

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

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

Thursday, 11th July, 2024

Present:- **Councillors** Andy Wait, Grant Johnson, Anna Box, Jess David, John Leach, Deborah Collins, Saskia Heijltjes and June Player

Apologies for absence: Councillors:

#### **75 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **76 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### **77 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Alex Beaumont gave his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Hal MacFie.

#### **78 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

#### **79 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN**

There was none.

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

Ceris Humphreys made a statement regarding 'Journey to Net Zero and the Active Travel Masterplan'.

In response to a question from Councillor Heijltjes, Ms Humphreys stated that she would welcome a workplace levy.

In response to a question from Councillor Box, Ms Humphreys stated that joined up thinking was needed regarding short journeys within Bath. There should also be a focus on longer journeys and stopping them earlier.

The Chair thanked Ms Humphreys.

#### **81 MINUTES**

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

## 82 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Highways, Councillor Rigby gave an update on the following:

- North Parade Bridge is now open (closed for 7 weeks, work was on target)
- 3 crossings are completed
- City Centre Security Scheme, Upper Borough Walls is finished, now working on Lower Borough Walls (due to finish in November)
- Regarding highways, Queen Square is completed
- Regarding Emission Based Parking TRO – this was paused for the pre-election period but is going ahead now.
- Liveable Neighbourhoods – Sydney Road is in place and there will be a press release regarding Lower Lansdown.
- Transport Action Plan (TAP) will be considered by Cabinet today.
- Park and Ride – looking at a full business plan. It has been in house for 18 months. We are keen on a dedicated RUH Park and Ride.
- Consultation on parking charges will go live shortly.
- National Highways plan to close Warminster Road for repairs for a significant period.

Councillor Heijltjes asked why the bid for traffic signalling was unsuccessful. The Cabinet Member stated that it was a competitive bid, we were almost not 'bad enough'.

Councillor Box asked about Park and Ride timing extensions for the Christmas period. The Cabinet Member explained that there would be trials in the run up to the Christmas Market period.

Councillor Heijltjes asked how to add schemes to the TAP (Transport Action Plan) and how the TAP and ATM (Active Travel Masterplan) interact. The Cabinet Member stated that schemes are objectively scored. She also noted that Councillor Heijltjes is meeting with officers about this.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel, Councillor Warren gave an update on the following:

- The Local Plan has incorporated the new National England Standard
- Nature Recovery – the bid on Forest of the Nations has been successfully shortlisted.
- The Climate and Nature Annual Report has been deferred for consideration as there has been a government delay in releasing data
- Green Open Homes had 800 visitors/22 homes
- Heritage Homes project – Council buildings have improved. Solar Panels have been fitted on the cemetery and sports centre.

- Energy efficiency standards for rental properties are being worked on.

Councillor David asked if the Green Open Homes Scheme could be expanded to include nature friendly gardens. The Cabinet Member noted the suggestion.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members.

### **83 CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES IN NORTH EAST SOMERSET: THE JOURNEY TO NET ZERO TRANSPORT STRATEGY**

Councillor Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel, introduced the item and gave a presentation which covered the following:

- What is this Strategy?
- Why have we created this Strategy?
- How have we developed this Strategy
- Keynsham and Saltford, summary of possible improvements
- Somer Valley, summary of possible improvements
- Hicks Gate, summary of possible interventions
- Whitchurch Village, summary of possible improvements
- What are the next steps of this Strategy?

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

Councillor MacFie asked about car parks in Keynsham in light of extra homes and shoppers. The Cabinet Member stated that the information was supported by data and that car parking is under review. She added that nothing would be happening immediately.

Councillor MacFie thanked the Cabinet Member for visiting the Keynsham area and showing possible routes. He stated that he was keen to see facility for bikes on the bypass in the area.

Councillor MacFie asked about planned housing developments at Hicks Gate and the links with Bristol. He stated that it would be helpful to know the numbers for the consultation response. The Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development, Councillor Matt McCabe explained that any allocated housing will be consulted on. He explained that Bristol City Council are keen to move the Park and Ride at Brislington in order to develop the site for housing. He stated that it is not clear yet where the housing would be but would probably be on both sides of the boundary.

Councillor Johnson asked about mobility hubs, especially with regard to delivery hubs around the CAZ (Clean Air Zone). The Cabinet Member (Councillor Warren) explained that some mobility hubs are on the programme of work with WECA (West of England Combined Authority). She explained that hubs would be different depending on location, some town centre hubs may include a bus stop and bike parking and some in rural locations may include parking.

Responding to a question from Councillor Johnson about a train station in Saltford, the Cabinet Member stated that this is a question for WECA.

Councillor Wait stated that he welcomed a cycle path along the bypass in Keynsham to give a cycle and walking route into town.

Councillor Wait stated that he supported the pedestrianisation of Keynsham High Street and continuous cycle path from Bath to Bristol. The Cabinet Member stated that she would continue to put the case to WECA.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members.

## **84 ACTIVE TRAVEL MASTERPLAN**

Councillor Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel, introduced the item and gave a presentation which covered the following:

- What is this Masterplan?
- Why have we created this Masterplan?
- Schools Climate Summit
- What is the Masterplan?
- Interactive Map of routes
- What are the next steps in the Masterplan?
- When and how do the public get involved?

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

Councillor Box stated that the consultation must make clear that it is a shopping list in order to manage expectations. She asked that open updates are given to show working and why things happen. She stated that bike schemes are good but people have concerns about the dangers of roads. She asked if there is likelihood of bike racks on buses. The Cabinet Member for Highways explained that she had had conversations with two major operators, and it is not something they feel they can do at present.

Councillor Box asked about active travel key partners such as GP's and schools. The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency that she wants all partners to feed into the consultation. She stated that the plans will be updated – for example if there is funding for an individual route.

Councillor Collins stated that this was exciting work and that it was good to see integrated routes. She state that it was slightly disappointing that the great tool kit does not seem to flow into the plan, it is just routes. Also some roads are heavily used by cyclists but are low on the maintenance list. The Cabinet Member thanked her for the feedback.

Councillor Player asked about working on what we already have. She stated that road conditions are appalling. She stated that on the Lower Bristol Road car park, all of the vegetation has been pulled out. It must be made attractive. The Cabinet

Member stated that these points can be checked and while street trees are not in this policy, it is a priority for us.

Councillor Heijltjes asked how the ATM is delivering for residents, she stated that it was too big, had some mistakes, the map is not useful and census data is from 2021 when numbers were skewed due to the pandemic/work from home. She also asked why another expensive report had been done and asked the cost and timeframe for delivery. The officer explained that the report had been written in house. The data is the most up to date that we have and the plan can be adapted, residents can tell us if we have something wrong. The Cabinet Member stated that she is aware that this piece of work is not complete at this stage, legal advice was slightly later than we would have liked. She further explained that this document puts us in a position to have successful bids for funding and the cost is less than implementing any possible cycle route.

Councillor Johnson stated that cyclists are concerned about cars and also about ice and leaves when cycling, there is a need to maintain cycle tracks. The Cabinet Member stated that she hoped the new Government would pay attention to the need for this type of work when considering budgets. She referenced feedback on independent travel which included fear of men – she stated that trees can add to such fears and concerns.

Councillor David stated that this is the first time the Council has had an Active Travel Masterplan for the whole district. She stated that she would like a map so she can promote it. She also suggested that the consultation be promoted through universities and schools. She asked when more e-bikes would be available in Bath, a lot get moved to Bristol. The Cabinet Member responded that usage of the bikes helps. She thanked Councillor David for her suggestions.

The Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development, Councillor Matt McCabe stated that he was pleased to see rural issues in the document. He stated that there is a missing chunk between Radstock and Bath (no pavement). He underlined the importance of gathering local knowledge. He noted that there is sometimes a lack of links between villages and sometimes walkers do not want cyclists on footpaths and landowners may not want to surface their land. He stated that it will be a challenge to prioritize. The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency explained that the next step will be prioritization once identified as a 'strategic route'.

Councillor Box stated that it is a good use of tax payers money to create this Masterplan as it is cost effective and we can be more flexible going forwards. The Cabinet Member agreed.

Councillor Leach asked if Bath's cycle mayor could be involved in the Masterplan and asked if there was a walking mayor. The Cabinet Member stated that she would be delighted to work with them and is in contact with the current cycling mayor.

Councillor Player asked about plans for cycling on Upper Bristol Road which, she reported, is incredibly dangerous. The Cabinet Member explained that this document did not have that level of design detail, she stated that we are constrained by the widths of roads but are monitoring floating bus stops.

Councillor Heijltjes spoke about the shared use of paths and 20mph cycle speed must be an error. She stated that towpaths were socially unsafe and not wide enough. The Cabinet Member agreed that towpaths are not the complete answer. Councillor Heijltjes stated that she would like to see a plan for the most urgent of the routes. The Cabinet Member agreed that the next stage is prioritization of the routes.

Councillor Heijltjes asked how walking/cycle zones are decided on. She asked how to get a request of a bridge into the plan. The Cabinet Member stated that the team can advise on this.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members.

## **85 RESPONSE FROM CABINET TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FOOD TASK GROUP**

*Note: Councillor Grant Johnson Chaired the meeting from this point (Councillor Andy Wait left the meeting)*

The Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development, Councillor Matt McCabe introduced the item. He talked about middle ground growers.

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

Councillor Heijltjes asked about the partially accepted recommendation regarding a lead officer. The Cabinet Member stated that he will consider where it sits. The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency stated that the reason for the partial acceptance was that the funding is unclear at this stage.

Councillor Player stated that there are no allotments in Westmoreland Ward. There are houses with no gardens and flats but people deserve green space. The Cabinet Member for Built Environment stated that a suitable site would need to be put forward and he will take away her points.

Councillor Leach stated that he was on the Food Task Group and explained that they were constrained in what they could cover due to the remit and time available.

The Cabinet Member for Built Environment stated that it is a challenging time for farmers and it is important that we engage.

Councillor Johnson explained that there was a commitment to allotments in Paulton 14 years ago when the housing was built. He asked if there is a mechanism in the planning system to ensure these commitments are met. The Cabinet Member stated that this was completely unacceptable and he will see if there is something in the Local Plan to address this. The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency added that telling your MP is useful as the Government will be revamping policies. Councillor MacFie added that there is a mechanism – it can be put in as a ‘condition’ of a planning application.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members.

**86 PANEL WORKPLAN**

Panel members noted the future workplan and made the following suggestions for future items:

Councillor Box – Food Strategy - Business/Farmers

Councillor Box – enforcement regarding the Dark Sky Policy

Councillor Heijltjes – Vison Zero Update

Councillor David – Waste (high streets and town centres) – progress on reduction

Councillor Collins – retro fitting/planning policies

Councillor Player – HMO's/Waste and mess

The meeting ended at 12.16 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**