

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee - Climate and Place held in the Sedgemoor Room, Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater, TA6 3AR, on Wednesday, 20 March 2024 at 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Martin Dimery (Chair)

Cllr Steve Ashton

Cllr Bente Height

Cllr Henry Hobhouse

Cllr Dave Mansell

Cllr Tom Power

Cllr Alan Bradford

Cllr Edric Hobbs

Cllr Marcus Kravis

Cllr Harry Munt

In attendance:

Cllr Dixie Darch

Cllr Richard Wilkins

49 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Adam Boyden (substituted by Cllr Mike Rigby) Cllr Matt Martin and Cllr Alex Wiltshire.

50 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

There were no declarations of interest received.

51 Minutes from the Previous Meeting - Agenda Item 3

Resolved

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17th January 2024 be approved as a correct record.

52 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

The Chair welcomed two public speakers to the meeting. The speakers presented their questions which had been submitted and printed alongside the agenda in advance of the meeting (in italic below) and the officer responses (**in bold below**) were read out to the committee as follows:

PQT 1 Nick Hall

Q1

Good morning – my name is Nick Hall. I am a Pilton Parish Councillor. Today, I am speaking in a personal capacity about Glastonbury Festival Traffic Management As you may recall from when I spoke in January, some members of our community, including myself, have raised a number of issues with the management of traffic associated with the Festival. Most of those issues have not been addressed by the Festival operating company Glastonbury Festival Events Ltd (GFEL). Hence we are relying on Somerset Council to encourage GFEL to engage.

In recent years there hasn't been direct contact between our community and the Somerset Council's traffic management team. Mr O'Dowd-Jones' commitment to have that team come and speak to our community is much appreciated. We need to progress this meeting to ensure we can have an impact on this year's Festival.

Somerset Council officer response:

As detailed at the scrutiny committee when this was last raised; Somerset Council Traffic Management team are in regular dialogue throughout the year with the Glastonbury festival off-site traffic management team to discuss and agree the festivals traffic management plan.

Following every festival, an off-site traffic de-brief meeting is held to ensure that any learning is captured, and improvements incorporated for future years events. The community are free to contact the Council's traffic management events team at eventstm@somerset.gov.uk if they have any concerns regarding the festivals traffic management plan. To date, and following our previous response, Somerset Council have not received any contact from the Parish Council with regards to any concerns regarding the traffic management plan. Somerset Council are also aware that GFEL continue to engage with the local community by holding regular meetings with local Parish Councils and also have dialogue with individual residents on numerous matters with the village liaison team who are available for one to one meetings. There is however a meeting between Pilton Parish Council and the Glastonbury festival off-site team on the 24th April where the Somerset Council traffic management team will also be present. Any concerns that the Parish Council have can then be discussed with all parties concerned. At this time, we believe that the plan reflects the best options for the majority of the village and the requirements of the festival and but are happy to take on any further viewpoints so long as the majority of the community as represented by the Parish Council are in agreement.

Q2

I still haven't heard back from the traffic management events team on the issues of:

- *Temporary Traffic Restrictions Orders and the insufficient consultation on public roads and footpaths.*

GFEL have had two meetings with the Parish Council and understand this issue has not been raised. For information, the TTRO's are in the process of being finalised, taking on board any learning from 2023, and will be advertised in the next few weeks.

- *Potholes and large-scale road degradation*

Please report any potholes and/or concerns about the road surface to Report a problem on the road ([somerset.gov.uk](https://www.somerset.gov.uk)). Where you believe the festival may have a detrimental impact on the highway please identify these area by providing a map and what three word locations and names of the highway/roads in question and we can take the issue up with GFEL.

- *Impact of offsite events/campsites*

We will review the offsite events/campsites with the Glastonbury festival off-site team but many of these do not require permission. We will monitor any issues that arise during the festival but have not had any previous notifications from a traffic/highways perspective.

- *Reducing the traffic through Pilton village.*

We are aware that the traffic through Pilton village has been significantly reduced over recent years and that only essential and residential traffic is now being routed through the village into the Green car park. Access is facilitated through manned gates and is only available for those with the correct passes. The Glastonbury festival off site team has been working very closely with the Parish Council as the community representatives on this matter.

Two other questions that I raised in my speech in January were not answered:

- *Is there an intention to create a publicly available de-brief report on Glastonbury Festival highways and traffic issues?*

Following every festival, a de-brief meeting is held with Parish Council and any learning is fed into the wider off-site traffic de-brief meeting, led by GFEL that includes Somerset Council, Police, other agencies, contractors and Village liaison team to ensure that any improvements are incorporated for future years events. All learning from the previous Festival is discussed and improvements suggested and undertaken where appropriate or required. This meeting is chaired by GFEL and the minutes are

confidential and not open for the public. On this basis there will not be a public debrief report, as the Traffic Management plan belongs to Glastonbury festival and a de-brief report is not required as part of the licensing agreement.

*· Regarding the Strategic Traffic Management Plan (STMP)
- condition of Planning Approval 2022/2458/FUL. The applicant has now submitted this STMP for approval. I have some reservations – it doesn't address air quality along the routes and doesn't assess the risks to non-car users. However my biggest concern is that a very large area around the Festival site is 'controlled' by GFEL (in conjunction with Somerset Council and the Police) by a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) that is not publicly available. Would it be possible to make available a public version of this TMP?*

There is a high-level Traffic Management plan which is publicly available. The detailed plan, which is owned by GFEL, is not available publicly for a number of reasons ** but it does work well and has been tried and tested over numerous years with GFEL and Somerset Council working together. Again, if there are any specific issues that you believe require addressing please raise them through the Parish Council or the Traffic Management Events team. ** note.. this is on both security and commercial grounds.

PQT 2 Eva Bryczkowski

TURN WORDS INTO ACTION NOW

Holding full council meetings at Canalside Conference Centre is totally non environmentally friendly.

For example, from Glastonbury, where there are no trains, the 75 bus to Bridgwater is every hour. I can catch the bus to Bridgwater for free with my bus pass. But Canalside Conference Centre is not held in the centre of town, and is awkward to get to. So I drive, spend money on petrol, (councillors/officers get petrol expenses), this adds to extra cars on the road, carbon emissions, and polluting the environment. Surely a more environmentally friendly place can be found by the council? I generally prefer to turn up in person because it's nice to get to know councillors, and I learn a lot from this. I don't mind paying for petrol for that reason alone. But what about people who are poorer than me? Also, as is my democratic right, I believe in turning up to support lobbies when appropriate:

Q1

Councillors and officers, can you immediately, as soon as possible, research more suitable and environmentally friendly places, where people can catch buses to them, avoiding carbon emissions?

Thank you for your question and constructive challenge on the Council's use of the Canalside Conference Centre, Bridgwater, for its Full Council meetings.

In line with legislative requirements the Full Council meetings need to be held in a venue that can accommodate the Council's 110 elected members, senior officers and members of the public. This means a venue that can accommodate about 140 people, has sufficient car parking, can be accessed using public transport and has sufficient broadband and audio visual capabilities to support live streaming of the meetings

for anyone wanting to observe or participate remotely. These requirements cannot currently be met by any of the Council's office accommodation across Somerset and therefore the Council has to use external venues. Analysis of available venues with the Council's requirements has meant the following potential venues for Full Council meetings:

**Canalside Conference Centre, Bridgwater
Westland Centre, Yeovil
Haynes Motor Museum, Sparkford**

All of these can have different challenges for members of the public depending on where they live in Somerset when using public transport to get to the meeting venue. The Council continues to explore other potential venues including some in the Taunton area due to its central location within Somerset.

Q2

Somerset is a predominantly rural area. The council is, I understand, subsidising some bus services. For me to get to Musgrove Park for an early appointment, the 29 bus leaves every two hours from my bus stop on the outskirts of Glastonbury. Then I need to change at Glastonbury town hall. In the centre of Taunton I need to change again, and get on the number 22 bus to Musgrove Park hospital. For an early appointment at 9am it is impossible to go by bus. Bus drivers told me that since the other bus repair sites have gone, if a light bulb goes or gearbox needs repairing, the bus needs to go to Wells anyway to get it sorted. Thus passengers miss whatever appointments they have in Taunton. The 29 bus used to go all the way from Wells to Musgrove Park, and the college. Councillors, if you are still going to subsidise certain bus routes, and be less Taunton centric, please consider influencing First Bus, or other companies, get them to use common sense and have the 29 bus go back to starting from Wells and going all the way to Taunton, particularly Musgrove Park hospital. Please will you subsidise this as soon as you are able to?

The current 29 bus service operates between Glastonbury, Windmill Hill and Taunton. However, from 15 April 2024 this service is being re-numbered 374 and most journeys will operate between Bristol via Wells, Glastonbury and Street to Taunton providing a through service for passengers living north of Glastonbury.

The times of journeys will remain similar to those currently operating with the first arrival in Taunton town centre at 0850 and the last departure from Taunton at 1722 Mondays to Fridays. The section of route between Glastonbury and Taunton is fully subsidised by Somerset Council and has been for many years.

For connections onto Musgrove Park Hospital it is necessary to change buses and use the Taunton Park & Ride service which sets down and picks up passengers directly outside the main entrance to the Hospital. There are no other daytime bus services to/from Taunton which serve the Hospital site and from the 29 it is possible to alight outside the Market House in Taunton Parade and catch the Taunton Park & Ride service from the same bus stop.

Q3

Regarding the cost-of-living crisis, I presume councillors wish to avoid incurring extra expenses being loaded onto less well-off Somerset residents?

When I, or anybody else in a similar position, needed to get to Musgrove for an early appointment, which could not be changed, I had to use Community Transport.

This cost me £28 cash before petrol prices went up, when I had downbeat nystagmus, so couldn't drive. If outpatients are kept in longer than two hours, the price doubles, thus costing £56.

a) If you really care about especially poorer Somerset residents, will you please consider subsidising the 29 bus to arrive in time for early appointments? This is not a divide and rule situation, other small places and towns matter too. But catching three! buses from Wells to Musgrove Park is ridiculous and needs to be rectified if you really care about the environment.

b) Some local authorities are taking private bus companies back into public ownership. Will you start researching how to do this, bring your findings back to the Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee, and propose this option to full council as soon as possible please? Otherwise, all the sentiments expressed towards poorer people, and about environmental issues are only just words. And your promises will be merely aspirations, unless they are fulfilled, in order to avoid the environmental catastrophe that is already happening.

There are currently no plans to provide earlier journeys on service 29 (soon be re-numbered 374). The service is timed to allow passengers including students attending the two Further Education Colleges in Taunton to arrive in Taunton before 0900 and to return after 1700 in the evening with a daytime frequency of roughly every two hours during the day. This service is vital in providing links to Taunton, Street, Glastonbury and Wells and will now provide a new link to Bristol, but patronage on the section of route between Street and Taunton is low hence the need for a significant subsidy in order to maintain this element of the service. Somerset Council has an Enhanced Partnership in place involving all bus operators in the County and we have no plans to bring private bus companies into public ownership.

The Chair thanked both members of the public for their questions and the officer responses that had been provided, and there were no further comments from any members of the committee.

53 Scrutiny Climate and Place Work Programme - Agenda Item 5

The Chair invited Jamie Jackson, the Governance Manager, Scrutiny to present the Scrutiny committee Climate and Place Forward Plan and Outcome tracker. The Governance Manager, Scrutiny advised that:

- An additional meeting to discuss 'Water Quality in Somerset' has been

confirmed for Friday 26th April to be held at 1.30pm in Deane House, Taunton.

- The schedule of meetings for the year 2024/2025 has not yet been finalised, but when it has this detail will be included in the committee's Forward Plan.
- The intention is that the Forward Plan will include quarterly budget monitoring and performance reporting going forward.

The Governance Manager, Scrutiny invited comments, questions and suggestions from members and one member had several concerns regarding the length of time the committee had waited for this forward plan, he felt that the forward plan was not member led, and that the use of 'information only' items is bad practice for a Scrutiny committee. The Cllr added that the committee ought to be concerned with items such as performance monitoring of the Councils Climate change ambitions, Public Transport, Active Travel, The Somerset Waste Board Business Plan and the known issues around broadband rollout in Somerset.

The Governance Manager, Scrutiny thanked the Cllr for his valuable and constructive feedback on the Forward Plan and advised that the Forward Plan is a working, evolving document and he would take all the Cllr's comments away to be considered going forward. He added that the Climate Change service was intending to bring quarterly performance monitoring to this committee and that this would starting soon. The Service Director, Economy Employment and Planning advised that a report regarding the Connecting Devon and Somerset broadband contracts would be ready to bring the next meeting of this committee, adding that there had been some recent challenges, details of which could not be disclosed in today's public meeting due to their commercial sensitivity.

The Chair thanked officers for their continued efforts with the committee's Forward Plan and Outcome Tracker.

54 Annual report on the Trading Standards Service - Agenda Item 6

The Chair welcomed Dolores Riordon, Operations Manager, Heart of the SouthWest Trading Standards Service to the meeting to present the update report to the committee. The report summarises the annual Strategic Assessment which analyses the last three years of Service activity to identify key issues and likely trends. The report identifies five key enforcement priorities for 24/25.

- Scams.
- Doorstep crime and rogue trading.
- Animal health and welfare including disease control.
- Illicit tobacco and vapes.
- Food allergens and standards.

A brief discussion took place, during which members were reminded that the detail of current/live investigations could not be disclosed in public session. Members thanked the Operations Manager for the update and agreed that this is wide ranging and very interesting

work. Members queried why the recent government ban on single use plastics is not mentioned in the report, and the officer explained that Trading Standards is taking a light touch enforcement approach to this currently, and therefore it is not one of the five high priority issues.

The Chair thanked Dolores Riordon for bringing the 2023/2024 Trading Standards update and the committee noted the report.

55 Section 19 Reports from 2020-2022 Flood Events - Agenda Item 7

The Chair welcomed Neil O’Gilvie, Service Manager Flood and Water Management and Anna Mears, Flood Impact Reporting Officer to the meeting and invited them to give a presentation to summarise the findings from the backlog of Section 19 Reports from 2020-2022 Flood Events. The Service Manager Flood and Water Management invited comments and questions from members and the following points were discussed -

- Flood prevention on listed buildings and the need for more flexibility on rules and regulations surrounding this.
- The need for a common-sense approach to decision making, with small scale decision making at a local level.
- The role of the Somerset Rivers Authority in facilitating discussions around funding for flood prevention projects.
- The issues with farming and crops such as maize which are known to contribute to increased flood risk

During the discussion several members expressed concerns regarding the difficulties faced when applying for planning permission to install flood defences on listing buildings. At the end of the debate Cllr Henry Hobhouse proposed that:

The Scrutiny Committee -Climate and Place recommends that the Somerset Council Planning Service review its policies and advice to residents regarding the application of flood defence mechanisms to listed buildings.

The proposal was seconded by Cllr Steve Ashton and the committee voted unanimously in favour.

56 Preliminary Report Section 19s 2023 Flood Events - Agenda Item 8

Following a short comfort break, the Chair welcomed all back to the meeting and invited Neil O’Gilvie and Anna Meares to present the Preliminary Report for the major flooding events that took place across Somerset in 2023/early 2024.

The Service Manager,

Flood and Water Management explained that this report sets out the methodology

for the full S19 investigation for the flood events and that the aim of this approach is to enable the team to undertake future S19 investigation reports within a target of 6 months of the event. He invited comments and questions from members and the following points were discussed –

- The issues around the insurability, and under reporting of incidents on land and property in high flood risk areas.
- One member asked about the validity of S19 reports and was advised that S19 reports do not go out of date as such, but can be superseded by newer events, and any new S19 investigation begins by reviewing any previous S19 investigations that have been carried out in the area, analysing any previous actions or recommendations that may or may not have been implemented.
- Community Engagement drop in events immediately following events is an opportunity for the Council and its flood management partners to work with communities to implement flood prevention measures quickly.
- One member felt that members need more information around how to help and advise people on flood prevention.
- Changes to Schedule 3 of the 2010 Flood and Water Management Act is expected soon which is focused on attenuation ponds, SUDS and urban drainage systems.

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance and the committee noted the S19s preliminary report.

57 Somerset Energy Investment Plan - Report of the Task and Finish Group - Agenda Item 9

The Chair invited committee member Cllr Dave Mansell, the Chair of the Task and Finish Group to present the findings and recommendations from the Somerset Energy Plan Task and Finish group (Appendix B) which had met six times over the period Oct 23-Feb 24. Members heard that the group had worked with Somerset Council officers and external consultants Regen and UK100 to steer and put forward a 'critical friend' challenge to the development of the Somerset Energy Investment Plan (Appendix C).

The Chair thanked Cllrs Ashton, Kravis, Boyden, Mansell, Bradford and Hobhouse for their time and input into the development of the Plan and invited comments and questions from the wider committee.

Members discussed the Somerset Energy Investment Plan (Appendix C) and Cllr Mike Rigby requested for more information on several aspects of the plan, including other small nuclear power stations under development in the UK, ambitions around tidal energy generation opportunities and EV car registrations, and was advised that written responses would be obtained from the report author after the meeting.

Following the discussion, The Chair asked the committee to vote to accept the recommendations as set out in Appendix B Task and Finish Group report, with the addition of a further proposal as follows -

The Scrutiny Committee - Climate and Place recommends that the Planning Service reports back to this committee on the efficacy of providing.

- a) A supplementary planning document on how we approach energy efficiency developments in listed buildings, as per BANES. (Bath and Northeast Somerset Council)
- b) A policy like Bristol City Council's BCS14: The heat hierarchy.

This was seconded by Cllr Harry Munt and the committee voted all in favour. Cllr Dixie Darch, Lead Member for Climate Change thanked the Task and Finish Group for their input and feedback on the Somerset Energy Investment Plan which is a map of opportunities for this Council. Cllr Darch explained that the Council is acting as an enabler, rather than a main investor in the future of renewable energy generation in Somerset.

58 2023-24 Budget Monitoring Report – Month 10 - Agenda Item 10

The Chair welcomed Christian Evans, Head of Business Partnering to give the month 10 budget monitoring update. He invited comments and questions from members and the following points were received and responded to –

- . Page 6 – Use of agency staff to fill critical posts is adding pressure.
- . Page 7 – More information required regarding the clawback of underspend on the Connecting Devon and Somerset contract.

The Chair thanked the Head of Business Partnering for the budget monitoring report and the committee noted the update.

59 Items for Information - Agenda Item 11

The Chair asked the committee to note the items for information and invited comments and questions from members. There were none received.

(The meeting ended at 1.35 pm)

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CHAIR