

COUNCIL – 21 JULY 2011

No.	Question from/to	Question	Response
1.	Councillor Lugg to Chief Executive (Returning Officer)	<p>At the local election count we were handed glossy booklets which listed the numbers of electorate for each ward, candidates' names (though not their party) and other useful information. However the count was only open to candidates, agents, helpers, counting agents and candidates' guests, all of whom knew the information already or knew someone they could ask. No other members of the public were there.</p> <p>What was the cost of producing the leaflet please?</p>	<p>The cost of printing the document was £120 to which can be added an element of officer time.</p> <p>Members will be aware that the Electoral Commission has increasingly scrutinised the electoral process in recent years and has set performance standards and requirements. This goes hand in hand with our desire to improve and strengthen the elections process.</p> <p>As Returning Officer I am required to have in place a detailed communication and awareness strategy which ensures robust methods of communicating with candidates, agents and the press who also used the document. Relying on those groups to ask for information on ad hoc basis would not meet the requirements.</p> <p>The usual debrief with election agents is to be held shortly which will be followed by constitutional and Electoral Working Group feedback received informally so far has been almost exclusively positive.</p>
2.	Councillor Smith to Cabinet Member for Environment.	How much money has been received from the £36 green bin charge?	To date £480k has been received from over 14,000 customers who have subscribed to the service. (this answer was the position as of 8 June 2011 and a more detailed response can be provided at the meeting).
3.	Councillor Smith to Cabinet Member for Housing, Health & Leisure.	How much was Gloucester's bid for the Discretionary Housing payments from the government pot?	The Council does not bid for DHP funding. The Government allocate it according to a formula. For 2011 /12 we have been allocated £43,783 and can spend up to £109,458 with the difference being fully funded by the Council.

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4.	Councillor Field to Cabinet Member for Performance & Resources.	How much money does this council have in reserve? If possible please provide a breakdown of the various amounts, and the name of the account or fund.	<p>A comprehensive list of the various reserve account year end balances (as at 31st March 2011) is shown on the table attached (see appendix 2). Many of these reserve accounts are earmarked to fund existing commitments and are therefore unusable to support general expenditure.</p> <p>In addition to the year end balances on the attached table, members will also recall that as part of the budget setting process for 2011/12, that a new reserve account will be established to hold the balance of any New Homes Bonus grant monies received - for the purpose of 'Streetcare' and 'Organisational Transformation'. These sums will only be allocated subject to ongoing review of the councils achievement of its £4m savings target in the current financial year.</p> <p>The external auditor has recently stated that: "the council has a good money plan with robust procedures in all stages, from putting together the plan, through to monitoring its implementation".</p> <p>It is also important to note that the level and use of reserves and balances as shown in the table attached is entirely in accordance and consistent with the principles of the money plan, as approved by full council.</p>

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5.	Councillor Field to Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure.	How many times has the new Victorian bandstand at the park been used since it opened, and how much income has it generated for the council?	<p>The new bandstand at the park is promoted as a community facility and is available for any, non-commercial usage, free of charge. This would include community groups, charities, schools, etc.</p> <p>When the bandstand was first opened in July 2010 usage was encouraged on an informal basis. However, to avoid clashes of usage between different groups wanting to use the bandstand on the same day we recommend that groups book the bandstand and this can be done easily through the council's web site. To avoid any disappointment that could be caused by clashes a simple booking system was introduced in April 2010 and so far this year 11 groups have used the park and had access to the bandstand. Highlights include the Challenge 66 marathon, gay pride and race for life.</p> <p>The bandstand was never intended to be a revenue generator for the council. However, there would be a charge for commercial usage as we are able to provide equipment such as lighting and seating but as yet this has not been taken up. Promotion of the bandstand for commercial usage will be considered as part of a new Parks and Open Spaces Strategy that is currently being worked on by officers.</p> <p>I would encourage Members to promote usage of this excellent facility for a wide variety of performances including music and entertainment all of which bring life and vitality to Gloucester Park.</p>

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6.	Councillor Field to Cabinet Member for Environment.	Recently there have been incidents where people have allowed their horses to foul the footpath and grass near Sainsbury's on Northgate Street. This looks bad for our city and is unhygienic. Is the Cabinet Member aware of this problem? I assume that this carries the same penalty as for dog fouling or littering, so what is this council doing to enforce this policy, and prevent future occurrences of this antisocial action?	<p>This type of problem does not occur frequently and when it does the issue would be reported to Enterprise to clear as part of the street cleaning regime. Whenever such instances are reported we will respond to them.</p> <p>The issue of horse fouling is not an offence that falls within the same legislation as littering and dog fouling and so would not carry the same penalty. Any questions of trespass, ie horses being on a footpath (Church Walk or Ash Path) without the owners consent, would be dealt with by the County Highways / Police.</p>
7.	Councillor McLellan to Cabinet Member for Communities & Neighbourhoods.	Can the Cabinet member advise on the latest position in regard to the future location of the shopmobility scheme?	Following the Council meeting in April, it was agreed we would consult further with Shopmobility users regarding the location of the service. This took place in early May and 136 users were consulted. The outcome was that the users felt that the market location did not suit their needs and many preferred the current location to remain. Therefore we listened to this and have responded appropriately by keeping the service in Hampden Way. However we recognise that this is not a permanent solution for the service and we are now actively engaging with organisations in the VCS to find a long term solution for the service.
8.	Councillor McLellan to Cabinet Member for Performance & Resources.	In March 2011 DCLG published a consultation document on the Future of Local Public Audit. As the consultation period has now closed can the Cabinet member publish what was agreed as the Council response?	The council did not submit a formal member response to this consultation. However, the Director of Resources has submitted an officer response and also contributed to the consultation as part of the Society of District Council Treasurer's network. I have asked the Director to meet with Cllr McLellan and the Chair of Audit Committee to update them on his comments to the consultation, and to share this with Audit Committee members, if necessary.