

Council 29 October 2024

Public Questions

1. Question from Jenny Dingsdale

The so-called Liberal Democrats showed clearly last time that they are driven by a crazy ideology into acting in ways that are neither liberal nor democratic. What actions will you take to ensure our local government complies with the Nolan principles going forward? I suggest a change to the scrutiny committee, so that it complies with best practice and is not run by the same party running all the other committees.

Response from the Leader of the Council

Dear Jenny Dingsdale, thank you for your question.

As Leader of all the Councillors of this Council I am very proactive in making sure the 7 Nolan Principles are adhered to. I will be talking to Councillors on their conduct under my announcements at the start of the meeting.

On your suggestion of Chairs and Vice Chairs of committees that is a matter for Councillors to decide on.

2. Question from Catherine Mudge

Why have over 16 formal code of conduct complaints made after the last full TDC meeting held on 30 July 2024 been ignored by the Monitoring Officer?

I am also writing to formally express my concern regarding the loss of time allowed for me to ask my question during the recent [meeting/council session]. This reduction in time, with interruptions from the Chair prevented me from fully presenting the issues I intended to raise.

Specifically, I would like to request that the council address the following points:

1. **Clarification on Time Management:**

Please provide an explanation as to why the time allotted for my question was reduced or limited.

2. **Response to Original Question:**

In light of the lost opportunity to fully present my question, I respectfully ask the council to address my original inquiry in full. I would appreciate a formal, written response to ensure that the concerns I intended to raise are adequately considered.

I look forward to your response and to understanding how the council plans to ensure that similar issues do not occur in the future, thereby allowing all participants to have their voices heard.

Response from the Leader of the Council Executive Member for Corporate Resources

Dear Catherine Mudge, thank you for your questions.

The complaints have not been ignored and are being processed as expeditiously as reasonably possible

In reply to your further questions:

1. Members of the public are allowed 3 minutes to ask a question, not to make political speeches or otherwise.
2. I can assure you I am open to listening to your voice and as you have requested a formal, written response to you ensuring that your concerns are adequately considered, this I will do.

3. Question from Gillian Blick

I see from the Council's website that you are working with an organisation called Action on Climate in Teignbridge (ACT) whose stated aims are to make Teignbridge carbon neutral. Please could you let me know how you believe this will benefit residents of Teignbridge.

Response from the Executive Member for Climate Change, Environment, Flood and Coastal Risk Management

In 2019 the council unanimously declared a [climate emergency](#) and later an ecological emergency. This was partly in response to lobbying from local residents and climate action groups.

Doing our bit to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is both a moral and legal obligation to mitigate the worst impacts of a warming climate on current and future residents in Teignbridge, and globally. In the process, residents will also benefit economically and improve their well-being. Not acting now will burden future generations with unaffordable costs and potentially an existential threat. Below a list of some of the benefits to Teignbridge residents of our Council's actions (working with Action on Climate in Teignbridge),

- Making our homes warmer, more energy efficient, and more affordable to heat.
- Improving community health through improvements to air quality, active and shared travel options, and home liveability standards.
- Capturing spend and investment in the local economy through initiatives such as community energy projects.
- Increasing our energy independence and reducing the effects of global energy supply shocks.
- Establishing the right mix of local amenities/facilities and cultural experiences working to create sustainable communities.
- Supporting communities to become more resilient to our changing climate including wetter weather, flooding, and extreme heat.

- Halting/reducing further species loss and supporting the natural environment to recover.
- Providing benefits for local communities through nature-based solutions.
- Creating and maintaining jobs fit for the future.
- Working with other agencies locally to reduce the potential climate change impacts of flooding, coastal erosion and sea level rise.

Action on Climate in Teignbridge, a not-for-profit community interest company, has broad climate and ecological [objectives](#). It is only natural, as part of our [One Teignbridge](#) Council strategy, that we work with ACT and others to deliver on our declared goals.

Introductory information on climate change can be found [here](#) or you can refer to more detailed information on the government's [Climate Change Committee](#) website.

4. Question from Simon Baxter

This question is about the provision of changing and toilet facilities in Teignbridge. It concerns the difficult issue of how to respect the rights, preferences and safety of the whole community in the provision of these facilities.

No-one would reasonably argue that male nudity is appropriate in a women's changing facility. There are, however, people with male bodies who would like to be allowed to use these facilities on the grounds that they are understood to be, and understand themselves to be, women.

Most 'trans' people are no doubt fine people who would never cause harm to others. However, there are men with no such scruples who would take advantage of access to the women's facility with illegal, perverted or predatory intent.

Add to this the fact that the women's facility will for the most part be where children and younger women change. The council might be seen to be putting these vulnerable groups in danger, if this were allowed to occur.

Also, if people with male bodies are allowed to use the women's changing rooms, this may be effectively excluding Muslim women from using the facility at all

It would seem that by allowing 'trans' people (and thus possibly men with questionable or predatory intent) to opt to use the women's facility, the council could be seen as failing in its moral duty of care for children, and indeed for women.

Question: Can the Council please consider the provision of a changing and toilet space specifically for 'trans' people?

This would fall short of the total inclusion of 'trans women' as women, which they would no doubt prefer, but it would provide a space in which they could hopefully feel safe and valued. I am sure most people would support this.

Similarly women and children using the women's facility could feel confident that their space was appropriately protected.

It seems that the law would allow this solution.

The following quote is an example from equalityhumanrights.com:

Example;

A service provider provides single-sex services. The Equality Act allows a lawfully established separate or single-sex service provider to prevent, limit or modify people's access on the basis of gender reassignment in some circumstances. However, limiting or modifying access to, or excluding a trans person from, the separate or single-sex service of the gender in which they present will be unlawful if you cannot show such action is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. This applies whether or not the person has a Gender Recognition Certificate.

The 'legitimate aim' in this case would be the protection of children, young people and women, from the easily foreseeable possibility of abuse and other harms from predatory men while on council premises. The council could assert that this measure is a 'proportionate means' of achieving this legitimate aim, as the only realistic alternative, it seems, would be some form of exhaustive vetting procedure which would be beyond the remit, skills or budget of a council leisure facility.

Thank you for giving this question your consideration.

Responses from the Executive Member for green spaces and leisure

"As can be seen from the agenda, a Notice of Motion relating to the subject matter of this question is to be put to the Council later in this meeting. Consequently, the issues raised will be formally considered by a committee of this council. Thereafter, any recommendations arising from that work will be formally considered by this Authority and any appropriate action taken as necessary".