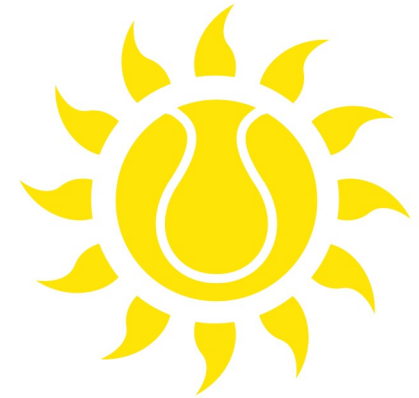


Policy Development & Scrutiny Annual Report 2015-16



Foreword - Cllr Lisa Brett

Policy Development & Scrutiny within Bath & North East Somerset continues to make a positive impact to the decision making process and is an essential part of ensuring that our local decision making remains effective and accountable.

In Bath & North East Somerset the Policy Development & Scrutiny function ensures that decision-making processes are clear and accessible to the public and that the people making those decisions are held accountable, in a sense it provides a “critical friend” and challenges executive policy makers or decision makers.

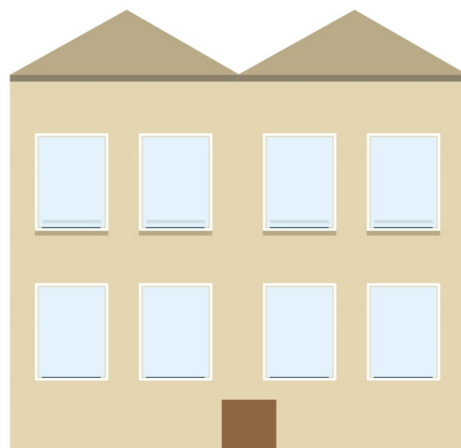
Scrutiny is also a powerful tool for empowering communities and enabling local people through their democratically elected representatives to participate in decisions which affect their day to day lives. We do this by examining issues that impact on Bath and North East Somerset residents, businesses and visitors. In doing so, we promote issues which are of relevance to local people, and actively engage them in the scrutiny process.

Through working collaboratively, councillors have the opportunity to dig deep, and discuss the key issues that matter most to our local community. This has recently been demonstrated by two panels piloting a 30 minute pre-briefing meeting which has improved the questioning of items on panels agendas and enabling a richer debate. This will now be rolled out to the remaining panels

I hope that this report provides you with a flavour of some of the excellent work that the Policy Development & Scrutiny Panels have done this year.

Cllr Lisa Brett

Chair of PDS Chairs and Vice Chairs Group



“Scrutiny is also a powerful tool for empowering communities”

The Annual Report

The Annual Report is structured into four sections:

1

What we do

2

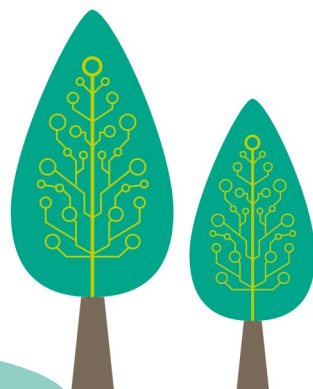
Scrutiny committee work

3

Scrutiny reviews

4

Community involvement



Residents and stakeholders can get involved by:

- attending public meetings
- giving evidence to one of the panels; and
- sending in comments about a review.

Work planning allows:

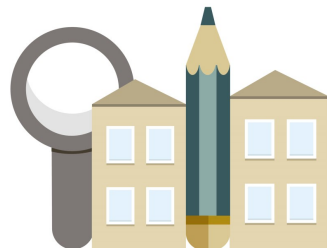
- A focus on specific areas of service delivery;
- To question whether recommendations could improve a service;
- Call other public bodies to account; and
- Enable joint panels to potentially be convened.

Scrutiny doesn't:

- Makes decisions about council policies and services but instead make recommendations to the cabinet or council
- deal with individual queries or complaints; or investigate planning or licensing decisions.

Meetings:

- The public are welcome to attend
- Last typically 2-3 hrs;
- Meet regularly (during daytime and evenings)
- Have a formal structure, but are run in an accessible way
- Papers published at www.bathnes.gov.uk and at council information points.



4 PDS Panels
1 Select Committee



Planning, Housing & Economic Development PDS Panel

During 2015-16 the Planning, Housing & Economic PDS panel heard a range of issues that affect the financial prosperity of the people of Bath & North East Somerset.

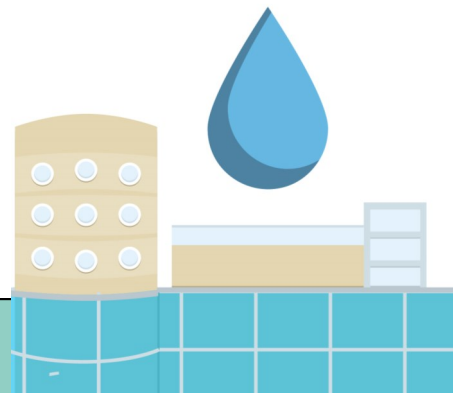
Some of the topics covered this year include; reviewing the developments within the West of England joint spatial plan, and the World Heritage City Management Plan. The panel also provided input into the directorate plans. Councillors also contributed to evolving plans for local housing, with the aim of encouraging a joined up approach that reflects local needs.

Cllr Rob Appleyard

Chair Planning, Housing & Economic Development PDS Panel

Panel members:

- Rob Appleyard (Chair)
- Barry Macrae (Vice Chair)
- Colin Blackburn
- Lisa O'Brien
- Fiona Darey
- Cherry Beath
- David Veale



Adding value to the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

In September 2015 the Planning, Housing & Economic Development panel contributed to the emerging local flood risk management plan. Panel members wanted to make sure that certain aspects of the plan, such as emergency planning and the council's statutory responsibilities, were clear and transparent.

The panel recommended the cabinet becomes the body that gives sign-off for the final plan. These measures would ensure that responsibilities when dealing with emergency planning are robust, clear and transparent for the future.



Communities, Transport & Environment PDS Panel

The panel have been busy in 2015-16 working on a number of key issues. This work gave both the public and stakeholders the chance to have their voice heard.

Two influential public inquiry days were held. The first responded to a consultation by the Government on the potential closure of the Bath Magistrates, County and Family Courts. The second inquiry day saw the panel work with the community to identify possible transport solutions for the east of Bath.

Panel members also explored the potential for contracting out the local bus network. This work has had a positive influence on some of our key developments in future transport and planning.

Cllr John Bull

Chair Communities, Transport & Environment PDS panel

Panel members:

- John Bull (Chair)
- Brian Simmons (Vice Chair)
- Peter Turner
- Alan Hale
- Neil Butters
- Jonathan Carr
- Dine Romero
- Michael Norton
- Les Kew
- Bob Goodman

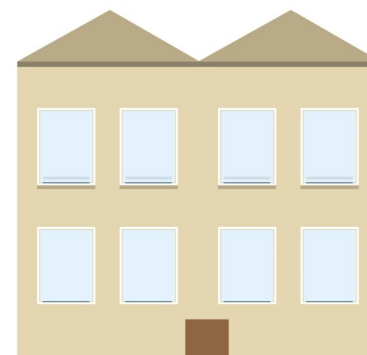
“two influential
public inquiry
days were held”

Holding community Safety partners to account



The Communities Transport and Environment panel's remit includes the responsibility and power to review or scrutinise “responsible authorities” (this includes the Council, Police, Fire and Rescue, Probation and Clinical Commissioning Group) who work together to reduce crime and disorder.

In January 2016, the panel discussed developments to our local community safety plans. Councillors heard about work across a range of diverse issues, from anti-social behaviour to modern slavery. This update provided the opportunity for members of the public to share their concerns and any ideas, on topics of interest to various wards across the district. The report was, on the whole, well received and the panel welcomed the opportunity to comment on our future safety plans.



Resources PDS panel

The Resources PDS panel continues to do important work at a time when public services are stretched. As councillors, we held the new cabinet to account over a number of issues.

Many people are feeling the financial squeeze, so the panel wanted to know how recent welfare reforms were bedding in.

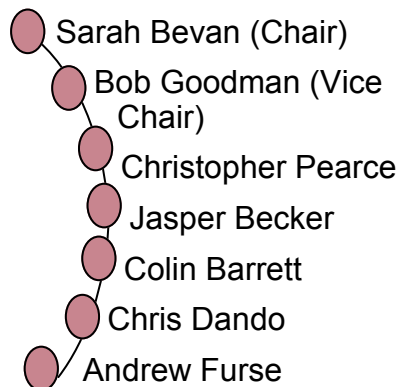
Bath is a well known and historic city, however inequalities exist. We need to make sure that different people's needs are thought of. Councillors looked at topics such as universal credit and council tax support. It was important for us to understand how things were going and what could be done.

Cllr Sarah Bevan

Chair Resources PDS panel



Panel Members:



“members were
able to hold officers
and stakeholders to
account”

Reviewing the impact on the use of consultants and agency staff

In 2012 the panel investigated whether the Council's use of consultants is providing value for money. During 2015 the panel received an update on the progress and impact that the panel's work has had on the council.

One of the key issues was the need to strengthen its transparency and accountability in the use of consultants and agency staff. So changes have been made to ensure that there are improved governance processes. A new system has also been developed to help the council meet its requirements around skill shortages, project work, as well as where required to source (locally where possible).

The panels report has helped the council ensure best value and transparency in the appointment of future agency staff and consultants,



Children & Young People PDS panel

The Children & Young People panel held the cabinet and children's service providers to account over a number of key issues, including child sexual exploitation.

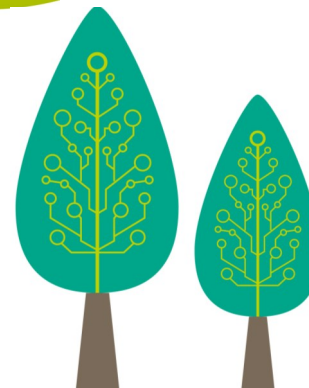
Members also considered the implications of new laws such as Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) reform, and the Care Act. The panel, in their role as a critical friend, added value by asking that local issues were reflected in the planning of services.

Cllr Lisa Brett

Chair Children & Young People PDS panel

Panel members:

- Lisa Brett (Chair)
- Matt Cochrane (Vice Chair)
- Karen Warrington
- Peter Turner
- Sally Davis
- Liz Hardman
- Alison Millar
- David Williams (voting)
- Andrew Tarrant (voting)
- Chris Batten (non-voting)
- Rebecca Thompson (non-voting)



Children's sense of safety / School Health Education Unit

The panel received a briefing during January 2016 about how safe children and young people felt in Bath & North East Somerset. Members considered the results of a recent health survey lead by the Schools Health Education Unit (SHEU) and completed by some local primary and secondary students.

Councillors were provided with a picture as to whether children felt safe in their communities. In 2015, 92% of boys and 93% of girls said they felt quite or very safe at school. In contrast only 40% of boys and 31% of girls felt the same about going out after dark.

Members provided clarity for parents on the different sources of material available to them, such as the recent e-safety information. The meeting also provided the opportunity to highlight some of the key issues from the survey, such as self-esteem in girls, and what work is being planned to combat them.

Concerns raised at this public panel meeting added value to future discussions of the SHEU steering group.

“members also considered the implications of new laws”

Health & Wellbeing Select Committee

The Select Committee have been busy during 2015-16, with reports on a range of different subjects. Members were kept briefed by local health and social care partners on their future plans. Regular updates were received from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), public health and Healthwatch. The Select Committee added value by bringing a community perspective to the provider's current and future plans.

Cllr Francine Haerberling

Chair Health & Wellbeing Select Committee

Select Committee Members:

- Francine Haerberling (Chair)
- Geoff Ward
- Bryan Organ
- Paul May
- Eleanor Jackson
- Tim Ball
- Lin Patterson

“the Select
Committee
added value”

Contributing to change in health services

The Select Committee continues to take an interest in the integration of the former Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Disease (The Min) with the Royal United Hospitals (RUH).

In November 2015 the Select Committee received a presentation from the RUH about the integration of services, and the next steps for stakeholder engagement. The RUH and the Select Committee discussed the proposals, and ensured that the community voice contributes to health service planning for the longer term.

Some of the points raised focused on the long term funding and staff resources for the planned hydrotherapy provision and demographic changes. All of which are now included in the ongoing dialogue between the RUH and the CCG.

The panel have noted the next steps being made to ensure that Scrutiny provides a mechanism for patients, carers and the public to influence any proposed future service change.



Scrutiny Inquiry Day on the proposal to close Bath Magistrates, County and Family Court

Background:

In June 2015, the Secretary of State announced his intention to reform the courts in England and Wales. This involved some difficult decisions about the courts and tribunals estate. Proposals were made to close Bath Magistrates, County Court and Family Court.

The Communities, Transport & Environment panel:

- held a scrutiny inquiry day to formulate a local response to proposals, along with relevant experts and key stakeholders on the questions raised within the consultation document;
- gathered evidence on the key concerns and impacts of those potentially affected by the proposals;
- evidence was submitted to the Ministry of Justice.

Key concerns:

- Assessment does not consider the potential wider impact on quality of service;
- The potential reduction in admin support
- Bath court buildings were in good condition;
- Disproportionate effect on the most deprived such as the homeless

community;

- Rural areas had not been considered
- Access to local justice and local knowledge will be reduced dramatically
- potential use of other space in Bath.
- The request for a full equality analysis of the proposal.

What changed as a result of the report:

In early 2016, members were pleased to learn that Bath Magistrates, County Court and Family Court would be saved from closure. Having reviewed all the responses received during the consultation process, the Lord Chancellor agreed to close other courts in the South West region, but to retain our local Bath court.



“Saving our County Court represents a triumph for the scrutiny process.”

Scrutiny Inquiry Day which examined a range of transport solutions to the East of Bath

Background:

In November 2015, Council discussed a proposed park and ride facility to the East of Bath. The meeting asked the Communities, Transport & Environment panel to examine a range of integrated transport solutions for the East of Bath.

What the Panel did:

In March 2016, a scrutiny inquiry day was held to collectively identify possible transport solutions for Bath, attracting approx, 154 attendees.

The day included presentations from officers, experts and community groups on the policy context and local view. An afternoon workshop, community consultation room and evening session were used to capture ideas.

After collating all of the key issues and concerns from the day the panel were able to formulate a range of recommendations to present to cabinet at its meeting in May 2016.



Panel Recommendations:

- better use of Lansdown Park & Ride (e.g. signage);
- use of a site (or sites) smaller than originally discussed, to the East of Bath;
- potential use of rail and river
- investigate Nottingham City's integrated transport strategy;
- investigate a possible link road between the A46 / A36;
- incorporate travel plans for the Royal United Hospital (and other health facilities); and
- early sight of the recent Local Development Framework Steering Group review conclusions.

These recommendations focus on having a positive influence on some of the key future transport decisions for the East of Bath.



Review of a Quality Contract scheme for local bus services

Background:

In January 2015, a council motion asked scrutiny to look at the potential for a new transport scheme which could contract out the local bus service in Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES). This could give the local transport authority the means to decide which bus services are delivered, by which operator, to what standard, and any additional facilities desired within the scheme area.

In July 2015, the Communities, Transport & Environment panel set up a task and finish group consisting of 4 panel members and specialist officers to carry out some investigative work based on existing information on this scheme, formally known as a Quality Contract scheme (or QCS).

What they did:

The aim of this work was to consider the initial advantages and disadvantages of using a QCS to help develop future local transport policies in B&NES.

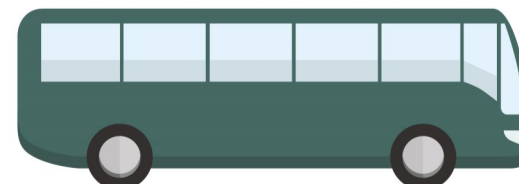
It also set out to understand what a QCS was, how it works, and if other local authorities had explored it. Information was collated from internal and external sources, including other local authorities and bus operators.

The interim report:

The panel received a draft interim report in January 2016. It was suggested that:

- B&NES wait before considering a QCS, because the future Buses Bill could amend current legislation, or offer new powers; and
- members agreed to review the current findings when the Buses Bill and potential West of England devolution deal have been developed further (potentially in 2017).

The interim report was also submitted to the West of England Joint Transport Study during 2016. Once all stages of the scrutiny review have been made, a final report with conclusions and recommendations will be drafted.



Avon and Wiltshire Partnership (AWP) NHS Trust joint scrutiny

Background :

In September 2014, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published a report asking AWP to take steps to improve their services. During Spring 2015, the health scrutiny committees of four local authorities (including B&NES) started a task and finish group review into the response of AWP to the CQC inspection.

The scrutiny review set out to:

- consider the CQC report;
- consider AWP's past, current and planned response to CQC;
- identify where AWP's response had been robust, or could be strengthened; and
- support AWP by recommending areas for improvement, or for further scrutiny.

The joint health committee met with AWP to discover the concerns and priorities. As critical friends, councillors were able to offer positive support where they could, and challenge outstanding concerns.

AWP covers a large sub-regional area so bringing together many local perspectives was also important for AWP to move forward.

Final report:

The recommendations went back to individual health scrutiny committees for endorsement. The B&NES Health and Wellbeing Select Committee approved the following in January 2016:

- recognition of AWP's engagement;
- that improvement was underway before the CQC inspection report was published;
- leadership changes were made before and after the CQC report;
- concerns about delayed transfer of care; and to
- consider a Section 136 protocol.



Our PDS panels work closely with a wide selection of groups, organisations and individuals. Without positive, trusting and mutually beneficial relationships, the work of the PDS panels and the Select Committee would not be nearly as valuable.

We would like to thank the following, who amongst others, have contributed to the reviews during the previous year:

B&NES Councillors and officers

Residents

NHS B&NES Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

Care Quality Commission (CQC)

NHS England Specialised Commissioning

NHS South West Ambulance Service Foundation Trust

Healthwatch

Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust

Arriva Transport Solutions Ltd

Public Health England

Mott MacDonald

Wiltshire Councillors

Bathford Parish Council

Whitchurch Parish Council

Bathampton Parish Council

Batheaston Parish Council

Nottingham City Council

Monkton Coombe Parish Council

Claverton Parish Council

First West of England

Sustrans

West of England LEP

UWE, Bristol

Corsham Transport Group



Bath Cycling Club

Corsham Station Campaign

Cycle Bath

Bath Cycle Club

B&NES Cycle Forum

Railfuture Severnside

Bath Preservation Trust

Bathmeadows Alliance

Transition Bath

Transition Larkhall

National Trust

Campaign for clean air

Federation of Bath Residents Associations (FoBRA)

Circus Area Residents Association (CARA)

Bath Chamber of Commerce and the Initiative in B&NES

Batheaston Primary School

Bath Spa University

Bath Liberal Democrats

HM Courts & Tribunal Service

Lighthouse Victim & Witness Care (Avon & Somerset Police)

DHI

Southside

Somerset Branch of the Magistrates Association

Curo

University of Bath

Stand Against Racism & Inequality

(S.A.R.I.)

Reach Team

District Judges

North East Combined Authority

Nexus

Department for Transport



Contacts

For further information about this document, or to get involved please contact:

Donna Vercoe (01225) 396053

For specific committee enquiries please contact:

Mark Durnford (01225) 394458

- Children & Young People
- Health & Wellbeing
- Planning Housing and Economic Development

Michaela Gay (01225) 394411

- Resources
- Communities, Transport and Environment

All correspondence to:

Policy Development and Scrutiny

Bath and North East Somerset Council

The Guildhall, Bath,

BA1 5AW

scrutiny@bathnes.gov.uk

