

**North Somerset Council
Council Meeting 11 July 2023
Question Time (Agenda Item 8)**

Question 1

From Councillor Keating

**To Executive Member for Children’s Services, Families and Life-Long Learning
– Councillor Gibbons**

**Update on the status of the Department for Education’s application to build an
SMEH School in Churchill**

Councillor Keating asked the Executive Member for an update on the status of the Department for Education’s application for a special school in Churchill.

Councillor Gibbons thanked Councillor Keating for his question and responded that she believed the DfE was submitting the planning application in September.

Question 2

From Councillor Thornton

To Executive Member for Culture and Leisure – Councillor Solomon

Weston Odeon Cinema

Councillor Thornton asked the Executive Member for an update on the Weston Odeon cinema.

Councillor Solomon asked the Leader to respond. Councillor Bell responded that he had written to the cinema owners as soon as the closure was announced. He had had a positive meeting with the cinema owners who had advised that they were selling the site and were currently negotiating a sale to another cinema operator. He was optimistic that it would be reopen soon as a cinema.

Question 3

From Councillor Ellis

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport – Councillor Hannah Young

Bus lane A370 Long Ashton bypass

Councillor Ellis asked the following question of the Executive Member:

“Many people on the doorstep raised the issue that they haven’t seen any buses or only one or two buses using the bus lane whilst cars are queuing now it is down to one lane. This doesn’t sound like it is helping with reducing climate change but adding to the problem. Will this be looked at for example, it being a time limited bus lane rather than 24/7?”

Councillor Young thanked Councillor Ellis for his question and noted that the reason for the bus lane was so that a reliable bus service could be put in place on that route. She had received a number of queries of this nature and the team had explored the possibility of the lane not being 24/7 but the Minister for Transport had fed back to a local MP that the government's national bus strategy, Bus Back Better, recommended that bus lanes should be full time and as continuous as possible. She added that the recommendation was that they should be part of a whole corridor approach including other physical measures. She would continue to keep a close eye on the project with the team to understand the impact although it was early days.

Question 4

From Councillor Cronnelly

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport – Councillor Hannah Young

Closure of face-to-face rail ticket offices

Councillor Cronnelly asked the Executive Member what the council could do with the news that face-to-face rail ticket offices were being closed.

Councillor Young thanked Councillor Cronnelly for his question and noted that the plan was under active consultation currently. She was liaising with the West of England Combined Authority leads for the area. A response to the consultation would be given based on feedback received as ticket offices were critical for a range of users who would be disadvantaged if they were closed. There were concerns over the lack of informal surveillance. She would be happy to request a meeting with GWR or the Rail Delivery Group which was running the consultation to put forward the council's concerns. She would be happy to feed through concerns if people contacted her direct.

Question 5

From Councillor Payne

To The Leader – Councillor Bell

Management of waste bins on Weston seafront

Councillor Payne asked the following question of the Leader:
“We had some great weather throughout June, and it was lovely to see such large numbers of visitors come to enjoy Weston seafront.

But unfortunately, we still don't seem to have got to grips with the management of waste on the beach and on the prom whenever we have a large influx of visitors. The overflowing bins and waste just abandoned where people have been sitting, is regularly left overnight to be scattered by animals and ending up in the sea.

I appreciate of course that it's a very difficult problem to solve. Ideally, we want to reduce the amount of waste that is produced in the first place and for people to deal with it responsibly, but do you agree with me it's essential that we manage effectively all the waste that is produced, and will you commit the council to getting to grips with this ongoing problem once and for all?”

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Payne for his question and responded that he agreed with him and that it had been an issue for many years. He did not believe the problem would ever be solved as it was down to human behaviour, respect for the environment and respect for each other. In conjunction with Councillors Solomon and Waite, he would work with officers to address the challenges including extra resource for the summer including later collections and weekend cover. This would be for Clevedon and Portishead seafronts also. Additional measures around enforcement, signage and behaviour change would also be looked at. Work would involve local ward members and consideration of the budget to support measures.

Question 6

From Councillor Williams

To Executive Member for Safety in the Community – Councillor Clayton

Antisocial behaviour in Worlebury Woods

Councillor Williams asked the Executive Member what work was being done to address the issue of antisocial behaviour including the setting of fires in Worlebury Woods. Would Councillor Clayton work with resident and him to look at Public Space Protection Orders and other measures to counteract the antisocial behaviour?

Councillor Clayton thanked Councillor Williams for his question and replied that he was willing to work with Councillor Williams and residents. He had informed officer of the antisocial behaviour in the woods. He was looking for patrols in the area by the council's Community Response Officers and would encourage residents and the ward member to report the issues on StreetSafe. This would direct the council's officer and the police in where the issues were occurring.

Question 7

From Councillor Pilgrim

To Executive Member for Culture and Leisure – Councillor Solomon

Access to services via the library teams

Councillor Pilgrim asked the Executive Member whether the promotion of access to services via the library could be improved as some residents were still unaware that they can go into libraries to get advice and assistance. She asked that the scheme be promoted in other ways than online

Councillor Solomon thanked Councillor Pilgrim for her question and agreed to bring the matter up with the library team so that residents were made aware that the scheme existed. He could not promise extra resources due to the council having to make cuts, but he would talk with the library team. He would also take up the matter of awareness of the scheme amongst library staff.

Question 8

From Councillor Petty

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport – Councillor Hannah Young

A38 Major Road Network scheme

Councillor Petty noted that the A38 MRN scheme had been on the agenda for a number of years and that an aspect of the decision had been postponed. She asked for clarification on which Executive Member was responsible for the scheme and who would be the point of contact going forward.

Councillor Young confirmed that the scheme fell into her portfolio but that a final funding decision had not yet been received. She had raised the issue at the Weston Gateway Strategic Transport Board at which there was a representative from the Department for Transport. They could not clarify when the decision regarding funding would be made but it was likely to be in September. She would keep a watching brief on the relevant Forward Plan items and keep relevant ward members informed.

Question 9

From Councillor Pryke

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport – Councillor Hannah Young

Parklets in Hill Road, Clevedon

Councillor Pryke asked the Executive Member whether residents and businesses had been consulted on the two recently installed parklets before they were built. Councillor Pryke also asked a follow up question around the promotion of the consultation on the Clevedon seafront scheme as he and other residents had only found out via Facebook.

Councillor Young confirmed that there had been consultation as part of the initial consultation on the public realm scheme and that the parklets are licensed to businesses so businesses can approach the council if they wish to take advantage of the parklet licensing scheme. There had also been a more recent session with the traders on Hill Road, Bellevue Road, and Alexander Road. Most traders had said they welcomed parklets; three businesses had requested licenses and two were currently being installed. Consideration had been given to holding back on the installation given the review being carried out, but businesses had asked that they be installed as they had built their financial models over the summer based on the opportunity to license the parklets. To compensate for parking spaces lost to the parklets, additional spaces had been made available in the Herbert Road/Hill Road area. Councillor Young apologised personally for the lack of communication around the planning of the public meeting. She said that ward members were noted on the communications plan for the meeting and apologised if there had been an error in timing but would personally ensure that ward members would receive advance notice going forward.

Question 10

From Councillor Smith

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport – Councillor Hannah Young

Clevedon Seafront

Councillor Smith asked the Executive Member whether there would be a postal survey of all Clevedon residents on the future of the parking scheme considering the issues highlighted during the June update.

Councillor Young replied that there was a public meeting as requested by Clevedon residents on 20 July at 7pm. The purpose of the meeting was to inform residents and other stakeholders of next steps including how the council would engage with them over the summer. The council was intending to appoint independent consultants to carry this out, The consultants would determine the mix of engagement methods and the council had put together a specification around the consultation. Councillor Young has asked via the specification that specific groups have a genuine opportunity via mixed methods to contribute to the review and that she wanted the widest possible involvement of the people of Clevedon. A conclusion would be reached based on the evidence gathered and she was awaiting the results of the independent review, the Active Travel England visit, the safety audit, and the independent audit. She accepted there were lessons to be learned and possible changes to be made. The scope of the review had not been limited to avoid any options. If there was a case for reversing the scheme, that was in the specification and would be shared. A page was being put together on the North Somerset Council website to include information on the review, the project brief, and the specification to give the public assurance that the matter was being considered seriously.

Question 11

From Councillor Pepperall

To Executive member for Culture and Leisure – Councillor Mike Solomon

Fly tipping in Worle

Councillor Pepperall asked the Executive Member what the council could do about fly tipping at the BT telephone exchange behind St Marks Church as it had recently cost the company £5000 to clear the site.

Councillor Solomon replied that the land was private and therefore the responsibility lay with BT to police and clear fly tipping on their land. The council had limited officer availability in any event.