

COUNCIL - 26 NOVEMBER 2009

No.	Question from/to	Question	Response
1	Councillor Haigh to Cabinet Member for Housing and Health	“How many Probationary Tenancies have been granted by GCH to date. Of those granted how many were extended beyond their original term and or lead to the tenancy being terminated?”	<p>“The term Probationary Tenancies refers to Introductory Tenancies, which were endorsed by tenants through formal voting and consultation. Since their introduction in February 2009, 235 Introductory Tenancies have been put in place as a result of new tenancy lettings. They only apply to new tenants off the waiting list and not existing tenants.</p> <p>Twelve notices have been served to date although no tenant has had their tenancy terminated as a result.</p> <p>When a NTQ (notice to quit) has been served, there is an opportunity for tenants to have a review hearing with GCH Managers, four review hearings have been held. One case was resolved immediately, One resulted in a tenant moving back to sheltered housing for further support, two tenants have had the introductory tenancy extended to 18 months.”</p>
2	Councillor Haigh to Cabinet Member for Housing and Health	“How many Demoted Tenancies have been issued by GCH to date. Of those issued how many lead to the tenancy being terminated?”	<p>“A Demoted tenancy allows GCH to demote the tenancy to tackle poor tenancy behaviour. To date GCH has not had to resort to this action.</p> <p>Demoted tenancies were introduced in February 2009, again with consultation and endorsement of our tenants.”</p>
3	Councillor Haigh to Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	“Has the Audit investigation into the Coney Hill Neighbourhood Partnership's dissolution been completed? When will you be bringing it for examination by the Audit Committee?”	<p>“The Coney Hill Neighbourhood Project (CHNP) audit was requested by the Chief Executive following the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for the Built Environment held on 10th March 2009. The audit considered 3 main areas:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CHNP operating on a deficit budget - The sale of 1a Stanway Road - The future use/ownership of the Community College. <p>The Audit has been completed and a report issued. The next steps will be to discuss the report with the chairs of both the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committees.”</p>

4	Councillor Haigh to Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture	“Given that the City holds a great deal of expertise in Cultural Services and Tourism is it the administration's intention to enter into a partnership with the County Council to develop the Blackfriars sit as a Cultural Venue as well as a Modern Languages facility?”	<p>“The proposals emerging at Blackfriars Priory are very exciting. I was delighted to hear of the recent confirmation of the County Council led project to develop the Language Immersion Centre on the site of the former Clutch Clinic.</p> <p>With regard to the priory complex itself I fully support the plan to secure greater use of this unique asset. There are discussions underway to explore how the City Council might assist in promoting wider cultural uses. However, the detailed requirements and the potential for City Council involvement still need to be examined in detail.”</p>
5	Councillor Phil McLellan to Cabinet Member for the Environment	“When I last asked, Council officers were unclear how it was planned to deal with the disposal of disposable nappies when new refuse and recycling arrangements come in early in 2010 - can the Cabinet Member now update me?”	<p>“The new waste and recycling service will be introduced from February 2010, giving residents the opportunity to recycle more and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill.</p> <p>The Council will continue to promote the use of real nappies through the Recycle for Gloucestershire scheme (www.recycleforgloucestershire.com) which offers significant discounts on purchase of modern real nappies. Using these nappies can save parents over £600 compared to disposables, as well as reducing the amount of waste that we send to landfill.</p> <p>Disposable nappies will continue to be collected with the waste that goes to landfill, and evidence from other local authorities does not suggest that there will be any particular difficulties with this.</p> <p>As is currently the case, the Council will work with any customer who has particular difficulties with their recycling and disposal, and will consider providing larger sized wheeled bins in exceptional cases.”</p>

6	Councillor Phil McLellan to the Leader of the Council	"Can I welcome the good news that SWRDA has agreed to fund the linkage scheme between the Docks and City Centre - can the Leader please advise me of the latest timetable for doing the work?"	"Councillor McLellan is right to welcome the decision of the SWRDA to confirm the funding for the scheme to improve Kimbrose Triangle and Southgate Street. The completion of the links between the Quays and the City Centre is important to support the future economic potential and success of the retail core of the City. I understand that we can expect an announcement from the County Council later this week that the contract for the works for Southgate Street and Kimbrose Triangle has been let and that a start on site is expected by 1st March. Although this is a little later than previously anticipated, the good news is that it is now anticipated that the scheme will be complete by the end of September next year, well in time for the Christmas shopping period. In the Docks, the RDA scheme will be commencing next week with the provision of the coach drop-off points in Commercial Road. A start will be made on the main works within the Docks in January. This part of the links scheme is expected to be complete by June next year."
7	Councillor Phil McLellan to Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	"Can the Cabinet Member advise me how many people have so far responded to the Council online budget consultation scheme?"	"To date, over 300 people have accessed the on-line survey and 155 have completed the survey. The closing date for responses is 30th November, and the results will be used to help inform the three year financial planning process."
		Supplementary Question	Response
		"Is the Cabinet Member happy with the online Simalto system and is she confident that the responses submitted will be representative?"	"Thank you for your question. I have gone through it myself and it isn't the simplest system to use, but let's not forget this is in addition to what we currently do, not instead of. So it is an ongoing process. We're trying to improve the process and get a more robust consultation to more people. Currently over 200 people have completed surveys, that's 200 more than we had last year, 200 people more to what we will be going through when we're standing in the streets and asking the surveys face to face. That's not to say we're not looking to improve in the future. We'll take key points from this, good and bad, what went wrong, what didn't go well, and from that we'll move on, so we'll hope to improve again next year. It's a learning process, we tried it, it's a massive step forward. It's the way we have to go."

8	Councillor Gordon Heath to Leader of the Council	<p>“Does the Leader not consider that the dawn rush to demolish the Bandstand, prior to any notification to Ward Councillors or even a press release, was at best inconsiderate and at worst inept and ungracious, considering the petition, signed by thousands, for it's retention?”</p>	<p>“I cannot agree with Councillor Heath's view that the recent bandstand demolition was in any way inconsiderate, inept or ungracious. The wishes of the community, expressed through a very comprehensive public consultation, have been frustrated for a considerable time and the council has been forced to manage an increasingly dangerous structure in a public park setting. In addition, several thousand pounds of council taxpayers' money, and a considerable amount of officer time, has been spent in dealing with the legal challenge to the planning decision. Those who mounted the challenge, as well as those who supported and encouraged it, may wish to reflect on whether this was a worthwhile exercise.</p> <p>The Secretary of State's reconsideration of the Conservation Area Consent issues was thorough, rigorous and fair. The Minister considered that he was 'satisfied that the Council had considered the various options for the bandstand in considerable depth'. He concluded that restoring the old bandstand would not meet the wider objectives for the Park's regeneration, and that the wider regeneration benefits of demolishing the bandstand and replacing it with a more usable structure outweigh the concerns about the loss of the local historic significance attached to the building.</p>
			<p>Once the consent to demolish was confirmed I make no apologies for acting swiftly to remove a dangerous structure. Indeed, the act of demolition confirmed the perilous state of the structure - a light tap with the machine brought it tumbling to the ground. It is regrettable that Councillor Heath cannot accept the Secretary of State's final decision but I make no apologies for acting swiftly in the interests of public safety in a park used by hundreds of children each week. We will now move quickly to complete the public's preferred replacement structure and complete the fantastic regeneration of Gloucester Park.”</p>

9	Councillor Gordon Heath to Leader of the Council	<p>“The letter of 13 October from the Government Office for the West Midlands, stated, Para 25 ...” a separate note is attached setting out the circumstances in which the validity of the Secretary of State's decision may be challenged in the High Court and the time limit for such a challenge.” Could the Leader explain why it was not considered necessary to wait six weeks for demolition?”</p>	<p>“I do think that my answer to question 1 covers these issues. The swift demolition was undertaken in the interests of public safety. Once the Conservation Area Consent was issued by the Secretary of State there was no legal reason to prevent the Council implementing the consent. The Council has acted legally and with complete propriety.”</p>
10	Councillor Whittaker to Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture	<p>“Approval for the Runway Project at the Airport was granted by this Council, citing specific conditions, one being the adoption of the Airport’s Green Management Plan. A key part of this Plan is to impose a ceiling of 4,000 tonnes of CO² per annum as emissions and a commitment to an annual review.</p> <p>This Plan was cited by many Members in the Chamber during that debate as a substantive and conditional criteria for their support in allowing the Runway Project to proceed.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member please assure us that this Council remains committed to this stipulation and as joint owners of the Airport that we will not shirk from our stated duty and will ensure that the targets and review are upheld, to show that we administer responsible governance as a matter of principle in this Chamber?”</p>	<p>“I can confirm that the Council remains committed to ensuring that Gloucestershire Airport Ltd complies with the emission limits which are now formally included in the airport’s green policy, and we will work with the airport management to monitor and review the position.”</p>
		Supplementary Question	Response
		<p>“Thank you to the Cabinet Member for the confirmation that the airport will be adhering to the CO² limits that were formally put in the proposal we all agreed to. I would like to put the following question to the Cabinet Member and that is that in order to comply with these, who is actually going to review and monitor the position to ensure the airport complies with these emissions next year.”</p>	<p>“We will of course be liaising with the airport company, both ourselves and our fellow shareholding Council, Cheltenham, will be doing that to make sure they comply with the limits which are now part of that green policy.”</p>

11	Councillor Whittaker to Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture	<p>“Now that another piece of our rare (and I fully admit, not beautiful in this case!) piece of our City’s history has been lost by ‘institutional vandalism’, with the Bandstand being razed to the ground in an early morning action, can the Cabinet Member please assure this Council that its replacement will not be a limited function, poor quality, flat pack style replica of a type seen on the ‘Mary Poppins’ or ‘Chitty Chitty Bang Bang’ film sets? This unsavoury saga has lost the City Council honest taxpayers money; not because of some fanatic trying to save the Bandstand, but because the consultation process gave inadequate alternatives. We need to learn from this expensive lesson.”</p>	<p>“The allegation of “institutional vandalism” in respect of the demolition of the life expired and dangerous bandstand is quite absurd.</p> <p>The merits of retaining this unattractive and increasingly unsafe structure have been exhaustively explored and debated through the channels of our own planning committee, the courts system, the government office and the Secretary of State.</p> <p>The Minister considered that he was “satisfied that the Council had considered the various options for the bandstand in considerable depth”. He concluded that restoring the old bandstand would not meet the wider objectives for the Park's regeneration, and that the wider regeneration benefits of demolishing the bandstand and replacing it with a more usable structure outweigh the concerns about the loss of the local historic significance attached to the building.</p> <p>With regard to Councillor Whittaker’s rather unkind remarks made about the replacement bandstand I would remind him that the option chosen was the one supported by the most people in a very extensive and thorough public consultation. The Council’s Planning Committee has also approved the scheme. It will be an attractive, high quality and fit for purpose structure and its installation will enable us, at long last, to progress towards the completion of the superb regeneration of Gloucester Park.”</p>
		Supplementary Question	Response
		<p>“The question is, quite simply, has the replacement already been purchased?”</p>	<p>“Part of the consent when it was granted by the Government Office for the West Midlands for us to demolish the crumbling structure of the bandstand was that we had to get a contract to replace it and I can confirm to Councillor Whittaker that we have complied with that condition.”</p>

12	Councillor Whittaker to Cabinet Member for Heritage and Leisure	<p>“The wheeled sports facility at Abbeymead Playing Fields, Lobley Drive, has been a success. The long drawn out consultation process here has placed it in the best location it seems for most residents and for use by the youth which was its primary aim. The path to it though was placed well out of view and by a longer route than necessary with a consequence that all the users go to it from the main road. This human nature to take the shortest visible route. Can we surface this short, but now very muddy path, into a hard surface one?”</p>	<p>“I am pleased to hear Councillor Whittaker’s support for this excellent facility, the success of which is testament to the extensive consultation which officers undertook with regard to the design and location.</p> <p>I have asked officers to look into the points he raises regarding the access to the site and to respond to him directly. However, there is no specific budget for the provision of an additional footpath at this site, and I cannot give any guarantees that the work requested will be carried out.”</p>
		Supplementary Question	Response
		<p>“It just shows there was a lack of common sense in planning the access to this amenity, especially where children are concerned as well because we need to be sure with planning applications that we take into account the design. Can I ask the Cabinet Member if we can ensure that in future places like this, especially where children are concerned, that we do take in the design line when we are designing pedestrian access.”</p>	<p>“I can comment in the absence of the Cabinet Member for Heritage and Leisure. I am sure that the appropriate director will have noted Councillor Whittaker’s comments and will pass them on to the officer concerned.”</p>