

**Bath and North East Somerset Council
Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 Engagement Report**

Section One: Our engagement process

Engagement on the draft Bath and North East Somerset Council Corporate Strategy has taken place through the following stages:

1. **Early engagement:** Initial engagements took place in Summer 2019 to inform the development of the council's new Corporate Strategy. These included presentations on emerging themes to the following groups:
 - Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (15th July and 24th September)
 - Bathavon North Area Forum (3rd September)
 - Cam Valley Area Forum (18th September)
 - Keynsham Area Forum (23rd September)
 - Somer Valley Area Forum (24th September)
 - Independent Equality Advisory Group (25th September)
 - Chew Valley Area Forum (30th September)

The direction of travel was generally well received, particularly relating to issues around transport, housing, prevention and climate change. This early feedback was taken forward into the development and drafting of the Corporate Strategy document.

2. **Public Events:** Following the development of a draft Corporate Strategy, two public events were held in December 2019 in order to provide an opportunity for residents and interested stakeholders to find out more about the Council's strategy and budget approach:
 - Guildhall, Bath – 57 attendees (17th December)
 - Civic Centre, Keynsham – 17 attendees (19th December)

A copy of the PowerPoint used at these events is available online here:
<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-01/Corporate%20Strategy%20and%20Budget%20Workshops.pdf>

74 people attended and over 120 different comments and queries were recorded during these events. In large part, detailed questions raised during these events were addressed directly at the time. However, some common themes included:

- *Pressures around social care funding*
- *The Council's approach to transport issues across the area – including more rural communities*
- *How the Council can best engage residents on and communicate about the climate emergency*
- *The need to raise income e.g. through a tourism tax*

3. **Online Survey:** Following these public events, the full draft Corporate Strategy document was published on the Council's online consultation system from 20th December 2019 to 24th January 2020 for further comments.

50 responses were submitted through the online survey. These included responses from key local organisations such as the Federation of Bath Residents Association (FoBRA), Curo and Citizens Advice Bureau BANES as well as from local residents. The next section of this report presents a table of key issues raised. This has been used to help inform the recommendations in this report.

4. **Further engagement:** During this time, the draft Corporate Strategy was also presented at the following for comment:
- Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (13th January)
 - Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (20th January)
 - Bathavon Area Forum (21st January)
 - Joint Somer Valley and Cam Valley Area Forum (22nd January)
 - Keynsham Area Forum (23rd January)
 - Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (28th January)
 - Independent Equality Advisory Group (28th January)

Where appropriate, comments raised through this further engagement have been summarised in the table below and used to help inform the recommendations in this report.

The last section of this document also includes the full minutes from the January Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel discussions on the Corporate Strategy.

5. **An ongoing, evolving conversation:** Whilst the document itself is due to be formally adopted in February 2020, the Corporate Strategy will continue to frame council communications and engagement activities for the next four years.

As part of our engagement, residents and stakeholders were asked how they would like to be involved in the Corporate Strategy moving forward. We will use this feedback as we develop our ongoing programme of engagement.

Section Two: Analysis of key issues raised

Many comments welcomed the new Corporate Strategy and the priorities it sets out. Many were also keen to be involved further as the strategy is implemented and highlighted ways in which they would like to collaborate and support the Council in delivering the strategy.

A number of queries and issues were also highlighted during the engagement which have been grouped together for analysis in the table below:

Priority area	Key issue raised	Response
General	<p>Some respondents asked for further information about how the strategy will be implemented and how progress will be measured.</p> <p>Alongside this, a number of specific suggestions were also put forward by respondents for possible performance measures that could be adopted.</p>	<p>The Corporate Delivery Programme sets out more detailed information on how the council will deliver the commitments contained within the strategy. Further work will take place to develop the performance framework that will monitor delivery.</p>
General	<p>Requests for more clarity about the relationship between the Corporate Strategy and other council policies and strategies – in particular, the B&NES Local Plan.</p>	<p>The Corporate Strategy is the council’s overarching strategic planning document. It sets out the core focus of the organisation for the next four years, guiding everything we do and how we do it. All of our other plans, policies and strategies will align with the commitments set out in the Corporate Strategy. This ‘golden thread’ relationship from the Corporate Strategy through to our other plans and policies is set out diagrammatically on Page 13 of the strategy document.</p>
Addressing the climate and nature emergency	<p>A number of points were made about the addition of ‘and nature’ to the ‘addressing the climate emergency’ core policy. These included suggestions for adding additional items relating to this theme as well as to declare an ecological emergency.</p> <p>There were also concerns that the addition of</p>	<p>Whilst we have declared a climate emergency as a Council, our strategy also recognises the importance of the ecological and nature crisis and establishes a core policy to address ‘the climate and nature emergency’.</p> <p>This recognises our aim to tackle both of these issues and provides a policy framework for the Council to develop further detail on this through the Corporate Delivery</p>

Priority area	Key issue raised	Response
	<p>this would lead to a lack of clarity.</p> <p>This issue was also raised at the Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel as set out in the minutes below.</p>	<p>Programme.</p> <p>The Corporate Strategy has also been updated to strengthen the commitment relating to natural environment carbon stores by adding reference to biodiversity.</p>
Giving people a bigger say	<p>Many welcomed the development of the Community Engagement Charter but want to see further detail on how this will be embedded in practice. A number of specific queries were also raised including how the unparished areas of Bath will be recognised in the Charter to ensure they are equally engaged.</p>	<p>The Corporate Strategy sets out a clear commitment to giving people a bigger say as well as tailoring the council's approach to community engagement in Bath, in order to reflect the needs of the City's residents.</p> <p>Specific feedback related to the Community Engagement Charter will be fed back to the Consultation and Communications Working Group who jointly developed the Community Engagement Charter.</p>
Preparing for the future	<p>More detail was requested on our approach to supporting the local economy, recognising that this is a difficult time for the 'high street' and that work is needed to develop a Destination Management Plan</p>	<p>The Corporate Strategy highlights the council's high-level commitments around preparing for the future. This includes the need to create a more resilient, sustainable, higher-skilled and greener economy.</p> <p>The Council has a programme of projects aimed at making our high streets attractive places to visit, including public realm improvements linked to 'greener' ways of getting in and around the area as well as a programme of business support. Reference to this has been strengthened in the Corporate Strategy document.</p> <p>Work on a Destination Management Plan for the area has started and will be completed later this year.</p>
Preparing for the future	<p>The commitment to energy efficiency retrofitting was seen as a positive move as long as this is reflected in our Planning and Listed Building policies e.g. low impact interventions such as secondary glazing of windows</p>	<p>The Corporate Delivery Programme sets out further detail on how this commitment will be delivered, including through the Council's statutory planning framework.</p>

Priority area	Key issue raised	Response
Delivering for local residents	More detail was requested on our commitments around transport as well as the need for some specific and clear performance measures within this area.	The Corporate Delivery Programme sets out a number of more detailed commitments related to transport (e.g. development of a Bath Transport Delivery Plan and support to the sustainable transport agenda). A set of performance measures is now being developed to help monitor delivery of this programme. We will also work closely with the West of England Combined Authority on joint transport planning. The Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (JLTP4) is due to be discussed in February and March.
Delivering for local residents	The broad ambitions set out in the strategy around housing were welcomed. However, more detail was requested on our specific commitments around homelessness and student housing.	The Corporate Strategy sets out the Council's high-level commitments around housing. Sitting underneath this, the Corporate Delivery Programme contains more detail on how we will deliver this. This includes the provision of an effective and efficient housing advice service which prioritises the prevention of homelessness. It also references the Local Plan process, which will consider student housing issues as part of this.
Focusing on prevention	Some respondents welcomed the focus on prevention but stressed the importance of taking an empowerment approach to this. This means 'doing with' rather than 'doing to' and recognising that everyone has a role to play in their health and wellbeing and that the Council needs to work with local communities on this.	The Council is committed to working with residents on this and building on the local strengths and resources that we have across the area. This is set out as a key commitment in the Corporate Strategy. To make this even clearer in the document, we have also made some updates to the wider text.
Focusing on prevention	Requests were made to more clearly acknowledge the relationship between air pollution and health e.g. the Clean Air Zone as an example of preventing future ill health	The Corporate Strategy has been updated to reflect this more strongly.

Section Three: Recommendations and Next Steps

The council thanks everyone who took part and gave us feedback on the draft Corporate Strategy. This report will be published online and updates on the Corporate Strategy will be provided to everyone who requested further information. As a result of the feedback provided, we have made a number of updates to the Corporate Strategy document. We also propose the following next steps:

1. Note the examples of good practice which were identified by many respondents and celebrate and build on this
2. Note the ways in which respondents identified that they would like to be involved and use this to help inform the development of our community engagement activities
3. Refer the comments on the draft Community Engagement Charter to the Consultation and Communications Working Group
4. Use the comments and suggestions on Corporate Strategy performance measures to help inform the development of our performance management approach
5. Refer the specific ideas and invitations to collaborate further to the relevant service area as appropriate to consider as part of future service planning

Section Four: Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel Feedback

Below are the minutes from each of the January 2020 Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel meeting discussions on the draft Corporate Strategy.

Corporate PDS Panel

The Director for Partnership & Corporate Services introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that it is the intention that the Corporate Strategy aligns with the budget proposals that the Panel will discuss further in February.

The Chairman said that if members of the Panel wish to discuss the matter informally, he would be agreeable for such a meeting to take place.

Councillor Alastair Singleton commented on the use of the term 'Climate and nature emergency' as opposed to Climate Change.

The Director for Partnership & Corporate Services replied that the use of language is important within the document and that this indicates the importance of the situation in which the Council is working.

Councillor Andrew Furse highlighted three key areas for him from the Draft Strategy.

- Deliver more carbon neutral, social and affordable housing and ensure that our Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) policies put communities first
- Ensure the Council is an exemplar for low carbon, including the delivery of carbon neutral and energy efficient homes through our housing company
- Have an effective approach to fly-tipping and litter enforcement as well as to city centre cleansing and trade waste

The Chairman thanked the Director for Partnership & Corporate Services on behalf of the Panel.

Climate Emergency and Sustainability PDS Panel

David Trethewey, Director of Partnership and Corporate Services, introduced the report. Panel members asked the following questions and raised the following points:

Councillor Craig raised the following points. *Officer responses are shown in italics:*

- Transport infrastructure is mentioned throughout but we are dependent on third parties in terms of improving bus and rail. *The officer explained that the Corporate Strategy shows the intention of the Cabinet is to influence WECA where possible in terms of improvements to bus and rail services.*
- How do you measure residents' views? *The officer explained that a randomised Voicebox survey is used. The Panel will be sent a link to this.*
- Allowances must be made for people who cannot use digital services. *The officer explained that the Council is working towards making as many services digital as possible which will free up staff to help people who cannot use the digital services. There is recognition that not all residents are online.*
- Council tax is spent on recycling, but we have limited control on buying things without excess packaging. We should lobby businesses so that they use less packaging. *The officer explained that clarity of strategic goals makes lobbying easier. The Panel will have a role when looking at the Environmental Bill.*
- Can we commit to look favourably at sustainable businesses who want to occupy our shops. *The officer explained that property is usually let on best consideration regarding the commercial estate.*

Councillor Hirst commented that the Corporate Strategy is a useful, clear and helpful document. He had the following queries. *Officer responses are shown in italics:*

- Query on inclusion of 'nature' in the Climate Emergency wording. *The officer explained that this is a recognition that there is also a nature emergency and that these are connected. The Cabinet are working across both agendas.*
- Supportive of the three bullet points on the climate and nature policy but concerned about what can be achieved and delivered in four years. There should be clear and achievable aims with quarterly reporting on performance statistics. *The*

officer explained that there is a target of carbon neutrality by 2030. There is a session in March to review the relevant strategies with a work programme cycle for these reviews.

- Regarding 'giving people a bigger say' – the current consultation on Entry Hill golf course may not meet the criteria. *The officer explained that the aim in the Corporate Strategy are based on learning from current and past consultations.*

Councillor Davies stated that the document is clear and the core policy of 'addressing the climate and nature emergency' is great. He made the following points. *Officer responses shown in italics:*

- The Council cannot do this alone, we need to shift behaviours and it would be good to see more in the Corporate Strategy about how the Council can play a wider leadership role in how everyone can help to address the emergency. *The officer explained that there are a series of measures planned to tackle this, the challenge is what to focus efforts on. There are web pages and tools for parish councils.*
- Regarding the 'prevention' principle – the Clean Air Zone could be included as an example of this as it will help to prevent future ill health.
- Regarding growth and enterprise (part of the Panel's remit), some of our high streets are in a difficult place, it would be good to have recognition of this. *The officer explained that there will be a discussion on this issue at the March meeting of the Corporate Panel.*
- We need to make sure there is congruence with work being done by WECA and BANES and that this is made clear to the public. *The officer explained that work is being done to coordinate the activity across the West of England.*

Councillor Born welcomed the draft strategy, it is accessible and a good size. She made the following points. *Officer responses shown in italics:*

- There should be robust tracking to measure what will be implemented and by when. *There will be more details in the delivery plan.*
- It is almost a year since the Climate Emergency was declared. The aim of carbon neutrality by 2030 is very ambitious - it does not feel like we are working fast enough to achieve this. An example is planning decisions which are made on guidance which may now be out of step. *The Council required that progress be reported back to this Panel in their March meeting where members can influence the policies to review timescale of the review.*
- It is important to have access points for people who do not have digital access. It is surprising how many people do not use computers. *This point is acknowledged and was discussed above.*

Councillor Karen Walker asked how residents can reserve books from the mobile library service if they are not online. *The officer explained that he did not know the details of this service but that access points are available.*

Councillor O'Brien raised the following points. *Officer responses shown in italics:*

- The two core policies ‘Giving people a bigger say’ and ‘Addressing the climate and nature emergency’ may not support each other and the ‘emergency’ should be more of a priority. *This comment can be fed back to the administration, the strategy reflects the manifesto.*
- The diagram is sensible – ‘improving people’s lives’ is a good purpose.
- The Council should use its position as a landlord to eliminate needless packaging. This could also be promoted by the BID and Chamber of Commerce. *This comment can be fed back to the administration.*
- We need to be dynamic, forceful and focused on the climate emergency – there are vast numbers of homes that need retro fitting, we should work with Curo on this. Also, new build applications should include tree planting. *Some of these points were discussed at Council in October.*
- The ‘Your Care Your Way’ model should be used by other services. *This is an area-based approach. Community areas are different.*

In response to a question from Councillor Bromley, the officer explained that there is a skills mismatch in the area and there is a question of how we address this, for example - there are not always the people with the skills to retro-fit houses.

Councillor Hirst stated that the word ‘emergency’ suggests that we are working in a different way to ‘business as usual’. We have to merit the word ‘emergency’ and show what we are doing. The officer explained that this will be clear through the budget proposals.

Dr Kumar stated that ‘emergency’ suggested radical action but the Council works very slowly. The officer explained that language used can raise a number of issues and that sometimes the use of more dramatic language can lead people to think that there is nothing they can do.

The officer reminded the Panel that they (along with members of the Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing PDS Panel) are invited to the Corporate PDS Panel meeting on 3rd February 2020 where the budget proposals will be discussed.

Note – there were two comments from members of the Panel that fell into the remit of the Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing PDS Panel. These comments will be passed on to that Panel.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to pass the following points on to the Cabinet for their consideration of the Draft Corporate Strategy at their February 2020 meeting:

- The word ‘emergency’ suggests a different pace to ‘business as usual’ – we must merit the word emergency in the pace of our work.
- More information about the Council’s leadership role which enables everyone to help towards the Climate Emergency is needed. We cannot do all of this work alone.
- We should use our position of landlord to encourage the elimination of needless packaging.

- Fast track the process of policy reviews such as updating the planning guidance so that decisions are in step with our Climate Emergency pledge.
- Regarding the 'prevention' principle – include the Clean Air Zone as an example of this as it will help to prevent future ill health.
- Make allowances for people who cannot use digital services.
- Be clear about what can be achieved (regarding the Climate Emergency) in 4 years then report back quarterly with performance statistics. Clarity of aims and robust tracking is needed.
- Some recognition in the Corporate Strategy about the difficult time for the High Street.
- More focus on the 'Climate Emergency' and the scale of work to be done – fast track retro fitting of homes (working with Curo) and new builds to include tree planting etc.

Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing PDS Panel

The Director for Partnership & Corporate Services introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that the draft strategy had been launched in December 2019 and had been discussed by the Council's two other Policy Development & Scrutiny Panels earlier in the month. He stated that the document sets out the Council's core purpose, policy focus and key commitments as well as describing the organisation's approach to monitoring performance and managing its budget.

He added that Councillors have also been invited to attend the Corporate Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel on February 3rd where the Draft Budget will be discussed in more detail. He highlighted the following area within the draft strategy.

OUR FRAMEWORK

ONE: We have one overriding purpose – to improve people's lives.

This might sound simple but it brings together everything we do, from cleaning the streets to caring for our older people. It is the foundation for our strategy and we will ensure that it drives our commitments, spending and service delivery.

TWO: We have two core policies – tackling the climate and nature emergency and giving people a bigger say. These will shape everything we do.

THREE: To translate our purpose into commitments, we have identified three principles. We want to prepare for the future, deliver for local residents and focus on prevention.

Councillor Liz Hardman said that she felt it was difficult to comment on the draft strategy without any budget figures attached to it and called for the budget to return to the agenda of all Panels to discuss their remits separately in future years. She queried how

the Council will 'Re-shape the way we work with children, young people and families in order to reduce demand for high cost, specialist children's social care placements'.

Councillor Andrew Wait commented that he quite liked the draft of the strategy and its focussed approach. He said that he would welcome further information on the Community Engagement Charter and stated that he would like to see more reports referencing the Parish Charter in the future as this was an area the Council could improve upon.

Councillor Paul May suggested the Parishes be surveyed to gain their feedback on the Charter.

Kevin Burnett offered a note of caution by saying that not all people's lives will necessarily be improved by increasing the use of new technology. He welcomed the draft strategies approach to improving the inequalities in life experience, including education, employment and health outcomes for local residents.

The Chairman said that he felt the draft strategy was very headline in its approach and offered nothing new in terms of ideas from the previous administration. He called for further explanation of the Council's workings alongside WECA as he personally was yet to see any advantages.

He added that he would be interested to see how Citizens' Juries will improve decision-making.

Councillor Jess David commented that she would have liked to have seen more detail relating to the section of the draft strategy in terms of prevention.

The Corporate Director for People replied that details of new initiatives will be brought to the Panel over time.

The Director for Partnership & Corporate Services informed the Panel that the delivery plan is set out within the draft budget papers.

The Panel RESOLVED to note the next steps for the Corporate Strategy.