

Statement to Bath and North East Somerset Council's

3rd February 2020 Corporate Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel Meeting

Thank you chair.

As a diversely experienced strategy, policy and sustainability professional, and an active citizen striving to improve the enduring wellbeing of this locality, there is much that I welcome in this administration's Corporate Strategy. Indeed, it communicates the Council's core purpose, activities and associated budgetary priorities more clearly, concisely and effectively than many I've seen in the past. However **my purpose** today is not to flatter, but **to enhance and ensure the Strategy delivers**.

to this end, my first suggestion is that, rather than just two core policies (responding to last year's Climate Emergency declaration and election promises), you have **more and broader well-being policies** thereby enabling you to strengthen the links between policy goals, activities and budgetary priorities. Doing so might, for example, help prioritise actions to address the worrying unsustainability of the 83.5% of the net budget going on Social Care and the impact this might have on residents' lives and community resilience. It might also help ensure that the 'just transition' aspect of the climate emergency is not marginalized¹, with the associated risk of pushback from those suffering its adverse effects.

Secondly I hope that the **holistic approach** implicit in the three interlocking Principles carries through to the appraisal of investments and outcomes, and especially in relation to those straddling service areas and/or impacting on multiple communities and organizations. For realising co-benefits, spreading costs, and avoiding adverse side effects will be critical to successfully delivering the Strategy in the complex, uncertain and uncontrollable world we live in.

Thirdly, to demonstrate progress, it seems that much more needs to be done to **align strategies, identify critical paths, and to develop a range² of appropriate performance indicators and metrics³**. In this, focusing on what matters and being mindful of what can't be measured will be key.

Finally in communicating the Strategy, as one who has long recognized that a good picture speaks louder than pages of words, I would love to see the outer circle of the diagram highlighting more policy goals (if not perhaps as many as those of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals badge I'm wearing). For as the Council's need⁴ to work with and influence diverse communities and institutions (and especially national and regional government) in order to achieve its ambitions, **broadening the locus for strategic collaboration** in this way can only help secure their buy-in.

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¹ Para 3.5iii of the Council's 10.10.19 Climate Emergency Progress report states "The Council is committed to ensuring that the transition to a zero carbon future is a just one". However page 9 of the draft 2020-24 Corporate Strategy commits to promoting "a high-skill economy" and supporting "the transition to a green local economy" seemingly without any priority on ensuring that all communities and demographic groups share in the resultant benefits. Including "Inclusivity" and "Prosperity" amongst the Council's Core policies, and reframing these commitments as "building an inclusive, low carbon and prosperous local economy" would, in my view, better enable and give more flexibility as to how, the Council delivers its Strategy.

² For example, rather than just measure "% population 16-64 in employment" (as suggested on page 9 of the draft 2020-24 Corporate Strategy), consider a range of indicators addressing the quality, inclusivity and sustainability of employment (capturing for example, participation rates across the life-cycle, the quality and intensity of employment, the contribution of volunteering and pro-bono work) as well as the quantity of employment as defined and categorized by the Office for National Statistics.

Note that in keeping with the biophysical, social and economic complexities of policy development and execution, there are 169 performance indicators associated with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

³ In some areas (such as supporting "the transition to a green local economy"), new measures of environmental and social wellbeing may need to be developed to complement or counter the embedded values in more readily available measures such as GDP or GVA per capita (which does not distinguish between the value of economic activity based on resource extraction or regeneration.)

⁴ Resolution 6 of the Council's 10.10.19 meeting recognises that "meeting our Climate Emergency commitments is about major system change and can only be delivered by the combined action of national, regional and local government, other institutions, and alongside action in the private and community sectors. Local government has a key influencing, convening and enabling role, but does not have the powers or resources to deliver these ambitions on our own."