

**North Somerset Council
Council Meeting 9 January 2024
Question Time (Agenda Item 12)**

Question 1

From Councillor Ellis

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport – Councillor Hannah Young

A370 – lights at Backwell

Councillor Ellis asked the following question:

“Given the recent anger by many members of the public at the consultation to the BSIP proposals at the Backwell traffic lights, will these plans now be dropped”.

Councillor Young thanked Councillor Ellis for his question and responded that the consultation had now closed, the responses were being analysed and would be considered in conjunction with the evidence for the original proposal as per the agreement by the Executive for all BSIP proposals. She was awaiting the information on which to make the decision which she anticipated would be received later in the month. Councillor Young agreed to keep ward members updated on the decision.

Question 2

From Councillor Thornton

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport – Councillor Hannah Young

126 bus from Weston to Wells

Councillor Thornton asked the following question:

“I am very pleased that the 126 bus from Weston to Wells has been reinstated, and that it picks up and drops off in the ward I represent – Uphill. I want to ask the Executive Member how passenger numbers will be monitored on the service - because when I used the bus on Saturday, the buses I took to Wells and back were absolutely packed - with some people having to stand for significant amounts of time. In one case a man with a large pushchair was not allowed to board the bus because there was no room, and the pushchair was not collapsible. Saturday may have been particularly busy because it was the first Saturday the new service had run, and the weather was reasonable. It is also the case that there are fewer buses running on a Saturday. But if the demand on Saturdays turns out to be as great as week days it would be useful to get the figures and ask First Bus to put more services on at weekends if funding allows. I am sure First Bus would also find it profitable.”

Councillor Young thanked Councillor Thornton for her question and replied that the council received monthly monitoring reports albeit with a time lag and she was happy to provide the passenger numbers to members. She asked that members feedback any concerns they receive from residents regarding bus services and around passengers being unable to board due to numbers using the service.

Question 3

From Councillor Bridger

**To Executive Member for spatial planning, placemaking and economy,
Councillor Mark Canniford**

National Planning Policies and North Somerset Council's Local Plan

Councillor Bridger asked the following question:

“We’ve seen a number of changes to national planning policy since the end of October, and many residents are under the impression the Council is in a much stronger position to defend speculative development at appeal. In the last couple of years, we have sometimes come unstuck when Planning Inspectors have judged we are unable to maintain a rolling 5-year supply of deliverable sites for housing. The Government has removed this requirement where Local Planning Authorities have a Development Plan that is up to date (i.e. adopted within the last 5 years). Given North Somerset’s last tested position was that we could only demonstrate 3.5 years, I’d be grateful if the Executive Member could confirm or clarify whether we are still vulnerable at appeal until we adopt our new Plan?”

Councillor Canniford thanked Councillor Bridger for his question and responded that the guidance received in October encouraged the council to reduce the central government demand for new house building and the council was now working towards the number in its own Housing Needs Assessment. This however was not taking away pressure from developers to develop and have options to develop their land. Until the council had an adopted Local Plan, developers could still push for speculative development.

Question 4

From Councillor Cronnelly

To Executive Member for homes and health – Councillor Jenna Ho Marris

NHS dentistry

Councillor Cronnelly had been in communication with a provider keen to offer dental services locally, but it was finding barriers to entering the market. He asked whether the Executive Member would be prepared to meet with the provider to understand the obstacles and work with him to provide a letter outlining the need for NHS services locally to speed up its application

Councillor Ho Marris thanked Councillor Cronnelly for his question and responded she would be prepared to do so and that she and Councillor Thornton were working to bring the issue to the Health and Well Being Board and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Question 5

From Councillor Daw

**To Executive Member for spatial planning, placemaking and economy,
Councillor Mark Canniford**

Affordable Housing

Councillor Daw asked Councillor Canniford about the proportion of one- and two-bedroom flats and smaller accommodation which would make up the 40% affordable housing requirement.

Councillor Canniford thanked Councillor Daw for his question and replied that the council's Housing Needs Assessment would determine what was required, not the developer and the council would then develop the policy. He would provide a written answer to Councillor Daw.

Question 6

From Councillor Charles

To Executive Member for homes and health – Councillor Jenna Ho Marris

Contact with Community Groups affected by Gaza conflict

Councillor Charles asked the Executive Member the following question:
“In light of the recent vote would the Executive Member reach out to community groups directly affected by the Gaza conflict and see what support we can directly offer”?

Councillor Ho Marris thanked Councillor Charles for his question and responded that she would do so. She added that colleagues were already doing this by working with Non-Governmental Organisations including Race Equality North Somerset and refugee groups in order to provide support.