

Public Agenda Pack



Minutes of a Meeting of the Full Council held in the Hollinsworth Hall, Canalside Conference Centre, Marsh Lane, Huntworth, Bridgwater TA6 6LQ, on Wednesday, 27 September 2023 at 2.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Mike Best (Chair)

Cllr Lee Baker (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Steve Ashton

Cllr John Bailey

Cllr Councillor Brian Bolt

Cllr Hilary Bruce

Cllr Simon Carswell

Cllr Norman Cavill

Cllr Barry Clarke

Cllr Simon Coles

Cllr Nick Cottle

Cllr Dixie Darch

Cllr Tom Deakin

Cllr Andy Dingwall

Cllr Michael Dunk

Cllr Caroline Ellis

Cllr Ben Ferguson

Cllr David Fothergill

Cllr Andy Hadley

Cllr Bente Height

Cllr Ross Henley

Cllr Henry Hobhouse

Cllr Dawn Johnson

Cllr Liz Leyshon

Cllr Martin Lovell

Cllr Kevin

Cllr Tessa Munt

Cllr Graham Oakes

Cllr Oliver Patrick

Cllr Emily Pearlstone

Cllr Suria Aujla

Cllr Marcus Barr

Cllr Alan Bradford

Cllr Theo Butt Philip

Cllr Mike Caswell

Cllr Mandy Chilcott

Cllr Peter Clayton

Cllr John Cook-Woodman

Cllr Adam Dance

Cllr Hugh Davies

Cllr Martin Dimery

Cllr Lance Duddridge

Cllr Sarah Dyke

Cllr Habib Farbahi

Cllr Bob Filmer

Cllr Andrew Govier

Cllr Pauline Ham

Cllr Alistair Hendry

Cllr Edric Hobbs

Cllr John Hunt

Cllr Tim Kerley

Cllr Tony Lock

Cllr Dave Mansell

Cllr Harry Munt

Cllr Mike Murphy

Cllr Sue Osborne

Cllr Kathy Pearce

Cllr Derek Perry

Cllr Evie Potts-Jones

Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey

Cllr Faye Purbrick

Cllr Leigh Redman

Cllr Mike Rigby

Cllr Diogo Rodrigues

Cllr Dean Ruddle

Cllr Councillor Heather Shearer

Cllr Fran Smith

Cllr Andy Soughton

Cllr Claire Sully

Cllr Lucy Trimnell

Cllr Councillor Martin Wale

Cllr Alex Wiltshire

Cllr Gwil Wren

Cllr Tom Power

Cllr Steven Pugsley

Cllr Wes Read

Cllr Bill Revans

Cllr Tony Robbins

Cllr Jo Roundell Greene

Cllr Peter Seib

Cllr Brian Smedley

Cllr Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts

Cllr Mike Stanton

Cllr Andy Sully

Cllr Sarah Wakefield

Cllr Richard Wilkins

Cllr David Woan

Cllr Ros Wyke

Other Members present remotely:

Cllr Jason Baker

Cllr Councillor Nicola Clark

Cllr Mike Hewitson

Cllr Christine Lawrence

Cllr Adam Boyden

Cllr Shane Collins

Cllr Helen Kay

Cllr Rosemary Woods

30 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from Councillors Jason Baker, Adam Boyden, Nicola Clark, Shane Collins, Dawn Denton, Philip Ham, Susannah Hart, Mark Healey, Helen Kay, Val Keitch, Andy Kendall, Jenny Kenton, Marcus Kravis, Christine Lawrence, Matt Martin, Frances Nicholson, Connor Payne, Gill Slocombe, Jeny Snell and Rosemary Woods.

31 Minutes from the Previous Meeting - Agenda Item 2

RESOLVED that the minutes of Full Council held on 26 July 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

32 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 3

Councillors present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor of a Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

UNITARY COUNCILLOR	TOWN AND/OR PARISH COUNCIL
Steve Ashton	Crewkerne Town Council / Hinton St George Parish Council
Suria Aujla	Bridgwater Town Council
Lee Baker	Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council
Marcus Barr	Wellington Town Council
Mike Best	Crewkerne Town Council
Alan Bradford	North Petherton Town Council
Theo Butt Philip	Wells City Council
Simon Carswell	Street Parish Council
Norman Cavill	West Monkton Parish Council
Peter Clayton	Burnham Highbridge Town Council
Nick Cottle	Glastonbury Town Council / St Edmunds Parish Council
Adam Dance	South Petherton Parish Council
Tom Deakin	Taunton Town Council
Andy Dingwall	Westonzoyland Parish Council
Caroline Ellis	Taunton Town Council
Ben Ferguson	Axbridge Town Council
Bob Filmer	Brent Knoll Parish Council
Andrew Govier	Wellington Town Council
Pauline Ham	Axbridge Town Council
Ross Henley	Wellington Town Council
Edric Hobbs	Shepton Mallet Town Council
John Hunt	Bishop's Hull Parish Council
Tim Kerley	Somerton Town Council
Tony Lock	Yeovil Town Council
Martin Lovell	Shepton Mallet Town Council
Mike Murphy	Burnham Highbridge Town Council
Graham Oakes	Yeovil Town Council / Yeovil Without Parish Council
Sue Osborne	Ilminster Town Council
Kathy Pearce	Bridgwater Town Council
Evie Potts-Jones	Yeovil Town Council
Tom Power	Wincanton Town Council
Wes Read	Yeovil Town Council
Leigh Redman	Bridgwater Town Council
Mike Rigby	Bishop's Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council
Tony Robbins	Wells City Council
Dean Ruddle	Somerton Town Council
Peter Seib	Brympton Parish Council / Chilthorne Domer Parish Council

Heather Shearer	Street Parish Council
Brian Smedley	Bridgwater Town Council
Federica Smith-Roberts	Taunton Town Council
Andy Soughton	Yeovil Town Council
Richard Wilkins	Curry Rivel Parish Council
Dave Woan	Yeovil Town Council
Ros Wyke	Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council

33 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

Public Questions were received from:-

- Alan Debenham - Budget
- Mr JC Woods – Council Tax Discount
- Sigurd Reimers – Climate
- Catherine Cannon – Plant based food/Climate
- Paul Partington – Rights of Way
- Andrew Strong – Bus/Transport
- David Redgewell – Bus/Transport
- Robbie Bentley – Bus/Transport
- Ian Beckey – Bus/Transport
- Eva Bryczkowski – Town Centre Improvements
- Nick Hall – Licensing Policy
- Carolyn Griffiths – Licensing Policy

The questions and responses provided are attached to the minutes in Annexe A.

Chair’s Announcements

The Chair of the Council, Councillor Mike Best, referred to the events detailed on the Chair’s Information Sheet, circulated and published with the agenda.

Council observed a minute’s silence in memory of former Councillors Alex Glassford, Peter Humber and Derek Yeomans who had sadly passed away. Several councillors paid tribute to them at the meeting, including Councillors Lee Baker, Mike Best, David Fothergill, Bill Revans and Martin Wale.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Kevin Messenger to his first meeting of Full Council.

34 Report of the Leader and Executive - Agenda Item 5

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bill Revans, introduced the report which set out the recommendations to Council which arose from the consideration of the report at the Executive meeting held on 6 September 2023.

The purpose of the report was to acknowledge the year end position of the legacy Councils' General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes.

The Council discussed the report and the following points were raised:-

- Councillors thanked officers for all their hard work in compiling the reports for the five former councils.
- Concern was raised on the slippage figures within the report.
- Councillors agreed that the table within appendix 7 for Paper A was useful and requested that the figures were further broken down by projects.
- Councillors queried why the Yeovil Refresh Project had not been highlighted within the table, as the Firepool Project had been highlighted within the Taunton figures.
- Councillors queried when the finalised funding from Government would be known.

Councillor Bill Revans proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Liz Leyshon.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the year end position of the legacy Councils' General Fund Capital Programmes and approved the carry forward requests of £99.5m and revised Capital Programme attached at Appendix 7.
- Acknowledge the year end position of the legacy Councils' HRA Capital Programmes and approved the carry forward requests of £90.4m and revised Capital Programme attached at Appendix 7a.

35 Report of the Monitoring Officer - Agenda Item 6

The Monitoring Officer, David Clark, introduced the report which set out a proposed appointment of a co-opted member to the Scrutiny Committee for Children and Families (Paper A) and a Chief Executive Non-Key Decision which approved a Member Dispensation (Paper B).

The Council discussed the report and the following points were raised:-

- Concern was raised on the distribution of late papers for the agenda.
- Councillor David Fothergill thanked officers for the decision paper on the member dispensation for Councillor Christine Lawrence due to ill health.

Councillor Liz Leyshon proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor David Fothergill.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to:-

- Paper A - Approve the appointment of Joanne Simons as a co-opted member on the Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families.
- Paper B - Note the non-key decision report taken by the Chief Executive on 6 September 2023.

36 Report of the Chief Executive - Agenda Item 7

The Chief Executive, Duncan Sharkey, introduced the report which asked for approval for emergency cover arrangements for two vacant Service Director roles.

Councillor Dean Ruddle proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Sue Osborne.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to:-

- Confirm the emergency temporary appointment of Niki Shaw Strategic Manager Quality, Performance, Policy and Assurance, to provide emergency cover to the proposed post of Service Director Adults Strategy, Transformation and Performance, with effect from 1 August 2023 for a temporary period until 31 March 2024 or on a permanent appointment being made, whichever was sooner.
- Confirm the emergency temporary appointment of Paul Coles Strategic Manager Adults Services, to provide cover for the post of Service Director Adults Commissioning, for a temporary period until 31 March 2024, or on a permanent appointment being made, whichever was sooner.

37 Report of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee - Agenda Item 8

The Chair of Licensing and Regulatory Committee, Councillor Simon Carswell, introduced the report which requested approval of the Statement of Licensing Policy.

The Council discussed the report and the following points were raised:-

- Councillors thanked officers for the work carried out on the Policy.
- Councillors mentioned noise nuisance created by many festivals within the area and requested a member briefing on the licensing objectives.
- The Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee welcomed councillors to attend their meetings.
- Councillors thanked the public speakers and all of the people that had

submitted responses to the consultation.

Councillor Simon Carswell proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Ros Wyke.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Statement of Licensing Policy.

The meeting adjourned at 3:50 pm.

The meeting restarted at 4:15 pm.

38 Report of the Leader and Executive - Agenda Item 9

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Liz Leyshon, introduced the report which included a summary of the key decisions taken by the Leader and Executive.

Member Questions were received from:-

- Councillor Dave Mansell/Cllr Gwil Wren - Flooding
- Councillor Lucy Trimnell - Heritage
- Councillor Norman Cavill - Phosphates
- Councillor Sue Osborne - Planning
- Councillor David Fothergill - Adult Social Care
- Councillor Diogo Rodrigues - Car parks/Transport

The questions and responses provided are attached to the minutes in Appendix B.

The Council discussed the report and the following points were addressed to Lead Members:-

- Installation of contactless payments on all bus services.
- Concern on the amount of empty electric vehicle charging bays in the Crescent Car Park.
- Section 19 on Flooding and the importance of keeping the roads open.
- Thanks were given to local communities and the actions taken during the recent flooding.

The Council noted the report.

39 Annual Report of Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Culture - Agenda Item 10

The Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Culture, Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts, introduced her annual report.

The Council noted the report.

40 Annual Report of Lead Member for Public Health, Equalities and Diversity -
Agenda Item 11

The Lead Member for Public Health, Equalities and Diversity, Councillor Adam Dance, introduced his report.

The Council discussed the report and the following points were raised:-

- Councillors requested an update on the take-up figures for this year's covid vaccine.
- Concern was raised on the withdrawal of some vaccine programmes.
- Councillors requested a further breakdown of the results from the school's wellbeing survey.
- The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee for Childrens and Families advised that the survey results would be discussed at one of their meetings.

The Council noted the report.

41 Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Board - Agenda Item 12

The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board, Jane Lock, introduced the annual report.

The Council discussed the report and the following points were raised:-

- Councillors thanked the Chair, Vice Chair and all the members of the Board for their hard work.
- Councillors gave special thanks to the retiring Independent Chair of Corporate Parenting Board.

Councillor Leigh Redman proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Tessa Munt.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to:-

- Recommend a continued focus on corporate parenting responsibility as our new structures and arrangements were established, especially around housing, education, apprenticeships and social value in our procurement systems.
- Support and promote a whole council approach to create practical and specific offers to Care Leavers through our Local Offer and the Care Leaver Covenant.

- Extend its thanks to the Somerset Care Council's young people for all the hard work that they had undertaken.
- Extend its thanks to the retiring Independent Chair of Corporate Parenting Board, Jill Johnson for her commitment and tenacity during her tenure from 2016- 2022.

42 Annual Report of the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership - Agenda Item 13

The Chair of the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership, Councillor Henry Hobhouse, introduced the annual report.

The Council noted the report.

43 Redundancies Arising from Changes in Services - Agenda Item 14

The Lead Member for Transformation and Human Resources, Councillor Theo Butt Philip, introduced the report which detailed two proposed dismissals on account of redundancy in relation to changes within their services.

The Council discussed the report and the following points were raised:-

- Councillors thanked the officers for their work during their years of service for the councils.
- Councillors highlighted that only one of the redundancies was related to the Local Government Reform.

Councillor Theo Butt Philip proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Faye Purbrick.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to:-

- Approve the costs of the redundancies, as set out in Appendix One (Pest Control).
- Approve the costs of the redundancy, as set out in Appendix Two (Highways and Transport).
- Delegate authority to the relevant Service Director to agree the final date of dismissal and the final redundancy package, noting that the payment would not exceed contractual redundancy pay or the payment required under statute to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

44 Report of the Special Members Panel - Agenda Item 15

Exclusion of the Press and Public:

Having been duly proposed and seconded the Council **RESOLVED** to exclude the press and public from the meeting under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information.

Reason: Information which was likely to reveal the identity of an individual and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Liz Leyshon, introduced the report of the Special Members Panel.

The Council discussed the report and the following points were raised:-

- Councillors were advised of the membership of the Panel.
- Clarification was given on the process followed by the Panel.
- Councillors were glad that the decision had come to Full Council.

Councillor Liz Leyshon proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Theo Butt Philip.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, the Council **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendations within the confidential report.

(The meeting ended at 5.45 pm)

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CHAIR

Annexe A – Full Council 27 September 2023 – Public Questions

Annexe A – Public Questions	
Name of person submitting	Question
Alan Debenham	<p>Studying Paper A Referred to in Agenda Item 5, Table 5 Requirements from Earmarked Reserves shows a Total of £51.9 m is required to satisfy present and future Budget Needs including £23 m adjustment for 2022/23 recovery and a further £26.9 m for 2023/24 forecasts.</p> <p>Is this now concluded by stating that necessary protection of Council's Reserves position entails finding cuts to spending to the order of £51.9 m and if so when will the public be made aware of these cuts and their likely content?</p> <p>Response from the Deputy Leader of Council and Lead Member for Resources and Performance: Cllr Liz Leyshon</p>
Full written response	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Debenham. The Executive of Somerset Council agreed the Medium Term Financial Strategy in July of this year. Within that strategy there are 17 points of action, including Review of Reserves and work on the Medium Term Finance Plan that will include savings within the Revenue Budget covering the services provided to the people of Somerset. I can assure you that the work is far from concluded by allocation of General Fund reserves, that is an important early stage in the work towards the MTFP but as we all know reserves can only be spent once.</p> <p>Officers have been working throughout the summer months to confirm the achievement of savings from the current year 2023-24 budget, to establish where savings have not been achievable, and to work on bringing forward new savings.</p> <p>As Members of this Council we understand that this task becomes more and more difficult every year, particularly in these last two years, post-Covid, when inflation and rising interest rates have had such an impact on local authorities.</p> <p>Members of the Executive will again have difficult decisions to make on which of the savings will be brought forward as part of the budget setting process.</p>

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	<p>Within the savings, there will also need to be reduction in cost of borrowing, and rationalisation of assets so that disposals can play their part in creating greater income streams, particularly for transformational activity such as Local Government Reorganisation.</p> <p>All that work has commenced and you will see important decision papers at Executive through the autumn months, starting on 4th October, and Members will be fully engaged throughout by attendance at monthly briefings, at Scrutiny and Audit between now and February.</p>
Mr JC Woods	<p>At the full council meeting of 23 Sep 2022 recording point 1 hours 35 mins Councillor Leyshon was content to group all landlords as a corporate body and able to claim the additional Council tax on their Corporation tax bill. She described the situation in London of empty properties gaining value with no occupants. What Councillor Leyshon failed to mention, as I indicated in my email below that no consultation was taken up with local Letting Agents and private landlords nor, the implication of small bills being raised with ongoing disputes between SCC, Tenants, Landlords and the cost to the Council. She commented that the Corporation Tax "was mentioned by one of her colleagues" it seems Council business is now conducted by throw away remarks of Councillor Layshon colleagues. Councillor Leyshon has been unable to provide any evidence of this suggestion of Corporation Tax and how it applies in Somerset when her reference was to London properties.</p> <p>Councillor Leyshon was tasked to rationalise what discounts the previous councils provided instead, she has with no or minimal consultation, she has grouped private landlords by the same " Demonised Brush " of property speculators based in London and holiday home owners</p> <p>My question is that Councillor Leyshon has allowed her personal views to cloud her view of private landlords like myself providing quality accommodation to young couples and their children who cannot afford to get on to the property market. That private landlords should have no recognition and that the previously, in place discounts, where not be rationalised across the County but removed entirely by Councillor Leyshon and her two colleagues.</p>

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	<p>I would ask the full council to reflect on these omissions and personal views of Councillor Leyshon and that a standard 3 month 100% discount be applied to empty properties to allow for renovation and repair during the period of change over of tenants.</p> <p>In my particular situation I was able to renovate the property as described below within 10 days to provide urgently needed accommodation this young couple and their children.</p> <p>This family were forced to leave their previous accommodation as the landlord sold up.</p> <p>Perhaps the actions of Councillor Leyshon and her "throw away comment" colleague demonstrates why their previous property was sold and why, I am now forced to raise my rent to cover any other periods when I change my tenants and the Council will come looking for Council Tax</p> <p>Response from the Deputy Leader of Council and Lead Member for Resources and Performance: Cllr Liz Leyshon</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<p>The rationale for the decision to remove the existing Class D discounts, ranging from 75%-100% across the former district Council areas, is given in paragraphs 4.11 – 4.14 in the report to Full Council November 2022.</p> <p>In accepting that the change would mean increased costs for landlords, as Lead Member for Resources I was suggesting that to mitigate this, Council Tax charges for empty properties are an allowable expense when working out taxable rental profits (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/income-tax-when-you-rent-out-a-property-working-out-your-rental-income#allow-expense)</p> <p>Councillor colleagues and I recognise the importance the private rental sector plays in providing decent, affordable accommodation and in no way have I tried to ‘demonise’ landlords who play an important role in providing accommodation for many of Somerset’s residents including vulnerable people and families.</p>

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	<p>I apologise for any misunderstanding caused when I was also, separately, raising the issue of housing in some parts of the country where owners, often corporate landlords, are satisfied with capital gain without providing homes for people to rent at reasonable cost.</p>
<p>Sigurd Reimers</p>	<p>I was interested in reading the annual report on Public Health, Equalities and Diversity (agenda item 11 in the Reports pack). In particular, I found the section (5.1) on Air Quality and Climate Change (page 174) to be welcome. However, there was no mention of the effects of climate change itself and its impact on the County (eg sea level rise, drought and flooding) in the report.</p> <p>Following the declaration of a climate emergency by the five previous Somerset Councils in 2019, and the County Climate Emergency Strategy in 2020, Somerset West and Taunton Council, for one, decided to apply principles relating to climate change across all its activities.</p> <p>What evidence is there of such a broad awareness in this otherwise excellent Public Health report, given that the threat from climate collapse is already having public health implications, and with more to come? For example, climate change particularly affects the most vulnerable part of the population. The Healthcare Inequalities section of the report (section 6.4) could be a section where such an awareness could be better evidenced.</p> <p>Response from the Lead Member for Public Health, Equalities and Diversity: Cllr Adam Dance</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<p>The Public Health team are working closely with the Climate and Place Directorate which is responsible for formulating the response to the Climate Emergency and the risks of Climate Change in the council and so we have not covered some of the wider impact on the county of Climate Change which is more appropriately considered under this Directorate. Public Health has a key influencing role in the response to the Climate Change Emergency, and one example is developing the Public Health Ambassador programme that will involve officers from across the council being supported to deliver ‘health in all policies’, reducing health inequalities through action on the social and environmental determinants of health.</p> <p>Sustainability will be a cross-cutting theme, for example by working with Ambassadors in Planning to promote healthy and climate change resilient developments, and with Transport to promote accessible low carbon travel options. The physical and mental wellbeing risks to individuals and communities due to climate change and climate anxiety is also included within this work.</p>

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**Catherine
Cannon**

For some time, I have been asking Council to take action to help normalise plant-based eating by prioritising plant-based choices wherever the Council has an opportunity and ensuring that food served within council is as climate friendly as possible.

Scientists say that cutting animal products out of our diet is the single biggest way for individuals to reduce their impact on the planet. A new Oxford University study published just two months ago showed that even just reducing meat consumption can make a huge difference, & could be the equivalent of taking 8 million cars off the road. The amount of research over the years reaching similar conclusions is now frankly overwhelming.

However what I'm asking is not about individual diet choices - it's about showing climate leadership. It's about local government stepping up to help flip the current norm in which menus are heavily biased towards meat & dairy. It's about demonstrating that meat does not have to be the centrepiece of every meal, & supporting people to make choices that are healthier & more sustainable.

Somerset has a large farming community. I come from a family of former beef & dairy farmers, & I understand the challenges farmers are facing with the weather, the supermarkets and the cost of inputs. Genuinely supporting farmers means looking honestly at the future and recognising where change is necessary. At the moment, farmers are forced to keep doing what they have always done because of subsidies, but continuing with the status quo is a betrayal of the future of farming. In order to ensure future food security & financial security for farmers, as well as increase biodiversity, we need to strengthen & expand our horticulture sector and shift our diets to match. This will allow us to rewild some of the 85% of UK farmland which is currently used for animal farming (despite providing just 37% of our calories - an unbelievably inefficient way to feed ourselves!) and allow nature to thrive again.

The UK central government is currently facing a legal challenge regarding its failure to introduce measures to reduce meat and dairy in its food strategy. It is ignoring the insistence of its own advisors that a move towards plant-based must be the future, & must be lead by the public sector.

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	<p>It is not always easy to find plant-based options in cafes, public buildings and schools. We urgently need to provide plenty of choice and availability of healthy, plant-based food. The Council has the opportunity – and I think, the duty – to simply prioritise plant-based food options wherever they can and treat the climate crisis with the urgency it requires.</p> <p>I would like to meet with councillors to address concerns over cost, inclusivity, choice and local impacts of such a direction, and for them to hear how it could be an enormous win for health, sustainability and budget. I ask council to please prioritise this issue & this meeting.</p> <p>Response from the Lead Member for Environment and Climate Change: Cllr Dixie Darch</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	
<p>Paul Partington</p>	<p>Circa 2013 I carried out statistical analyses of the thirty-four shires and found that the number of kilometres of public rights of way per square kilometres showed Somerset at 16th about average and is less than Wiltshire 13th, Gloucestershire 4th (what was Gloucestershire) and Dorset 12th. Somerset, Wiltshire, Gloucester and Dorset were all within the statistical standard deviation. Does Somerset County Council as a highway authority accept that the number of kilometres of public rights of way that it is responsible for is about average for a shire county?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. How many outstanding defects are there recorded for Somerset Public Rights of Way? 3. What measures are being taken by Somerset County Council to address in a timely manner the outstanding defects? 4. Does Somerset County Council accept that the definitive map (DM) is a legal document and what is shown on it is correct unless shown otherwise? 5. Does Somerset County Council accept that even if an application has been made to downgrade or delete it, the Highway Authority must assert and protect the right of the

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	<p>public to use and enjoy the highway at the status shown?</p> <p>6. Bridleway T 2/11 – Bickenhall has a record of complaints about obstruction dating back to 26 February 2007. When is Somerset County Council as the Highway Authority going to assert and protect the right of the public to use and enjoy the highway at the status shown?</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Transport and Digital: Cllr Mike Rigby</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<p>Circa 2013 I carried out statistical analyses of the thirty-four shires and found that the number of kilometres of public rights of way per square kilometres showed Somerset at 16th about average and is less than Wiltshire 13th, Gloucestershire 4th (what was Gloucestershire) and Dorset 12th. Somerset, Wiltshire, Gloucester and Dorset were all within the statistical standard deviation. Does Somerset County Council as a highway authority accept that the number of kilometres of public rights of way that it is responsible for is about average for a shire county? No recent analysis has been undertaken on this by the Council, therefore we are unable to comment.</p> <p>2. How many outstanding defects are there recorded for Somerset Public Rights of Way? As of 22/9/23, there were 3892 outstanding issues recorded. This includes the Somerset area of Exmoor National Park. Of the 3892 issues, 3340 are categorised as defects.</p> <p>3. What measures are being taken by Somerset County Council to address in a timely manner the outstanding defects? The number of outstanding issues has increased and remained high since the CoVID19 pandemic, which saw an increased use and interest in the path network. Area Warden resource increased from 6 to 7 FTE in 2022 to help address the level of outstanding issues. This increase in staff resource should see the number of outstanding issues start to reduce. Issues are prioritised in accordance with the Rights of Way Safety Inspection Manual, with the focus being on prioritising issues that pose the greatest risk to the safety of the public. The Council also has in excess of 400 volunteers and continue to recruit more, with their work continuing to complement the work of paid staff in resolving issues.</p>

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	<p>4. Does Somerset County Council accept that the definitive map (DM) is a legal document and what is shown on it is correct unless shown otherwise?</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>5. Does Somerset County Council accept that even if an application has been made to downgrade or delete it, the Highway Authority must assert and protect the right of the public to use and enjoy the highway at the status shown?</p> <p>Yes, the duty is to assert and protect the right to use and enjoy the highway, and reference is made to the Definitive Map & Statement with regard to the status of the highway. However, on occasion it is prudent to assess a situation on its individual circumstances, with consideration to the available evidence.</p> <p>6. Bridleway T 2/11 – Bickenhall has a record of complaints about obstruction dating back to 26 February 2007. When is Somerset County Council as the Highway Authority going to assert and protect the right of the public to use and enjoy the highway at the status shown?</p> <p>The Council is in receipt of a s130a Highways Act notice with regard to the current obstructions on this route, and thus will be considering how it responds to this notice in the coming weeks. RoW colleagues are happy to update Mr Partington in due course with the Council’s latest position in response to the notice.</p>
<p>Andrew Strong</p>	<p>The draft Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 26th July 2023 contain a reply to a Public Question (no. 2) on bus issues that includes the following sentences: <i>“You will be aware that the Council has access to fairly limited bus recovery funds from Government which are provided in the form of a ‘BSIP+’ grant for the current financial year. The Bus Advisory Board, which is a public meeting, will discuss these matters in detail and ensure transparency about use of funds to support services.”</i></p> <p>The BSIP Plus Grant had been awarded by Government on 17th May 2023 and it amounts to £737,079 for the current financial year.</p> <p>The Bus Advisory Board had met on 25th July 2023 - the day before the Full Council meeting. It had been reconvened from 18th July. Cllr Mike Rigby was unable to attend but the draft Minutes of that meeting record that the Chair spoke</p>

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	<p>about the BSIP Plus Grant in the following terms: <i>“He clarified that the Council has agreed in principle to provide some of its BSIP+ funding to offset the need for the bus operator to reduce the level of service on some routes which would otherwise be at risk.....”</i></p> <p>The Bus Advisory Board was unable to discuss this matter in detail and come to a consensus view because a decision had been made already.</p> <p>To rectify this oversight and to ensure transparency about the use of funds to support bus services, will the Council now publish a breakdown of spending from the BSIP Plus Grant on specific bus services, accompanied by the options analysis that informed the decision on which routes to subsidise?</p> <p>Furthermore, in view of recurring complaints from bus users about cancellation of timetabled journeys by the principal bus operator in Somerset, will the Council explain what measures have been put in place to ensure that the recipients of the BSIP Plus Grant operate in full the bus services which are now receiving financial support from that source?</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Transport and Digital: Cllr Mike Rigby</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<p>BSIP Plus Funding is being used to support the six services that were previously withdrawn by commercial operators during 2022 and replaced with subsidised routes funded through the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG). BSIP Plus has replaced BRG so we have continued to support those six services with BSIP Plus. At each point that a service was saved, an update has been provided by Officers at Bus Advisory Board meetings. Those services are:</p> <p>3 – Taunton Town Service</p> <p>30 – Frome Town Service</p> <p>68 – Yeovil Town Service serving the railway stations</p>

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81 – South Petherton to Yeovil

126 – Axbridge to Wells

D2 – Frome to Bath (evening services)

The remainder of the funding is being used for an interim period, until the end of March 2024 to support the four services recently announced as at risk. These services are:

25 – Dulverton to Taunton

28 – Minehead to Taunton

54 – Taunton to Yeovil

58 – Yeovil to Wincanton

Unfortunately, at the time of the Board meeting in July it was not clear at that point exactly what proposals were being put forward by Buses of Somerset in relation to the at-risk routes and therefore could not be discussed in detail. Once these became clearer, due to the tight timescales associated with the Department for Transport (DfT) deadlines and governance processes it was not possible to reconvene an extraordinary Board meeting to discuss these proposals in detail. However, following internal discussion with Members and Officers, the appropriate internal governance was followed, and approval sought and granted by the Department for Transport (DfT) for the use of the funds in this way. We are not able to publish specific details around contract prices as this is commercially sensitive information, but we have been clear on the 10 routes currently being supported by BSIP Plus.

Our conditions of contract require operators to advise us of any journeys which they fail to operate. Support for the four services provided by the principal bus operator under this grant, only commenced on 4th September 2023 and we have

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	<p>arranged monthly meetings to review performance. The first of these meetings is due to take place at the end of September.</p>
David Redgewell	<p>Question 1</p> <p>With the closure of the First Group Plc South Bus Depots in Somerset at Bridgwater and the proposal to close Yeovil Bus Depot at Reckleford with the provision of an outstation Bus Depot in Yeovil with provision for 12 buses and but is this enough to grow the bus network in Yeovil and District.</p> <p>With drivers facilities, cleaning bus washing and fuelling facilities, but only mobile bus maintenance van, with only one main fully operating centre in Taunton Depot with full maintenance facilities of jack pits and rolling road and stall maintenance Depot at Minehead with cleaning washing and fuelling facilities and a mobile maintenance van and a Bus Depot in Weymouth for the West Dorset and Somerset area and the Bus Depots under First Group Plc Wales and West Bus Division at Weston-Super-Mare, Scarle Crescent, Bath Spa, Weston Island, with a maintenance Depot at Wells, Priory Road but main maintenance being at Bath Western Island.</p> <p>Under the bus services improvement plans and the bus strategy of the Somerset local Transport plans, with the need to improve the county bus network in Yeovil and District Bridgwater, Taunton, Wellington and Minehead and the Mendip Towns of Frome, Shepton Mallet, Glastonbury, Street and Wells.</p> <p>Has Somerset Council protected it Bus and Coach Depot in Somerset locals along with the county bus and coach stations at Frome, Cork Street, Shepton Mallet interchange, Wells Bus and Coach Station, Bridgwater Bus and Coach Station, Taunton Transport Hub, Yeovil Bus and Coach station, Wincanton Bus and Coach station, Wellington Coach Park, Glastonbury Coach Parks, Street Coach Parks, Bus interchange at Chard and Minehead and Bus Depot site from Development in Bridgwater, Taunton, Yeovil, Wells and Minehead. First Group Plc sites and South West Coaches Depots at Yeovil and Wincanton, Hatch Green Coach Depot, Beauchamp Taunton Somerset, Berry Coach in Taunton, Axe Valley</p>

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Coach at Biddenham, Axbridge Somerset, Frome Bus Company, Bakers Coaches Yeovil, Libra Travel, and smaller bus operators from development and undertake a study of the needs of bus and depots in county of Somerset and held discussion with Vosa, the Traffic Commissioner Kevin Rooney and bus operators.

Similarly to the protection of bus and coach operating centres in the west of England mayoral combined Transport Authority and North Somerset Council.

Question 2.

What progress is being made?

For passengers on a recovery plan on bus services operated by First Group Plc South Buses to stop the cancellation of bus services in Taunton, Bridgwater, Minehead and Highbridge and Burnham on Sea and Chard

On services 21, 21a Taunton Bridgwater bus and coach station, North Petherton, Highbridge Town, Highbridge and Burnham on Sea station for service 20 Brean Berrow, Uphill Hospital Weston-Super-Mare railway station and bus and coach station, Taunton Town Centre, Taunton Railway Station, Bishop Lydeard Station, Watchet and Minehead Services 28, Services 22 Taunton to Wellington, Services 99 Taunton to Chard, Taunton Town services, Services 1, 6 and 7, Bridgwater Town service B1 and 14.

Whilst it may 1 to 2 % of passengers journeys it real lives of passengers unable to get to school college hospital the railway station for train connections from Minehead or watch on early morning journeys, nurses trying to get to work in Musgrove Park hospital when the early morning buses do not run on service 22, Passengers unable to work in the police office in Bridgwater from Burnham on Sea or a university student unable to get from Burnham on Sea to Highbridge and Burnham on Sea station to catch the First Group Plc Great Western Railway company train to Filton Abbey Wood station for UWE Bristol or pensioners unable to get home from Asda in Bridgwater by the bus station to Cannington on service 14 when the lunch time journeys fails to run.

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Or passengers stranded in Bridgwater bus and coach station with no supervisor any more unable to get home to North Petherton, Burnham on Sea for Berrow and Brean on service 21 21a and onto service 20 at Burnham on Sea for Berrow and Brean, the 99 bus service cancelled to Chard with a 2 hour wait for the next bus.

These are real passengers who have complained to the First Group Plc South Buses or the Traffic Commissioner Kevin Rooney.

So 1 to 2 % given out by First Group Plc South Buses to Somerset Council are real live not a council officer statics and what discussion are taking place about punctuality and reliability of the bus network.

Question 3 - So what action is Somerset Council taking to ask First Group Plc South for a recovery plan especially on service funded by the Somerset Council.

Question 4 - What progress is being made on the recruitment of bus drivers with help from Somerset economic development team.

Question 5 - And what fines have levied on First Group Plc South or Wales and West bus divisions or other operators for none delivery of Somerset bus network for not delivering the councils contracted bus network and could we have figures similar to the West of England Mayoral Combined Transport Authority and North Somerset Council transport area in the North of Somerset.

Question 6

What progress is being made on the reopening of historic Taunton Bus and Coach Station as new transport hub with passengers facilities waiting room changing places toilets and refreshments cycle hire and E. scooter hire, office for First Group Plc South Buses and facilities for National Express coaches.

Is there a date for a stakeholders and passenger consultation and when will NHS Somerset covid 19 medical centre leave the building for a High Street shop.

Question 7

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	<p>With the difficulties on operating first group plc South Bus service between Taunton Town Centre for connection with National Express Coaches and at Taunton Railway station for First Group GWR and Cross Country trains Arriva Germany State Railway Bishop Lydeard Station for the West Somerset Railway service to Minehead and the bus service to Watchet and Minehead for Butlins holiday camp and Bank Street.</p> <p>In view of the levels of passengers transferring to the First Group Plc South buses 28 to Minehead funded by Somerset Council and the need to improve bus shelter bus stops and waiting facilities at Taunton Station.</p> <p>What progress is now being made?</p> <p>On the reopening of the West Somerset Railway to through passengers trains to Minehead for the Butlins holiday camp and residents and Tourists of west Somerset.</p> <p>Working with the Department for Transport Network Rail western route First Group Plc Great Western Railway company the West Somerset Railway company Heart of the West Local Enterprise partnership and Peninsula Transport Board and Somerset Council to ease pressure of the A358 and A39 routes and on the bus service and help the West Somerset Railway company revenue stream at a loss of £216 317 Or £4000 a week .</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Transport and Digital: Cllr Mike Rigby</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<p>1. The Council does not have the ability to intervene in any bus companies’ commercial management of their land holding and operational facilities. These are commercial decisions, which will be down to the bus operator to determine. The bus operator is required to agree with the Traffic Commissioner, what their maintenance and depot arrangements will be. Any facilities listed, that are under Council control following the move to the new unitary authority, are subject to the Council’s decision-making process.</p> <p>2 & 3. In response to questions 2 and 3, we continue to monitor First South West’s recovery plan to address reliability issues across their network. We receive weekly lost mileage data from the operator and officers are in constant contact with First South West regarding complaints and issues raised by members of the public. We have now introduced monthly</p>

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performance meetings with First South West and we will continue to press them at every opportunity to improve their reliability.

4. Recruitment and retention of staff is a challenge across the economy and clearly bus companies are no exception unfortunately. There are limits to the ability of Somerset Council to tackle this issue, but we will look at all opportunities to take positive action. As part of this we are looking to use the skills bootcamps programme which the Council manages locally on behalf of DfE to run a specific session addressing skills for bus drivers.

5. Our aim within the Enhanced Partnership arrangement has been to support operators rather than penalise them. Up until now, almost all of the instances of non-delivery of service that we are aware of have been on commercial journeys. There have been some instances of non-operation of contracted journeys and where we have been aware of these, we have reduced payments to the operator accordingly. Through our Conditions of Contract, operators are required to notify us when contracted journeys do not operate. We rely on operators advising us of lost journeys on contracted routes as we have very limited resources to monitor this. There is no provision through the Enhanced Partnership for operators to be penalised for the non-operation of commercial services and there is no scoring regime in place. The Traffic Commissioner regulates the provision of commercial bus services in their area and the Commissioner has powers to take action against operators who consistently fail to operate registered journeys/services. The powers of the Traffic Commissioner are wide ranging and can include fines, reductions in the number of vehicles the bus operator can operate, a block on new service registrations, a direction to the operator to reduce services to improve reliability or ultimately the removal of an operator's licence. However, the Commissioner would take into account the efforts being made by the operator to rectify the situation in any decision he/she might make.

6. Stage 2 feasibility is ending with our consultants. We now have a proposed site plan and accompanying artistic impressions. These will go through the relevant internal reviews and approvals before putting them out to public consultation. We anticipate this consultation taking place during the Autumn.

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	<p>The NHS are looking at other options in the town centre and at this time do not have definite plans for an alternative site. We will continue to work closely with them to minimise the impact to the service as and when the mobility hub begins construction.</p> <p>7. We are a member of the Working Group along with WSR, Network Rail, GWR and LEP, and are facilitating the drafting of an outline business case for the Taunton to Bishops Lydeard extension. The Council has also contributed financially to the research required to determine costings. The provision of a service along the route and any extension to Minehead is a commercial decision and for Network Rail and GWR to determine. We will continue to support the project as it progresses.</p>
<p>Robbie Bentley</p>	<p>Question 1</p> <p>With First Group Plc South buses and First Group property pulling out of Reckleford bus and coach Depot in Yeovil Somerset for a smaller bus depot site in the town as a outstation for its South Somerset and West Dorset Bus network and Yeovil Town service.</p> <p>The new Depot is planned to consist of a bus depot with drivers facilities supervisor office bus washing machine cleaning and fuelling facilities and limited maintenance overnight maintenance van.</p> <p>But with First Group Plc South moving their bus fleet to a new depot and bus service 77 ,55 Yeovil bus and coach station to Somerton Street Glastonbury and Wells bus and coach station to Wells Bus Depot.</p> <p>In its hay days Yeovil bus and coach depot had 43 buses and coaches keep at Neutilus works in Reckleford Yeovil for operations for the Southern Railways Southern National omnibus company and Royal Blue motor services, today first group plc South buses keep 12 to 15 buses at the Depot.</p> <p>So with plans to pull down the 19 12 / 1913 petters Engine's factory built Neutilus works with its Engineering and Aviation industry history building engines for Westlands before that firegrates and Engine's the works being connected by the first electric lights in Yeovil, the building is a major victorian building in Yeovil and from the 19 40 / 1950 was taken over by the</p>

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Southern Railway Southern National omnibus company limited and was the area operating office for Somerset and Dorset with major offices for the Regional Traffic Superintendent.

The Depot operated over 50 buses and coaches for Yeovil Town bus and bus routes across west and North Dorset and south Somerset and coach services for Royal Blue motor services Ltd Yeovil Town Railway station being a major bus coach and railway interchange,

With bus and coach service across London victoria Hampshire Somerset, Dorset, Devon and the Cornwall, with Western and Southern National omnibus company headquarters in Exeter Devon Western National omnibus company being owned by the Great Western Railway company and Southern National by the Southern Railway company, Yeovil was a major Transport hub and the Neutilus works and major bus and coach Depot and Engineering site.

The Depot past to the government owned national bus company and to Cawlett Holdings on bus privatisation a management buyout then to public transport company first group plc.

South buses but also run First group plc Great Western Railway company and south Western Railway company in Somerset and to and from London and South west England.

As the building is very important to the history of Somerset and South West England and under threat of demolition by First group plc property or a Developer.

What action is Somerset Council Planning Department taking to evaluate the conservation value of the building for the conservation office to visit and write a report and to advise Historic England and Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport on the response to sport list the building.

And any planning permission for change of use for the site to hotel houses flats or a bus and transport museum, incorporating the Historical buildings should have a 106 agreement to funding a new bus and coach Depot for Yeovil.

Question 2.

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What Progress is being made in applying for Zebra 2 funding for zero Emissions bus regional area scheme with £129 million pounds and £ 25 million pounds targeted on Rural area such as Somerset with a need for electrification of Somerset bus network and especially with a modern mothballed bus and coach Depot in Bridgwater.

What proposal are being worked up for investment in a bid for Somerset and especially for Bridgwater and District important to the Town services links to Taunton 21 21a Service 21 to Highbridge and Burnham on Sea for Berrow, Brean and Weston-Super-Mare link to service 20

But as a through service, Service 75 Bridgwater bus and coach station to Woolavington, Purton, Walton Street, Glastonbury and Wells bus and coach station with service on Bristol Temple meads station and bus and coach station, Service 14 / 15 Bridgwater bus and coach station to Cannington Watchet and Minehead Service, Service 127 Bridgwater bus and coach station to cheddar Chew valley and Bristol, 126 Weston super mare bus and coach station locking Banwell ,Winscombe Axbridge, cheddar, Westbury sub Mendip Wells bus and coach station.

Question 3

If a bid was put in with Electricity de France First Group Plc South or Wales and West buses big lemon buses Bridgwater Town Council Highbridge and Burnham on Sea Town Council,

North Somerset Council and the West of England Mayoral Combined Transport Authority Mayor Dan Norris and Tata Battery factory.

A successful bid may be forthcoming for Bridgwater and District into the Cheddar Valley and Chew valley.

The expression of interest need to be their by 20 th October 2023 and full bid by 15 th December 2023.

Will the Council look at progressing a joint bid?

Given that a commercial battery factory has gone ahead not far from the First Bus Depot and that concerns exist about the safety issues surrounding its proposed closure, would it not be better to have such modern facilities which are coming on stream around Bridgwater and elsewhere in the county be concentrated and therefore easily accessible to each other?

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	Response from Lead Member for Transport and Digital: Cllr Mike Rigby
Full written response	<p>1. Yeovil Bus Depot was considered by English Heritage (prior to the name change to Historic England) for national designation in February 2014. It was not added to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest as it did not meet the requirements for listing. The building has now been put forward, through the legacy candidate route for the next Assessment Panel of the Local List, and a decision is expected shortly. Unless the building is located within a conservation area or is listed however the issues that either building control or the planning authority can consider are limited to the method of demolition and the restoration of the site. Given the building’s local significance, in the meantime the LPA has contacted the owner to open discussions about the future of the building.</p> <p>2. We welcome the government’s very recent announcement relating to the ZEBRA 2 funding opportunity. We are currently engaging with the local bus operators to determine whether there is an appetite for any of them to work with us on a potential bid for the funding available and asked them to confirm that they can commit to providing the remaining funding required to deliver vehicles and infrastructure.</p> <p>3. We understand that the Department for Transport (DfT) will accept joint bids from Local Transport Authorities, although the Local Authority can only be the lead on one bid, not multiple bids. We welcome proposals from operators and other Local Transport Authorities and will give due consideration to any proposals received.</p>
Ian Beckey	<p>Question 1</p> <p>With the difficulties on operating first group plc South Bus service between Taunton Town Centre for connection with National Express Coaches and at Taunton Railway station for First Group GWR and Cross Country trains Arriva Germany State Railway Bishop Lydeard Station for the West Somerset Railway service to Minehead and the bus service to Watchet and Minehead for Butlins holiday camp and Bank Street.</p>

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	<p>In view of the levels of passengers transferring to the First Group Plc South buses 28 to Minehead funded by Somerset Council and the need to improve bus shelter bus stops and waiting facilities at Taunton Station.</p> <p>What progress is now being made?</p> <p>On the reopening of the West Somerset Railway to through passengers trains to Minehead for the Butlins holiday camp and residents and Tourists of west Somerset.</p> <p>Working with the Department for Transport Network Rail western route First Group Plc Great Western Railway company the West Somerset Railway company Heart of the West Local Enterprise partnership and Peninsula Transport Board and Somerset Council to ease pressure of the A358 and A39 routes and on the bus service and help the West Somerset Railway company revenue stream at a loss of £216 317 Or £4000 a week .</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Transport and Digital: Cllr Mike Rigby</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<p>We are a member of the Working Group along with WSR, Network Rail, GWR and LEP, and are facilitating the drafting of an outline business case for the Taunton to Bishops Lydeard extension. The Council has also contributed financially to the research required to determine costings. The provision of a service along the route and any extension to Minehead is a commercial decision and for Network Rail and GWR to determine. We will continue to support the project as it progresses.</p>
<p>Eva Bryczkowska</p>	<p>THE ONGOING YEOVIL REFRESH SCHEME</p> <p>STOP KILLING THE HIGH STREET AND WRECKING LOCAL BUSINESSES</p> <p>I appreciate that there are a number of essential works needed to be done in the centre of Yeovil. However, aims to spend £24 million pounds and counting, on non - essential improvements, does NOT justify this amount of money being spent.</p> <p>AUSTERITY</p> <p>Along with many other councils, due to the catastrophic lack of funding since 2010, Somerset County Council is in huge debt, and councillors have done their best to save money by reluctantly cutting back on things that ARE essential.</p>

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IMPROVEMENTS THAT ARE NOT ESSENTIAL AT THIS STAGE IN TIME

Yeovil Refresh has been going on for three years or so, and will continue, despite residents and local businesses saying loud and clear,

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

Plans such as the installation of street furnishings and soft landscaping, like raised gardens, might make the town centre more attractive, but they are NOT essential at this stage. Certainly not at the expense of small businesses, who are struggling financially due to reduced footfall.

They have suffered enough already during the pandemic, and yet you, Somerset County councillors, have confirmed in the news today, that all of this scheme, including the lovely enhancements portfolio holder Mike Rigby has waxed lyrical about, will continue, ignoring what Yeovil residents and businesses are telling you.

They can be completed when the money is available, it is certainly NOT at the moment, and it is needs to be spent on more important things.

VALUE FOR MONEY

I want to see my council tax money being spent on more essential things, like social care, helping vulnerable residents, and many other necessities during this cost of living crisis.

THE TOWN IS A TOTAL MESS

I occasionally go by bus from Glastonbury to Yeovil for hospital appointments and shopping.

The last time I went I didn't realise that there was no longer a bus stop in the centre of town. I was early for my appointment, but instead of getting off at the soon to be gone bus station, I got off further away from the hospital, thus causing me to be late.

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The streets were difficult to navigate due to the town centre being in a total mess, and similar to a bomb site. I kept having to ask frustrated locals for directions. This often led me into dead ends, where I'd get to the end of a pavement and then had to turn back again.

After my appointment, I did some shopping. (All we have in Glastonbury are mainly hemp, psychic candles, and crystal shops).

In every shop I went into, local business people told me they were struggling financially, not just from rising energy costs, but from what formerly Somerset District councillors decided to do, which now Somerset council have voted to continue.

Frankly, councillors, you risk local residents not voting for you because you haven't properly listened to them, despite what councillor Rigby has said.

The portfolio holder cosying up to local businesses and promising to attend meetings to consult and reassure them just doesn't cut it.

You already k.n.o.w. how local business people feel, and what they want. Stop wasting time attending meetings, immediately start taking ACTION to restore the high street and save local businesses.

Yes, carry on doing essential repairs and improvements.

But stop wasting our money, to the tune of 24 million quid and rising, on what are follies dreamt up by councillor Rigby and the former South Somerset District Council.

This is the same person who refuses to put speed calming measures on the road into Dunstan Park estate, where children play on the roads and risk injury or worse from speeding vehicles.

He wrote to us residents saying that, because no injury or fatality had been reported yet, they do not consider this a priority.

Yet raised gardens and attractive enhancements in the centre of Yeovil are more of a priority than preventing serious harm or fatality occurring to young children.

QUESTION ONE

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	<p>Regarding representing the wishes of Somerset people you represent, are you going to continue spending 24 million pounds on those refurbishments that are non - essential? Yes, or No?</p> <p>QUESTION TWO Can you proceed immediately, to scrutinise the decisions made by the portfolio holder and the Highways department, in order to make it less expensive to do those repairs that are essential, thereby providing a timeline for delaying some of them wherever possible?</p> <p>QUESTION THREE Can you make a clear decision to recompense local businesses who have suffered for a long time due to reduced footfall, spending the money intended for unnecessary, at this stage, enhancements? (Which will make it more likely they will vote for you instead of someone else at the next County Council election. It'll come sooner than you think).</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Transport and Digital: Cllr Mike Rigby and Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Assets: Cllr Ros Wyke</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<p>The Yeovil Refresh budget of £24m included many elements, including transport, major development and complementary initiatives, not just the public realm upgrades in the town centre. The budget was made up from a number of different sources, including Community Infrastructure Levy, S106, Active Travel England and Future High Street Fund, as well as contributions from South Somerset District Council regeneration budgets and external developers.</p> <p>The capital budget for all projects in the new authority is under review and any savings that can be made will be reviewed by the Executive as part of the budget setting process that is underway.</p>

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	<p>The works to the town centre will continue to completion, but it is clear that communication with town centre business, commuters and shoppers could be clearer, therefore we have instigated actions with the contractor, working in partnership with the Town Council, Chamber of Commerce and crime reduction partnership, to improve signage, provide additional information on the programme and help movement through the town during the works.</p> <p>The team have commissioned Love Yeovil to engage with business and members of the public around their wishes for events in the town centre, to encourage footfall and bring increased vibrancy to the town centre after the works have completed.</p> <p>We will also be shortly publishing on the Refresh website, a standalone guide to the parking, taxi ranks, accessible parking and buses that will help town centre users to navigate the town during the works and afterwards.</p> <p>The team have commissioned Love Yeovil to engage with business and members of the public around their wishes for events in the town centre, to encourage footfall and bring increased vibrancy to the town centre after the works have completed. We have recently completed two separate engagement events, including at Super Saturday, that gave some excellent, positive feedback. As stated above, we are working closely with the Town Council, Chamber of Commerce and crime reduction partnership in the town to reduce disruption and improve communication about the project. Reduced footfall is seen across all town centres in the UK, big and small. The team are also working other initiatives in the town centre working with developers to bring forward residential development that will increase footfall in the heart of the town.</p>
Nick Hall	<p>Good afternoon. My name is Nick Hall. I live in Pilton, near Shepton Mallet. I am a Parish Councillor speaking in a personal capacity on the draft Statement of Licencing Policy – agenda item 8.</p> <p>I want to make two broad points today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I don't believe that the Licensing and Regulatory Committee has properly considered my views or those of fellow consultees.• There are significant gaps in this policy.

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Unresponsive consultation process:

In May the consultation period was suddenly reduced from eight to six weeks. Consultation responses were only published on 4 September. These responses did not address the substantive issues that were raised by me and others. Four days later I had to submit questions for the Licensing Committee to be able to answer them at their meeting on 14 Sept. Disappointingly there was no discussion of my questions or those of another participant. Moreover, no answers were forthcoming at the meeting. When I challenged this lack of response, I was told that I would be provided with written answers before the Full Council – I am still waiting.

Contrary to guidance (14.9 of the section 182 Guidance, Licensing Act 2003) I don't feel that the Licensing and Regulatory Committee has given any weight to my views.

Significant Policy Gaps

The nub of the problem is that this policy must cover 2500 to 3000 Licensed premises across the whole of Somerset, one of which is for the Glastonbury Festival with 210,000 people. There are unique issues associated with the Festival but this Licensing policy needs to address them to reduce the risk to public safety and reduce public nuisance.

With limited time I can only highlight three significant policy gaps:

1. Surely an 'Area of Concern' is overcrowding and crushing at large indoor and outdoor events? There are multiple recent examples of tragic outcomes – O2 Academy (Brixton Dec 2022) and Astroworld (Houston Nov 2021) being the most notable. Moreover, last year Mendip District Council's Scrutiny Board expressed concerns on this matter.
2. An applicant is not legally required to notify a Parish Council of a License application or variation. Hence the new policy of Somerset Council notifying affected Parish Councils is a good step forward - this should be written into this statement of policy.

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	<p>3. Alongside the main Festival there are 20 to 30 off-site events each individually regulated by a Temporary Event Notice (TEN). There needs to be a more effective policy mechanism to control the cumulative impact on our community from this situation. I welcome the commitment to introduce a searchable database for TENs but much more needs to be done to assess the situation and implement effective solutions.</p> <p>Conclusion</p> <p>I assert that the views of some consultees have not been properly considered and hence the policy cannot be determined. Moreover, significant gaps remain in this statement of Licensing Policy.</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Culture: Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<p>Mr Hall was sent a written response to six points raised at the meeting of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee on the 14th of September, which addresses three of the points raised in Mr Hall’s question to Full Council. The response was as follows:</p> <p>1. Areas of Concern (2.3): Surely Somerset Council is concerned about overcrowding and crushing at large indoor and outdoor events? There are multiple recent examples of tragic outcomes - East London and Houston being the most notable. Moreover, MDC Scrutiny Board expressed their concerns on this matter last year.</p> <p>Overcrowding is of course a concern with regards to events. These matters in relation to individual events are not, however, addressed through the Council’s Licensing Policy. For example, capacities of premises will be relevant to the Fire Service as one of the Responsible Authorities (RAs) when considering the Fire Safety Risk Assessment. The section on large scale events makes reference to the importance of allowing RAs to make representations when necessary. With reference to your comment regarding the MDC Scrutiny Board, any concerns would be addressed during the planning process and through the working groups that are set up in advance of Glastonbury. Crowd Management concerns are included within that remit. Furthermore, the Multi Agency Partnership and Crowd</p>

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Management Working Group will also consider these matters. The Licensing Policy sets areas for consideration when granting licences rather than issues of concern at licensed events for which there are other remedies. In the recently published public decision of Lambeth Licensing Sub-Committee in relation to the fatalities at O2 Academy Brixton, we see there that the Licensing Authority’s concerns which included overcrowding and crush have been mitigated by the imposition of some 70 plus conditions to be endorsed on the varied Licence.

2. Partnership Working (3.1.1): It is not a legal requirement for an applicant to inform a Parish Council of a License application or variation. The lead officer’s response to this issue is to state that Parish Clerks are notified – presumably by the LA? This hasn’t routinely been happening in the Mendip area. So if this is the Council’s solution to this issue then this Licensing policy should explicitly state that the LA will write to the affected Parish Clerks - within say 3 days of validating any License application/variation.

As we are aligning our processes in the early stages of a Unitary Council, we as the Licensing Authority (LA) will be notifying Parish Clerks accordingly upon receipt of a new application or a full variation application. We, therefore, agree with this point but it is a procedural change rather than an issue for Policy.

3. Cumulative Impact Policy (3.3): In our community we have two major concerns:
 - a. Sequential licensed events at the same location;
 - b. Multiple large ‘events’ apparently only requiring Temporary Event Notices (TENs) with no LA control of the cumulative impact.

A Cumulative Impact Policy should now be developed to address these issues and doubtless other similar ones across Somerset.

The statutory Guidance issued in accordance with Section 182 of the Act, specifies that -

“Cumulative Impact is the potential impact on the promotion of the licensing objectives of a number of licensed premises concentrated in one area.”

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Furthermore, *“Cumulative Impact assessments (CIAs) relate to applications for new premises licences and club premises certificates (CPCs) and applications to vary existing premises licences and CPCs in a specified area”*.

CIAs do not, however, apply to TENs so it is not possible to use this to regulate the number of TENs in a locality. TENs can be controlled if complaints are made about the activities authorised by an individual TEN itself, allowing Environmental Health and/or the Police the option to object regarding further events. A CIP will not, therefore, be appropriate to the Glastonbury licences.

4. Enforcement (3.9): It has been custom and practice for MDC’s Scrutiny Board to review the regulation of the Festival License each year. This formal review, and others like it, should form part of this Licensing policy. Each application and/ or granted licence must be considered on its own merits and is, therefore, not a matter for Policy. The level of planning, supervision and monitoring that the Council and other RAs undertake in relation to Glastonbury is commensurate with its scale and nature, being significantly different from that of other licensed events and premises. RAs such as the Police & Fire Authority are familiar with their role and responsibilities in accordance with the Licensing Act and recognise that they can apply to review the premises licence if appropriate.
5. Safe capacities (4.1.4): This policy should not only require the applicant to specify safe capacities but also to specify their procedure to ensure control of safe capacities? The policy should also describe how the LA will audit the control of safe capacities. Home Office guidance states that

“Safe capacities should only be imposed where appropriate for the promotion of public safety or the prevention of disorder on the relevant premises”.

To state in our Policy that all applicants must specify a safe capacity will, therefore, be inconsistent with the guidance. Each licence can be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

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	<p>6. Noise Nuisance: Our experience is that the design and monitoring of License conditions for noise nuisance are inadequate. Policy and implementation need to be tightened. Conditions are attached to each licence in accordance with the specific circumstances of each premises. RAs responsible for upholding the “prevention of public nuisance” and “prevention of crime and disorder” objectives (such as Environmental Health and the Police) are engaged during the legislatively driven consultation process in order for this to take place. This is, therefore, not a matter for Policy because this document sets out the general approach taken by Licensing and should not describe how other RAs feed into it.</p> <p>In relation to the consultation, this lasted from 2nd June to 17th July and was in accordance with the time periods specified in the Council’s Consultation and Engagement Standards. Furthermore, paragraph 14.6 of the Home Office guidance, published in accordance with section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003, states that <i>“Subject to the statutory requirements, it is for each licensing authority to determine the extent of the consultation it should undertake, and whether any particular person or body is representative of the groups described in the 2003 Act. While it is clearly good practice to consult widely, this may not always be necessary or appropriate (for example, where a licensing authority has recently carried out a comprehensive consultation in relation to a revision to its policy made within five years of a full revision to it). As such, it may decide on a simple consultation with those persons listed.”</i> The policy drafted largely represented a blend of policies previously adopted by four predecessor district councils. As there were no dramatic changes or significant new themes introduced, it was determined by Officers that six weeks would suffice. The period was not reduced, but it is true to say that some interested parties were unable to access the draft policy initially and that this was not identified and rectified until approximately two weeks into the process.</p>
<p>Carolyn Griffiths</p>	<p>I am here to raise concerns over the failings of the Council’s conduct of the so called consultation of the Licensing Policy and to caution you against approving the proposed new policy.</p> <p>I live in Pilton. I was motivated to respond to the consultation as I have seen at first hand the failings of the existing policy. The proposed new policy on today’s agenda is almost identical simply because your officers and the Licensing</p>

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Committee have failed to engage with proposals for change. In almost every case the changes proposed by consultees have been rejected; but worse still they were rejected with no credible explanation or on invalid grounds.

I asked the Licensing Committee to intervene. I alerted the committee to these failings. The chair in the face of evidence to the contrary refuted the allegation and stated at the meeting *the consultation responses were considered*. That's all he said; he gave, no explanation and no response to the issues I (and others) had raised.

So here I am today. The three minutes allowed for public contribution gives no opportunity to convince you of the extent and seriousness of the failings of the consultation. Yet I cannot see how you can approve the proposed policy. It is based on a failed consultation process and it fails those who are affected by the licenses you grant.

I can only give you some illustrations; just two examples. Please don't respond to just these as there are many other equally important issues that warrant the Council's proper attention.

a) Noise controls, monitoring and enforcement :

My consultation response described (using the Glastonbury Festival only as an example) the evident inadequacy of the existing policy to protect (a number of) communities from the repeated nuisance of noise. The problems of noise is a fact and was recognised by members of the public and Councillors at Mendip's Scrutiny Board. This seems to indicate that the existing policy, its application, monitoring and/ or enforcement provisions of the policy needs to be improved. Astonishingly your officers (who have prior involvement in the application of the existing policy) rejected any changes to the policy stating

'Any complaints received will be assessed and appropriate action taken'...

In other words they failed to understand the point and the opportunity for improvement of the policy was ignored.

b) Cumulative Impact Assessment

The current policy does not encourage the consideration of cumulative impact; yet events in parts of this County particularly merit this. The reasons given for the policy not including cumulative impact assessments is 'that Somerset

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	<p>Council has no immediate plans for this'. No explanation. Just a stark refusal. This is simply not a competent response to a proposal for change .</p> <p>In the light of the foregoing</p> <p>a) I would like the Council to explain how it can consider the proposal before it to be a real reflection of improvements that could <i>and should</i> be made to the policy . It represents a failure of due process and a failure to serve the public interest.</p> <p>b) If the Full Council refuses to accept the need for a fresh review (by councillors/officers persons who have no prior involvement in the consultation or the Council's operation of the existing policy) then I would like its advice as to where I must take this matter next.</p> <p>I am prepared to further elaborate the issues I have raised and which the Council has discounted without valid explanation. But there are many other consultees responses that similarly need to be reviewed. I had hoped the new Council would be a listening Council. This has so far proven not to be the case.</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Culture: Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<p>Officers response is as follows:</p> <p>a) There is a legislatively driven process in place supported by mandatory guidance that provides a mechanism for licence holders to be held accountable, including the variation and review processes. In terms of both licensing applications and already granted licences, complaint or concern in each case must be dealt with on its own merits and circumstances, in accordance with the above. This is a matter for applying legislation and guidance rather than for inclusion in policy.</p> <p>b) The statutory Guidance issued in accordance with Section 182 of the Act, specifies that –</p>

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“Cumulative Impact is the potential impact on the promotion of the licensing objectives of a number of licensed premises concentrated in one area.”

Furthermore, *“Cumulative Impact assessments (CIAs) relate to applications for new premises licences and club premises certificates (CPCs) and applications to vary existing premises licences and CPCs in a specified area”*. CIAs do not, however, apply to Temporary Event Notices (TENs) so it is not possible to use this to regulate the number of TENs in a locality. TENs can be controlled if complaints are made about the activities authorised by an individual TEN itself, allowing Environmental Health and/or the Police the option to object regarding further events. A Cumulative Impact Policy (CIP) will not, for example, be appropriate to the Glastonbury licences. Furthermore, there is currently no evidence elsewhere in Somerset that a CIP should apply.

Officers had considered the consultation response and reasons were provided within the agenda pack. Many of the issues raised were relevant to an individual licence. The Council’s Licensing Policy document sets out the general approach by Licensing and should not refer to specific issues with licences, as mentioned above.

The consultation period lasted from 2nd June to 17th July and was in accordance with the time periods specified in the Council’s Consultation and Engagement Standards.

Furthermore, paragraph 14.6 of the Home Office guidance, published in accordance with section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003, states that *“Subject to the statutory requirements, it is for each licensing authority to determine the extent of the consultation it should undertake, and whether any particular person or body is representative of the groups described in the 2003 Act. While it is clearly good practice to consult widely, this may not always be necessary or appropriate (for example, where a licensing authority has recently carried out a comprehensive consultation in relation to a revision to its policy made within five years of a full revision to it). As such, it may decide on a simple consultation with those persons listed.”* The policy drafted largely represented a blend of policies previously adopted by four predecessor district councils.

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	<p>As there were no dramatic changes or significant new themes introduced, it was determined by Officers that six weeks would suffice.</p>
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Name of person submitting	Question
Cllr Dave Mansell and Cllr Gwil Wren	<p>Section 19 flood investigation reports</p> <p>With the Lead Local Flood Authority having insufficient staff and budget, and following severe floods in Milverton, Queen Camel and other areas in May 2023 and in Wellington and West Somerset in September 2023, would it please be confirmed when sufficient resources will be provided to allow the council to start work on important Section 19 flood investigation reports. These reports are vital to target future maintenance and to build a resilient and sustainable network in the face of changing climatic conditions.</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Environment and Climate Change: Cllr Dixie Darch</p>
Full written response	<p>We are reviewing the budgets across Climate and Place to seek additional resource to support the growing demand with the Flood and Coastal team. Due to the increase in severe weather, we are seeing the need for the statutory s19 reports rapidly increasing.</p>
Cllr Lucy Trimnell	<p>I am very concerned about the guardianship of our heritage assets within Somerset Council following a recent highways Small Improvement Scheme in Bruton and would like this council to consider appointing a heritage champion role within the executive.</p> <p>Over the summer works were completed to a junction in the middle of the conservation area in Bruton to widen pavements. This included the removal of slabbed paving and iron kerb edging, the same as can be seen in areas of cities such as Bristol and Manchester and it's removal caused a great deal of upset amongst residents, particularly those who live within the conservation area and have to comply with incredibly strict rules for even the most minor of alterations to their properties</p>

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	<p>Conversations with highways officers reveal that although Heritage South West were consulted on this matter as of April this year there is now no contract between Highways and a heritage body and therefore no advisory body to refer to regarding our heritage assets.</p> <p>A heritage champion liaising with highways, local members and Heritage South West could have focussed on establishing ways to incorporate the metal edging into the design scheme (as has been done in Bristol) and therefore respect the heritage and built environment both in Bruton and other parts of Somerset.</p> <p>It is thought that 70% of councils already have a Heritage Champion and with Somerset Council being the custodian of a vast array of heritage assets, Grade I and II listed buildings and Conservation Areas it is clear that such a role within the council is very much a necessity and I would like to see this explored at pace to ensure that heritage is placed at the heart of everything Somerset Council does.</p> <p>For some of these the exterior appearance of their properties has been significantly altered by the rep</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Assets: Cllr Ros Wyke</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<p>Somerset Council takes the responsibility for heritage protection seriously and with officer advice and support we will explore the suggestion of a Heritage Champion, including assessing experience elsewhere.</p>
<p>Cllr Norman Cavill</p>	<p>As we all know there is a requirement by this LPA for any additional development within certain catchment areas, to be phosphate neutral</p> <p>Mitigation is now required to provide neutrality for a minimum of eighty years.</p> <p>Some of the larger developments are providing mitigation, by constructing wetland habitat from existing farmland, which will require a maintenance plan to ensure their continued operation.</p> <p>Recent events clearly show that flash flooding will bring with it substantial quantities of silt, resulting in clogging and filling up of waterways within the mitigation site, in turn reducing the effectiveness of the mitigation site.</p>

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	<p>On new development sites, it is now common practise to set up management companies. Are we to rely on these companies to undertake costly mitigation maintenance?</p> <p>What provision has this council, the LPA, made to regularly inspect and ensure the continued full operation of these important systems?</p> <p>Can you give assurance that future budgets will contain a specified and adequate sum, so that proper inspection and enforcement if necessary will be available?</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Assets: Cllr Ros Wyke</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<p>For all phosphate-affected planning applications that require mitigation, we have been requesting that Applicant’s submit Maintenance and Monitoring Plans before a planning decision is issued. This relates to both minor and major applications. We ask for this information so that adherence to these Maintenance and Monitoring Plans can be secured through a Section 106 Agreement. A monitoring fee is attached to the s106 Agreement to cover the Council’s administrative costs.</p> <p>Generally, these Maintenance and Monitoring Plans include specific provisions such as annual inspections and the submission of monitoring reports to the LPA. Through the Section 106 Agreement we would be able to take enforcement action if it was found that the Maintenance and Monitoring Plan was not being adhered to. Ongoing maintenance and monitoring is also part of all of the Habitats Regulations Assessment that must be completed for all phosphate affected planning applications, and these all go to Natural England for sign-off so they also have sight of any long-term commitments made by Applicants.</p>
<p>Cllr Sue Osborne</p>	<p>Questions regarding the resourcing of the Somerset Council Planning Service.</p> <p>The creation of the new Somerset Council has presented numerous challenges in bringing together the four District Council Planning Teams, particularly in how they have been resourced, job descriptions and employment contracts. Some areas, eg, Area South have relied heavily upon Agency Contract staff whose contracts are likely to end soon. A job evaluation policy has now been introduced to cover any vacant posts.</p>

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	<p>For the Planning Service, this has resulted in posts being valued at less than the previous District salary/contract fee. My Questions are as follows:</p> <p>What is the timescale for completing and implementing a workforce strategy for the planning department, including job evaluations?</p> <p>What is the likely uplift in budget requirements in order that current planning team members are not financially disadvantaged by the Job Evaluation process and hence leave Somerset Council as a result?</p> <p>What plans are in place to strengthen planning enforcement? I am getting an increasing number of complaints about lack of both action and response from officers working in enforcement to Parish Council enquiries?</p> <p>What is the risk and what are the Consequences for this Council should the planning service start to fail due to inability to recruit and retain enough experienced planning team members?</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Assets: Cllr Ros Wyke</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<p>There are five (5) planning teams which have been brought together and work started to develop a strategic approach to workforce planning. That work is programmed to come forward in the next 6 months. The strategy will support staff retention and recruitment.</p> <p>Somerset is not alone in having planning staff resourcing issues, this is a national issue and has been reflected in the recent DLUHC Planning Skills Delivery Fund programme as well as the commitment to increase planning fees to enable improved funding for planning services. (Albeit not ring fenced)</p>

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	<p>Currently, the job evaluation schemes in use by Somerset Council are different to those previously used by some of the districts including South Somerset. District employees are protected on their TUPE terms and conditions which includes their salaries.</p> <p>Where a new job evaluation has resulted in lower salaries, we can apply a financial recruitment or retention allowance to a role to compensate for the salary difference. This needs to be evidenced based on current market data for similar roles and a recent recruitment exercise.</p> <p>Agency and short-term contract staff are different and their contracts are different. Their contracts are renewed and managed dynamically and in accordance with service needs.</p> <p>The issues of high % contractor staffing is particularly relevant to south and is a carry over from SSDC. West do have vacancies and a contractor presence but this is less of an issue for North and East.</p> <p>With our Investigation and Enforcement teams there is significant demand from the public. We have adopted (01/04/23) a Somerset Council Enforcement Policy which sets the framework for how we will manage our investigations. Current resources have been protected in the latest round of budget review to ensure we can continue to do this.</p> <p>To manage and have oversight of the whole of the service a Head of Planning role is being created. The intention is that we can be agile in our response (for instance when we have staff sickness and with our ways of working. This coupled with formal performance monitoring reported to Strategic Planning Committee will ensure we have an understanding of the needs of the service, the quality of the outcomes and have a customer centric approach moving forward.</p>
Cllr David Fothergill	<p>There is growing anecdotal evidence of modern slavery issues relating to the recruitment, contracting and employment of overseas care workers. These issues raise serious concerns both for the welfare of those individuals brought to the UK and also with regards the quality of safeguarding checks.</p>

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	<p>Please can the Executive Member of Adult Social Care advise of the number of overseas care workers who have been recruited into Somerset Care Homes and (separately) into Somerset Domiciliary Care: which agencies have been used by care and domiciliary care providers and what local authority checks are in place to ensure that providers and their agencies are using appropriate procedures.</p> <p>Somerset has a responsibility to those employed in our County and those receiving services in our County and therefore if the information is not readily available, I would like to know what steps are being put in place to improve levels of safeguarding for all those concerned and when these will be introduced.</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Adult Services: Cllr Dean Ruddle</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you for raising this query. We very much recognise the importance of this topic and share your interest in ensuring the welfare of our overseas care workforce. • The workforce recruitment and retention challenges, coupled with supply and demand pressures experienced across health and care services, have seen a rise in organisations right across the country increasingly looking overseas to bolster capacity into frontline, public-facing roles. This comes on the back of the government’s decision to add ‘care workers’ and ‘home carers’ to its shortage occupation list for skilled workers in February 2022, enabling providers to directly recruit from abroad to these roles for the first time. • In common with other areas, including our neighbouring counties, we know a significant proportion of Somerset providers, especially those in our homecare market, are supporting overseas recruitment; Somerset Council has felt the benefit of this in being able to reduce previously high levels of ‘unmet need’ in sourcing timely domiciliary care. • We are not required to collect nor able to provide specific numbers of overseas care workers recruited by our independent Somerset care homes or domiciliary care providers. Care providers are independently regulated by the

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Care and Quality Commission and have regulatory duties on them including one linked to safe staffing practices [Regulation 18: Staffing - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk/publication/regulation-18-staffing). The CQC have made clear their stance and approach to tackling modern slavery and human trafficking and monitor this as part of their inspection and oversight framework - [Our statement on modern slavery and human trafficking - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk/publication/our-statement-on-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking)

- However, as part of our safeguarding, and market oversight and shaping duties, we have a range of measures and approaches in place to promote and check that providers are using appropriate procedures:
 - This includes the routine quality assurance and contracting work we undertake with local care providers to ensure services are robust and legal. This work is done in close liaison with the CQC, safeguarding and colleagues in NHS Somerset. Our PAMMS (Provider Assessment and Market Management System) Quality Assurance approach includes a range of questions relating to ‘Staff Training and Recruitment’ (including ensuring ‘recruitment records confirm that the organisation has carried out all relevant employment checks when staff are employed, including (but not limited to) ensuring that all staff have a suitable DBS check before starting work, that the member of staff has the right to work in the UK and that they are registered with any relevant professional body and, where necessary, are allowed to work by that body’). We have also ensured our Quality Assurance team bolster their knowledge in this area through attending Home Office-led training on ‘Right to Work’ requirements so we can advise providers accordingly and respond in line with latest expectations), and our local Safeguarding policies and approach include a focus on modern slavery.
 - We have also ensured we are active in promoting safe recruitment practices and communicating information relating to international recruitment with our care workforce through a variety of comms and engagement channels, including our weekly briefings (newsletters) to care providers and the Registered Care Provider Association (RCPA), our monthly Learning Engagement Meetings, and also via our Proud to Care Somerset activity. On 8th June 2023, an event was delivered in partnership with Skills for Care and the RCPA titled [‘Free](#)

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	<p>International Recruitment Masterclass’ – this event enabled Care Providers to engage in a series of conversations with experts in the field of international recruitment in Social Care. This consisted of representatives from Get Borderless, Yeovil District Hospital, RWK Goodman and more. With many Care Providers feeling the pressures of having a diminished workforce, not just in Somerset but nationwide, we know that international recruitment is becoming more and more appealing. We used this event to help Providers get the information they need to make the appropriate and legal steps in this process.</p>
Cllr Diogo Rodrigues	<p>One</p> <p>Given the refurbishment at Crescent Car Park in Taunton, which resulted in a 37% reduction in regular parking spaces and an expected loss of income totalling approximately £173,000 (excluding the £20,000 monthly loss during refurbishment), Somerset Council's stated 'Stark and Challenging' financial situation, and their plan to continue reduce parking availability in urban areas to promote alternative transportation methods, I would like to ask the lead member the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Do you believe that reducing the income from Crescent Car Park by £173,000 was a prudent financial decision, given the council's financial challenges?2. Can the council afford the self-inflicted financial loss resulting from rolling out reduced parking availability in urban areas, considering the budget constraints <p>Two</p> <p>It was concerning to learn recently about the potential loss of over £100 a day on the Somerset Council operated 68 bus service from Yeovil bus station as a result of allowing passengers on for free due to not having a contactless payment service. Only last week I had confirmation that the issue was still ongoing on this service.</p> <p>This self-inflicted financial damage takes on a greater seriousness when we consider the 'stark and challenging' financial situation that this council has described itself to be in. I would like to ask the lead member the following:</p>

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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exactly how many Somerset Council-operated bus services currently do not offer contactless payment options, and can you provide a list of these services? 2. What is the estimated weekly financial loss attributed to the absence of contactless payments on these Somerset Council-operated bus services? 3. Could you please outline the concrete plans and timelines in place to implement contactless payment options on the affected bus services <p>Response from Lead Member for Transport and Digital: Cllr Mike Rigby</p>
<p>Full written response</p>	<p>One: We do not anticipate any reduction in overall parking income in Taunton as a result of the much needed improvements in the Crescent Car Park and mobility hub. Indeed the installation of EV chargers will create a new income stream to the Council.</p> <p>We also think that overall use of the Crescent will increase due the vast improvement in the public realm attracting more users and maximising the assets use and income.</p> <p>Any peak time displacement from the Crescent will be picked up by surrounding public parking</p> <p>Two:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All Council operated routes and a number of subsidised contracted routes are unable to offer contactless payments at the moment. This affects 29 routes but many of these are either once a week or once a day journeys. These routes are set out below: <p>Council operated routes by our in-house fleet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 – Taunton Town Service (serving Bishops Hull) 5 – Babcary to Yeovil (Wednesday only) 8 – Pilton to Yeovil (Thursday only) 9 – Crewkerne to Donyatt

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12 – Taunton Town Service (Monkton Heathfield)
18 – Ilminster to South Petherton (Tuesdays and Fridays only)
19 – Bridgwater to Street (College Days only – am and pm journeys only)
22B – Taunton to West Buckland (Mon to Fri one journey)
30 – Frome Town Service
34 – Bruton to Charlton Hawthorne (School Days pm journey only)
39 – Bruton to Yeovil (Friday only)
44 – Over Stratton to Yeovil
48 – Burnham to Cheddar (Tuesdays and Fridays only)
56B – West Coker to Yeovil (one journey a day)
67 – Burnham to Wedmore
68 – Yeovil Town Service (serving the rail stations)
81A – Yeovil to Stanchester School (School Days am and pm journeys only)
667 – Wincanton to Castle Cary (one journey a day)
F – Bridgwater Town Service
S1 – S3 – Ilminster Shuttle

Council subsidised routes:

10 – Porlock to Minhead (At West)
11C – Minehead Town Service (Ridlers)
56 – West Coker to Yeovil (Community Transport South West)
62 – Weston to Bridgwater College (College Days only – Bakers Dolphin)
66 – Axbridge to Bridgwater College (College Days only – Bakers Dolphin)
67 – Wedmore to Wookey Hole (Mendip Community Transport)

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196- Glastonbury Tour Bus (Apr – Sept, Mendip Community Transport)

198 – Dulverton to Minehead (AtWest)

665 – Kingweston to Yeovil (Mendip Community Transport)

2. It is not possible to identify the number of passengers being permitted to travel for free due to the issue with contactless payments. However, a decision was made that due to the technical difficulties which we are working tirelessly to try and resolve, we would allow passengers who were unable to pay with cash to travel for free, rather than leaving potentially vulnerable passengers stranded. Passengers are advised that they can travel for free on this occasion but need to ensure they bring cash payment for their next journey. Many of the passengers travelling on the routes identified will be concessionary pass holders and therefore, travelling for free. These journeys will all be recorded.

3. Officers have been trying to resolve this issue for quite some time, which has proved extremely challenging. We are restricted to using one payment provider for this purpose and have encountered numerous barriers that we have had to overcome, due to the number of parties involved. We are now at a stage where the payment provider and ticket machine provider have finally reached agreement, with SMART Applications Management (SAM) acting as the managing agent for the agreement. We are still awaiting final confirmation of when the contactless payments can go-live and continue to chase on an almost daily basis.

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