

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 17th July 2025

Present:- **Councillors** Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Anna Box, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Alan Hale, David Harding, Liz Hardman, Steve Hedges, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Dr Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, John Leach, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Matt McCabe, McCombe, Sarah Moore, Ann Morgan, Robin Moss, Michelle O'Doherty, Bharat Pankhania, June Player, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, Paul Roper, Sam Ross, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby, Karen Walker, Tim Warren CBE and Andy Wait

Apologies for absence: **Councillors** David Biddleston, Deborah Collins, Sarah Evans, Ian Halsall, Gavin Heathcote, Saskia Heijltjes, Oli Henman, Joel Hirst, Hal MacFie, Onkar Saini, Warren, Sarah Warren and Joanna Wright

13 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

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

14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

15 MINUTES - 22ND MAY 2025

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of 22nd May be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL OR FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Councillor Liz Hardman invited Councillor Karen Walker to the dais to present her with her past Chair's badge, as she had been unable to attend the annual meeting.

It was then proposed by Councillor Kevin Guy, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss and supported by Councillors Shaun Hughes, Sam Ross and Tim Warren that the Council places on record its appreciation of the services performed by Councillor Karen Walker in the office of Chair of the Council for 2024/25.

Councillor Karen Walker then addressed the Council and, in so doing, highlighted a number of the key moments of the year such as attending 85 events, meeting many people and presiding over 17 citizenship ceremonies. She thanked officers, colleague members and her husband, Dave for support over the year.

The Chair then asked the Council to show their thanks and appreciation to Mandy Bishop, Chief Operating Officer, as this was her last Council meeting before leaving to take up the post of Chief Executive at North Somerset Council.

The Chair then;

1. Made the customary announcements regarding microphones and phones;
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.

17 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

18 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Statements were made by the following members of the public;

Stuart Bridge spoke to Council about the 2 new pedestrian crossings on Bloomfield road, setting out the improvements this had made to safety in the area and thanking the Council for these upgrades. A full copy of the statement has been added to the online record and the Minute book.

Hillary Carr, Chair of Bathford Parish councillor, made a statement about the collaborative relationship between BANES & Bathford Parish Council and its community. A full copy of the statement has been added to the online record and the Minute book.

Theresa Franklin made a statement about bike hangars, expressing positivity for active travel and thanking the Council for increasing the number of bike hangars in the city from 21 to 41. She urged the Council to continue to promote active travel. A full copy of the statement has been added to the online record and the Minute book.

Phoenix Dewberry, a member of the Bath Pride Committee and founder of Safe Space Bath made a statement proposing measures to ensure the city protects trans and queer folks, assisted by their friend, Ross. Councillor Lesley Mansell asked if Phoenix was aware that the Supreme Court ruling has not changed the requirements of the Equalities Act, to which Phoenix replied that they were aware, but it still had had a considerable impact. Councillor Tim Warren asked Phoenix if they had personally been threatened, to which Phoenix replied that they had not personally experienced this, but had many friends who had. Councillor Sam Ross asked how Phoenix would define a safe space. Phoenix replied that it was somewhere that welcomes, celebrates and protects trans people. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if Phoenix would like to meet with the Equalities Officer and Cabinet Member, to which they responded that they would. A full copy of the statement has been added to the online record and the Minute book.

Bob Goodman made a statement about the state of the Council. He referred to listed buildings consent concerns that he has previously raised with the Council, and in particular, at 10 Wellington Buildings. He gave his view that regulations had been breached and that the Council was not taking the action it should to deal with unauthorised activity. Councillor Eleanor Jackson asked if Bob was aware that enforcement is left to the discretion of the Local Authority, to which Bob replied with his view that this was not the case. Councillor Colin Blackburn asked how long the Chief Executive had known about the alleged criminal act that had been committed by the Council, to which Bob replied that he had brought this to the attention of officers in January/February 2023 and had been told at the time that the Chief Executive had been informed. Councillor Tim Warren asked what qualifications Bob had to be able to make these claims, to which Bob replied that he had been a trained Buildings Surveyor with Bath City Council and a fellow of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and had considerable knowledge in this area.

Helen Bedser, Chief Executive of Julian House, made a statement about the future of Off the Streets service provision in B&NES and called on the Council to take urgent action to secure the future of the off-the-streets service and to commit to a fair, sustainable budget for the homelessness pathway. Councillor Robin Moss referred to Helen's mention of the two business cases they had submitted, and whether they had received a formal response from the Council. Helen replied that they had had constructive engagement with the Council and received £25k for a feasibility study which they matched for both business cases. Those were submitted 8 months ago and 2 months ago but as yet, no formal response had been received, which made planning for continuity of the service very difficult. Councillor Karen Walker asked if Helen was aware that, in May, the Council published a preliminary market engagement notice for the provision of a hostel. Helen replied that she was aware, and that the engagement notice had been extended again to 31st July. A full copy of the statement has been added to the online record and the Minute book.

Ed Browning made a statement setting out why a better public toilet strategy for B&NES was needed. He explained his personal perspective as to why this was vital, and also mentioned his experience as a Tour guide and the impact of poor toilet provision on the visitor experience. He urged the Council to support the motion later on the agenda, and press ahead with practical improvements. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if Ed was supportive of the idea of making the market toilets open to the public. Ed replied that he would welcome that, and added that improvements to them would be appreciated. A full copy of the statement has been added to the online record and the Minute book.

Ghika Savva, Student Community Partnership Manager, made a statement highlighting the beneficial work of the Partnership and the positive impacts it produced, but calling for further funding to help the work continue with increased student numbers. Councillor Colin Blackburn asked how much funding the University of Bath and Bath Spa University contributed each year, to which Ghika replied that it was 50% of the costs. Councillor Tim Warren asked about actual amounts, to which Ghika replied that the cost of the operation was about £100k a year and they commit to 3 years funding at a time. Councillor Karen Walker asked if there was a figure for the amount of students living in Peasedown St John, Radstock, Midsomer Norton and Westfield. Ghika replied there were a few, but not in HMOs and added that students were moving further afield as accommodation

options in the city reduced. A full copy of the statement has been added to the online record and the Minute book.

Malcolm Baldwin, a member of the Circus Area Residents Association (CARA) made a statement entitled 'Future-proofing our tourist economy sector: Part 2' and urging Councillors to support the motion later on the meeting's agenda. Councillor Karen Walker asked Malcolm if, should the motion be successful, he would agree that the benefits should be across the whole of B&NES and not just Bath. Malcolm agreed that should be the case, but proposed that resources should be targeted on where the need was greatest and some kind of sliding scale might work. Councillor Shaun Hughes asked if Malcolm considered that a levy would solve 'over-tourism', to which Malcolm replied that it would not necessarily do that, but that tourism needed to be managed differently, with a balance between visitors and residents. Councillor Eleanor Jackson asked if it would be a good idea to devote some of the proceeds to the provision of public toilets, to which Malcolm replied that that would be a good example to use some of the funds. A full copy of the statement has been added to the online record and the Minute book.

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

19 YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2024 TO 2026 - REFRESH FOR 2025 TO 2026

The Local Authority has a statutory duty, in partnership with Health, Police and Probation, to produce a Youth Justice Plan. The Plan sets out how services are to be organised and funded and what functions will be carried out to prevent youth offending and re-offending across Bath and North East Somerset. The Plan was presented to the Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy, Development and Scrutiny Panel and then to Cabinet and is now recommended to Council for approval. A final version will then be submitted to the national Youth Justice Board (YJB).

The Council considered the refresh of the Youth Justice plan for 2025-26.

On a motion from Councillor Paul May, seconded by Councillor Mansell, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to approve the refreshed Youth Justice Plan.

20 TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2024-25

Treasury risk management at the Authority is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 Edition (the CIPFA Code), which requires the Council to approve a Treasury Management Strategy before the start of each financial year, review performance during the year, and approve an annual report within six months after the end of each financial year. The Council considered a report giving details of performance against the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25.

On a motion from Councillor Mark Elliott, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss, it was then unanimously

RESOLVED that

1. The Treasury Management Report to 31st March 2025, prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Code of Practice, is noted; and
2. The Treasury Management Indicators to 31st March 2025 are noted.

21 FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

At its meeting on 7th July 2025, the Restructuring Implementation Committee considered the flexible retirement application from the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service). The Restructuring Implementation Committee now recommends to Council to approve the application for flexible retirement.

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

RESOLVED to approve

1. The flexible retirement of the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) from 1 October 2025 for a period of four months in the first instance whilst a new Chief Executive is recruited; and
2. A delegation to the Director of People & Change, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the power to extend the flexible retirement arrangement by mutual agreement for up to one further month if required to ensure a smooth transition.

22 MOTION FROM THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP - SUPPORT FOR VISITOR CHARGE POWERS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND

The Council considered a motion from the Liberal Democrat Group about visitor charge powers for Local Authorities.

On a motion from Councillor Michelle O'Doherty, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

Council notes:

1. Over 1 million overnight visitors and 4.2 million day visitors come to Bath annually.
2. Tourism brings significant economic benefits to our area, generating nearly half a billion pounds in direct and related spend, supporting local businesses and over 8,000 jobs.

3. Direct income to the Council from visitor spending – including £12 million financial surplus from Heritage Services in 2024-25 – helps fund vital public services across Bath and North East Somerset.
4. High visitor numbers are also associated with disbenefits and additional costs to local authorities, through pressure on infrastructure, services, transport, waste management and cleansing.
5. Visitor charges, paid to local authorities by overnight visitors, are commonplace in other countries; similar schemes are beginning to be considered and introduced in the UK using a variety of mechanisms.
6. Visitor charges have the potential to raise additional income which could help mitigate the impacts of tourism on communities and invest in improved facilities and services benefiting residents and visitors.
7. Councils face long-term financial challenges, due to the decline in government grant funding and cost pressures, and have been encouraged to develop new sources of income.

Council therefore:

8. Calls on Government to give English councils the freedom and necessary powers to introduce locally administered visitor charges.
9. Welcomes the leadership B&NES is showing on this issue and the initiative by the Leader of B&NES Council to establish a joint position with Leaders representing other key heritage cities in England.
10. Endorses the joint letter from the Leaders which calls for new engagement between Government and councils to explore and develop strategies for ameliorating the adverse impacts of tourism and to consider how the benefits can be as impactful and wide ranging as possible.
11. Believes any visitor charge schemes in England should be designed locally, based on evidence and tailored to local needs. Furthermore, believes that income should be available to the administering local authority to allocate and should not be to the detriment of other government funding allocations.

23 MOTION FROM THE LABOUR GROUP - PUBLIC TOILET PROVISION

The Council considered a motion from the Labour group about public toilet provision.

On a motion from Councillor Robin Moss, seconded by Councillor Paul Roper, it was then unanimously

RESOLVED that

Council notes that:

1. Bath attracts over 6 million visitors a year¹ and is one of Britain's most visited cities by overseas tourists²
2. Tourism brings over half a billion pounds to our economy³
3. Everyone needs to use the loo throughout the day, but for very many people, access to a public toilet can be hard to predict. The Royal Society of Public Health estimates 1 in 5 limit going out and 56% limit fluid intake on purpose, because they're worried about toilet availability.⁴
4. Public toilets are essential for dignity, hygiene and public health. They protect social interaction and related economic activity for many:
 - more than 20% of the population are women of menstruating age⁵
 - urinary incontinence affects roughly 20%⁶
 - one in ten have problems with bowel control⁷
 - disability is "a lot" life-limiting for 6% of residents and "a little" for 10.4%⁸
 - and under-fives make up around 5%.⁹
5. In 2011 B&NES had 27 public toilet sites (B&NES' 2011-2026 Public Toilet Provision Strategy)¹⁰ but its public toilet website says we have just 20 today¹¹
6. A quick look on www.toiletmap.uk shows our loos are very few and far between.
7. Most of our public toilets close at 6pm, and many close earlier.
8. B&NES' Public Toilet Provision strategy should be reviewed on a five-yearly basis, so if this motion is passed this should have no budgetary implications.

Council recognises that:

9. People limit trips when they can't confidently access public toilets – this impacts long-term physical and mental health, the public space and local economy.
10. Our residents, visitors and traders will all benefit from more public toilets.

Council agrees that:

11. A full review of the Public Toilet Provision Strategy is now needed as the Strategy reaches its end-date. It should:

¹ <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/journey-net-zero-public-consultation-january-2022/visitors-and-tourists>

² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/leisureandtourism/articles/traveltrends/2023>

³ <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/journey-net-zero-public-consultation-january-2022/visitors-and-tourists>

⁴ <https://www.rsph.org.uk/about-us/news/taking-the-p-the-decline-of-the-great-british-public-toilet.html>

⁵ https://www.ahpma.co.uk/menstruation_facts_and_figures/

⁶ <https://www.bbuk.org.uk/continence-problems-in-the-uk/>

⁷ Same source

⁸ <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/SEB%20Population%20%26%20Demography%20Apr25.pdf>

⁹ Same source

¹⁰ https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/public_toilets_provision_strategy_-_december_2011_adopted.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/find-public-toilet>

- engage with communities and partners to identify gaps and solutions,
- include a needs assessment, and
- prioritise better provision of clean, accessible public toilets across B&NES.

24 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Councillor Duncan Hounsell made a statement explaining progress being made on re-opening Saltford Railway station as part of the vision of MetroWest. A full copy of the statement is linked online and has been added to the Minute book. Councillor Tim Warren asked if there was time on the timetable for a train to stop, to which Councillor Hounsell replied that it would be addressed as part of the feasibility study, which would then feed into a business case.

The Chair thanked the Councillor for his statement.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

Chair

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services