

Public/Member Questions – Full Council  
Public and Member Questions – Full Council – 17 July 2019

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PQ/MQ	From	Topic	Question/statement
PQ1	Nigel Behan	<b><u>Climate Change</u></b>	<p>Q1 Relates to a week of events from 15 July across the UK <b><u>“Summer Uprising – ACT NOW. IT IS TIME TO REBEL”</u></b></p> <p>The Bristol Occupation by XR Southwest state on their “Events” page that:</p> <p>“Parliament and many UK councils have declared a climate and ecological emergency, but their actions do not match their words. The government’s commitment to cut carbon emissions to zero by 2050 is an alarmingly insufficient response. In the Global South, water shortages, famine, extreme weather and conflicts over dwindling resources are already commonplace. Britain’s food security is at risk. Our children’s future is at stake.”</p> <p>There are XR groups in Somerset including:</p> <p><b><u>“Extinction Rebellion Frome</u></b>            Environmental conservation organisation            Frome arm of campaign group Extinction Rebellion. We are responding to an unprecedented ecological emergency, and we need your help!”</p> <p>And</p> <p><b><u>“Extinction Rebellion South Somerset</u></b>            Community            Extinction Rebellion actions in the South Somerset area. The planet is in ecological crisis. The Extinction Rebellion is a necessity.”</p> <p>What will SCC (Elected Councillors who decide and the Officers who advise) do practically to highlight the “Climate Change Emergency” issues as the XR “demand is.....            (“For five consecutive days, rebels from Bristol and the South West, will disrupt key transport routes and occupy spaces in central Bristol. Our demand...”)            ..... that national and local governments ACT NOW to halt biodiversity loss and cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025.”?</p>

Answer: From Cllr David Hall

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Thank you for your question Nigel. You will be aware that in February at Full Council a motion was carried to declare a Climate Emergency with a pledge to develop a Climate Emergency Strategy and to make Somerset carbon neutral by 2030.

This is the highest level commitment we could give to signal our intent to have a positive impact on our carbon emissions and footprint and to halt or reverse some of the damage that has been done to the Earth's climate. We know this is a bold commitment and a tall order but nevertheless we have made it.

You will also be aware of our commitment to work with our District partners, neighbouring Authorities, the private sector and experts , to develop the strategy. We need to develop an action plan, with defined timescales, with tangible actions and activities, to enable us to meet our goals.

We are already in dialogue with a broad swathe of interested parties, including Extinction Rebellion who met with senior Officers of the Council last week. We are keen to hear from all segments of our community and positively engage and consult with citizens, businesses and organisations in Somerset, to ensure we have a strategy and action plan which everyone in Somerset can identify with, get behind and contribute to.

We are at the very beginning of our journey and the scoping of the work has only just begun, but we know if we are to succeed in this task, and we must succeed, that we need to change systems, behaviours, policies and practice and to take direct and positive action. To do this we ,need the help of everyone in this county and beyond.

We are in a phase of research, evidence gathering and most importantly, listening. Listening to experts and interest groups, leaders in positive action, about the sorts of things we can and should do, the behaviours we can change, the things we can all stop doing.

I trust this affirms our commitment to this agenda.

PQ/MQ	From	Topic	Question/Statement
PQ2	Louise Thomas	<b><u>5G rollout</u></b>	In the light of the growing Worldwide opposition to the 5G rollout, and the appeal by scientists and doctors to the EU, WHO and UN, the peer reviewed scientific research indicating biological harm to humans and the environment, and the fact that both Glastonbury and Frome councils have put a moratorium on the rollout of 5G subject to reviewing the research , does Somerset County council consider that it may be also appropriate to look into the 5G frequency emissions and the impact it could have on Somerset's residents.

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Answer: Cllr Christine Lawrence

*Mobile networks have been in operation since the 1980s, all wireless technologies have to be rolled out under strict government guidelines, which are based on medical studies and research programmes going back more than 30 years. These are reviewed on an ongoing basis. The research and associated guidelines include all wireless technologies used globally and in the UK – for 2G, 3G, 4G, WIFI and now 5G.*

*In addition, there are strict rules on the power level (exposure to radio waves, non-ionizing radiation, electromagnetic fields) that each site broadcasts a signal at – this is governed by an organisation called ICNIRP.org, (the international commission on non-ionizing radiation protection.) This organisation informs the Health & Safety Executive and Public Health England, together acting as the health-related watchdog for the mobile industry. All 5G is being rolled out within those guidelines.*

*It is possible that there may be a small increase in overall exposure to radio waves when 5G is added to an existing network or in a new area; however, the overall exposure is expected to remain low relative to guidelines and as such there should be no consequences for public health.*

*Public Health England’s (PHE’s) Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards (CRCE) takes the lead on public health matters associated with radiofrequency electromagnetic fields, or radio waves, used in telecommunications.*

PQ/MQ	From	Topic	Question/Statement
PQ3	Nigel Behan	<b><u>House of Commons Transport Committee Bus services in England outside London (May 2019)</u></b>	<p><a href="https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmtrans/1425/1425.pdf#">https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmtrans/1425/1425.pdf#</a></p> <p>Following the Select Committee report (link above) the Campaign for Better Transport called for:</p> <p>“A National Bus Strategy would ensure the Government focuses on protecting and improving bus services across the country by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Combining funding from public sector spending on buses within a long-term framework to give local authorities and bus operators the ability to maximise the benefits of investment, plan properly for the future and ensure no further services are lost</li> <li>- Speeding up the move to low and zero emission vehicles to help national and local</li> </ul>

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government meet environmental and public health objectives, support jobs in bus manufacturing and help establish the UK amongst the international leaders on clean mass transport

- - Establishing a programme of investment in physical and virtual infrastructure to support buses including a new generation of modal interchanges, targeted investments to make motorways and other strategic roads more bus-friendly and initiatives to encourage the development of multi-modal ticketing and journey planning.”
- As one of the report’s recommendations was that the Government introduce a national strategy for buses by 2020.

Does the Council support the Transport Committee’s request that:

“In its response to this Report the Government should lay out a clear timescale for the development of this strategy, including the impact assessments and consultations which will accompany the development of such a strategy. We believe there is merit in such a national strategy being underpinned by a national forum involving representatives from bus operators, trade unions and other stakeholders to examine and share information on issues such as improving services, recruitment and retention, skills, apprenticeship and bus safety.”

And the recommendation(s):

“We recommend that the Government develop and adopt a bus strategy by the end of 2020. This should include:

- the Government’s ambitions for increasing bus ridership;
- a commitment to making the full suite of operating models, including franchising, available to all local authorities, and guidance on how different bus operating models can be used most effectively and implemented quickly with a minimum of bureaucratic impediments;
- a more stable multi-year funding model for local transport, including bus services, and a clear strategy for and details of how to access any bid-for funding;
- an assessment of the evidence for the effectiveness of bus priority measures across England,

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			<p>and guidance on how best to implement bus priority measures; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specific targets for modal shift, and actions to encourage people to switch to bus use.”</li> </ul> <p>And what will SCC do practically as part of the Climate Change Emergency (and Air Pollution) concerns?</p>
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Answer: Cllr John Woodman

**Answer:** Somerset County Council contributed evidence into the Select Committee’s examination of bus services in England and is happy to support the Committee’s request of Government and associated recommendations. SCC has an adopted bus strategy (accessible from <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/transport-strategy/> ) which sets out our current plans and actions for bus services and the Council is also developing a climate change strategy which may well then inform a further review of the bus strategy in due course.

PQ/MQ	From	Topic	Question/Statement
PQ4	Eva Bryczkowski	Supporting Vulnerable People	<p>Lack of funding has meant that much needed refuges have been closed. Yes, some local authorities provide safe houses, but they are not as safe as a group of women in the same house/refuge protecting one another with the support of a full time worker.</p> <p>Regarding victims of sexual abuse, whether children or adults requiring help, there is no way near enough support. There are very long waiting lists. And generic counselling often wasn't enough and not tailored towards the victims who needed specialist counselling or therapy in order to help them heal, often from traumatic experiences.</p> <p>I now would like to compare and contrast how different levels of funding affected services offered to adults who experienced sexual abuse as children.</p> <p>When I worked at Bristol Rape Crisis Line we had an enormous amount of people, (mainly women), ringing up wanting support and counselling for childhood abuse, particularly with their experiences of flashbacks which impacted on their everyday life, at work for example.</p> <p>A colleague and I set up Incest Survivors as an offshoot. This was because we had enough</p>

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funding to do this. That is why I think it's important and relevant to mention this.

We set up self-help groups, counselling, and giving tailored individual support to individuals.  
Two examples:-

- We supported a young woman who was sexually abused by her father to be able to leave home and find another place to live in. But it didn't stop there. She was having severe flashbacks, and we helped her in different ways to eventually heal.
- Another example was a woman who experienced such extreme sexual abuse as a child that she couldn't go anywhere where a man was nearby. She urgently needed to post a parcel but a man was serving in the post office. So I went with her and she stayed outside while I went in to post it.

Why are these examples relevant? Because it takes valuable time in order to do these things and support people, and that needs adequate funding. Now that there is definitely not enough funding in local authorities, and the levels of support offered is far less. Local authorities, and Councillors in Somerset County Council, with all the goodwill in the world simply cannot afford to provide this level of funding, despite the excellent examples of best practice in some areas.

Now in Somerset, (as in most local authorities), there are serious gaps in provision. For example, gaps in domestic violence provision. According to a recent Women's Aid report, lack of enough funding has literally meant that it is a matter of life and death. With less refuges, and also in existing refuges where there aren't enough beds to provide for everyone who is escaping from domestic abuse, workers have near impossible decisions to make. For example, the report quotes from a worker, "I spent last weekend trying to work out which woman to turn away, asking myself - is this woman going to die if I turn her away?"

According to the Avon and Somerset Police Commissioner's Crime report. While this highlighted many examples of good practice, it also included information about the gaps in provision - which we MUST focus on in order to improve the level of support offered. For example, the report mentions cuts a key service, children's support services. These help children who have witnessed domestic abuse to access extra support. While there might have been increases in funding for domestic violence provision, it isn't enough. The number of cases of domestic violence has skyrocketed. Where increased funding has enabled the number of beds to largely

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to remain stable, (mainly due to housing benefit caps which often pays women's rent in shelters), women still had to wait weeks to get a place in a refuge. One woman had to call the police four times while waiting for a safe space. Another woman attempted suicide after being raped so brutally by her partner that her womb was severely damaged. When she finally managed to leave her partner there was no space immediately available.

The Somerset PCC report recommends a ratio of one refuge for 10,000 in population.

The report stated that the victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence lack one-on-one support services, which is crucially needed.

The report outlines a number of percentage increases in domestic abuse and sexual abuse over certain time periods.

It states that the majority of services offer only short term support. Also that these services are not provided overnight or on weekends, when often support is very much needed.

I simply don't have time now to provide extra figures from the above and other research.

Suffice it to say that I would like the Councillor who answers my questions, instead of simply confirming good practice, which is great, to concentrate on the gaps and what can the Council do about the terrible suffering experienced by adults and children.

QUESTION ONE:-

What are councillors and officers going to do about the gaps in provision so that people who are suffering get the help they need?

QUESTION TWO:-

Working from the premise that:

If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got.

If what you are doing isn't working, do anything else at all.

How are the Council going to lobby the government in radically different ways?



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QUESTION THREE:-

Will the Council do such radically different things such as brainstorming, involve staff working in the above areas, and anything else they can think of to find a way out of this impasse? h

Answer: Cllr Christine Lawrence

**Question 1**

*In 2017, Somerset County Council Public Health team produced a domestic abuse needs assessment for the county. This has helped inform the current Somerset Domestic Abuse Strategy and work of the Somerset Domestic Abuse Board, helping us to assess and understand the needs within the County and to use our resources as best we can to address those needs.*

*Part of this has seen us attempt to help maximise available resources through the commissioning of an integrated domestic abuse support service, (known as SIDAS Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Service). This means there is support in the community and in refuge or safehouses, available for victims/survivors assessed as needing the support of a specialist domestic abuse service, whether they are a victim, perpetrator or child, all of which can be accessed through one single referral point.*

*The staff within this service work with the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) depending on the needs, as it does with a range of agencies as a means to provide safety and support to those accessing SIDAS.*

*The current SIDAS contract ends in March 2020. Currently procurement is underway to re-commission the service from April 2020. Both the existing service and new service specifications have been developed taking into account feedback from victims/survivors of domestic abuse. We have also completed engagement work with commissioners from other local statutory bodies, and providers of services across the region. This has been to help us ensure we're commissioning a service that is realistic and best meets the needs of our communities, whilst complementing the other services available locally that provide support to domestic abuse victims/survivors.*

*Feedback from survivors suggests that although some do prefer the peer support a refuge offers, others prefer the flexibility that a safehouse provides, especially for those with several children or teenagers where a refuge can be incredibly overwhelming. We are intending to continue with this mix of service provision in the new contract, together with provision of target hardening to help victims/survivors stay safe in their own homes.*

*The criminal justice system also offers a range of measures to help victims stay safe at home, and to take action to help perpetrators stop their abuse. SCC through its SIDAS provision currently tries to maximise this through effective multi-agency working with the police, social care, housing providers and others. For many years SCC has commissioned support services to help perpetrators change their behaviour. The new contract from April 2020 will continue with this.*

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*In 2017 Public Health commissioned a specialist service to support children and young people aged 18 years and under who have experienced sexual abuse and trauma in Somerset. The service is funded by a partnership between Somerset County Council, NHS England and Somerset CCG.*

**Question 2**

*There are many changes anticipated over the coming months through national legislation, including the new Domestic Abuse Bill which was consulted on last year. Currently, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has a consultation (until 2nd August) on the future delivery of support to victims and their children in accommodation-based domestic abuse services in England. This proposes the introduction of a statutory duty on local authorities to provide support that meets the diverse needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children, ensuring they have access to provision that is right for them. We see this consultation as a positive step by the UK Government. We are also encouraged that this acknowledges / suggests that additional funding maybe available.*

**Question 3**

*The market and stakeholder work undertaken in the last eighteen months has helped shape the new service delivery model requested through the re-procurement of the service which is currently underway. This included talking with service users/ victims as detailed within the response to question 1. This is a model we will continue to utilise for all of our services.*

PQ/MQ	From	Topic	Question/Statement
MQ1	Liz Leyshon	Major Road Network Schemes	<p>At the recent Peninsula Transport Board meeting, the road scheme submissions for the Peninsula area of Cornwall, Devon &amp; Somerset included two schemes for Somerset. In the Large Local Major scheme, Somerset has proposed the Walton/Ashcott by-pass. In the Major Road Network scheme, Somerset has proposed the Glastonbury by-pass.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet member for Highways and Transport please confirm the approximate likely costs for each of these two schemes and identify how much of each total might be covered by DfT funds, how much by developer contributions and how much by Somerset County Council? Of the SCC contribution, can the Cabinet member please clarify the source of the SCC funds and when these would be required? And if developer funds are paid retrospectively as housing and other development takes place, how will the Council manage the cashflow for these major</p>

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schemes?

Response from Cabinet Member for Highways, John Woodman

**Answer:** *Early indicative costings for the proposals are £90m for Walton/ Ashcott Bypass and £20.3m for Glastonbury Bypass. This is based upon some very early costing activity to inform DfT of the relative value for money of the proposals in comparison to other schemes and are the likely minimum costs to address the congestion pinch-points on the current routes. The costs are likely to change as route options are further developed, consulted on and agreed, and as more detailed design is undertaken. Our assumption at this stage is that 15% of the cost of each scheme will need to be provided from third party contributions and that DfT will fund 85% of the scheme costs. At this early stage in the process it is not possible to say how much if this will be provided through developer funding, and we will work with Mendip District Council to ensure developer contributions to the schemes are maximised. As with other major transport schemes the Council will consider the need for any capital contribution towards the schemes as part of the capital programme which is reviewed annually. The bulk of any capital contributions towards scheme construction would be needed in 2024/25. The Council has provided cashflow in lieu of future developer contributions for current major transport schemes such as M5J25 and would consider this if necessary, for the MRN schemes.*

PQ/MQ	From	Topic	Question/Statement
MQ2	Leigh Redman	Fire Station closures	<p>“As a member of the Devon &amp; Somerset fire &amp; rescue authority, I am privileged to be one of the representatives of this council, in July an extensive 12 week consultation was announced, elements of which, if progressed that could involve station closures and/or cuts to service, aspects that could have potential impacts on the safety of some members of our Communities.</p> <p>I wanted to ask if we as a County are responding formally to this important consultation and also suggest it would be a good idea for the appropriate scrutiny committee to look at this proposal paper and our response?”</p>

Answer: Response from Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing, Cllr Christine Lawrence

*I can confirm that SCC will be formally responding to the consultation, officers from Public Health and the Civil Contingencies Unit are preparing a draft response to be discussed at the Adults and Health Scrutiny in time for a submission before the 20th September deadline.*

*We will also pull together a Member’s briefing setting out the main points of the Fire Service’s Proposal.*

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