

# **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING**

Thursday 22nd May 2025

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

Apologies for absence: **Councillors** Anna Box, Deborah Collins, Alan Hale, Steve Hedges, Hal MacFie, Paul Roper, Karen Walker and Tim Warren CBE

### **1 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

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

### **2 ELECTION OF CHAIR 2025/26**

It was proposed by Councillor Robin Moss, seconded by Councillor Kevin Guy and supported by Councillors Shaun Hughes, Joanna Wright, Gavin Heathcote and Sarah Evans and then

**RESOLVED** unanimously that Councillor Liz Hardman be elected Chair of the Council for the Council year 2025/26.

Councillor Liz Hardman 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 the outgoing Chair for the excellent example she had set. She explained she was looking forward to representing the Council at citizenship ceremonies and the Corporate Parenting Panel. She explained that one of her main areas of focus would be mental health charities, including Bath Mind, whilst continuing to support the residents of Paulton.

### **3 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR 2025/26**

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

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Shaun Stephenson-McGall be elected Vice Chair of the Council for the Council year 2025/26.

Councillor Shaun Stephenson-McGall made and signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office, received the Chain of Office from Councillor Liz Hardman and thanked the Council for his appointment.

[Notes;

1. *The above successful resolution was carried with 47 Councillors voting in favour and 2 Councillors abstaining.]*

#### **4 MINUTES - 20TH MARCH 2025**

On a motion from Councillor Eleanor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Matt McCabe, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

Councillor Grant Johnson declared an 'other' interest, in regard to the Licensing Policy item, as a member of a football club management committee.

Councillor Matt McCabe declared an 'other' interest in regard to the same item, as a Board Member of Komedica.

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

Councillor Liz Hardman explained that, as Councillor Karen Walker was unable to be present, she would be presented with her past Chair's badge at the July Council meeting.

The Chair then;

1. Made the customary announcements regarding microphones and phones; and
2. 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 AND OTHER ASSOCIATED ANNUAL BUSINESS**

The Council considered a report concerning its non-executive and regulatory Committee arrangements for the Council Year May 2025 to May 2026 and associated annual business. The Council was also required to formally undertake a statutory review of the political proportionality arrangements (as triggered under

section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989) in respect of bodies that are required to be politically proportionate, following the recent change in political group membership.

Councillor Kevin Guy, before moving the recommendations, announced his new Cabinet structure and portfolios as set out below;

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|--|--|
| <b>Cabinet Members</b>                   |  |
| Cllr Sarah Warren (statutory dep Leader) | Sustainable B&NES                                    |
| Cllr Mark Elliott (dep Leader)           | Resources  |
| Cllr Matt McCabe                         | Built Environment, Housing & Sustainable Development |
| Cllr Joel Hirst                          | Sustainable Transport Strategy                       |
| Cllr Lucy Hodge                          | Sustainable Transport Delivery                       |
| Cllr Alison Born                         | Adult Services                                       |
| Cllr Paul May                            | Children's Services                                  |
| Cllr Manda Rigby                         | Communications & Civic Services                      |
| Cllr Paul Roper                          | Economic, Cultural Sustainable Development           |
| <b>Cabinet Project Leads</b>             |  |
| Cllr Oli Henman                          | Climate Change                                       |
| Cllr Ian Halsall                         | Council Environmental and Waste Services             |
| Cllr Fiona Gourley                       | Sustainable Transport & Rural                        |
| Cllr Onkar Saini                         | Business and Skills                                  |

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

**RESOLVED to**

1. Approve the structure for non-executive and regulatory decision making and Policy Development & Scrutiny working;
2. Accordingly, appoint those bodies with membership, terms of reference and delegated powers as set out in the Constitution, noting the amendment to the Restructuring Implementation Committee Terms of Reference as set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report and amendments to the Health & Wellbeing Board Terms of Reference, as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report;
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), as set out in Appendix 2 of the report;
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;
7. Confirm the continuing B&NES membership on Avon Fire Authority of Councillors Paul May, Onkar Saini and Robin Moss;
8. Note the arrangements for the conduct of Cabinet business;
9. Note the urgent executive decisions that have been taken in the last municipal year;
10. Note the activity of the Member Advocates;
11. 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;
12. Note the Police and Crime Panel's annual report;
13. Note the calendar of meeting dates that has been prepared up to May 2026 which is available on the Council's website;
14. 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.

*[Notes;*

2. *The above successful resolution was carried with 45 Councillors voting in favour and 2 Councillors abstaining.]*

## **9 LICENSING ACT 2023; REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY**

The Committee considered a report presenting the findings of a public consultation exercise and recommending to Council to adopting the Statement of Licensing Policy following consideration by the Licensing Committee in April 2025.

On a motion from Councillor Tim Ball, seconded by Councillor Toby Simon, it was

**RESOLVED** to

1. Note the responses to the public consultation exercise and to accept the officer recommendations in Appendix 1 of the report;

2. Note that the proposed policy was placed before the Licensing Committee on 24 April 2025 and received their input and approval for the policy to proceed to Council for its consideration; and
3. Adopt the revised Statement of Licensing Policy in Appendix 2 of the report.

*[Notes;*

3. *The above successful resolution was carried with 45 Councillors voting in favour and 2 Councillors abstaining.]*

## **10 CONSTITUTION; RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP**

The Council considered a report from its Constitution Working Group recommending revised Contract Standing Orders, financial delegations and a voting process change.

On a motion from Councillor Tim Ball, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss, it was unanimously

### **RESOLVED to**

1. Approve the revised Contract Standing Orders as set out at Appendix 1 of the report for adoption into the Constitution to come into operation on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2025;
2. Approve the Financial Scheme of Delegations, as set out at Appendix 2 of the report and its addition to the Constitution as a new section at 3.7.12;
3. Agree a delegation to the Section 151 Officer to approve the updated Financial Regulations in due course, as set out in paragraph 3.7 of the report;
4. Approve the additions to the officer delegations scheme to cover the Council's property assets;
5. Agree that all votes on substantive items at Council be named votes, as described in paragraphs 3.9 - 3.12 of the report to take effect from the July 2025 Council meeting; and
6. Agree the consequent procedural rule amendments (as set out in Appendix 4 of the report) that are needed to put this voting decision in place.

## **11 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Statements were made by the following members of the public.

Susan Charles made a statement about Access, Planning and Buses. Susan called on the Council to have accessibility in mind for all aspects of travel use and gave

some examples of recent problems. A full copy of the statement has been added to the Minute book and the online record.

Jason Towells made a statement about Fosse Way school and called on the Council to reconsider funding students at this vital service. A full copy of the statement has been added to the Minute book and the online record. Councillor Shaun Hughes asked whether there had been any changes in the children's needs that would support the Council's decision, to which Jason replied that the children's needs had not changed. Councillor Sarah Evans asked if this would potentially affect school attendance, to which Jason replied, potentially it would. He explained that transition is very difficult and traumatic for these students and being on site means this is minimised so they are able to access school calmly, and challenging behaviour at home is reduced. Unfortunately, some children may refuse to attend at all. Councillor Lesley Mansell asked if Jason was aware that the Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing PDS Panel had considered this issue and specifically the disproportionate number of young people with special educational needs within the youth justice system and whether he considered that withdrawing funding may mean these young people are more likely to end up in the youth justice system. Jason replied that, as some of these young people were severely autistic, their needs were different. Councillor Joanna Wright asked if the closure of the residential provision might lead to some children going into care, to which Jason replied that potentially it could mean that for a small group of children.

Joanne Meredith made a statement calling for a new community hall in Keynsham. She spoke as a member of Keynsham light opera group for 25 years, serving as chair of committee for over 10 years and a director for the group since 2010 and also the volunteer artistic director of Phoenix Keynsham Youth Theatre. A full copy of the statement has been added to the Minute book and the online record. Joanne set out the reasons why a community facility was needed and would benefit the Keynsham community. Councillor Dave Biddleston asked whether the problems Joanne had described were experienced by other organisations in the town, to which Joanne replied that she was on a local working group and these difficulties were shared by other groups. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if there was any kind of business case whereby the Council might be able to match funds raised by the community, to which Joanne responded that she wasn't aware that there was. Councillor Chris Warren asked for clarification on the age range for the Phoenix group, which was given, and mentioned the hall at the new Pixash facility.

Bethany Claus Widick made a statement about the Winifred's Lane ETRO, a copy of which has been added to the Minute book and the online record. Bethany explained that the ETRO had made a clear and positive impact on the quality of life and safety in her neighbourhood.

Charlie Knight, a student at the University of Bath, made a statement about making WECA work for Bath, a copy of which has been added to the Minute book and the online record. Charlie thanked the Council for a number of positive impacts the Council had had on the city. Councillor Robin Moss asked Charlie if he was aware that the Council also represented North East Somerset. Charlie agreed that he was aware.

Adrian Inker made a statement making the case for a community hall in Keynsham, a copy of which has been added to the Minute book and the online record. He presented data about the population increase and set out the many benefits such a facility would bring, including bringing together charities and community organisations to encourage joint working and support. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if there was yet a business plan for this proposal, to which Adrian replied that they could work on one, but that it would be helpful to know at the outset that they had the Council's support before investing time and effort. Councillor Dave Biddleston queried whether Adrian was aware that plans for a theatre complex at Broadlands school had been included in the Building Schools for the Future programme some years ago, which had been cancelled by the Conservative government. Adrian replied that he had been involved in the plans for that project, which had coincided with the Academy programme which took this out of the Local Authority's remit which had been very unfortunate. Councillor Sam Ross asked if Keynsham Town Council would be involved in plans, to which Adrian replied that they would be part of any consultation and planning process, but ownership would need to remain with the community.

Taylor Wilson-Quon made a statement about the National Highways recommendation to make the A350 a strategic route from the M4 to the Dorset coast, thereby diverting traffic and particularly HGVs from driving through Bath. He welcomed this as a positive step forward, leading to less congestion and pollution in the city.

Simon McCombe made a statement about rural transport (a copy of which has been added to the Minute book and the online record) and in particular the 'Big Lemon' bus service (X91 and X99) which serves the Chew Valley. He outlined how vital this service was to the community and hoped that WECA would continue to provide this. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if Simon would like to meet with Councillor Fiona Gourley, the new Cabinet Project Lead for Rural connectivity. Simon replied that he was sure the Chew Valley Sustainable Transport Project group would be interested in doing so.

The Chair thanked the speakers for their statements, which would be referred to the relevant Cabinet Member.

## **12 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

Councillor Shaun Hughes made a statement in support of Fosse Way House as a vital and unique lifeline for children and families, as endorsed by their OFSTED report. He praised the outstanding work they did, at a fraction of the cost of alternatives and called on the Council to reverse the decision to withdraw funding before the facility was lost within a matter of weeks. Councillor Joanna Wright asked if Councillor Hughes was aware of the costs B&NES would incur if some of the children had to go into care, to which Councillor Hughes replied that he did not have the costs for B&NES, but was aware from other Councils that it could be in the region of £5k a week, or more if the child has more complex needs. Councillor Kevin Guy asked Councillor Hughes if he had noted from the report that went to the Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel on this issue that decisions made had not been for budgetary reasons, but were educational decisions based upon expert advice as no funding had been withdrawn. Councillor Hughes confirmed that he had, but noted

that the funding was not being provided and disagreed with the contention that these children did not require the service.

The Chair referred this statement to the relevant Cabinet Member.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm

Chair .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**