

# **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING**

Thursday 19th March 2026

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, Alan Hale, Ian Halsall, David Harding, Liz Hardman, Gavin Heathcote, Steve Hedges, Saskia Heijltjes, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Dr Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Matt McCabe, Simon McCombe, Sarah Moore, Robin Moss, Michelle O'Doherty, Manda Rigby, Paul Roper, Sam Ross, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby, Karen Walker, Chris Warren, Sarah Warren, Tim Warren CBE, Andy Wait and Joanna Wright

Apologies for absence: **Councillors** Sarah Evans, Oli Henman, John Leach, Ann Morgan, Bharat Pankhania, June Player and Dine Romero

### **63 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

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

### **64 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

### **65 MINUTES - 24TH FEBRUARY 2026**

On a motion from Councillor Matt McCabe, seconded by Councillor Karen Walker, it was

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of 24<sup>th</sup> February 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **66 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL OR FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Chair made the customary announcements regarding microphones and webcasting.

At the Chair's request, a video was shown about the Councillors' corporate parent role and pledge to children in care. Further information is available from the below link;

[Our pledge to children in care and care experienced young people | Bath and North East Somerset Council](#)

### **67 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

There were no items of urgent business.

## **68 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Statements were made by the following members of the public;

Professor Penny Hay made a statement entitled “Playing outside, learning everywhere: the importance of outdoor play for children, families and communities”. A copy of which is available on the Minute book and attached to the online record. Councillor Gavin Heathcote asked Penny how these aims could be achieved. Penny explained it was a collaborative process with cultural, creative and educational input and invited Councillors to see this in action on 12<sup>th</sup> June at the Forest of Imagination event.

Alla Chaikovska read a statement from Adam Jukes who had not been able to attend. Adam’s statement was also in support of the Green Group motion on the agenda. A copy of his statement is available on the Minute book and attached to the online record.

Gillian Ford addressed Council, as a Foster Carer, expressing deep concern that the changes taking place in Children’s Services might result in reduced support structures and ultimately Foster Carers leaving the service. Councillor Joanna Wright asked if families and Foster Carers had been consulted, to which Gillian replied that they had not. Councillor Robin Moss, a member of the Fostering Panel, asked if Gillian considered it important for Foster Carers to be listened to, to which Gillian replied that it was imperative and that any change must be careful and based on views from those within the Service. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if Gillian would like to meet the Cabinet Member and relevant officers, to which Gillian replied that she would.

Jodie Brown, also a Foster Carer, made a statement expressing similar concerns and highlighting the great relationships between Foster Carers and Social Workers. A copy of the statement is available on the Minute book and attached to the online record. Jodie commented that, if staff are driven out, this will impact children and families so the proposals need to be reconsidered. Councillor Robin Moss asked Jodie if she agreed that the process should be paused and re-started in a considered manner. Jodie agreed this was vital and that children and Foster Carers need to be consulted. Councillor Joanna Wright referred to a government target for 10,000 more Foster Carers and asked if Jodie thought these proposals would encourage more Foster Carers, to which Jodie replied that she didn’t think so. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if Jodie would like to meet the Cabinet Member and relevant officers, to which Jodie replied that she would.

The Chair thanked the speakers for their statements which were referred to the relevant Cabinet Members.

## **69 AVON PENSION FUND - LGPS POOLING OF INVESTMENTS**

The Council considered a report about Avon Pension Fund pooling of investments.

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

**RESOLVED** that the Council in its capacity as Administering Authority for APF, the Council agrees to:

1. Implement required changes to investment pooling through the following arrangements;
  - i. APF becoming a shareholder in the new LPPI Holdings Ltd;
  - ii. APF's assets will be transferred to LPPI Holdings' subsidiary, LPPI Ltd, an FCA regulated investment company which will be operated in accordance with the shareholder agreement.
2. Delegate to the Director of Assurance, Risk and Pensions, in consultation with the Chair of the Avon Pension Fund Committee, the powers to undertake tasks to progress these required changes to investment pooling, and to take such decisions deemed necessary to promote the interests of the Council and the Avon Pension Fund with respect to pooling. This will, without limitation, include agreeing and authorising financial expenditure or investment that may be required consequential upon the Council's participation in LPPI and agreeing, authorising, and signing documentation and contracts on behalf of the Council in its role as Administering Authority of the Avon Pension Fund. This delegation is valid for 6 months and remains in force until 19 September 2026.
3. That subject to the above, all such matters shall be carried out with the aim of achieving the target date for APF joining LPPI and moving its assets of 1 April 2026, and subject to such intermediate steps and timescales as may be considered appropriate and necessary by the Director of Assurance, Risk & Pensions, in consultation with the Chair of the Avon Pension Fund Committee.

## **70 CHARITABLE TRUST BOARD ANNUAL REPORT**

The Council considered a report updating them on activity of the Charitable Trust Board for 2025/25.

On a motion from Councillor Sarah Warren, seconded by Councillor Samantha Kelly, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** to note the Annual Report of the Charitable Trust Board for 2024/25.

## **71 DESIGNATION OF CHAIR & VICE CHAIR DESIGNATE**

The purpose of this report was to invite the Council to indicate a Councillor as Chair of the Council (Designate) and Vice-Chair (Designate) for the next Council Year beginning in May 2026. The Council, at its Annual Meeting in May 2026, will still be required formally to elect Councillors to these roles for the forthcoming Council Year.

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

## **RESOLVED**

1. That, for forward planning purposes, the Council names Councillor Shaun Stephenson McGall to be treated as Chair of the Council (Designate) and Councillor Dine Romero as Vice Chair of the Council (Designate) for the 2026/27 Council Year.

## **72 MOTION FROM THE GREEN GROUP - ENABLING OUTDOOR PLAY AND COMMUNITY BELONGING**

The Council considered a motion from the Green Group calling for measures to enable outdoor play and community belonging.

On a motion from Councillor Saskia Heijltjes, seconded by Councillor Joanna Wright, it was

## **RESOLVED** that

Council:

1. Recognises the vital role that physical activity and outdoor play have in supporting the health, wellbeing, and development of children and young people across Bath and North East Somerset.<sup>1</sup>
2. Notes the work undertaken by the charity Playing Out. Play streets (or 'playing out' sessions) are neighbour-led temporary road closures on quiet, residential streets, creating a safe space for children to play freely together on their doorstep. Playing Out also champions School Streets, to provide children with more opportunities for outdoor play at the beginning and end of school days.<sup>2</sup>
3. Notes research published in the British Medical Journal identified a mental health crisis in young people before COVID19, with the pandemic exacerbating these issues and widening inequalities. Playing out can help children and young people build emotional resilience by creating strong ties to their local community and developing both social skills and a sense of belonging.<sup>3</sup>
4. Is concerned that 2022/2023 data from Sport England reveals that 39% of BANES' children are failing to meet the Chief Medical Officers' recommended 60 minutes of daily exercise. Council notes that outdoor play in England has declined by 50% in a generation, with traffic, fear of crime, and unwelcoming public spaces contributing to this drop.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pediatricnursing.org/article/S0882-5963%2817%2930185-9/abstract>

<sup>2</sup> <https://playingout.net/play-streets/impact-overview/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jcv2.12008>

<sup>4</sup> <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2025-12/Active%20Lives%20Children%20and%20Young%20People%20Survey%20->

5. Acknowledges that the BANES Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2023-2030) aims to put in place the best conditions for people of all ages to live healthy and fulfilling lives including enabling and encouraging proactive engagement in health promoting activity at all ages for good quality of life.<sup>5</sup>
6. Believes play sufficiency is an important part of supporting Bath and North East Somerset's children, leading to better outcomes for their health, wellbeing and education.
7. Notes that play provision within Bath and North East Somerset sits across departments and there is no one or team responsible for play provision.

Council resolves to:

1. Invite the appropriate Policy Development and Scrutiny panel(s) to consider adding the issue of play provision to their workplan(s).
2. Suggest that PDS work could include reviewing existing plans and strategies, identifying any gaps, and considering how Council could enable more children in Bath and North East Somerset to play more of the time.

[Notes;

1. *Councillors in favour (48); - 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, Alan Hale, Ian Halsall, Dave Harding, Liz Hardman, Steve Hedges, Saskia Heijltjes, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Matt McCabe, Simon McCombe, Sarah Moore, Robin Moss, Michelle O'Doherty, Manda Rigby, Sam Ross, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby, Andy Wait, Sarah Warren, Tim Warren, Joanna Wright.*

*Councillors against (2); - Councillors Chris Warren, Gavin Heathcote*

*Councillors abstaining (1): - Councillor Karen Walker]*

### **73 MOTION FROM THE LABOUR GROUP - EVOLVING DISCOVERY CARDS - MODERNISATION AND EFFICIENCY FOR RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS**

This motion was ruled out of order so not taken.

### **74 MOTION FROM THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP - NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The Council considered a motion from the Liberal Democrat Group on the National Planning Policy Framework.

On a motion from Councillor Sarah Warren, seconded by Councillor Matt McCabe, it was

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[%20academic%20year%202024-25%20report-.pdf?VersionId=02ctNYq5CXJAG4naDr4BlmM\\_a406a.5y](#)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/document-and-policy-library/joint-health-and-wellbeing-strategy>

## **RESOLVED** that

### Council notes:

1. The recent Government consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which are intended to support the Government's growth and house building targets.
2. These reforms will limit local planning authorities' ability to set high environmental standards for new homes, banning councils from setting policies that go further than national building regulations, particularly in the areas of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Net Zero Construction policy.
3. B&NES Council has been an ambitious early adopter of BNG and Net Zero Construction policies via the Local Plan Partial Update of 2023 and is already achieving 'Net Zero in operation' and 10% BNG standards for new build.
4. B&NES has recently consulted on increasing our ambition for climate and nature through updated local development management policies as part of the Local Plan Options consultation.

### Council believes:

5. The proposed NPPF changes will be a step backwards and will downgrade recently established standards to support nature recovery and tackle climate change.
6. Government should not prevent councils from going further and faster in response to the Climate and Nature Emergency.
7. Building to higher standards has been shown to be technically, legally and financially viable.
8. New homes must be fit for the future. If 1.5m homes are to be built in England, these must be energy-efficient homes, which deliver lower energy bills for residents and which contribute to statutory, national Net Zero targets.
9. Sustainable, climate resilient homes are good for public health by addressing air quality, over-heating, damp and cold, energy efficiency (tackling fuel poverty), and supporting active lifestyles.
10. Measures to embed nature-friendly design features, such as 'swift bricks' and sustainable drainage systems, stronger protections for habitats of high environmental value and integration of Local Nature Recovery Strategies into planning decisions, are welcome.
11. Local knowledge, local policy-making and local decision-making are essential to a robust and fair planning system.

Council therefore:

12. Objects to the proposed NPPF changes regarding BNG and Net Zero Construction.
13. Calls on the Government to empower councils to protect and restore nature and to set ambitious energy and sustainability standards for new developments, through local plans processes.
14. Endorses the letter, coordinated by the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) and signed by over 60 local authorities, businesses and NGOs including B&NES, on this issue.
15. Requests that the Leader write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on this matter.

[Notes;

1. *The above successful resolution was carried with the following votes;*

*Councillors in favour (46): Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, Dave Biddleston, Colin Blackburn, Anna Box, Stuart Bridge, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Ian Halsall, Dave Harding, Steve Hedges, Saskia Heijltjes, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Matt McCabe, Simon McCombe, Sarah Moore, Robin Moss, Michelle O'Doherty, Paul Roper, Sam Ross, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby, Andy Wait, Karen Walker, Sarah Warren, Tim Warren, Joanna Wright*

*Councillors against (2): - Gavin Heathcote, Chris Warren*

*Councillors abstaining (1): - Liz Hardman]*

## **75 MOTION FROM THE INDEPENDENT & CONSERVATIVE GROUPS - ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE CAMPAIGN PRACTICES**

The Council considered a motion from the Independent and Conservative groups regarding environmentally responsible campaign leafletting, moved by Councillor Shaun Hughes and seconded by Councillor Tim Warren.

Following a vote, this motion was

**NOT CARRIED**

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.
- 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.

*[Notes;*

1. *The above resolution was lost on a named vote;*

Councillors in favour (5): - Alex Beaumont, Colin Blackburn, Alan Hale, Shaun Hughes, Tim Warren

Councillors against (45): - Councillors Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Dave Biddleston, Alison Born, Anna Box, Stuart Bridge, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Ian Halsall, Dave Harding, Liz Hardman, Steve Hedges, Saskia Heijltjes, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Paul May, Matt McCabe, Simon McCombe, Sarah Moore, Robin Moss, Michelle O'Doherty, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, Paul Roper, Sam Ross, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby, Andy Wait, Karen Walker, Sarah Warren, Joanna Wright.

Councillors abstaining (2): - Councillors Gavin Heathcote, Chris Warren]

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

Statements were made by the following Councillors;

Councillor Shaun Hughes made a statement to Council about parking charges in Midsomer Norton. A full copy of the statement is available online and on the Minute book. He presented data from the last year which he maintained demonstrated that the parking service was running at a loss. He also described the negative effect on local businesses. He called for public feedback to be taken on board and a common-sense approach to now be taken. Councillor Eleanor Jackson asked if the same parallel could be made in Radstock and Keynsham, to which Councillor Hughes replied that he wasn't sure about the situation in Keynsham, but it was definitely a similar situation in Radstock. Councillor Karen Walker asked if Councillor Hughes had consulted residents, to which he responded that he regularly spoke with business owners and residents on this topic.

Councillor Joanna Wright made a statement about Councillors' corporate parenting responsibilities in relation to the staff restructure in Children's Services. A full copy of the statement is available online and on the Minute book. Councillor Kevin Guy asked Councillor Wright what she considered fairer consultation looked like, to which she replied with an account of a staff member of 35 years facing redundancy who had not been offered training for the qualification she now needed to fill the new role.

Councillor Sam Ross made a statement about rural bus services, a copy of which is available online and on the Minute book. She drew attention to various services that were being cut and the impact of this. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if Councillor Ross was aware that buses were the responsibility of WECA, to which she replied that she was aware, but it seemed that these issues were never taken up with WECA and as Councillor Guy was WECA Deputy Mayor, there was perhaps an opportunity to do so. Councillor Eleanor Jackson asked what could be done to preserve cross border community bus services and Councillor Ross replied that it would be good if there was cross-party consideration of these issues.

Councillor Gavin Heathcote spoke to Council about Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March being Mother's Day and also the date for the Bath Half Marathon. He highlighted the serious travel disruption this had caused and queried why the Half Marathon had been held on this day. He explained that there were no clear diversion routes and traffic management was inadequate, creating chaos, and called for these issues to be considered in scheduling future events.

The Chair thanked the Councillors for their statements which were referred to the relevant Cabinet Members.

The meeting ended at 8.35 pm

Chair .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**