



**Note of the meeting of the Bath City Forum
held on Wednesday, 20th September, 2017
in Council Chamber - Guildhall, Bath**

Meeting Attendance

In Attendance
Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones
Councillor Rob Appleyard
Ashley Ayre
Lisa Bartlett
Councillor Colin Blackburn
Adrian Davies
Dave Dixon
Roger Driver
Councillor Bob Goodman
Sally Harris
Mark Hayward
Caroline Kay
Robin Kerr
Chris Mordaunt
Rosie Phillips
Councillor Joe Rayment
Leslie Redwood
Residents
Dr Christopher Roche
Councillor Dine Romero
George Samios
Councillor Shaun Andrew Stephenson-McGall
Harry Tedstone
Councillor Peter Turner
Virginia Williamson

Apologies Received from
Jeremy Boss
Councillor Fiona Darey
Councillor Andrew Furse
Michael Hill
Gareth Lloyd
Penny McKissock

Councillor Michael Norton
Councillor Lin Patterson
Councillor Christopher Pearce

1. Statement for the outgoing Chair

Councillor Bob Goodman opened the meeting and explained that due to taking on a Cabinet role he would not be able to continue as the Chair of the Bath City Forum.

Councillor Goodman made a series of points in his speech as outgoing Chair:

- The Forum will in the future look to gain more teeth and must never be considered to be a talking shop.
- The Forum will continue to receive his support as the link with the Cabinet and the new Chair now has a platform to take the agenda of this Forum forward.
- The support received from Jo Farrah, Rosie Phillips and B&NES Officers had proven to be valuable as had the cross party support from Cllrs Joe Rayment, Dine Romero and Colin Blackburn.

2. Nomination for the position of Chair

Ashley Ayre explained there had been one advance nomination for the position of Chair received for Councillor Colin Blackburn. This nomination was submitted by Robin Kerr and seconded by Councillor Bob Goodman.

No other nominations were put forward from the floor. The forum agreed to carry out the vote by a show of hands.

The forum voted in favour of Councillor Colin Blackburn taking on the role of Chair.

3. Nomination for the position of Vice Chair

The Chair explained that there had been one advance expression of interest received for the position of Vice Chair, this was for Rosie Phillips.

No other nominations were put forward from the floor. Rosie Philips self-nominated and was seconded by Chris Roach.

The forum agreed to carry out the vote by a show of hands.

The forum voted in favour of Rosie Philips taking on the role of Vice Chair.

4. Fire Service Update

Adrian Davies from Avon Fire and Rescue presented a report for August 2017 that covered activity and incidents for the Bath area.

Questions

Robin Kerr – At the previous meeting the question was raised “how many of the 48 party houses in Bath have been inspected by the Fire Service?”

Response – The details will need looked into and a response will be circulated. (This was sent by e-mail to forum members on 9 October 2017)

Councillor Bob Goodman – What is the approach to buildings with more than five floors?

Response – The Fire Service has a record of these buildings and treats them in the same way as they would high rise buildings.

Caroline Kay – What plans are in place for museum buildings?

Response – There are already many buildings that have salvage plans in place, those that do not are encouraged to work with the Fire Service to get these into place.

Councillor Shaun Stephenson-McGall - What work is taking place with the Universities around river safety issues?

Response – The Fire Service are working on getting a pro-active message out. The Student Community Partnership has an agenda item on the river at their October meeting.

George Samios – Are there any high rise buildings in Bath that have cladding on them? And have the Schools in Bath been checked for safety issues?

Response – Berkeley House in Snow Hill is the only building in Bath that is classified as a high rise and does not have cladding issues. The cladding used in Grenville Tower has been used by industry across many types of buildings. There is confidence that all schools are safe, none are high rise and all have escape routes.

Ashley Ayre – Since Grenfell the Council and Curo have been in contact with the DCLG. The Council no longer hold any social housing stock in B&NES but have had conversations with providers about cladding issues, although some renovation work has taken place; the materials used were non-flammable.

The Councils estate and heritage buildings have been checked and safety checks were already in place. Work with private landlords where there is cladding is on-going with Property Services in line with the guidance from the DCLG.

Councillor Dine Romero – On low level buildings that have cladding which have been converted into homes, are there regulations that change?

Response – There is more stringent legislation in place.

Councillor Dine Romero – Where the Fire Service fit smoke alarms into people homes they arrive in fire appliances, is this the best use of resources?

Response – Crews that are carrying out this work arrive in appliances as they need to be always available for emergency call-outs. Additionally the public see the fire crews as the face of the service and when carrying out home visits there are times that other issues are picked up and sign posted by trained crew members.

Councillor Shaun Stephenson-McGall – Has the recent issues involving senior officers and governance in the service had a knock on effect to front line crews?

Response – There is a feeling at grass roots level when the media are reporting negative news that this affects the image of the service as a whole.

There is a team investigating the issues and the findings will be shared. A new appointment has been made and we hope to see a positive impact as a result of this.

The important thing to remember is that the crews always strive to deliver a first class emergency service.

Shaun clarified that the local authority sees the recent news as a governance issue and is not related to the emergency service provision.

Caroline Kay – The cladding issues in Bath have been helped by the use of Bath Stone over many years. The use of Bath Stone was not only used for aesthetics but has been shown that it helps when there are fire hazards.

Councillor Colin Blackburn – Their report shows that there has been an increase in the number of call outs, how does this effect delivery of service for front line crews?

Response – Crews plan other duties but when call levels do rise the priorities have to change and rescheduling of other duties has to take place.

5. Police Update

Chief Inspector Steve Kendall provided an update to the meeting:

- Neighbourhood teams are working with partners to meet the challenges in local areas. Cluster zones, Neighbourhood Sergeants and dedicated points of contact have been put in place to create a strong team that can deal with issues when demands change.
- The Police are facing financial challenges and are working with the P&CC to look at the funding issues and staffing levels for the longer term. Where there are lower levels of resources this does have an effect on how incidents are dealt with.
- There has been an 8.4 per cent rise in reported crime across the Avon and Somerset force area - that figure is 8.2 per cent in B&NES. Calls for police assistance are up 8.8 per cent. 38,784 calls were made to police in B&NES last year; the force has seen a “considerable number of requests.”
- Bath is generally a very safe place to live and work but there is a drugs issue in Bath as there is in every city across the country. Bath remains a safe place but the police service is facing significant challenges.
- The City Centre Team is working alongside agencies on issues such as mental health, missing persons and homelessness issues.

Questions and responses:

1. Cllr Dine Romero – Could you let us now about the levels of hate crime locally?
Response - Hate crime has increased across the force as it has nationally...there's no specific trend in B&NES. There is a strategy to deal with hate crime. The desire is to reduce it through education and other ways. There has been no reaction to hate crime being linked to the terrorist activity locally as seen in other places in the country.
2. Cllr Dine Romero – Could you let us know about how the Police are working with people who suffer with mental health issues?
Response – 1 in 4 people suffer from some mental health issues during their life. The Police have been trained to recognise the signs and use care pathways as a method when people arrive in custody. This more compassionate approach has seen a reduction in the numbers of people with issues being processed through custody in the conventional way.

3. Cllr Shaun Stephenson-McGall – The media has reported that the PCC has said that £1.1 million in savings has to be found, what will this look like and will this mean service cuts?

Response – The PCC has committed to protection of neighbourhood resources, the reductions need to be looked at and the detail will need to be worked out. There is a PCC meeting in Bath next week where this question could be asked.

4. Rosie Phillips – Six months ago action was taken on the open drugs market and organised crime, what has been the impact on the city?

Response – The team continues the fight on drug crime and activity does continue. The figures do show that drug offences are 56% down in the local area despite the increase in burglary offences. There is continued awareness around the issue of outsiders coming into vulnerable communities and operating from their homes.

5. Cllr Peter Turner – Although the public like to see the Police on patrol, what is the effect of technology such as CCTV and how is this helping the Police?

Response – There are areas where developments need to continue and this will require investment. 4G/WIFI has given officers greater ability to stay mobile and not have to return so often to the office. The internet has also brought fresh challenges in the way it is used to commit crime.

6. Cllr Joe Rayment – After there have been Police raids do we see a reduction in the levels of drug trade on the street?

Response – Where leads are followed up and intelligence is gathered provides the public with the signal that the issues are being addressed. Where we do take dealers out of the chain they soon become replaced by someone new. Bath does continue to remain a safe place to live.

7. Leslie Redwood – Thank you for the service that you are providing. What has been the impact of the removal of a city centre operational base?

Response - The people of Bath and my colleagues would like to have kept that police presence and the Manvers Street facility. The closure was duly part to finance and this was not possible.

Police patrols do remain in the city centre and a station of sorts off the Lower Bristol Road; if it were to be possible we would like somewhere closer to the city centre. Is it possible in the current financial climate? Who knows? We don't have that facility that we once had and we do miss it.

8. Member of the public – What is the position from the Police on homelessness?

Response – The police work with our partner agencies and look to protect the vulnerable. Some members of the street community have made a lifestyle choice.

6. Minutes of the previous meeting 24.07.17

The Chair asked that the minutes of the meeting on 24 July be agreed.

Councillor Joe Rayment agreed the minutes were an accurate record and no objections were raised by any other forum members.

7. Unregulated Holiday Lets in Bath

It was noted that interests were declared by Cllr Colin Blackburn and Sally Harris who both have connections to rental properties in Bath.

Robin Kerr provided a statement on behalf of FOBRA. This is attached and available on the Council website.

Harry Tedstone gave a presentation on behalf of the Bath Independent Guest House Association (BIGHA). This is attached and available on the Council website.

An additional statement from the FSB was submitted but was not read out. This is attached and available on the Council website.

Question and observations:

1. Cllr Rob Appleyard asked how we had got to the numbers that had been shown in the presentations. There appears to be an amount of cross over in the points made about party houses, the general problems in Bath with housing and high cost properties being taken out of the market.
Response – There are a mix of properties being taken out of the market half are larger properties and the rest are 1-2 bed apartments. The smaller properties make it harder for first time buyers and people in low paid jobs who need to rent.
2. Cllr Dine Romero felt there are similarities to the problems that HMO's bring to the city, planning is not covering the issues that are being raised and there needs to be changes in legislation by central government.
3. Cllr Dine Romero – A report has been written by Ben Wood's team, is this going to be circulated?
Response – Lisa Bartlett, Divisional Director – Development explained that the report that was written is an internal document that was being used by officers in-house, this is not a formal Council report that is being held back. Further work is required before a document will be ready to circulate.
4. Cllr Joe Rayment felt that people were opting to use Air B&B as it is a cheaper option for visitors. If noise is such a big issue why is this not being addressed? It appears the bigger problem is the lack of affordable houses that are being supplied to the city.
Response – Harry Tedstone explained that noise issues are not dealt with by the police and they refer people to the Council.
5. Chris Mordent, Housing Services, explained that there are schemes in place that deal with the introduction of HMOs to the city.
Response - Harry Tedstone felt that where buy to lets are happening there has to be better management where the use changes to a HMO.
6. Chris Roche – It appears that owners of "party houses" have lower overheads and greater profits. What potential is there for the Council to raise funds from these properties?

Response – Ashley Ayre explained that B&NES Council have to gather evidence first and must act legally in how it operates, there are constraints on what revenue could be achieved. To change there needs to be a challenge to Parliament; national regulations are giving us the powers to make decisions.

7. Virginia Williamson – There are places in Bath such as Brougham Hayes where Air B&B is being advertised for rental on Facebook. It seems that we are so restricted by the way the class of use is set out?

Response – Lisa Bartlett explained that outside of London larger properties can fall outside and do need planning permission. There are examples of local applications that are being looked at presently. Where smaller properties enter the market there are no controls outside of London, this is where there is a need for new powers, the housing act has selective powers which exempt holiday lets at the moment.

8. Caroline Kay felt that we need to look further afield at what other cities are doing and lobby nationally for action.
9. Leslie Redwood felt that that there are number of cities across the UK that are suffering the same effects from unauthorised lettings as in Bath. Visit Bath supports change and recognises that presently there is a lack of tools that can be used around planning class. Response – Harry Tedstone explained all BIGHA members operate safe, clean, legal and fair businesses. The city is soon to open a new casino that will see an increase in the stag market.

Actions

- It was agreed that the Bath City Forum will write to Wera Hobhouse, MP for Bath to lobby central government on the change in legislation, business rates issues and fire regulations for unregulated holiday lets.
- Lobby the LGA
- Review progress at a future forum meeting in about six months' time. Bring in others to the discussion where required.

8. Neighbourhood Portion of CIL

Dave Dixon explained that the work that the Forum had asked to be completed has been carried out.

It was agreed that the Criteria Guidance Notes, the Application Form and a record of all the projects will be sent to forum members. This information is also available on the Council website; any comments need to be sent to Mark Hayward by 4th October.

The Forum was asked for volunteers to work on the CIL working group. The group will need to schedule meetings to take place ahead of Forum meetings.

Caroline Kay and Roger Driver offered to be involved in the working group.

Once the working group is in place it initially needs to take a look the twenty four expressions of interest already received and decide which of these to recommend to the Forum. There will

be a rolling receipt of applications and the role of the CIL working group is to filter out applications that do not meet the criteria for funding.

At the 27 November forum meeting the working group will put forward project recommendations for the Forum to agree in advance of these going to Cabinet.

Councillor Dine Romero asked that if a member of the working group has an interest in a project that has applied for funding; they are not involved in the recommendation.

9. Any Other Business

Bath City Forum - Transport Sub Group

Cllr Peter Turner explained that a discussion has taken place with Cabinet member Cllr Mark Shelford and he would welcome a group that could assist him with transport matters in Bath. Peter is willing to take on the duty of Chair.

Peter suggested that a group of six people from Bath be set-up, they will be non-political, action focused and passionate about transport issues. Representative volunteers to join this group are being sought.

Cllr Shaun Stephenson-McGall felt that having only Bath people was at odds with the wider perspective. Shaun also felt the requirement for the group to be non-political was wrong.

Ashley Ayre explained that this is the Bath Forum and looks to represent resident's views from a Bath perspective. This forum needs to make decisions on what it wants to do for the city.

Cllr Colin Blackburn felt that the forum has a structure where sub groups have been set up but some of these have not really gone anywhere. There may be a need to review what is actually wanted going forward.

Chris Roche felt that sub groups need to allow representation of people with other links to the city.

Caroline Kay felt that transport is a topic with many areas that needs to be covered and existing groups and linkages need to be looked at.

Cllr Joe Rayment felt that many issues are political and it is wrong to take into account political party membership when working to address issues. If the Chair of the transport group is from a political party then others on the group should be able to be from political parties. Where B&NES Ward Councillors are involved in subjects covered by the forum there is a role where working together to work out conflicts needs to happen.

Purpose of Bath City Forum

Cllr Dine Romero asked that the forum looks at what it is here for and what it is able to achieve. The sub groups that we have need to have a purpose and be clear on what they are being used for. The forum needs to avoid replicating work that is going on elsewhere. Additionally there needs to be a route for recommendations to be taken forward to a regular slot at cabinet meetings.

Cllr Rob Appleyard explained that the Bath City Forum was set up to cover the deficit that exists between Bath and the remainder of North East Somerset. Outside of Bath, Parish Councillors are working at a local level with other area forums. Ward Councillors from Bath are attending the forum as an extension of the role they carry out as part of B&NES as a whole, this at times feels conflicting. There does need to be a clearer outline of what we are here to achieve.

Virginia Williamson endorsed Dine's comments and added that the forum has the potential to be successful; it needs a work plan and a greater level of advanced planning. Where presentations are being given, copies of these in advance would be welcomed. A separate workshop might be needed to get things working better. There needs to be a reassurance that discussion takes place on organic ways for the forum to work.

Robin Kerr asked why the student representative had not been replaced on the Forum. Ashley Ayre responded by explaining that a process is set out for co-opted members that leave and this will be followed.

Ashley Ayre explained that the governance model to Bath is different to the areas outside of the city. The forum does have advisory powers on spending of the neighbourhood portion of CIL and the Community Empowerment funds. Ashley attends the agenda setting meeting as the role of the Council's Senior Officer to the forum, the forum members are also represented and are encouraged to bring ideas on what needs to be covered. Last year a workshop was held on CIL and from that a process has been set up.

This forum needs to decide what it wants to do and if there are different options required we can look at these.

Cllr Joe Rayment explained that the forums outside of Bath will see B&NES Councillors, Parish Councillors, Local Organisations and members of the public attend.

The mixture of representatives for the Bath Forum are Ward Councillors and selected co-opted members (other individuals and organisations else can also attend). The membership when attending forum meeting are here to represent Bath even if they hold a wider role.

Action: It was asked that The Chair, Vice Chair and Council Officers look at the roles and responsibilities of the Bath City Forum and set this so that there is a clear document that references this.

Rosie Phillips asked that all suggestions to be e-mailed to Mark Hayward.

Cllr Shaun Stephenson-McGall suggested that Bath may wish to consider a community governance review, this happened in Norton Radstock and more recently in Swindon. It would be good to look at this on a future agenda with advisors on the legal matters that sit with this.

Outgoing Chair

Chris Roche asked that the forum pass its thanks onto Cllr Bob Goodman for his work as the first Chair of Bath City Forum.