

Federation of Bath Residents' Associations

DRAFT MINUTES

Ordinary Committee Meeting starting at 6.30pm

Thursday 26th September 2024, Widcombe Junior School

Attendees:

Theresa Franklin (CCRA); Sally Parkes (SH&SHRRA); Joanne Johnson (SH&SHRRA); Caroline Greenwood (PERA); Morny Davison (Catharine Place RA); Malcolm Baldwin (CARA); Tony Miles (UOPRA); Jan Shepley (Widcombe); Michael Wrigley (Widcombe); Chris Meehan (Bathwick Estate); Alasdair Baron (Bathwick Estate); Ian Tarr (TARA); Lawrence James (Wellsway); Peter Cook (Wellsway); Julie Ingerfield (Bloomfield Rd); Liz Taylor (Entryhill); Jill Kingaby (Bear Flat Assoc); David Morgan (Bear Flat Assoc); Elizabeth Curnow (CCRA/Treasurer); Rachael Hushon (LCA/Chair); Jeremy Boss (Vice Chair); Richard Wales (Bathwick Hill); Ceris Humphreys (PERA); Richard Pooley (Sydney Buildings HA); Poppy Laycock (Bath Spa Uni SU); Jas Raymond-Barket (Bath Spa Uni SU); Ghikka Savva (Student Community Partnership); Liz Eyles (Bath Spa University); Corinne Evans (University of Bath); Sophie Broadfield (BANES); Cllr Paul Roper (Liberal Democrats).

Apologies:

Patrick Rotherham (Vineyards); Paul Crowsley (SH&SHRRA); Julia Perryman (MLMBRA); Graham Feltham (LOPRA); Nick Tobin (AB&CPRA); Benjamin Orford (University of Bath SU); Jane Tucker (LOPRA); Sylvia Sinclair (SJS Bath Limited).

Welcome:

The Chair welcomed Sophie Broadfield, Executive Director Sustainable Communities for Bath & North East Somerset who presented the Economic Strategy for the region, and Cllr Paul Roper, Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development.

Presentation:

Cllr Roper urged FOBRA members to read the full Economic Strategy for the region.

Link: <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/B%26NES-Economic-Strategy-2024-2034.pdf>

Key facts presented:

METRO DYNAMICS, the London based company, specialising in devolution and local government, were actively engaged in developing the 10-year Economic Strategy for B&NES.

Four key stakeholders have played a pivotal role in the development of the Economic Strategy, notably Bath Spa University, University of Bath, Royal United Hospital and CURO.

The primary objective is to build a fair, green, creative and connected region, working in collaboration with WECA.

Currently the region has lower than average wage, high housing costs, and shortage of land for employment.

The Economic Strategy encompasses 6 Key pillars for growth:

1. Green Economy. Create jobs in the area of renewable energy in the run up to Net Zero
2. Good work. Give people good jobs and good pay
3. Resilient Businesses. Building a diverse, creative, and sustainable business.
4. Creativity and innovation.
5. Housing and affordability.
6. Stronger Places building resilience and sharing prosperity more fairly

Growth is expected to come from 3 areas:

Technology

Creative

Digital

The following points were put forward by members and discussed:

1. Build a cycling highway between Bath and Salford which addresses pedestrian safety. The Council replied this was “already happening”. Participants felt that there was a need to ensure that walking and cycling was safe for women and children. The Avon and Somerset “Walk & Talk Scheme” for over 18 year old females, addresses issues like anti-social behaviour, poor street lighting, and public safety. FOBRA members felt it would be beneficial to keep this service in the public eye.
2. The plan appeared to adopt a “top down” approach with little residential involvement. The Council replied that the strategy had been developed with relevant data, taking into account local business and key stakeholders. The Chair stated that FOBRA provided a forum for discussion, unlike Local Parish Councils, (e.g. Radstock and Keynsham) which have a statutory role in decision making.
3. The retail offering in Bear Flat has left locals disappointed. The Chair gave examples of how local Resident Associations could get involved with local businesses by working with the Council to improve specific retail areas. Margaret’s Building, being a prime example. Moorland Rd and Weston High Street had benefitted from funding and advertising.
4. Is there “cross party” support for this Economic Strategy? Would the plan be sustainable if another party gets elected? The Council replied that it would take 7-10 years to deliver the strategy. Certainly, this Council hope to be re-elected. The goals are immersed in “Building Better Housing and Creating Better Jobs” both of which address a financial deficiency.

5. "Thinking" companies like consulting, legal, and creative already enjoy working in Bath City Centre. However, noise levels are increasing and need to be controlled at street level to encourage these businesses to remain and expand. Are we attracting the right type of tourists? Do we really want coaches that bring tourists to Bath for a couple of hours? Buskers using amplification need to be managed. Cllr Roper referred to a 5 Page document on Street Policy.
6. There is evidence that graduates want to stay, but there are no calibre jobs in the city, example Engineers, and no place where you could build a business from start-up to growth. London's dynamic experience of business growth in "new" business areas on the periphery of central London was cited. This could happen in our region. Why not create a new business community in warehouse areas in or around Keynsham for example? It doesn't have to be in Central Bath. Enterprise finds its own dynamic areas to thrive.
7. The Economic Strategy does not yet address "diversity"? How will it address people living in "poor" conditions? Cllr Roper replied that CURO is a key participant in the development of the plan.
8. We need to look after the heritage assets we have. It has been 2 years since B&NES rightly approved a permanent ban on the use of glyphosate weedkiller to control weeds in streets across the area. But as a result, our streets and pavements are overgrown with weeds and in another 2 years the fabric of our listed buildings and heritage assets could be affected. The FOBRA Chair appealed to the Council to reach out to its residents to help. It was felt that such an appeal would "generate an army of people across the city who could help the council teams do the work."
9. Many more cafes and restaurants have sprung up in the City Centre with planning deregulation. The result of which is dirt, more litter and a never-ending problem with gulls. How is this problem being addressed? The recent "gull survey" will hopefully provide insight into the seagull problem and consequentially some solutions. Councillor Roper again referred to the document on Street Policy.

Finally, Cllr Roper said the economic metrics for our region are challenging. The average salary is low. B&NES has a population of ageing affluent people and students. The new Economic Strategy provides a vision for constructive change.

Chair thanked both Cllr Roper and Sophie Broadfield for attending the meeting and providing this update.

Meeting ended.

World Heritage Site Advisory Board (WHSAB)

26 September 2024

Informal notes of meeting for FOBRA members

These notes are intended for FoBRA members and are not a substitute for the full minutes which will be published in due course on the WHS site. The WHSAB covers both the world heritage inscriptions for the City of Bath and for Bath as one of the Great Spa Towns of Europe.

- This was the first meeting to be chaired by Professor Marion Harney. She noted a formal thanks to Barry Gilbertson for his substantial contribution as the previous Chair.
- The updated terms of reference for the Advisory Board and the supporting Strategic Management Group were approved.
- Alex Sherman of Bath Preservation Trust provided an update on the **WHS Enhancement Fund**. He noted that the funding basis has changed previously it comprised £5k from the WHSAB and £20k from BANES. The BANES element has been replaced by a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) bid which has been successful with £60k allocated over three years. Projects will need to follow the CIL criteria and this will focus on the public realm and may limit some of the communication and educational projects previously funded. It was noted the funding has been at the same level for many years so in real terms has been falling rapidly.
- At the request of FoBRA members we raised at this point concern about deterioration of **heritage assets and the public realm** particularly in respect to weed-induced damage to railings and street furniture. Especially in the area outside of the core Bath centre. We emphasised that as a register of these assets and their ownership does not exist how can maintenance be planned and controlled. Councillor Matt McCabe noted that BANES has been working on a new process to record local heritage assets which will allow for recording of street assets. It should be ready for launch “soonish”. [Note after the meeting Matt approached me to sound out whether this could be a community supported activity and I thought a many of our RA members would be willing to support an initiative like this).
- The main item for the meeting was the consideration of the latest draft of the **WHS Management Plan**. This version has been updated after a comprehensive workshop and separate sessions by the Strategic Management Group. All agreed this was a very good draft which addresses the key concerns and priorities. This is a near final draft which will be submitted to the council in November for approval to be released for a full 8-week public consultation in December & January. The aim is for it to be adopted in Feb/March, which whilst, tight fits the target timeline set by UNESCO.
- Yesterday the new **Architect in Residence** for the City was formally announced. He is **Bob Allies** (a distinguished architect and partner of the firm Allies and Morrison). His post is fully funded by Bath University for a period of three years, and it is anticipated that Bob will be working on two days a week commitment.
- There were **updates** from the Great Spa Towns, Mayor’s guides (Duncan Barley is their new Chair), Bathscape on projects to end 2026 (current funding period) and initial thoughts on how work can continue after this and from Bath Preservation Trust. It is

BPT's 90th year. On the 10th October Adam Fergusson of Sack of Bath fame will be made a Freeman of the City in recognition of his role in the debate about greater protection of our heritage buildings. On the 23/24 October BPT are holding a two-day conference on Sustainable Development in a World Heritage City. Tickets will sooner be available at £175 for some local organisations/ people.

Report for FoBRA by Caroline Greenwood and Jeremy Boss