

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

COUNCIL: 24 FEBRUARY 2021

ITEM 9: REPLIES TO ANY QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL BY MEMBERS SUBMITTED UNDER PART 4, COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES, PARAGRAPH 10 OF THE CONSTITUTION

(a) To consider the following question submitted by Councillor Luggar

“Can North Devon Council please consider being the lead on a formal bid to the Department of Transport (DfT) for funding from the Restoring our Railways project for the Taw Link. The speculative bid last year was warmly received and while not initially successful we have a very strong chance of being awarded funding to allow us to do engineering and economic feasibility studies. This will allow us to be in a position to make the full business case at a later date.”

Councillor Worden’s response:

“The Council has been involved with and supported this project for some time. The bid can be submitted by a community group and it is suggested that this is the more appropriate route. If the Council were to act as lead, if successful the procurement of the consultant to carry out the required work would need to be undertaken in accordance with the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules and the rules relating to public procurement. It is suggested that a bid submitted by the community group but submitted with the Council’s support would be more appropriate.”

(b) To consider the following question submitted by Councillor Walker

“During discussions regarding moving more of the council contact services online, we as councillors were assured they would also be available offline. I have been made aware, by a ward member, that they tried to renew their parking permit recently and were told “they had to do this online and there is no other option. I queried this with the head of service and was told this was correct.

In my ward, as with many in North Devon, we have an older demographic. Many have little or no computer skills, some have no interest in the internet and have no internet access.

Please could we have assurance that there will be an offline method to do everything so we are not discriminating against those who are not computer literate and/or have no access to the internet?”

Councillor Worden’s response:

“It is the case that the Council has been expanding the range of services that can be accessed online. The benefits to both the council and the customer are clear but we are of course aware that there are a significant number of our population who are not able to, or do not wish to, access services online. In that case, Customer Services staff will try and assist any members of the public over the telephone. The online permit system is one where offline options are limited so the team will look at this further.”