

Full Council – AGM - 24 May 2023 – Public and Member Questions

	Annexe A – Public Questions
Name of person submitting	Question
Town Cllr Matt Harrison	<p><i>At its full council meeting of 2 May 2023, Shepton Mallet Town Council unanimously resolved to submit the following requests to Somerset Council.</i></p> <p><u>Shape Campus Commercial Options Appraisal</u></p> <p>Somerset Council should engage with Shepton Mallet Town Council’s resolution to undertake a commercial options appraisal so the two organisations can have a serious commercial and political conversation about it. Given the context of Shepton Mallet now being without a leisure centre and question marks looming large over the future of the Minor Injuries Unit, the Town Council should lead this conversation. The Integrated Care Board and local Primary Care Networks are undertaking significant research about potentially needing space at Shape so the organisations should make sure we are joined-up on this.</p> <p><u>Shape Campus car park and Park Road utilisation</u></p> <p>The new Collett Park play park and Strawberry Line link opening have shown Shepton Mallet Town Council means it when it says they are physically developing the town. However, Shepton Mallet Town Council needs cooperation from Somerset Council to best utilise the car park to make visiting Shepton and the park easy. This would encourage tourism and drive economic regeneration. See also Town wide car parking strategy.</p> <p><u>Levelling Up Fund Round 2 bid project deployment</u></p> <p>Shepton Mallet Town Council needs to ensure the thousands of pounds spent on this work is not wasted before time dilutes its relevance. Shepton Mallet Town Council needs to ensure the work is considered by highways and planned in. Specifically, we need highways to consider the High Street reversal project, as proposed both in the Levelling Up Fund round 2 bid and the Neighbourhood Plan. As our incumbent MP has made clear, the work</p>

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identified in the bid should have been delivered by the previous County Council as business as usual. Shepton Mallet Town Council needs to make sure the new Council knows this will be expected of them. Specifically also, the Rectory Road safety improvements as resolved in Shepton Mallet Town Council 's TD&P committee need implementing by highways.

Leisure Centre / Sports provision

As Shepton Mallet Town Council develops a strategy for addressing the structural shortfalls - a legacy from previous administrations - we need both expertise and funding from Somerset Council so when Shepton Mallet Town Council is in a position to build, it is able to do so.

West Shepton Playing Fields

Shepton Mallet Town Council needs to take ownership of this land to (i) protect from future housing development, other than the much-needed social provision already planned (ii) give the town quality open green space that can be used for sports in perpetuity. It's in such a great position now (Scouts, football club, skate park, BMX track, Strawberry Line), a development strategy would be easy to pull together. The Somerset FA has serious money on the table now to help develop physical assets such as 5G training pitches and pavilions.

Commercial Road car park

There have been two serious offers from commercial developers in the last three years; Shepton Mallet Town Council needs to truly benefit from any development and play a much more upweighted role than the standard statutory consultee position it normally takes. Whoever/whatever buys the land would shape that part of Shepton for decades to come.

The former registry office

Shepton Mallet Town Council should take ownership of this strategically located modern, relatively well maintained building which is currently not in use.

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Friday markets charter

The opportunity to drive economic regeneration could be much more easily realised if Shepton Mallet Town Council takes ownership of the weekly Friday market. Exploratory research into effective operational and marketing of other markets has already begun. It is vital that footfall is raised on the High Street and pedestrianised Town Street, not just to assist existing businesses but also to help make people feel safer on our streets; regular markets are a great way of facilitating this and Shepton Mallet Town Council believes it can vastly improve on the current offering.

B3136 / A37 cycle bridges

Highways need to maintain the momentum of the Mendip legacy of the Strawberry Line by funding the installation of these bridges. Priority to the B3136 so a direct, traffic-free route to Wells is created. Shepton Mallet Town Council commissioned the engineering plans. Highways should provide the installation funds. Shepton Mallet Town Council can project manage it, like it did the Market Place resurfacing.

Free parking for existing Sunday market

Shepton Mallet Town Council needs to be able to actively promote the Shape Mendip car park as being free to park in over weekends to help the Sunday market thrive. According to the current market organiser, it is the only monthly market in Somerset not to benefit from advertised free parking. See also Town wide car parking strategy.

Flooding mitigation work

Shepton Mallet Town Council needs Somerset Council to commit to fund the proposed works pulled together by the Mendip-funded Calm Engineering and Carroll Environmental project. Especially as house building increases, the known bottlenecks in the foul and surface water waste works need to be addressed.

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Social housing commitment

Shepton Mallet Town Council needs Somerset Council to commit to deliver on the confirmed social housing plans for West Shepton.

National Planning Policy Framework support

Shepton Mallet Town Council needs Somerset Council to help assist with the delivery of the 'CG Fry / former Mid-Somerset Showground' plans to alleviate the local housing shortage. This will (i) provide much needed S106 (or CIL if that replaces it) and reduce the potential of speculative developers wanting to build on inappropriate sites.

Citizens Advice Bureau funding

Shepton Mallet Town Council should not be funding this organisation. It should insist on requesting this is funded in a more strategic way and all CABs in the county funded holistically, by the county council.

Bringing tourism to Shepton

Shepton is proud of The Prison which is now a major tourist attraction in the South West. The town needs to capitalise on this to make it a destination rather than a single visit location. There are several decaying buildings in need of restoration and development, including The Anglo Trading Estate, a Grade II* building at risk, The Bell pub in the town centre, and the Amulet. Shepton Mallet Town Council has ideas for projects in such key buildings that would attract tourism if funds can be sourced.

Town wide car parking strategy

Somerset Council should fund a town-wide car parking strategy that identifies issues perceived by residents, availability of car parking and then implement mitigation plans to assist with the economic regeneration of the town.

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	<p><u>Library</u> Somerset Council to continue to fund library provision to enable the facility to remain in its current location and provide the same opening hours and service.</p> <p><u>Citizens Advice</u> Shepton Mallet Town Council should be considering its long-term funding of this organisation. It should insist on requesting this funding in a more strategic way and all Citizen’s Advice in the County funded holistically by Somerset Council and remains committed to supporting its residents.</p> <p><i>Response from: Cllr Ros Wyke, Lead Member for Economy, Planning & Assets</i></p> <p>We would like to thank the Town Council for its questions. It is recognised that there a number of concerns, issues and opportunities that have been raised which are important to the Town Council and the community of Shepton Mallet. We value engagement with all our partners in Parish, Town and our City Councils. As I am sure you will appreciate, it is challenging to address each of the points raised in this format in an appropriately detailed way. With that in mind, I can assure you that relevant Cllrs and Officers would be willing to meet with you to discuss each of the points in detail and, discuss possible next steps.</p>
Amanda Millar	<p>Problems on Dunstan Park Estate</p> <p>Welcome to Chaos Road!</p> <p>Problems on Dunstan Park Estate and the Need to Prevent Children From Harm.</p> <p>Residents who live on Dunstan Park Estate in Glastonbury are concerned about the lack of traffic calming measures and potential danger to children playing on or near any of the roads into the estate.</p>

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It is a relatively new estate just off the Wells Road and round the corner from West Mendip hospital.

Taylor Wimpey built it and have been responsible for its maintenance.

Residents have written to them a number of times asking what are they are doing about transferring the responsibility to Somerset County Council highways department and when will it ever happen. They always reply that it takes a long time to do all the checks properly before the transfer is done.

But the first section of the busy main road into estate was originally built 14 years ago!

Furthermore, this part of the thoroughfare has now become the responsibility of the highways department.

Their latest email states that section 28 applies to part of our estate, Sharpham Road, the main thoroughfare into the estate and therefore the highways department is responsible for it.

Then it is the transport department's responsibility, according to them.

I rang the transport department and they were very helpful.

They advised us to:-

Look up the Somerset County council's site online to find out about speed limits.

Look into additional information about traffic calming measures.

Contact our local councillor Phillip Ham about this.

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Contact our local town council.

Contact our local parish council.

Make an application to the appropriate department in Somerset County Council.

We will do this but we fear that it will take a long time.

We want to avoid a child being injured or fatally wounded as soon as possible.

Some residents have decided to take matters into their own hands regarding speed limits and other measures.

A resident called round to my house just now.

He described how when new people, (including drivers of emergency vehicles), come into the estate via Sharpham Road they don't know the layout of the estate.

They will then drive into the narrowest road of all.

This is the only road where vehicles are able to go into and out of the estate. They won't be able to see around the sharp corner until it is too late.

No matter how slowly they drive, they will meet oncoming traffic within a very limited space, with cars parked either side of this narrow road.

Emergency vehicles, paramedics, have been delayed due to the preponderance of parked cars everywhere blocking the corner and not able to reach critically ill patients quickly enough.

Residents call the above,

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CHAOS ROAD.

We residents will do our best but feel that this is far too urgent.

We would like somebody in Somerset County Council, if at all possible, to take on some of the responsibility and help us with our enquiries.

Workers in the transport department have been very helpful so far, unlike Taylor Wimpey, who we will write to yet again.

We would like traffic calming measures put in place as soon as possible.

And we want it done now in order to protect children on our estate from harm.

QUESTION ONE

What help can any department, person or officer give to us in order to prevent a child being injured or fatally wounded?

QUESTION TWO

What timescale can be given regarding the above?

QUESTION THREE

What S.M.A.R.T. goals can be put in place to achieve the above?

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(S. Specific
M. Measurable
A. Achievable
R. Realistic
T. Timed)

ie how long will this take, a day, a week or months away?

Response from: Cllr Mike Rigby, Lead Member for Transport and Digital

We are sorry to learn about your concerns regarding traffic on this new development. While this development is substantially complete the developer has not yet satisfied all obligations to secure highway authority adoption and therefore it does not yet form part of the maintainable public highway asset, this includes Sharpham Road. If residents want speed reducing measures then they could canvass the developer directly although they are only obligated to complete the works in accordance with the planning consent, which they have done.

As you may be aware Somerset Council looks after over 6600 km of roads and we have to carefully prioritise improvement works in line with the limited budgets available which involves making some very difficult decisions to make sure our resources are directed where there is clear evidence of significant problems or incidents. Fortunately, there have been no recorded personal injury collisions within this development which does mean that even if these roads were public highway this area would not be a priority for us in terms of funding and the only mechanism of taking any scheme forward would be if the Town Council/community were able to fully fund it.

I am sorry that this is not the answer you were looking for.

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**Loretta
Whetlor**

B3191 Watchet

Thank you for allowing me to come and address you today. I am here as a very concerned resident of Watchet. Back on 12th January this year Somerset County Council closed the B3191 following the results of a geotechnical survey. More detailed inspections revealed further movement of the road as reported in the news on 23rd March 2023. Since that date no further information has been passed to the people of Watchet. They are very unhappy about this they feel that they have been forgotten and wonder if it's a case of "if we don't mention it perhaps it will go away". Well, it won't go away and nor will the people of Watchet. It is affecting businesses and residents alike. Tourism will be drastically affected this summer.

My questions are :

1. Has there been any more movement of the road/cliff documented since the last date on 23rd March 2023? If so please can we in Watchet be told. If not, why has no more been done. It is now 2 months since this last report and 5 months since the road was closed initially. Please advise the people of Watchet that you have not abandoned them.
2. Can you please advise whether all the Councillors on the Somerset Council are aware of the 7 Nolan Principles of Public Life. If not, can you assure me that they will be.
3. A resident recently told me that she has written to the Leader of the Council, The Chair of the Council, several MPs in London including the Prime Minister and the Portfolio Holder of the Council responsible for Highways regarding my first question. These letters/emails were sent over the past two months. She has to date not received ONE response to her letters/emails. I find this appalling. I am happy to provide her name to you privately.

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Response from: Cllr Mike Rigby, Lead Member for Transport and Digital and Cllr Bill Revans, Leader of the Council

Response to Q1 (Andrew Turner) The B3191 Cleeve Hill, Watchet has been closed indefinitely due to the substantial risk associated with the cliff instability.

Somerset Council initially closed the road on 12 January 2023 following the results of a geotechnical survey. Since then, two further surveys have been undertaken on 16 February and 19 April. Both surveys indicate a further cumulative movement of up to 6 millimetres at some survey points located on the road surface.

The permanent directional signage package was issued to our contractor in May 2023 after consultation with communities. The new and replacement signs will be delivered at the end of May and installation is expected to commence from 5 June 2023.

The English Coast Path at Cleeve Hill has already been diverted and further work continues in collaboration with Natural England and adjacent landowners to assess alternative route options.

An economic development business survey has been launched.

Possible improvements to the pedestrian environment in the town centre, include (subject to budget allocations and consultation):

- a. restriction of vehicle access to Swain St Car Park to create a loading bay to free up pedestrian/cycle space on Swain St
- b. cosmetic improvements such as painting exterior of doctor's surgery, additional planters, etc.
- c. longer term, there is an ambition is to remove kerbs in town centre to enhance public realm

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	<p>Public Rights of Way and Active Travel: improvements to current diversion (footpath WL 30/2, running from the top of B3191 down to the ‘donkey field’ and Mineral Line) are taking place at the end of May including additional aggregate and improvements to the steps. Evidence shows this diversion is well used and well signed. Discussions with landowners are still ongoing for improving path on Mineral Line (cutting back vegetation, surface improvements, considering permissive agreement for cycling). The Council is also considering how to avoid drainage issues on footpath WL 18/64 plus mitigating safety concerns for increased footfall over West Somerset Railway level crossing (at Kentsford Cross). Further diversions to reopen walking and cycling access around the closure (potential for a further diversion for England Coast Path) are ongoing. A key focus of this workstream is to encourage walking and cycling from Warren Bay to Watchet town centre in peak season.</p> <p>With respect to future communications, the Council is working on a new page for Somerset Council website that will have FAQs, to be updated regularly to reflect current information.</p> <p>Response to Q2 (Scott Wooldridge) – I can confirm that all Councillors on Somerset Council are aware of the 7 Nolan Principles of Public Life. Members received Code of Conduct training following the elections in May 2022. The principles are also set out in the Members Code of Conduct in the Council’s Constitution and that was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 22 February 2023.</p>
David Redgewell	<p>Public Transport in Somerset</p> <p>Question 1.</p> <p>What progress is being made on the Wells bus and coach station to Westbury Sub Mendip Draycott Cheddar Axbridge bus routes and connections with Winscombe Banwell Locking Weston bus and coach station, service 51.</p>

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Especially with the summer tourist season in Somerset and the need for access to Cheddar and Axbridge by public transport network.

Local residents also need access to education, colleges and university in Weston Super Mare and Weston Super Mare hospital.

This is an urgent matter for Somerset Catch the Bus Campaign, Somerset Bus Partnership, Railfuture Severnside with the main line First Group, Great Western Railway Station at Weston Super Mare. Councillors Tessa Munts and Theo Butt Phillips, Wells Bus Users Group.

Visit Somerset and Visit West South West Transport Network, Severnside Railway Partnership.

In view of the fact North Somerset Council has provided a new bus service from Cribbs Causeway bus and coach station to Portishead and Clevedon.

What progress is being made with North Somerset Council and Somerset Council on this important transport link, urgently for the summer season as a 16 seater westlink demand responsive bus service is not big enough for the transport link.

Questions 2.

What progress is being made with First Group Plc Bus Division South on the recruitment of drivers at the following bus depots: Minehead, Bridgwater, Taunton and Yeovil and First Group Plc Wales and West Bus Division on bus drivers for Wells Bus Depot in Somerset, which is subject to an electrification plan.

Is any monitoring being carried out by Somerset Council officers on the streets in Taunton and District or Minehead on the effect on passengers or discussion with the western traffic commissioner Kevin Rooney.

Questions 3.

What progress is being made on the plans to improve bus railway integration at Taunton railway station for buses and coaches with waiting shelters and passengers facilities and Taunton transport hub.

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With Network Rail, Western Route, First Group Plc, Great Western Railway, Arriva Cross Country Trains, German State Railway, Department for Transport, Severn Railway Partnership,

Heart of the West, Local Enterprises Partnership and Peninsula Transport Board.

To make bus rail integration work for the West Somerset by First Group Plc Bus 28 and the West Somerset Railway via Bishop Lydeard station. And bus 25 to Dulverton and progress on Taunton transport hub.

In the town centre for buses and coaches service on First Group Plc South Division, Buses of Somerset, National Express coaches, Megabus, Flixbus, Berrys Coaches, Hatch Green and Dartline Go Ahead Group South West.

On waiting rooms changing places toilets, cafe or snack bar, CCTV cameras and modern waiting facilities bus and rail realtime information systems.

When is a public consultation and planning application due.

David Redgewell South West Transport Network, Railfuture Severnside.

Response from: Cllr Mike Rigby, Lead Member for Transport and Digital

Driver shortage – missing miles are running at just over 1% which is close to the long-term average. more resources – borrowed drivers – 8 drivers from Cornwall.

Question 1 response

We understand that North Somerset Council are continuing to explore options to either link up a conventional registered local bus service with our 126 at Cheddar or provide a through service which Somerset Council would be asked to contribute to. At present there are no further details available, however with the recent announcement by the Department for Transport in relation to the replacement of Bus Recovery Grant with Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus funding, the future of the current 126 service is now secure in the short to medium term.

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Question 2 response.

We are receiving daily updates from Buses of Somerset regarding reliability of services from depots at Minehead, Bridgwater, Taunton and Yeovil. These updates are providing us with lost mileage information which is much improved from February 2023 when there were a significant number of cancellations. Officers met with Buses of Somerset managers on 15 May and were advised that they are currently 10 drivers short, but they continue to operate with 8 drivers provided from outside the area leaving them only two short overall which is manageable, with a steady stream of drivers currently entering their training school. We are not carrying out on street monitoring of services in Taunton at present as the operator is sharing reliability information freely with us and we are not in conversation with the Western Traffic Commissioner as we are satisfied that Buses of Somerset are doing all they can to restore and maintain reliability at this time.

For the Wells depot of First West of England we are not aware of any significant driver shortage, and we are not currently receiving complaints about reliability of services operated from this depot.

Question 3 response:

With regard to the rail station interchange, the interchange is in place, but the Trenchard Way junction works need to be completed before the buses can use it (so buses can be routed past the platform and egress from the new junction). The works being undertaken by Milestone are on-programme and will be completed in early June as originally planned. We are liaising with the local bus operators with regard to the bus stops that will be served once the interchange is operational.

The Taunton mobility hub is about to enter stage 2 feasibility. Once complete we will have a preferred layout with high level design and costings. The hub will include a waiting area with wifi and real time bus information. The feasibility study will help our understanding of what other components, such as a café, could be included. Public consultation and detailed design will take place this autumn.

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	<p>There is a changing places facility being located at the site too, that work is being done by a team within Major and Special Projects.</p>
Tess Gill	<p>Petition Cross to Axbridge Safe Path - Get the Job Done</p> <p>Thank you for this opportunity to present and speak in support of our online petition, (Cross to Axbridge Safe Path - Get the Job Done https://chnng.it/YDM92NzJWk) asking the Council to take action to ensure the right of way between Cross and Axbridge is safe and accessible to all users. This has been an objective of the Parish Council and local community for many years due to the danger to pedestrians of walking on narrow Cross Lane which is the only alternative route between Cross and Axbridge and is increasingly congested with HGV vehicles. Axbridge has the shops, school, chemist, Doctor making it an essential destination for Cross and Compton Bishop which have none.</p> <p>Our campaign was established in 2013 by the Parish Council and our first action was a procession of local people from Axbridge to Cross where we were addressed by Tessa Munt then our MP.</p> <p>In 2016 we presented our first petition to SCC and with the support of David Fothergill and local Councillor Bob Filmer work was carried out in 2020 installing a pedestrian refuge on the A38 and a pavement along Cross Lane up to the entrance to the right of way across the fields. This was a big step forward but we have had numerous reports since then of pedestrians using the right of way including children being worried by cattle. An Axbridge resident was seriously injured. One field along the way still has no fencing separating the cattle from pedestrians, the other a flimsy electric fence easily breached. The grassy surface is unsuitable for buggies and mobility scooters or for those less mobile and the gates are inaccessible for such users.</p> <p>Therefore the steps set out in the petition are also urgently needed, namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The footpath has a firm stable surface2. Stock proof fencing is installed along the whole length to ensure the safety of pedestrians, prams, children and dogs on leads;3. Any gates if necessary are accessible to all users including mobility scooters and buggies.

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	<p>We have been told there is a new programme of SIS projects that will focus on the Government’s transport priorities of carbon reduction, promoting active travel, safety and rural mobility. We believe that upgrading the right of way has excellent policy alignment with these objectives. It will stop car use for a distance of less than a mile and encourage the pleasant walk along the path with views of our beautiful countryside. Our petition which is supported by the Parish Council, Axbridge Action Group, and our County Councillors is the latest of many expressions of strong community support. The comments made by signatories to the petition attest to the dangers of Cross Lane and problems with access to and safety from cattle of walking along the right of way. As Cross Lane is the only alternative to using the right of way there is no current safe route and we would ask the Council to give it its support.</p> <p><i>Response from: Cllr Ros Wyke, Lead Member for Economy, Planning & Assets</i></p> <p>The Council wholeheartedly supports your objective to create an off-road active travel route between Cross and Axbridge. Upgrading the current RoW may be an option but will need the agreement of Landowners along the route and we suggest that initial discussions are best conducted at a local level to understand the willingness of Landowners to engage and support the proposal. Council Officers are available to give support and advice to local community representatives on the technical and legal issues that are likely to need to be explored and agreed with Landowners along the RoW.</p>
Sigurd Reimer	<p>Climate Emergency – Carbon Neutrality</p> <p>Four years ago Somerset County Council and the four District Councils declared a climate emergency. A number of positive initiatives followed in their wake, and during this period Taunton Extinction Rebellion had a number of meetings with its local Council, based on our worries about the risks from climate breakdown. In particular, we expressed, and are still expressing, concern around the evidence from United Nations scientists</p>

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	<p>of an imminent and irretrievable tipping point being reached in extreme weather patterns, caused by climate change.</p> <p>With today being the first meeting of the new Council, how realistic does it now regard achieving its aim of carbon neutrality by 2030?</p> <p><i>Response from: Cllr Sarah Dyke, Lead Member for the Environment and Climate Change</i></p> <p>We are still very much committed to doing what we can to achieve our goal of carbon neutrality by 2030. We have recently commissioned a review of the baseline emissions of the new authority and are now currently reviewing and aligning the corporate priorities from across the previous five councils with a view to reviewing and refreshing our Climate and Ecological Emergency strategy and developing a robust and costed Action Plan.</p> <p>This Action Plan and Strategy refresh will set out the steps and actions that we intend to take necessary to deliver our aims of net zero across our estate and operations, delivering a carbon neutral county, ensuring resilience to the risks of Climate Change and addressing the ecological crisis.</p>
Nigel Behan	<p>Global Warming</p> <p>As the BBC have reported: Global warming set to break key 1.5C limit for first time</p> <p>a) What steps and measures can the New Unitary Council apply to actively minimise the forecasted rise in global warming?</p> <p>“The LGA have produced a series of (Adapting to climate change) case studies:</p>

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“Highlighting best-practice communications of councils who are communicating climate change action to residents, businesses and staff.” As they assert.

- b) Does Somerset Council plan to participate in similar activities and propose meaningful, significant and practical projects – with measurable outputs etc?
- c) The NALC noted that: “Recommendations for NALC policies and services: a) As part of its range of ‘good-practice’ publications, NALC is recommended to produce one or a number of Climate Change related material, which includes ‘legal advice’ on the creative use of the powers already available to local councils, as summarised in this document b) Local councils should be given a direct power to undertake tree planting and other eco-friendly activities on a much wider range of land, beyond just their own recreational spaces and highway verges. c) The ‘section 137’ expenditure limit on community energy facilities and activities should be removed d) Local councils should be given the power to promote and operate facilities and services to recycle waste and re-use resources. e) The role and effectiveness of neighbourhood plans in relation to Climate Change should be protected and given more weight in decision-making. f) Local councils should be given a power to promote and run facilities for their local community which make effective use of ICT (Information and Communications Technology), such as community broadband systems.”

How can Somerset expand (develop further existing powers) on these proposals in a meaningful and significant way?

Response from: Cllr Sarah Dyke, Lead Member for the Environment and Climate Change

What steps and measures can the New Unitary Council apply to actively minimise the forecasted rise in global warming?

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Obviously, we are all very concerned and alarmed at the news reported last week that average global temperature will break the 1.5C threshold, set back in 2015 under the Paris agreement to limit the worse impacts of climate change, between now and 2027. Set in this global context we recognise that Somerset Council has a very limited scope to influence this issue but we still must take action to play our part in tackling this global crisis.

The first step we must take it to understand where we are generating our carbon emissions from, and we have recently commissioned a piece of work to map the carbon baseline for the new unitary council. Once we understand what our emissions are and where they arise we can then set targets, plan and take action to reduce and minimise these emissions. We can also monitor progress against this baseline.

But we are not waiting for this Baseline work to be completed, we have already undertaken many projects to cut emissions from our assets and estates, such as the investment on refurbishing County Hall B-block, Yeovil library etc and the recent successful Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) bid which will look to cut the emissions from Wellington Sports centre and Alcome Childrens home.

Work is also underway to review our newly combined transport fleet and to transition this as quickly as possible to as green a fleet as possible through the use of Electric vehicles under 3.5 tonnes and alternative fuels for some of our large fleet vehicles such as our waste and gritter fleet.

Work is underway to cut emissions from street lighting through the investment in greater energy efficient lighting and we will investigate opportunities for part night lighting where appropriate.

Improving and enhancing our natural environment will also play a significant part in tackling the climate and ecological emergency by both sequestering carbon dioxide and through the use of natural solutions to tackle issues such as flooding and improving air quality. I am pleased to say Somerset Council and partners have

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developed a Somerset Tree Strategy which will soon be adopted which has high ambitions to increase tree cover in Somerset from a very low base (7-8%) to nearer the national average of 13% and beyond. We have been successful in bidding for funding for dedicated posts to help deliver the ambitions of this Strategy from the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund.

We are also early in the process of developing our Local Nature Recovery Strategy, a statutory requirement under the Environment Act. This will look to identify those areas of Somerset where Biodiversity can be enhanced or restored to create wildlife corridors and protect and support our vulnerable species of flora and fauna, again this is being developed with key partners from across the county.

Other key elements in tackling the climate and ecological emergency will be Somerset Council transitioning all our Services to ensure that Carbon reduction and enhancing nature are key considerations within any policy decision making and that being prepared for and resilient to the impacts of climate change and that we set these parameters when procuring goods and services or letting our contracts. We will also look to use our influence, working with partners, other public sector organisations and businesses to drive action to decarbonise the wider Somerset and increase our preparedness for all that future climate change will bring.

Does Somerset Council plan to participate in similar activities and propose meaningful, significant and practical projects – with measurable outputs etc?

Within the Somerset wide Climate Emergency Strategy ‘Towards a Climate Resilient Somerset’ we state the importance of our residents taking action to tackle the climate emergency and that without their support, we will not be able to meet our 2030 Climate goals as the council’s own carbon emissions, and influence on others, is limited in the wider countywide context.

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	<p>As part of the work in preparing for the transition to a single council, we recognised the need to develop a dedicated climate and ecological emergency Communications and Engagement Plan to support and encourage Somerset’s residents to take action to cut carbon emissions, protect and enhance our natural world and to help prepare for the expected impacts of a changing climate and any extreme weather events. Officers are now in the process of developing this Communications and Engagement strategy, with support from the Communications team. The engagement will be built around attendance at key local events to promote the climate work and offer advice, communicating via social media platforms and traditional routes actions that everyone can take to both save money, but also save carbon and thematic programmes to run throughout the year targeting, for example, energy efficiency and reducing energy demand in the lead up to winter when energy use increases, or opportunities to look at active travel campaigns or biodiversity enhancements.</p> <p>How can Somerset expand (develop further existing powers) on these proposals in a meaningful and significant way?</p> <p>Somerset Council, working with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) and through the emerging Local Community Networks (LCN’s) will continue to support Town and Parish Councils develop their responses to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies. We will look to develop consistent and complimentary approaches and try to share best practice across all of the T&P councils and also encourage representatives to join our growing community of Environment Champions across the county.</p>
<p>Elizabeth Browne</p>	<p>Social Care Provision and Housing Development</p> <p>Taking future health and social care provision into account, how can it be acceptable to consider permission for major developments in Bridgwater using statements based on building space capacity rather than list sizes for primary care and available bedspace in secondary care? Also why are some developers not being asked to</p>

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	<p>contribute towards local healthcare provision whilst their proposals will have significant impacts on the above services?</p> <p><i>Response from: Cllr Heather Shearer, Lead Member for Adult Services and Cllr Ros Wyke, Lead Member for Economy, Planning & Assets</i></p> <p>See below (Sarah Baker Section) in respect of the technical note setting out the assessment process. If there is a significant impact on healthcare provision a financial contribution will be sought.</p>
Sarah Baker	<p>Social Care Provision and Housing Development</p> <p>Recently Sedgemoor District Council approved outline planning consent for Land at East Bridgwater, as approved by the planning inspectorate in the local plan for 1200 homes. This land is being developed in 3 parts, Strawberry Grange 260 homes are being built, Folletts farm 530 homes outline planning approved and, the ex Somerset County Council farm 750 homes will be coming to planning soon.</p> <p>Q1.The planning inspectorates comments in their report on the local plan, says the council could not change the number to 1300 homes, as a consultation had only been conducted for 1200. Why has Sedgemoor district changed this to a now proposal of over near 1600 homes?</p> <p>Q2. Sedgemoor District Council failed to successfully implement an actual traffic strategy to create new roads for this major application, despite all the monies from central government. Westonzoyland and Bawdrip are crumbling with traffic, along with their surface drainage systems, including Bower and Westonzoyland road who are suffering due to the construction traffic for the strawberry grange. The roads have become an unlawful night construction lorry stop. The westonzoyland bridge is crumbling with national rail evidently being a fragmented strategic partner in bridge and traffic management, especially with the previous weight restriction being</p>

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removed. Somerset County Council did comment on the local plan that the now Squibbers Way was to connect to Dunwear lane, but it did not seem that East Bridgwater land would really be used, due to the high cost of developing the land.

Q3. The follets farm outline was deferred for a pollution assessment, but instead the officers allowed the applicant to use SDC's reports that only had the nearest monitors approximately 0.5 miles away from this development, and the average mean figure accepted by the government included several months of the monitors not working. This town as a crisis of people suffering with COPD. And was still allowed to build a school with a tiny amount of land for our most vulnerable children, along side the motorway, where officers have noted they mis calculated the bund, and submitted plans for a second school to be built near.

Q4. During the planning process, the SDC housing officers response was to not approve a reduction of 10% of social housing from 30%, yet we have residents who have been on waiting lists with medical conditions for over 7 years. The social housing will be three storey flats, with triple glazing for noise, acting as sound barriers for the privately owned homes. It is stupid to believe that our most vulnerable in society are to be locked into flats, hounded by noise and poisoned with car fumes if they open their windows. How can this council resolve its social care and equalities public duty with this liability?

Q5. The follets planning application received a consultee response from the NHS that NO ONE is taking any credit for submitting, stating that the Town's GP practices have capacity to provide for all these new residents to the town! Sedgemoor District Council used to use a formula calculating a square meter formula to calculate how many patients a surgery can handle. Who is going to be held for this catastrophe, we all know how over capacity our GP surgeries are?

Response from: Cllr Heather Shearer, Lead Member for Adult Services and Cllr Ros Wyke, Lead Member for Economy, Planning & Assets

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Question 1 response:

The Planning Inspector in paragraph 111 refers to the suggestion that the allocation could accommodate 1350 dwellings. She supported the more efficient use of allocated sites but as the increase in numbers had not been put forward at earlier consultation stages she did not put it forward as a modification stating that “It would not therefore be appropriate to modify the Plan in this respect at this stage. Any increase in numbers of dwellings on the site would therefore be a matter for the Council at application stage.” In line with the Inspector’s report therefore, it is entirely appropriate for the Council to consider higher dwelling numbers based on detailed technical assessments undertaken in support of planning applications. It should also be noted that the adopted Development and Design Principles for East Bridgwater increased the allocation capacity to a minimum of 1,350 dwellings based on more detailed assessment. The current applications therefore suggest potentially 1,540 dwellings, an increase of 190 dwellings.

Question 2 Response:

It is noted that some of the concerns are related to the current construction activities and are therefore controlled through existing planning conditions in respect to the construction management plan. In respect of Squibbers Way, this was never shown in the local plan to connect to Dunwear Lane. Whilst in the past various alternative schemes were investigated these were discounted. The local plan as a whole, including the East Bridgwater allocation is supported by a transport strategy whilst individual planning applications are required to undertake a detailed transport impact assessment. Contributions have been secured to provide improvements to the strategic network including J.23/Dunball roundabout, as well as funding for local network improvements. The final stage of development will provide for the distributor road that will link Westonzoyland Road to the A39 and also enable Bower Lane to be downgraded to a “green lane” that will benefit pedestrians and cyclists.

Following the first deferral at Committee for Members to seek further clarity of the Highways Authority’s position, Highway officers re-affirmed their lack of objection to the scheme specifically setting out that the site access

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from Dunwear Lane has been designed to accommodate up to 560 dwellings and the proposed roundabout on Westonzoyland road tested for up to 1608 dwellings (+ background growth). In addition the local highway network modelling had been provided to show the dispersal of traffic from the East Bridgwater site based on an uplifted number of 1600 dwellings. This shows the number of increased movements that are predicted on various routes from the site to the town centre and towards the town's employment areas. Whilst it was accepted that a number of junctions will experience increased congestion as a result of the development, there is ongoing review of the transport model for Bridgwater and improvements are in the pipeline at the Cross Rifles roundabout and at the junction of Monmouth St and St John St. It was also acknowledged that improvements are likely to be needed to the Bath Road roundabout and potentially to St John Street including the mini roundabout near the railway station. The applicant has agreed to a substantial contribution towards off-site improvements and the highway authority did not object to the proposal on the grounds of an adverse impact on the local highway network.

Question 3 Response:

The Council's Environmental Services are a consultee on the planning applications and have assessed noise and air pollution issues. Where appropriate conditions are placed on any planning consent. Whilst air quality is an important factor to assess, currently there are no specific air quality issues at Bridgwater although this continues to be carefully monitored. The SEN school has been constructed with the appropriate amount of indoor and outdoor space, it has both sports pitches, dedicated areas for outdoor active learning and large areas of formal and informal open space. The bund and acoustic fence provide the necessary noise mitigation. As part of the East Bridgwater allocation a new primary school is planned, this has always been the case and is not related to the SEN school. This new school will again have the appropriate level of indoor and outdoor space.

Extensive assessment of noise pollution and air quality has been undertaken with the application, with the main source being the M5 motorway but the potential for the proposal to affect existing residents in terms of noise and air quality as a result of traffic movements associated with the construction and the subsequent occupation of the proposed new homes was also considered. The Environmental Health Officer concluded that the

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assessment of air quality had followed an appropriate process in order to assess the risk of any adverse impacts including the scope, methodology and compliance with the relevant standards. The officer concludes on air quality that they are satisfied with the conclusion that “Future occupants of the Proposed Scheme would not be exposed to pollutant concentrations above the relevant objective levels, therefore the effect of the Proposed Scheme with regards new exposure to air quality is considered to be negligible, which is not significant.”

Question 4 Response:

The resolution to grant for 530 dwellings at Folletts Farm is an outline application. The detailed design and layout will be set out in subsequent reserved matters applications. Therefore, the design and location of the affordable housing has not yet been determined. The reduction in affordable housing from 30% to 10% was on the basis of the submitted viability assessment that took account of all developer contributions, build costs and anticipated sales values. The Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework require the Council to take into account viability on schemes. This will be reviewed through a review clause that has been agreed to be included within the S106 Agreement and should viability prove to be better than anticipated, additional affordable housing will be secured.

Question 5 Response:

Planning North (formally Sedgemoor District Council) approved a technical note for developers on Health Contributions for GP provision. This note is published on the Council’s web site and provides the methodology for calculating whether financial contributions are required as a result of new development. This note is the same method that the NHS use to provide the Council with their response to major planning applications. In the case of Folletts Farm, the NHS re-confirmed that there was sufficient capacity within existing GP surgeries to accommodate new patients from the proposed development and therefore no additional financial contributions would be sought. It is important to note that the contributions are based on the floorspace of GP surgeries and contributions are for the capital cost of extending these where necessary (the response refers specifically to “sufficient infrastructure capacity”). This is separate from the wider funding, recruitment and retention of GP’s

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	<p>themselves that is a direct matter for the NHS. It is possible therefore that in some cases the surgeries themselves are of sufficient size but there are short term issues with recruitment/vacancies resulting in increased waiting times to see a doctor. This is not though a planning matter.</p>
Simon Peter M^cKie	<p>Library Service and OUP Reference Databases</p> <p>For many years, the Library Service has subscribed to the OUP’s suite of reference databases and made it available to library members without charge. This suite is an incomparable source of authoritative information and includes, amongst much else, the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and the Oxford English Dictionary. The OED, in particular, is a uniquely authoritative account of current and historic English usage.</p> <p>The Council, however, has not renewed its subscription and has ceased to provide the suite to the inhabitants of our County. I have been given three reasons for this decision:</p> <p><i>(1) First, I have been told that the OUP suite of programmes is little used.</i></p> <p>In fact, the suite was accessed 6,552 times last year. Greater publicity of the availability of this suite would further increase that usage. The annual subscription is, I understand, £9,600 or about £1.47p per reference. For such a valuable resource that is not expensive. What is more, simple numerical measures cannot take account of the importance of each reference. Somebody studying a Victorian novel for A Level or a degree may only consult the OED once but that may be crucial to his understanding of the work.</p> <p><i>(2) Secondly, I have been told that hard copies of the 20 volume OED are held at Frome, Taunton and Yeovil Libraries.</i></p> <p>English usage, and our understanding of its history, is changing constantly. No hard copy dictionary can be updated as quickly as an online version. Relying on a hard copy version, even if were practical, risks using outdated information. It is, in any event, not practical. To suggest that the Council’s constituents,</p>

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scattered over the whole area of Somersetshire, might travel to Frome, Taunton or Yeovil every time they need to look up a word in the OED is absurd.

(3) Thirdly, I have been told that other, perfectly adequate, dictionaries are available.

This assertion displays a shocking ignorance. There is no other dictionary of the English language which is authoritative as to English usage.

Our Libraries are an essential public service. The loss of the OUP suite of programmes will be harmful to the older children and young adults of the County as they progress through their GCSE's, A-Levels and degrees and to other adults in the County who are regular readers or writers or who are seriously interested in English language, literature, history or law.

With my Councillor's, Dawn Denton's, full support, I ask that the Council reverses this decision and again gives access to this unique suite of programmes for the benefit of the inhabitants of the County.

Response from: Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts, Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Culture

In response to financial pressures last year all services were asked to identify potential savings and one of those identified for libraries was to not renew the Oxford Online licence, which included the OED & ODNB

The rationale for this was that compared to other online resources such as e-books, e-audio, e-magazines & e-newspapers, the usage of Oxford Online was very low and offered a saving of £9,600 per annum. Furthermore, the vast majority of information covered by the OUP licence was available elsewhere online for free.

The full OED is not freely available to all online. However, extracted versions are, as are a number of alternative dictionaries from other suppliers, which are suitable for the vast majority of people's enquiries.

In addition, customers can still use hardcopy versions of the 20 volume OED at Frome, Taunton & Yeovil libraries.

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	<p>The majority of the subjects of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography are available via other free online biographical sources, with the hard copies of the ODNB we have retained covering many of the more obscure historical figures, for whom the content has not appreciably changed.</p>
Eva Bryczkowski	<p>Save Yeovil's Acute Stroke Care Services</p> <p>A group of residents got together to raise a petition against the above closure. Although the Trust ran a consultation, it was presented as if they had already decided to close it completely. The preference for closure was clearly pointed out.</p> <p>The treatment of strokes is very time sensitive. As the Trust's Dr Whiting acknowledges, 'With a stroke, what matters is the total time taken from calling 999 to having a scan and starting the right treatment.'</p> <p>Residents are worried that the large increase in drive time to Musgrove Park hospital will adversely affect how a patient will recover.</p> <p>My late younger brother Zygmunt had a stroke last year in Portsmouth. Paramedics did not get to him in time to begin quick treatment and get him to the hospital. This adversely affected him in a massive way.</p> <p>Whilst Somerset County Council does not have total control over the decisions of the Trust, both are partners in the Integrated Care Board, (ICB), which takes an overview of healthcare in the Somerset area. If SCC accepts their decision that in itself will carry some weight.</p>

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The ICB generally tends to mark its own homework, and unfortunately the SCC often acts as their mouthpiece, in my and other members of the public when we have asked questions about the proposed closure of other hospital wards.

Reading the Health and Wellbeing reports when I attended their Scrutiny Committees some time ago, the SCC often brag about how committed they are about achieving excellent physical and mental health for Somerset residents.

They monitor such stakeholders such as the ICB.

They claim to ensure that everybody in Somerset gets a very good service that meets their varied needs.

QUESTION ONE

What do County councillors think about the long term effects of delayed time sensitive treatment of strokes and how this will impact on the greater need for social care afterwards regarding extra costs for us council tax payers and the local authority?

The council is trying to save money isn't it?

QUESTION TWO

How do you feel councillors, if a loved one of yours has to travel much further after experiencing a severe stroke, when it would have been possible to keep open BOTH the unit in Yeovil and Musgrove Park?

QUESTION THREE

What can be done NOW in terms of SMART GOALS to give the best care to somerset residents?

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Response from: Cllr Heather Shearer, Lead Member for Adult Services

Thank you for your questions I intend to answer both questions with this response. Eva, please except my condolences for the loss of your brother last year who received stroke services in Portsmouth.

We all want every stroke patient in Somerset to have the best and most appropriate care possible. After a stroke, if the right specialist treatment, care, and support is received people can go on to live full and independent lives. We know that our acute hospital-based stroke services are not currently set up in the best way and that there are differences in the way these services are delivered, due to staffing pressures.

It is important that Somerset NHS commission high-quality stroke services, which are sustainable and fit for the future, which is why they are proposing to change the way acute hospital stroke services are organised in our area, so that everyone in the county will have the best opportunity to survive and thrive after a stroke.

The public consultation sought to understand views on whether hyper acute and acute stroke services should be provided at:

- one hyper acute stroke unit in Somerset and, if that is the right way forward, whether the unit be located at Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton, and;
- acute stroke services at either:
- Two acute stroke units, one at Musgrove Park Hospital and one at Yeovil District Hospital; or
- One acute stroke unit, which would need to be located at the same hospital as the hyper acute stroke unit proposed to be Musgrove Park Hospital.

The Stoke Consultation came to the Scrutiny Committee on 12 October 2022. Following a presentation on the options the Committee made the following comments:

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- Looking at the options the Committee wanted to know why there was not an option to have all the services in Yeovil. This was part of the longer list of options but was dismissed as it has proven historically very challenging to recruit Consultants to Yeovil Hospital.

- The Committee wanted to know the timescale for the consultation, and to continue to influence and debate the findings.

There is a further update planned for the Scrutiny Committee on the 31st of May and the 3rd of August.

This is a decision for NHS Somerset to make after listening closely to the consultation feedback and based on the staffing and funding pressures the system is under. NHS Somerset have not made any final decisions yet and they remain open-minded about the solution until after all the feedback, evidence and information has been analysed and considered.

Hearing the views of people throughout the consultation process was and is an important part of the decision making and will be fully taken into account alongside other essential factors such as clinical, financial and practical considerations. Any decision to proceed with the proposals will be informed by the feedback from the consultation.

All the feedback gathered during the 12-week consultation is now being analysed by an external research organisation. They will prepare a report setting out what people have said about the proposals for the NHS Somerset Board in due course.

I have been made aware by Dr Bernie Marden that NHS Somerset has reached out to the Quicksilver Community Group, who have raised the petition and invited them to meet with him and members of his team. Although the 12-week public consultation closes today they still welcome engagement with the community group.

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Ray Tostevin

See response above for both of the questions about Stroke

Petition – Save Yeovil’s Acute Stroke Care Services

Note 5k+ signatures = debate

<https://www.change.org/p/save-yeovil-s-acute-stroke-care-services>

At the time of submission of this notice to Somerset Council, close to 5,000 signatures have been added to our petition, from across the local community in south Somerset. We call on Somerset Council to add it's opposition on the proposed changes; we believe the changes would be highly detrimental to the health and wellbeing of the 180,000+ people who currently rely on Yeovil Hospital to provide healthcare.

As stated in our petition:

"It is widely recognised that the first 45 minutes after onset are crucial to recovery for a stroke patient. The additional time taken for patients, currently served by YDH, in transporting them to the Hyper-Acute Stroke unit at Musgrove in Taunton is likely to have significant detrimental consequences to their subsequent recovery."

We urge councillors to join us in lobbying NHS Somerset (aka Integrated Care Board) to reject the planned closure of Hyper-Acute Stroke care at YDH, as a matter of urgency. We understand the consultation period has officially closed. NHS Somerset have engaged an outside consultancy to study the results of that consultation and to provide NHS Somerset, with its findings, over coming months.

We understand there is a full council meeting on Wednesday 24th May and hope that this petition and proposal can be discussed at that meeting as a question from the public. If it is possible for our representatives to attend the meeting, we should be very grateful if you could indicate where and when the meeting will take place.

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	<p><i>Response from: Cllr Bill Revans, Leader of the Council</i></p> <p>It is recognised that this is an important issue for Hyper-Acute and Acute Stroke care in Somerset. This matter has previously been debated and discussed at the Council’s Scrutiny for Policies Adults and Health Committee on 8 March 2023. We acknowledge that the level of change proposed by Somerset NHS Foundation Trust is of significant concern to our communities. We are aware that our partners in the Somerset Integrated Care System have undertaken a public consultation on the provision of Hyper-Acute and Acute Stroke care in Somerset and that that consultation is now closed, and the outcome awaited. However, on behalf of Somerset Council, I will write to our partners forwarding the petition and supporting information urging them to give full consideration to the issues that are raised and to set out clearly to us how these concerns will be mitigated depending upon which decision the Somerset NHS Foundation Trust takes.</p>
Annexe B – Member Questions	
Name of person submitting	Question
Cllr Andy Dingwall	<p>Coronation Celebrations Cost</p> <p>I am sure like myself, others in the council were delighted to see Somerset Council engage in a broad range of celebrations for the Kings Coronation and to see our new branding on various promotional items.</p>

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I would like to understand how much – in terms of both money and resources – the council allocated to marking this historic event in each of our major towns, specifically:

- Taunton
- Yeovil
- Bridgwater
- Frome

Response from: Cllr Mike Best, Chair of Council

The only events in the county supported directly by Somerset Council were the activities in Taunton.

These activities were initiated by Somerset West and Taunton Council who began planning for the Coronation event in December 2022. SWT was historically responsible for events and the Mayoralty in Taunton as it was the only part of Somerset not to have a city, town or parish council as a result of local government reorganisation in 1974.

Funding of £40,000 was carried across from the former SWT's Economic Development' budget. Somerset Music contributed to production and staffing costs using £4,300 of the £12,000 grant funding it had received from Music for Youth to deliver the musical festival element of the event in Vivary Park as part of the 'King's Coronation Bandstand Project'.

Events such as this in towns in Somerset are usually be organised by the relevant town council as several town councils did to mark the Coronation.