

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Full Council meeting (19th March 2026)

Motion from the Independents and Conservative Group: Environmentally Responsible Campaigning Practices

To be proposed by Councillor Shaun Hughes

Council believes:

- Bath & North East Somerset has declared a Climate Emergency and adopted a Climate Emergency Strategy, committing the Local Authority to reducing avoidable paper consumption and minimising environmental impact.
- During the run-up to Local Elections, there is significant investment in printed campaign materials. This can lead to the production of large quantities of leaflets, contributing to substantial paper use and associated environmental impacts.
- Traditional campaign models are reliant on large-scale paper distribution and do not align with the Council's agreed environmental priorities or the commitments outlined in the Climate Emergency Strategy.
- Although hybrid communication approaches have been adopted, the use of printed leaflets remains high within current campaigning practices.
- The distribution of large volumes of printed leaflets also generates additional recycling waste, increases the workload for waste collection crews, and contributes to avoidable litter-picking pressures across the area.
- Reducing unnecessary printed material is consistent with the Council's wider objective of supporting and creating sustainable communities.

Council notes that:

- Digital communication is an essential and effective tool for modern political campaigning, offering targeted, cost-efficient, and rapid engagement with residents.
 - Printed materials may still play a role in reaching residents who are digitally excluded or for whom physical communication is more accessible.
 - Recycled paper still requires substantial energy and processing resources to produce printed leaflets.
 - Environmental guidance consistently identifies reduction as the most important stage in the reduce–reuse–recycle hierarchy, as preventing waste is more effective than managing it after production.
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- *Unless where specifically set out in the statute, motions approved at Council do not bind the Executive (Cabinet) but may influence their future decisions.*
 - *Councillors are reminded of their public sector equality duty which requires the Council to consider or think about how their policies or decisions may affect people who are protected under the Equality Act.*

- Campaigning strategies that rely heavily on paper leafleting are outdated and inconsistent with the Council's climate objectives.

Council therefore:

1. Reaffirms its commitment to the Bath & North East Somerset Climate Emergency Policy by actively encouraging reductions in unnecessary paper consumption.
2. Agrees that all political Group Leaders should write to their Local Party requesting that it minimise paper use in party-political campaigning and limit the total number of physical leaflets they distribute to no more than two per year.

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