

**North Somerset Council
Council Meeting 21 February 2023
Question Time (Agenda Item 12)**

Question 1

From Councillor Westwood

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

Rented Housing in North Somerset

Councillor Westwood asked the Executive Member the following question:

“As ward councillors, we are getting increasing numbers of people coming to us with housing problems. Many of these residents have serious issues relating to poor maintenance – damp, draughty windows and mould (all of which have negative health implications), mostly in properties rented by private landlords.

Residents frequently ask us when North Somerset Council will be introducing some form of Landlord Licensing Scheme which would offer tenants better assurance/ protection on standards. Can the Executive member give an update on the council plans to bring in such a scheme?”

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Westwood for his question and replied that the council had been working over the last four years to strengthen its engagement with the private rented sector including targeted interventions against “rogue” landlords. Members were asked to use the online rogue landlord reporting scheme and let the private sector housing team know if they receive complaints. The current targeted licensing scheme has had positive impacts with reductions in several areas in the number of properties deemed to be poor. Councillor Bell had asked the private sector housing team to develop an Action Plan to move the council towards a licensing scheme within the next 18 months or so given that consultation would be required. A Stock Conditioning Survey conducted for the council by the Building Research Establishment would be presented to the ASH Policy and Scrutiny Panel shortly.

Question 2

From Councillor Charles

To Councillor Hogg, Executive Member for Transport and Highways

Engagement of residents in co-creation and co-design of Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

Councillor Charles asked the Executive member whether there were any plans to involve residents and service users in the design and creation of the service provision under BSIP.

Councillor Hogg thanked Councillor Charles for his question and replied that he was committed to engagement with communities to help inform the future development of services under BSIP however it would be difficult to explore co-creation and co-design as there were over 200k residents. He was fully committed to engaging with community leaders to ensure they were part of a feedback mechanism to inform future service development. He added that the council was restricted by the Department for Transport in the way that BSIP funding could be deployed, and services run as there would still be a number of services run by commercial operators. He added that Demand Responsive Transport as a scheme was not designed by the council and was limited by the number of buses available and the geography of North Somerset.

Question 3

From Councillor Charles

To Councillor Cartman, Executive Member for Corporate Services

Organisation of Local Elections

Councillor Charles commended the Election Team for its outstanding member briefings in respect of the changes brought forward by the Electoral Commission around voting and voter ID. He asked whether there would be any evaluation of the problems faced post-election and whether the Executive Member was confident in respect of the preparations needed for the elections given the changes to the voting process.

Councillor Cartman thanked Councillor Charles for his question and replied that he was very pleased with the preparatory work completed so far by the Elections Team and the effort put in to getting the message out to residents on the requirement for identification when going to vote. He added that it was incumbent on everyone to get the message across about the voter ID requirements.

He asked the solicitor to the council, in his role as returning officer, to comment further on preparations made. The solicitor to the council replied that the Electoral Commission conducted reviews after each election and published a post-election report. He added that the risk for this election was heightened and recognised as such by the Association of Electoral Administrators and the Electoral Commission and had not been helped by the late issue of the regulations around voter ID but that the Elections Team was doing all it could to ensure the smooth running of the elections with the new regulations.

Question 4

From Councillor James

To Councillor Canniford, Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy

Addressing housing poverty

Councillor James asked the Executive member for an update on what the council was doing to improve the housing pipeline especially for social rented properties and whether its targets had been met.

Councillor Canniford thanked Councillor James for his question and responded that the council had seen the target number of affordable housing increase from 150 in 2019 to 300 properties delivered by quarter 3 of 2022-23 and would likely hit 400 delivered by the end of the quarter 4. He added that the council was doing far better now than ever in the past and that the pipeline for affordable housing coming forward was also very good.

Question 5

From Councillor Cato

To Councillor Petty, Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Engagement

Carbon metrics in council reports

Councillor Cato asked the Executive Member when members could expect to see full life cycle carbon metrics in the Climate Emergency section of all reports coming to committees so that members could see whether projects being brought forward would make the situation worse in the council's ambition to be net zero by 2030.

Councillor Petty thanked Councillor Cato for his question and acknowledged that he had asked for the measure previously. However, with budget pressures and a lack of resource in the climate change department, it was not currently possible to deliver them. She added that the council did not have the data Councillor Cato was looking for now but would like to find an exemplar council which was providing that type of data. Whilst the council did not have the metrics available, each council department was taking an active role in determining the levers it had at its disposal to deliver behavioural and community change in terms of carbon emissions and climate change to get to net zero. She believed that whilst the reports requested did not exist, the council was taking a different approach to doing all it could to reach the net zero target by other means. She would ask for an update on what was being done in the next 6 monthly update report to members.

Councillor Hogg added that he was aware of good data around transport decarbonisation within North Somerset and offered to meet with Councillor Cato and officers to talk him through it.

Question 6

From Councillor Petty

To Councillor Hogg, Executive Member for Transport and Highways

Consultation on BSIP with Disability Access Group

Councillor Petty asked the following questions:

“When do you expect the Bus User Forum to be set up? Would you consider including the Disability Access Group in receiving comments around DRT useability?”

Councillor Hogg thanked Councillor Petty for her questions and replied that the Bus User Forum was imminent. He anticipated using stakeholder mapping to ensure all groups were represented on the forum. He was keen to see how DRT would connect residents from more economically deprived areas to commercial areas.