

# Public Agenda Pack



## **EXECUTIVE**

**Monday, 7 October 2024**

**10.00 am**

**John Meikle Room, The Deane House,  
Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE**

### **SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA**

To: The members of the Executive

We are now able to enclose the following information which was unavailable when the agenda was published:

Agenda Item 4      Public Question Time (Pages 3 - 4)

The Chair to advise the Committee of any items on which members of the public have requested to speak and advise those members of the public present of the details of the Council's public participation scheme.

For those members of the public who have submitted any questions or statements, please note, a three minute time limit applies to each speaker and you will be asked to speak before Councillors debate the issue.

We are now live webcasting most of our committee meetings and you are welcome to view and listen to the discussion. The link to each webcast will be available on the meeting webpage, please see details under 'click here to join online meeting'.

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## Executive Committee – 7<sup>th</sup> October 2024 – Public Questions

Name of person submitting	Public Questions Question
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 3</p>	<p>Following reports on ITV News regarding the future of the Willow Man sculpture near Junction 23 of the M5, can the executive please provide clarity on the following points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How was the £1m figure for its repair or replacement derived?</li> <li>2. Is the council exploring whether S106 or CIL can be used from either the Gravity site or other developments in the wider Bridgwater area?</li> </ol> <p><i>Note – as per PQT rules only two questions can be asked and will be answered at the meeting. Written responses only to be provided to questions 3 and 4.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. If the impending Dunball roundabout is completed under budget, is there any scope for siphoning that remaining funding off to go towards regenerating the Willow Man?</li> <li>4. Has the £35,000 provided by National Highways to explore the sculpture's future been entirely spent, and if so what was it spent on?</li> </ol> <p>Here's the ITV news link for reference: <a href="https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2024-09-26/future-of-m5s-willow-man-in-doubt-as-re-build-cost-could-hit-1m">https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2024-09-26/future-of-m5s-willow-man-in-doubt-as-re-build-cost-could-hit-1m</a></p> <p><b>Response from Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture and Equalities and Diversity</b></p>
<p><b>Brenda Orr</b></p>	<p>My name is Brenda Orr. I am a retired secondary teacher with 40 years of experience. I bring my values and educational ethos as a teacher here today.</p> <p>I am asking for a Governance review in your forward plan to address deficiencies in the “Unreasonable Customer” policy: a review of when and how “vexatious” allegations can be made; a review of when and how individual service users can be named across the organisation.</p>

## Executive Committee – 7<sup>th</sup> October 2024 – Public Questions

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You are the elected members. You are in charge of policies, values and behaviours in this new council. I do not believe in a “commissioning council” with key services being outsourced or privatised. I voted for a change to the old policies and values of the former County Council. I am disappointed that we aren’t seeing much change to date in this new council. Is this due to inheriting from the County Council an Officer Corps that is inculcated in the “commissioning council” culture?

The “Unreasonable Customer” policy is applied by officers, without any of you approving it or exercising proper oversight. That cannot be good governance and wouldn’t happen in any school in which I worked. Should the Executive Councillor(s) for the related portfolios approve any unreasonable customer designations, before they are applied?

To protect a Council policy position, is it acceptable for officers to have the power to potentially silence citizens with genuine concerns, through the possible mis-application of the “Unreasonable Customer” policy, without your elected oversight?

Does the Unreasonable Customer policy require an Executive Councillor’s approval, before the individual is named and identified to All Councillors and/or to staff via Managers briefing them? Does the individual alleged to be an unreasonable customer, have the right to see what has been written about them to All Councillors and/or managers and their staff, or is it acceptable for that to be hidden from them?

There is no vexatious policy in this council. Why not? When vexatious allegations are made, but kept hidden from the alleged unreasonable customer, what redress do they have by policy, to restore their good name and character? If the claims of “vexatious behaviours” were erroneously made, would the redress correction go to everyone previously informed?

The Local Government Ombudsman describes the huge imbalance of power when a large council alleges “vexatious behaviours” against a single individual. As a teacher, I would caution this Council to be very careful about the application of “vexatious behaviours”, as it could be seen as bullying and intimidation, especially when controversial public policies are involved.

I ask for your assurances today that the issues I have raised will be fully addressed.

**Response from Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture and Equalities and Diversity**