

Bath Area Forum

18th July 2023 at Bath City Community Farm, Whiteway, Bath

In attendance:

Paul Harris (Curo/Health and Wellbeing Board); Simon Martin (B&NES - Director of Regeneration & Housing); Nicolette Boater (Chair of Bath Area Forum); Cleo Newcombe Jones (B&NES - Regeneration Team Manager); Hazel Thorpe (B&NES - Development Officer, Regeneration); Sam Plumber (Project Manager - Youth Connect South West); Stephen George (B&NES - Planning Officer); Dave Dixon (B&NES - Community Engagement Manager); Mark Hayward (B&NES - Community Engagement Officer); Cllr David Wood (B&NES - Deputy Council Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Priorities & Delivery); Cllr Deborah Collins (B&NES - Widcombe & Lyncombe Ward); Nik Bowyer (B&NES - Strategic Transport Projects Manager); Cllr Manda Rigby (B&NES - Bathwick Ward and Cabinet Member for Highways); Cllr Michelle O'Doherty (B&NES Newbridge Ward); Cllr Paul Crossley (B&NES Southdown Ward); Cllr Paul Roper (B&NES -Kingsmead Ward); Cllr Joel Hirst (B&NES Odd Down Ward); Steve Richards (Resident); Cllr Toby Simon (B&NES Bathwick Ward); Bob Goodman (Resident – Combe Down); Ceris Humphries (Resident - FOBRA); Jill Kingaby (Resident - BFA); Cllr Ruth Malloy (B&NES Weston Ward); Kay (Resident – Bathwick); Jay West (Resident); Alan West (Resident); Carole Greenwood (Resident - PERA); Nick Somer (Resident – PERA); Thelma Grimes (Resident -BFA); Debbie Covell (Resident – FOSB); Chris Jones (Resident – Southlands Weston); Jo Salisbury (Resident -CSE); Angie Paddock (Resident – Southlands Weston); Steph Dodge (Resident); Penny Gallagher (Resident); Rachel Gay (Resident); Lynne Boreham (Resident – Odd Down); Lilly (Resident); Angela (Resident); Malcolm (Resident – The Circus Bath). Another fifteen residents were present who did not provide their details.

Apologies:

Cllr Jess David (B&NES); Cllr Alison Born (B&NES - Widcombe & Lyncombe Ward); Cllr George Tomlin); Cllr Ian Halsall (B&NES); Cllr Joanna Wright (B&NES); Cllr Sarah Moore (B&NES – Twerton Ward and Chair of the Council); Cllr Tim Ball (B&NES – Twerton Ward); Rachel Hushton (FOBRA);Tom Box (Curo); Ghika Silva (Student Community Partnership); Jeremy Boss (Widcombe RA); Cllr Saskia Heijtes (B&NES); Cherry Bennett (B&NES)

Cabinet Priorities

The forum welcomed Cllr Dave Wood, Bath, and North East Somerset's Deputy Council Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Priorities & Delivery for who gave an overview of [Cabinet priorities](#) following the May 2023 election.

The following points were raised:

Nicolette Boater inquired about the council's plans to empower citizens and allocate sufficient resources to align with their strategy. Cllr Wood responded by stating that the implementation will involve building upon current methods and actively engaging with residents to gather feedback and address specific concerns.

Kay from Bathwick expressed her approval of the Council's decision to listen to residents' opinions. She highlighted the lack of prior consultation with residents in the past. Additionally, she mentioned that the language used during interactions with residents seemed to indicate a predetermined agenda, and that data was manipulated to support the Council's desired outcomes. Cllr Wood clarified that the administration's manifesto, which they were elected on in the recent election, outlines their plans for delivery, but emphasised that this does not mean they will cease listening to residents.

Lynne from Odd Down inquired about the presence of a 'Food Strategy' within the Council's plans, as it was not apparent from the information provided. Cllr Wood clarified that addressing the climate emergency is a crucial component of their strategy, which encompasses the issue of food as well.

Lily from Bath raised concerns about the net zero plans, questioning their full extent and how they will be enforced. She mentioned potential consequences such as airport closures, the adoption of insect-based diets, and the loss of personal freedoms due to the fifteen-minute concept. Lily also criticised the Council for making decisions on behalf of everyone and for exerting control over behaviour change.

Angela from Odd Down highlighted the backlash against the traffic situation in Rush Hill, Bath. This issue has arisen due to council decisions that have pushed the traffic from other areas. Angela also criticised the bus service, stating that it is of inadequate quality. She further mentioned that the politicians are preoccupied with arguing about buses with WECA instead of resolving the issues. Angela expressed concern about cyclists riding too fast on paths and the need for her to own and use a car, as necessary.

Cllr Manda Rigby, the Cabinet Member for Highways and representative for Bathwick Ward in B&NES, acknowledged the suboptimal state of transport in Bath and its impact on disadvantaged individuals. She highlighted that the transformation of buses into profit-driven enterprises has compromised their service quality. Furthermore, she emphasised the need to provide alternative transportation options to reduce reliance on cars for all types of journeys. It is important to note that the aim is not to confine people to their home communities.

Local Plan

The Forum received an [update on the Local Plan](#) from Stephen George – Planning Officer, B&NES. It was explained that further engagement with Parishes and other stakeholders is planned for July and September 2023.

The following points were raised:

Lynne recognised the importance of implementing a local food growing strategy to address food security concerns. Nicolette Boater emphasised the need for the Council to prioritise this issue, ensuring access to land and the right to grow food.

Ceris asked is the Supplementary Plan Document for the Local Plan open to reviewing if appropriate and if the review could specifically focus on the flexibility of larger developments?

Chris Jones inquired about the potential rejection of the plan and the subsequent actions that would be taken. Stephen George clarified that there is an existing policy in place to address the immediate future, and the plan will be presented with multiple options for further deliberation.

Debbie opposed the plan to build a new Lidl Supermarket in Lambridge, arguing that it contradicts the Council's green agenda and harms local small traders. She criticised the consultation process for being ineffective and excluding certain viewpoints. When she raised these concerns with the councillors, she received no replies. Stephen George defended the planning process, stating that the application is already being addressed and no further comment can be given.

Cllr Joel Hirst inquired about the national planning guidance and its implications for areas like HMOs and University Accommodation. Stephen George clarified that there is some flexibility regarding university accommodation.

Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy

In June, the new seven-year [Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy](#) was launched.

During the Forum meeting, Paul Harris, Executive Director for Customer Experience at Curo, provided an [update on the strategy](#). There will be further engagement to encourage local communities to participate in its delivery.

The Health and Wellbeing Board consists of over twenty-five representatives. The strategy document was informed by data from the joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA), including input from the NHS and health data.

Paul Harris emphasised that the strategy requires the collective effort of organisations and individuals in our communities.

The following points were raised:

The audience member expressed their lack of information about the strategy and questioned the absence of prominent notices for residents to see.

Steph highlighted the local school's provision of breakfast clubs, a food pantry, and cooking courses for both students and parents. These initiatives require support from the Council.

Bath Local Centres High Street Improvement Scheme

Hazel Thorpe, Development Officer, Regeneration, presented on the upcoming improvements for four High Street locations in Bath. These locations include Twerton High Street, Mount Road Local Centre, Moorland Road, and Weston High Street. The [presentation](#) included detailed information on the planned improvements for each of these areas.

The following points were raised:

One audience member argued in favour of keeping Mount Road as it is, citing the views expressed by others who shared the same sentiment. Furthermore, they highlighted the fact that there is no obligation to allocate funds towards making any changes.

Chris from Weston expressed his satisfaction with the opportunity to review the plans for Weston High Street and mentioned the upcoming autumn consultation. Despite having internet access, Chris felt there was a dearth of information as nothing had been delivered to his door. Additionally, Chris raised concerns about the lack of information regarding the 'ring of steel' project.

Angie from Weston believes that there has been a lack of public awareness regarding the Weston High Street proposals. She suggests exploring alternative options, such as promoting the use of empty shops in the village. Hazel acknowledges that there have been significant changes since the initial consultation and expresses a desire to gather more information as the process continues.

Disabled parking facilities were not being provided as part of this project. Hazel clarified that traffic changes are costly and outside the scope of the current initiative. She emphasised the need to be realistic about what can be accomplished and highlighted that the High Street work is a separate project from the liveable Neighbourhoods scheme.

Have conversations have been held with long-term businesses in Moorland Road to determine the changes that would best suit their needs. The scheme's potential impact on businesses and people's lives is a concern, as it could be damaging and ruin lives.

Malcolm explained Residents from the Circus, have successfully made minor cosmetic improvements to streets like Marlborough Buildings. These efforts have been well-received by the community. It is worth noting that the Council's assistance is not always required for implementing such changes.

Youth Connect South West

Sam Plumber, Project Manager, provided a [comprehensive overview](#) of the work being done by Youth Connect South West in Bath and their strong collaboration with local communities in the city.

The following points were raised:

There is a strong demand for a Youth Club in Weston. To address this, the church has hired a resolute youth worker. Additionally, there is an offer of assistance to conduct a leaflet drop in Weston to raise awareness about the Youth services.

Transport Consultations (10 mins)

Nik Bowyer, Strategic Transport Projects Manager at B&NES Council, [provided an update](#) on the Somer Valley Links consultation (the potential effects that could arise on the A367 Wellsway) and the upcoming Bath to Bristol Strategic Corridor (BBSC) consultation in the summer.

You can [visit the consultation webpage](#) to find out more and share your views. The page includes an [interactive map](#) which is useful for seeing the proposals by location.

Future Meeting Date

If you are interested in presenting at the next Bath Area Forum meeting or have suggestions for Agenda items do let us know. It is currently scheduled for 26th September at 5.30pm and will be the Forum's AGM.