

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING:	Council	
MEETING:	8 November 2018	
TITLE:	Influencing the central government policy agenda	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
Thriving in uncertain times: Our offer to become a self-sufficient local authority		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 This report sets out progress made in developing a single document setting out the council's key requests of central government in order to create a more sustainable council.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Council is asked to;

- 2.1 Adopt the document attached as the Appendix as its core position statement in order to influence the central government policy agenda and secure benefits for local residents and businesses
- 2.2 Ensure that relevant Secretaries of State, local Members of Parliament, key officials and other relevant stakeholders receive a copy of the adopted document
- 2.3 Use the document in order to continue to seek influence on central government
- 2.4 Encourage local stakeholders to use the document to also influence central government to benefit Bath & North East Somerset residents and businesses.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 The attached position statement and related work to influence central government has been carried out within existing resources.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Council has a number of statutory duties and powers with regard to promoting the wellbeing of our communities. This work has been undertaken within this framework and within the context of the Council demonstrating community leadership for our area.

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 Feedback from the engagement undertaken on the council's budget in 2017 highlighted that our communities share the council's concerns about the impacts of central government policies- particularly relating to local government finance- on our ability to sustain high-quality local services. Particular areas identified through the Area Forum engagement on the budget included the impact of our Universities on our ability to generate Council Tax and Business Rate income, and the impact of tourists and visitors. Latterly, the issue of the impact of short-term holiday lets has also come to the fore, with a motion passed at the Council on this in July.
- 5.2 As a result of this feedback, and drawing on previous discussions with central government on the council's financial position, a package of measures to seek to influence central government policy in a more systematic way has been prepared. This draws on the council's submission presented to the Government's Fair Funding Review. It has been refined by further analysis of the financial challenges facing the authority, as set out in the report to October Cabinet on the Medium Term Financial strategy, which identified that these seeking to influence central government provided a key component of our overall approach.
- 5.3 The resultant document, entitled "Thriving in uncertain times: our offer to become a self-sufficient local authority", is attached as an Appendix. Once finalised and adopted its aims will be twofold:
- To be submitted to **ministers, officials, and others the council seeks to influence**. This will complement and reinforce the face-to-face discussions which Cabinet members are also having with central government such as recent meetings between the Leader and ministerial advisers on short-term lettings.
 - To be made available to **local stakeholders, partners and communities** to set out the the council's thinking on these issues, and to invite involvement in further developing these proposals and influencing the central government agenda. Key partners to be included within this conversation will include the CCG, parish and town councils and WECA. Progress made on this will also be fed back at the November/December Area Forums.
- 5.4 The attached document is not designed to be an exhaustive list of all our requests of government. In addition, the council will continue to press central Government to fully fund the impacts locally of the so-called "new burdens" it has introduced. For example, we have argued strongly – and will continue to argue- to central government that the SEND reforms have not been fully-funded. Whilst the council welcomes the improvements for children and families resulting from these reforms, this has led to significant "cost-shunting" to local authorities which the government must address directly and urgently.
- 5.5 The document's primary aim is to persuade government of the merit of a number of key requests for policy and legislative change, as well as of some technical changes which could be achieved in the shorter-term. The approach emphasises our strategy of seeking greater self-sufficiency, particularly through the ability to raise funding to invest in our local infrastructure and public realm whilst also maintaining our support for adult social care and children's services.

- 5.6 The council will also continue to work with other authorities on the full range of issues set out in the paper, for example with local authority areas who have expressed an interest in a tourism levy in some form. The council has also been working through the LGA with council areas with common interests, including areas who have seen significant growth in University numbers in recent years. Further progress on this will be reported as appropriate.

6 RATIONALE

- 6.1 This document has been prepared in response to feedback from local communities during last year's budget engagement sessions that the council should seek to influence the central government policy agenda to the benefit of local residents and businesses.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 The option of not preparing a single document bringing together these policy requests was considered. However, it was thought that the most practical way of setting out the council's case both for central government and local communities was to produce a clear guide to the council's position.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The report and attached document have been prepared in consultation with the council Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance and Efficiency, Chief Executive, S151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and Corporate Directors.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

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Background papers	<i>List here any background papers not included with this report, and where/how they are available for inspection.</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	