



## Minutes

of the Meeting of

## The Council

**Tuesday, 10 May 2022**

New Council Chamber, Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 6.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 9.36 pm

### Councillors:

Karin Haverson (Chairman)

Wendy Griggs (Vice Chairman)

Marc Aplin  
Nigel Ashton  
Mike Bell  
Mike Bird  
Steve Bridger  
Peter Bryant  
Gill Bute  
Mark Canniford  
Ashley Cartman  
John Cato  
Caritas Charles  
Caroline Cherry  
James Clayton  
Sarah Codling  
John Crockford-Hawley  
Ciaran Cronnelly  
Donald Davies  
Catherine Gibbons  
Hugh Gregor  
Ann Harley  
David Hitchins  
Steve Hogg  
Nicola Holland  
Ruth Jacobs  
Patrick Keating  
John Ley-Morgan  
Stuart McQuillan  
Phil Neve  
Ian Parker  
Robert Payne  
Marcia Pepperall  
Bridget Petty

Lisa Pilgrim  
Terry Porter  
Geoffrey Richardson  
David Shopland  
Timothy Snaden  
Mike Solomon  
James Tonkin  
Richard Tucker  
Richard Westwood  
Roz Willis

**Apologies:** Councillors: Andy Cole, Caroline Goddard, Huw James

**Officers in attendance:** Jo Walker (Chief Executive), Amy Webb (Director of Corporate Services), Nicholas Brain (Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Sheila Smith (Director of Children's Services), Matt Lenny (Director of Public Health), Beth Swann (Young Director) and Aaron Horner (Senior Projects Officer).

**Partaking via Microsoft Teams:** Councillors Peter Crew, Sandra Hearne

Officers: Lucy Shomali (Director of Place), Hayley Verrico (Director of Adult Services), Alex Hearn (Assistant Director Placemaking and Growth), Hazel Brinton (Committee Services Manager)

## **COU Chairman's Welcome**

**1**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the face-to-face meeting and noted that those councillors attending via Teams would not be in attendance formally or able to vote.

## **COU Election of the Chairman of the Council for the Municipal Year 2022/23**

**2**

**Motion:** Moved by Councillor Petty, seconded by Councillor Gibbons and

**Resolved:** that Councillor Karin Haverson be elected Chairman of the Council for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

### **Councillor Haverson in the Chair**

Councillor Haverson thanked members for electing her as Chairperson. She thanked all councillors for their cooperation and work across all parties since 2019 and looked forward to working towards fulfilling the promise to residents to deal with the climate emergency and asked that members considered the overall common good even when fighting their own corners. She wished the Council to set an example of cooperation, communication and compromise.

On behalf of the Council, Councillor Haverson expressed her thanks and appreciation to Councillor Westwood as outgoing Chairman for his service to the Council.

**COU 3 Appointment of the Vice-Chairman of the Council for the Municipal Year 2022/23**

**Motion:** Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Hogg and

**Resolved:** that Councillor Wendy Griggs be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

The Chairperson congratulated Councillor Griggs on her appointment and asked her to address the meeting.

Councillor Griggs addressed the council and thanked the members for her election as Vice-Chairman.

**COU 4 Public Participation: Miranda Pickersgill, local resident - impact of the Banwell Bypass on the neighbouring villages of Winscombe, Sandford and Churchill**

Miranda Pickersgill addressed the council on the impact of the Banwell Bypass on the villages of Winscombe, Sandford and Churchill and asked members to consider the impact of the road and related new housing on those villages. She asked that proposed mitigation measures be re-considered as they did not address the concerns of local residents particularly in light of the Climate Emergency and encouraging sustainable travel.

The Chairperson thanked Miranda Pickersgill for her address. The matter would be referred to the relevant officers and Executive Member.

**COU 5 Public Participation: David Johnson, local resident - costs to the natural environment, finance and our future climate of the Banwell bypass scheme**

David Johnson addressed the council on the costs to the natural environment, finance and the future climate of the Banwell Bypass. He noted the concerns of residents of Churchill and Langford around the possibility of additional costs and sources of funding, cuts to traffic mitigation measures for the villages and the impact of the proposed Southern Link Road whether developed or not.

The Chairperson thanked David Johnson for his address. The matter would be referred to the relevant officers and Executive Member.

**COU 6 Public Participation: Amanda Barrett, local resident - on issues concerning the proposed development on Woodspring Golf Course, Long Ashton**

Amanda Barrett addressed the council on issues concerning the proposed development on Woodspring Golf Course at Long Ashton. She noted the ongoing Climate Emergency and the importance of maintaining healthy eco-systems to mitigate some of the effect of climate change and highlighted that biodiversity loss and climate change should be tackled concurrently. She added her belief in the importance of access to open green spaces for all.

The Chairperson thanked Amanda Barrett for her address. The matter would be referred to the relevant officers and Executive Member.

**COU 7 Public Participation: Colin Barker, local resident - on Code of Conduct of North Somerset Council Officers, Ward Councillors & Parish Councillors**

Colin Barker addressed the council on the matter of Code of Conduct of North Somerset Council officers, ward councillors and parish councillors.

During the address, the solicitor advised members that public participation could not be used to target individuals and stated that most of the speech to that point had been used to do so. He suggested that Mr Barker used his time to direct comments at the process rather than individuals.

Mr Barker requested that an independent body investigate the complaints made to the council about the conduct of officers and members and report back to him.

The solicitor advised members that a number of standards complaints filed by Mr Barker had already been investigated by himself as Monitoring Officer and the Deputy Monitoring Officer and responses given. He further confirmed that Mr Barker had been advised of the routes for appeal including the Local Government Ombudsman and a Judicial Review.

**COU 8 Petitions to be presented by Members (Standing Order No. 16)**

None received.

**COU 9 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 37)**

None declared.

**COU 10 Minutes**

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting of 12 April 2022 be approved as a correct record.

**COU 11 Motions by Members (Standing Order No. 14)**

In introducing his motion, Councillor Charles made reference to rules and new ways of working that would create mutual respect amongst councillors and the Government's response to the 2019 report of the Committee for Standards in Public Life which suggested that councils could make changes to their own Codes of Conduct to strengthen them. He added that he wished to see training to identify bullying and intimidation that would enable appropriate action to be taken.

**Motion:** Moved by Councillor Charles and seconded by Councillor Cartman

"This council notes

1. That Government has very recently published its response to the Committee for Standards in Public Life 2019 report into strengthening the local government standards regime after a three year wait. The response falls short of making changes to the standards regime but suggests that councils can adopt changes themselves to strengthen conduct issues.

2. Amongst possible changes proposed are steps to improve matters such as bullying and harassment of and by councillors and the adoption of an updated model code of conduct issued by the Local Government Association.

3. That many councillors elected in 2019 have valuable experience of the pressures in the role and can assist North Somerset Council in how it can support councillors in the future.

This council resolves

1. To ask the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer to review the new LGA code with a view to recommending its early adoption by Council and providing supporting training on the new code and standards matters for current councillors and its inclusion in future induction briefings for members following elections.

2. To create a group of councillors from across the council (no more than 6) to work with the Monitoring Officer and the Deputy Monitoring Officer to provide input into the adoption of the code and its related training and support with an overall objective of providing a productive and safe working environment for Cllrs in the future”

Seven members signalled their support for a debate on the Motion.

In discussing the motion, members expressed their support for the proposals. Reference was made to the wider effects of bullying and intimidation; the need for respect for alternative views; respect for the position of Chairperson including standing up when addressing members in the chamber and clarity of process for new councillors when faced with issues of bullying and intimidation. It was suggested that training for new councillors would support them when first elected.

Following further discussion, it was

**Resolved:** that the Motion as set out in full above be approved and adopted.

## **COU 12** Chairman's announcements

Cllr Haverson expressed her wish to be known as Chairperson. She added that for purposes of practicality she wished members to speak clearly into the microphone when addressing the chamber but had no preference whether that was sitting or standing as long as the member could be heard. The Chairperson announced that she would be re-instating social gatherings after each full council meeting to support councillors getting to know one another.

## **COU 13** Leader's announcements

The leader expressed his thanks to colleagues, officers, contractors and the residents of North Somerset over the previous three years. He announced that he was standing down as leader for the coming municipal year.

The Chairperson expressed sincere thanks on behalf of all members for the work

of the Leader since 2019 and was joined in this by other members.

**COU 14 Chief Executive's announcements**

None.

**COU 15 Political Balance and Leaders and Deputy Leaders of the Political Groups for the Municipal Year 2022/23**

The Assistant Director Legal & Governance reported on the current political balance as follows -

Independent 15: Conservative 13: Liberal Democrat 10: Labour 6: Green 4:  
No Political Group 2

Additionally, he reported that the Group Leader for the Independent Group was now Cllr Steve Bridger,

**COU 16 The Council's Constitution 2022**

The Assistant Director Legal & Governance advised that the item would be dealt with under item 24 as a reference from the Audit Committee.

**COU 17 Constitutional appointments etc.**

The Assistant Director Legal & Governance advised that with the resignation by Councillor Davies as Leader, a new Leader would need to be appointed.

**Motion:** Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Gibbons and

**Resolved:** that Councillor Bridger be elected Leader of the Council for the Municipal Year 2022-23.

The Leader announced there would be eight members of the Executive, including himself, but no Assistant Executive Members. He announced the members of the Executive, along with their indicative portfolios, as follows:

Name of Councillor	Portfolio
Steve Bridger	Leader of the Council
Mike Bell	Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing
Ashley Cartman	Executive Member for Corporate Services
Bridget Petty	Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Engagement
Mark Canniford	Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy
Catherine Gibbons	Executive Member for Children Young People, Life Long Learning and Skills
Mike Solomon	Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Service
Steve Hogg	Executive Member for Transport and Highways

The Leader expressed his thanks to the outgoing Assistant Executive Members and welcomed Cllr Hogg to the Executive.

The Assistant Director Legal & Governance advised that with the ongoing ill health of Councillor Crosby, members were also asked to vote on the appointment of Councillor Snaden as Chairman to the Adult Services and Housing Scrutiny and Policy Panel.

**Motion:** Moved by Councillor Tonkin, seconded by Councillor Bridger and

**Resolved:** that Councillor Snaden be elected Chairman of the Adult Services and Housing Scrutiny and Policy Panel

#### **COU 18      Municipal Calendar 2022/23**

**Motion:** Moved by Councillor Petty, seconded by Councillor Bridger and

**Resolved:**

(1) that the draft Municipal Calendar for 2022-23 as attached to the report be approved and

(2) that the Leader of the Council be authorised to approve any amendments not dealt with elsewhere as necessary.

#### **COU 19      Appointments to Outside Bodies 2022/23 (Council)**

The Assistant Director Legal & Governance presented the report. He advised that the Council was no longer required to nominate a representative to Alliance Homes Board following a change to its Constitution and that there was an error in the number on the Joint Safety Consultative Committee which should show 11 members not 8 and included 3 vacancies.

The Assistant Director Legal & Governance reported on external appointments to the council's own panels; Peter Smith and Stefan Ramel for Members' Allowances Review Panel and Peter Bray and Sharon Colk, Independent Members of Audit Committee.

**COU 20 Forward Plan dated 3 May 2022**

The Leader presented the forward plan.

**Resolved:** that the Forward Plan be noted

**COU 21 Policy and Scrutiny Panel Report**

None.

**COU 22 Corporate Parenting Report**

The Assistant Director Legal & Governance advised that whilst there was no formal report, Councillor Gibbons and the Director of Children's Services wished to introduce the new Youth Director to the council.

Beth Swann, the new Youth Director, addressed members and explained her role. She informed members that she had been appointed to seek the opinions of young people and add in her own experiences. She outlined some areas of her role including involvement in focus groups such as the North Somerset Youth Parliament; setting up the Children in Care and Care Leavers' Award Day; running interview panels for care leavers which helped support inclusion in hiring practices; reviewing Practice Standards and the Practice Framework and involvement in the Corporate Parenting Panel. Her role was to actively understand what was meaningful to young people and helping them support their own communities.

Beth was warmly welcomed by members.

**COU 23 Question Time (Standing Order No.18)**

Oral questions were directed to members concerned and the summary notes and topics involved are contained in Appendix 1.

**COU 24 Reports and matters referred from the Executive - dated 27 April 2022**

None.

**COU 25 Reports and matters referred from the Policy/Overview and Scrutiny Panels other than those dealt with elsewhere on this agenda**

None.

**COU 26 Reports and matters referred from the other Committees other than those dealt with elsewhere on this agenda**



**Audit Committee 28 April 2022**  
**AUD29 Constitution Review 2022**

Councillor Cato presented the report and informed members that it was a result of joint working between himself as Chairman of the Audit Committee, the Chairman of Partnerships, Corporate Organisation and Overview Management Policy & Scrutiny Panel (PCOM) and the Monitoring Officer. He added that the changes via a marked-up copy had been circulated to all members for comment in March and comments received had been incorporated into the final version submitted to the Audit Committee for consideration in April. He advised members that further changes over the following months would be made to the council's Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders.

In discussing the report members noted a desire to make the council more democratic and accountable to members, citizens and communities via the Constitution and that democratic debate between all members needed to be encouraged. Members highlighted the need for work to involve community groups particularly from Black and Minority Ethnic groups in discussing how the council's Constitution could be made to work for them and promote inclusion and diversity. Members further debated the merits of using gender neutral text in the Constitution.

An amendment to the motion to remove the time limits under 18.4 Question Time was agreed by Councillor Cato.

**Motion:** Moved by Councillor Cato, seconded by Councillor Charles and

**Resolved:** that the changes recommended by the Audit Committee as amended to include the removal of the time limit under Standing Order 18.4, Question Time be adopted by Council and that the Monitoring Officer be asked to update the Constitution and in consultation with the Chairpersons of Audit Committee and Partnerships, Corporate Organisation and Overview Management Policy & Scrutiny Panel, make the further changes required to address the points raised by officers and Councillor Petty.

**COU 27 Reports on joint arrangements and external organisations and questions relating thereto: Avon Fire Authority (Agenda item (25 (1)))**

Councillor Tucker presented his report and offered to find out the answers to any questions member may have.

**Resolved:** that the report be noted

**COU 28 Reports on joint arrangements and external organisations and questions relating thereto: West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Joint Scrutiny Committee (Agenda item 25 (3))**

There was no report but Councillor James whilst not present at the meeting had made it known that the minutes of the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee were available on the WECA website.

**COU 29      Dispensation Regarding Absence from Meetings under S85 of the Local Government Act 1972**

The Assistant Director Legal & Governance presented his report. He noted that a dispensation was required to be given by the Council for Councillor Crosby due to ill health as the six-month rule meant that a councillor could automatically be removed from office if there had been no attendance in that time. The recommendation was to grant a dispensation until November when the matter could be considered again.

Members noted their good wishes to Councillor Crosby for a speedy and full recovery.

**Motion:** Moved by Councillor Bridger, seconded by Councillor Tonkin and

**Resolved:** that the Council waived the requirements of Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of Cllr Crosby due to his current health issues and agreed that he receive a dispensation from the requirements of section 85 until 15 November 2022

**COU 30      Commissioning and Procurement Plan for New Energy Contract**

Councillor Cartman presented his reported and noted that whilst he feared it would be difficult to find an affordable green contract, he was pleased to announce that a net zero green energy contract had been obtained for a premium of 3%. He added that although the council was procuring from a large supplier this time, it did not preclude purchasing from local sources in the future.

He informed members that because of pricing and volatility in the energy market, the report proposed giving delegated authority to the S151 Officer in consultation with himself and other officers to achieve the best spot price possible through the council's energy consultants. He added that a contract for 12-24 months was the best approach currently.

In discussing the report, members were reassured by Councillor Cartman that as much as possible a robust approach to Russian gas supplies would form part of the contract. Members further noted that an "Invest to Save" approach to installing solar panels on the roofs of council buildings would support the drive to lower costs.

**Motion:** Moved by Councillor Cartman, seconded by Councillor Canniford and

**Resolved:** that the Council approved the Commissioning and Procurement Plan and that authority for the re-procurement of the energy supply contracts from 1st October 2022 be delegated from the Executive to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with:

- Principal M&E Engineer (advised by Energy Management Consultants)
- Climate Emergency Project Manager and
- Executive Member for Corporate Services

Councillor Bridger presented the report which required the Council to decide whether to formally transition out of Castlewood and remove it from the council's office requirement. The Town Hall would be retained as the primary office and consideration of other buildings would be given to facilitate face to face meetings.

Councillor Bridger informed members that further work would be required over the coming months if the decision was taken to vacate the site as to how it should be repurposed, redeveloped or sold. In presenting the report, he highlighted the decrease in staffing number from 2009-10 and that the pandemic had accelerated the transition permanently to a more flexible and agile form of working which did not require the same amount of office space. He noted that the council required a smaller primary office space based on the need of the council to deliver services to residents. He added that the building was costing the council £1m to run after rental income was considered and was in the worse category of public building in the country for energy use. Further reductions in occupancy and revenue were expected. Additionally, there was a maintenance backlog.

Councillor Bridger concluded by suggesting that the new Customer Service Strategy agreed by the Executive in April would deliver a service to residents that was more accessible than Castlewood had ever been and that there was an opportunity to deliver something in its place that both Clevedon and North Somerset needed.

In debating the report, members highlighted concerns over the loss of Castlewood and the role it had played in North Somerset and Clevedon. Mention was made of the impact of staff working from home on the delivery of services to residents and the instability of the council's website and online services which were expected to take over from face-to-face delivery of services. Concerns were highlighted over a "jobs anywhere" culture and the need to put a replacement face to face capability in place before Castlewood was exited. Consultation with residents of Clevedon and the north of the district and the Town Council were requested as was innovation in the use of community hubs.

In response to some of the points made, it was highlighted that all members and Clevedon Town Council had been made aware of the possible decision to vacate Castlewood and that the latter had been actively consulted and was working with North Somerset Council to produce a community hub in Clevedon town centre.

The Director of Corporate Services explained that working from home was an option where the role made this possible and that the designation of work styles was based around the needs of the business and the council's customers not the personal preference of the staff member. Consultation on work styles had been undertaken with the Accommodation Strategy PCOM Panel at whose bi-monthly meetings all members were welcome to attend. She undertook to issue further communication to all members on the Accommodation Strategy and programme.

In summing up, Councillor Bridger noted that he felt that way of working for staff was a matter for the Head of Paid Service and that this differed from members' access to officers. He invited members to rigorously scrutinise the Customer Services Strategy to ensure it was delivered as promised but that this was a

different matter to the decision on the council's asset strategy which included a decision on the future of Castlewood. He added that there was a consultation currently out until the end of June on development sites in the area including Castlewood and responses had already been received.

**Motion:** Moved by Councillor Bridger and seconded by Councillor Canniford

**Resolved:** That Council agreed to:

- (1) Transition out of Castlewood to remove it from the council's office requirement, and release it for development
- (2) Develop a preferred way forward through progressing a package of technical, planning and development workstreams, alongside soft market testing and preplanning engagement; and
- (3) Delegate to the Section 151 officer, Director of Place and Head of Strategic Procurement, the commissioning, procurement and appointment of technical, planning and development workstreams, alongside soft market testing and preplanning engagement.

**COU 32      Urgent business permitted by the Local Government Act 1972 (if any)**

None.

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Chairman

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## Appendix 1

**North Somerset Council  
Council Annual Meeting, 10 May 2022  
Question Time (Agenda Item 21)**

### **Question 1**

**From Councillor Keating**

**To Councillor Canniford, Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy**

#### **Jubilee Garden in Churchill**

Councillor Keating asked Councillor Canniford whether it would be possible for residents' groups and Churchill Parish Council to acquire a suitable piece of land from North Somerset Council to set up a Jubilee Garden which would be accessible to all residents and beyond the village.

Councillor Canniford thanked Councillor Keating for his question and responded that if a suitable piece of land within the village owned by North Somerset Council could be identified by the residents' groups then North Somerset Council would be willing to enter into discussions. He added however that looking at the map of Churchill, the council owned little land in the village other than that occupied by the school and leisure centre and small parts adjacent to the highway.

### **Question 2**

**From Councillor Charles**

**To Councillor Solomon, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Service**

#### **Use of Pesticides**

Councillor Charles asked the Executive Member if there were plans to remove and ban the use of glyphosate pesticide by North Somerset Council contractors in Portishead for the clearance of open spaces.

Councillor Solomon thanked Councillor Charles for his question and agreed that the council was looking to move away from the use of glyphosate as soon as possible and was looking at an alternative. He added it was currently used on the highways to remove vegetation such as knotweed but that one sub-contractor appeared to be using where it shouldn't, and they were being tackled about this. Councillor Solomon proposed taking the matter of finding an alternative to the relevant Policy and Scrutiny Panel.

### **Question 3**

**From Councillor Ashton**

**To Councillor Canniford, Executive Member for Business, Economy and Environment and Councillor Cartman, Executive Member for Corporate Services**

#### **Members' IT Equipment**

Councillor Ashton requested that he receive IT equipment that allowed him to participate in online meetings and which did not lose his diary or photographs when reset.

Councillor Canniford thanked Councillor Ashton for his question and noted that whilst the equipment was fit for purpose when introduced in 2013 and could be relied upon, there was a need for a different solution. He passed the question over to Councillor Cartman as it fell within his portfolio.

Councillor Cartman observed that he was unaware of the technical issues that Councillor Ashton was experiencing and offered with the support of the Corporate Services Director to have the issue looked at the following day. He added that he felt it was time to look at the IT required for all councillors and his initial thoughts included a cross party group of councillors to discuss requirements for new councillors in 2023. He recognised there was an issue in the short term and asked that any councillor experiencing issues to email him and he would arrange for them to be addressed.

### **Question 4**

**From Councillor Harley**

**To Councillor Bridger, Leader and Executive Member for Housing Infrastructure Fund**

#### **Banwell Bypass**

Councillor Harley asked how the council was intending to tackle the issue of residents' concerns over the Banwell Bypass and whether if it did not go ahead, that the housing associated with it would still be coming to the villages.

Councillor Bridger thanked Councillor Harley for her question and observed that the council had already carried out a second consultation which was not required under the legislation. He added that local residents had had opportunities to shape the scheme to date with comments from the first consultation being taken on board as would those from the second consultation. These would inform the planning application later in the year. Councillor Bridger noted that he did not recognise the figures in uplift in costs as mentioned by one of the public speakers earlier and that all comments from the consultation and members were welcomed and he would take them up with the Banwell Bypass team. He added that whilst not generally in favour of new road schemes, this project was an exception and would give residents of Banwell their village back. He advised that he was committed to the proposed mitigation measures for the other villages which was integral to the project whilst

being mindful of costs. There would be a statutory consultation around the planning process.

#### **Question 5**

**From Councillor Aplin**

**To Councillor Solomon, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Service**

#### **Rewilding area in Worle**

Councillor Aplin asked whether there was any process for reassessing areas designated as rewilding zones as one of the areas in his ward was used by children to play. As the grass grows, they are losing their play area and retreating back indoors. Families in the area are supportive of rewilding but asked whether an alternative area could be found.

Councillor Solomon thanked Councillor Aplin for his question and would discuss the matter further with him.

#### **Question 5**

**From Councillor Parker**

**To Councillor Solomon, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Service**

#### **Petition regarding roads on Bournville Estate**

Councillor Parker asked "On the 11th March I presented you with a petition containing 683 signatures calling for the roads on Bournville to brought to an acceptable level of repair. Realising the cost would be in excess of £5m I asked that the council seek funding from external sources. What progress has been made on this request?"

Councillor Solomon thanked Councillor Parker for his question and noted that the portfolio would pass to Councillor Hogg the following day. He said sums had been put aside and would be happy to share the programme of repairs with Councillor Parker but that the council's total road repair budget was only £8m for North Somerset as a whole.

#### **Question 6**

**From Councillor McQuillan**

**To Councillor Canniford, Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy**

#### **Local Plan and National Planning Policy**

Councillor McQuillan asked if he and other residents could be reassured that the council was studying the Queen's Speech from earlier and if changes to planning policy and housing targets resulted in a change of direction in planning policy then the North Somerset Local Plan would remain flexible to take account of these.

Councillor Canniford thanked Councillor McQuillan for his question and said that the changes were welcome news. He hoped the government would choose to reduce the housing targets for North Somerset which were extremely challenging for the previous administration 5 years ago to find sites, but this had been made considerably worse by a recent 20% increase. He added that whilst he hoped the figures would be reversed, this could not be assumed so all sites would be built on by developers. He said that if the figures were reduced, this would be reflected in the council's Local Plan.

#### **Question 7**

**From Councillor Snaden**

**To Councillor Cartman, Executive Member for Corporate Services**

#### **Choice of operating system for councillors' tablets**

Councillor Snaden asked whether the Android system could be considered instead of the Apple operating system for members' IT as he found the latter hard to work with.

Councillor Cartman thanked Councillor Snaden for his question and agreed to look into the issue but noted that there were IT security implications.

#### **Question 8**

**From Councillor Codling**

**To Councillor Bridger, Leader and Councillor Petty Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Engagement**

Councillor Codling asked how the council intended to carry out effective and inclusive consultation and engagement with the council's most vulnerable residents and those with low levels of literacy who cannot necessarily engage with online consultations. She was particularly concerned in relation to consultation on large projects which were primarily online and with identified cohorts of predominantly community active residents. She felt this excluded those with low levels of literacy, the poorest in society, those with English as a second language and those with learning disabilities

Councillor Bridger thanked Councillor Codling for her question and replied that whilst he felt progress had been made, he also felt the council needed to "grown bigger ears" and become more creative with its consultations. He noted that there was a lot of disquiet around the consultation on major projects and wished to see the council being more upfront with the questions posed. He recognised it was an issue and it was a key priority for him.

Councillor Petty responded that changes to her portfolio meant that she would be responsible for inclusion and diversity and that she felt the council needed to properly recognise the different groups in society including those with health-related issues and those who were ethnically diverse. She wished to see further reach with different techniques during consultations and added that she had recently met with the Chairman of the Access Forum and would work closely with the Leader on this issue.

Councillor Gibbons added that on the back of the Anti-Racism motion, work had already begun on engaging with groups across the district.



**Question 9****From Councillor Shopland****To Councillor Bridger, Leader****Extension of Banwell Bypass**

Councillor Shopland asked whether an extension of the Banwell Bypass to the A38 had been considered to obviate traffic problems in the area.

Councillor Bridger thanked Councillor Shopland for his question but noted that the matter was quickly taken out of scope of the project several years previously and there were no plans to bring it back.

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