

FoBRA Hustings Meeting March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2023, 6.30pm – 8.30pm  
Widcombe Junior School

Attendees:

Charles Draper (Bathwick Estate)  
Timothy Cantell (Bear Flat)  
David Morgan (Bear Flat)  
Julie Ingerfield (Bloomfield)  
Ed Catchpole (Bloomfield)  
John Long (Camden)  
Jeremy Labram (Camden)  
Theresa Franklin (Cavendish Cres)  
Elizabeth Curnow (Cavendish Cres/FoBRA Treasurer)  
Emilio Pimentel Reid (The Cavendish Road Society)  
Justin Draeger (The Cavendish Road Society)  
Malcolm Baldwin (CARA)  
Katina Beckett (Entry Hill)  
Rachael Hushon (Lansdown Crescent/FoBRA Chair)  
Stephanie Higgins (Lansdown Crescent)  
Graham Feltham (Lower Oldfield Park/FoBRA Vice Chair)  
Liz Hallam (Lower Oldfield Park)  
Julia Perryman (Marlborough Lane & Marlborough Buildings)  
Ceri Humphreys (Pulteney Estate/FoBRA Transport Lead)  
Chris Jones (Pulteney Estate)  
Paul Crowsley (Sion Hill & Summerhill Road)  
Sally Parkes (Sion Hill & Summerhill Road)  
Sylvia Sinclair (St James's Square/FoBRA Secretary)  
Colyn Moore (St James's Square)  
David Quine (Sydney Buildings)  
Mary Sabine Stacey (Sydney Buildings)  
David Monson (Upper Oldfield Park)  
Jeremy Boss (Widcombe)  
Michael Wrigley (Widcombe)  
Ben Woods (University of Bath)  
Marianne Evans (Bath Spa SU)  
Neetu Karwal (Bath Spa SU)

Observers:

Nola Wright (Bathwick Estate)  
Cllr Kumar (Beech Road)  
Melanie Gilbert Smith (Cavendish Cres)  
Simon Banks (Englishcombe Lane)  
Nicola James (Lansdown Cres)  
Tom Moore (St James's Square)  
Emma Monson (Upper Oldfield Park)  
Laura Bold (Bath Spa SU)  
Ghika Savva (Student Union Liaison)

Apologies:

Nick Tobin (Ainslie's Belvedere)  
Tony Miles (Upper Oldfield Park)

Party Representatives:

Cllr Robin Moss (Labour)  
Cllr Manda Rigby (Lib Dem)  
Cllr Vic Pritchard (Conservative)  
Cllr Colin Blackburn (Independent)  
Cllr Joanna Wright (Green)

Rachael Hushon, Chair introduction

Welcomed and thanked the attendees and the five political representatives for taking part.

Reminded all taking part that discussion would come from the floor (member Association representatives), that as per usual committee meetings no filming or social media during the meeting.

Explained the format of the evening. The 5 representatives were asked to introduce themselves and present their position and approach to some of the issues we asked them to consider which include traffic/congestion, environment, heritage, planning, development, budget, social care and overall ambition for Bath. Each to have 5 minutes.

After all 5 have spoken, a Q&A from the floor. Each candidate will take 2 questions.

After those questions, each candidate allowed a 2 minute recap/reply (in reverse running order to earlier).

A running draw was conducted.

Running order:

Robin Moss  
Manda Rigby  
Vic Pritchard  
Joanna Wright  
Colin Blackburn

Robin Moss Opening Address:

Last 4 years global pandemic and lock down. Cost of living crisis. National leadership shambolic. Local govt has had to both act and work in this environment. Lib Dem administration has done a lot that labour have agreed with. This includes working together with vulnerable residents. Their ambition for environmental policies is admirable. But traffic and transport is a constant issue for previous Bath administrations and this one has been no better than previous ones. The Lib Dems have introduced small schemes like LNs and trying to deal with traffic coming in and out but these schemes are not joined up with the inter-relationship with different neighbourhoods. In addition, the Lib Dem administrations' reality is different to what has happened and what has been done (in social housing for

example). What is the council achieving? There have been both successes and failures. Important that politicians uphold highest standards.

#### Manda Rigby Opening Address:

Lib Dem administration has made great progress to address climate emergency. This is an ambitious programme. A plan to plant 100,000 new trees, doubled our renewable energy generation since 2019. But lots more to do. The recycling centre will be left open until a like for like facility in the city is built. We have delivered the first CAZ outside of London. We are trialling 3 LN schemes. 12 more in co-design with community input. Parking charges are now based on emissions and we have new RPZs. Hotels are no longer able to take resident parking places in central RPZs. Cleveland Bridge HGVs stopped. Bike Hangars trial in place. P&R buses back under Council control, if re-elected we will pilot school street programmes, trial Electric vehicle charging infrastructure and Council housing ambition to deliver 1000 units by 2030. We have Bath police station has been reopened. We introduced the successful Fixmystreet app and street weed removal systems not using harmful chemicals. We have a Street cleaning inspection system planned. We have achieved for Bath a UNESCO – 2<sup>nd</sup> designation. Working with both universities to cut down vehicle traffic and build student housing on campus rather than in the city. Retail footfall growing faster than other cities and shop vacancies in Bath well under the national average. New special needs education school funding secured.

#### Vic Pritchard Opening Address:

Administration needs less ideology and more growth. Problems in society in general worsened by our council. Bath Conservatives are committed to get bath moving again. Banes needs an admin to listen to its people to achieve growth and success. One that it can trust. An Administration that will work for all residents of Banes – growth path for future. Transport problems have worsened under Lib Dem administration. Bus gate north road issue wasted money. Cleveland Bridge took 12 months instead of 12 weeks. Conservatives would remove Ring of Steel and other barriers in Bath. Hours of operation make it useless at what it is intended. Keeps out tourists. LTNs – residents don't understand what they have planned for their areas. Conservatives will remove rush hour congestion. Work with bus operators. Protect rural community bus services. Forgotten communities – banes council has created greater risk for charities (Genesis Trust charity for example) due to parking charges making it unaffordable for carers. Conservates are pro growth, pro business. Listen to residents. Get bath moving again traffic and economy.

#### Joanna Wright Opening Address:

Traffic in this city and transport biggest issues in this city. She was in Lib Dem administration but concerned about how RPZ and LNs were being delivered. Private consultants brought in don't understand areas. IPPC report shows we need systematic change across everything we do now today not in the future. Disappointed by Lib Dems policy – should have done more. North Road bus gate should have happened. North road was stopped to get vote at this election. No circulation plan for this city which is needed so all residents can see issues and debate. Clean Air Zone – Caz C was chosen by Tories on the understanding that Queen Square delivery would reduce air pollution. But we aren't getting to those levels of air quality promised or required. We should we be looking at CAZ D. Tourism and planning. Air BNB major problem in Bath. Tourist tax should be introduced.

Waste centre staying is a positive. Planning and retrofitting should be done now. Green spaces protected. Lidl on London Road has not been required to put in an environmental assessment even though it was the correct size to require one for example.

#### Colin Blackburn Opening Address:

Noted that there are no residents' associations for Westmoreland. Since 2019 city dominated by Lib Dems. As independent councillors their voice is residents' voice. Cllr June Player is the other Bath independent councillor for Westmoreland. Sometimes they go against each other as they speak for their residents on their issues. RPZ one issue. 50% want RPZ. 50% don't. This has been problematic. Clean Green Friendly is their main message. Ward has both Victorian streets and riverside development so very diverse. Ward is a building site and has been for years. Green spaces gone. Work has gone from this area – people used to walk to work in what is now riverside development. Ward heavily HMO'd. Asked audience to look to see if you have an independent at ballot box and vote for them if you do.

#### Q & A Session:

##### **Marianne Evans (Bath Spa Student Union) to Colin Blackburn (Independent)**

Question: You mention your ward has significant number of HMOs – do you recognise that students are your residents too and how do you get them involved in decision making.

Answer: Student engagement very important. Presence of uni students in the city is for short period of time (during degree). Value them. Key is education around waste, recycling etc very important.

##### **Ceris Humphreys (Pulteney Estate) to Joanna Wright (Greens)**

Question: You talked about the climate emergency. What about the ecological emergency. Trees are dying when planted. Shouldn't more focus be on existing trees and vistas that we have versus planting new ones.

Answer: New trees take years to grow and years to make a difference. How do we protect trees and green spaces that we have in planning process is a key issue. Lambridge took out significant number of trees and the developer was meant to replant new but no enforcement and replanting hasn't happened. Planning process needs to focus more on trees, greenspace, flora and fauna also need protected. Council could make strong decision to say we need to have this – but they leave it to the planning officers and there is no real enforcement. Needs greater leadership. Plymouth leader stepped down this week over 100s of trees removed middle of the night.

##### **Sylvia Sinclair (St James's Square) to Vic Pritchard (Conservatives)**

Question: Your party wants to get Bath moving yet it was under your Cllr Bob Goodman that your party approved the Queen Square traffic light system which was designed specifically to move traffic into residential streets. Will you now remove the traffic lights from Queen Square if you get into power?

Answer: The conservative administration were forced to introduce the CAZ. Both the Council leader and the Council CEO were told if they didn't conform, senior members of the council and admin could be incarcerated. The Queen square system had to be approved by

the Conservative administration to comply with CAZ C even though the system designed is stupid. Yes, if able to, the Conservatives would remove CAZ traffic light system. Vic confirmed he was standing in next elections.

**Jeremy Boss (Widcome) to Manda Rigby (Lib Dem)**

Question: You mentioned in your opening address that empty shops account for approx. 3% of retail outlets. What is party doing to get more independent shops in Bath and keep areas like Widcombe and city centre thriving?

Answer: It is very area dependent. We are looking at significant investment in Milson Quarter. Also South Keys and North Keys developments. Will be working with Bath Uni Students on entrepreneurial initiatives too to try to keep Bath's University graduates in Bath after graduation. Key is we don't try to be a "Bristol-light" but play to our own strengths in terms of retail offering. Bringing independents and being a "food destination" are the areas we are currently seeing develop.

**Emilio Pimentel Reid (Cavendish Road Society) to Robin Moss (Labour)**

Question: Cllr Rigby says this is a city that cares. Buses can drive down Milsom street. Would you support Blue Badge holders to drive down too.

Answer: The existing Council needs to work better to help blue badge holders. There is a legal as well as a moral requirement for disabled access. Falls into the Department for unforeseen consequences. Similar to Vic's reply that he would take the traffic lights out of Queen Square – easy to say but what is knock on effect? This is a complicated issue and I can't give straight forward answer but preference would be yes to allow blue badge down Milsom Street but how does that work for rest of the city and how does that work for areas that are looking to be pedestrianised in the future?

**Liz Hallam (Lower Oldfield Park) to Colin Blackburn (Independent)**

Question: How many independent candidates will Bath have standing in upcoming elections?

Answer: Hopefully a few more candidates but not 100% sure.

**Chris Jones (PERA) to Joanna Wright (Greens)**

Question: How should BANES measure its success?

Answer: Through climate and ecological emergency responses and through affordability and how do we deliver that while its fair and square for everyone including the poorest households. For example poorest households being retrofitted so they can afford to eat and pay bills.

**Charles Draper (Bathwick Estate) to Vic Pritchard (Conservatives)**

Question: What is your plan to reduce north south through traffic

Answer: We need to confer with neighbouring authorities immediately. Talks have stalled re a route south to M4 that bi-passes Bath. We need to Resurrect approach. Helped issue that the 12 week scheme for Cleveland Bridge turned into 12 month scheme but London road is now static carpark. London road mentioned on national traffic reports.

### **Justin Draeger (Cavendish Road Society) to Manda Rigby (Lib Dems)**

Question: You have stated plans for 45 LTNs if you are re-elected. Where is a list of streets impacted in these 45 LTNs?

Answer: 3 LNs are now being trialed. 12 more are currently in co-design. The rest are ones that have been mentioned by residents and will be developed and include things like safer crossings, school streets etc. There are no streets named for these at the moment as they would require proper consultation. Justin asked for the streets impacted in 12 in those in co-design? Manda replied there are areas named but not yet streets as not that progressed – will send link to web site via secretary.

### **Ceris Humphreys (PERA) to Robin Moss (Labour)**

Question: B&NES is fortunate to have had the service of Labour Cllr Jackson for many years. She raised the point of portraits in council chamber – failure of proper representation of these portraits. Will Robin hold council to account for better representation of plaques and portraits in the city.

Answer: Yes. Cllr Brad Johnson also mentioned pictures in guildhall. Secondary issue of new plaques in city. Who do they include and who isn't included. Important issue.

(Vic Pritchard in response to Ceris's question – can't airbrush history away. Can't ignore the past but agrees more representation required going forward.)

### **Closing comments**

#### Colin Blackburn

Planning is a significant issue in Bath. Feel we are not grasping the nettle with climate emergency and hiding behind listed building rules and requirements. We also need better engagement with NE Somerset – not getting it right with the people who come into city to work.

#### Joanna Wright

Big thing we have failed to address this evening is buses and WECA. Unless we deliver across the region for transport it won't work and we need to make sure it's linked up. We need to make sure WECA leadership is talking to each other. LN money needs to come from WECA and we need to get better at talking to WECA and central government.

#### Vic Pritchard

Represents Chew Valley ward. Easy for it to be Bath centric. Has to be looked at as B&NES not just Bath. BANES includes a WH city, green belt and two cities. No admin takes control wanting to fail. Mistakes are made – their administration failure was Batheaston park & ride. Current administration's failure is Ring of Steel costing £7.4m. every £1 is 1% on council tax. The Ring of Steel is bad for disabled, it doesn't work to keep threat out, has been implemented on background of fear. In his view it's not anti-terrorist but anti-car.

#### Manda Rigby

City centre security scheme – like the CAZ, this was imposed by government. The CEO of council said it won't be allowed to be removed. Future administration won't be allowed to take it out (same situation as the CAZ). Agreed with Joanna Wright re Airbnbs being an

issue for the city. Responded to Vic Pritchard's comment re stalled talks re north south traffic and said M4 A37/A36 talks are actually carrying on and new news coming soon. She said Blue badge can get into Ring of Steel. Re Blue Badge holders and Milson street – it is now a quiet pedestrian shopping street and more disabled parking has been provided in Quiet Street and Broad Street carpark which are very close by. She said there must be environmental assessment for Lidl on Lambridge site. Two years taken away from this administration due to the pandemic and they need more time to implement change required for Bath.

Robin Moss

Please vote. Voter ID needed this time. Non-party political point – people need to get out and vote. Councils do consult but not good at looking at consequences. We need to go further and follow families and individuals through time to see consequences of what is put in place. Labour would do this if elected. Lot of money spent on consultations but not on their consequences.

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked all attendees, observers and candidates for participating. In particular she thanked all of the Councillors for the hard work they all contribute and for giving up their evening to join FoBRA.

**Notes by:** Secretary, Sylvia Sinclair