

Connecting Communities Forums - Council Budget Fairs

19th November – 30th November 2015

The Connecting Communities Forum's hosted a series of public meetings in November that included presentations on the Council's Budget proposals and the consultation on the West of England Joint Spatial. Below is a summary of the presentations, followed by a series of questions raised at each meeting.

Council Budget Fair Presentation

This presentation was split into two parts, with the first delivered either by Andrew Pate – Strategic Director for Resources or Tim Richens - Divisional Director - Business Support, Resources.

The Council is in the early stages of the budget process. The context for it is the Council's new, draft Corporate Strategy 2016-2020 which has been passed by Cabinet and will be going to Council with the budget on 16th February.

There are four dimensions/key themes:-

- Strong economy and growth
- A focus on prevention – particularly for older and younger people
- A new relationship with customers and communities
- An efficient business – including new ideas for income generation

A pie chart shows the revenue budget spend. The largest proportion is for adult social services. Expenditure on schools is also high but the Council receives ring-fenced Government funding to off-set this. This is shown on the income pie chart, alongside other sources of income such as Council Tax.

The Council Tax in B&NES is relatively low – it is the 4th lowest of 12 unitary authorities in the South West.

The Council currently spends around £240m a year on services, excluding schools. Over the last 3 years, it has saved £31m due to efficiencies and its 'Change' programme which largely relates to the following: IT, a 40% reduction in office accommodation and process efficiencies and procurement. There has also been increased income generation.

Over the next four years, it is anticipated that the Council will need to save £38m - the Council is about half way to achieving this with its latest budget.

The £8m revenue gap is due to inflation and therefore increased contract costs; changes in demographics and an increase in National Insurance to fund pension costs. The revenue support grant from the Government could cease by 2021, so the Council needs to be more self-sufficient.

While the Government has indicated that Councils will be able to retain 100% of Business Rates by 2020 (we retain 30% at present), anything we do get to keep will be off-set by something else. There are no details yet but this will not be additional income – the Chancellor has stated that the arrangement will be 'fiscally neutral'. It will also be possible for Councils to reduce business rates to encourage local economic growth.

The Chancellor's Announcement on 5th October indicated that Metro-mayors and Local Enterprise Partnerships will be able to increase business rates in future but further detail is still awaited. The figures in the presentation are estimates prepared before the Chancellor's Autumn Statement came out. However, they are broadly line with this – further detail will be known closer to Christmas when the Government will let Councils know how much Revenue Support Grant they will receive.

The Council intends to deliver the savings through the Service Delivery Plans for its three Directorates. These will go to the [Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels](#) in November.

Cllr Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency gave the second part of the presentation:-

There will be an internal spending review based on the [Draft Corporate Strategy](#).

The priorities are to:-

- Protect frontline services
- Re-design services and increase efficiencies
- Grow income (but not by charging more for what we already do)

The Council is looking at everything to determine how it can deliver services more efficiently including through collaboration with other authorities and organisations, including health. The One Stop Shops and 'your care, your way' programme are examples of how the Council already collaborates with partners.

There is a focus on early intervention to help, for example, before health deteriorates.

It is hoped to generate £7m over 4 years through new, additional income, largely relating to commercial opportunities such as bringing space above Council owned retail units into residential use.

Capital Spending priorities will be funded via sale of assets, grants, S106/CIL monies and borrowing. Bath Quays is a major regeneration project that will provide new office space and jobs to grow the economy and provide a return on investment.

There is also investment in school buildings planned for Paulton; Bishop Sutton and a new school being built at Ensleigh in Bath.

In terms of leisure provision, there will be £8m invested in Bath central Leisure Centre; £200k at Culverhay and a new facility for Keynsham.

The Council is continuing to work on a new Park and Ride for the east side of Bath. Also investment in the A39 at Hallatrow and a new crossing for Hayesfield. £1.2m is needed for Midland Bridge in Bath.

In the Somer Valley, new office space will be created at the business centre and in Keynsham a pilot one way scheme is being trialled for the High Street.

A copy of the [presentation](#) can be found here.

Bathavon Forum, Sixth Form, St Gregory's School, Bath

19th November 2015

In attendance:

Peter Martin, Bathford Parish Council
Andy Furse, B&NES Ward Councillor,
Des Wighton, Monkton Combe Parish Council
Lyn Alvis, Monkton Combe Parish Council
David Veale, B&NES Ward Councillor
Kathryn Manchee, Camerton Dunkerton and Englishcombe Parish Clerk,
M Robinson, Dunkerton Parish
Martin Veal, Cabinet Member and B&NES Ward Councillor
Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member and B&NES Ward Councillor
Adam Reynolds, Cycle Bath

Officers: Sara Dixon, David Trethewey, Tim Richens, Mark Hayward, Dave Dixon, Lisa Bartlett, Jayne Shaylar, Bruce Lawrence, Giles Oliver

Question 1 – Is the Schools capital improvements programme linked to the ring-fenced budget?

Response - The Capital programme is separate from the revenue budget.

Question 2 – Is the CIL funding accounted for in the revenue budget?

Response – No. The CIL funding is linked to development. The Council will not formally commit to spending money before it has been received.

Question 3 – How is Capital expenditure identified?

Response – These funds are raised in a number of ways including borrowing, capital receipts from the sale of property/land and Section 106/CIL monies.

Question 4 – Is the Council obligated to selling high value assets?

Response – No. The Government is proposing a new Housing Bill that relates to right to buy. The Council is waiting to hear further information about the implications of the Bill. The Council does not hold any social housing, only a small number of private dwellings.

Question 5 – Why is the Council setting up its own property company?

Response – It is the most tax efficient way. The Council will sell some of its assets that are suitable for housing provision to its new property company. This is not social housing although usual planning rules will apply. The Council has always had a large commercial estate so this is not something completely new. It is one of the largest landlords in the city of Bath.

Questions 6 – Will the Council own property in North Quays?

Response – The Council will own the freehold.

Question 7 – Is the Bath Quay Bridge already paid for?

Response – It will be funded by grant

Question 8 – Has the Heritage Lottery grant for the Archway project been confirmed?

Response – No. The Council is awaiting a decision on the application and will not commit expenditure beyond the grant.

Question 9 – Is there a limit on how much the Council can borrow?

Response – Yes. The Council has set the capital borrowing limit of £220 million. Current borrowing is at the value of £150 million. It is able to reset that limit at a Council meeting and may want to prioritise borrowing to invest in capital projects that generate a revenue return.

Question 10 – Will the Council enter into a PFI agreement?

Response – No. The Council has no plans for any PFI agreements but instead will plan to ensure it gets the best possible deal on its borrowing.

Question 11 – The old King Edwards School building on Broad Street has remained vacant for many years. Are there any planned to redevelop this site?

Response – The building is in private ownership.

Question 12 – How will the Council seek to make CCTV commercial?

Response – The Council will allow organisations to buy into its operations. An example given was Network Rail have CCTV in its stations and on the platforms. These cameras could be linked to the Council's CCTV control room which are monitored 24 hours. The Council would charge for this service, thereby reducing its own operational costs.

Question 13 – How does the Council manage its budgets from Adult and Social Care and the NHS?

Response – The Council has pooled and aligned budgets so there is better integration between the delivery of health and social care services and the commissioning of services. There is also a focus on prevention in order to help reduce the impact on the NHS budget and acute services as well as maintain the level of independence of people to remain in their own homes. It is in the Councils interest to work with the NHS as there are numerous links where preventative health services will result in longer

term benefits for residents.

Comment 14 – The recent works on the Bath Quay’s bridge will not encourage people to get out of their cars, as the junctions do not provide safe crossings for pedestrians and cyclists. This will not reduce congestion. The relevant departments need to work more closely together.

Response – The Council’s Transport and Fit for Life Strategy identifies the need to ensure we create a healthy and active community. This is also brought together in the Placemaking plan, the principles of which are to create places, shifting away from piecemeal development. The CIL monies will help make improvements. The Council has allocated within in its capital programme funding for junction improvements.

Chew Valley Area Forum, Chew Valley Secondary School, Chew Magna

23rd November 2015

In attendance:

David Hurfadine, Hinton Blewett Parish Council
Ray Jenkins, Whitchurch Parish Council
Maria Musins, Cameley Parish Council
John Harvey, Stanton Drew Parish Council
Heather Clewett, Stowey Sutton Parish Council
Richard Ireland, West Harptree Parish Council
Sandy Bell, Chew Valley Chamber of Commerce
Ian Bell, Chew Valley Chamber of Commerce
Andy Matthews, Chew Magna Parish Council
Dylan Morris, Cameley Parish Council
Lynne Easton, Chew Magna Parish Council
Chris Lewis, Local Resident
Chris Brookes, Bishop Sutton Local resident and business owner
Nick Baker, Chew Stoke Parish Council
Andrew Jones, East Harptree Parish Council
Cllr Tim Warren, B&NES Leader and Ward Councillor
Cllr Vic Pritchard, B&NES Cabinet Member and Ward Councillor
Cllr Liz Richardson, B&NES Cabinet Member and Ward Councillor
Cllr Martin Veal, B&NES Cabinet Member and Ward Councillor
Cllr Charles Gerrish, B&NES Cabinet Member and Ward Councillor
Cllr Andrew Furse, B&NES Ward Councillor

Officers: Ashley Ayre, Sara Dixon, Alison Wells, Dave Dixon, Mark Hayward, Andrew Pate, Mark Hayward, Lisa Bartlett, Sarah Chodkiewicz

Several comments were made about the presentation not demonstrating any expenditure within the Chew Valley other than those already committed (Bishop Sutton Primary School). The Council has a new challenge to analysis financial information relating to the Forum areas and will consider how best to present this in the future.

Question 1 – Why does the Council think that acquiring property is more beneficial than selling it?

Response – Revenue funding pays for all the services and this is under pressure. Using capital funding to acquire property will enable future income streams to be off set against the revenue expenditure. It is important that the Council grows its income by investing in the rights things to give a good return. We have already increased our revenue already by over £1million.

Question 2 – Do you believe the Council is better at managing property than the private sector?

Response – The Council has a good track of managing commercial property and working with the private sector. Our staff are very experienced, many of whom have private sector property backgrounds.

Question 3 – Does this mean the Council will not sell any of its assets in the future?

Response – The Council continues to review its portfolio of assets and will consider whether it needs to reinvest elsewhere to obtain a higher return.

Question 4 – How does the Council protect itself through interest rate rises?

Response – The Council is able to get very competitive rates and any borrowing is often based on a fixed rate. A review of the Council's existing loans has been completed and better rates are now being realised.

Question 5 – A reference was made to £2.25 million investment into super-fast broadband. Will the Chew Valley benefit?

Response – This investment in Bath will create an opportunity for income generation to the Council. BT were committed to improving 90% of the coverage, unfortunately they were unable to deliver on their commitment.

(Comment from Chris Head – The Forum will be hosting a discussion about Broadband in February. This was identified by the Forum as a priority issue in their Action Plan. Andrew Pate said that the feedback from this meeting would be very helpful.)

Question 6 – The Council has reduced the Parish Council grants. As this will impact on our budgets, will the Council be freezing or capping the precept rates that parish councils' receive?

Response – Over a number of years' parish council grants were subsidised by the Council. This was due to the implementation of a new system of council tax support which created a shortfall in grants. The subsidies will be reduced on a sliding scale.

Question 7 – Why is planned expenditure increasing, can we have more details?

Response – There are a number of reasons. Adult and social care pressures from an aging and growing population, employers national insurance contribution increases, public sector wage settlement (likely to be 1%), inflation on contracts. More details can be made available if requested.

Question 8 – Will there be a council tax increase?

Response – This will depend on the final settlement from the Government. If there is a shortfall then the Council may have to increase the Council tax to reduce the funding gap.

Question 9 - How can you ensure investment / income generated in Bath benefits the wider area?

Response – All additional investment / income goes back into the main revenue budget and is distributed across the whole area. There is an assumption that Bath gets a disproportionate amount of the income spent on it however this is not the case. The monies raised in Bath are distributed across the area.

Keynsham Area Forum, Community Space, Civic Centre, Keynsham

24th November 2015

In attendance:

Cllr Alan Hale, B&NES Ward Councillor (Chair)
Adrian Inker, Community @ 67 (Vice Chair)
Gill Hellier, Keynsham Civic Society
Clive Fricker, Keynsham Town Council
Terry Edwards, Local resident
Duncan Hounsell, Saltford Parish Council
John Twist, Corston Parish Council
Tricia Golinski, Saltford Parish Council
Fiona Bell, Volunteer Centre Bath & Beyond
Keith Baker, Keynsham Town Council
Philippa Paget, Compton Dando Parish Council
Kathleen Hovland, Local residents
Dick Ollin, Chewton Keynsham
Pam Rose, Chewton Keynsham
Roger Bushy, Keynsham Civic Society
J Davy, Local resident
Derek McCaig, Local resident
Andrew Wait, Keynsham Music Festival
Peter Morgan, Local resident
Dawn Drury, Compton Dando Parish Council
Dave Biddleston, Keynsham Town Council
David Leach, Local resident

Sally Davis, Farmborough Parish Council
Mervyn Davies, Local resident
Roland Blors, Corston Parish Council
Cllr Andrew Furse, B&NES Ward Councillor
Martin and Gill Palmer, Chewton Keynsham Local residents
William House, Keynsham Action Network
Margaret Wilson, Keynsham and Salford Churches Together
Brian Wilson, Ramblers Association
Cllr Martin Veal, Cabinet Member for Community Services
Cllr Brian Simmons, B&NES Ward Councillor
Cllr Charles Gerrish, B&NES Cabinet Member and Ward Councillor
Cllr Andrew Furse, B&NES Ward Councillor

Officers: Louise Fradd, Sara Dixon, Alison Wells, Dave Dixon, Mark Hayward, Derek Quilter, Richard Morgan, Tim Richens, Bruce Lawrence, Richard Daone, Becky Reynolds

Question 1 – The Metro West rail project does not appear in the budget figures. This project would help with the implementation of a station in Saltford. Also there is no mention of Saltford primary school expansion. Does this mean this will not happen?

Response – There are over 120 projects within the capital programme and the presentation includes a snapshot of some of the projects planned. Saltford primary school expansion is included in the 2016/17 financial year. Feasibility work is required.

Question 2 – Does the river corridor fund extend to Keynsham? Will you be liaising with South Glos as the river goes into the authority area?

Response – The fund is specifically identified for river safety improvements in the City of Bath. The River Corridor Group does look at the Avon and will take account of any impact / development in South Glos.

Question 3 – As Bath Community Academy share the sports facilities on their site will they be making a contribution towards the £200k improvements works?

Response – The Academy does contribute revenue funds towards the use of the facilities. The Council will take this up further with them.

Question 4 – As part of the new property company, will the Council offer some affordable houses?

Response – The initial aim will be to ensure the 60 units above the shops in Bath will be available for private rent as soon as possible. The Council will consider a business case that addresses a range housing needs. Any new developments on Council land would need to accord with affordable housing requirements built into its planning policies.

Question 5 – Currently the Council provides a weekly recycling collection. Will the protection of front line services include protection of this weekly service?

Response – Government funding has allowed the Council to offer weekly collections of residual waste. This funding expires in 2017. There is political support to continue to offer this service however a review will need to be carried out and it is possible to have weekly collections but split them between residual waste and recycling.

A further comment was made that if recycling collections are reduced to fortnightly collection, there would be an increase in fly tipping in the villages.

Question 6 – Is there still a commitment to ensure Somerdale delivers the employment opportunities?

Response – Yes, the Council is still committed to deliver the economic growth and jobs.

Comment 7 – I welcome the proposals in the budget to improve junctions across the area. The recent traffic improvements to Bath Hill in Keynsham are poor. The road has been narrowed which causes traffic congestion. Please stop narrowing the roads we need the traffic to flow freely.

Question 8 – The area will see significant housing growth, what improvements have been planned for to increase school numbers?

Response – There will be improvements to Castle Primary and a new school build on the Somerdale site as part of the development.

Question 9 – Will the Council have more autonomy on its spending once the Government grant has been withdrawn?

Response – Most of the grant is not currently ring-fenced, however more funding can be raised locally, so to some extent yes.

Question 10 – Bath does not have a precept, but Keynsham does, how did this happen?

Response – When Bath City Council existed, residents did not pay a city tax due to the rental income from its properties. When B&NES Council was created there was no parish council for Bath and therefore no precept was added to residents' council tax who lived in the city. The whole area benefits from the income generated in the city. It is up to the community to decide if they want to have a parish council for Bath.

Question 11 – How much is the Cabinet pushing Bath Tourism plus to promote the whole area and not just Bath?

Response – The Council are discussing this with them. We want to ensure they

<p>broaden their focus across the whole area.</p>
<p>Comment 12 – We need to ensure that the one way system proposed in Keynsham high street stops people using the town as a rat run. We need to ensure the flow of traffic is right.</p> <p>Response – The proposal is a trial. No final decisions have been made. It is important that the community are consulted on these proposal and ‘buy-into’ them prior to implementation.</p>
<p>Question 13 – Will there be a Tourism Levy introduced in Bath?</p> <p>Response – Under present legislation a Tourism Levy can only be a voluntary ‘opt in’ system. The Government is reviewing this. There are no proposals for such a levy for Bath at this stage.</p>
<p>Question 14 – The Volunteer Centre have been talking to the BID in Bath about ‘Volunteer Ambassadors’ for the city centre, is this something that the BID will support?</p> <p>Response – The BID is a separate organisation. Our aim is to ensure we obtain financial efficiencies to reduce Council subsidies.</p>

Bath City Forum, Banqueting Room, Guildhall, Bath

26th November 2015

In attendance:

Bob Goodman, B&NES Ward Councillor (Chair)
Paul Crossley, B&NES Councillor (Vice Chair)
Robin Kerr, FOBRA
Rob Appleyard, B&NES Ward Councillor
Lin Patterson, B&NES Ward Councillor
Charles Gerrish, B&NES Cabinet Member and Ward Councillor
Patrick Anketell-Jones, B&NES Councillor
Cherry Beath, B&NES Ward Councillor
Fiona Darey, B&NES Ward Councillor
Colin Webb, SOBA
Michael Norton, B&NES Ward Councillor
Pat Ryan, Bath Against Cuts
Caroline Kay, Bath Preservation Trust
Nigel Sherwa, Camden Resident
Peter Turner, B&NES Ward Councillor
Janet Rowse, Sirona,
Rob S, Local Resident Newbridge
Paul Dowling, RCS
Martin Veal, B&NES Cabinet Member and Ward Councillor
Terry Mitchell (Resident),
Andy Furse, B&NES Ward Councillor,
Jennifer Pack, B&NES Employee
Joe Rayment, B&NES Ward Councillor
Jeremy Boss, Widcombe Association
Dine Romero, B&NES Ward Councillor

Sarah James, B&NES CCG
Joe Scofield, Local Resident,
Monica Pearce, Bath Against Cuts
David Trumper, BANES Carers Centre
Ken Scott, Resident Association
Barbara Gordon, Bath Against Cuts
Bryn Jones, Transition Larkhall
Alexander Hart, Local Resident,
Oliver Mohamad, Oxfam
Janet Dabbs, Age UK BANES
Alison Millar, B&NES Ward Councillor
Van Du Bose, Local Resident,
Mark Dustin, Local Resident,
Claire Dustin, Local Resident,
Dick Daniel, Cycle Bath,
David Faulkner, Volunteer Centre
Peter M

Officers: Andy Thomas, Paul Pennycook, Andrew Pate, Tim Richens, Mark Hayward,
Simon De Beer, Jayne Shayler, Bruce Lawrence, John Wilkinson

Question 1 – Where will the investment for the Batheaston Park and Ride Scheme appear?

Response – There is a level of funding included in this year's budget as well as funding in future years. The funding also enables further work on site selection.

Question 2 – Investment has been mentioned for flood prevention work in the Bath Quays area of the river. What funding is being put into the river upstream from Pulteney Bridge?

Response – The Environmental Agency have carried out initial works into the flood elevation works. The Council will be making a contribution to support this project.

Question 3 – How will cuts to services over the next four years affect communities such as Twerton, Whiteway and others where there is a lot of social need and economic deprivation?

Response – The plans that are being put forward are unlikely to have an impact on frontline services. However the current Draft Directorate Plans highlight a number of initiatives which will help improve the lives of those most in need, including:

- Continuing our nationally recognised Connecting Families programme to support workless families to gain training and employment.
- Continuing to invest in the Welfare Support team, which provides support for those in need and also helps to develop skills and sustainable employment.
- Continued investment in sustainable energy initiatives including Energy @ Home to provide insulation and energy saving measures and tackle fuel poverty. People who live in specified areas of need (which includes Twerton and Southdown) may qualify for a free home energy assessment through the scheme. This will help 50-60 households in or at risk of fuel poverty and vulnerable.

- Delivering new Early Help Strategy for children, young people and families - promoting early identification of need and swift intervention.
- Providing advice and information through an integrated approach using our One Stop Shops and libraries, working closely with the Connecting Families initiative.
- The Council will continue to provide free access to the internet and training in libraries, including for those that can't access Government services online at home. Securing education, training and employment opportunities for our Care Leavers.

Question 4 – The proposals that will allow the Council to raise council tax by 2% to cover the greater needs in social care is insufficient. What is the plan to cover any shortfall?

Response –The projections made will have a minimum impact on health and social care services. It is impossible to predict an increase in pressures and needs in this area but the requirements that have been set out are the best estimates that can be made. The recent 'your care, your way' consultation is looking into better methods to improve the delivery of care for our communities. No decision has yet been made to increase the council tax.

Question 5 – It is pleasing to see the change programme has helped to deliver a position where there will not be an impact on front line services. What are the areas in this budget that will see spending cuts?

Response- There are savings in children's services revenue budget worth £50K. There are changes to the way that music services are delivered. The drugs and alcohol prevention services will carry out more targeted work, and by working closer with other services should also see an enhancement to the individual service users.

Question 6 – The figure of £7 million as an increase in revenue does not seem very ambitious. More could be done to put residents first and reduce pollution. What is being done by the Council to bring in a 'tourism style tax' to the City?

Response- The Council do have additional ideas for bringing in higher levels of funding for the City. There is work taking place on the West of England devolution deal that would bring more flexibility to the regions from Central Government and potentially an additional £1 billion over ten years to the WoE area. A tourism levy might be something that the Council would be keen to explore if the power to do this is given to us.

Question 7 – In the Chancellors statement the percentage cut to local authorities was 24% and not the 40% that was expected. How does the Council see this impacting on the £38 million in cuts it was expecting to make?

Response- The details on the revenue support grant will not become clear until late in December. There will be additional costs to find for public health. However the news was better than expected. *Note the figures have got more challenging in light of the provisional local government settlement.*

Question 8 – Bath is a wealthy city but ordinary people can't afford to live here. As all

the Council houses have been sold off, where will housing for ordinary people come from?

Response- The Council transferred its housing stock to Curo, former Somer Community Housing Trust in the 1990s. The Council are bound by Government legislation to deliver levels of new housing to the area; this will include affordable housing. The Council aims to deliver new homes through property company.

Question 9 – What measures are being taken with neighbouring authorities to avoid conflicts when business rates are used to attract new employers to the City?

Response- The government has not yet provided the detail on how this scheme will work. The Council will work with its neighbouring authorities and continue to have discussions with the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Question 10 – The Council appears to be comfortable with the savings it has to make and is looking at the income generation as a positive. Will the Council make a formal response to the Government to oppose the level of funding cuts?

Response- The Council recognises that there is still a lot of work to do as only half the £38 million in cuts have been so far identified. The Council will be looking to other Local Authorities to see where services can be shared. The Council are networked with the LGA and will lobby on issues where necessary.

Question 11 – What flexibility is there on capital and revenue expenditure?

Response- There are specific budgets, for instance Education, that is ring-fenced therefore can't be spent on anything else. There are specific rules that the Council must follow when setting out the revenue and capital budgets spending plans.

Question 12 – What will be the impact on staff in the redesigning of services? If you find savings through reductions in salaries/jobs won't there be an impact on those people not having money to spend or pay their council tax?

Response- Any changes to the level of staff will always go through formal consultation. There have been minimal number of compulsory redundancies this year and this is expected to stay low which is positive for staff. If any roles are cut the Council supports staff through its redeployment programme.

Somer Valley Forum, Conygre Hall - Timsbury

30th November 2015

In attendance:

Lynda Robertson, Midsomer Norton Society (Chair)
Cllr Karen Walker, B&NES Ward Councillor (Peasedown St John) (Vice Chair)
Cllr Rosemary Naish, Chair of Clutton Parish Council
Cllr Mike Hedges, Chair of Farrington Gurney Parish Council
Teresa Marston, Clerk to Farrington Gurney Parish Council

Cllr Jonathan Rich, Peasedown St John Parish Council
Cllr Eleanor Jackson, B&NES Ward Councillor (Westfield)
Cllr Doug Deacon, B&NES Ward Councillor (Timsbury)
Mrs Deacon, Local Resident
Cllr David Collett, Timsbury Parish Council
Cllr Barry Macrae, B&NES Ward Councillor (Midsomer Norton North)
Cllr Liz Hardman, B&NES Ward Councillor (Paulton)
Shirley Steel, Somerset and Dorset Railway Heritage Trust
Jan Merchant, Local Resident
Cllr Ray Merchant, Timsbury Parish Council
Cllr Richard Robertson, Midsomer Norton Town Council
Roger Tollervey, Welton Valley Group
Cllr Deirdre Horstmann, B&NES Ward Councillor (Radstock)
Becky Brooks, Midsomer Norton, Radstock and District Journal
Cllr Michael Evans, B&NES Ward Councillor (Midsomer Norton North)
Cllr Hugh Warren, Paulton Parish Council
Cllr Bob Piper, Paulton Parish Council
Cllr Rupert Bevan, Radstock Town Council
Cllr Tom Clifford, Peasedown St John Parish Council
Peter Barter, Somer Centre
Terry Taylor, Norton Radstock Regeneration
Cllr Chris Dando, B&NES Ward Councillor (Radstock)
Cllr Robin Moss, B&NES Ward Councillor (Westfield)
Cllr Jane Lewis, Midsomer Norton Town Council
Emily Merko, Clerk to Hinton Blewett Parish Council and Administrative Assistant to
Westfield Parish Council
Mike Horler, Local Resident
Cllr Veronica Packham, Chair of Timsbury Parish Council
Cate Le Grice-Mack, Norton Radstock Regeneration
Cllr Lesley Mansell, Peasedown St John Parish Council
Cllr Kathy Thomas, Chair of Peasedown St John Parish Council
Cllr Sue Langton, Timsbury Parish Council
Cllr Paul Myers, B&NES Ward Councillor (Midsomer Norton Redfield)
Cllr Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member – Resources, B&NES

Officers: Mike Bowden, Gary Adams, Cathy McMahon, John Wilkinson, Denice Burton,
Richard Baldwin, Jo Lewitt, Dave Dixon, Sara Dixon, Alison Wells, Andrew Pate, Simon De
Beer

Question 1 – It seems that much of this budget depends on income generation –
when can Councillors expect more information on this?

Answer – The information about the Property Company went to Cabinet on
Wednesday so Councillors should have received papers relating to this. The Council
has made two, very successful property investments in recent years and will be
seeking more. The income estimates contained in the presentation are conservative
and more may be generated.

Question 2 – How will the Council derive income if it is selling its properties to a
private company?

Answer – The Council will be the only shareholder in the Property Company so will be retaining ownership in this way.

Comment 3 – The Government states that Housing Associations need to be compensated for any properties they lose under the ‘Right to Buy’ scheme. There does not seem to be provision for recompensing them. Also, the Government has indicated that Councils should, themselves, sell off their ‘high end’ assets.

Answer – The Council is no longer a housing authority, with flats in the Royal Crescent and Circus for example, which may have been considered ‘high end’.

Comment 4 – It is good to see frontline services such as youth provision being protected. However, there is concern that the Council is withdrawing as a licence holder for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. This does result in a £20k - £30k saving, with costs passed to schools instead. However, it could lead to this becoming a scheme in which the rich can participate.

Answer – Due to the detailed nature of this question, it was suggested that the enquirer speak with Cllr Michael Evans, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, following the meeting.

Question 5 – What is happening about the feasibility study relating to the junction between Bath Road, Peasedown St John and the A367? There was another accident on this road last week.

Answer – Ward Councillors for Peasedown St John have brought the issue to Cabinet. It has been raised today, at the previous Somer Valley Forum meeting and at Scrutiny. It is now for the Cabinet Member for Highways to address.

Question 6 – How is the new Somer Valley Enterprise Zone being defined? Is it just Midsomer Norton, or Peasedown St John as well?

Answer – Officers are still working on the Enterprise Zone – it is focussing on sites already allocated for employment, such as Old Mills but more can be allocated going forward.

Andrew Pate commented that the Forum may wish to look at this in more detail at a future meeting as this was an area that they identified as a priority issue in their Action Plan.

Question 7 – If the Council is buying properties to sell, how will this help with housing waiting lists?

Answer – The Council is intending to bring forward properties that already exist but are not habitable, such as those above shops. It is an accounting process. It can also borrow at a low rate to invest. It is not disposing of properties to raise short term funds.

Question 8 – it is noted that a Metro Mayor may be able to increase business rates.

Would this be a Mayor for the greater Bristol area?

Answer – it would be a Mayor covering the four West of England authorities (Bristol; Bath and North East Somerset; North Somerset and South Gloucestershire). The Government are pushing for Metro Mayors but no decision has been made as yet.

Question 9 – Would a Metro Mayor necessarily diminish the power of Local Authorities?

Answer – No – the aim is to attract funds to address big issues.

Question 10 – This presentation has been very clear and easy to understand – how do we help get this information across to young people?

Answer – this is a good point and we could look to extend the sessions to the Youth Parliament and do more engagement with young people in future years.

Question 11 – The £174k for the bridge in Radstock detailed on the presentation is a direct contribution from the developer, so not Council spend. Are other figures like this included?

Answer – Developer contributions have always been part of the Council's budget presentation and included in the overall capital programme.

Question 12 – How much CIL money does the Council expect to receive from the Bath Quays Development?

Answer – CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) only came into force in April 2015, therefore, the level is not high in this financial year but it will be rolled into next year, when more funds will become available. It will be a substantial contribution.

Question 13 – The Chancellor indicated that a 2% rise in Council Tax could be spent specifically on Adult Social Care – is this something that B&NES would consider?

Answer – It is too early to answer as this announcement only came last week. The detail is not yet available. The impact of the Government's settlement will influence what happens next. The Government is talking about two things – being able to increase Council Tax without referendum and a 'precept' for Adult Social Care.

Question 14 – If the Council owns no social housing and the majority is with Curo, who will reimburse them through properties lost under the right to buy and will this lead to a reduction in social housing?

Answer – as far as we understand it, the Government will reimburse them.