

# BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 20th November 2025

Present:- **Councillors** Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, David Biddleston, Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Anna Box, Stuart Bridge, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Ian Halsall, David Harding, Liz Hardman, Gavin Heathcote, Saskia Heijltjes, Oli Henman, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Dr Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, John Leach, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Simon McCombe, Sarah Moore, Ann Morgan, Robin Moss, June Player, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, Paul Roper, Sam Ross, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, Malcolm Treby, Karen Walker, Sarah Warren, Tim Warren CBE, Andy Wait and Joanna Wright

Apologies for absence: **Councillors** Sarah Evans, Alan Hale, Steve Hedges, Matt McCabe, Michelle O'Doherty, Bharat Pankhania, George Tomlin and Chris Warren

### 37 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

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

### 38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 39 MINUTES - 18TH SEPTEMBER 2025

On a motion from Councillor Kevin Guy, seconded by Councillor Eleanor Jackson, it was

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of 18<sup>th</sup> September 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 40 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL OR FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chair asked the meeting to stand in silence for a minute following the recent deaths of Honorary Alderman and former Councillor Bryan Chalker and former Councillor Mike Kelleher.

The Chair then made the customary announcements regarding microphones and webcasting.

The Chair noted that this would be the last meeting attended by Chief Executive, Will Godfrey and thanked him for his service with the Council. Will thanked the Chair and said a few words.

**41 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

There were no items of urgent business.

**42 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Statements were made by the following members of the public;

Robin Kerr made a statement on behalf of the Bath Alliance for Transport and Public Realm, a copy of which has been added to the Minute book and online record. Robin spoke in support of the Movement Strategy, asking for it to be aligned with the Local Plan and proposed 3 'quick wins' to support implementation.

Ian Sanders spoke to Council about challenges for new build developments in BANCES, focussing on unaffordable service charges funding public amenities on the developments and local implications of the Government's recommendations for mandatory Council adoption and common adoptable standards. A copy of Ian's statement has been added to the Minute book and online record. Councillor Robin Moss asked if Ian was aware of other estate's residents in Keynsham experiencing the same issues. Ian replied that he was in contact with a number of other estates, sharing the progress and steps they had taken.

David Redgewell made a statement about public transport funding issues. He raised issues on the Bath Bus & Coach station and Railway station interchange, reopening the Travel centre, cleaning and maintenance of the interchange and reopening Saltford Railway station. David also raised the issue of public transport to new homes, employment, hospital and education facilities. Councillor Eleanor Jackson asked David whether he considered the bus station was adequately designed for accessibility. David replied that work was needed to improve signage for partially sighted people, and that all parties involved needed to make a plan for accessibility improvements.

Charlie Siret made a statement on behalf of WESTACT (West of England Shared Transport and Active Travel) in support of the recent consultations on the Local Plan, 10 year Movement Strategy, and the A4 Bath to Bristol proposals. She flagged an upcoming event in Farmborough on Saturday 10th January about improving transport for Farmborough and invited councillors to attend. A copy of the statement has been added to the Minute book and online record.

Jackie Head from the Chew Valley CIC Sustainable Transport Partnership, the group that is working with WECA and the Big Lemon to deliver two *WESTlocals*: the X91 and 99, gave a statement proposing a series of selection criteria for upcoming bus discussions with WECA, a copy of which has been added to the Minute book and online record.

Elaine Workman from the Chew Valley CIC Sustainable Transport Partnership continued the points from the same group, proposing further selection criteria. A copy of the statement has been added to the Minute book and online record.

Phil Collins from the Chew Valley CIC Sustainable Transport Partnership concluded the presentation with the final proposed selection criteria. A copy of the statement has been added to the Minute book and online record.

## **43 ANNUAL CLIMATE AND NATURE PROGRESS REPORT 2025**

The Council considered a report presenting the Annual Climate & Nature report 2025 which updates Council on the progress made in tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergencies in 2024-25, both as a Council and as a wider district.

On a motion from Councillor Sarah Warren, seconded by Councillor Joel Hirst, it was

**RESOLVED** to

1. Note the progress made in tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergencies during 2024-25, as set out in the Attachments; and
2. Approve the Annual Climate & Nature Progress Report before publication.

*[Notes:*

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

*For (44) – Councillors Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, David Biddleston, Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Anna Box, Stuart Bridge, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, David Harding, Ian Halsall, Gavin Heathcote, Oli Henman, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Shaun Hughes, Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, John Leach, Ruth Malloy, Hal MacFie, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Simon McCombe, Manda Rigby, Sarah Moore, Ann Morgan, Robin Moss, Dine Romero, Paul Roper, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, Malcolm Treby, Andy Wait, Karen Walker and Sarah Warren*

*Abstain (3) – Councillors Saskia Heijltjes, Sam Ross, Joanna Wright]*

## **44 WEST OF ENGLAND GROWTH STRATEGY**

The Council considered a report on the West of England Growth Strategy developed by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA). This strategy has been developed in partnership with the MCA, B&NES Council, South Gloucestershire Council and Bristol Council.

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

**RESOLVED** to

1. Endorse the West of England Growth Strategy as a Bath & North East Somerset Council document; and
2. Support the Mayoral Combined Authority in promoting the West of England Growth Strategy and the West of England as a destination for inward investment.

*[Notes:*

2. *The above resolution was carried with the votes as set out below;*

*For* (46) – Councillors Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, David Biddleston, Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Anna Box, Stuart Bridge, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, David Harding, Liz Hardman, Ian Halsall, Gavin Heathcote, Oli Henman, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Shaun Hughes, Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, John Leach, Ruth Malloy, Hal MacFie, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Simon McCombe, Sarah Moore, Ann Morgan, Robin Moss, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, Paul Roper, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, Malcolm Treby, Andy Wait, Karen Walker, Tim Warren and Sarah Warren

*Abstain* (3) – Councillors Saskia Heijltjes, Sam Ross, Joanna Wright]

## **45 APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE (HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)**

The Council considered a recommendation from its Restructuring Implementation Committee.

Before moving the motion, Councillor Kevin Guy congratulated the successful candidate and thanked outgoing Chief Executive, Will Godfrey for his service with the Council. This was echoed by Councillor Robin Moss and Councillor Karen Walker.

Councillor Guy then moved, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss, and it was

**RESOLVED** unanimously to approve

1. The appointment of Ms Sophie Broadfield as Chief Executive on a salary of £175,000 per annum with a start date of 1 January 2026;
2. The designation of the postholder as Head of Paid Service under section 4 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 with effect from 1 January 2026; and
3. The designation of the postholder as Returning Officer for all elections and Electoral Registration Officer with effect from 1 January 2026.

## **46 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2025**

The Council considered a report giving details of performance against the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for the first six months of 2025/26.

On a motion from Councillor Mark Elliott, seconded by Councillor David Biddleston, it was

**RESOLVED** unanimously to note;

1. The Treasury Management Report to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025, prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Code of Practice; and
2. The Treasury Management Indicators to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

## **47 AVON PENSION FUND ANNUAL REPORT**

The Avon Pension Fund Committee discharges the responsibilities of the Council in its role as the administering authority of the Avon Pension Fund in accordance with the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (as amended). The Council considered the annual report of the work it has undertaken in the previous twelve months and reference is also made in the report to the future work programme. This report is for the 12 months to 31 March 2025.

On a motion from Councillor Toby Simon, seconded by Councillor George Leach it was

**RESOLVED** unanimously

1. To note the Committee's Annual Report to Council; and
2. To note the Pension Board's Annual Report.

## **48 AUDIT COMMITTEE 2024/25 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Audit Committee has specific delegated powers given to it from Full Council and as such is required to report back annually on its work to Council under its existing Terms of Reference. The Audit Committee 2024/25 Annual Report details the work carried out by the Committee for the period April 2023 to May 2024.

On a motion by Councillor David Biddleston, seconded by Councillor Sam Ross, it was

**RESOLVED** unanimously to agree that

1. The Annual Report of the Audit Committee is noted, and Council confirms that it has received 'assurance' that the Committee are fulfilling the responsibilities as stated in the Committee's Terms of Reference.

## **49 MOTION FROM THE GREEN GROUP - AI**

On a motion from Councillor Mark Elliot, seconded by Councillor Grant Johnson, it was

**RESOLVED** that

This Council Notes that:

1. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasing rapidly, bringing significant benefits and opportunities for public good, as well as challenges that must be managed responsibly.
2. The UK's leadership in digital infrastructure – including data-centre growth – positions us at the forefront of the global technology economy

- a. The UK may already be the third-largest host for data centres, behind the US and Germany.<sup>1</sup>
  - 3. The government has designated data centres as critical national infrastructure, recognising their importance to the UK's economic future. While energy use is a factor, AI and digitalisation have the potential to drive energy efficiency, decarbonise industry, and support the transition to net zero, helping reduce long-term energy costs for households and businesses alike.
  - 4. Innovation across the sector is reducing environmental impacts through renewable power sourcing, circular cooling, and waste-heat recovery systems, showing that digital transformation and sustainability can go hand in hand.
  - 5. While some have raised concerns about over-reliance on automation, evidence increasingly shows that AI can enhance human decision-making, improve learning outcomes, and free people from repetitive work, allowing more creative, empathetic and community-focused tasks.
  - 6. Local councils across the UK are successfully deploying AI tools aimed at streamlining tasks, for example in the planning process and social care, including note-taking.<sup>2</sup>
  - 7. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology stated the technology could accelerate post committee meeting tasks, allowing officers to focus on the task at hand rather than paperwork. Early trials in central government show that officials saved on average, one hour of admin per one-hour meeting.<sup>3</sup> This demonstrates how AI can directly improve public-service productivity and free capacity for front-line delivery.
8. Bath and North East Somerset has introduced the following AI:<sup>4</sup>
- a. Microsoft Copilot: To assist in various administrative functions, speeding up repetitive or time-consuming manual tasks.
  - b. Magicnotes: Utilised specifically within social care, Magicnotes aids in transcribing and then producing high-quality summaries of a wide range of meeting types.
  - c. Zoom: Used for telephony and supporting our contact centre teams. It includes call transcription capabilities that use AI to help summarise calls for staff.
- These examples show that the Council is already adopting AI in a careful, transparent, and effective way that improves staff efficiency and service quality to local residents.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/clyr9nx0jrzo>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/61064-councils-to-use-ai-for-preparing-meeting-minutes-as-part-of-government-trial>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/governance/396-governance-news/61064-councils-to-use-ai-for-preparing-meeting-minutes-as-part-of-government-trial>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/use-ai-technologies>

9. Bath and North East Somerset allocated £65,000 in the 2025/2026 budget for Artificial Intelligence (AI) investment aimed at improving resident facing services.<sup>5</sup>
10. The Digital Strategy 2023 states that the council will use data and intelligence to inform transparent decision making, including a defined and applied framework for the ethical and secure use of data, including leveraging new data technologies such as AI.<sup>6</sup>
11. None of your personal data is used by the AI technology provider to improve their AI products, other than specific improvements local to B&NES council's implementation, and all data is stored and processed in either the UK or EU.
12. AI tools are not employed in the decision-making process and all decision making is made by Council officers;<sup>7</sup>
13. AI-produced content undergoes review by a Council officer before being used further.<sup>8</sup> These safeguards demonstrate the Council's responsible approach to innovation which keeps human accountability at the centre of all technological progress.
14. B&NES has internal policies on Use of Generative AI<sup>9</sup> (which will be reviewed and updated early next year) and Data & Research Ethics<sup>10</sup>, as well as high-level webpages outlining the Digital Strategy and overall position on Use of AI Technologies.
15. AI presents an opportunity to make councils greener, smarter, and fairer. With ethical oversight, transparency, and innovation, Bath and North East Somerset can lead the way in using technology to serve people and the planet, supporting both the climate and ecological emergencies the Council has declared.

This Council Resolves to:

1. Recognise the importance of ethical and sustainable use of Artificial Intelligence in delivering services.
2. Request that this issue be referred to the Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel to review current operational AI practices & policies and consider whether a comprehensive AI policy (strategic & operational) should be developed and, if so, recommend what factors it should address.

[Notes:

3. *An amendment to the original motion (which had been moved by Councillor Joanna Wright and seconded by Councillor Saskia Heijtjes) was moved as set out above, and agreed with the votes below;*

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/budget-consultation-2025-2026>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/digital-strategy>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> [LINK](#)

<sup>10</sup> [LINK](#)

For (43) – Councillors Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, David Biddleston, Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Anna Box, Stuart Bridge, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, David Harding, Liz Hardman, Oli Henman, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, John Leach, Sarah Moore, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Simon McCombe, Sarah Moore, Ann Morgan, Robin Moss, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, Paul Roper, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, Malcolm Treby and Andy Wait

Against (3) – Councillors Saskia Heijltjes, Sam Ross and Joanna Wright

Abstain (3) – Councillors Gavin Heathcote, Karen Walker and Tim Warren

4. This became the substantive motion which was carried with the votes as set out below;

For (44) – Councillors Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, David Biddleston, Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Anna Box, Stuart Bridge, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, David Harding, Liz Hardman, Oli Henman, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, John Leach, Sarah Moore, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Simon McCombe, Sarah Moore, Ann Morgan, Robin Moss, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, Paul Roper, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, Malcolm Treby, Andy Wait and Tim Warren

Abstain (5) – Councillors Gavin Heathcote, Saskia Heijltjes, Sam Ross, Karen Walker, Joanna Wright]

## 50 MOTION FROM THE INDEPENDENTS FOR B&NES GROUP - COMMUNITY LIBRARIES

This item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

## 51 MOTION FROM THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP - SEND PROFITS

The Council considered a motion from the Liberal Democrat Group.

On a motion from Councillor Paul May, seconded by Councillor David Harding, it was

**RESOLVED** unanimously that

Council notes:

1. In December 2024 the Government introduced the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, with an overall aim to better protect children and raise standards in education.
2. The Government also announced £740 million in new funding to support pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and those needing alternative education within mainstream schools. Inclusion remains their overarching policy, so that our children and young people are educated together with their peers in their own community, where appropriate.
3. The SEND system is under severe strain, with some families struggling to secure vital support for their children which is compounded by some schools and councils struggling to provide the necessary support. Council recognises

- the role of campaigning organisations, including SEND Sanctuary UK and Let Us Learn Too, to highlight the impact of inadequate funding on staffing and delays to provision.
4. The Council's budget for children's service provision, particularly for those children in the care of the local authority, is under considerable strain. Residential provision and foster care services are increasingly costly due to for-profit operators.
  5. Children with SEND and those who are in care deserve the same opportunities as every child, including access to the support they need to thrive both in school and in later life.
  6. Research commissioned by the Liberal Democrats has revealed that private equity-backed SEND providers are making combined profits of over £100m a year, with some achieving margins of over 20%.
  7. Many of these companies are backed by firms registered in tax havens or foreign sovereign wealth funds.
  8. The Government has taken some action to curb profiteering, but more is needed. Through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, government has introduced powers to cap the profits of providers of illegal or exploitative children's homes, alongside enhancing financial transparency and greater enforcement by Ofsted.
  9. The forthcoming Government review of the SEND and Alternative Provision system, which has been delayed until next year, would be an opportunity to propose action against excessive profits by SEND providers.
  10. The proactive work of hard-working officers in Bath and North East Somerset Council to improve our SEND and social care services, which is commended.

Council believes that:

11. Making excessive profits from the needs of children is unacceptable and must end. Children with are not commodities for profit and should never be treated as such. In principle, Council believes that social enterprises are the ideal model for SEND and children's social care service providers.
12. Resources must be directed into improving provision, staffing and outcomes for children, not into shareholder dividends or inflated executive pay.
13. Local authorities and schools should be supported to provide sustainable, high-quality, inclusive educational and residential provision within both their mainstream and specialist settings, including by establishing more cost-effective local provision.

Council resolves to:

14. Call on the Government to take action to cap the profits of private providers of services for vulnerable children, including sanctions against providers who breach this, with any profits returned to local authorities.
15. Support further reforms to boost the SEND and social care system, including strong financial oversight of providers, transparency, and new powers and funding for councils to build and manage local mainstream and specialist provision directly and to prioritise non-profit-making organisations in commissioning.
16. Endorse the principle that Government reforms must put children and their families first.

17. Request the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Education on this matter.

## **52 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

Statements were made by the following Councillors;

Councillor Saskia Heijltjes made a statement raising concerns about the informal consultation process for the Residents Parking zone in Cambridge, a copy of which has been added to the online record and Minute book. Councillor Kevin Guy asked why Councillor Heijltjes had not raised these concerns earlier, to which she replied that she had.

Councillor Eleanor Jackson made a statement about transport to the RUH and the need for better provision, a copy of which has been added to the online record and Minute book. Councillor Shaun Hughes asked Councillor Jackson if she felt that the Cabinet and WECA understood her specific challenges and were listening to her concerns. Councillor Jackson replied that she thought they were listening but whether that would turn into action remains to be seen. Councillor Kevin Guy asked whether Councillor Jackson would like to share her thoughts with the WECA Transport Board when it starts next year. Councillor Jackson replied with a request to attend as an observer at WECA meetings.

Councillor Joanna Wright made a statement also raising concerns about the consultation process leading to the Cambridge Residents Parking zone, a copy of which has been added to the online record and Minute book.

Councillor Anna Box made a statement, thanking the public speakers who had raised issues about buses in the Chew Valley and stressing the leisure opportunities and enjoyment that adequate bus transport can bring, preventing isolation and loneliness. A copy of the statement has been added to the online record and Minute book.

Councillor David Harding made a statement also in support of Chew Valley buses. He pointed out that the Chew Valley is the worst connected part of B&NES, which leads to isolation and that has consequences in the area. He applauded the campaigners who had spoken at the meeting earlier and called for a meeting with WECA as the funding was due to run out in March 2026.

Councillor Simon McCombe made a statement echoing the comments from Councillors Box and Harding, and the public speakers about Chew Valley buses X91 and X99, a copy of which has been added to the online record and Minute book. He stressed the vital role these buses play and urged pressure to be put on WECA to continue these vital services.

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm

Chair .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**