

Paragraph 12.02 of Part 4 of the Rules of Procedure contained within the City Council's Constitution provides that a Member of the Council may submit a written question to any Cabinet Member.

This document informs Members of Council of written questions put to Cabinet Members and written replies thereto.

Council is recommended to RESOLVE to note the written questions submitted and corresponding responses.

No.	Question from/to	Question
1.	From Councillor Pullen to the Leader of the Council	At the Full Council Meeting on 24th March 2016 a motion was passed regarding Parry Hall. Part of the motion requested that the Leader of the City Council meet with the Leader of the County Council to "discuss preserving Parry Hall as a community asset for use by local people for many years to come". Could the Leader give an update and advise if a meeting has taken place and what progress has been made.
Response		
<p>I had an initial discussion with the Leader of the County Council, and we asked officers to work up the detail.</p> <p>The Managing Director subsequently had an initial discussion with the relevant Director and the Head of Asset Management at the County Council. County officers agreed to provide a briefing note on the 10 County-owned community buildings in the City, and the County's willingness to transfer these. Once this is received, further negotiations will be possible. I hope to be able to provide a further update to Councillor Pullen at the Council meeting in September.</p>		
2.	From Councillor Haigh to the Cabinet Member Performance and Resources and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning	<p>What are the current levels of staffing against establishment in the Planning Compliance Section?</p> <p>What is the impact on the service of any short staffing?</p> <p>What steps are being taken to recruit to any vacancies or otherwise support overstretched staff?</p>
Response		
<p>The Planning Compliance team establishment comprises two officers, one officer resigned from his post in early July to take up a new position outside the Council and this post is currently vacant.</p> <p>The Council is looking to maintain its service in this area, in the interim with assistance from other officers with Planning Compliance experience and by using other team members to provide non-technical support to the Senior</p>		

Planning Compliance Officer. It is possible that some enquiries may take longer to deal with in some instances, but we hope to limit this and urgent cases will continue to be prioritised.

Given the financial challenges facing the Council, there is a standing expectation that wherever a vacancy occurs in the organisation, officers will in the first instance look for opportunities to avoid simply replacing the vacancy with a like-for-like substitute.

Managers are expected to critically review each vacancy and consider a range of options before seeking approval to replace a post. This critical evaluation will need to balance service needs against the need to make savings. Managers are required to consider whether service outcomes can be delivered in a different way, or whether the work could be re-engineered so that service needs are met and savings are achieved. Examples of options that they are expected to consider include: flexible retirement; job share; fixed term contracts; agency; partnership working; and apprenticeships. HR advisers are available to assist officers working through these options.

In this instance, managers are still currently assessing ways in which a planning compliance service can best be provided within constrained resources. The Council's current work on projects such as 'Together Gloucester' is designed to investigate if there are more holistic and efficient ways of joining up services across business areas and/or whether there is any scope for forming partnerships with other organisations so we can continue to deliver high quality services within the City.