

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 18th September 2025

Present:- **Councillors** Michael Auton, Alex Beaumont, David Biddleston, Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Anna Box, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Sarah Evans, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Alan Hale, Liz Hardman, Gavin Heathcote, Steve Hedges, Saskia Heijltjes, Oli Henman, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, John Leach, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Matt McCabe, Simon McCombe, Sarah Moore, Robin Moss, Michelle O'Doherty, June Player, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, Paul Roper, Sam Ross, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby, Chris Warren, Tim Warren CBE and Joanna Wright

Apologies for absence: **Councillors** Tim Ball, Mark Elliott, Ian Halsall, David Harding, Dr Eleanor Jackson, George Leach, Ann Morgan, Bharat Pankhania, Andy Wait, Karen Walker and Sarah Warren

25 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

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

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

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

The Chair reminded the meeting that the Council was currently in the pre-election period for the Widcombe & Lyncombe ward, and to bear this in mind for any contributions.

The Chair invited Councillor Colin Blackburn to briefly address the meeting. Councillor Blackburn made the following statement;

“At our last Full Council meeting, a member of the public addressed us about an issue of alterations made to council owned grade listed buildings, without listed buildings consent, which, by definition, is a criminal offence. He addressed the Council Leaders and in my factual question after the statement, I referred directly to the Chief Executive. I acknowledge that in asking that question I treated said officer unfairly and wish to withdraw the question.”*

The Chair then made the customary announcements regarding microphones and phones and announced that the meeting was being webcast. Anyone who did not wish to be filmed should make themselves known to the camera operators.

28 MINUTES - 17TH JULY 2025

The Council considered the minutes of 17th July 2025.

On a motion from Councillor Kevin Guy, seconded by Councillor Paul May, it was

RESOLVED that the amended* minutes of 17th July 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

29 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was none.

30 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Statements were made by the following members of the public;

Clive Humphries addressed the meeting about student HMOs in Bath. A copy of Clive's statement has been placed on the Minute book and added to the online record. Councillor Tim Warren asked Clive if he considered landlords should be paying business rates, to which Clive responded that he didn't. He added that he thought landlords should pay a contribution to the Council that is equitable to rates.

Mark Jerzak made a statement about the Chew Valley community trail, highlighting the benefits of the northern section of the path and calling on the Council to complete the circuit. A full copy of Clive's statement has been placed on the Minute book and added to the online record. Councillor Lucy Hodge asked Mark if he thought it would be helpful for the Council to contact Bristol Water again, and the speakers on this issue meet with her to discuss this. Mark agreed that it would.

Nick Baker, a Parish councillor from Chew Stoke, also spoke in support of completing the Chew Valley recreational trail for the many health, wellbeing and environmental benefits it brings. A full copy of Clive's statement has been placed on the Minute book and added to the online record.

Nicola Wilson, also a Parish Councillor for Chew Stoke, made a statement about the trail, bringing a historical family aspect to the issue as her grandmother had first come up with the idea of a trail around Chew Valley 25 years ago. A full copy of Nicola's statement has been placed on the Minute book and added to the online record. She urged the Council to take steps to press for completion of the trail.

The Chair thanked all the speakers and referred their statements to the relevant Cabinet Members.

31 APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE (SECTION 151 OFFICER)

The Council considered a recommendation from its Restructuring Implementation Committee regarding this appointment.

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

RESOLVED to agree the appointment of a new Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer), Mr Stuart Donnelly, from 5th January 2026 (*final date confirmed after the meeting*).

32 POLICY DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

The Council considered the Policy Development & Scrutiny annual report.

On a motion from Councillor Dine Romero, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to note the contents of the Policy Development and Scrutiny Annual Report 2024-2025.

33 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE USE OF THE REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA) & INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (IPA) 2016

The Council considered a report updating them on the use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act and Investigatory Powers Act, Policies, and Procedures.

On a motion from Councillor Manda Rigby, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss, it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. To note the summary of statistics on the use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (RIPA/IPA) by the Council (Appendix 1);
2. To note the RIPA & IPA training module (link para 3.4 of the report); and
3. To note and approve the Council's Policy on the use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) & Investigatory Powers Act (IPA) 2016 (link at para 3.5 of the report) which has been unchanged since the report to Council in 2024.

34 STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Council considered the annual report of its Standards Committee.

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

RESOLVED to note the work of the Standards Committee, as set out in the annual report.

35 LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MOTION - HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

The Council considered a motion from the Liberal Democrat group.

Councillor Alan Hale raised a point of order, although the specific procedural rule which he considered had been breached was not specified. His query, supported by various other councillors, was whether it was appropriate to have this motion on the agenda in a pre-election period. Councillor Hardman explained that advice had been sought from the Chief Executive (and Returning Officer) and Monitoring Officer and that her decision had been to permit the motion, the core element of which was requesting additional powers from Government

On a motion from Councillor Sarah Moore, seconded by Councillor Jess David, it was then

RESOLVED that

Council believes:

1. HMOs are an essential part of the local housing market, particularly within Bath, providing affordable accommodation not only for students, but also for professionals, key workers, lower-income workers and temporary workers among others.
2. Students are an important part of the fabric of life here in Bath and North East Somerset; that the universities and colleges are vital strategic partners; and that both bring important social, community, cultural and economic benefits to our area.

Council notes that:

3. 'House in Multiple Occupation' (HMO) and 'large House in Multiple Occupation' are defined terms under housing legislation.
4. Council tax exemptions applied to those HMOs solely occupied by students represent a reduction in potential income to the local authority and in funds available to support the vital public services on which all residents rely.
5. Government no longer compensates local authorities for this reduced tax income via grant funding.
6. More widely, overall grant funding awarded to B&NES has been reduced by central government from £31 million in 2013/14 to just £1.3 million in 2025/26, a reduction of over 95%.
7. Government has indicated willingness to recognise the impact of mandatory discounts and exemptions in the Fair Funding Review.
8. B&NES faces a housing affordability crisis which is exacerbated by new HMO conversions reducing the supply of affordable family homes.
9. B&NES Council has previously adopted planning policies to support the aim of maintaining an appropriately balanced housing mix in the city of Bath.

10. The forthcoming Local Plan Options consultation represents an opportunity to consult on new potential policy approaches to HMOs.

Council therefore:

11. Calls on government to recognise the challenges faced by university cities in the Fair Funding Review formula proposals.
12. Highlights the opportunity for B&NES residents to participate in the Local Plan Options consultation, from 3 October to 13 November 2025.
13. Invites the Council Leader and local MPs to press central government to acknowledge the impact of student HMOs on local authority finances and to address it with a Fair Funding formula that compensates local authorities in full.

[Notes;

1. The above resolution was carried with the votes set out below;

For (36) – Councillors Michael Auton, Alex Beaumont, David Biddleston, Alison Born, Anna Box, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Liz Hardman, Steve Hedges, Oli Henman, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, Hal MacFie, John Leach, Sarah Moore, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Matt McCabe, Simon McCombe, Robin Moss, Michelle O’Doherty, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, Paul Roper, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby

Abstain (11) – Councillors Colin Blackburn, Sarah Evans, Alan Hale, Gavin Heathcote, Saskia Heijltjes, Shaun Hughes, Sam Ross, June Player, Chris Warren, Tim Warren, Joanna Wright]

36 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

The Chair made reference to the Q&A document that had been circulated to the meeting.

The meeting ended at 7.46 pm

Chair

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services