

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday 29th July 2025

Present:- Councillors Andy Wait (Chair), Shaun Hughes (in place of Grant Johnson), Duncan Hounsell (in place of Alex Beaumont), Anna Box, John Leach, Deborah Collins, Joanna Wright (in place of Saskia Heijltjes), and Hal MacFie

Cabinet Member for Resources: Councillor Mark Elliott

Also in attendance: Chris Major (Director of Place Management), Ceri Williams (Policy Development & Scrutiny Officer), Simon Porter (Head of Waste and Fleet) and Michael Hewitt (Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer)

150 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

151 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Democratic Services Officer drew attention to the Emergency Evacuation Procedure.

152 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Alex Beaumont, Councillor Saskia Heijltjes and Councillor Grant Johnson had sent their apologies to the Panel. Councillors Duncan Hounsell, Joanna Wright and Shaun Hughes were their respective substitutes for the duration of the meeting.

Councillor Karen Walker had also sent her apologies to the Panel and Councillor Hal MacFie was sitting on the Panel occupying the current vacant position.

153 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Colin Blackburn declared an other interest with regard to agenda item 7 (Call-in of decision E3620 – Business waste collection changes in central Bath). He stated that his wife runs a business within the centre of the city and that he is a Director of the business.

154 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

Councillor June Player addressed the Panel. She expressed concern about the financial and operational impact the proposed decision to change the timings for business waste collection will have on small and independent traders. She questioned the accuracy of the cost estimates and highlighted potential negative environmental and community consequences.

Mr Charlie Dalton-Ball, a local business owner addressed the Panel. He raised practical objections to the proposed waste collection time changes, citing staffing, hygiene, fire safety, and financial burdens. He noted that 93% of consultation respondents opposed the time changes and urged the Council to reconsider the decision.

156 CALL IN OF DECISION - BUSINESS WASTE COLLECTION CHANGES IN CENTRAL BATH

Councillor Colin Blackburn addressed the Panel and presented the case for the call-in. He argued that the proposed single-member decision lacked sufficient scrutiny and risked undermining existing improvements in waste management.

He highlighted concerns about the lack of pre-decision scrutiny, the consultation process, cost implications for businesses, and potential negative impacts on staff and the public realm. He advocated for a phased approach, implementing supported elements (e.g. reusable rubbish bags and labelling) while reconsidering the proposed time restrictions.

Councillor John Leach said that overall, there had been a low response to the consultation and asked if it was known why.

Councillor Blackburn replied that many businesses were too busy to respond and unaware of the potential impact until later in the process. He added that he had spoken to many businesses who did not respond but shared the concerns raised.

Councillor Anna Box asked about the operational logistics of waste collections and bollard access to the centre of the city.

Councillor Blackburn replied that service vehicles had access via a known procedure and that businesses were accustomed to the current collection window.

Councillor Joanna Wright asked how the change in timings would affect refuse collectors at the end of the working day and whether they would be able to access public transport to their homes.

Councillor Blackburn replied that they would still need to transfer the collected waste to a transfer station and that this could be a two hour process. He added that similar concerns had been raised by the operators and that they might need to use additional vehicles.

Councillor Shaun Hughes asked if the potential cost burden on businesses and staff was a true reflection.

Councillor Blackburn replied that he felt that the £3,000 estimate was too low and did not account for additional staffing, insurance, and utility costs.

Councillor Wright raised concerns regarding fire safety and internal waste storage.

Councillor Blackburn replied that many businesses were likely to have limited space to store waste and that specific waste handling needs were required for food waste.

Councillor Box asked if residents views had been sought on this decision.

Councillor Blackburn replied that he was not aware of any public concerns being raised as the consultation was aimed at local businesses.

The Chair asked if a reason could be given with regard to the lack of engagement from local businesses and members of the public for this Panel meeting.

Councillor Blackburn replied that people were too busy working and therefore no time to attend.

Councillor Wright asked if the decision had been scrutinised by the Panel prior to it being made.

Councillor Blackburn replied that it had not.

Councillor Wright asked if the waste collection contractors had been consulted as part of the decision-making process.

Councillor Mark Elliott, Cabinet Member for Resources replied that they had.

Councillor Elliott addressed the Panel. He defended his decision, stating that the proposed changes aimed to improve the public realm by reducing visible waste and deterring seagulls and vermin. He emphasised that the decision would be implemented as a 12-month pilot and that the Council had consulted widely over a six-week period, followed by targeted door knocking of businesses within the city centre.

He stated that the morning collection window (7.30am – 10.00am) remained unchanged and that no extra vehicles would be required as a result of the decision.

He explained that businesses could explore alternative collection arrangements as in some cases it would be possible to collect waste directly from a premises.

He said that the low response rate could also be viewed as a lack of concern about the proposed changes.

He stated that the estimated additional £3,000 annual cost per business was a worst-case scenario.

Councillor Duncan Hounsell asked if he could provide further comment on the rationale for the proposed time changes for waste collection.

Councillor Elliott replied that ongoing complaints were being received from residents about waste and seagulls.

Councillor Deborah Collins asked for clarification on when the window for collections was extended from 2 to 2.5 hours.

Councillor Elliott replied that this had changed as a result of the consultation process to reduce the need for extra vehicles and apologised that this was not reflected in the report that was circulated for the Panel.

Councillor Wright asked for further explanation regarding sections 3.11 and 3.12 of the Equalities Impact Assessment and how the Council were looking after its staff and the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises within the city.

Councillor Elliott replied that the proposed new collection window ended earlier than the current one and that the Equality Impact Assessment did not anticipate significant negative effects.

Councillor Box questioned whether enough information was available and suggested further scrutiny of the decision should take place following the pilot period.

Councillor Elliott acknowledged that the data available was from a low number of responses and expressed his willingness to return to the Panel for further scrutiny.

Councillor Hounsell referred to sections 5.2 and 5.3 of the report and asked if the Council were likely to need to employ an additional Enforcement Officer.

Councillor Elliott replied that he was highlighting this as a potential risk and reiterated that it was his view that it was a reasonable decision to adopt a trial period. He added that he would reexamine the decision if significant problems were to occur.

Councillor Collins commented that this could well be a serious issue for some local businesses and asked that the Council acts appropriately in terms of implementation and enforcement.

Councillor Elliott replied that he would advocate a supportive approach during the pilot and stated that the Council would work with businesses struggling to comply.

Councillor Hughes asked how the proposed changes would affect Council staff.

The Director of Place Management replied that they will work with the team on potential changes to shift patterns. He added that an improved public realm was the intended achievement.

Councillor Box questioned how this element could be measured successfully.

Councillor Elliott replied that he was willing to see how this could be measured.

He then gave a closing statement to the Panel. He said that he believed that the decision was reasonable and proportionate and that benefits to the public realm were there to be achieved. He added that the pilot would provide valuable data to inform future decisions.

Councillor Blackburn made a closing statement to the Panel. He maintained that the change of time for business waste collection element of the decision should be paused, with other two supported elements implemented first. He said that even within a trial period the costs to the businesses would be real.

Councillor Hughes stated that he felt that there was not an appropriate amount of data to proceed with a trial period and that changing the collection times would not result in less clutter within the city.

He added that he felt that the costs mentioned for the Council were likely to be real and that further scrutiny should take place in order to protect local businesses.

Councillor Hounsell commented that he felt that it was a rationale decision to have a trial period to test the feasibility of the change in collection times.

Councillor Wright said that she felt that pre-decision scrutiny would have been better, and that while improvements to the public realm are welcome, she did not agree that a pilot was a good idea.

Councillor Collins commented that only a small number of concerns had been raised through the consultation process and that a way forward was necessary to gather additional data. She asked that if the trial period goes ahead that officers will provide help to those businesses that need it, and the trial would be paused if significant problems did arise.

The Chair asked for the Panel to receive a report after six months of the trial period being in place so that they could be updated on its progress.

Councillor Hal MacFie said that he believed that 5pm – 6pm was a commercially important time of day for businesses and was therefore happy with decision to change the collection times.

Councillor Leach commented that he would like the decision to proceed as stated by the Cabinet Member for Resources.

A motion to refer the decision back to the Cabinet Member for reconsideration of the time restrictions was proposed by Councillor Shaun Hughes and seconded by Councillor Joanna Wright but was not carried. (Voting: 2 in favour, 5 against, 1 abstention).

A subsequent motion to dismiss the call-in and allow the decision to proceed was proposed by Councillor Deborah Collins and seconded by Councillor Duncan Hounsell and was carried. (Voting: 5 in favour, 2 against, 1 abstention).

The Panel therefore **RESOLVED** to dismiss the call-in and allow the Cabinet Member’s decision to proceed.

The meeting ended at 12.26 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services