

## **Statement to the 12.3.18 meeting of B&NES Council CTE PDS Panel**

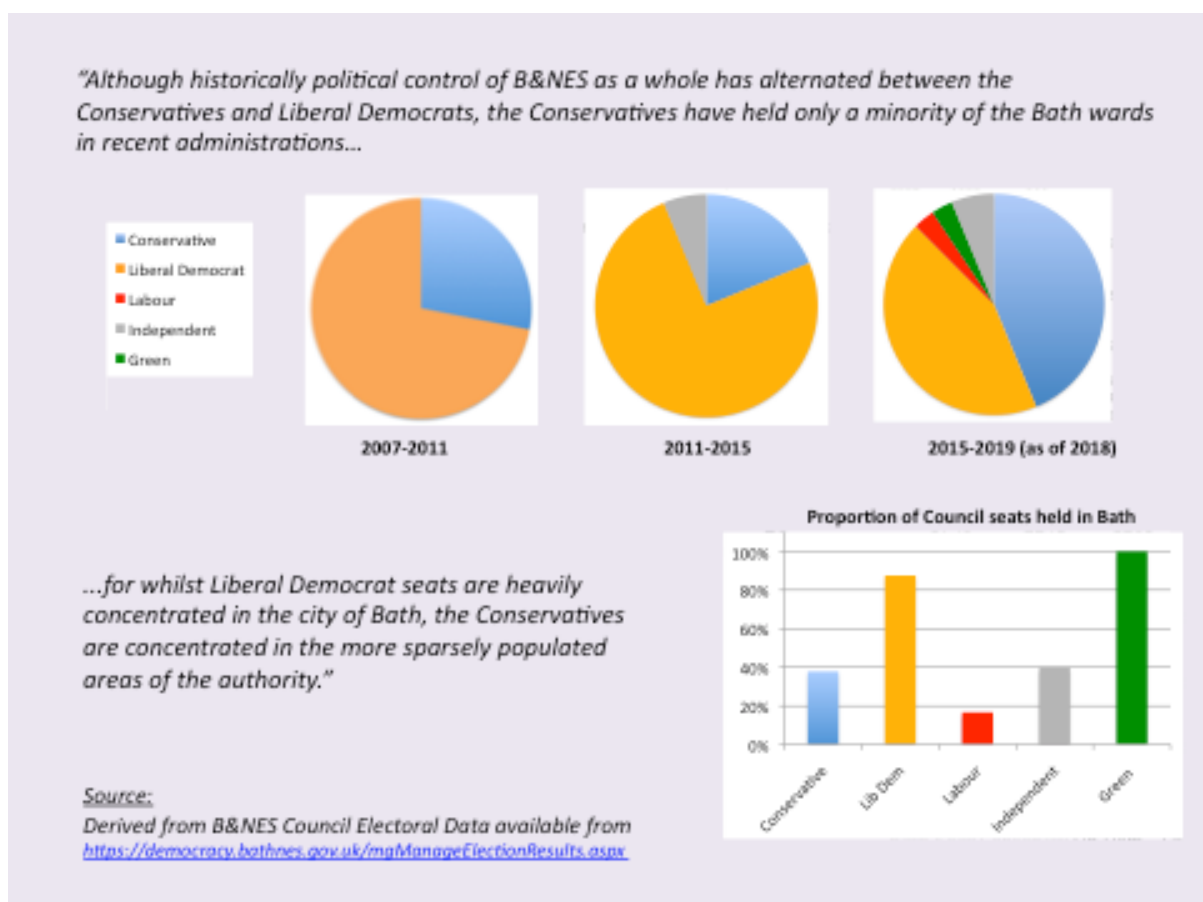
Thank you Chair.

Seeing your discussion today of the revised Parish Charter, and the realignment of responsibilities and resource accompanying this, I was struck by the contrast to the governance of the unparished Bath wards in this authority - home to 48% of the Council's electorate.

So, as a community-minded (but non-party political) Bath resident, I would like to share my growing concerns about what has long been known as "the Bath governance deficit" problem.

There are several interrelated aspects to this:

1. Unlike Bath residents, residents of parished wards, via their Parish councilors, can exercise direct control over how services in their ward are delivered. They are also statutory consultees on planning applications and regular consultees on other areas of Council business;
2. There is a marked difference in the party political make-up of the parished and unparished areas. Although historically political control of the Council as a whole has alternated between the Conservatives and Lib Dems, the Conservatives have held only a minority of the Bath wards. Furthermore, Lib Dem seats are heavily concentrated in the city of Bath, whilst the Conservatives dominate in the more sparsely populated areas of the authority.



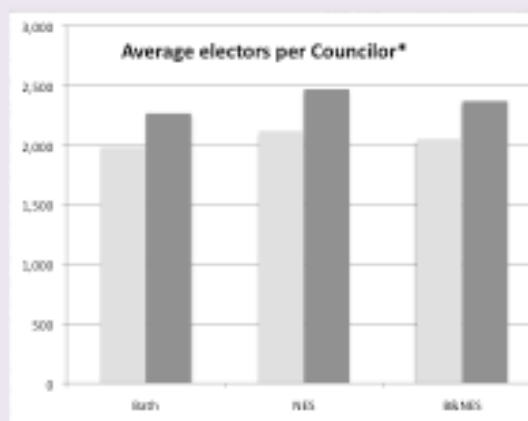
With the first-past-the-post electoral system enabling an overall majority of Council seats without an overall majority of the votes cast, it is thus unsurprising that currently only 2 out of 8 Cabinet members represent Bath wards.

3. Although the Bath City Forum, now into its third year of existence (and of which I am delighted to be a co-opted member), has been a significant step forward in regard to enhancing

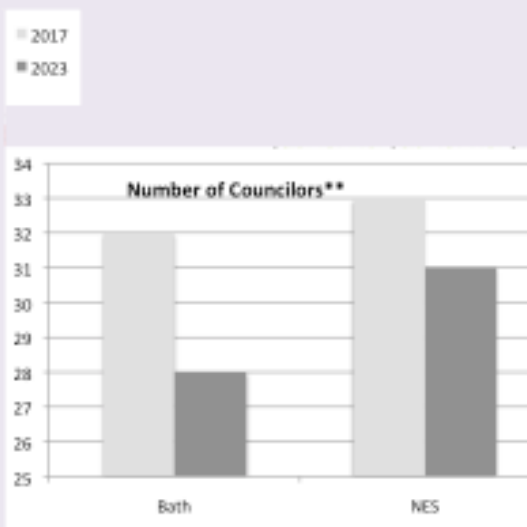
communication with and participation of the Bath community, its influence on how services are delivered has been more modest. Critically, because in large part it is an advisory rather than decision-making body, but also because it is not directly representative of its constituent wards, and is more focused on Bath wide issues than ward level ones.

4. This Bath governance deficit is likely to increase from May 2019. Given the planned 10% reduction in Councilors and the current overrepresentation of Bath wards relative to those of North East Somerset, it is likely that the Local Government Boundary Commission will reduce the number of councilors representing Bath wards by around twice as much as it will reduce those representing North East Somerset.

*"This Bath governance deficit is likely to increase from May 2019..."*



\*Assumes uniform 10% increase in all wards in 2023



\*\*Assumes all councilors represent around the same number of electors in 2023

Source:

Derived from LGBC Electoral Data downloaded from

<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-west/somerset/bath-and-north-east-somerset>

I'm going to finish with a question:

In view of the changing context and evidence I have described, what, if anything, will be or is being done, about parishing Bath so as to address its governance deficit?

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