

**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 "grow 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.