

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, 10th September, 2020

Present:- **Councillors** Rob Appleyard, Tim Ball, Colin Blackburn, Shelley Bromley, Neil Butters, Vic Clarke, Sue Craig, Paul Crossley, Gerry Curran, Chris Dando, Jess David, Tom Davies, Sally Davis, Douglas Deacon, Winston Duguid, Mark Elliott, Michael Evans, Andrew Furse, Kevin Guy, Alan Hale, Liz Hardman, Steve Hedges, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Dr Kumar, Matt McCabe, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Paul May, Sarah Moore, Robin Moss, Paul Myers, Michelle O'Doherty, Lisa O'Brien, Bharat Pankhania, June Player, Vic Pritchard, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, Mark Roper, Richard Samuel, Bruce Shearn, Brian Simmons, Alastair Singleton, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, Karen Walker, Sarah Warren, Karen Warrington, Andy Wait, Ryan Wills, David Wood and Joanna Wright

Apologies for absence: **Councillors** Sarah Bevan, Alison Born and Chris Watt

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Monitoring Officer explained to Council about the Council's cooperation agreement with Bath and West Community Energy (BWCE) and Keynsham Community Energy companies in the light of the later motion on the agenda about local electricity (agenda item 11).

The Democratic Services Manager announced the following declarations;

Councillor Alastair Singleton declared an 'other' interest in item 11 'Local Electricity Bill' as a member of BWCE, for which he received interest on his shareholding, and as Director of Keynsham Community Energy. Advice had been specifically provided by the Monitoring Officer that, as this did not constitute a disclosable pecuniary interest, Councillor Singleton was able to move the motion on this subject.

Councillor Sarah Warren declared an 'other' interest in item 11 as she holds shares in BWCE and receives interest from those.

Councillor Liz Hardman declared an 'other' interest in item 11 as she holds shares in BWCE and receives interest from those.

Councillor Robin Moss declared an 'other' interest in item 11 as Chair of the Board of Radstock and Westfield BIG Local CIC.

Councillor Matt McCabe declared an 'other' interest in item 11 as he holds shares in BWCE and receives interest from those.

Councillor Karen Warrington declared an 'other' interest in item 11 as she holds shares in Chelwood Solar Farm and receives interest from those.

Councillor Paul May sought clarification from the Monitoring Officer about the financial aspect of the above interests and the position of these Councillors in taking

part in the debate and vote. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that, although there was a financial aspect to these, they were not disclosable pecuniary interests as the shareholdings were not more than £25,000 nor constituted more than 1% of the total issued share capital.

29 MINUTES - 23RD JULY 2020

On a motion from Councillor Winston Duguid, seconded by Councillor Shaun Stephenson McGall, it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of 23rd July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record, to be signed by the Chairman in due course.

30 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OR FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chairman made the following announcements;

He made a formal note of recognition in respect of 2 long standing foster carers retiring after 42 years of service to the Local Authority and children in B&NES.

He congratulated the Roman Baths on their success at the Visit England Awards in August, winning a Silver for Large Visitor Attraction of the Year and Silver in the International Tourism category and further congratulated Bath's Parade Gardens in scooping a coveted Trip Advisor Travellers Choice Award. Finally, he noted that the Council had been commended in the Municipal Journal Awards for its regeneration of the former Keynsham Civic Centre.

He invited the Leader to give a brief update on the latest Covid situation for the Council. Councillor Romero explained the latest situation about the pandemic in Bath & North East Somerset and asked people to let her know if the key messages were not getting through and invited any queries to be e-mailed to her.

31 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no items of urgent business.

32 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Statements were made by the following members of the public;

David Redgewell made a statement about transport issues which had been circulated to Members, a copy of which is attached to the online minutes. Councillor Neil Butters asked David to explain a little more his reference to links with Wiltshire and Mendip; whether he meant on a transport level, or wider. David responded that with Wiltshire he had meant on a transport level: with Mendip, it was not so clear due to the reorganisation there, and that maybe B&NES and Mendip would be a better fit. Councillor Robin Moss followed with a further query about this and David replied that, as Somerset County Council had voted to look into the option of becoming a unitary authority and reviewing the future for the historic county of Somerset, there

may be outcomes from that about the north of the county. The statement was referred to the relevant Cabinet Members.

Martin Grixoni made a statement about household recycling and waste which had been circulated to Members, a copy of which is attached to the online minutes. Councillor David Wood asked if Martin was aware of the statement that B&NES had issued this week about sharp increases in recycling rates and recognising that during the pandemic, thankfully residents had stayed at home and recycled from the kerbside. Martin confirmed that he had seen it but commented that to be the last city to open its recycling centre did not seem to be a badge of honour. Councillor Paul May asked Martin for his view as to what may have been the cause for this. Martin responded that it appeared to be an overly cautious approach when there had been very low infection rates in the area, or a lack of leadership to grip the situation. Councillor Robin Moss asked Martin what the ecological difference was between kerb recycling and tip recycling, to which Martin responded that a statistical increase in kerb recycling did not mean an overall increase and that, overall, he considered that the rates would be lower. The statement was referred to the relevant Cabinet Members.

33 PLANNING REFORM CONSULTATIONS

The Council considered a report on two consultation papers launched in August, one on [Changes to the current planning system](#) (consultation deadline 1st October 2020) which would have a more immediate impact and the other, a White paper on a more fundamental reform to the Planning system entitled [Planning for the Future](#) (Consultation deadline 29 October 2020). The Government has indicated that it will seek to introduce the changes to the current system before the end of 2020 and this report was brought to Council to gather comments from Members to be fed back into the Council's response.

On a motion from Councillor Tim Ball, seconded by Councillor Paul Myers, it was

RESOLVED unanimously

1. To agree the responses to the consultations set out in section 3 of the report and delegate authority to the Director of Development and Public Protection to formulate and submit more detailed responses, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing and Economic Development and in consultation with Group Leaders;
2. Note the changes to Planning system which came into force on 1st September 2020, and
3. Write to our local MPs, and encourage residents to do the same, asking them to intervene on this issue in support of this Council's responses to the consultation.

[Notes;

1. *Resolution 3 above was proposed by Councillor Robin Moss and accepted into the substantive motion by Councillors Ball and Myers.]*

34 POLICY DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Council considered the annual report of the work of the Policy Development & Scrutiny Panels for 2019/20.

On a motion from Councillor Paul Myers (in his role as Chair of the Policy Development & Scrutiny Chairs & Vice Chairs' Group), seconded by Councillor Winston Duguid, it was

RESOLVED unanimously

1. To note the work of the Policy Development & Scrutiny Panels, as set out in the Annual Report attached at Appendix 1; and
2. That Council welcomes the opportunity to consider this annual PDS report and, in the interests of continuous improvement, requests an external peer review by the LGA of the Council's approach to scrutiny and policy development and the particular effectiveness of the current panels.

[Notes;

1. *Resolution 2 above was proposed by Councillor Joel Hirst and accepted into the substantive motion by Councillors Myers and Duguid.*
2. *Councillor Paul Myers wished it recorded that he accepted the proposal from Councillor Hirst with the mandate of the Policy Development & Scrutiny Chairs & Vice Chairs' Group group.]*

35 LABOUR GROUP MOTION - PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

On a motion from Councillor Grant Johnson, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss, it was

RESOLVED that

Council notes:

1. That analysis of the 2019 Local Election results by the Fawcett Society found that only 35% of councillors in England are women, up 1% since 2018. Of the seats that were up for election in 2019, 35% went to women, up just 3 percentage points on 2015 when these seats were last contested.
2. As of October 2019, 27 councils have passed the LGA Labour Group's Parental Leave policy, and an additional 9 councils have their own parental leave policy in place.
3. In 2019, the LGA co-produced the 21st Century Councils Equalities Toolkit with MHCLG. The toolkit recommends that councils adopt a parental leave policy, and they link to the LGA Labour's Parental Leave policy as a model to adopt.

Council believes:

4. That the role of a councillor should be open to all, regardless of their background, and that introducing a parental leave policy is a step towards encouraging a wider range of people to become councillors, and is also a step to encourage existing councillors who may want to start a family to remain as councillors.
5. That parental leave must apply to parents regardless of their gender, and that it should also cover adoption leave to support those parents who choose to adopt.

Council therefore resolves:

6. To adopt the parental leave policy (attached) to give all councillors an entitlement to parental leave after giving birth or adopting.
7. To ensure that councillors with children and other caring commitments are supported as appropriate.
8. To provide the leadership to support town and parish councils to adopt a similar approach.
9. To request that the Constitution Working Group consider the matter of proxy voting or another form of remote voting for councillors who are on parental leave, and whether that should be extended to councillors absent for other reasons (e.g. long-term sickness), and to report back to Council by the next Annual Meeting with proposals, or reasons for not bringing proposals, to allow councillors to fulfil their voting rights while absent.
10. To request that the Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel consider the matter of how the role of casework could be undertaken while a councillor is on parental leave or absent for other reasons (e.g. long-term sickness), and to report back to Council by the next Annual Meeting with proposals, or reasons for not bringing proposals.

[Notes;

1. *The above resolution was carried with 44 Councillors voting in favour and 12 Councillors abstaining.]*

36 CONSERVATIVE GROUP MOTION - RESTORING COUNCIL SERVICE LEVELS

On a motion from Councillor Richard Samuel, seconded by Councillor Sarah Warren, it was

RESOLVED

Council:

1. Recognises residents pay Council Tax to receive in return a range of publicly accessible services;

2. Notes that during the ongoing Covid19 Pandemic many of these services have continued at reduced levels or they have been provided in different ways.
3. Recognises that the failure by the Government to fully reimburse Councils for Covid19 related costs and lost income means that difficult financial and service decisions will need to be made following the Covid19 Pandemic.

Council therefore requests:

4. That this Council notes the aspiration to restore Covid19 Pandemic service levels and asks the Cabinet to consider this in the forthcoming budget setting round.

[Notes;

1. *The above successful resolution amended the motion within the agenda papers with a vote of 44 Councillors in favour and 12 Councillors voting against.*
2. *A further amendment was moved and seconded by Councillors Dando and Jackson, erasing the section about difficult financial service decisions to come and sending a message to Government that the Council could not continue to cut services. This was lost with a vote of 5 Councillors in favour and 51 Councillors voting against.*
3. *The substantive motion was carried with 45 Councillors voting in favour, 10 Councillors voting against and 1 Councillor abstaining.]*

37 LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MOTION - LOCAL ELECTRICITY BILL

On a motion from Councillor Alastair Singleton, seconded by Councillor Bharat Pankhania, it was

RESOLVED

Council notes:

1. An increase in the provision of locally generated, renewable electricity is needed to help tackle the climate emergency.
2. One of the three immediate priorities for action, identified in the Climate Emergency Progress Report to Council (October 2019) was “a rapid and large-scale increase in local renewable energy generation”
3. Local renewable energy generation may also support the local economy towards a green recovery from the Covid-19 crisis, supporting jobs, services and energy security.
4. Community-scale renewable energy projects are blocked from becoming direct energy suppliers due to the very high setup and running costs involved as well as excessive regulations.
5. Making costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier’s operation would create significant opportunities for locally generated renewable electricity to be supplied directly to local people and businesses.

6. The Local Electricity Bill would establish a Right to Local Supply, which would promote local renewable electricity supply companies and co-operatives by making the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate to the size of the supply operation.
7. The Bill has received the support of 198 Members of Parliament and is co-sponsored by a cross-party group of MPs, including Bath MP Wera Hobhouse.

Council therefore resolves to:

8. Support the Local Electricity Bill and the Power for People campaign.
9. Write to relevant Government Minister(s) and local Members of Parliament, informing them of the Council's support for the Bill and request that they support the Local Electricity Bill to become law.
10. Write to the Power for People campaign, expressing the Council's support for the campaign and the Local Electricity Bill.

[Notes;

1. *The above resolution was carried with 54 Councillors voting in favour, 1 Councillor voting against and 1 Councillor abstaining.]*

38 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no items.

The meeting ended at 9.14 pm

Chairman

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services