

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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

Monday, 21st September, 2020

Present:- **Councillors** Karen Walker, Tom Davies, Shelley Bromley, Sue Craig, Joel Hirst, Lisa O'Brien, Grant Johnson, Dr Kumar and Matt McCabe (in place of Alison Born)

Apologies for absence: Councillors:

61 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, namely Councillors Sarah Warren and Dave Wood (Cabinet Members for Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services), Councillor Paul Crossley (Cabinet Member for Community Services), Councillor Neil Butters (Cabinet Member for Transport) and Councillor Tim Ball (Cabinet member for Housing, Planning and Economic Development). She added that these councillors were not eligible to vote as part of the Panel.

The Chair added that also present were officers David Trethewey - Director of Partnership & Corporate Services, Chris Major, Assistant Director – Highways and Transport, Simon De Beer – Head of Planning, Richard Danone – Deputy Head of Planning Policy and Michaela Gay – Democratic Services Officer.

62 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

There was none.

63 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Alison Born gave her apologies and was substituted by Councillor Matt McCabe.

64 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor McCabe declared an 'other' interest in Item 10 where a plot of land that he owns is referred to.

65 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

66 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. He spoke to the Panel about the need for school/college/university transport issues to be integrated into WECA plans.

Councillor Hirst asked if Mr Redgewell was aware of any plans for WECA to look at school transport issues. Mr Redgewell stated that there was money from the treasury for school buses and trains and that WECA must set out a proper plan for this.

67 MINUTES

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

68 BATH CLEAN AIR PLAN - SEPTEMBER 2020 UPDATE

Chris Major, Assistant Director – Highways and Transport, introduced the report and gave a presentation which covered the following:

- Feasibility study
- Government funding package
- COVID 19 impacts
- Infrastructure delivery
- Mitigations
- Next steps

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

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

- The presentation shows that levels of traffic have almost reached the levels of last year at this time. Have you allowed for more people using cars due to Covid (people not able to share cars and maybe reluctant to use public transport)? *The officer confirmed that there is a reluctance to use public transport so people are using cars more. He explained that NO₂ (Nitrogen Dioxide) levels are near where they were before the lockdown period. He further explained that some cities have seen larger reductions and that it can depend on the geography of the city and type of street. He stressed the need to continue to monitor air quality levels into the winter.*
- Is the financial assistance scheme just for BANES residents? *The scheme is not limited to BANES residents.*

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

- Is there a start date for the scheme and will we be the first to implement a CAZ? *It will be early 2021 but there is no exact date yet. We are likely to be one of the first to implement a CAZ in the country.*

- How will we manage if the Government funding for bus upgrades is not enough? *The funding package is in line with that given to other cities, we are relatively comfortable that we have enough funding in place – also the risks reduce as we move towards delivery.*
- Can we recommend a weight limit for Cleveland Bridge? *This scheme is not linked to Cleveland Bridge.*

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

- There are press stories about other cities dropping plans for their CAZ, I am pleased we are continuing. *Sheffield and Leeds have decided not to continue with their scheme.*
- Will you be monitoring traffic flow elsewhere so that we can be sure that we are not moving the problem elsewhere. *Yes we will be monitoring traffic flows and will deal with impacts.*
- Regarding the scheme for people to make their vehicles compliant, what happens when people are waiting to get the work done? *We will recognise that there may be a time lag so, if people have placed an order they will be exempt from the scheme. We are also working with charities eg. Foodbank vehicles.*

Councillor Bromley asked how the 'last mile' delivery will work. The officer explained that there is an existing model for this – couriers transfer packages onto cargo bikes which do the 'last mile' of the delivery journey in the city.

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

- We are down £2million in funding from what we had originally requested, what is the impact of this? *We have received £9.4 million and we can start to use this.*
- What are the number of businesses we can help with these schemes? *600 businesses have registered for the scheme so far. We will get the scheme out to as many businesses as possible.*

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

- Where are the local distribution hubs? *There is no confirmation on this yet.*
- Will the scheme be looking at anti idling? *The scheme will be concentrating on the CAZ.*

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

- What is the situation with the funding? *We have negotiated with the Government to develop the best package of funding which in line with other authorities.*
- Will you monitor rat runs such as Oldfield Park? *We will monitor traffic flow around the city and any funds generated by the scheme will be put back into sustainable transport. We need to be reactive to any problems that come up*

and understand the reasons behind them. We are not trying to prevent businesses from getting on.

Councillor McCabe asked about exemptions – the officer responded that exemptions are a mixture of local and national issues.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the progress outlined in the report.

69 BANES LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL UPDATE: CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Simon de Beer – Head of Planning introduced the report and gave a presentation which covered the following:

- Local Plan Partial Update
- Climate Emergency Policies
- Zero Carbon Construction
- Whole Life Cycle Carbon Assessments
- Retro fitting Existing Buildings
- District Heating
- Renewable Energy
- Parking Standards and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure
- Other Policies
- Interim Approach pending partial update.

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

Councillor Hirst stated that he welcomed this approach to attempt to address the Climate Emergency challenge. He raised the following points. *Officer responses are shown in italics:*

- Regarding growth in electric vehicles, are we addressing the concerns from Western Power? *Western Power are working on future energy planning.*
- Where there are options in the report, will you make your recommendations as part of the consultation? *We can express our preferred option but also present other options.*
- Are there opportunities for district heating in new build schemes and existing infrastructure? *We have opportunities in some areas where there is high density. We have done extensive research in this area.*

Councillor O'Brien stated that grass helps to absorb carbon dioxide yet many people tarmac over their front lawn to provide car parking space. This may also have implications for localised flooding. Do you consider this? The officer explained that while work could be done with Highways regarding permission for lowering pavements, the planning system does not have powers to control this. We could issue guidance regarding retrofitting.

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

- What do you think our options are regarding whole life cycle carbon assessment? *We do not have a policy on whole life cycle. We would have to work on an appropriate level and consult and we would also need some expertise in the department.*
- What is the flavour of the likely impact of guidance regarding the retrofitting of existing buildings (and heritage buildings)? *We have produced a self-help guide to retro fitting, in the past we have held 'Bath Green Homes' event (There was a suggestions that this could be held online).*

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

- Can we require developers to provide parking spaces especially for shared cars/club cars? *We are working with colleagues in transport towards encouraging car sharing schemes.*
- Is there a policy on the use of plastic in sports pitches? *We will look at this through the update. It depends on the planning control level.*

Councillor Bromley asked about the development of self-charging batteries. The officer stated that she would look into this.

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

- Home batteries may require a structure on the side of houses – we should make sure that planning rules do not hinder any opportunities in this area. *Officers to take this back.*
- Can we protect family homes within a 2km distance of schools? 2km has been found to be the optimum distance for people to walk to school. Could we look at this? *We can check on the controls to see if we could float this in the consultation.*
- Could solar/wind turbines be listed as temporary structures? *The Government writes the green belt policy which does not recognise temporary or experimental structures. It is a rigid area of policy.*

In response to a query from Councillor Walker, the officer explained that the wind turbine assessment would be updated.

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

- Is there an update on the Draft Environmental Bill and 10% biodiversity net gain? *We are working with other Local Authorities in looking at the options on this. There are many benefits to biodiversity net gain, they need to be deliverable.*
- Is there any scope in a policy on rain capture? *The Government sets a limit to how much we can require these measures through the planning system.*

The Panel **RESOLVED** to forward its comments to officers on the emerging options for amending the Local Plan policies which relate to the Climate Emergency and recommended that public consultation go ahead as soon as possible.

70 TREE AND WOODLAND PLAN UPDATE

Simon de Beer – Head of Planning introduced the report and gave a presentation which covered the following:

- The objective
- Purpose of the Plan
- Tree and Woodland Plan Timetable

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

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

- Is the plan to plant 4250 trees during the 2020/21 season ambitious enough if we want to achieve our target by 2023? *The numbers in the report are provisional, we need to maximise planting.*
- Is the funding enough for the scale of the project and how will we get the message across to people to get involved? *The funding is set aside from the SIL, we have discretion and can review areas for spend. We may also be able to access other national funds.*

Councillor Dave Wood - Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, explained that preparation before planting is important, the pre-work is necessary to get the maximum benefit. There will be a full year of planting 2021/22. Councillor Walker stated that we could plant saplings from our own stock in our nurseries. Councillor O'Brien stated that new build house owners should be encouraged to plant new trees and advised not to replace hedges with fencing. The officer explained that these comments will be fed into the process, there is a tree coordinator. It is very important to engage with residents. The planning system has limited capability. The Cabinet Member explained that everyone can plant in the Free Tree scheme. This has been in the press. Ward members can advise on pieces of land within their ward where trees could be planted.

Councillor Davies agreed that ward members should be consulted. Councillor Wood responded to Councillor Davies to confirm it is a net of 100,000 trees.

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

- Cabinet Members could engage with interest groups. The Cabinet Member explained that 'More Trees Bath' is an essential partner.
- Can we encourage the replacement of the tree at the entrance to the Sainsburys store? *The Council would always seek to replace trees that have died.*
- Is there guidance on overgrown trees that block light etc. *We will get back to you on this.*

Councillor McCabe stated that if we start a nursery this autumn, it could mean we have 100-200 saplings to be grown on in the future. From planning perspective, we have to be aware of 'change of use' issues where there is a tree planting scheme. We could shout out to landowners who may have a patch of land. People can plant acorns etc. in pots.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the progress and supported moving forwards with the Tree and Woodland Plan.

71 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted their future workplan.

The meeting ended at 6.15 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services