

**North Somerset Council
Council Meeting 20 February 2024
Question Time (Agenda Item 12)**

Question 1

From Councillor Smith

To the Leader - Councillor Mike Bell

Clevedon Seafront

Councillor Smith asked the following question:

“I wrote to the leader around two weeks ago due to the AECOM Review stating that at Clevedon Seafront “...vehicles running over the [mini roundabout] is common and there is the potential for head on collisions...” I believe that due to the limited space, this breaches Section 188 of the Highway Code whereas, a T junction, as suggested is supported by sections 160, 200, 206 and 211. Additionally, the AECOM Review states that 84% residents dislike the feature, our own highways team have admitted it is a pointless feature serving no benefit to 80% - 90% of road users and the RAC has said that due to the limited space a T Junction may be simpler and cheaper. I believe that the simpler the road, the safer it is. Will the leader support me and stop this lacklustre idea?”

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Smith for his question and responded that he was always in favour of stopping lacklustre ideas. An officer had already responded to this question and the Executive Member was considering the issue in advance of the Executive meeting next month.

Question 2

From Councillor Robert Payne

**To Executive Member for Spatial Planning, Placemaking and Economy –
Councillor Mark Canniford**

Occupancy rates to shop units on the south of Waterloo Street

Councillor Payne asked the following question:

“Looking around Weston town centre, it is quite evident that there is quite a high occupancy rate of the retail units, particularly when you consider comparable towns, which is something we can be really pleased about. But one obvious exception to this: the shop units along the south side of Waterloo Street from number 2 to number 14, where of the nine units, only two are occupied. My understanding is that these are all owned by the same landlord who appears to be charging excessively high rents. Do you think there’s anything the council can do to engage with this landlord to try and bring these units back into useful occupation?”

Councillor Canniford thanked Councillor Payne for his question and replied that as the Council didn’t actually own these properties, it was difficult to intervene.

However, he had already asked for confirmation that the landlord was paying the appropriate business rates as this may be the only enforcement intervention that the council could make. In North Somerset, we could generally be pleased with our occupancy rates compared to other areas.

Question 3

From Councillor Thornton

To Executive Member for Highways and Transport - Councillor Hannah Young

Use of motorcycles in bus lanes in the North Somerset area

Councillor Thornton asked the following question:

“Can I ask if serious consideration can be given to our public speaker John Martell’s request for motor cyclists to be able to use bus lanes throughout North Somerset as they do in the Bristol City Council area?”

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Thornton on behalf of Councillor Young for her question and responded that he completely agreed and had already initiated a review as a result.

Question 4

From Councillor Charles

To the Leader - Councillor Mike Bell

Monthly communications update with geographical relevance

Councillor Charles asked if the executive member would consider providing members with a monthly comms update allowing us to know the geographical relevance and location of press releases.

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Charles for his request and agreed that it would be helpful to be provided to all councillors who could then choose to unsubscribe if they did not want to receive it. He encouraged all members to contact the comms team with any additional local comms suggestions that they may have.

Question 5

From Councillor Pryke

To the Leader – Councillor Mike Bell

Backbench engagement with the work of the council

Councillor Pryke asked Councillor Bell to consider the involvement of backbench members in the work of the council in matters such as car parking charges to gauge opinion other than solely as part of the public consultation.

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Pryke for his question and replied that he would ignore the political points but was happy to pick up on engagement with members. This was one of the themes that had formed part of the recent peer challenge with

the recommendation that a group should be established to look at just that. He took the opportunity to underline that engagement was a two-way relationship and that this was directly related to attendance.

Question 6

**From Councillor Williams
To the Leader – Councillor Mike Bell**

Weston-super-Mare floral clock

Councillor Williams asked the executive member to clarify the recent communications that stated the council had no prior knowledge of the work to the floral clock as he had seen two emails to the contrary.

Councillor Bell thanked Councillor Williams for his question and responded that he couldn't comment directly on the comms as the information had been provided by officers in response to the question asked by the executive member. It was unfortunate that this had been raised directly at Council as a political point where it would have been more helpful to have worked together for agreement before the event.