

## **Statement to the 14.11.16 Cabinet meeting of Bath & North East Somerset Council**

Thank you Chair.

My eye was caught by a Single Member decision, due for implementation tomorrow, which under the guise of being “critical” to the Bath Transport Strategy, approves further public money for site-specific investigations of an East of Bath Park and Ride, bringing the total capital spend on the project to over a million pounds and thereby adding to the already considerable risk this project poses to revenue budgets.

However from a policy development perspective, more concerning is the gamble this decision implies with the long-term wellbeing of our locality. I say “gamble” rather than “calculated bet” because nowhere in this decision report (as with those on this subject to last November's Council and to Cabinet in May and July of this year), is there a convincing rationale and evidence on how the potential benefits justify the well-documented costs, risks and uncertainties associated with the provision of additional Park and Ride capacity east of Bath.

Nor is there a demonstration of how the project meets either the 7 objectives agreed in the 2014 Bath Transport Strategy or the 4 overarching strategic priorities laid out in the West of England's Joint Spatial Plan consultation document, let alone a comparison of how the project compares with other potential investments aimed at these priorities and objectives.

The speed and often covert way with which this project has been progressed since last November's highly contentious Council meeting, also raises concerns about the fairness and adequacy of the associated consultative and scrutiny processes. However as there remains a possibility that this yet to be implemented decision might be called-in for further consideration, suffice it to say, that I hope that on this occasion the scrutiny process will facilitate open and rigorous consideration of the full range of issues and perspectives relevant to an infrastructure investment shaping the economic and environmental wellbeing of our communities for decades to come.

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