

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Tuesday 3rd February 2026

Present:- **Councillors** Robin Moss, Toby Simon, Malcolm Treby, Colin Blackburn, Duncan Hounsell, Jess David and Hal MacFie (in place of Stuart Bridge)

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Gavin Heathcote

185 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including:

Councillor Dine Romero (Chair of the Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development Panel and

Councillor Andy Wait (Chair of the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development Panel

The Chair noted that the order of items will be changed so that item 11, 10 and 9 will be considered in that order.

186 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

187 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Bridges sent his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Hal MacFie.

Councillor Heathcote sent his apologies.

188 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

189 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

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

There were none

191 MINUTES

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

192 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member confirmed that their updates would be contained within items on the agenda.

193 HERITAGE SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN

Councillor Paul Roper, Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development, introduced the presentation which covered the following:

- Vision
- Strategic Priorities
- Heritage Services 2025/26
- Key Project Information
- 2026/27
- Key Activity

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

Councillor MacFie asked about the fluctuation in the Roman Baths targets. The officer explained that there was a jump from 2025/26 to 2026/27, various reasons including that the next financial year has 2 Easters. There are a number of strategies in place to arrest the slight decline. We have taken a prudent approach to projections in future years as we will need to assess the market.

Councillor Treby thanked the Cabinet Member for the positive report and asked if visitor numbers for the Roman Baths are down this year compared to other attractions. The officer explained that numbers are in line with the attraction sector as a whole in the UK. People are taking shorter stays. ALBA will soon release figures. He noted that some organisations drive footfall at the expense of yield so we have to use caution in comparing visitor numbers.

In response to a question from Councillor Treby regarding yield per visitor, the officer explained that he is happy with this currently. Retail is slightly down and likely caused by the cost of living. In response to a question from Councillor Treby regarding the Fashion Museum predictions, the officer explained that higher numbers are expected in the opening year and then a level off. He explained the opportunities to cross sell with the Roman Baths (joint ticket).

Councillor Simon noted universal credit concession ticket and asked about the possibility of introducing a pension credit ticket. The officer stated that he would take this back to the team.

Councillor Blackburn asked what the ticket cost came down to in terms of revenue for the Council as residents' money is being used for this. The officer explained that the Fashion Museum has a comprehensive business case. It will overall run on a surplus but break even when factoring in borrowing costs. He added that there is no

real disadvantage to residents, all capital is looking to be repaid from Heritage Services. The Council will eventually own the attraction.

Councillor Blackburn asked about headwinds over the next 12/24 months. The officer acknowledged the potential destabilising factors such as ticket prices rising due to the World Cup and possible political instability.

Councillor Blackburn asked about the square outside the fashion museum – when this was included and implications for the road network. The Cabinet Member explained that this had been part of the extensive consultation over the whole district.

Councillor Moss asked if international visitor numbers had been affected by global political/economic changes – particularly from North America. The Cabinet Member stated that Visit West will publish the numbers.

Councillor Moss asked about the potential tourism levy, collected by WECA and impact on the number of visitors. The Cabinet Member stated that this will all be spent on public realm improvements.

Councillor Blackburn stated that in Germany, the café is a tourist information centre which is a good cross sell. The officer explained that there is a World Heritage Centre in York Street and all front-line staff are trained.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officer.

194 CORPORATE ESTATE ASSET MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2025-2030

Councillor Paul Roper, Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development, introduced the item. There was a presentation which covered the following:

- Purpose of our Corporate Estate
- What is the Asset Management Framework?
- How the Framework Fits Together
- Why are we doing it now?
- What will be different?
- Key Outcomes by 2030
- Corporate Estate Asset Management Policy 2025-30
- Supporting Corporate Objectives
- Strategic Delivery
- Corporate Estate Asset Management Policy
- Corporate Estate Asset Management Strategy 2025-30
- Mission
- Future Impact
- Our Corporate Estate as an Enabler
- Operating as a Corporate Landlord
- Our Corporate Landlord
- Challenging Our Assets
- Delivering the Corporate Asset Management Policy

- Our Plan on a Page
- Performance and Governance
- Governance
- Milestones

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

Councillor Moss stated that this was a useful overview. He stated that key outcomes and future impact are missing and asked to see some KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) with figures from past/present/future. The officer confirmed that this information is being prepared.

Councillor David asked about public engagement in terms of assets that could be of community value. She also asked when the Action Plan would be published. The Cabinet Member explained that community groups can register an expression of interest. The officer explained that there is an asset management process – every asset is assessed in terms of: keep/invest/housing/disposal. The process includes potential for community asset transfer. He further explained that an Action Plan is being developed.

Councillor Simon stated that he would like to see ‘community solidarity’ as a priority included under ‘Corporate Estate as an Enabler’.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officer.

195 DRAFT BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2026/27 AND FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

Councillor Mark Elliott, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the item.

Councillor Dine Romero gave the following feedback as Chair of the Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development Panel.

Children’s Services and Adult Social Care are under significant and increasing pressure. Demand is rising, needs are becoming more complex, and inflation continues to strain budgets. Without government reform of social care funding, the situation is likely to continue this trajectory.

The panel looked at proposed savings related to increased Care Act reviews, short-term care pathways, enablement, and universal services. Concerns were raised about potential negative impacts and that cost-driven decisions might disrupt essential support. Officers provided reassurance that reviews will remain person-centred, based on eligibility and outcomes.

The panel discussed co-production in recommissioning learning disability services, reflecting on last year’s engagement work. They emphasised the importance of early, meaningful engagement with individuals and families.

Concerns were expressed about joint working between the Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB), especially as the ICB expands and may lose focus on B&NES. There was reassurance that there will still be a dedicated Place Director.

Funding disputes for people with complex needs were also highlighted, and the panel welcomed a commitment to bring forward joint reports on dispute resolution.

The Panel reviewed the “top 25 contracts” and asked for more transparency. Positively, it was noted that Children’s Services are concentrating on slowing growth rather than finding new savings. SEND pressures were discussed, with early signs of improvement in EHCP timeliness and fewer complaints.

The panel still had questions about how some savings—particularly relating to transitions from high-cost residential placements to supported tenancies—would be achieved without reducing support. The Panel is committed to ongoing scrutiny to ensure vulnerable residents’ needs remain central to decision-making.

Councillor Andy Wait gave the following feedback as Chair of the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development Panel

This Panel has fewer statutory pressures and a focus on steering the Council’s future direction. Officers described the current year’s budget as “benign”, a view the panel broadly shared.

A major concern was the potential reduction in opening hours at the Bath and Midsomer Norton recycling centres. The panel welcomed the decision not to proceed, noting that cuts would have increased mileage to the Keynsham depot. Members also raised issues about kerbside waste route revisions, but were reassured that operational adjustments were manageable.

Parking enforcement and active travel were also discussed, particularly blocked dropped kerbs and whether enforcement could be carried out using electric cycles—currently limited by technology. Misuse of Park & Ride sites as general car parks was highlighted, prompting conversations about improving monitoring technology.

The panel examined funding for school streets, supported bus services and community travel initiatives, and was reassured these were supported through earmarked reserves or WECA-related funding. They welcomed plans for electric refuse vehicles from 2026, and sought clarification about associated costs.

Concerns were raised about Clean Air Zone operational deficits and parking charge increases affecting small businesses. Officers noted that reserves were available for the CAZ and that evidence does not show a direct link between parking charges and high street health, though the Council will continue monitoring.

Finally, members emphasised the need for clear communication around waste, recycling, and transport changes so residents understand the rationale behind them. Overall, the panel was supportive of the budget and commended the work undertaken by officers.

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

Councillor Hounsell stated that the assumption made by Government regarding the Fair Funding Formula was 100% Council Tax collection rate and asked what our

collection rate is. The officer responded that it was approximately 98.5%. Councillor Hounsell commended the Cabinet Member and officers on the collection rate figure.

Following a question from Councillor David, it was explained that B&NES has the third lowest core spending power among unitary authorities, partly due to incorrect assumptions in the funding formula.

Councillor MacFie asked if social housing funding came under Capital Schemes. The Cabinet Member explained that major housing delivery is typically grant-funded rather than borrowing-funded.

Councillor Blackburn raised concerns about limited trend data and context in the report, making scrutiny difficult. The Cabinet Member stated that previous year's figures are given, portfolio cash level reporting shows budget lines so you can see movement from one year to the next. He asked that the Panel raise queries about this type of information in October time when the report is being prepared.

Councillor Blackburn pointed to the figure of 7.5% down regarding homelessness but asked what this was down from. The Cabinet Member will follow up with data on this. **Councillor Blackburn asked what underpins the £250k yellow box enforcement estimate. The Cabinet Member stated that it is based on departmental estimates and explained that enforcement aims to improve traffic flow. Councillor Blackburn asked why CIL money is being used for the new waste centre and cemetery. The Cabinet Member stated that the corporate CIL pot is there to serve infrastructure needs linked to development.**

Councillor Romero asked if the income from Heritage Services and parking mitigates what we lose in terms of HMOs on Council Tax. The Cabinet Member stated that it makes up some of the difference but not all.

Councillor Moss asked if the £150 per (band D) household from Heritage Services mitigates the effect of the Heritage status of the city on housing overall. The Cabinet Member did not accept the premise. Councillor Moss stated that we are proud of Bath and the tourism generated but it comes with a consequence in that a lot of people who work in Bath, live in North East Somerset and a lot of industry has moved to South Gloucestershire. He added that he believes the focus has been lost in that the tourism industry is to the detriment of North East Somerset and that he did not believe this budget has the vision to reduce the trend. The Cabinet Member stated that there are economic development plans in the budget and that some of this discussion is around Local Plan issues.

Following a question from Councillor Hounsell, the Cabinet Member stated that the relationship with WECA (West of England Combined Authority) is positive.

Councillor Hounsell asked for an update on BOB (Being Our Best programme). The Cabinet Member stated that 67% got a pay rise and nobody's pay was reduced. **Councillor Simon asked why the corporate contingency has reduced. The Cabinet Member explained that last year's contingency was unusually high due to uncertainty and that levels are now normal.**

Councillor Treby asked why there are not more savings proposed this year in order to mitigate the effect of the Fair Funding Formula in subsequent years. The Cabinet Member explained that many other Council's would be pleased at our budget proposals and we will always protect frontline services. We now have a 3-year settlement and time to plan.

Councillor Treby stated that some Council's have used moving traffic offence enforcement as a revenue source and asked for reassurance that we will not do that. The Cabinet Member stated that it will be used for what it is there for which is improving traffic flow.

Councillor Blackburn asked for an update on the Commercial Estate. The Cabinet Member stated that he is happy to come to the Panel to talk about this at a future meeting and it is on the future workplan.

Councillor Moss referenced the comment about it being difficult to scrutinise the figures as the Government settlement comes so late – he suggested that an item on budget scrutiny be added to the workplan so that Panel members can look at questions they want to ask and information they need in future years.

Councillor Moss stated that he was pleased to hear that recycling centre opening times have been addressed and that the Discovery Card will not have a charge and was pleased with the ability to look at differentiation of costs for residents and tourists. The Cabinet Member stated that he looked forward to proposals regarding the Tourism Levy which can hopefully be used to mitigate some of the effects of tourism.

Councillor Moss asked if the contract savings target are achievable. The Cabinet Member stated that yes this was achievable as it represents under 1% per contract and is supported by new contract management tools. Councillor Moss stated that some of the highest value contracts are in the health and care sector.

Councillor Moss asked about delivery of the Capital Programme, the Cabinet Member stated that he does have confidence in this but noted that it is never spent entirely due to allowances for contingency.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member, officers and Panel Chairs.

196 PANEL WORKPLAN

Panel members noted the future workplan and the following suggestions:

- Discussion on budget consultation – July TBC
- AI item (referred from Council) – March TBC
- Quarterly Performance Report – May TBC
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme Update

The meeting ended at 6.18 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services