

Batheaston Annual Village Meeting
Minutes of the 2024 Meeting
Held on Tuesday 21st May at the New Village Hall

Welcome and Introduction

Hannah Squire, Chair of the Parish Council, chaired the meeting and opened it by thanking the Trustees of the New Village Hall for hosting it.

There were approximately 20 residents of the village in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Sarah Warren, of Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES)

Minutes of the 2023 Meeting were approved.

A discussion of the bus service to the village

Councillor Squire welcomed Bob Scowen, interim head of integrated transport for West of England Combined Authority (WECA, which covers Bristol, South Gloucestershire and B&NES).

He outlined how bus travel had been managed over the past 40 years or so, since privatisation in 1984, and that the great majority of services in WECA are provided as commercial services by First Bus, who choose which services to run based on their profitability.

Bob described the “ticking demographic time bomb”, the older age profile of the workforce and the “great retirement” that came about as a result of the Covid pandemic.

He said that 60% of rural service are commercial unsustainable, and as a result WECA are seeking to develop Westlink – “Demand-Responsive Transport” – to provide the best possible service in light of these constraints.

Members of the audience commented on the service to Batheaston, lamenting the loss of the through route to RUH, and clashes of the timetable with FareSaver services.

Daniel Marley, of the Transport Strategy team at B&NES, discussed the provision of school buses. He recognised the impact on children and families of cancellation of services, which is causing children to be late to school (and marked as such, which is unfair!). He gave an assurance that he is working with WECA and the bus companies to minimise the occurrence of this.

Their presentation was warmly welcomed, and Cllr Squire thanked them for coming to the meeting.

There followed **Updates on the following topics:**

➤ **The Local Plan**

Cllr Kevin Guy, Ward Councillor and Leader of the Council at B&NES, described this as the most important legal document the Council creates, as it sets out where housing can be built – and where it can't. The Local Plan requires 14,000 new homes to be built, of which locations for 6,000 are already earmarked, mostly in the sustainable transport corridors, along the A4 and Somer Valley.

Batheaston does not have an obvious location for major development; the notional target is for 63 new dwellings between now and 2044.

The process of developing and adopting the Local Plan is going on now and will continue to late 2025.

➤ **Batheaston Leadership Group**, Kevin gave an overview of this group which helps to coordinate the activity of community organisations.

➤ **“Penny's Pantry”** – held at the Rhymes Pavilion every Wednesday morning, with coffee and cakes, and opportunity for social interaction and to meet representatives of local agencies including CURO, Community Police, WERN. There are also **monthly lunches at the New Village Hall**: a chance to eat with other people (fee £5).

- **St John's and St Catherine's Church**, the vicar is the Rev'd Laretta Wilson, as part of the United Benefice with Bathford. Rob Mimmack, Church Warden, said the churches are open all day, every day. All are most welcome to the church services at 10am, with coffee at 11am coffee afterwards.
- Members of **Grow Batheaston** gave a presentation on their **Beaver Projects**, which will be launched at an event on June 7th. This will describe the recent reintroduction of beavers to the Avon after about 400 years.
- Members of Grow Batheaston also described the work on the **“Tree Trails” projects**, the **Forest Garden** (in the Secret Garden at the Riverside), **Children’s Football Club** on Saturday mornings, with Bath City Football Foundation.
- Finally, they outlined plans for the land adjacent to the Surgery, which is currently being cleared by the owner, and they hope to create a **community garden**.
- **Batheaston Art Trail**, Immi Corry outlined this 2-day event, which is now its fourth year, and will take place over last weekend in September. It attracts over 400 visitors, and takes place in artists’ own houses, studios and 2 public buildings. They will be fundraising, with a quiz and curry event.
- **Batheaston Youth Club**. Pam Burcombe, one of the trustees, described the important work of the Youth Club and some of the activities that they run regularly and special events for the young people of the village. She said that they have ambitious plans, and more Trustees are needed to help to take these forward.
- **Parish Councillors** gave updates on various aspects of its work including the consultation on **plans for the Rhymes Pavilion**.
- There followed a set of updates from others in the audience and general discussion.
- Cllr Squire closed the meeting, thanked the speakers and all who attended, and invited everyone to stay and mingle and enjoy the light refreshments.