

# **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING**

Thursday 16th May 2024

Present:- **Councillors** Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, David Biddleston, Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Anna Box, Deborah Collins, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Sarah Evans, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Ian Halsall, Liz Hardman, Gavin Heathcote, Steve Hedges, Saskia Heijltjes, Oli Henman, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Dr Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, George Leach, John Leach, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Matt McCabe, Paul May, Sarah Moore, Ann Morgan, Robin Moss, Michelle O'Doherty, June Player, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, Paul Roper, Sam Ross, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby, Karen Walker, Sarah Warren, Tim Warren CBE, Andy Wait, David Wood and Joanna Wright

Apologies for absence: **Councillors** Alan Hale, Dave Harding, Shaun Hughes, Samantha Kelly, Bharat Pankhania and Alison Streatfeild-James

### **1 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as set out in the agenda.

### **2 ELECTION OF CHAIR 2024/25**

It was proposed by Councillor Gavin Heathcote, seconded by Councillor Kevin Guy and supported by Councillors Robin Moss, Tim Warren and Joanna Wright and then

**RESOLVED** unanimously that Councillor Karen Walker be elected Chair of the Council for the Council year 2024/25.

Councillor Karen Walker made and signed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office, received the Chain of Office from Councillor Sarah Moore and then addressed the Council. She thanked Members for their support and confidence in her and expressed her huge honour at being given the chance to chair for a second time in 9 years. She explained that she passionately believed that everyone should have the same opportunities and so her theme for the year was inclusion for all living life to the full.

### **3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR 2024/25**

It was proposed by Councillor Robin Moss, seconded by Councillor Kevin Guy, and unanimously

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Liz Hardman be elected Vice Chair of the Council for the Council year 2024/25.

Councillor Liz Hardman made and signed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office, received the Chain of Office from Councillor Karen Walker and thanked the Council for her appointment.

#### **4 MINUTES - 14TH MARCH 2024**

On a motion from Councillor Eleanor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Michelle O'Doherty, it was

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

*[Notes;*

- 1. The above resolution was carried with one councillor abstaining and all other councillors voting in favour.]*

#### **5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Robin Moss declared a non-pecuniary (other) interest during the Items from the Public (minute number 10) as reference was made to the Homes for Ukraine scheme, which he has participated in. This declaration was made during that item.

#### **6 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL OR FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Councillor Karen Walker presented Councillor Sarah Moore with her past Chair's badge.

It was proposed by Councillor Kevin Guy, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss and supported by Councillors Colin Blackburn, Joanna Wright and Tim Warren that the Council places on record its appreciation of the services performed by Councillor Sarah Moore in the office of Chair of the Council for 2023/24.

Councillor Sarah Moore then addressed the Council and, in so doing, highlighted a number of the key moments of the year and made particular reference to welcoming 250 new UK citizens to the country. She had been struck by the number of communities and people within them who give up their time. She thanked the Lord Lieutenant of Somerset and his deputies, B&NES staff, family and friends for their support during her year.

The Chair then;

1. Reminded everyone to switch off/to silent their mobile phones and laptops;
2. Reminded Members to use their microphones so that their comments are picked up for the webcast, and to turn them off when finished speaking; and
3. Announced that the meeting was being webcast and invited anyone who did not wish to be filmed to make themselves known to the camera operators.

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

There were no items of urgent business.

## **8 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS & OTHER ANNUAL BUSINESS**

On a motion from Councillor Kevin Guy, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss, it was unanimously

### **RESOLVED to**

1. Approve the structure for non-executive and regulatory decision making and Policy Development & Scrutiny working (set out in current form in Appendix 1 of the report);
2. Accordingly, appoint those bodies with membership, terms of reference and delegated powers as set out in the Constitution (with the correction to the proportionality table of 3 not 4 independent members on the Avon Pension Fund Investment Panel);
3. Approve the allocation of seats on those Committees and Panels (such seats to be filled in accordance with the nominations made by the political groups);
4. Appoint to chair each committee and panel those Councillors as may from time to time be nominated by the political group to whom the chairmanship of the body is allocated;
5. Authorise the Monitoring Officer to fill any casual vacancies in membership of all the bodies constituted and vacancy in the office of Chair of such bodies in accordance with the wishes of the political groups;
6. Determine the bodies on which co-opted and independent members are to have seats, as either voting or non-voting members and appoint such members accordingly (current arrangements are set out in Appendix 1 to the report);
7. Note the arrangements for the conduct of Cabinet business, as set out in section 5 of the report;
8. Note the activity of the Member Advocates, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report;
9. Instruct the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make appointments on non-executive outside bodies and note that the Leader or Cabinet Members will do so for executive outside bodies, where such vacancies arise;
10. Note the calendar of meeting dates that has been prepared up to May 2025 which is available on the Council's website;

11. Authorise the Monitoring Officer to make and publicise any amendment to the Council's Constitution required, or take any other necessary action, as a result of decisions taken at this meeting on this and other reports within the agenda, or otherwise as required by law.

## **9 CONSTITUTION: ESTABLISHMENT OF CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP & MINOR UPDATES TO NOTE**

On a motion from Councillor Dave Wood, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** to

1. Agree the Terms of Reference and scope of the Constitution Working group at Appendix 1 of the report and invite each political group to put forward their nomination(s) in due course, with the intention of bringing proposed changes to November 2024 Council; and
2. Note the minor amendments made by the Monitoring Officer, as part of his delegated authority, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

## **10 QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

The Chair made reference to the Question and Answer document which had been circulated to Councillors and provided to the members of the public who had submitted questions.

Statements were made by the following members of the public.

Lara Amro spoke to Councillors about the conflict in Gaza and its impact on her life in Bath. She made reference to the Nakba of 1948 and explained her family's experience. She explained that 17,000 children had been separated from their parents during the current conflict and called for support. Councillor Guy asked what Lara considered the Council could do to help. Lara replied that anything that helped advocate for the children in Gaza and possibly facilitate them coming to the UK for support would be helpful.

Ameerah Lebaqa described the UK's proud tradition of settlement schemes and asked why Palestinian lives were not seemingly worthy of protection. She called on the Council to put pressure on the Government to launch a scheme similar to the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Councillor Guy asked if Ameerah would be happy to meet the relevant Cabinet Member to discuss further, to which Ameerah replied that she would be. Councillor Ross asked Ameerah whether she was aware that the Green group were planning to bring a motion for peace to Council, to which she replied that she was aware, and was grateful.

Jane Samson made a statement calling on the Council to explain what practical support it had offered to Gaza since its statement in March, and to use its power to lobby Government to implement a resettlement scheme. A full copy of Jane's statement is attached to the minutes. Councillor Wright asked Jane if she was aware that the B&NES Constitution incorporates reference to the Human Rights Act

1998. Jane replied that she was glad to hear it, and would like to know what practical steps have been made to reach out to Palestinian residents in B&NES since the statement was made in March.

Marie Duffy addressed Councillors about the situation in Gaza and referred to the admirable work that the dedicated B&NES team had done supporting Ukrainian refugees and called for a similar arrangement to be put in place. A full copy of Marie's statement is attached to the minutes. She stressed that the Council must engage with its Palestinian residents about supporting their family members in Gaza. Councillor Moss asked Marie if she was aware that it was the Home Office that granted visas and that the Council could only step in and support once that had happened. Marie replied that she had heard such positive feedback about the Council support to Ukrainians, via the dedicated team, and hoped that the same kindness and hospitality could be offered to Palestinians.

Mohammed Alrozzi addressed Councillors about the situation in Gaza and explained that, since he had spoken to them in March, he felt ignored. He had not been offered any help or support for family members in Gaza and commented that the government action contrasted markedly with support that has been given to Ukrainian refugees. A full copy of Mohammed's statement is attached to the minutes. Councillor Joanna Wright asked Mohammed, as a resident of B&NES, whether the Council had done anything to support him, to which Mohammed replied that they had not.

Majdi Lebaqa spoke about the Gaza situation and implored Councillors to help bring Palestinian families to safety as there is nowhere safe for them to be. No more time can be wasted.

Malcolm Robinson spoke in support of the Sydney Road Liveable Neighbourhood scheme and outlined some of the positive changes the area had seen in terms of safety, pollution and community feel. He urged the Council to make this a permanent change. Councillor Blackburn asked Malcolm how many households had benefitted from the scheme compared to the hundreds of households being impacted from displaced traffic and increased pollution. Malcolm replied that he did not have that number. Councillor Heijltjes asked if Malcolm would welcome a crossing on Beckford road for people walking and cycling in an already congested area, to which Malcolm replied that he did not live there but residents there could request one.

Richard Andrews made a statement supporting the Sydney Road Liveable Neighbourhood scheme. Richard explained the positive benefits he had noticed and presented information from the South West Ambulance service that the road closures did not cause a significant delay. A full copy of Richard's statement is attached to the minutes. Councillor Blackburn asked the same question as he had to the previous speaker, to which Richard replied around 60/70 households.

Mary Allan spoke in support of the Sydney Road Liveable Neighbourhood scheme setting out a number of positive benefits she had spotted. A full copy of Mary's statement is attached to the minutes.

The Chair thanked everyone for their statements, which would be considered by the relevant Cabinet Members.

## 11 STATEMENTS FROM COUNCILLORS

Councillor Anna Box made a statement about supporting the No Mow May campaign. She explained the wildlife and biodiversity advantages of leaving patches of lawn un-mowed and urged her fellow Councillors to have a go with this low key but impactful action. Councillor Moss asked Councillor Box if she agreed that grass verges near junctions did still need mowing, for safety reasons, to which Councillor Box agreed.

Councillor Ruth Malloy made a statement about voting rights for EU citizens. She wanted to bring this back into the spotlight as the Election Act 2022 had led to the disenfranchisement of some residents for local, Mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections. Councillor Guy asked if the councillor agreed that Brexit had significantly damaged local democracy, to which she replied that it had. Councillor Heijltjes asked how many EU citizens in B&NES would be affected by this, to which Councillor Malloy replied that she did have that figure, but it is a disenfranchising and inconsistent move, as it depends on their country of origin.

The Chair thanked the Councillors for their statements, which would be considered by the relevant Cabinet Members.

The meeting ended at 8.02 pm

Chair .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**