

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

Name of person submitting	Annexe A – Public Questions Question
Keith Elliot	<p>Question 1a -</p> <p>Somerset Council, SDAS and SSDAP: an overly-long tale of deficit, duplicity and dysfunction.</p> <p>Identify the worst restaurant chain in the country serving the most unpalatable and probably noxious food, then promise it greatly augmented funding with the only proviso that it increases portion size. No other changes required.</p> <p>As analogies go, that's disturbingly close to the government's current 'From Harm to Hope' 10 year strategic plan for cutting the supply and demand for drugs in our communities and "delivering a high quality treatment and recovery system".</p> <p>In 2021 Dame Carol Black's government-commissioned enquiry into services in this domain concluded that "since 2012 the government has entrusted all decision making on drug treatment services to local authorities with virtually no accountability or recognised standards". Yet this exact-same fatally-flawed commissioning and delivery paradigm has received 3 years of highly significant funding uplift throughout the country contingent almost exclusively upon increasing adult service user numbers by 20% and youth service numbers by 50%. Somerset's share over 3 years has been 2.8 million pounds equating to a 20% budgetary supplement for that period.</p> <p>Dame Carol got it spot on. "No accountability or recognised standards" perfectly characterises the state of drug and alcohol services in Somerset even prior to 2012 and dating back to when Turning Point first won the Somerset commission from the NHS in 2008.</p> <p>It is also exactly what I've been reflecting to Somerset (County) Council for over 10 years now and which has been met with a stridently irresponsible response throughout, refusing to countenance any of the manifest failings repeatedly highlighted. Its instinct for evasion and gaslighting in these matters has been of Post Office proportions but unfortunately many many more individuals in Somerset will have lost their lives and had their futures stunted as a result of this council's fatal indifference than ever resulted from the Horizon scandal, for that is the inevitable cost of the overwhelming clinical deficits evidenced year on year by this service.</p>

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

	<p>The council has required me to remove at this point, and at others elsewhere in this tract, references to council posts and generic postholders whom I believe to have been highly unobservant of their Duties of Care, and I have complied with its wishes in order to bring these matters to your attention.</p> <p>I hope you will all read on and respond mindfully given the Duty of Care accorded to each and every one of you by your important and influential public roles:</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Public Health, Climate Change and Environment, Councillor Graham Oakes</p>
Brian Clarke	<p>Question 2a – PETITION (no debate – less than 5000 signatures)</p> <p>My name is Brian Clarke. I have been diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease and depend on a wheelchair to get around Wells. I am here to present to you a petition signed in Wells by more than 1400 people – 1400 being the number of blue badge holders in Wells. Many of the signatories are people who have serious accessibility issues like me and are now effectively co-complainants. The petition demands that you take immediate steps to end discrimination against disabled people, by addressing the complaints and recommendations made in the Wells Pavements Accessibility Survey 2023.</p> <p>In December 2023 I co-authored and submitted, to Duncan Sharkey, Mickey Green, David Carter, Tessa Munt, Adam Dance and Richard Wilkins, a printed copy of this survey.</p> <p>It describes in clear detail the poor and discriminatory pavement and road infrastructure in Wells that places me at disadvantage and considerable risk compared with able-bodied people. It identifies multiple examples that show how the current environment in Wells places Somerset Council in breach of its statutory duties in relation to the Highways Act 1980, the Road Traffic Act 1988 and the Equalities Act 2020.</p> <p>The report may look like an academic report, but it is a formal complaint from a disabled, vulnerable person. Since December 2023, neither I nor my co-authors Theo van Hensbergen and Bob Payne have received any meaningful written response from any representative of the Council – just one acknowledgement last month.</p> <p>It is not unreasonable of me to have expected a response with your plans in the interval and for some of the very worst issues to have been remediated.</p> <p>I suggest to you that, in relation to Highways planning and delivery, you urgently need to address the total disconnect between your Council’s policy and the outcomes you deliver. To quote from your stated Somerset Equality Objectives 2024 to 2026 - “By 2025, and by working with partners from across the County, improve access to, and information about, public amenities and services for those residents who are otherwise excluded by disability.”</p> <p>I see no evidence of your policy’s outcomes in Wells.</p>

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

	<p>My question is: “Does Somerset Council have any intention of remediating the serious discriminatory issues identified in the survey, which blight people’s experience of living in Wells”?</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Transport and Waste, Councillor Richard Wilkins</p>
<p>David Redgewell</p>	<p>Question 3a With the public Consultation on Taunton Transport hub no completed What is the progress on passengers and staff facilities at the new Transport hub such passengers waiting rooms information point. Working with Taunton Town Council and public Transport users’ groups. Transport providers and regional authorities Peninsula Transport Board. Catering concession, Toilet including changing places toilets, Quality waiting shelters, for bus passengers and National Express coaches limited Flixbus coaches, Berry's coach services Realtime information systems for bus coach and Train services CCTV and staff accommodation for First Group plc South buses, Go head Southwest buses, Stagecoach Southwest and Hatch Green and operational offices In both buildings 1 and 2. Now the Consultation has closed and input from public Transport companies like First group plc South buses Division Stagecoach west and National Express coaches including accessible area to lower wheelchair rumps on coach services Avon and Somerset police and crime commissioner. Do we now have an opening date for Taunton Transport hub in spring 2025 So, passengers can use a warm well lite Transport hub instead of some of the poor passenger facilities in Taunton And any progress on the similar bus and coach station rebuilding and passenger facilities at Yeovil bus and coach station, with waiting room, Toilets Kiosk / catering and staff accommodation.</p> <p>Question 3b It's Great to see bus coach and Public Transport users stalls by Somerset bus partnership and other Transport users groups across Somerset in unity Somerset council, Banes and North Somerset council, But after all the good. Work in catch the bus month When bus and coach users turn up at bus stop shelters bus and coach station Railway stations and Transport interchanges the often fund out date bus timetables and bus and coach services number for bus services that no longer run and damage bus shelters In Somerset unity council, Banes and North Somerset council area. Especially on cross boundary services Like 376, 375 374 Yeovil bus and coach station to Bristol Temple meads station and Bristol Bus and coach station via street, Glastonbury and Wells bus and coach station 374 Taunton Town centre soon to be the</p>

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

Transport hub to street, Glastonbury Wells bus and coach station to Bristol Temple meads station and Bristol Bus and coach station, 375 Bridgwater bus and coach station, Bridgwater Hospital Glastonbury, Wells bus and coach station and Bristol Temple meads station and Bristol Bus and coach station D2x Bath spa bus and coach station to Odd Down Peasedown St John Radstock Withington, Buckland, Dinham and Frome Town centre, Sainsburys or Railway station. D2 Bath spa bus and coach station, Midford. Norton St Philips Rode Beckington and Frome Sainsburys. 171, 172, 173 .174 Bath spa bus and coach Peasedown St John Radstock Westfield Midsomer Norton, Chilcompton Shepton Mallet Paulton and Wells bus and coach station. Shepton interchange next to Tesco has out of date services number on the bus stops Bus stops along service 161 Shepton Mallet interchange to Frome Town centre as an example

Many timetables case has timetable displays that are unreadable. The font size being too small for passengers who are partly sighted. The West of England Mayoral Combined Transport Authority and North Somerset Council use a larger size as does Wiltshire Council and Devon.

There is a need to install Real time information displays at Wells bus and coach station and other key bus and coach station in the unity council area. Yeovil bus and coach station when rebuilt, Bridgwater bus and coach station Minehead Town Centre. Does the council have plans to improve passenger information displays and plans on where to catch your public transport Network services at main interchanges or produce a county Network map. And take action with city Town and parish councils to remove graffiti and Repair bus stops and shelters and improve passengers' information.

Question 3c

With the Labour government policy on Devolution and taking back control of Bus, coach and railway services.

With more local and regional control of Railways network. Including Regional Railway services like Metro West railway south services. Between Bristol Temple Meads, Bedminster, Parson Street, Nailsea and Backwell, Yatton for Clevedon, Worle Parkway Weston Milton Weston Super Mare, Highbridge and Burnham on Sea Bridgwater, Taunton Wellington, Cullompton Exeter St Davids and Exeter Central. With the new stations at Cullompton and Wellington with bus interchange.

What discussion at Somerset Unity Council having with North Somerset Council, Banes and West of England Mayoral Combined Transport Authority Western Gateway Transport Board and Peninsula Transport Board the Greater Southwest Partnership. About a Regional Devolution deal. Including Franchising powers for the bus and coach Network or Municipalisation of the bus and coach Network.

David Redgewell Southwest Transport Network.

Response from Lead Member for Transport and Waste, Councillor Richard Wilkins

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

Nigel Behan	<p>Question 4a - We would like to speak on matters related to Agenda Item (Motion) 10: Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and protecting Somerset pensioners</p> <p>Unite the Union is running a campaign To Defend the Winter Fuel Payment</p> <p>Noting that: “The Labour government’s plan to slash entitlement to Winter Fuel Payment have shocked millions of UK pensioners.”</p> <p>And: “In response, Unite has launched a national campaign to defend the Winter Fuel Payment. If enough of us take action, we can change the government’s plans and help all our pensioners keep warm this winter.”</p> <p>Additionally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pensioners’ winter fuel allowance - CUT- Cap on social care costs - SCRAPPED- Energy bills this winter - RISING AGAIN <p>“After 14 years of Tory cuts, Labour could have chosen to tax the wealthy to fix broken Britain. Instead, they have chosen more cuts.”</p> <p>Does the Council agree that:</p> <p>“Why should pensioners pay the price?</p> <p>[The] Labour [government] does not need to choose austerity. Energy company profits have more than trebled since before the pandemic and the 50 richest families in Britain own a combined £500 billion in wealth - the same as half the UK population. The wealth is there in our society, and [The] Labour [government] could choose to tax it.”</p> <p>Does the Council (motion) request for “....a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty” envisage the suggested proposals set out immediately above and/or some other redistributive/fairer solution?</p> <p>Question 4b – In the introduction to the Open consultation Proposed changes to bus franchising guidance Published 9 September 2024(Proposed changes to bus franchising guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)) it is stated that:</p> <p>“The government is determined to deliver better bus services, grow passenger numbers and drive opportunity to under-served regions. Bus services support our missions to kickstart economic growth and break down barriers to opportunity by connecting people to education and employment opportunities. It is clear, however, that the current system where services are predominantly</p>

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

run on a commercial basis and bus operators decide on the routes and provision is not delivering for communities across England. This has led to declining levels of bus services and passenger numbers.

The government has pledged to fix this and has developed a plan for delivering better buses, centred around supporting local transport authorities to take back control of their local services.”

Will SC (the LTA) incorporate service users’ responses to the questions in the consultation to be submitted to the DfT (“The consultation began on 9 September 2024 and will run until 7 October 2024. Please ensure that your response reaches us before the closing date.”)? The questions include:

(These questions are listed here to give you an overview of what we are asking.

See the [Ways to respond section of the GOV.UK page for this consultation](#) for an online response form and other ways to respond.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to lower the consent threshold that LTAs are required to meet to prepare a bus franchising scheme assessment and why?

Do you have any other comments on the consent threshold that LTAs are required to meet to prepare a franchising scheme assessment?

Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to revise the approach to the option identification and why?

Do you have any other comments on the proposal to revise the approach to option identification?

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes to reduce the content LTAs need to provide in the franchise assessment and why?

Do you have any other comments on the proposed changes to the franchise assessment?

Do you agree or disagree with the addition of the section entitled ‘putting people at the heart of franchising’ and why?

What, if any, suggestions do you have on how the franchising guidance could better:

- support the delivery of the government’s missions
- promote the government’s objectives?

Do you have comments on any other parts of the guidance?)

Response from (Q4a) Lead Member for Adult Services, Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Sarah Wakefield and (Q4b) Lead Member for Transport and Waste, Councillor Richard Wilkins

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

Amy Frend	<p>Question 5a – PETITION (debate – more than 5000 signatures)</p> <p>A361 East Lyng speed limit My name is Amy and I have been a resident of East Lyng for just over a year. I started the petition to try and get the speed limit reduced on a section of the A361 due to my concerns of the safety to both drivers and pedestrians. This particular section of the road has a speed limit of 50mph which is often ignored and vehicles travel in excess of this. It's a busy stretch of road with agricultural vehicles and lorries passing through constantly. My house is on one side of the road and a housing estate opposite comprising of about 15 homes. As drivers we are dealing with near misses on a daily basis, pulling out or into the junction or one of the many well used driveways due to a campsite and cider farm being located here is at times extremely dangerous, cars will often go to overtake as you start to slow in readiness to turn, which is just an accident waiting to happen. My biggest concern though is for the safety of pedestrians, children cross the road daily for the school bus along with the users of the public bus. Residents have to walk in the road to get to the main part of the village to access either the church or village hall. Not being able to use these services or attend events in the village leave people feeling isolated and not part of the community. Less than 300 metres away the 30 mph zone starts as you enter the main part of the village, I feel this needs to be extended to at least Staggs Farm which is 1/2 mile down the road, there are then bends in the road causing people to naturally slow down. Myself and the 15,000 plus people who signed the petition feel something needs doing about this section of the A361 before anyone else tragically losses their life, thank you for listening.</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Transport and Waste, Councillor Richard Wilkins</p>
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Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

Annexe B – Member Questions	
Name of person submitting	Question
<p>Cllr Mark Healey</p>	<p>Question 1a - It appears that the council has resource issues regarding the amount of planners we have. This affects the public and business alike. Regarding the delivery of new and affordable housing.</p> <p>The council needs to understand that the length of time gaining planning permission in some cases taking literally years to achieve let alone the increase burden of ever-increasing costs to the developer and public alike, this has a knock-on effect. I have read the document regarding planning and transport, I will concentrate on planning, which appears to be aspirational, one of my questions is, how do you intend to deliver what is within the said document when there is little or no money to achieve what is written?</p> <p>It saddens me that the most complaints I am receiving to date is regarding planning, Which I am sure fellow colleagues must be getting as well.</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Assets, Councillor Mike Rigby</p>
<p>Cllr Leigh Redman</p>	<p>It has been known for some time that EDFe have been breaching the previously agreed uplifted workforce number on site, originally the limit was 5600 set by the DCO and had attached financial penalties should they breach this with financial payments being due if the number of staff exceed limits in specific areas, the monitoring is done by HPC. The limits were put in place to ensure EDFe encourage a fair spread of their staff across all areas, limiting concentrations in villages and towns closer to site (travel time to site was always going to be instrumental and increased pockets of staff in some areas would negatively impact on local people by increasing rental costs and decreasing available property for them).</p> <p>There was an uplift agreed that covered an increase for the numbers already on site, uplifting to 8600.</p> <p>For many months there have been in the region of 11,000 workers on site and living in our communities. It looks like we will be asked to agree an uplift that would see more than double the originally agreed number of staff working on site...</p> <p>Question 2a - Can I ask the executive member when we will see topic papers and have an opportunity to discuss the uplift? Can I ask that SC officers and members are given the necessary time to adequately review and respond? and if necessary, have any mitigation backdated, reflecting the fact that EDFe, likely, first breached the 8,600 agreed number early in 2024?</p>

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

	<p>I am conscious that officers are already busy dealing with normal HPC works, can I ask that we push for EDFe to fund any necessary officer/legal support in SC to ensure we can respond to their further increase application without impacting day to day works?</p> <p>Question 2b - Can I ask that when we do respond we ensure that there is more detailed location information of where their staff are living and an independent body be employed, at their cost, with monitoring and reporting, as the current self-administered system is not working?</p> <p>Thank you and Stay safe,</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Assets, Councillor Mike Rigby</p>
<p>Cllr Susannah Hart</p>	<p>Cllr Faye Purbrick asking on behalf of Cllr Hart</p> <p>This question is raised in the context of a number of tradesmen approaching their elected representatives to seek redress for the failure of payments being made to them, for works already undertaken on the Life Factory Project, which forms part of the Glastonbury Town Deal suite of projects. It is understood that an independent audit of the finances of the Life Factory and the other projects administered by the Red Brick Building is currently being undertaken and we look forward to a timely publication of the report</p> <p>Question 3a - Payments are apparently outstanding for over six months, to tradesmen who were deliberately chosen because they were small, local firms. Such small businesses simply cannot remain in business without payment. We ask therefore, on their behalf, when can all outstanding payments expect to finally be received?</p> <p>Question 3b - The last published minutes of the Town Deal Board refer to the Life Factory as being “a project of concern” and state that the outcome would be “at best a watertight shell”, given that the scaffolding is currently being removed and the timber beams will, as such, be exposed to the elements, as we move in to winter, is it really likely that even this minimal outcome can be achieved?</p> <p>Question 3c - Furthermore, at present 74% of the £3 Million allocated to project has already been spent, only to result in a roofless structure, in all honesty has there been any consideration of the voracity of the entire scheme in terms of value for public money spent?</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Assets, Councillor Mike Rigby</p>

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

<p>Cllr Diogo Rodrigues</p>	<p>Question 4a - Could the council inform me, Westonzoyland Parish Council, and concerned parish residents, of the progress, decisions or action relating to the Parish Councils request for enforcement investigations relating to 3 separate areas of the Towens Weston Site, Springwat Lane, Westonzoyland Airport.</p> <p>The parish council first raised concerns to this council back on 9th August 2023, covering areas of concern around transport, environmental impact and potential breaches of planning conditions. The Parish Council provided further detail in December 2023 and again more detail in June/July of this year, but are yet to see any change or adequate response.</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Assets, Councillor Mike Rigby</p>
<p>Cllr Andy Dingwall</p>	<p>This question is regarding the ongoing use of Deane House.</p> <p>Following attendance at a recent committee meeting, I was made aware of the significant personal efforts that the Democratic Services Team are having to make in order to ensure the JMR facility at Deane House is operational. This includes coming in hours before their working day starts on a Monday morning to set up, and moving heavy equipment on a Wednesday lunchtime in time for the tenants who occupy the room for the second half of the week. This is often done without the aid of facilities teams.</p> <p>I am also aware of the effort that senior leaders, managers and others from the wider team must make to move between County Hall to Deane House for specific meetings or presentations. Making the journey by foot must waste many hours of productive time. Making the journey by car, while quicker, adds to traffic, pollution and cost of fuel and does not make for a more sustainable Somerset.</p> <p>With this in mind, please could I have information on the following points:</p> <p>Question 5a - The actual cost of maintaining a presence in Deane House for Monday to Wednesday Lunchtime Question 5b - The estimated cost of resource for the teams movements between County Hall and Deane House – this would be based on the transit time, both ways, per person per meeting, and the average hourly wage for those in attendance of the meeting (that tend to be senior level managers) Question 5c - The unpaid, voluntary effort required by council team members in order to ensure the room is ready for business Question 5d - A review of the actual or reputational risk involved in being unable to handle public meetings for 50% of the working week Question 5e - A cost assessment of re-opening County Hall for public meetings</p>

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

	<p>Question 5f - An understanding of the strategic long term view for the councils provision of public meetings</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Assets, Councillor Mike Rigby</p>
<p>Cllr David Fothergill</p>	<p>The Future of Taunton’s Brewhouse Theatre</p> <p>There is widespread concern in the County Town about the lack of support from this Council for the Brewhouse Theatre, Taunton.</p> <p>Question 6a - Given the extensive support that has now been extended to Bridgwater Arts Centre and the Octagon Theatre in Yeovil can the Executive Member please confirm what future support is planned for the Brewhouse in Taunton.</p> <p>Question 6b - Can she also confirm that the future of the Theatre and its environs will be secured by a fully funded asset transfer to the Taunton Town Council and give a target date for the transfer.</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture and Equalities and Diversity, Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts</p>
<p>Cllr David Fothergill</p>	<p>Following my question at a recent Executive meeting on the lack of 5-year Electrical Safety Certificates it was reported in the publication, Somerset Confidential that the Council had confirmed 378 homes properties did not have the legal certificate. In the article a Council spokesman is quoted as saying ‘<i>whilst we cannot demonstrate 100% compliance with certification at this time, we do not let properties that are unsafe</i>’.</p> <p>This was taken within the article to indicate that the 378 homes without certificates are not currently let. Please can you confirm that this is the case.</p> <p>Question 7a - Are all properties without a 5-year certificate unoccupied and if not how many are occupied?</p> <p>Question 7b - Can the Council please also confirm when 100% certification will be in place?</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture and Equalities and Diversity, Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts</p>

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

<p>Cllr Gill Slocombe</p>	<p>I became a Councillor in 1999 for Sedgemoor District Council and a Bridgwater Parish Council which is now Bridgwater Town council. I did this because I cared about many issues that I felt were not being addressed in my community, the political balance in my Ward which was one of each, would you believe.</p> <p>To be a councillor you need to care about people, want to help, want to make a change and direct them to the best possible route. Up until this time I have always felt that I have managed to achieve this, but now since the new Unitary I feel as lost as many of our electorate.</p> <p>Customer Service seems to have gone out of the window, if you want to speak to someone it's almost impossible. When you ring the outside number you are reminded that if you wish to go on line it will be quicker and more efficient, really? Well tell me when did we stop caring enough to want everyone to be digitally connected? Some people actually want to speak to a human being, someone they can explain their personal issue to, someone who will listen, perhaps when they cannot connect to us as Councillors.</p> <p>The expectation in this council is that we all have mobiles, so when we are told to hold on, we can do so because we all have so much time on our hands, it's absolutely fine to keep people hanging on for over 20 minutes, this I believe is done so the person will eventually find the means to go online with the help of someone else.</p> <p>Question 8a -</p> <p>I ask this council to remember the 'Equalities Act' to remember the inclusivity of each of us, to remember that not all of our customers want a mobile, and IPAD, or Computer. In our communities many of our electorate just want to speak to someone to explain their problem, directly, being it a personal financial issue or that once again their bin has not been collected, or even just to tell you that the pothole outside of their house has now reached to Australia. They want to be independent and feel they are being heard, so they continually try to find something that is called customer service!</p> <p>Please let us not become so big that we have forgotten the people that pay their rates, elect their councillors, the people that pay the council's wages, the people that matter.</p> <p>Let's become a caring council surely that's why we are all here?</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture and Equalities and Diversity, Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts</p>
<p>Cllr Tom Deakin</p>	<p>The Heavitree Way estate has experienced parking issues for a number of years, these largely take the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parking on corners - particularly around Compton Close • parking too close to the main road - junction with Priorswood Road • parking opposite the entrance to Compton Close • parking over dropped kerbs

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

	<p>I have numerous photos and videos from residents demonstrating the problem on a daily basis.</p> <p>This is exacerbated in this particular area given its proximity to both the railway station and cricket ground. I have seen first-hand the significant danger this situation is posing - indeed I had a near miss only the other day whilst on foot in the area.</p> <p>I don't believe a full resident's parking consultation is necessary nor desired by the residents. Some simple double yellow lines and enforcement would help to mitigate the problem.</p> <p>I know that this issue has been looked at previously but I'm afraid the outcome just isn't satisfactory - the residents need this council to take action.</p> <p>Question 9a Please can you let me know what action this council will take to help resolve the issues faced?</p> <p>It is essential we take action before an incident occurs, not in response to one happening as is so often the case.</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Transport and Waste, Councillor Richard Wilkins</p>
<p>Cllr John Hunt</p>	<p>The proposed disposal of Mary Street/High Street Car Park in Taunton.</p> <p>This decision was made by the Somerset Council Executive at a meeting held on 5th August 2024.</p> <p>At that meeting, and on the assumption that the car park is replaced, I commented "it will help address lingering issues of antisocial behaviour in this part of the town." I went on to say "an alternative use for the site is a good idea from that perspective." My comments were quoted in local press articles, one using the headline, "Cllr welcomes plan to turn Taunton car park into flats." This was understandably taken by several residents to mean that I supported the removal of this very popular car park, which I do not. In fact, I'd rather see the existing car park secured and policed properly, particularly at night.</p> <p>As you can all imagine, these articles generated a lot of public concern over the loss of this vital facility, and I feel that I must support their calls for the Mary Street/High Street Car Park to be withdrawn from sale.</p> <p>This car park is used mostly by shoppers and commuters during the day, whilst in the evening, the ground floor is used by the many people taking advantage of the thriving entertainment facilities such as the Creative Innovation Centre (CICCIC), The Lawns and the many restaurants and public houses nearby. It was suggested at the Executive meeting that people could use the multi-</p>

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

	<p>story as an alternative. Can you imagine leaving The Lawns or CICCIC after dark and walking to the multi-story? It is closed in the evening for good reason.</p> <p>We are trying to attract people to Taunton, if they cannot park, they will not come. Yes, in a perfect world they'd all use the Park and Ride, cycle or walk..... However, in the real world, they want to drive. Losing these 269 conveniently situated spaces, will hugely affect Taunton's already fragile economy.</p> <p>It also makes financial sense for the council to retain this vital asset. To support my case, I wanted to share the estimate of this assets value, however this was detailed confidentially in the executive report, so I'm unable to do so. What I can point out to my fellow councillors is that this facility is currently generating enough revenue to cover the estimated freehold valuation in short order, making the decision to dispose of this car park ill-conceived, in my opinion.</p> <p>Of course, I realise the council needs to sell assets, however, selling this one will undoubtedly damage our county town's economy, whilst making no financial sense whatsoever, based on the figures provided to me.</p> <p>Question 10a - I therefore ask that this car park is removed from the list of proposed disposals.</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Transport and Waste, Councillor Richard Wilkins</p>
<p>Cllrs Barry Clarke and Philip Ham</p>	<p>The question that is brought here today has been raised on two different occasions at Scrutiny meetings with no definitive answer. The current Somerset budget for adult and children's social care is around 70% of the total.</p> <p>Question 11a - How much of this expenditure remains in the County and how much in the UK?</p> <p>Question 11b - How much is taken out of the UK via various investments, pension funds and other offshore interests?' Children's Services Response - We do not track spend outside of the UK or complex company structures and how much those companies invest in pension funds and off-shore interests.</p> <p>Response from Lead Member for Adult Services, Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Sarah Wakefield</p>
<p>Cllr Sue Osborne</p>	<p>I welcome the fall in the number of overdue care assessments as reported to the September 2024 Executive meeting, which now stands at 435 overdue assessments against a target of 200.</p> <p>However, I am concerned that the number of overdue care assessments in Area South stands at 180 overdue assessments compared to 30 - 40 overdue assessments in the other areas.</p> <p>Question 12a - Why has the number of overdue assessments remained disproportionately much higher in Area South and what steps are now being taken to reduce this backlog?</p> <p>Question 12b - When do you anticipate Area South's performance getting back on track and on target?</p>

Full Council – 26 September 2024 – Public and Member Questions

It is now proposed that the project costs for the Newton Europe contract, including the 'my life my future' transformation work (cost £7m over 2 years) will now be funded from flexible use of capital receipts.

Question 12c - As this project was anticipated to save this council between £10 and £14m, why is this not being funded from the savings to be delivered?

Question 12d - Please can you demonstrate that the savings have indeed been made as per the agreed contract with Newton Europe?

This is important as I understand that this contract was drawn up on a payment by results basis.

Response from Lead Member for Adult Services, Housing and Homelessness, Councillor Sarah Wakefield