

Full Council – 1 March 2023 – Public and Member Questions

Annexe A – Public Questions	
Name of person submitting	Question
Adam Thomas	<p>I would very much like to put forward a question for you to consider at the next full council meeting, later this month.</p> <p>The advent of the new unitary authority, creates a great opportunity to correct at least one injustice done to Somerset since the mid-70s. That of course is the council signage along the northern boundary of the council. At the moment it welcomes people to Somerset, which is inaccurate and incorrect. A different council area you ARE entering, a different county you are NOT.</p> <p>So, my question is as follows;</p> <p>Please can the new Somerset Council replace the signs along its northern border with both North Somerset and Bath & North Somerset Council, with something more sympathetic that recognises that all these councils together form the historic county of Somerset?</p> <p>The transient nature of local government set-ups has played havoc with our historic counties, Somerset more than most. Now though is the perfect time to help correct this, and YOUR generation of councillors can go a long way towards this.</p> <p><i>Response from Cllr Mike Rigby, Lead Member for Transport and Digital</i></p>
David Redgewell	<p>Question 1.</p> <p>With Somerset County Council owning the West Somerset Railway line and lease the infrastructure to the West Somerset Railway Plc, what action is the County Council Transport Department taking to make sure this vital tourist link to West Somerset is open from this spring to passenger services.</p> <p>With the landslide at Tribble Bridge on the A358 near Combe Florey which also effected the highway, a large part of the line was covered in mud and potatoes, has discussion and action be taken with the farmer to make sure this does not happen again.</p>

Full Council – 1 March 2023 – Public and Member Questions

	<p>With experts including Network Rail Western being brought in to assess the situation what progress is being made to get line reopened.</p> <p>Question 2 What progress is being made on reopening the West Somerset Railway to through trains with First Group Plc, Great Western Railway, Network Rail Western, Heart of the Southwest Local Enterprises partnership and Southwest Peninsula Transport Board for train services between Taunton and Bishop Lydeard.</p> <p>Question 3 With the importance of the First Group Southwest of England Buses of Somerset Service 28 from Taunton town centre, hopefully Taunton Transport Hub soon to Watchet and Minehead to work with First Group Great Western Railway to promote bus rail integration improvements to bus shelters along the route including improvement to bus interchanges at Bishops Lydeard Station, Watchet Station, Minehead town centre and bus shelters at Minehead Railway Station including bus branding with Rail Link on the side. Minehead is also a bus interchange for Lynmouth and Ilfracombe via Porlock and the town bus service.</p> <p><i>Response from Cllr Mike Rigby, Lead Member for Transport and Digital</i></p>
Sarah Little	<p>Good afternoon and thank you for listening.</p> <p>My colleagues from AAF spoke to you last week on the subject of three of the local hunts which were brought to the Council's attention for not having had the required TTROs in place for their Boxing Day Events in our towns last year. These hunts went on to insist either, or both, to have had permission (from the police - not the issuing authority) and/ or to lay at the Council's door the blame for them not having had these secured in time. My part in our campaign focussed on the Seavington Hunt's Boxing Day Event in Crewkerne.</p> <p>AAF had understood (as was wholly reasonable and so we assume the Council did also), that when the Council put out its statement of 20th December 2022 regarding Boxing Day hunt parades to say: "two have confirmed they will meet on private land and the third will not be closing the road" (and that third being the Cotley Hunt), that both the Seavington Hunt and the</p>

Full Council – 1 March 2023 – Public and Member Questions

	<p>Blackmore and Sparkford Vale would not be entering the towns of Crewkerne and Castle Cary respectively. While the BSV did stay away, the Seavington did not. We imagine the Council will agree this shows a blatant disregard for any authority, for the law, and for the health and safety of the public.</p> <p>AAF understands the Council and the Police are this year to write a joint letter to the local hunts explaining that they should apply for an order to temporarily close the road if they intend to meet and gather in any of our village- or town-centres on Boxing Day 2023.</p> <p>MY QUESTIONS:- Please can you confirm that this is the case and that these Orders will be TTROs? Please will you put this to a timescale for first contact and any follow-ups in the event of no initial reply? Please will you confirm that costs are to be charged to each Hunt individually, and not shared? Please can you confirm that “the local hunts” means all Hunts local to Somerset County which hold Boxing Day Events, these being: the BSV, Cotley, Seavington; the Mendip Farmers’ Hunt, the Weston & Barnwell and the Taunton Vale?”</p> <p><i>Response from Cllr Mike Rigby, Lead Member for Transport and Digital</i></p>
Nigel Behan	<p>The Budget Monitoring report for February and (December) noted:</p> <p>“90% of the ASC budget is spent on individual placements purchased through the market via block and spot placements. Therefore, there is a significant risk that this budget will continue to overspend. This is due to increase demand, the cost-of[1]living rise, particularly the increase in petrol, gas, electric, and food. Alongside this our neighbouring authorities, due to lack of supply in their areas, are wanting to purchase additional beds in Somerset at significantly higher cost than we currently purchase these beds.”</p> <p>“We have therefore built into this budget £5.4m amount to stabilise and have sufficiency in the market.” (December)</p>

Full Council – 1 March 2023 – Public and Member Questions

(Whilst the October report noted: “**Competitive Market failure** – As an organisation we commission a large amount of our services and that has been a good way of keeping our costs down. We are now seeing a failure of the competitive market across a range of areas but with a particular high impact in social care, with very significant cost increases in Children’s external placements and Adults residential & nursing care. The spiralling costs in these areas are putting the councils’ budgets under significant pressure.”)

- a) Does this indicate a (more than) significant problem in the so called “care market” that some eulogise at length in some Local Authority “commissioning” circles – should Local Authorities have to manage, for people who require Social Care, according to what other Councils are willing to “offer” “financially”?
- b) What other models of Adult (and Children’s) Social Care will the new Unitary Council explore rather than commissioning (procurement and contract management etc.) and the vagaries of the “care market”?
- c) What amount of (spreadsheet) cash is “built” into the (ASC) budget for these scenarios, in the new Unitary Authority budget for 2023/2024 – and what discussions are taking place with the Local Government Association (LGA) to avoid Local Authorities appearing to “compete” in this less than “joined up” manner?

Response from Cllr Liz Leyshon, Executive Member for Finance and HR / Cllr Heather Shearer, Executive

Full Council – 1 March 2023 – Public and Member Questions

Annexe B – Member Questions	
Name of person submitting	Question
Cllr Leigh Redman	<p>Support for Councillors.</p> <p>I am proud that Somerset County Council works very hard to support our staff when they are in need, from workplace assessments while home working through to medical support to return to work following an illness, we have 110 councillors in the new council, often they are in similar circumstances and, I feel, are as much a part of the council, in some cases working many hours in their role supporting council and their constituents.</p> <p>Can the Executive member confirm if this support extends to Councillors, and if this is in place, can the executive member confirm how members might access this essential support?</p> <p>Thank you and Stay safe</p> <p><i>Response from Cllr Liz Leyshon, Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Member on Finance and Human Resources</i></p>