

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

### **CABINET**

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

Thursday, 7th March, 2024

#### **Present:**

Councillor Kevin Guy (Ch)	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 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
Councillor David Wood	Deputy Council Leader (non-statutory) and Cabinet Member for Council Priorities & Delivery

#### **76 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **77 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

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

#### **78 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **79 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **80 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

There was no urgent business.

## 81 QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

There were 15 questions from Councillors and 11 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.]*

## 82 STATEMENTS OR PETITIONS FROM PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS

Members of the public and Councillors made statements as follows:

- Kari Erickson – Liveable Neighbourhoods. Ms Erickson spoke against the Liveable Neighbourhood schemes in the city. She stated that the Lower Lansdown scheme does not meet its stated objectives and that people are not always able to walk or cycle up the hill. People are now having to drive longer distances to get to where they want to go. She stressed that this is adversely affecting the lives of the local residents and that local people are not in favour of the schemes.
- Chad Allen – English Ivy. Mr Allen stated that the Council is destroying wildlife in the local area and that actions such as removal of hedges and trees without replacing them are damaging the planet. Recycling in different ways could also improve the eco-system.
- George Clutton (Radstock Town Clerk) – Radstock Regeneration Action Plan. Ms Clutton thanked B&NES Council for its support in bringing forward the Radstock Regeneration Action Plan. She thanked the Regeneration Team for their excellent work and praised the partnership working and co-operation which had brought the Plan to fruition.
- Cllr Chris Dando – Radstock Regeneration Action Plan. Cllr Dando also thanked officers for their work on the exciting and innovative Action Plan. He stated that this project was an excellent example of partnership working. He welcomed the interest shown in the project and noted that this was good for Radstock and for any other potential schemes. The Plan would enable further investment and draw-down funding for the area. As local ward member and Chair of Radstock Town Council he looked forward to making this a success.
- Cllr Eleanor Jackson – Radstock Regeneration Action Plan. *(A copy of Cllr Jackson's statement is attached as an appendix to these minutes).*

## 83 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS CABINET MEETINGS

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings held on 1<sup>st</sup> February and 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 84 MATTERS REFERRED BY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY BODIES

No matters were referred by Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels.

## **85 SINGLE MEMBER CABINET DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE PREVIOUS CABINET MEETING**

The Cabinet agreed to note the report.

## **86 RADSTOCK TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION ACTION PLAN**

Cllr Paul Roper introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation, and made the following points:

- High streets and town centres across the country have faced huge upheaval in the last decade. These are tough times even for the most powerful and influential retailers. And it isn't just retail that is affected – many sectors that relied on high footfall to survive have been decimated.
- The effects of these changes on rural towns and smaller cities have been devastating.
- One can visit hundreds of rural town centres and see how much reduced their once-proud high streets are. The bank branches and other anchor institutions are gone. Pubs are closing in their thousands. Technology and centralisation have rendered many traditional service providers redundant in rural locations.
- The business rates system is not fit for purpose and needs reform.
- Our high streets and town centres are entering a new era. It is not entirely clear what that future will look like – but the focus has to be on “Place Making”. Making spaces and places where people want to be. Creating environments for new ventures to thrive. We must adapt and repurpose buildings for new uses.
- This will take both time and investment, but our ambition should not be dampened by this.
- The first element needed is community engagement. This regeneration project is a great example of how we have listened and worked with the local community in a hugely collaborative way.
- B&NES has a dedicated, expert resource working on this issue – the Regeneration Team. This is a team of 12 that delivers impactful projects working with our communities in a positive way. They are entirely grant-funded, save for one officer, and have secured £23m in grant funding over the last 4 years. There are many more projects in the pipeline and their work is making a significant difference to our communities.
- One of the schemes that they have developed is the Radstock Town Centre Regeneration Action Plan. Radstock is a town with a unique heritage, attractive green spaces and local facilities which serve a wide rural area. There is significant potential for increasing the vibrancy of the town centre and attracting more visitors and investment. The Plan aims to create a thriving town centre bringing vacant buildings back into use.
- The aim is to deliver as many of the priority projects as possible and to have high ambitions. Successful delivery of these projects will rely on collective action to secure funding and take forward these initiatives. We have three schemes already being delivered: improvements to Tom Huyton Park, a new community arts space in the Old Printworks, a cultural programme that is delivering free creative and arts activities and a greenway arts trail.

- The plan will form a basis for funding bids and help to prioritise town centre projects that would benefit the community and make Radstock a more varied and welcoming place.
- The partnership has already secured £560,000 of investment in the town centre in its initial two years.
- This is the start of a process to improve Radstock town centre and we are excited to see this next chapter unfold.
- Cllr Roper thanked local stakeholders, businesses and residents who participated and put forward their ideas for ways to improve their town centre. He gave huge thanks to project partners, Radstock Town Council. This is a great example of listening to local people and working collaboratively. Radstock Town Council has already approved the Plan.

Cllr Matt McCabe seconded the motion and made the following points:

- The importance of having this Plan in place is that we can now respond to funding bodies and can be very clear about what we want.
- Cllr McCabe thanked the Regeneration Team for all their work on this project alongside the Town Council and local stakeholders.
- He had been struck by the enthusiasm and commitment shown by those people he had met who were involved in the various local projects.
- The RadCo site is a significant site in the middle of Radstock, discussions are ongoing with the owners, and it is hoped that progress will be made later this year.
- He thanked the Radstock Town Clerk, George Clutton, for her hard work and great enthusiasm for this project and the town in general. He also thanked Cllr Chris Dando for his work and the warm welcome given to those visiting Radstock.

Cllr Mark Elliott endorsed the Action Plan stating that it demonstrated that the Council is committed to improving all areas of Bath and North East Somerset. The Plan presents a great opportunity for Radstock and will be extremely useful when preparing bids to access funding for the area.

Cllr Sarah Warren stated that she was very impressed with this report and highlighted some of the other work that the Council is involved with in and around Radstock that contributes positively to efforts to tackle the climate and nature emergencies. Cllr Warren mentioned the following projects:

- The Somer Valley Rediscovered partnership which is driving investment into the natural environment benefiting the local community with a focus on the Cam and Wellow catchment aiming to improve water quality.
- The work with Radstock Town Council on the Greenspaces project which is providing:
  - Nature Recovery on key greenspaces including Haydon Batch
  - Volunteering opportunities for residents
  - Free wildlife and heritage events and activities for residents
  - Regular Green Social Prescribing
- Work to identify greenspaces with Radstock Town Centre for future work – sites include The Miners Pool, St Nicholas Churchyard and two B&NES owned sites just outside the town centre boundary (Foxhills and land adjacent to The Colliers Way).

- Actively seeking funding to take more greenspace projects forward.
- Working in partnership with The Active Way project to deliver walking and cycling social prescribing activities for residents.
- Development of a full business case in relation to the Midsomer Norton /Westfield walking and cycling links, that will provide improved links to the Midsomer Norton - Radstock greenway, making it easier and safer to get around the neighbourhood by bike, foot, or wheelchair.
- Working closely with the West of England Combined Authority on the heat from the mines project.

**RESOLVED:** (Unanimously):

To endorse the Radstock Town Centre Regeneration Action Plan (set out in Appendix 1 of the report) as a basis for decision making and funding bids in order to seek to deliver the priority projects identified.

## **87 HERITAGE SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN 2024-2029**

Cllr Paul Roper introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation, and made the following points:

- Heritage Services is run as an independent business unit with oversight by the Heritage Advisory Board. The assets under management are the Roman Baths, The Victoria Art Gallery, The Fashion Collection Archive, The Clore Learning Centre and The World Heritage Centre.
- As an authority we are truly blessed that we have at our disposal a world class operation delivering substantial benefits – not only significant financial benefits, but equally importantly cultural, educational and community benefits.
- In this current year, this service is delivering a record-breaking £10M contribution to council finances – its highest ever figure. The Roman Baths is the primary contributor to these figures. This year visitor numbers will reach 1M which is well in excess of budget but still below the 1.2M we achieved prior to Covid. The forecast next year is £12m.
- The budgeted revenue from Council tax next year is £120m, so in theory without the Roman Baths, our council tax would need to increase by 10%.
- There is a new commitment to offer free admission to the Roman Baths for school groups from schools where 30% or more of the school roll receive free school meals. This is an example of how we are building on the Council's commitment to making heritage accessible to all.
- The Residents' Discovery Card is also available to all B&NES residents providing free access to the Roman Baths and the Victoria Art Gallery, along with discounts on other attractions and at local businesses.
- Cllr Roper also outlined the excellent work taking place at the Victoria Art Gallery.
- The Clore Learning Centre opened in June 2022 and is just off York Street. It has been converted into an education space providing first rate educational experiences for schools and community groups from around the country.
- Items from the fashion collection archive have been on loan to other exhibitions and museums. The Council is moving forward with ambitious plans for the development of the new world-class Fashion Museum. Heritage Services will commence design work shortly and develop plans for the storage of the fashion collection archive in Locksbrook, in partnership with Bath Spa

University. These projects open the exciting prospect of creating a broader appeal of visitor attractions in the city and will also create career and educational opportunities. All with a renewed commitment by the service to reduce our carbon footprint.

- Cllr Roper thanked the Heritage Services Team for their dedicated, innovative, and exceptional work and for the benefits that they bring to the city and wider authority.

Cllr Alison Born seconded the motion and made the following points:

- We are incredibly fortunate to have a world class visitor attraction i.e. the Roman Baths in the heart of our city and to be able to access it free of charge through the Council's Discovery Card scheme.
- In the Adult Social Care and Public Health area, we are used to making difficult decisions about how to spend the money we have but those decisions would be far more challenging if we did not have the additional funding we get from Heritage services. This helps the Council to provide the services that our residents need and enables it to avoid some of the cuts that other councils are having to make.
- The council has invested in a talented team to lead our World Heritage services and the advantages we derive from those services results from the skill, hard work and dedication of that team. The impressive and ambitious plans they are developing for the fashion museum will bring further benefits to Bath and North East Somerset.

Cllr Paul May acknowledged the importance of the funds generated by Heritage Services which has an impact on services throughout Bath and North East Somerset. He praised the effectiveness and efficiency of the team and also welcomed the educational aspects of the plan.

Cllr Sarah Warren congratulated the team on their work to reduce the carbon footprint and pointed out that the spa waters are used to heat the Clore Learning Centre.

Cllr Kevin Guy stated that Councils have recently been portrayed by central government as being wasteful in their approach. He pointed out that the Heritage Service is run by Council members and officers and is a great example of both national and worldwide success.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously):

To approve the Heritage Services Business Plan 2024-2029.

The meeting ended at 7.25 pm

Chair

\_\_\_\_\_

Date Confirmed and Signed

\_\_\_\_\_

Prepared by Democratic Services