

**Council
18 July 2013
Written Questions to Cabinet Members**

No.	Question from/to	Question	Response
1.	From Councillor Field to the Leader of the Council	<p>Please update members on the status of the following buildings:</p> <p>a) Tanners Hall, Gouda Way</p> <p>b) The Golden Egg</p> <p>c) Former Trident Life Insurance building on London Road</p>	<p>Response from Leader of the Council</p> <p>All of these buildings are privately-owned and thus their fate is not in the Council's hands, although we try to influence where possible. Taking each one in turn:</p> <p>a) Tanners Hall is a scheduled monument on the National Heritage at Risk Register. It is owned by a development company based near Stroud. In September 2011 they obtained planning permission for a new 3/4 storey development on the site incorporating the monument. This consent runs until Sept. 2014. The site is currently being advertised for sale.</p> <p>The condition of the monument is deteriorating. English Heritage are due to advise us on what urgent works are required until the current or any future scheme is implemented. If the current owners are not willing to undertake any works, the Council might have to consider serving an Urgent Works Notice.</p> <p>b) We are in discussions with Aviva Investors who will be making a decision on its future shortly.</p> <p>c) Officers have regularly contacted the building owners, Pall Mall Investments, at the request of councillors, including Councillor Field and myself, to ask them to take measures to keep the site tidy. We have recently been in touch with the agents for the building who advise that it is being actively marketed for sale and to let but there is no serious interest from potential buyers or occupiers at this point.</p>

2.	From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Environment	<p>London Road is an important gateway to the city, seen daily by many commuters and visitors. It is also in a conservation area. It needs some attention to the following problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Street markings missing, potholes in Claremont Road and Newland Street ▪ Loose paving slabs outside the bus station ▪ Litter and weeds in the flower beds and in front of the former Trident Life building 	<p>Response from former Cabinet Member for Environment:</p> <p>The Highways department in the County Council have been to investigate the first two matters raised and have said:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whilst some surface scabbing is present there are no actionable defects. We will continue to monitor these roads on a regular basis for safety defects. ▪ The area that is Highways around the bus station is inspected on a monthly basis and was completed early this month, any loose slabs would have been picked up as part of this inspection with a completion date of 28 days. ▪ This is a piece of private land and therefore not the responsibility of the City Council however after the matter was brought to the attention of NMS by Cllr Field, contact was made with the owner of the building, which resulted in them cutting back the vegetation and clearing the waste, including shopping trolleys off their land. In relation to the flower boxes, we have spoken to both Enterprise and Highways about the problem and it appears that the solution would be to remove / reduce the raised boxes (which will be quite costly). At the time, the flower box was litter-picked at our request. We will seek information from Enterprise as to the frequency of the litter-picking of the flower boxes.
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2.	continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Street signs in need of repainting outside Northgate House ▪ Rusty litter bins on Wellington Parade ▪ Waste ground next to the shops opposite the garage, leading up to the city church <p>I have reported all these issues but it seems we also need to make this area a streetcare priority – have we any resources to make this important entrance to the city spick and span?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Matter has been reported to Enterprise and NMS will ensure that it is done ASAP. ▪ As part of the ongoing bin review, one of these bins has been identified as needing repair and will be removed. One bin will also be moved to Great Western Rd. ▪ This is privately owned land and therefore not the responsibility of the City Council. However in order to create a cleaner environment , NMS have worked with the Gear project to clear this area, up to 200 hours of volunteer time have been spent here. However this is not a permanent solution and legal action against the owner may be needed. A great deal of time has also been spent in this area to get Network Rail to install spikes along the bridge (to tackle pigeon mess). Since the spikes have been installed the pavement has become much cleaner. <p>Resources have been utilised particularly in terms of staff and volunteer time in this area, but resources for additional work have to be balanced against other demands across the City.</p>
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3.	From Councillor Field to the Leader of the Council	Please list the groups with an influence on the city centre/economy of Gloucester, and briefly describe their remit.	<p>Response from Leader of the Council</p> <p>It is a fact of life that there will be a number of different groups who influence issues as big and varied as the city centre and the economy. Many of these groups have different interests and purposes and the key is to co-ordinate their work. Taking the city centre first, there is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) City Centre Management Team – This is the main co-ordinating group for the city centre and is Gloucester’s “Town Team” under the Portas Review. Town Teams are described as “a visionary, strategic and strong operational management team for high streets”. The CCMT brings together stakeholders in the city centre including the two main shopping centre managers and small traders. It has recently been awarded £133k from the High Street Renewal Fund following a successful bid to Government. The CCMT monitors and drives the implementation of the City Centre Action Plan. 2) City Centre Community Partnership – A resident-led group for the city centre. 3) Evening Economy Group – Brings stakeholders together to deliver the Evening Economy Action Plan. 4) Westgate Traders – A traders group based on the Westgate Street area of the city centre. <p>Turning to the economy, the main driver for growth in the County’s economy is GFirst, the Local Enterprise Partnership. In the City, our Economic Development Team are very proactive and have delivered many great results in inward investment terms. The Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses are the two main business groups with whom the Council works.</p>
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4.	From Councillor Field to the Leader of the Council	Do you agree that 'chuggers' put off shoppers and detract from the Gloucester shopping experience?	<p>Response from Leader of the Council:</p> <p>Yes, they can have that effect and that is why the Council entered into a Site Management Agreement with the Public Fundraising Regulatory Authority in August 2012 which limits the number of chuggers, the places in which they can stand and the days on which they can operate. Councillor Field was advised of this in response to a question at Council on 19th July 2012.</p>
5.	From Councillor Field to the Leader of the Council	The City MP disappointingly declined to speak up for my Richard III campaign in the House of Commons. Will you support it?	<p>Response from Leader of the Council:</p> <p>The decision on the resting place for the body of Richard III is a matter for Leicester University under the terms of exhumation licence. York Minster has already set aside its claim, although some distant relatives have lodged a judicial review. To argue over the resting place of a long-departed monarch does feel to me to be rather unseemly. The Chief Executive is writing to the University of Leicester to request that our Mayor and Sheriff are invited to the service in due course. We will also work with the Cathedral to ensure there is an appropriate celebration of his life held in Gloucester.</p>

6.	From Councillor Field to the Leader of the Council	At the last council meeting I asked you what the administration is doing to support the shops in the city centre. Please can you provide me with a list of all the measures you are undertaking?	<p>Response from Leader of the Council:</p> <p>It is disappointing that Councillor Field feels the need to ask the same question twice. The answer is still the same, although the City Council, through the City Centre Management Team, has successfully bid for £133,000 of High Street Renewal Fund money. There are numerous measures the Council has taken or is taking, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Reducing car parking charges. 2) Grants for new businesses to help with business rates, rent and property repairs. 3) £2 million city centre investment fund established for projects including car park refurbishments, new Tourist Information Centre, Shop Gloucester campaign, new public toilets, lighting and phase two of the Museums Transformation Project. 4) Business support through our Economic Development Team. 5) No charges for tables and chairs on the highway. 6) Regular contact with Commercial Agents to help fill empty units. 7) Increased resources for our City Centre Management Team. 8) Night Markets held regularly. 9) Christmas lights and switch-on event. 10) Other Council-supported events in the city centre including heritage weekend and Gloucester Day. 11) Replacement of the Eastgate Chamber structure.
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7.	From Councillor Field to the Leader of the Council	What is your reaction to news that Nike is pulling its shop out of the Quays?	<p>Response from Leader of the Council:</p> <p>The news is disappointing but, as I understand it Nike took a decision to close a number of stores. The nature of outlet shopping is that retailers come and go and I am sure that the Gloucester Quays management will be working hard to fill this unit.</p>
8.	From Councillor Mary Smith to the Cabinet Member for Policy and Performance	<p>Discretionary Housing Payments</p> <p>1. How many applications were there for dhps last year and how many were awarded?</p> <p>2. What was the budget for dhps last year? How much was awarded and how much was returned to the DWP?</p> <p>3. What is the budget for this year? How many applications have they had so far in this financial year? How many of these claims have been processed and how many awards have been made?</p>	<p>Response from Cabinet Member for Policy and Performance</p> <p>The number of applications for a given financial year has not been recorded in the past. We receive a number of applications in March that are for the coming year. However, under the old procedure in 2012/13 applicants were rarely declined. We do record the number awarded and these are 163 DHP awards plus 14 relating to homelessness.</p> <p>The budget for 2012/13 was £89,107. We awarded £56,489. Therefore £32,618 was returned to the dwp</p> <p>The budget for 2013/14 was £234,400. We have received over 200 to date. We have already considered over 100 applications. 40 have been awarded, 40 declined and the remainder referred back to the claimant for additional information</p>

8	continued	<p>4. Are they able to confirm the number of applications for each housing provider?</p> <p>5. Given the fact that the Good Practice Guide suggests that claims should be processed within 4 weeks is this going to be their target time?</p> <p>6. Have they decided upon any kind of eligibility criteria and what type of cases will they prioritise?</p>	<p>We do not collate this information as part of processing DHP applications.</p> <p>Our procedure states we will review applications within a month. There were an unprecedented number of initial applications in the first quarter, which took longer than a month. We anticipate being able to deal with the majority of cases within this deadline. Sometimes there is a need to carry out some further investigation and these cases may take a little longer. As part of our review process, using Civica's staff welfare rights knowledge, we are also taking the opportunity to review applicants eligibility for other benefits and signposting them to apply for further support, rather than simply focusing on DHP applications alone.</p> <p>Yes. Applicants need to fall into financial hardship. All income will be taken into account when considering if that applicant is in financial hardship. The initial award for dhp is 13 weeks. Repeat awards will be considered where the applicant has other criteria involved.</p> <p>These are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That applicant or member of the household have a terminal illness • That applicant or member of the household have a long term illness or disability that affects their ability to move properties or requires them to have an extra bedroom • The property is significantly adapted to meet the needs of the tenant or a member of the household, thus making it uneconomic to move them
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8.	continued	<p>7. Have they re-designed the claim form to make it more appropriate for social housing tenants?</p> <p>8. What is the review/disputes procedure?</p> <p>9. Are they going to work together with landlords to identify claimants who may be entitled to dhps?</p> <p>10. Are they going to notify landlords of decisions on dhps?</p>	<p>We are currently in the process of finalizing the revised application form and expect to have this approved by the end of June</p> <p>Applicants have the right for the decision to be reviewed. In these cases the review will be dealt with by a different officer than originally considered the case. Applicants should write to request a review and advise us of any additional information that may support their application.</p> <p>We are attending landlord events to help inform the process.</p> <p>We do not plan to notify landlords of individual dhp decisions, as this is potentially personal information. We will continue to work closely with GCH as our housing ALMO.</p>
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9.	From Councillor McLellan to Cabinet Member for Environment	Other councils in the area recycle a wider range of plastics and "tetra packs." Are there any plans to extend the range of recyclable objects being collected in Gloucester City	<p>Response from Cabinet Member for the Environment:</p> <p>Since being appointed to this role, I have met with Council officers to discuss the current recycling regime and the possibility of introducing further improvements to the service, whilst seeking more efficiencies and savings.</p> <p>It is worth reminding Members of the items we can currently collect through our kerbside collection service –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newspapers and Magazines Plastic Bottles (all types) Phone Directories Plastic Milk Bottles Magazines and Paperback Books Juice Bottles Junk Mail, letters and cards Cleaning / Detergent / Bleach Bottles Light Card Egg Boxes Toiletry Bottles Envelopes (with plastic windows removed) Cereal and Food packaging boxes Household Dry Cell Batteries Shredded Paper Meat and Fish (raw and cooked – including bones) Food Cans Dairy Products Drink Cans Cooked and Raw fruit and vegetables Bread, Cake and Pasta Clean Glass Jars Leftover food from your plate Glass Bottles Tea and Coffee Grounds
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9.	Continued		<p>In addition, the recycling banks at Sainsburys (Barnett Way and The Quays), Morrisons (Glevum Way), Asda (Bruton Way) and at Castlemeads Car Park provide the facilities for further recycling of –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textiles and Shoes • Cardboard, and • Tetra Paks (Barnett Way only) <p>Whilst we are able to collect a wide range of material, I will be looking to introduce changes so as to improve our collections, whilst I also seek further improvement and efficiencies from the Enterprise contract.</p> <p>However, I was pleased to attend a recent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s Waste and Recycling Task and Finish Group, who are looking at this very issue. The Task and Finish Group are looking at a number of ways of changing our current recycling scheme. They have already met with a number of different individuals and organizations, and I eagerly await their recommendations, so that I can consider these accordingly. It would, of course, be wrong for me to steal their limelight, and so I am sure Councillor Field, as Chair of that Group, would be pleased to tell you more.</p>
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