

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

CABINET

These minutes are draft until confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting.

Thursday, 13th March, 2025

Present:

Councillor Kevin Guy	Leader of the Council, LD Group Leader, Member Advocate for Armed Forces and Veterans
Councillor Tim Ball	Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Alison Born	Cabinet Member for Adult Services
Councillor Mark Elliott	Cabinet Member for Resources
Councillor Paul May	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Councillor Matt McCabe	Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development
Councillor Manda Rigby	Cabinet Member for Highways
Councillor Paul Roper	Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development
Councillor Sarah Warren	Deputy Council Leader (statutory) and Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel

84 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

85 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Senior Democratic Services Officer read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

86 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Dave Wood.

87 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Matt McCabe declared a non-registerable interest in agenda item number 12, Heritage Services Business Plan, because his wife is a Trustee for the Fashion Museum Foundation. Cllr McCabe left the meeting when this item was discussed and took no part in the debate or decision.

88 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was no urgent business.

89 QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

There were three questions from Councillors and no questions from members of the public.

[Copies of the questions and responses, including supplementary questions and responses if any, have been placed on the Minute book as Appendix 1 and are available on the Council's website.]

90 STATEMENTS OR PETITIONS FROM PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS

There were no statements from members of the public or non-executive councillors.

Cllr Manda Rigby, Cabinet Member for Highways, drew the attention of the Cabinet to the article published in the Bath Chronicle regarding the recommendations from the M4 to South Coast study. The recommendation is that the primary strategic route to the South Coast will be the A350 from the M4, passing via Chippenham, Melksham and Westbury before connecting to the A36 at Warminster and continuing south. The current network utilises the A36 and A46 through Bath as the main designated route. Cllr Rigby was delighted with this outcome and thanked all officers and councillors that had worked towards this conclusion.

91 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS CABINET MEETING - 13TH FEBRUARY 2025

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 13th February 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

92 CONSIDERATION OF SINGLE MEMBER ITEMS REQUISITIONED TO CABINET

No single member items were requisitioned to Cabinet.

93 MATTERS REFERRED BY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY BODIES

No matters were referred by Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels.

94 SINGLE MEMBER CABINET DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE PREVIOUS CABINET MEETING

The Cabinet agreed to note the report.

95 HERITAGE SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN 2025-30

(Note: At this point Cllr Matt McCabe left the meeting having declared a non-registerable interest in this item.)

Cllr Kevin Guy introduced Rob Campbell, Head of Culture and Heritage, and invited him to make a presentation regarding the Heritage Services Business Plan.

The presentation covered the following issues:

- The vision for the service is to “learn from the past, understand the present and shape the future”.
- B&NES Heritage Services comprise The Roman Baths, The Victoria Art Gallery, Bath Record Office, World Heritage Centre, Clore Learning Centre and the Fashion Museum.
- The money from tourists is fed directly back to the community in which the tourism occurs.
- The challenging sector-wide conditions have been met with cost saving and entrepreneurship.
- Heritage Services will return an approximate surplus of £12m in 2024/25 which is equivalent to £145 per Council Tax household.
- The service was awarded the “Best of the Best” award in Tripadvisor’s Travelers’ Choice Awards in 2024. This is the highest level Tripadvisor award and means that B&NES is in the top 1% of listings worldwide.
- The Fashion Museum proposals have been developed into one of the most cultural significant projects in the UK.
- In 2025/26 challenging market conditions are anticipated but a range of proactive measures will be introduced to give the best opportunity to succeed.

A copy of the presentation slides is attached as an appendix to the minutes.

Cllr Paul Roper, Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development, introduced the report, moved the amended officer recommendation and made the following points:

- Cllr Roper highlighted the extensive activities and plans for Heritage Services for the next 5 years.
- He emphasised the uniqueness and beauty of Bath and North East Somerset, highlighting its two UNESCO World Heritage Classifications.
- Heritage Services operates as a separate business unit but is owned by Bath and North East Somerset Council.
- The Roman Baths attract over one million visitors annually, making it the second most visited payable attraction in the UK after Stonehenge.
- Visitors significantly contribute to the local economy, with many staying in the city for extended periods.
- Positive feedback and high ratings on Tripadvisor help maintain a steady flow of visitors.
- Heritage Services engages in community activities, targeting learning and engagement, and supporting the neediest in the area.
- The Clore Learning Centre and Victoria Art Gallery offer award-winning learning and engagement activities.
- The Bath Records Office provides access to a vast archive, with plans to digitize records for greater accessibility.
- Despite the closure of the Fashion Museum, the collection remains curated and is showcased globally.
- Plans are underway to establish a new Fashion Museum in the Old Post Office building, a project of international significance.
- Cllr Roper commended the Heritage Services team for their excellent work and highlighted the Liberal Democrat administration’s ambition and achievements.

Cllr Mark Elliott seconded the motion and made the following points:

- Heritage Services are a valuable asset to Bath & North East Somerset residents.
- They demonstrate expertise, business acumen, and creativity.
- Heritage assets enrich the cultural depth of the city.
- Financially, Heritage Services deliver significant value, saving each household £145 in council tax for the financial year ending April 2025.
- There is anticipated growth in visitors to the Roman Baths for 2025/26.
- The projected financial surplus is £12 million in 2024/25, rising to £14.2 million in 2025/26.
- This is equivalent to a 12% rise in council tax, or 18% when including visitor parking revenue and business rates.
- Few councils have such valuable assets and the contributions from Heritage Services are highly appreciated.
- The reopening of Jolly's store is imminent, this is an iconic Bath landmark owned by the Council.
- This latest development is more proof that, assisted by our tourism and heritage footfall, the city's retail sector and wider economy are doing very well.

Cllr Sarah Warren highlighted the proactive efforts of Bath & North East Somerset Council's Heritage Services in advancing the Net Zero commitments. The department has made environmental sustainability a core aim, with initiatives such as optimising the Roman Baths Heat Exchange System, engaging suppliers for sustainable procurement, and working towards zero waste to landfill. A sustainability manager has been recruited to oversee these efforts, including the development of a decarbonisation plan based on three years of carbon emissions data. The service is also pioneering a sustainable tourism strategy and seeking external accreditation for their sustainability work. Cllr Warren expressed pride in these achievements and thanked officers and Cllr Roper for their contributions to the council's net zero aspirations.

Cllr Manda Rigby drew attention to the Remarkable Books exhibition which will take place on 27th and 28th June 2025 at the Guildhall, Bath. The free two-day event will showcase, for the first time since 1923, a wide range of extraordinary books, manuscripts and fine bindings acquired by what was then the Bath Municipal Library, now in the care of the Bath Record Office.

Cllr Paul May noted how well the Heritage facilities are run and praised their contribution to Health and Wellbeing and the local economy. He also highlighted the inclusive nature of the service, and the efforts made to engage with all sectors of society.

Cllr Tim Ball stated that he is pleased to see the business plan being taken forward and is proud of the work that is taking place.

Cllr Kevin Guy thanked local residents for giving this administration the opportunity to deliver these projects and services.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

- (1) To approve the Heritage Services Business Plan 2025 – 2030.

- (2) To delegate approval to the Executive Director Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the S151 Finance Officer, to approve a capital budget of up to £2,135,000 towards the development of detailed designs (RIBA Stage 3) and associated work, to support the future redevelopment of the Fashion Museum Bath. This is in-line with the activity outlined in the Business Plan and the overall Council commitment to the project, included as part of the Council's Capital Programme and recently approved as part of the Council's budget setting for 2025/26.
- (3) To delegate approval to the Executive Director Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, S151 Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer to accept grant awards and philanthropic contributions made towards the Fashion Museum Bath project in-line with the fundraising strategy identified in the Heritage Services Business Plan.

The meeting ended at 7.15 pm

Chair _____

Date Confirmed and Signed _____

Prepared by Democratic Services