

**North Somerset Council
Council Meeting 14 November 2023
Question Time (Agenda Item 10)**

Question 1

From Councillor Petty

To: Executive Member for climate, waste, and sustainability – Councillor Annemieke Waite

Motion on flooding and communication with the Environment Agency

Councillor Petty asked whether the Executive Member had any comment to make on the motion on flooding and communication with the Environment Agency,

Councillor Waite thanked Councillor Petty for her question and Councillor Shopland for his motion. She agreed that the issue was a genuine concern for North Somerset Council which required sea defences to protect neighbourhoods. She added that rising sea levels as a result of climate change were predicted to be an issue for North Somerset from 2040 onwards and to mitigate the risks, the council worked closely with the Environment Agency in a number of ways including the recently published Local Flood Risk Management the objectives and actions of which were adapted directly from the Environment Agency's Flood and Coastal Erosion Flood Risk Management Strategy for England. She noted that the planning for the risk was to be found in part g of the strategy. North Somerset Council was also a member of the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee led by the Environment Agency. This committee had an important role in protecting communities from flooding and coastal erosion by helping the Environment Agency and other partners understand local issues and balancing local and national priorities. North Somerset Council would host the next committee meeting in January where local efforts and sea defence projects would be showcased. The Environment Agency managed some defences in North Somerset with the council managing others. The council had a proactive programme of management of its sea defences and works were planned in Weston-s-Mare and Clevedon to sea wall to deal with tides and storms. She added that there was a pilot project to protect the sand dunes in Uphill which councillors were invited to view. Many future decisions were taken with the Environment Agency on the management of flood risk but there was more to do.

Question 2

From Councillor Keating

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport – Councillor Hannah Young

Roadworks on A370 and A38

Councillor Keating noted the roadworks on the A370, A38 and Brockley Coombe were creating significant difficulties for residents in getting into work. He asked the Executive Member how works had been planned at the same time on two significant routes from the south of the district to Bristol. He asked how this could be avoided in

the future to prevent the south being blocked from the north of the district.

Councillor Young thanked Councillor Keating for his question and responded that she appreciated the works had caused difficulty for residents in the area. She added that the works were separate with the work on the A370 relating to the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) with routine maintenance works to the north of Brockley Coombe. National Grid were carrying out works on the A38 and Downside. The National Grid works were intended to take place earlier in the year, but the works had been delayed as much as possible to avoid the summer period. She noted that the council had been working closely with National Grid on the issues and with ward members and added that these works were extremely urgent to replace aging power cables which had been leading to power cuts for residents. The BSIP improvement works allowed National Grid to carry out works on Downside which otherwise would have resulted in two separate road closures. A number of changes had been made since the start of the works to increase traffic flow and the network manager had been speaking with National Grid on a daily basis. They had succeeded in obtaining additional resources to manage the traffic lights and bringing forward the end date for the works. She hoped that with additional measures and resource that the end date for the works at Brockley Coombe could be similarly brought forward. She added that improved communications to residents would be considered in the future but noted that there was a huge amount of work planned on the area's road network which would result in more disruption as investment was made. This would not just be as a result of works planned by the council but would involve other agencies too. She encouraged residents to consider how to manage their journeys going forward and that the council could provide resources to assist in this.

Question 3

From Councillor Bridger

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport – Councillor Hannah Young

Impact of heavy rain on highways network.

Councillor Bridger asked in light of the impact of heavy rain on the area's highway network, how much had been received by the council in the current financial year from the Department for Transport (DfT) for road maintenance; how did this compare with previous years and does this reflect what the council needed to meet the scale of the challenge.

Councillor Young thanked Councillor Bridger for his question and added that she would follow up her answer with a written response. She added that the DfT Spending Review had allocated a fixed annual budget between 2022-25 to invest in highways maintenance. Details of the allocated funds could be found in Executive Member decision DP498. In 2020-21 funds totalled £7.48m; 2021-22 £5.99m; current year £6.89m of which £0.89m was from the government's pot hole fund. The council had received a share of the £200m national budget announced which was a reduction on previously allocated amounts. In 2020-21, the council allocated capital of £1.25m to cover the funding deficit and increased this to £2.5m for 2022-23 and 2023-24 but the council could not yet confirm whether this was sustainable at any level for future years. Regrettably, decisions had had to be taken on which roads to

maintain with many local roads in a state of managed decline. Over previous years the council had been successful in applying for additional national funds for a range of projects which allowed the council to undertake resurfacing works and address drainage issues at the same time.

Question 4

From Councillor McQuillan

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport – Councillor Hannah Young

Kingcott Mill Farm Park Home – review of bus stop location and road speed.

Councillor McQuillan asked the following question of Councillor Young “I would like to highlight the situation faced by residents of the Kingcott Mill Farm park home site on the Clevedon road on the outskirts of Long Ashton. The residents of this site feel unable to access bus services safely due to the speed of the traffic on the Clevedon road and the lack of a safe crossing point. They also feel speeds are too high for the safety of cyclists and pedestrians navigating the very narrow pavements. This leaves them feeling isolated and reliant upon the car.

We met earlier in the year and agreed that North Somerset council should engage with relevant landowners and, in parallel seek further advice from highways officers as to options – such as moving the current bus stops using BSIP funding or reviewing speed limits. On behalf of residents of Kingcott, can I please ask for an update on progress?”

Councillor Young thanked Councillor McQuillan for his question and responded that she had engaged with officers in the hope of moving the bus stop. The BSIP programme relied on not needing to purchase land or enter into negotiations to do so, so it was not possible for this to be made part of the BSIP. She had asked officers if the issue could be addressed outside of the programme but there was currently no budget to purchase the required land or associated legal work needed to move the bus stop to private land. The issue of speed reduction needed to form part of the Highways Scheme requests and work was ongoing to prioritise these. Councillor Young would provide a separate written update to Councillor McQuillan.

Question 5

From Councillor Smith

To The Leader – Councillor Mike Bell

Review of Clevedon BID

Councillor Smith asked the following question of Councillor Bell ““I'd like to build on Cllr Shopland's question in the last session, I promise it is not about flooding and, after speaking to business owners. Firstly, has the leader got any updates relating to ongoing review of the Clevedon BID particularly around the timeline?”

Secondly, can he justify why the council used its dominant vote, from a building which it is vacating, against a significant number of businesses to prop up a failing system?”

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Smith for his question and responded that the public review was scheduled for 20 November to update residents on the

independent review of the scheme. The review of the report and next steps would be considered at the meeting and further discussions were being held in the council as to how to approach the findings.

In terms of the BID matter, Councillor Bell referred Councillor Smith to his response given at the last Council meeting and that the council had acted on the advice of officers in line with the established protocol regarding casting its vote as a ratepayer through BID processes as was done with the Weston-s-Mare BID. The same process as always had been followed and concerns regarding the BID process had been referred to the Secretary of State. He believed the council had acted appropriately and responded to concerns, but the matter was now out of the council's hands.

Question 6

**From Councillor Joe Tristram
To Executive Member for Highways and Transport, Councillor Hannah Young
and Executive Member for spatial planning, placemaking and economy,
Councillor Mark Canniford**

Crossing at Banwell School

Councillor Tristram asked Councillor Young the following question "At the beginning of this meeting Council heard from Banwell school parent Rebecca Robinson about the dangerous state of the Zebra crossing outside the primary school. This situation has gone on since the last crossing supervisor retired in 2018. My predecessor Karin Haverson worked with Banwell Parish Council to get a solution but didn't manage. She and the parish clerk spoke to several officers and ended up going in circles. Sadly, the Banwell School parents have lost faith that our council thinks their children's safety is important. I know this isn't true, but I can see why they believe it. I'd like to hear from the executive members for transport and place what they can offer to regain the residents' trust".

Councillor Young thanked Councillor Tristram for his question and replied that she did not underestimate the impact this issue was having on parents in Banwell and across the wider district. For Health and Safety reasons there were no longer school crossing patrols due to national guidance and workplace liabilities. She had been exploring options with the highways team who have suggested a solution which could be implemented in the financial year incorporating road painted signage, but this was not followed through as the parish council did not feel this would address concerns. The parish council has identified that a flashing sign was required which was proposed to be sited on church owned private land. She added that the planning aspects of the proposal needed to be resolved and that the private land would require planning permission. She would investigate further whether there was any way to avoid the need for planning for the school crossing element and would work with the ward members to find a solution. In terms of council processes, Councillor Young noted that there were currently 400 active requests across the district and several hundred ideas sent in as part of the Active Travel consultation. The transport and highways teams had been working improving processes and making them more transparent. Ward members had access to a dashboard also available to town and parish councils which showed those proposals which had been allocated budget and, in the schedule, (45). The maintenance programme would be added in time to the

dashboard. The remaining schemes not currently allocated in the schedule were going through a prioritisation process which had been shared with the relevant Scrutiny Committee and those selected would be allocated budget in the new financial year.

Question 7

**From Councillor Pryke
To The Leader Councillor Mike Bell**

Repairs to The Avenue in Clevedon

Councillor Pryke asked the following question of Councillor Bell “For the last 6 months I have tried to get either an Officer, Director, or the appropriate Executive member to work with myself and residents to get some urgent repairs to The Avenue in Clevedon. At the very least a member of the Highways team to visit The Avenue in Clevedon. The Avenue has a number of major potholes and really needs some TLC.

Will the Leader take up my issue with the Highways team and inform me when a member of that team will visit this road and the outcome of this visit”.

Council Bell agreed to do so.

Question 8

**From Councillor Ellis
To The Leader Councillor Mike Bell**

Backwell Lights A370 bus lane

Councillor Ellis asked the following question of Councillor Bell “A bus lane replacing the left-hand lane will cause huge tail backs which will hinder buses getting to the bus lane, have cars idling that would normally use the left lane to go straight on but instead be stuck behind cars waiting to turn right creating greater pollution, adding greatly to journey times, and annoying most people.

Cllr Bell has stated we need to look at the lights to increase capacity. Every assessment on the lights has said that it is at over capacity. Losing a lane will drastically increase traffic issues.

The situation at present is that councillors universally rejected it, but it is going to consultation. A councillor asked if the plans were going to be changed via email, there was no answer.

He promised this council will consult. The consultation I have been told is open to everyone, but only people in Backwell are being informed and invited to the drop-in session. This will drastically affect people in Nailsea, but no plan is in place to inform them and let them have their say. Q1. Who is setting the policy, the council, officers, or councillors? Q2. Will he guarantee that Nailsea will be given the same drop-in session as Backwell, in Nailsea and the people of Nailsea being informed? Not just an area with a small population.”

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Ellis for his question and added that he was aware of the correspondence from local ward members and that officers had been working with the Executive Member for Highways and Transport to address concerns. He added that the team were working as far as capacity allowed to deliver engagement sessions. He was aware of a recent engagement session where only one local member attended so he would encourage all ward members with an interest in the scheme to come to the organised sessions. He added that it was the Council which set policy and it had set a policies to support both the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Active Travel. Councillor Bell committed to engaging with residents in Nailsea when there were Bus Service Improvement Plan schemes proposed for Nailsea. For the scheme proposed in Backwell, he felt it was entirely appropriate that there was a public facing event in Backwell. This did not exclude those from other areas with an interest in the scheme who could also attend. The same response to the question had already been provided via email and the event had been widely publicised in the area via the council's social media and website which confirmed that the event was open to everyone with an interest in the scheme not just those living in Backwell

Question 9

From Councillor Aplin

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport - Councillor Hannah Young

Queensway Speed Action Group

Councillor Aplin asked whether Councillor Young would be willing to meet with the Queensway Speed Action Group and himself to discuss the issues of speeding and accidents on the Queensway.

Councillor Young thanked Councillor Aplin for his question and whilst she was not aware of the request or issue would be very happy to meet with Councillor Aplin and the group.

Question 10

From Councillor Petty

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport - Councillor Hannah Young

Engagement with Backwell community and surrounds regarding bus improvements

Councillor Petty asked Councillor Young whether the engagement process was genuinely seeking opinions from the community of Backwell and the round; that the final design and project had not been committed given that residents have seen that a contract has been granted; that local ward members continue to be consulted, will have the opportunity to review the comments from the community and that a full safety audit will take place to review the potential impact on other junctions in the village before any work takes place.

Councillor Young thanked Councillor Petty for her question and confirmed that the final design and project had not been committed to even though the Design and Build contract had been awarded. She went on to explain the two aspects of the contract and noted that the design phase did not commit the council to the build phase. She added that the consultation and engagement were genuine. She noted that the proposed scheme was very contentious which is why the council wished to hear from residents on the potential impact before committing to a scheme. A previous question had suggested that a lane would be removed for cars increasing congestion at the Backwell junction. She agreed that the proposal currently would close Dark Lane to traffic but that the proposal and modelling would decrease congestion as it would change the traffic light phasing and improve traffic flow along the A370. However, the design had not been committed to and local engagement with residents was sought to decide whether it made sense to proceed with the change. A safety audit would take place at the design stage with a full safety audit to follow if the scheme was delivered