

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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

Thursday, 6th July, 2023

Present:- **Councillors** Andy Wait, Jess David, John Leach, Alex Beaumont, June Player, Saskia Heijltjes and Ian Halsall (in place of Michael Auton)

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Anna Box

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Anna Box sent apologies.

Councillor Michael Auton sent apologies and was substituted by Councillor Ian Halsall.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

There were none.

7 MINUTES

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

8 CLIMATE STRATEGY OVERVIEW

The Chair invited Councillor Oli Henman - Cabinet Project Lead for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel and Louise Morris – Head of Green

Transformation to introduce the presentation (presentation slides are attached to these minutes) which covered:

- Climate Strategy Update
- Climate Emergency Action Plan and Ecological Emergency Action Plan
- Four priorities for climate, with clear targets and supporting actions
- Three policy priorities for Nature, together with the Ecological Emergency Action Plan
- Climate Progress Report 2023
- Key Challenges

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

Councillor Heijltjes referred to the aim of reducing car miles driven by 25% by 2023 and asked if this target will this be increased to 40% to be aligned with WECAs latest target to reduce car miles driven. The Cabinet Project Lead explained that the issue to concentrate on is how we deliver 25% and then look at how we can be more ambitious.

The Chair suggested that the Panel could receive a report to a future meeting on Journey to Net Zero – this would give more information on transport targets.

Councillor David asked about the levels of operational staff in terms of neighbourhood cleansing teams and parks teams that are available to help support community initiatives such as wildflower planting. The officer stated that colleagues across the Council do a good job in bringing in external funding for projects. She explained that there had been a cultural shift in the Council towards climate and nature. She stressed the importance of work and communication with communities.

Councillor Wait asked how the team has grown over the last 4 years. The officer explained that the Green Transformation Team has been in place for the last year. There are 5 full time equivalents working in climate. Some funding is external for specific projects. Councillor David stated that it would be useful to have an understanding of staffing levels in nature and climate to make sure there is no further attrition. Councillor Wait explained that the Panel would receive details on the budget at their November meeting. The Cabinet Project Lead stated that it is a dynamic and effective team and they are recruiting currently.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that many climate and nature issues effect our streets, she asked if there is a plan to adopt a kerbside strategy. The Cabinet Project Lead stated that this had been raised and makes sense for us to incorporate as part of forward planning.

Councillor David asked about support for local food growing. The officer stated that she had no definitive answer at present but that the team are looking into it.

The Cabinet Project Lead stated that a future item for the Panel could be community engagement on climate and nature. The Chair stated that there were forums across Northeast Somerset and Parish and Town Councils. Councillor Heijltjes added that there is Bath Area Forum and also it would be useful to include schools. The officer

stated that there was a successful conference with young people last year. The Cabinet Project Lead agreed on the importance of building on the experience of working with young people. He stated that the Climate Hub would allow for cross working between groups.

Councillor Leach mentioned Bath Allotment Associations and stated that the Council may find there is pressure for support coming from such organisations.

Councillor Beaumont asked if there would be a conference in Northeast Somerset. The Cabinet Project Lead stated that it was crucial that what we do includes all areas of the authority.

Councillor Player stated that she is keen on the community aspects in terms of what people can do in their own way – otherwise the challenge can seem so immense. She stated the importance of everyone doing their own little bit towards the goal. She asked about the possibility of a roadshow for the wards – less formal than a forum. Ward members can inform people about a roadshow in their local area. The Cabinet Project Lead stated his support for this suggestion and explained that the team are looking at their engagement strategy. Councillor Wait stated that it would also be useful to have a stall at local farmers markets.

The Chair thanked the officer and Cabinet Project Lead for the presentation.

9 EMISSIONS BASED CAR PARKING CHARGES

The Chair invited Andy Dunn – Team Manager Parking Services – to introduce the report and presentation which covered the following:

- Paying for parking
- Emission based charges – context
- How does emission-based charging work?
- Next steps

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

Councillor Leach asked about if the main drive for this was road safety or public health. The officer explained that the emphasis is pedestrian safety (regarding lung and heart conditions).

Councillor Player asked if this was introduced as part of the Clean Air Zone (CAZ). The officer explained that they are separate but complimentary schemes that address different types of air pollution.

Councillor Halsall asked how confusion and frustration of users will be addressed. He stated that people may not know what their emissions are. He also asked if there would be sufficient signage in all areas. The officer explained that residents did not need to know their emissions – it is worked out based on their number plate. He add that the team were engaging with organisations such as Bath BID and Visit Bath to get the message out to people and hopefully address people's concerns.

Councillor Wait asked if Bath is the first place to introduce emissions based charging, the officer explained that it was the first to use the machine permit as far as he knew.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that she welcomed the scheme. She asked about foreign visitors paying the highest charge and how this must be made clear to them. She stressed that communications with people around this are very important as is information about Park and Ride services.

Councillor David stated that she was glad to see that being able to pay with cash was being retained and that people also would have the option to buy a season ticket. She stated that she had concerns regarding the cumulative impact on low income households across the authority and hoped that people would be supported with targeted schemes. She suggested that the Panel could consider the impacts. The officer responded that poor air quality affects everyone. He stated that residents are able to identify any concerns as part of the consultation. He stated that there is not discount for residents as part of this scheme and that the focus is targeting the more polluting vehicles.

Councillor Leach stated that he was concerned about the impact on foreign visitors. He asked about the rationale of the maximum payment and asked about reductions for electric vehicles. The officer stated that the problem was access to data. He further explained that any vehicles add to road congestion and the focus would be to direct visitors to Park and Ride sites.

Councillor Leach suggested that enforcement officers could see if a visitor declared an electric vehicle but did not drive one. The officer stated that this could be considered.

Councillor Beaumont asked if the scheme would be spread out to north east somerset once it is established in Bath. The officer stated that the equipment is being replaced in Keynsham so technically the scheme could be used there.

Councillor Halsall asked if the Council incur a cost to process cash payments. The officer stated that there has been a big reduction in cash income since Covid (£100k to manage the service has been reduced to £40k).

Councillor Heijltjes stated that signs should be technically correct in stating 'least CO2 polluting vehicles'.

Councillor David asked if the revenue from the scheme will be ring fenced. The officer stated that any revenue would be a by product of the scheme. He would check with finance officers.

Councillor Halsall asked if there could be an additional sign explaining that charges are being increased due to climate emergency measures so people know the reasons behind the charges. The officer stated that this can be considered, he stated that on and off street sites would be different and the focus would be to signpost people to Park and Ride sites.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that it would be good to increase the hours of the bus services for Park and Ride sites. The officer stated that these bus services are run by First bus and if they are popular, more money will be available which could be used to improve bus services provision for Park and Ride.

Councillor Wait asked if it was possible that less polluting cars in the Norton Radstock area not be subject to payment. The officer stated that he would look at this.

The Chair thanked the officers.

10 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted their future workplan was currently being worked on and noted the following suggestions for future items:

- Update on Journey to Net Zero
- Engagement on Climate Emergency plans
- Local food growing
- Rivers/state of rivers

The meeting ended at 11.15 am

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services