

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

PLANNING, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday, 8th May, 2018

Present:- Councillors Will Sandry (Chair), Barry Macrae (Vice-Chair), Rob Appleyard, Colin Blackburn, Lisa O'Brien and Liz Richardson

Also in attendance: Graham Sabourn (Head of Housing) and Stephen Bird (Head of Heritage Services)

59 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

60 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

61 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

62 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Liz Richardson declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 (Museum Forward Plans 2018 – 2021) as she is a part time lecturer for a Fashion Degree course at Bath Spa University.

63 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

64 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

The Chairman acknowledged that he had received a statement in writing on behalf of David Redgewell and said that the contents were more appropriate to the Communities, Transport & Environment Panel, he would therefore forward it to them.

Fiona Wilde made a statement to the Panel on the subject of Airbnb's. A copy of the statement can be found on the Panel's Minute Book and as an online attachment to these minutes, a summary is set out below.

I wish to raise my concerns about the proliferation of flats in Bath rented out in their entirety as Airbnb's, and state how this affects me directly.

There are currently 896 Airbnb lets in Bath – the number of lets having increased by 66% over the previous year.

Airbnb started out as people letting out a spare room in their own home on a short term basis, or their flat when they were away on holiday. What worries me is that now, entire flats are commonly used as Airbnbs in increasing number – particularly those in short supply – studio, 1 bed and 2 bed flats. Over 350 of Airbnb lets currently available in Bath are 1 or 2 bedroom flats.

In 2015 the Government amended the law to allow the short term let of properties in London not exceeding 90 days a year. It is up to the Local Authorities of other cities to decide whether to apply this for themselves. Bath and North East Somerset Council is clearly not doing so.

Last year, the long-term tenant of the flat above me was evicted purely so that the owner could renovate and let the flat out as an Airbnb. She lists it as her 'home' which is untrue as she lives elsewhere in Bath.

My rent is £19.40 a day, a weekly rent of £136.10, £590 a month.

The Airbnb above me is currently charging £80 a day, which is a weekly rent of £560, £2480 a month.

The huge profits when the 90 day limit is not enforced are clearly a massive incentive. My concern is that, with the prospect of such easy money, there is very little reason for the owner of my flat not to do the same, either becoming an Airbnb host herself, or selling the flat to the owner of the flat above me, allowing her to extend her Airbnb 'business' to two properties.

In the case that my home becomes an Airbnb – what are my chances of finding an affordable place to live – with rents continually increasing and available flats disappearing in order to exploit this Airbnb loophole? I cannot afford the extortionate rents charged for the new builds or the current flats which are becoming harder to find, and I am not alone in this.

My flat is in a highly desirable area for tourists and there are already at least three other Airbnbs in my street. Bath is particularly vulnerable to Airbnb because of its high level of tourism to a proportionately low population.

The full political ramifications of the Airbnb 'system' continuing without adequate legislation are only just beginning to be seen. Every indication is that they will be highly destructive and divisive to society if the current trajectory continues unabated.

Councillor Colin Blackburn acknowledged the concerns raised and asked if she was worried about the traffic of people in and out of the flat above her.

Fiona Wilde replied that the fire alarm has been set off a few times mistakenly by people staying there and she said that she is sometimes contacted if people staying there can't get hold of the owner. She added that she does have a slight concern over seeing strangers in the hallway and the safety of her post.

Councillor Barry Macrae agreed that the subject is a concern to the Council and that the Panel is hoping to look at the issue in more detail later in the year. He said that he would encourage other speakers to represent their views.

Councillor Bob Goodman, Cabinet Member for Development and Neighbourhoods said that the Council were trying to address the issue but are not able to introduce legislation at the current time. He added that a letter has been sent to Government this week on this subject. He said that from July WECA will have some powers within this area.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien commented whether the fact that the owner of the flat claims it is their residence would be of interest to the HMRC.

The Chairman thanked Fiona Wilde for her statement on behalf of the Panel and said the Panel would look to discuss the matter in more detail at its September meeting.

65 MINUTES - 13TH MARCH 2018

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

66 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Bob Goodman, Cabinet Member for Development and Neighbourhoods addressed the Panel, a summary of his update is set out below.

Joint Spatial Plan – The Plan has been submitted and the inspectors are already engaged with our officers and asking questions. It is expected that the examination in public will take place in September / October.

Local Plan – Members of the Local Development Framework Steering Group have been working hard on this matter, especially with regard to Student Accommodation, Affordability and provision for Elderly People.

Councillor Barry Macrae said that there was a need for substantive documents to be in place. He asked with regard to housing units, who is analysing the needs of the people wanting this provision.

He added that the Council should endeavour to clarify and help to better quantify (with Developers) that future housing provision should be of more direct value to ...and in locations better suited to.... a wider range of potential occupier "demographics" - such as empty-nesters, elderly-singles, newly-weds, working couples - rather than relying only upon only commercial house developers' aspirations of 'three-bed-semis-with-gardens'.

And furthermore, that NEW housing provisions be built primarily in locations where local jobs, leisure and health/community services already exist & are accessible, rather than continue to impose them upon remote green-field, small rural/village locations which currently exacerbates the debilitating and environmentally damaging daily commuting and then requires subsequent significant new, rate-payer funded, transport/care/education infrastructure & other community resources to support it.

Councillor Goodman replied that this would be addressed through the work on the Local Plan.

The Chairman commented as to whether it was right that units designed for younger people are often of a smaller size.

Councillor Paul Myers, Cabinet Member for Economic and Community Regeneration addressed the Panel, a summary of his update is set out below.

Housing

Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) Rough Sleeper Bid – B&NES has been invited to work with MHCLG on enhancing our response to rough sleeping with the aim of reducing the numbers of individuals resorting to sleeping out this coming winter. Officers have been meeting with MHCLG representatives to co-produce a bid that will seek to build on local good practice. The bid is currently being worked up with input from partner-providers and MHCLG in preparation for the 18 May deadline for submission.

End of programme Affordable Housing delivery – As forecast, the 2016-2018 affordable housing programme target of 465 new affordable homes has been exceeded quite significantly to 527. This was largely due to the Council and its partners securing additional affordable housing funding for specialist schemes and the activity of our housing association partners in securing additional affordable housing opportunities.

Consultation on expansion of Additional HMO Licensing Scheme – The 10 week consultation (due to close on 25th May 2018), on the proposal for a new City wide additional HMO licensing scheme, is still live which includes on-line surveys, interviews and 2x public events which took place on:

Thursday 19th April 5.30-7pm (Brunswick Room, Guildhall)

Wednesday 25th April: 3.30-5pm (Lansdown Hall, All Saints Centre, Weston, Bath, BA1 4BX)

More information can be found on our website:

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/consultations/additional-hmo-licensing-consultation>

It is important that Councillors, residents and other interested parties are encouraged to respond.

Bath Enterprise Zone

Bath Quays North

The determination process for the Outline Planning Application for comprehensive redevelopment of the Avon St coach and carpark progresses, with initial response clarifications received from the LPA.

OJEU procurement progressing well with first stage scheme tenders and bidder presentations delivered end of February. Tenders largely scored with decision notices to be issued to bidders Q1 2018, following which 3 of the 5 bidders will move to the next round.

Bath Quays South

Strong market response received during soft marketing phases for Council delivered commercial office. Commercial Estate Investment SMD paper approved.

Enabling works commenced on-site. Trees and vegetation removal largely complete; archaeology works commencing May 2018.

Bath Quays Bridge

Tenders returned for works associated with BQS sub-structure and river wall delivery, and steel tonnage order relating to super-structure fabrication. Expected to open Spring 2019.

Funding - £12.5m of Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) funding secured following successful bid to Homes England. Bid supports longer-term housing and economic growth objectives by enabling relocation of the City's waste transfer station and strategic land to come forwards for residential development.

Economy & Culture

Business Growth team officers have continued to support local independent business and retailers with a structured visit programme to the Guildhall, Green Park Station and Moorland Road, along with its continued support of the Bath Independent Business Forum and Keynsham Business Group.

Commissioned arts activity, targeted to areas which will most benefit – We have reviewed the first three months of work. In Foxhill, 111 people have participated or engaged to date, and a 'taster' day of arts & creative activity will take place on Sat. 12 May. In Somer Valley, 224 people have participated or engaged to date, plus 1,200 attending the 'Man Engine' event on the College campus (this was not funded by B&NES, but arts activity that we funded took place as part of the day).

Data-driven marketing – scheduling a workshop session for early July, for arts and cultural organisations about how to use demographic data to improve marketing

WW1 Centenary – works to undertake cleansing and minor repairs to the War Memorial in Royal Victoria Park, Bath, commences early May.

The first month of Future Bright has been extremely successful as we have signed up over twice as many participants than in our delivery profile. We are already getting really positive feedback from both participants and partners about the service supporting people to improve their income, which has not previously been available.

Heritage Services

At the national Visit England Awards for Excellence 2018 the Roman Baths won GOLD for 'Inclusive Tourism' and SILVER for 'Inbound Tourism'.

Regeneration

Housing Growth: WECA have been approved £3m Capacity Funding through Housing Deal for the staff and consultancy resources to work up delivery strategies for the 11 Strategic Development Locations within the West of England. An element of this will be delegated to B&NES to produce delivery strategies for North Keynsham and Whitchurch.

Somer Valley Enterprise Zone: Commercial Delivery Framework (CDF) consultants procured , A362 improvement options underway, Key Stakeholder Group has met, £50k RIF funding approved towards CDF;

Public Realm/Market Towns Programme: Keynsham High Street public consultation closed – nearly 1,500 residents engaged, consultation report will be published late May/early June, MSN signage and Town Park concepts in development; Saw Close due for completion May 2018, Kingsmead Square pedestrianisation feasibility underway.

Councillor Rob Appleyard asked what the £12.5m from the HIF was anticipated to deliver.

Councillor Myers replied that he would respond in writing to the Panel.

Councillor Eleanor Jackson questioned whether the local Parish and Ward Councillors should have been contacted prior to the 'Man Engine' event and if an appropriate risk assessment had been carried out.

Councillor Myers replied that he would look into the matter on her behalf.

Councillor Barry Macrae asked what the latest position was on broadband in rural areas.

Councillor Myers replied that he was aware of a number of schemes and would bring further details to the next meeting of the Panel. He added that he would supply what information he could in the interim in writing.

Councillor Barry Macrae stated that he would like to see the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone publicised more, especially as it has been in place for 12 months.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien raised a matter that had been discussed at a meeting of Keynsham Town Council regarding the mix of housing in new developments. She asked whether 5 bedroomed properties were what the area needs and can the Council direct developers to a different approach.

Councillor Bob Goodman replied that it was the Council's role through the work of the Local Plan to address this.

The Chairman commented that he had heard of a number of incidents regarding members of the public tripping over steps in the redeveloped area of Saw Close as they were not of a standard depth. He asked whether any remedial works were required.

Councillor Myers replied that he would respond in writing to the Panel.

Councillor Liz Richardson asked if a breakdown could be provided for the area and tenure of the Affordable Housing provided.

Councillor Myers replied that he would respond in writing to the Panel.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Members for their updates on behalf of the Panel.

67 MUSEUM FORWARD PLANS 2018-2021

The Head of Heritage Services introduced this report to the Panel. He explained that the 3-year forward plans for the Fashion Museum, Roman Baths Museum and Victoria Art Gallery are necessary to attain Full Accreditation status with Arts Council England (ACE). He said that the Government's Accreditation scheme requires governing body approval and the forward plans will go forward for formal adoption by single member decision in June 2018.

He stated the forward plans will be delivered within existing resources and no new funds are sought. The museum forward plans will be delivered within the Service's cash limits as adopted by the Council in the Heritage Services 5-year rolling Business Plan.

He informed the Panel that the museum forward plans will contribute to the Heritage Services' Service Aims, which are:

- to enhance the quality of life for residents of Bath & North East Somerset;
- to maximise public enjoyment of the Council's world class heritage;
- to enable people to learn from the activities and achievements of past and present societies;
- to promote understanding and appreciation of different cultures;
- to contribute to the district's economic prosperity through our Business Plan.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien asked who pays the costs when items are loaned from the Fashion Museum.

The Head of Heritage Services replied that the facility in receipt of the items pays for the transport / courier and associated costs.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien asked what the end of lease options for the Fashion Museum were, could the Guildhall be an option. She added that if further storage for items from the Roman Baths were required, could the site of the Bath Community Academy be used.

She stated that she was not impressed by the plan for the Victoria Art Gallery and that she would like to see sculptures featured more as she felt this would generate more visitors.

The Head of Heritage Services replied that the Guildhall would not really be an option for the Fashion Museum as textiles need controlled light and conditions to protect them. He acknowledged that the museum does need a new lease of life and that attracting people to the current site is difficult. He said that there have been some discussions about a potential offer within a new build site.

He added that the partnership with Bath Spa University is flourishing and that for the past two years an ex Bath Spa student has been awarded Designer of the Year.

He said that storing items at Bath Community Academy had not been considered previously by officers.

He explained that most items within the Victoria Art Gallery are sourced locally and that he would look to show more sculptured items where possible.

Councillor Barry Macrae questioned whether the Fashion Museum required a central location or could it be transferred to an appropriate academic site. He added that he would like to see more work in the future carried out with local areas and their respective museums.

The Head of Heritage Services replied that they do try hard to engage with local communities and had referred to some of their work within section 6 of the report. He added that the Fashion Museum does need to be within a more suitable venue.

Councillor Barry Macrae asked how the marketability of the Assembly Rooms can be increased.

The Head of Heritage Services replied that the site needs to be more engaging and accessible.

Councillor Rob Appleyard commented that he felt the Fashion Museum required a central location, but accepted that it was currently difficult to get visitors to the City to the current location. He said that he could see a future for it within a newly built site. He added that the Roman Baths was an experience that everyone could enjoy.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien recalled that two themed exhibitions at the Fashion Museum spring to mind, Film and Jane Austen, and asked for consideration to be given to similar events in the future. She suggested two other potential options for its future home, the proposed new Bath Stadium or within the new Quays development.

The Chairman commented that the income attained by the service is an amazing achievement and that all concerned should be proud of their work.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the forward plans for the Fashion Museum, Roman Baths Museum and Victoria Art Gallery.

68 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel. He informed them that at the most recent agenda setting meeting they had discussed receiving a report in either July or September on the subject of 'Housing Choices for Vulnerable People' and that even prior to the earlier public statement they had proposed to receive a report on Airbnb in September.

Councillor Rob Appleyard queried the value of pursuing the WECA invite. He suggested that the Panel could either ask questions through the appropriate Cabinet Member or Councillor Liz Richardson in her role on the West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Colin Blackburn called for the briefing paper on Broadband to be chased as it was promised to the Panel some time ago.

The Chairman agreed and said following its receipt they could then decide on what matters require further debate.

Councillor Lisa O'Brien asked if the Panel could scrutinise the work of Bath Tourism Plus and whether the investment justifies the progress that has been made within the area. She added that this could be linked to work involving Airbnb.

Councillor Liz Richardson asked re: Airbnb, how the policing of the 90 days of use would be carried out.

Councillor Colin Blackburn said that Airbnbs in Berlin don't allow bookings to take place once the limit has been reached. He added that the Panel should receive a report and that information on safety and standards should be contained within it.

Councillor Rob Appleyard suggested the Panel hold a Scrutiny Inquiry Day or something similar on this matter.

The Chairman said that he would speak further on this issue with officers to gain their views and advice.

The meeting ended at 4.05 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services