



QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Thursday 5 December 2024

**1. QUESTION FROM KIM STURGESS (in attendance)
Re: Road closure from Dartmouth to Warfleet**

It has now been 9 months since the public road from Dartmouth to Warfleet DCC maintain collapsed. On 22 February DCC closed this vital link used by all Warfleet residents. To date no repairs have been started and all residents plus police, fire and ambulances have to make the 6 mile round trip to get to and from Warfleet.

Do you care about the residents of Warfleet?

A caring council would have by now repaired and reopened the road.
A caring council would send letters to all Warfleet residents updating them on progress and providing them a targeted date for reopening the road.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

We appreciate local residents' frustration with the wall collapse at Ravensbury Drive, Dartmouth in February of this year.

Devon County Council does not own the land on which the wall was built and has been liaising with the two landowners since mid-March but with mixed levels of engagement. There is an ongoing dispute as to ownership and who is liable for the wall, as well as the root cause of the problem. Devon County Council on multiple occasions have tried to work alongside the landowners to remedy the situation however have been unsuccessful so far. Our officers have received delayed responses and had to adhere to third party processes for example loss adjustors and external surveyors who have their own lead times.

Devon County Council is considering their position regarding enforcement whether that be issuing the appropriate notices under the Highway Act or considering prosecution.

Unfortunately, the road was closed because it is not safe to use in its current state and bollards had to be temporarily installed because the barriers that were placed there kept being moved.

**2. QUESTION FROM CATHY MUDGE (in Attendance)
Re: Review of Child Policies**

Thank you for your offer to remove certain concerning information on the Devon Council Website regarding advice for children up to the age of 18 years.

Has the Council undertaken a critical review of their LGB and gender questioning child policies in light of the Cass Report 2024, if not when will you undertake this review and how will you ensure you have the views of sex realists, like myself, or other groups like the Women's Rights Network (Of which I am a member) involved, not just transactivists like Intercom Trust and Proud 2 Be. Without this review, you are continuing to support the gender affirming or transactivist approach embedded in both education and social work guidance promoted by the Council.

I look forward to your answer.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER

The Cass Review was in relation to NHS services, the County Council is not a health provider and does not run Gender Identity Development Services. We have already provided a response to your question about policy and guidance review, which was provided for full Council on 5th September.

**3. QUESTION FROM JENNY DINGSDALE (in attendance)
Re: Outcomes for Children with Protected Characteristics**

Working Together to Safeguard Children defines safeguarding as preventing impairment of children's mental or physical health or development. It says "information is sought, analysed, shared, and broken down by protected characteristics to facilitate more accurate and timely decision-making for children and families, and to understand outcomes for different communities of children."

Are you doing this? What can you tell me about the outcomes for children with the protected characteristics of gender reassignment, for children with additional protected characteristics such as care experience, and different communities of children affected by gender ideology, such as children of transitioners?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER

Due to data protection and limitations of small numbers in data we are unable to provide this information to you. Any concerns about a child with gender incongruence would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by practitioners who are trained to the highest standards of safeguarding, with referrals made to mental health and gender identity NHS services for specialist support to the child and family where necessary.

**4. QUESTION FROM DAVID CHAPPELL (in attendance)
Re: Investments in Devon Pension Fund**

Are Devon County Council and the Devon Investment and Pension Fund Committee aware that since Israel's onslaught on Gaza commenced in October 2023, some Devon Pension Fund investments in companies arming Israel's attacks with bombs, mortars, tank shells, missiles, armoured bulldozers, and fighter planes, have doubled, trebled, quadrupled, or risen even more?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR MORRISH

The briefing note provided to the Investment and Pension Fund Committee in relation to the notice of motion on Pension Fund investments included an analysis of the investment exposure to companies believed to be selling arms to Israel as at 30th June 2024, based on the 11 companies named by the United Nations Human Rights Commission: [States and companies must end arms transfers to Israel immediately or risk responsibility for human rights violations: UN experts | OHCHR](#)

It is acknowledged that there may be other relevant companies that were not included in the list. However, this subject was given a full airing at the Investment and Pension Fund Committee.

The Devon Pension Fund does not directly own shares or bonds in any individual companies. The Devon Fund owns units in funds managed by the Brunel Pension Partnership through its appointed managers, including Legal and General Investment Management, who manage the Global Developed Paris Aligned Benchmark Passive Fund which represents 50% of the Devon Fund's equity allocation and 25% of the total Devon Fund's investments.

During the Autumn of 2023, the Devon Pension Fund consolidated its passive equity allocation in the Global Developed Paris Aligned Benchmark Passive Fund, which involved divestment from the previous Global Developed Passive Fund and a UK Passive Fund. The effect of this would have been to reduce the exposure to UK listed companies, and increase the investment exposure to companies listed outside the UK.

The Global Developed Paris Aligned Benchmark Fund is a passive fund, which means it is designed to track a benchmark which in this case comprises over 1000 global companies. Each company is weighted based on a formula taking into account its market capitalisation (number of shares issued x share price) in proportion to the total market capitalisation of the global market adjusted by carbon emissions data. The increased investment in the Global Developed Paris Aligned Benchmark Fund would have led to the purchase of shares of all the companies in the index to maintain the same proportionate weighting. There is not an investment team or individual making decisions as to which shares to buy. Arms manufacturers are excluded from the benchmark if they manufacture controversial weapons (biological and chemical weapons, cluster munitions, anti-personnel landmines), rather than with reference to who they sell their weapons

to. Lockheed Martin and RTX are excluded from the Fund on that basis. This exclusion policy is also applied to Brunel's active equity and bond portfolios. In response to the motion referred from Council, the Investment and Pension Fund Committee agreed to recommend that Officers and members engage in conversations with Brunel representatives and other pool members on ensuring that the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are fully reflected in investment policies. This will involve discussing with Brunel the potential to widen the exclusion policy.

**5. QUESTION FROM NEIL MARTIN (in attendance)
Re: Floating Bus Stops**

With the RNIB, Guide Dogs & Bus Users UK, all having raised concerns about the safety and accessibility of floating bus stops for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Why does DCC seem stubborn and reluctant to review the Rifford Road proposal that are introducing 3 Floating Bus Stops, without the support of the RNIB which it met in 15/5/23 and which the Rep clearly stated that they did not approve of the Floating Bus stops, contrary to previous answers given to the council by Cllr Hughes?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

I explained in my response to a Member of the Public question at 11 September 2024 Cabinet that there was a meeting involving the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) local representative to consider the details of the Rifford Road scheme. There was support for the proposed scheme including the use of bright colours on the cycle path for contrast with the pedestrian paths and use of trapezoidal kerbs to provide additional guidance for visually impaired people crossing the segregated paths. This was considered a preferable solution to the shared space alternative. Since then, there has been a further review with a site meeting held in September 2024 involving visually impaired representatives from Devon In Sight, Guide Dogs and the Devon County Council sensory team. Feedback from that meeting indicated that there is little further which could be done to improve the bus stops for visually impaired people. A further meeting will be arranged with the visually impaired representatives once the scheme is completed.