely.
- We will look at new ways of delivering services – we will be more innovative and commercial, capitalising on opportunities to generate revenue through Council resources and sound investments, and through making the most of new technologies, as well as looking at where we can save money by sharing services with other organisations.

- Given the savings that we anticipate need to be made, there will inevitably be some difficult choices about the range and level of services provided by the Council - but we will endeavour to put our residents first – especially the vulnerable and those in most need.

Secondly, delivering new Homes and Jobs:

- We're fortunate in Bath & North East Somerset to have a strong skills base - over 40% of our residents have a degree.
- However wages are 9% lower than the national average and house prices approximately 40% higher than the national average. This is a real challenge and one of our new administration's priorities.
- Creating new jobs and more affordable houses are essential to our growth and prosperity. Our economic strategy seeks to address this by supporting higher wage industries to grow here and locate here. We aim to grow our economy and increase its value by £3 billion by 2029.
- We have ambitious targets to support the creation of 11,500 new jobs and 13,000 new homes, including over 3,000 affordable homes – and will do whatever we can to support and encourage the regeneration of brownfield sites throughout our area.
- Our economic plan will aim to support the whole of the B&NES area:
- We will support and encourage an entrepreneurial culture, building on our strengths in information and communications, creative and digital, environmental / low carbon services and the visitor economy.
- We will support the delivery of much-needed new office space and we will be stepping up work to attract developers, with a target of building up to 50,000 square metres of modern business floor-space before 2029.
- We will play a key role as members of the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership. Money from the LEP will help deliver our new business quarter in Bath at Innovation Quays. This will create a new home for creative, ICT and financial and business services. Flood mitigation works to enable this will begin this year.
- We will support top-end office space at new employment locations in Keynsham and the Somer Valley, helping them achieve their economic potential and create sustainable jobs, and support the delivery of superfast broadband in our rural communities.

Thirdly, improving transport:

We all know what an important issue transport is in B&NES.

We're committed to taking action to make it easier for residents, businesses and visitors to get around our area.

We will support sustainable transport options to encourage the greater use of walking, cycling and local bus services;

We will invest in infrastructure – such as the long-awaited East of Bath Park & Ride, whilst delivering long-term transport strategies for every part of the B&NES area;

We will promote local rail by continuing to support the MetroWest project to deliver a more frequent local rail service;

We will tackle congestion and air pollution by seeking to improve traffic flows and tackle bottle-necks;

And we will work with residents to try and address residential parking concerns throughout the area.

Our fourth priority is investing in our area's young people:

- Children are the future of our area, and this administration is committed to giving our area's young people the best possible start in life.
- We're very fortunate to have so many "Good" or "Outstanding" schools here in Bath and North East Somerset, and will continue to support them to improve and promote educational excellence. We will invest at least £6.6m to make sure that we have the right number of school places to maintain high quality education - this will include building new schools.
- We want our children grow up to be good citizens, confident to be themselves and respectful and tolerant of differences, so we will continue to champion equality and diversity.
- We will provide early support to vulnerable children so that, wherever possible, they don't need to go into care. We will also provide timely help for the children and families that most in need in our communities.
- We will prioritise the Connecting Families service - as a direct result of this children are back in school, youth crime is down and parents are off benefits and in work.
- We will continue to support adoption services, including working with our neighbouring authorities to create a single Adoption Agency.

Our fifth priority is to create cleaner, greener and healthier local communities:

- This priority, perhaps more than any of the others, will involve working closely with residents to harness the abilities of our local communities.
- We want our area to be cleaner, to be greener and, with the Council's new responsibilities for public health, healthier too.
- In this regard, we have already agreed a £17m investment in our leisure centres, to help get more people, more active, more often.
- We are establishing a task-force to look at how we can improve street cleaning, reduce litter and tackle the on-going gull menace which plagues our area.
- We will continue to take action to address the causes and effects of climate change, including flood mitigation and continuing to encourage increased recycling rates.
- We will support the health and wellbeing of local residents by working closely with our NHS colleagues and others to promote active lifestyles and early-intervention in public health issues – focussing on prevention and helping people to help themselves.

Our sixth and final priority is to ensure choice and independence for Older People

- Even with demographic pressures and tighter Council budgets, we want to deliver world-class service for our area's older and vulnerable residents – ensuring properly joined-up health and social care services, and supporting people to help them remain independent for longer.
- Our 5-Year Better Care Fund Plan – which is about joining up and improving care - has already been identified nationally as an example of best practice, and this administration wants to build upon this success.
- The focus is on preventative services that help people stay well for longer, and keep them out of hospital or a care home.
- Supporting people discharged from hospital is also important. Our intensive home from hospital support service delivered in partnership with Age UK B&NES and Care & Repair Home Improvement Agency is a good example of this.
- We face an increase in dementia which puts pressure on carers and on social and health services. We will continue to support dementia services, including the award-winning Independent Living Service for people with dementia, and their carers, living in rural areas.

- We will deliver on our new, statutory responsibilities under the Care Act 2014, providing the right support and advice to people who need it.

Summary

Here I have set out our top priorities. Underpinning of these is our commitment to delivery and to making tangible changes.

We will ensure that this Council efficient and well-run, and we will always put our residents first.

I am therefore very happy to move the recommendations in this paper.