

Appendix A
23 November 2022

Name of individual who submitted question:	Question details
Nigel Behan	<p>Question 1</p> <p>The LGA’s response to the Autumn Statement noted: “While the financial outlook for councils is better than we feared next year, councils recognise it will be residents and businesses who will be asked to pay more. We have been clear that council tax has never been the solution to meeting the long-term pressures facing services - particularly high-demand services like adult social care, child protection and homelessness prevention.”</p> <p>And “We are pleased that government will provide extra funding for adult social care and accepted our ask for funding allocated towards reforms to still be available to address inflationary pressures for both councils and social care providers. Councils have always supported the principle of adult social care reforms and want to deliver them effectively but have warned that underfunded reforms would have exacerbated significant ongoing financial and workforce pressures. The Government needs to use the delay announced today to learn from the trailblazers to ensure that funding and support is in place for councils and providers to ensure they can be implemented successfully.”</p> <p>Also that: “The revised social rent cap is higher than anticipated next year but councils will still have to cope with the additional financial burden as a result of lost income. Councils support moves to keep social rents as low as possible but this will have an impact on councils’ ability to build the homes our communities desperately need - which is one of the best ways to boost growth - and retrofit existing housing stock to help the Government meet net zero goals.”</p> <p>And “Financial turbulence is as damaging to local government as it is for our businesses and financial markets and all councils and vital services, such as social care, planning, waste and recycling collection and leisure centres, continue to face an uncertain future…….”</p> <p>What Social Rent increases (“capped” at 7%) and Council Tax rises (5%?) is the proposed Unitary now considering?</p>

Appendix A
23 November 2022

Question 2

It has been recently reported in "Public Finance" that Hampshire CC and Kent are raising the prospect of S114 Notices (sort of bankruptcy?!)

As the Public Finance magazine notes [Counties warn of potential section 114 notices | Public Finance](#)

Hampshire (with large reserves) and Kent are both Conservative controlled but worryingly in their pleading letter it is observed that:

Without additional funding or amendments to "outdated" statutory requirements such as comprehensive library services and home to school transport, upper tier authorities will soon "go over the cliff edge", the letter said.

And

The leaders said they "fully expect to see more failures in the sector over the coming year" unless councils' obligations and the funding they receive become better aligned.

[Clearly they don't like "obligations" or – remove some of the "have to do's" but we'll take the cash!?!]

Whilst some of the issues they raise though are valid and there are many councils going through similar does SCC/District Councils and the proto-Unitary have any proposals (asking the government etc) to remove (so called "outdated") Local Authority statutory requirements or (even to) go on the front foot and lobby to extend statutory requirements?

Question 3

Assuming the Finance Local Authority S151s forecasts are reliable as the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR [Home - Office for Budget Responsibility \(obr.uk\)](#)) what impact will the Autumn Statement have on the in-year overspends (£20m odd) and the Somerset Council shortfall (£75m roughly – "before savings") for the next financial year and could clarity be provided on how (Ensure delivery of the LGR Business Case savings and) "[minimise redundancy payments](#)" (from Executive papers) would work in practice?

Appendix A
23 November 2022

	<p>Response from Cllr Liz Leyshon – Executive Member for Finance and Human Resources</p> <p><i>Cllr Leyshon extended an offer to meet with Mr Behan to discuss.</i></p>
<p>John Brendon / Marian Davis</p>	<p>Queen Camel Village Petition regarding land at its Playing Field</p> <p>I am advising that Queen Camel wishes to submit a petition at the next Full Council meeting in Bridgwater on 23 November 2022. This petition has been signed by nearly 600 villagers, children and adults, as well as their friends and families, who all enjoy and benefit from using the village playing field and, in particular, the children’s play area. This petition is asking that Somerset County Council (SCC) transfer the land it owns, which forms part of the village playing field, to Queen Camel Parish Council (PC).</p> <p>The PC owns most of the playing field but approximately one acre is owned by SCC. This parcel of land (Land Registry No. ST80581 and ST82848) was owned separately to provide some playing field facilities to the old primary school and SCC used to contribute £500pa to the costs of maintaining it. Since the primary school relocated in 2016 SCC has stopped contributing to its maintenance and the PC has requested that the land owned by SCC is transferred.</p> <p>Getting this land transferred is now particularly important as the children’s play area is located on it and is very badly in need of replacement with modern equipment. The current equipment is at the very end of its useful life and some items have been taken out of use for safety reasons. SCC’s attention has been drawn to its risks in this respect. The PC does not want to and cannot commit to spending significant sums of money installing equipment on land it does not own and cannot be certain it will retain in the future. The present play area site is optimal in the use of the field, for access and for safety reasons. Accordingly over a period of years the PC has been trying to get SCC to transfer this land. Also having ownership of this land will allow the PC to plan for the longer-term development of the playing field.</p> <p>To date these discussions have not borne fruit as SCC has said it does not have the resources to deal with the matter and the most it can offer is a licence for the PC to use the land. However, it is unclear how long any licence could run for and after 2026 SCC is potentially free to dispose of the land as it thinks fit without having to get the consent of the</p>

Appendix A
23 November 2022

	<p>Secretary of State for Education. Therefore any licence does not seem to provide adequate ownership or the “right to use” security to allow for the replacement of the play equipment by the PC.</p> <p>It has also been noted that the Local Government Reorganisation Advisory Forum has considered the Devolution of Services and Assets, particularly from county and districts to towns and parishes. Queen Camel believes that the transfer of this land would fit well within this objective. This approach is consistent with past discussions between the PC and SCC.</p> <p>The PC has said it will meet the reasonable costs, including legal ones, to allow for this parcel of land to be transferred to it and does not understand why SCC will not allow the matter to progress so that a new play area can be installed for the benefit of the local communities. I, on behalf of the petitioners, ask that you consider this matter most carefully and take steps to allow for the land to be transferred to the PC.</p> <p>I would be happy to provide any further information you need to assist in your considerations and look forward to hearing back from you.</p> <p><i>Response from Cllr Ros Wyke – Executive Member for Development and Assets</i></p> <p><i>The Council has set out its position on this matter in previous correspondence. Due to restrictions on the disposal of school playing field sites, the council would need to obtain permission from the Department of Education to transfer this site prior to 2026. This is a costly and lengthy process and would not be a cost effective use of scarce resources. The Council has offered to extend the existing licence until 2026, when we will be in a position to transfer the land to the Parish Council for its continued use as recreational playing fields. I understand that this position is not acceptable to the Parish Council and would wish to assure the Parish Council that the council has no intention of disposing or developing the site in the future – we recognise that the facility is a valuable community asset and will be happy to execute a transfer as suggested for its continued use as recreational playing fields or a Multi-Use Games Area or similar for the parish of Queen Camel, once the Department for Education restrictions have been lifted.</i></p>
Alyson Rogers	1. On 27th May, AAF and League Against Cruel Sports handed in a letter to SCC asking that they ban trail hunting on council land. We understand that last time we asked, the legal department were looking at this. Could you tell me what is the delay and when are you likely to make a decision?

Appendix A
23 November 2022

	<p>2. Have the council considered a Public Space Protection Order in places where the hunts cause most havoc and disruption to the public?</p> <p><i>Response Cllr Ros Wyke – Executive Member for Development and Assets</i></p> <p><i>1. Over 90% of the Councils land ownership is occupied by others. It is for tenants to determine whom they invite on the land they manage and occupy. No applications to trail hunt, a lawful activity, have been received for land in our immediate control. We are not aware of any trail hunting without consent taking place on Council land.</i></p> <p><i>2. The Council holds little public open space and We are not aware of any issues.</i></p> <p><i>Note; The Council in the 90's banned hunting on its land, mainly to do with stag hunting on the Quantocks, this was overturned by judicial review.</i></p> <p><i>The Council had significant land holdings on the Quantocks which included the sporting rights, but the actual usage was under lease to the forestry commission or with Commoners rights. In 2012/13 the council divested itself of these land ownerships.</i></p>
<p>Pip Donovan</p>	<p>My name is Pip Donovan and I am founder of Action Against Foxhunting (AAF).</p> <p>My question relates to the various Boxing Day Hunt meets that occur on public roads in Somerset. I have been engaging with SCC on this issue since December 2021.</p> <p>The controversy relating to foxhunting can be very polarising. But that is not what I am debating here. This is about PUBLIC SAFETY and ROAD CLOSURES. A hunt meet on a public highway is a high-risk equine event, involving traffic, horses, adults with children, protesters, kick hazards, bite hazards, slip and trip hazards etc. If the road is not officially closed, and the proper scrutiny is not applied to the organiser's safety procedures, the public is put at risk. Before Boxing Day last year, AAF contacted SCC to ask whether the hunts applied for road closures for their public meets. The traffic officer said that she had tried to contact the hunts, but they had not responded. SCC also said that it was too late to take action as the deadline for road closures had passed. She confirmed that if a hunt stops and</p>

Appendix A
23 November 2022

obstructs the highway, this is an "illegal gathering". We focussed on two towns in particular, Chard and Castle Cary and warned SCC that illegal gatherings would take place on the highway in both places.

Despite our warnings, the meets took place anyway. **No hunt had applied for a road closure anywhere in Somerset for Boxing Day 2021.**

I attended the meet in Castle Cary and collected evidence of law breaking. The hunt obstructed the highway, illegally used their own either untrained, or incompetent marshals to direct traffic, rode horses the wrong way up a one-way street, posed dangers to the public by bringing unreliable horses to the meet and allowed their dogs to run free amongst children. Protesters were present, and one of them was assaulted. My colleague attended the meet in Chard where she recorded the same things. This is a link to a video of the road blocking etc in Chard on Boxing Day.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDiut8UXSTo&t=75s>

Here is a map of Castle Cary - detailing the law-breaking and health and safety risks taken by the BSV in Castle Cary on Boxing Day. I have photographic and video evidence to back this up.

All year we have been engaging with councils to make sure it doesn't happen again in 2022.

On 14th January 2022, the chair of Castle Cary Town Council said that SCC had informed her that the hunts would have to apply for road closures for this year. Avon and Somerset Police said the same. The chair reported it in good faith, but it wasn't true.

A FOI to SCC revealed that the council traffic officer did not send any emails to the hunts at all. She did not even try to engage, and then she appeared to lie about it to Castle Cary Town Council, the police and to AAF.

Once again, the deadline for applying for a road closure for Boxing Day has passed and no hunts have applied.

I have been engaging with Mr Bunting, (SCC Traffic Officer) and he is looking into it. I have also been engaging with Councillor Dyke. Both Councillor Dyke and Mr Bunting have been very helpful.

My questions:

Are we going to be told again that it's too late to do anything about it this year? For how many more years are we going to be told it's "too late"?

And, given that the Highways Authority has a duty to keep the traffic flowing, how will SCC prevent the hunts from obstructing the roads in Somerset on Boxing Day this year?

Appendix A
23 November 2022

	<p>Thank you.</p> <p><i>Response from Cllr Mike Rigby – Executive Member for Transport and Digital</i></p> <p><i>Any event that takes place on the highway where vehicle movements are restricted would require a road closure using either the Town and Police Clauses Act (TPCA) or the Road Traffic Regulation Act (RTRA), the hunt parades are no exception. When we are made aware of an event taking place we will investigate and treat as business as usual as part of our network management duty. If the hunt parades close the road for their exclusive use, then they will need to have the relevant order in place that facilitates the closure.</i></p> <p><i>SCC officers have now written to the hunts Ms Donovan has referred to and we have received positive engagement from those who have responded. We will now be working with the hunts over the next few weeks to ensure that any necessary road closures are obtained, or the parades take place away from the highway. This is still very much work in progress although we are committed to ensuring that the necessary order is in place where required.</i></p>
<p>Tim Andrews</p>	<p>The Department for Transport's Bus Recovery Grant has been a lifeline in Somerset for bus services that have struggled with a post-COVID reduction in passenger numbers. These bus services provide significant social and economic benefits for residents, and they make a contribution to the county's wider climate change agenda. In the light of the expected end of the Bus Recovery Grant on 31st March 2023, what actions will the Council be taking to ensure that the county's current level of bus services is maintained across the county beyond that date?'</p> <p><i>Response from Cllr Mike Rigby – Executive Member for Transport and Digital</i></p> <p><i>SCC is currently using BRG funding to support a number of bus services across the County, where these were previously operated on a commercial basis and then withdrawn by the operator.</i></p> <p><i>It is uncertain what will happen with regard to funding beyond March. However, we are working with our Communications Team and the Somerset Bus Partnership to promote the use of public bus services across the County, to try and encourage more people to use the bus and hopefully make them more sustainable in the longer term.</i></p>

Appendix A
23 November 2022

<p>Kevin Comer</p>	<p>Why has the Council's response to the National Highways A358 supplementary consultation ruled out a reduced design standard as favoured by Parish Councils? It indicates that the priority is for the road to be built but does not say why a lower impact design (presumably cheaper both in finance and emissions) would mean the road not getting built'</p> <p>"What is the county council's response to the increase in carbon emissions arising from the 65% increase in traffic projected as a result of the A358 upgrade? Somerset West and Taunton wrote:</p> <p>11.6.6 ... the Council is of the opinion that the conclusion reached in Table 15-7 of chapter 15 ... "that no significant effects in relation to GHG emissions or vulnerability of the proposed scheme to climate change are predicted during the construction and operation phases", is considered to be misleading and possibly inaccurate ... Whilst great play is made throughout chapter 14 of the PEIR of the potential for GHG emissions during the construction phase for the proposed A358, very little evidence is presented in relation to the projected 65% increase in vehicle use. Where is the evidence to prove that a 65% increase ... would result in "no significant effects with regards to greenhouse gas emissions ... during the operation of the proposed scheme.</p> <p><i>Response from Cllr Mike Rigby – Executive Member for Transport and Digital</i></p> <p><i>The County Council's position continues to be that we strongly support and have promoted the need for the A358 between Taunton and Southfields to be upgraded to dual carriageway as part of an end to end whole route improvement of the A303/A358, between the M3 and the M5 at Taunton. The scheme should improve connectivity and access to the South West Region, improve the resilience of the strategic road network and help to promote economic growth in the region. A principal objective and essential component of the scheme is also to address the environmental (air quality and congestion) impacts of traffic flow through Henlade which is an Air Quality Management Area.</i></p> <p><i>Somerset County Council sought clarity at the Statutory Consultation stage about the design standard that National Highways was applying for the main line. National Highways has explained its position in relation to design standards to the affected communities. The Government set out the aspiration in its second Road Investment Strategy document (2020-2025) to build a high quality and high performing dual carriageway along the A303/A358 corridor. Funding is therefore dependent on the road performing this strategic purpose.</i></p>
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Appendix A
23 November 2022

	<p><i>In our response to the Statutory Consultation, the County Council noted the emissions generated through the operation of the scheme will be included within Somerset's area wide transport emissions metrics and will therefore be taken into account in Somerset's transition to net zero. We also said that this must be balanced with the benefits that the scheme will deliver and, in working with National Highways on the development of the detailed design, the County Council would therefore wish to explore opportunities for the scheme to contribute to the transport measures described in Somerset's Climate Emergency Strategy. This dialogue continues and the County Council will review the National Highways' Environmental Assessment when it is submitted with the Development Consent Order later this year.</i></p>
<p>Robert Barnes</p>	<p>Five Flower beds at the bottom of Duke Street, Taunton, the wood around the five flower beds is rotten. Rotten wood has been taken away by Somerset West and Taunton Council, rotten wood is danger to public.</p> <p>Environment agents have been to look at and emptied at the five flower beds at as the drains in the road have been filled with soil.</p> <p>The Environment Agency said if the drain gets filled up with soil again, the highway will be taken to court and charged with environmental damage.</p> <p>Police Officers told Mr Barnes that Mr {name removed} kept phoning the police about Mr Barnes clearing the flower beds at the bottom of Duke street, Mr Roger {name removed} will be arrested for making nuisance phone calls to the police about Mr Barnes.</p> <p><i>Response from Cllr Mike Rigby – Executive Member for Transport and Digital</i></p> <p><i>Council officers have inspected the highway gullies at the reported location and all assets have been reported as clear and operational.</i></p>
<p>David Redgewell</p>	<p><u>Question 1</u></p> <p>Taunton bus and coach station is to be a major Transport hub for Somerset and Southwest England. We would like to know when a planning application is going to be put into Somerset west and Taunton council. For conversation of the bus and coach station into a Transport hub.</p>

Appendix A
23 November 2022

With passenger waiting room cafe and toilet and staff facilities for local and Regional bus services and long-Distance coaches by Flixbus and National Express coaches services.

Will the station design still be Rido which of course will now have to have wheelchair accessible bays.

In the past wheelchair passengers were pick up and set Down from the Entrance road to the station itself.

National Express coaches operated the wheelchair accessible lifts near the back wall and managed the passenger and luggage to the stands.

Where will be Bike Hire base be and E Scooters stands.?

What hours will the Transport interchanges be staff and is a community safety partnership plan for CCTV and police checks.

Would Somerset county council as local transport Authority please advise us of their plans with passenger and stakeholder on the design of Taunton bus and coach station and public consultation.

Question 2

Castle Cary station Somerset.

Is mayor inter city and local Railway station on London Paddington to Westbury, Taunton, Exeter st David Newton Abbott, Plymouth Truro Penzance GWR main line.

And secondary line to Yeovil pen mill and Yeovil junction, Dorchester west and Weymouth town.

And Network rail western route and First group Great western railway has started building a new car park Double Decker in conjunction with the wine and water business next to the station.

Somerset county council the Local Transport Authority is funding and Part funding to local bus links to the station route 1 from Shepton mallet interchanges to castle Cary station, and Yeovil bus and coach station. 667 Street, castle Cary station castle Cary Town and Wincanton.

This bus use to stop in the station.

But because of the works pick up and set on the main Road outside the on a Glass verge with no pavement facilities shelter or lighting CCTV let alone a castle Kerbs and a Drop Kerbs to cross the road to a North bound bus stop to the Bath and west show ground and Shepton mallet.

Appendix A
23 November 2022

	<p>What plans does Somerset county council as Transport and Highways Authority have to provide a safe bus and interchanges at castle Cary station with Network rail western route First group plc Great western railway and southwest coaches. David Redgewell Southwest transport Network and Rail future Severnside.</p> <p><i>Response from Cllr Mike Rigby – Executive Member for Transport and Digital</i></p> <p><i>1. Work is still underway on the 2nd stage of the feasibility study which includes site design and layout. Wheelchair accessibility will be taken into consideration and incorporated into the proposals. A consultation process will follow at a later date, but the finer detail and timetable is still being worked on. We can reassure Mr Redgewell that he will be consulted with at the appropriate time.</i></p> <p><i>2. Conversations and a site visit have taken place involving SCC, GWR and the operator to review the issues and identify opportunities for improvement. GWR are keen to find a resolution to the issues and are exploring the opportunities identified further.</i></p>
<p>Emma King</p>	<p>With regard to the decision by the previous county council to support the decision of the then CCG in the closure of St Andrew's ward in Wells, being the last remaining mental health ward in Mendip, in spite of the fact that the county council are meant to be elected representatives and 52% of respondents to the consultation disagreed with the decision:</p> <p>it is my opinion, and that of many others, with over 4000 signatures on the petition to save the ward, that the scrutiny of this decision by the previous council did not follow council procedures and, as such, it is incumbent upon the new council to revisit this decision.</p> <p>Furthermore, the consultation conducted by the ICB (formerly CCG) concluded in April 2020 and, as such, does not take into consideration the mental health implications of either the pandemic or the cost-of-living crisis. Somerset Intelligence, a partnership project funded by Somerset County Council, Somerset West & Taunton District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Mendip District Council and South Somerset District Council, includes key facts for Somerset on suicide, stating that the suicide rate for Somerset for the period 2017-19 was statistically higher than the</p>

Appendix A
23 November 2022

	<p>national average and between 2005 and 2019 there were 779 suicides, an average of just over 50 a year. It also states that there is a strong association between suicide rates and levels of deprivation. The rate for suicide and undetermined death for residents living in the 20% most deprived areas in Somerset being significantly higher than for the county as a whole. The impact of the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis is only increasing the levels of economic deprivation and therefore people's mental health is declining. For example, a BACP survey, dated 8th Sept 2022, states that 66% of therapists have noticed that cost of living concerns are causing a decline in people's mental health.</p> <p>Therefore, even though the ICB is planning on "moving away from bed based interventions", it is clear that the closure of this ward is ill-thought out and will deprive people in crisis from accessing a service near to their homes, possibly resulting in them being sent, not only potentially to Yeovil, but possibly hundreds of miles away to places where they will be unable to be visited by friends or family, support which is essential to making a swift recovery.</p> <p>Although the decision has been made by the ICB (now CCG) there is evidence to suggest that this can be overturned with enough pressure from the public. A decision from the county council to withdraw support for this closure would send a strong message that we need St Andrew's ward to remain in situ to continue the long record of excellent inpatient mental health service which has existed in Wells for hundreds of years and ensure that those of us in crisis and in need can get the care we need in the place we need it.</p> <p><i>See response to Eva Bryczkowski below</i></p>
Eva Bryczkowski	<p>QUESTION 1 * Will Somerset County Councillors strive and fight to reverse the woeful decision to close Saint Andrews Ward?</p> <p>QUESTION 2 * Will SCC councillors exercise due diligence and empower yourselves and your electorate by reading the Suicide Prevention Report and visit the people in Saint Andrews Ward, with their permission, to listen and find out the best ways you can help?</p> <p>QUESTION 3 * Will you provide us with hard evidence to show that you have done your homework properly by choosing to do the right and ethical thing regarding the patients in Saint Andrews Ward?</p>

Appendix A
23 November 2022

THE URGENT NEED TO FIGHT FOR SAINT ANDREWS WARD TO REMAIN OPEN

I am looking at the timetable for the 77 bus from Wells to Yeovil. There are none that run on a Sunday. This is a day when many people are free. Thus preventing relatives who don't own cars from visiting their loved ones i.e. those who have been forcibly removed from Saint Andrews Ward in Wells all the way to Yeovil. Patients in a town that is strange to them, away from their friends and relatives who live in Wells and surrounding areas. If the proposed closure, decided by the Integrated Care Board, (ICB), goes ahead, that is. People with mental health issues already tend to feel isolated. They will feel it a lot more if they are an hour away from loved ones who have no car. Furthermore, with the cost-of-living crisis, relatives will have even less chance of visiting due to having to spend more time and money on buses, petrol, and other expenses.

Somerset County Council does not directly deliver mental health services across Somerset, it is true. However, it has a huge influence on how they are run. One of the Council's key roles is to:

- * Monitor how these services are run in order to ensure that they achieve the highest standards.
- * To make sure that mental health users get what they need.

If they don't, their mental health will deteriorate and there is a definite risk of suicide.

Research done by the Suicide Prevention Report has shown that bereaved families of loved ones who have committed suicide have said that this is often due to a gap in provision.

For example, when a patient moves from one place to another or from other big changes in circumstances. This will have a dramatic effect on continuity of care. Hard evidence, corroborated by extensive research, shows that there is more likelihood of a patient committing suicide under the above circumstances. The Clinical Commissioning Group, which was replaced by the Integrated Care has already decided to close Saint Andrews Ward. Thus increasing the likelihood of vulnerable people who have been sectioned because they are a danger to themselves or others taking their own lives. We cannot, must not, allow this to happen. We have to fight for justice, kindness and equality for those with mental health difficulties.

Appendix A
23 November 2022

We, indeed, you Councillors, have to fight vigorously to reverse the decision that the ICB have made. Otherwise, there will be blood on the hands of the members of the ICB's hands. And, frankly, there will be blood on your hands too, Somerset County Councillors, if you allow this to happen. Councillors, you have some leeway and a modicum of power to be able to influence the members of the ICB. You are responsible for making sure that mental health services in Somerset are the very best after all! Surely? Please read the Suicide Prevention Report as soon as possible after this meeting. It needs to be done today. Prioritise it. There is no time to lose! It could happen any day, now or in the near future. We don't know exactly when this will occur. It is in the remit of the ICB. It is within your power to prevent lives being lost. So empower yourselves to do this on behalf of those who have no voice. To serve the people you represent. So put this at the top of your To Do list. It's that urgent. In order to achieve a win win solution, consider having a moratorium on this. Park it for now. Meanwhile, do the research. Visit people, with their permission, and listen to them. Find out the best ways you can help. And don't mark your own homework! Provide proof and solid evidence to show that you have done your homework properly. Just like councillor John Osman did. Now him and me might be at the polar opposite ends of the political spectrum, but he did a good job of chairing a meeting I went to many years ago. As a Unison steward coordinator, I went to a meeting in SCAT. It was about whether to prioritise Learning Disabilities. Parents of adults with learning disabilities turned up and were furious at the prospect of LD being privatised. It is impossible for anyone to be completely unbiased. It's all about perception isn't it?

But John Osman was the nearest example that I've come across of any chairperson being impartial. He visited adults with learning disabilities in their supported living homes. He visited adults with learning disabilities in other contexts, such as those in respite and residential care. And he listened to them and the staff about how they felt, wanted and needed. At the end of the meeting, (which, by the way, decided against privatisation), he said, "I have never been cuddled so much in all my life." That is what I would like you to do councillors. And quickly. The CCB conducted a consultation regarding as to whether to close Saint Andrews Ward.

A majority of respondents stated that they wanted the ward to remain open. The CCG dismissed and discounted the votes of those people who lived in Wells and surrounding areas, because they were considered to be biased. Biased? Ridiculous. You couldn't make it up! Frankly, it was rigged. If any of them want to sue me for defamation, bring it on! It would bring good publicity to the campaign and save lives. I will most probably win. Whether I win or not, my trade

Appendix A
23 November 2022

union provides legal representation that is completely free. Our legal team are very experienced and help thousands of members to achieve equality, diversity and justice.

I would like to suggest that you put yourselves in the shoes, the lived experience, of people who have been sectioned. Put yourselves in the shoes of parents of children who have taken their own lives. Put yourselves in the shoes of husbands, wives, partners, brothers, sisters, lovers or friends who have had their loved ones commit suicide. Imagine experiencing the unbearable grief, pain and unresolved loss. Put yourselves in the shoes of the staff who have to witness this and feel that they have failed to prevent a life being lost. What we earn; where we live; how we are treated by our employers; whether we are well-off or have fallen on hard times; who we work and keep company with; how services are funded; and many other things, they are all political, because it is about power, money and whether justice can be achieved. It is about how services are run and funded locally, relevant to Saint Andrews Ward. The NHS is on its knees due to underfunding since 2010, due to the austerity project created by the Conservatives and supported by the Liberal Democrats, who also voted for privatisation of the NHS, then continued by the Conservatives to the present day, with even harsher measures to come. This applies to Somerset as well as nationally. Austerity has led to early deaths, suicides due to impoverishment or harsh benefit sanctions, and locally, it could be caused by the closure of Saint Andrews ward. Austerity could have been prevented by other parties, (for example the Liberal Democrats), by holding the government to account like the DUP did. They insisted that they would only vote for certain measures if the government did things they considered to be beneficial and fair to their particular constituencies.

Back to today. I realise that you are councillors, supported by officers, who work extremely hard and are well intentioned. Some of the latest measures that the leading party have introduced will, hopefully, serve the vulnerable people of Somerset well.

Response Cllr Heather Shearer – Executive Member for Adult Social Care

Thank you for the questions I will answer both questions received by Emma King and Eve Brickowski together. Somerset's then Clinical Commissioning Group made the decision at their Governing Body on 24 September 2020 to approve the proposal to relocate fourteen adult mental health beds from Wells to Yeovil. The acute adult mental health beds are a small but important part of the then-new model of adult mental health care. The Open Mental Health model designed by people with lived experience is very much focused on supporting people as close to home as possible, in

Appendix A
23 November 2022

their communities through a range of local services. As you are aware the public consultation on the relocation of these beds ran from 17 January 2020 to 12 April 2020 and included 63 consultation events across Somerset. The consultation document was also considered at scrutiny meetings at Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council and also Somerset County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees. They had planned to attend the Somerset West and Taunton scrutiny meeting in March 2020, however, this was stood down due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Full information was shared with the SWaT scrutiny committee in the absence of attendance at this meeting.

The proposed relocation was reviewed and assured by NHS England and NHS Improvement with a process including assurance by the south west regional Clinical Senate. The Clinical Senate Review said that "The Clinical Review Panel (CRP) were unanimous in their view that clinical evidence and best practice supported the proposals to move 14 inpatient mental health beds for adults of working age from the ward currently in Wells to Yeovil, where two wards will be combined to address concerns around maintaining stand-alone units." All responses to the public consultation were independently analysed by Participate Ltd and the feedback was publicly shared via an online event in early September 2020, prior to the Governing Body meeting on 24 September 2020. The decision was based on the safety of standalone wards, the distance of the Wells ward from an emergency department and the lack of 24/7 medical cover, and not in relation to costs. While the location of fourteen mental health beds will be changing, it is important to note that the change will not result in any reduction in bed numbers.

Regarding the transport issues as a system, we have made a commitment to explore the transport issues on an individual patient level nearer the time of the ward move. The refurbishment work of the two wards has taken longer than anticipated and the expectation is that it will be completed in autumn 2023. It is worth noting that there are just as many issues of people currently travelling north to Wells from elsewhere in Somerset.

We are very aware that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected everyone's mental and physical wellbeing both here in Somerset and across the country.

We recognise the concerns raised by Ms King, and Ms Bryczkowski that we need more mental health services and not less and would like to offer the following in response.

Appendix A
23 November 2022

	<p><i>The pandemic accelerated many of the positive transformational plans that the health and care system had in place having been awarded £13million funding. The focus has been and is firmly on more support being available to more people as early as possible, so that they are supported to manage their mental health at home or in their local community, meaning that people's mental health does not deteriorate to the point where they require in-patient treatment and care. Evidence tells us and we believe that providing better care locally and supporting people to stay at home wherever we safely can, provides the best outcomes and facilitates recovery.</i></p>
Bev Anderson	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to submit this question and for some serious consideration is given to answering this vital question to me and the Public at large, who will be affected by the pending closure of St Andrews Ward.</p> <p>Should and If St. Andrews Ward be closed in the future I am gravel concerned in regard to the matter of finance and funding for the new 16 bed in patient ward that has been considered.</p> <p>Consecutive governments have relied on PFI contracts, (Private Finance initiatives) for the building of Hospitals Emergency call centres, Courts, schools and other vital public services. However, the Public accounts committee in 2010 warned the then Conservative/ Liberal Democrat government that the PFI contracts were not value for money and there were serious concerns regarding the 25/30-year rental agreements that many were locked into. Indeed the Public accounts committee had every right to be concerned considering that every building and contact entered into was costing the public tax payer and astounding three (3) time the amount of the original build, thus the public were in fact paying for three (3) new buildings for every one (1) that was being used. Although the coalition were made aware of this and asked not to enter into any further contracts: George Osborn gave the go ahead for sixty-one (61) PFI projects worth a total of £6.9bn since coming into power.</p> <p>There have long been questions into and surrounding whether the PFI model offers good value for money for the taxpayer. Given the current economic situation, these are more pertinent. An investigation at the time by Channel 4 news highlighted the discredited PFI system and Mr George Osborn in 2009 said they were working on reforms to the discredited PFI model that are transparent accounted for and genuinely shifts the risk to the private sector.</p>

Appendix A
23 November 2022

	<p>It is sad that the cost of Britain’s controversial PFI ultimately cost the Taxpayers more that £300bn which was the figure given in 2017-18. Numerous NHS Contracts such as the Calderdale Royal Hospital in Yorkshire was a £64.6million, the scheme ended up costing the Calderdale & Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust a total of £773.2million. Another example, Bart’s Health NHS Trust London said that the cost of its two (2) sites would cost £1.1bn but the documents found show that the cost will be £7.1bn by the time the contract is paid off in full in 2048/49.</p> <p>Can the ICB, in the current economic situation of the country, the severe underfunding of the NHS considers without full scrutiny, (which it has failed to do thus far), consider fundamentally putting the burden of this financial matter to people of Mendip?</p> <p>Please can the ICB give a full account of the method of funding, which is believed to be “seed funding/ finance” should St Andrews not be saved and a new build as suggested in Yeovil?</p> <p>Please can The ICB provide the names of the investors and the percentages of their investment?</p> <p>Please can the ICB provide the Full amount and stage that they have agreed to regard “seed funding” and whether the investors are that of private health providers / Companies etc?</p> <p>Please can the ICB provide fully accountable and transparent conflict of interest checks in regard to the investors, so that we can all have a level playing field so there is no smoke screen for any future PRIVATISATION OF THE NHS & ITS SERVICE?</p> <p><i>Response Cllr Heather Shearer – Executive Member for Adult Social Care</i></p> <p><i>I would like to respond to Bev Anderson. Thank you for your question. I will pass the question on to the ICB and once I have received the answer, I will get a written answer for you.</i></p>
<p>Michael Strange</p>	<p>This question relates to the Somerset Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education.</p> <p>Evangelical Christian and Moslem SACRE faith representatives presented the Local Authority with a joint document advising about shared religious sensitivities which was rejected by the Local Authority.</p>

Appendix A
23 November 2022

The Local Authority subsequently blocked the SACRE membership of the Moslem community's representative that helped to write that document.

In its new draft SACRE Constitution, the Local Authority states its intention to remove SACRE membership from the other authors, the Baptist, Independent Evangelical and Pentecostal Church representatives. These are all of the SACRE Evangelical Christian representatives.

Despite repeated requests from its SACRE members, the Local Authority has imposed online SACRE meetings and prevented members from guiding their own agenda. As demonstrated in the last meeting, this has enabled the Local Authority to prevent debate and manipulate meetings in a sham consultation process in order to approve their draft SACRE constitution and so create a compliant sham SACRE.

When the Evangelical Christian faith communities wrote a great many letters to Councillors expressing their concerns about these matters, the Leader of the Council wrote a long reply that avoided addressing those concerns.

Somerset County Council evidently thinks that treating Somerset SACRE members and faith communities with contempt in this way will produce a Religious Education syllabus that will not be robustly rejected. They are mistaken. Producing it will be a waste of taxpayers' money

We have one question. Why?

Response Cllr Tessa Munt – Executive Member for Children and Families

Thank you for your question about the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education and the teaching of Religious Education in Somerset's schools.

The document

We have not formally received the joint document to which you refer, although I understand it has been shared informally.

Appendix A
23 November 2022

Nonetheless, to address the points raised in your question, the document received informally expresses views, but makes no requests of this Council.

Thus, neither the document itself, nor any "request" could be "rejected".

A request to add one of the named individuals to the membership of SACRE was received, but not through the proper channels and therefore was not able to be accepted.

This Council will be contacting relevant organisations shortly to seek their nominees. Of course, I will be very happy to see anyone wishing to join SACRE put themselves forward through the proper channels at the appropriate time.

The Constitution

The draft Constitution does not seek to "remove" anyone. It simply acknowledges that it is accepted good practice, in this as in any and all other walks of public life, that there should be term limits on appointments.

This Council is very grateful for the contributions of all members of SACRE, and where members have exceeded reasonable term limits, we would expect that this be considered so we can encourage ongoing renewal and refreshing of SACRE's membership.

The process proposed for reviewing the Constitution is thoroughly open and transparent. This will not be rushed. We are intending to take a full academic year to give as much time as is required to consider all the issues. SACRE's Constitution will reflect all the relevant national legislation (1996 Education Act, Paragraph 390 – 397 & 2013 Review of Religious Education) and the guidance of NASACRE, the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education.

The Agenda

This Council does and will take an overview of the Agenda for SACRE meetings. That is because it is a Council Committee whose sole purpose is to provide advice on those matters as requested by the Council. It cannot serve that function unless the Council sets the Agenda.

The Syllabus

I would like to address the matter of the syllabus for Religious Education in our schools. We are not currently reviewing the syllabus, so there are no proposals upon which to consult. Therefore, any concerns are premature.

When the time comes to review the syllabus, this will be an open and transparent process, as laid out in law, with a commitment to promote understanding, respect, tolerance and inter-faith dialogue.

Appendix A
23 November 2022

	<p><i>I welcome all and any members of the community who share our commitment to these important principles and activities to engage with SACRE.</i></p>
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