

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

MINUTES OF CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Monday, 20th July, 2020

Present:- **Councillors** Karen Walker, Tom Davies, Alison Born, Shelley Bromley, Sue Craig, Joel Hirst, Lisa O'Brien, Grant Johnson and Dr Kumar

52 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed Panel members and officers who were attending the meeting via Zoom and members of the public viewing on YouTube.

She explained that other councillors (not on the Panel) were present as they had been invited to attend the meeting, namely Councillor Paul Myers (Chair of the Corporate Panel), Councillor Sarah Warren (Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services) and Councillor Joanna Wright (Cabinet Member for Transport Services). She added that these councillors were not eligible to vote as part of the Panel.

The Chair added that also present were David Trethewey - Director of Partnership & Corporate Services, Lynda Deane – Senior Manager, Reopening & Renewing High Streets Workstream Lead, Chris Major, Assistant Director – Highways and Transport and Michaela Gay – Democratic Services Officer.

The Chair announced that the meeting was being held under The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. She stated that the Council had agreed a protocol to cover virtual meetings and that this meeting would operate in line with that protocol. She explained that the meeting had the same status and validity as a meeting held in the Guildhall.

53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

54 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

55 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

David Redgewell South West Transport Network made a statement to the Panel regarding Transport matters.

Ceris Humphreys - Pulteney Estate Residents' Association made a statement to the Panel regarding Liveable Neighbourhoods.

Councillor Manda Rigby made a statement to the Panel regarding Liveable Neighbourhoods.

57 MINUTES

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting, hold on 16th March 2020 as a true record.

58 OVERVIEW OF THE RENEWAL PROGRAMME WORKSTREAMS

David Trethewey - Director of Partnership & Corporate Services and Lynda Deane – Senior Manager, Reopening & Renewing High Streets Workstream Lead, Emergency Management and Events gave a presentation to the panel which covered the following:

- Renewal Board and Workstreams – outline of approach
- Renewal Workstream Leadership
- Reopening the High Street Safely (Aim and Objectives)
- Reopening and Renewing Our High Streets
- Reopening the High Streets Safely – social distancing measures, access restrictions, retail reopening, licensed premises and visitor attractions
- Reopening Safely Guidance and Support
- Reopening the High Street Safely – Webinars, New Planning and Business Bill and 'I love local' campaign
- Reopening the High Street Safely – Next steps

Panel members asked the following questions and made the following points:

Councillor Hirst raised the following points. *Officer responses are shown in italics:*

- Which Cabinet Member does this sit with? *The Leader and whole Cabinet with Cabinet Members leading on specific parts of the workstreams.*
- What are the timelines? *There are some timelines regarding reopening and we are starting to build timelines into the other programmes.*
- *On the issue of reskilling – unemployment is a current issue, we are working to build a skills hub and are in discussions with WECA and colleges. This can be reported to a future meeting of the Panel.*
- Regarding governance, there is a gap for Bath as it has no forum, we need to find a solution for this. *Every area is different regarding governance, there will be discussions about the gap for Bath.*

Councillor Craig asked that members be kept informed and involved, especially as Bath does not have parish councils. She also asked about contingency plans for

each workstream in case of any future outbreaks. *The officer agreed that engaging with members is important. He explained that public health officers are built into the action plan for each programme.*

Councillor Walker asked if the work done on reopening would bring the High Street back to Bath. *The officer explained that public health has been the priority rather than attracting visitors from elsewhere, but this could now be considered in moving forwards.*

Councillor Born stated that the 'I love local' campaign was good and asked if food outlets with no space for tables and chairs would benefit from a central food court area, signposted in the city where people can eat take away food. *The officer explained that she had been looking at 'parklets' which are areas of benches and seating although finding space is a challenge. She explained that work would start on Kingsmead Square soon.*

Councillor Davies asked if we know how we are doing relative to other authorities and if best practice was being shared. *The officer explained that the BID footfall data showed that the trend is going up and that the area is above average for our comparator cities, particularly at weekends. She explained that she attends the Local Resilience Forum that other cities representatives also attend so best practice can be shared.*

Councillor O'Brien raised the following points. *Officer responses are shown in italics.*

- Why is Milsom Street closed to cars when it is not a narrow street and has been quiet? *This is one of Bath's main shopping areas, we will consult with traders to look towards helping footfall.*
- Keynsham High Street did not qualify regarding the government guidelines on footfall. There was a motion at the Town Council but may have been some misunderstanding, why were businesses themselves not consulted? *We could not consult in the way we had done it previously, there was not time to consult with businesses. Safety was the first concern, there were emergency TROs, we worked closely with the Town Council and are monitoring the scheme.*
- Item 9 mentions that the recovery of tourism could take 3-5 years, is this based on analysis? *This came from colleagues in Heritage Services. Many visitors had been from the US and Far East and it will take time for confidence to return.*
- Why after many years of consultation and analysis have the plans for Keynsham High Street taken a step back for review? *The officer explained that the step back was needed to assess the delivery possibility within the timescales. The 'review' is not a stop, work has not started yet due to the lockdown.*

Councillor Bromley raised the following points. *Officer responses are shown in italics:*

- People will queue outside shops in the current weather, but this may be more of a problem in the Autumn and Winter.
- Some parking spaces for disabled people have been removed – please keep ward Councillors informed of this. *We are aware of the impact of the removal*

of disabled access parking, we are looking at more blue badge parking and disabled access parking in the city, we are having meetings with accessibility groups.

Councillor Dr Kumar raised the following points. *Officer responses are shown in italics:*

- Do we have visitor numbers for the Holbourne Museum and Roman Baths? *The Roman Baths had 3,700 visitors as of 6th July which is above the target that was set. It is online booking only and running at 30% capacity. Advance tickets for 5,400 have been sold for next week. There is an increase in resident's bookings.*
- The decision has been made to keep the Victoria Art Gallery (VAG) and Assembly Rooms (AR) closed until March 2021 – is it too early to make this decision? *The Internal Recovery Board has to assess whether we are financially able to open a premises. We cannot afford to open the VAG or AR yet.*

Councillor O'Brien asked about the staff who would usually work in the VAG and AR. *The officer explained that these staff are working in the Roman Baths instead of the usual seasonal workers.*

Councillor Craig stated that she welcomed a relaxation on regulations regarding tables and chairs outside of cafes but asked that this be monitored as it can be an equalities issue. She also mentioned that she has asked the public realm team for a map which shows blue badge areas and loading areas. *The officer explained that some residential parking bays may be repurposed to use for blue badge parking and that a map can be produced once these decisions have been made.*

Councillor Craig asked about universities as they make a huge difference to the footfall of pubs and nightclubs. *The officer said that she would be in touch with universities in terms of what their expectations of numbers are, this could also be picked up at the economy board.*

The Panel **RESOLVED** that their above comments be passed on to inform the Cabinet.

59 LIVEABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Chris Major, Assistant Director – Highways and Transport, introduced the report.

Panel members asked the following questions and made the following points:

Councillor O'Brien stated that there is an emphasis on cycling and walking which is ok if you live near a centre/shops but this discriminates against people who live in rural areas, blue badge holders and those who cannot walk or cycle. *The officer explained that walking and cycling is being encouraged for those who can do this, we are not saying that cars cannot be used. We are trying to change habits where possible.*

Councillor Born raised the following points. *Officer responses are shown in italics:*

- Welcome that communities are being asked to put forward proposals – the criteria must be clear and central to the consultation and the local proposals must work together across the city.
- Regarding RPS (Residents Parking Schemes) – some areas of Widcombe and Lyncombe are already somewhat down the track to getting much needed schemes in place and will be concerned if the new strategy causes delay. *A significant amount of time has been lost due to the lockdown, we are behind but we are working on those schemes.*
- Regarding Bear Flat – there are some difficulties with parking for people working in local shops and other businesses. Some were using the regular bus services but these are reduced currently and some people are not confident about using public transport. She requested that staff could have access to permits while Covid measures that make it difficult for them to get to work remain in force. *Workers parking is always an issue, there is a fine balance with residents parking schemes, we are trying to look at it strategically, the LTN (Low Traffic Neighbourhood) scheme should help.*
- It is great to see the plan for EV (Electric Vehicle) charging points, this is welcome, and it is a good idea to use lampposts where they are sited at the front of the pavement. However, we will need to provide a mixture of rapid and slow chargers across all areas.
- *Regarding the query about EV car sharing clubs – this is part of the strategy and is key.*

Councillor Davies raised the following points. *Officer responses are shown in italics:*

- Could we have a brief summary of exactly what is being consulted on? *We are consulting on high level strategic documents which set the direction of travel for the Council.*
- EV (Electric vehicle) charging will be an enormous challenge – the paper mentions that BANES have ruled out the Oxford example of using channels, we should be cautious in ruling things out so early on. *A number of authorities have been forced into decisions, digging channels into footways can cause future problems. We ruled out channels after speaking to maintenance teams.*
- RPS (Residents Parking Schemes) - where are we on the on-street parking vision? *A number of schemes have not been completed due to Covid. All permit policies will be reviewed. There has been a Covid impact on this.*
- LTN (Local Traffic Neighbourhoods) – the flow chart is useful – the consultation should include the criteria. *We have tried to set out the prioritisation assessment (Section 4). The prioritisation process will be clear and transparent.*
- Regarding areas that are suitable for LTNs - this must be agreed before applications are submitted. *We need to consider the impacts, for example it would be hard to deliver an LTN over an arterial route in the city.*

Councillor Grant Johnson asked how the negative impact on local businesses will be mitigated by footfall. *It is a challenge to know how much business is car generated and evidence shows that retailers sometimes overestimate this. We will work with*

the attractors (retailers). We have seen the positive impact of well-designed schemes – the majority of evidence shows that overall footfall increases.

Councillor Johnson commented that it will be hard for some people in the city to cycle due to the hills and valleys. He asked if the Council will support residents regarding electric bikes. *This is an active travel policy and not just about cycling. It is about connectivity and people dwelling in areas. We are not saying people cannot use cars but that they may need to use different routes.*

Councillor Bromley stated that there is an assumption that people will be using mass transport and maybe there needs to be more publicity encouraging people to use public transport. *The Government message on public transport is changing now. It has been an unprecedented time for public transport.*

Councillor Craig raised the following points. *Officer responses are shown in italics:*

- There should not be a delay in residents parking schemes. *Work is continuing on these schemes.*
- RPS – could we have paper permits back to run alongside the digital ones as it is easier then, for residents to check vehicles which would help alleviate the pressure on Enforcement resources. *Paper permits are difficult to administer and remove many of the benefits. I understand the point but it would be too challenging to move back.*
- Is there a way to expedite the EV charging scheme. Ask ward members where chargers could be best placed in their ward. People are more likely to switch to electric vehicles if they see spaces and chargers. *We will note the comments. We will also be working with power suppliers.*

Councillor Joel Hirst raised the following points. *Officer responses are shown in italics:*

- It would be great to move forward with EV charging with some pilot sites.
- LTNs are all about making streets feel safer, a game changer. *LTNs are designed to allow journey's to be pleasant.*
- EV charging points have caused frustration in Bath as the pace of getting them fixed is slow. We need to commit to improve this. *The frustrations are noted, there has been a crossover of contracts. We needed to move to a more commercial model.*
- Is it possible for the Council to take control of their local grid? It would be good to have more EV charging points in Park and Ride sites and also to have EV taxis. *We are looking at putting solar panels in Park and Ride sites. We do have our first EV taxi but licensing policy does not allow us to have only EV taxis at this time. Taxis will be Euro 6 compliant which will reduce emissions.*

Councillor Dr Kumar stated that on his street it would not currently be possible to have EV charging points as there are too many cars. Residents parking places could be used. *The officer explained that on street EV charging points are challenging where there are no dedicated bays. We will need to work on the communication as we develop the infrastructure.*

Councillor Walker raised the following points. *Officer responses are shown in italics:*

- How do we support the high street? *Rural businesses and high street businesses are part of the renewal workstream The LTN policy and other pieces of work will help.*
- Commuters and visitors should be encouraged to use Park and Ride sites as residents and contractors need on street parking.
- Some residents live in the pedestrianised areas, they may be affected. *We are not saying that people cannot use cars in an LTN only that they may need to use a more suitable road/route. We will encourage people not to use cars for short journeys.*
- Are the timelines realistic? *They are challenging, we are looking to align resources with our priorities, we want to be ambitious.*
- Some people are still frightened of using public transport. *Hopefully this will change as the national communications are changing on this.*
- EV charging points should be planned in conjunction with RPS. *Agree.*

The Panel **RESOLVED** that:

1. Their above comments be passed on to inform the Cabinet.
2. They note the proposed timeline for adoption of the policies

60 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted items on the future workplan.

The meeting ended at 6.35 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services