

**North Somerset Council
Council Meeting, 10 January 2023
Question Time (Agenda Item 12)**

Question 1

From Councillor Cherry

To Councillor Hogg, Executive Member for Transport and Highways

Active Travel Scheme in Clevedon

Councillor Cherry asked the Executive Member for comments relating to the practical issues being faced by Clevedon residents by the Active Travel Scheme in relation to misunderstandings by the public of the wiggly white line outside of properties; the need for more signage to discourage cyclists from riding on the promenade and more enforcement by Parking Enforcement Teams particularly in respect of the parking of Royal Mail vans.

Councillor Hogg thanked Councillor Cherry for her question and responded that the issue with the white, wiggly lines should be addressed when the textured surface is laid down in the spring; he would ask officers to explore the option of signage to reduce ambiguity for motorists and to discourage cyclists from cycling on the footway and that there had been resourcing issues with the parking enforcement team but the need for additional enforcement was recognised.

Question 2

From Councillor Aplin

To Councillor Solomon, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Services

Castle Batch Park play equipment

Councillor Aplin asked the Executive Member that the authority work with Weston Town Council and the police on the ongoing issues with Anti-Social Behaviour and criminal damage at the park particularly given the instalment of costly new play equipment and that previous experiences of vandalism has led to the removal of play equipment

Councillor Solomon thanked Councillor Aplin for his question and agreed that ward members and other agencies would be engaged to consider ideas for tackling the rise of Anti-Social behaviour and to mitigate the effects of this on the new play equipment.

Question 3

From Councillor Shopland

To Councillor Bridger, Leader of the Council

Flood prevention in North Somerset

Councillor Shopland asked the Executive Member whether the council could receive reports from the North Somerset Drainage Board at future Council Meetings

Councillor Bridger thanked Councillor Shopland and asked the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Services to respond. Councillor Solomon responded that the authority did receive regular reports and that he would speak with officers about bringing these to Council meetings as it was an important topic for residents.

Question 4

From Councillor Keating

To Councillor Canniford, Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy

Update on Local Plan status and previously proposed garden villages.

Councillor Keating asked the Executive member for an update on the status of the authority's Local Plan given the change in direction of government policy and if it was to be amended that the garden villages previously proposed would not be in it.

Councillor Canniford thanked Councillor Keating for his question and responded that he hoped to see a reduction in the housing numbers required in North Somerset as a result of the change in direction and policies by the government. This would allow the council to address some of the unpopular and difficult decisions that it was having to make. He did not envisage the return of the garden villages as the site was unsustainable.

Question 5

From Councillor Richardson

To Councillor Hogg, Executive Member for Transport and Highways

Replacement of H bars

Councillor Richardson asked the Executive Member the following question:

"I am pleased to say that several roads in my ward have recently been resurfaced, but only some of the H bars have been replaced to the bemusement and anger of some residents.

There is a current policy that white lines older than 5 years are not replaced when resurfacing takes place. Residents were given no warning either when the H bars were first installed or when the resurfacing took place. This is neither open nor fair.

Can I ask that this policy is changed to renew existing H bars (cost should be minimal if carried out at same time) unless no longer required, and that when people initially request these lines they are told that they are good for five years, and they will pay to have them reinstated after this if required for any reason apart from road resurfacing

Councillor Hogg thanked Councillor Richardson for his question and agreed that the communication and policy around H bars needed to be reviewed although he did not believe there should be an automatic renewal of them as they may no longer be required.

Question 6

From Councillor Neve

To Councillor Hogg, Executive Member for Transport and Highways

Cuts to bus services and confidence in bus operators

Councillor Neve asked if the Executive Member the following question:

“At the last full council meeting in November Cllr Charles brought a motion regarding the recent cuts to essential bus services across the county and asking for a vote of no confidence in the operators.

From the subsequent debate, and as reflected in the minutes in today’s agenda, it was clear that the majority of members also had concerns about this matter and that the market as currently operating is failing. There were differing opinions regarding the best way to address this matter and the motion was defeated. Personally, I voted for the motion although I recognise the validity of some of the other arguments as to how best to address the problem. As a member for a rural community, and like others across the County I have seen key local bus routes completely removed, leaving residents, unable to access essential local services. In my own ward, for example, it is no longer possible for some of my Congresbury residents, who do not have access to or are unable to use private cars, to get to Yatton by public transport. This means they are unable to visit the doctors, dentists, opticians, vets and more. They are left reliant on friends, family, neighbours or local volunteer drivers to help them.

Now that the BSIP funding is in place and work is progressing on implementing that project can Cllr Hogg please update us on what is being done to address these major failings in local rural public transport and to reconnect residents to the essential services they rely on. What may these services be and when are we likely to see new provisions starting to operate.”

The Executive Member thanked Councillor Neve for his question and acknowledged that he shared members’ concerns with the current rural bus service but believed the best way to improve services was via the mechanisms being brought about by BSIP. He anticipated seeing a real difference in bus services for rural communities in April but added there remained the issue of how to connect rural communities. The ambition was to give a service every fifteen minutes on main arterial routes. For rural communities, demand responsive transport was being considered and he looked forward to communities and members being involved in improving rural bus services.

He anticipated further communication in the next 2 -3 weeks on what the new services may look like.

Question 7

From Councillor Porter

To Councillor Hogg, Executive Member for Transport and Highways

20mph scheme in Hutton

Councillor Porter asked the Executive Member the following question “For over 5 years I have been trying to get a 20 MPH scheme for Hutton Village. Residents are concerned over speeding through the village and the safety of pedestrians, children, cyclists and horse riders while moving within the village.

We finally had a scheme prepared in conjunction with North Somerset Council. and this went to public consultation in October. The residents were finally looking to see progress being made but the scheme suggested is very good, as far as it goes, but does not go far enough. There are two danger points just immediately adjacent to the proposed 20mph limit, on each end village and only a small alteration would be needed to encompass these two areas. During the day 88 attended, some couples and there were 166 responses online. In consultation a high majority, who attended, wanted the scheme extended to encompass these danger spots. This can be seen from the forms completed. Thanks to Chris Fletcher & Lotti for their attendance and they witnessed the strong feelings that those attending were adamant that these two areas needed to be included. Both myself and the parish council were very disappointed when the response to the consultation appeared to ignore all these requests from residents.

The report said that Extension of 20MPH limits does not comply with Executive criteria set in October 2020. Will the executive review their criteria to see if there is any way that the scheme may be extended, to encompass these two dangerous locations. This does seem Common Sense as to miss the opportunity of encompassing these two areas when establishing the new 20 MPH scheme in the village would be the wrong decision. I hope that’s not too much to expect, as we need to resolve the impasse. Hutton Parish Council has had funds allocated in its budget since 2019 towards improving the safety of residents, with the hope of reducing the speeding that regularly occurs in the village. If there is no change, I will find it difficult to support the position of North Somerset council. Engineers suggest there may be possible future additions for safety, but this misses the opportunity of doing the right scheme now. We have waited for long enough This is an opportunity for elected councillors on the Executive to make a real difference”

Councillor Hogg thanked Councillor Porter for his question and suggested that the way forward was to set up a meeting with Councillor Porter, himself, officers and members of the parish council. He did not wish to comment on the offered rationale for not extending the scheme without hearing it himself.

Question 8

From Councillor Davies

To Councillor Bell, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing

Care Sector in North Somerset

Councillor Davies asked the Executive Member the following question “The care sector is very fragile. Central government has allocated £500m to reduce bed blocking by fit to discharge patients in hospital. Would Councillor Bell care to reflect on the impact on residents and providers in North Somerset?”

The Executive Member thanked Councillor Davies for his question and noted that North Somerset had historically had a good record of managing hospital discharges and the authority’s social care teams were very effective in supporting this. He added that social care and health care were intertwined and the desire to discharge people more quickly from hospital would have a distorting effect on the social care market. He recognised the pressures but believed the authority and government would have to work together to solve them. Long term the only solution was sustainable funding for social care and health to build capacity, but he did not believe this was currently on the horizon.

Question 9

From Councillor Griggs

To Councillor Canniford, Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy

Changes to planning system

Councillor Griggs asked the Executive Member the following question “Does the recent government announcement give the council more control over approval of planning applications as we have more knowledge of our area”.

Councillor Canniford thanked Councillor Griggs for her question and responded that it was not clear yet whether the council would have more say over planning matters but that the flood plain was clearly not an option for more housing, and this would continue to be the council’s policy. Flood plains contribute to the restrictions in housing numbers in North Somerset.

Question 10

From Councillor Codling

**To Councillor Bridger, Leader of the Council and Councillor Gibbons,
Executive Member for Children, Young People, Lifelong learning and Skills**

Attendance at meetings of Outside Bodies

Councillor Codling asked the following question “Not sure if this is a widespread problem but having had to contact group leaders about scrutiny panel attendance, could I ask that you do likewise in regard to representatives on outside bodies?”

Whether members are enthusiastic volunteers or their group's designated 'it', they need to meet their responsibilities and afford the outside bodies the respect they deserve. I've been privileged to chair the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education for several years which is a statutory requirement for local authorities, previously supported stoically by the late Cllr Cleland and the supportive and enthusiastic Cllr Yamanka. This council term has been the opposite and of the 3 council appointed representatives, I have been the only attendee. This not only risks the embarrassment of inquiracy but also leads to an inability to conduct business. Outside bodies often aren't "sexy" or Press worthy but that is not our (or at least my) primary reason for being on this council."

Councillor Gibbons thanked Councillor Codling for her question and added that she had discussed the issue at length with the Assistant Director and had reached out to some of the other religious groups which were not currently represented at SACRE including speaking with Race Equality North Somerset to "get the word out".

Councillor Bridger added he supported the general point that Councillor Codling was making and noted that sometimes there were legitimate reasons for non-attendance, but apologies should be given in this case or better still contact Group Leaders for a substitute to be sent.

Question 11

From Councillor Payne

To Councillor Hogg, Executive Member for Transport and Highways

Active Travel Scheme in Milton Road/Baker Street Weston s Mare

Councillor Payne asked the Executive member when the snagging issues involved with the scheme would be resolved particularly with the flooding in Baker Street and the worn lining in Milton Road.

Councillor Hogg responded that he was not aware of the issues but would follow up on them if Councillor Payne wrote to him with the details.

Councillor Solomon added that he was aware that a team was working on some of the Baker Street snagging issues that day.

Question 12

From Councillor Willis

To Councillor Canniford, Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy

Charge made to the Vdub Christmas Run charity event

Councillor Willis asked why the organisers had been charged £200 for parking on the Beach Lawns for a short period during the event as this amount had to be raised by the owner drivers themselves. They had only parked up as they were aware there

were a lot of people in the town and hoped to raise more funds for the charity whilst there.

Councillor Canniford thanked Councillor Willis for her question and noted that the many charity events at that time of year did a good job in raising funds. He would look into the matter further but believed the fee was for event licensing. He and Councillor Bell had initiated a conversation around the licensing of events as they believed that the complexity of licensing was driving away small events from North Somerset towns. He hoped this work would continue with the successive administration.