

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

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

Thursday, 12th September, 2024

Present:- **Councillors** Andy Wait, Grant Johnson, Alex Beaumont, Anna Box, Jess David, Deborah Collins, Saskia Heijltjes and Duncan Hounsell (in place of John Leach)

Apologies for absence: Councillors: June Player

87 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

88 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

89 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor John Leach gave his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Duncan Hounsell.

Councillor June Player gave her apologies.

90 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Collins informed the Panel that she is a member of Bath and West Community Energy which is mentioned in the item 'Annual Climate and Nature Progress Report'. Following the Monitoring Officer's advice, she will stay for the discussion on the item.

91 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

- Councillor Duncan Hounsell made a statement regarding the 'WECA A4 Corridor Project'
- Malcolm Baldwin regarding 'Future Proofing our Tourist Economy Sector'
- Ceris Humphries submitted a statement regarding 'Street Strategy' but could not attend the meeting.

All statements are attached to the minutes of the meeting.

93 MINUTES

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

94 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Chair explained that Councillor Paul Roper (Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development) and Councillor Oli Henman (Cabinet Project Lead for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel) were at the meeting to present items and could answer any relevant questions when their item is discussed.

95 STREETS STRATEGY

Councillor Paul Roper (Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development) introduced the report. He explained that the paper sets out the issues on this policy development item. The Cabinet Member asked for the Panel members views.

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

Councillor Johnson asked whether 'zoning' (eg Food Quarter) in Bath may impact other areas of the city. He stated that Bath is not easily quartered and asked how this will work. The Cabinet Member explained that this was not just for Bath but other towns. There will be work with the regeneration team, 'zone' is a buzz word.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that the paper is focused on retail and events rather than footways and highways etc. She explained that Bristol and other Council's are developing a 'kerbside strategy' which is a more holistic way to look at our streets and how we use them. The Cabinet Member stated that he would pass this comment on. Councillor Heijltjes explained the 'Lambeth Kerbside Strategy' which sets out how the kerbside should be used for people, not just for car parking. It includes policies like EV (Electric Vehicle) charging provision and green spaces.

Councillor Box stated that she is a rural Councillor and that this strategy is more for the towns. She asked what enforcement there will be (in terms of licenses). The Cabinet Member stated that enforcement does need to be considered, there are currently 3 environmental health enforcement officers. The officer explained that since Covid, enforcement officers have been permissive to help businesses but there must be a line. Councillor Box asked that consideration be give to people with disabilities.

Councillor Collins noted that the paper gave an outline idea of the strategy. She asked that the impact on businesses be considered as there are places in Bath with vibrant mini highstreets and outside tables and chairs add to this. The Cabinet Member stated that he would pass these comments on.

Councillor Johnson agreed that there should not be anything too restrictive to allow for vibrant streets. He asked about strategies for buskers and also how enforcement would work when this is very stretched. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that there is a tension and agreed that enforcement has to be part of this. He acknowledged that enforcement is an issue in rural towns. He explained that Bath (BID) Marshalls can be considered.

Councillor David stated that the desire to introduce more markets is a good idea especially local and neighbourhood markets. She asked about the environmental impact of the strategy eg. The effect of patio heaters. The Cabinet Member explained that the Regeneration Team are looking at the environment of the city in terms of the street scene and looking to improve urban landscapes. The issue is with the funding.

Councillor Wait stated that the strategy is for the whole of BANES. He stated that he would like to see more markets and events for Keynsham High Street and asked that the organisation of this be made as straight forward as possible eg. Road closures. He stated that High Streets are struggling so anything that encourages people to come along is good. He asked how the team will communicate with residents. The Cabinet Member explained that a cultural review is taking place which will include meetings with stakeholders and community groups. We have picked up that people feel it is difficult to arrange community events and we take that on board, but have to comply with rules on Health and Safety etc. The officer added that he working on stakeholder analysis and will talk to residents associations at different stages. He gave an example that he will be in Keynsham next week to talk about air quality.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that there is not a residents association in her ward. She asked that noise be taken into account as many places where events take place are also residential.

Councillor Box asked that Town Councils be included in terms of key stakeholders as they know the area and the issues. The Cabinet Member agreed.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officer and asked that the strategy be brought back to the Panel when it is in its later stages.

96 ANNUAL CLIMATE AND NATURE PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor Oli Henman (Cabinet Project Lead for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel) gave a presentation which covered the following:

- Clear Ambition for Climate and Nature
- First Joint Annual Progress Report
- Where are we now: BANES Council
- Highlights: Climate
- Highlights: Nature
- Highlights: Place-based Green Infrastructure
- Next Steps

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

Councillor Johnson asked about decarbonising Council operations and how much of the electricity decrease was a result of direct changes made by the Council and how much was down to the national picture. The Cabinet Project Lead stated that he understood it was a mixture of both. He stated that he would check this and see if it is possible in the future to separate these statistics.

Councillor Heijltjes asked about timescales and deadlines that were shown in the original action plan. She asked about progress on the Ecological Action Plan and asked about risk assessments in terms of not achieving core priorities. The Cabinet Project Lead explained that the report shows the ambition for 2030. He said that it was a challenging picture and that there had not been the level of investment that was desired. A lot depends on the national picture. He added that the Annex show the original aims and progress.

Councillor Box ask the following questions, the Cabinet Project Lead answers are shown in italics:

- Can public health be shown in terms of air quality. Councillor Box requested a written response regarding how many potential lives have been saved by clean air strategies. She commended the intervention. *The Cabinet Project Lead agreed that this was a good idea and explained that the map on the website shows each air quality monitor. He agreed that this is linked with public health.*
- Suggestion of practical support for farmers and landowners with regard to biodiversity in hedgerows. Maybe a campaign/training. *The Cabinet Project Lead agreed with this approach.*
- The school transport fleet is very old, this could be de carbonised. *The Cabinet Project Lead agreed to take this comment back.*

Councillor David ask the following questions, the Cabinet Project Lead answers are shown in italics:

- It is good to see information on the ecological quality of parks and green spaces, a number of interventions have benefited from funding. The funding needs to be sustained. *The Cabinet Project Lead agreed that community partnerships are a good way to give people ownership. We need to build on those.*
- The Corporate landlord model offers opportunities to improve nature – hopefully this includes parks and green spaces. *This point will be taken back.*
- It is good to see a level of detail regarding rivers and glad to see the issue of sunken boats being gradually addressed. Plea to allow continued funding for this in the budget process. *There are different responsibilities regarding rivers – the process with sunken boats has begun, there are currently 6 sunken boats in Bath.*

Councillor Collins ask the following questions, the Cabinet Project Lead answers are shown in italics:

- Green Open Homes – brilliant initiative.
- Regarding transport, it is an important target to get emissions down. Cycling and walking do not seem to be having a big impact. Is there a communication strategy regarding transport? There is a lot of disinformation. It is useful for Councillors to know what they can do to move the dial. *The Cabinet Project Lead acknowledged that it is a challenging area, a big shift is needed to make changes. 20% of the Council fleet is electric. Part of the picture is the Liveable Neighbourhood plans – this may mean encouraging people not to drive past a school.*

Councillor Hounsell asked about the second phase of 'Solar Together. He explained a blockage in the system regarding getting payment to people for energy sent to the grid. He suggested a guidance leaflet to break down the jargon. The Cabinet Project Lead stated that this could be looked in to.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that transport made up 32% of emissions and the target is a 25% reduction in car journeys. She asked for data to be included and for background information to be included/signposted. She highlighted that only 1 out of the 18 new actions for 2024/25 are for transport while road transport was such a large cause of emissions. She added that there must be safe infrastructure for people to make the change to cycling. The Cabinet Project Lead stated that reducing car use is the core aim which requires a cultural shift. Education and communication are key as is the Liveable Neighbourhood scheme. He stated that there are plans for cycle routes but a lot depends on funding.

Councillor Heijltjes stated that she was keen to see the active travel links reinstated as part of the Somer Valley Links project. Councillor Wait agreed.

Councillor Johnson suggested training to encourage behavioural change for Council fleet drivers regarding reducing fuel use. The Cabinet Project Lead took this idea on board. He explained that in 2017, 40 vehicles were brought back in house which has affected the figures.

Councillor Collins stated that it is important to have good communication around why we are changing infrastructure.

Councillor Heijltjes asked how the reduction in emissions compared with the national picture. The Cabinet Project Lead explained that the statistics are from national sources and the team would check on this.

Councillor Heijltjes asked about the possibility of using electric cargo bikes for some roles such as road inspection teams. The Cabinet Project Lead agreed that this would be a good idea and also explained that E cargo bikes are being used/tested for the general public in his ward as part of the WECA e-bike and e-scooter trials currently.

Councillor Wait stated that in his surgeries there were often complaints about plants growing on pavements etc. – we need to explain that we do not use poison now but heat warming devices. We need to take people with us. The Cabinet Member Lead

agreed and explained that the use of pesticides was stopped in 2021 and manual removal is now used which takes longer.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Project Lead and the officer.

97 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted that future workplan and that the November meeting would consider:

Vision Zero Transport
Housing Plan
(possible Waste Recycling provision)

Future items include: Active Travel and Movement Strategy

Panel members suggested future items on: Air pollution and Homelessness Strategy Update

The meeting ended at 11.45 am

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services