

COUNCIL – 24 September 2009

No.	Question from / to	Question	Response
1	Councillor Kate Haigh to Cabinet Member for Environment	<p>“Dog mess and litter dropping are a serious problem for residents many of whom make great efforts to keep their areas tidy. As Council Tax payers they expect the City to provide basic facilities to help them, such as litter-bins and bins for dog mess.</p> <p>Is it acceptable to the Cabinet Member that there is no money available for the provision of waste and dog bins or for the emptying of any extra bins by Enterprise if residents or businesses fund them themselves? What plans does he have for rectifying this situation?”</p>	<p>“I share Councillor Haigh’s concerns with regard to this issue. I also recognise that providing additional bins can be seen as a way to eradicate problems with littering and dog fouling.</p> <p>Dog owners are responsible for picking up after their dogs and disposing of the waste in a suitable public or private bin. This is, of course, also the case for litter.</p> <p>There are currently 467 dog waste bins throughout the city, plus a further 374 litter bins, all of which can also take suitably wrapped dog waste. This represents a capital expenditure of over £250k at current prices.</p> <p>The Council has recently completed a refurbishment program of existing bins, and will also continue to secure suitable numbers of bins on new developments through the planning process.</p> <p>With the exception of these new developments, the current policy is that no further bins will be provided, as the level of expenditure required would not necessarily result in eradication of the behaviour of those responsible. If the Council were to provide additional bins when requested then capital expenditure in another area would need to be reduced.</p> <p>However, should a community or business wish to provide a bin, my officers will consider the feasibility of the ongoing servicing of the bin.</p> <p>We will also shortly be providing free ‘poop scoop’ bags to the public at a number of locations throughout the city.”</p>
2	Councillor Whittaker to Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture	<p>“What is happening to the problem of unadopted land pockets scattered throughout the Abbeydale and Abbeymead estates? Many of these have become unsightly, overgrown and a nuisance to residents, pedestrians and cyclists alike. If some are the responsibility of Highways, can we please remind them of their responsibility to resolve the issue? The open spaces that are unadopted are I believe of City</p>	<p>“Officers are actively working to address a number of small parcels of land owned by developers, and pursuing land owners to complete the adoption process. Before adopting land the Council must be satisfied that the land is in a suitable condition for adoption and to secure appropriate financial contributions from the owners to offset future maintenance costs. If Councillor Whittaker would like to provide specific examples, I will ask my officers to respond with the details of these individual parcels of land.”</p>

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		Council concern so can we, as a duty to our Council Tax paying residents, have the decency to attempt to follow up full adoption now that the estates in question are complete?"	
3	Councillor Whittaker to Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture	"Is there more that the City Council can do to help retain one of our vital city tourism gems, the National Waterways Museum?"	"The Council already provides a very comprehensive package of support to the National Waterways Museum. I acted promptly and positively to the Museum's calls for help earlier this year. Our package of assistance includes significant management resource and expertise (in a critical friend capacity); establishing links and partnership with Gloucester Quays; active cross site selling from our Museums, the Guildhall and the TIC; offering marketing expertise and providing specialist curatorial support to guide and prepare the museum for its re-accreditation process next year. There is also active assistance from Marketing Gloucester and the Gloucester Civic Trust. We all want the National Waterways Museum to succeed and I am pleased to note that visitor numbers have significantly improved and the Manager is of the view that the future is now looking brighter."
4	Councillor Whittaker to Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture	"With the opening of St Michael's Tower we at last have a functional, heritage building we can be proud of, in good restored condition at the centre of our city. A lot of excellent work and effort has gone into this from all parties. Why, oh why then, is the former Hawkshead store opposite allowed to look so neglected and derelict as such a key opinion forming part of our regenerating city?"	"I do agree that the former Hawkshead store creates a poor impression at The Cross. However, I do not think this is anything to do with the lettability of the unit as it exists in a very high footfall area. My understanding is that this unit has been the subject of some protracted legal wrangling between landlord and lessee which has prevented a re-occupation. However, I believe that there may be some encouraging movement and that a new occupier may be in the pipeline."
5	Councillor Whittaker to Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture	"What land does the City Council possess, that was not affected by the 2007 floods, which could be turned to good use as allotments, as the city will need to strive towards some degree of food security and sustainability in the future?"	"There is currently no land identified as vacant and suitable for use as allotments. The Council is aware of the current demand for plots, and the potential for use as allotments will be considered for any City Council-owned land which is identified as vacant or underused as part of the annual asset review."
6	Councillor Hilton to Leader of the Council	"Does the Leader still support the proposal to build a Parkway railway station at Elmbridge Court?"	"As Councillor Hilton knows, this is a project led by the County Council and, in response to his question there last week, they indicated that the rail element of the Elmbridge Court project would not be brought forward in the

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			forseeable future. I believe that the city needs enhanced rail services to support its economy and we will continue to have conversations with the County Council and other partners on the best way of achieving this.”
7	Councillor Hilton to Cabinet Member Performances and Resources	“Since the 1 st of April, what has been the monthly off-street car parking income and how does it compare to the 2008?”	“In the short space of time available I have not been able to establish precise income figures but I can say that overall car parking volumes have been up significantly on comparable weeks last year. Some weeks have seen volumes in excess of 20% up on 2008 figures. Income is not up by the same amount but is up slightly on budget. This is because the innovative new tariff structure that I introduced earlier this year lowered tariffs generally and encouraged longer dwell time. The indications are that this is proving a great success with significantly increased parking volumes in a climate where many other towns and cities are reporting notable declines in parking volumes.”
8	Councillor Hilton to Leader of the Council	“Phase 2 of the construction of Gloucester Quays is complete. Could the Leader please advise this Council on current state of lettings of the vacant units in phase 1 and 2? Are we expecting any new big names to open shops at the Quays in time for the Christmas trade?”	“I do not keep detailed lettings data on this centre but I am advised that lettings in phase 1 have been healthy and the local media have regularly covered new tenants such as the recently opened Thorntons unit. I am sure we will see more lettings, including some big names, as phase 2 is unveiled. There can be no doubt that the outlet centre has proved to be a great success for the city, extending our catchment and offer to an ever wider audience of shoppers, visitors and tourists. All of this helps to put Gloucester on the map.”
9	Councillor Hilton to Leader of the Council	“How many empty retail units do we have in the city centre and how does this compare to our nearest competitor, Cheltenham?”	“I understand that the last survey indicated 41 vacant units in Gloucester's primary shopping area and a slightly higher figure of 54 in Cheltenham. There is a danger in drawing direct comparisons as the primary shopping areas are not directly comparable. However, it is fair to say that all town and city centres have experienced a degree of strain due to economic conditions but I think Gloucester has proved to be resilient and footfall and parking volumes have been strong through the summer.”
10	Councillor Hilton to Leader of the Council	“Do you support the removal of land owned by Allstone Sand & Gravel, to the south of Myers Road, from GHURC's regeneration masterplan for the Railway Triangle?”	“My view is that the proper planning of this area is best served by looking at the whole railway triangle / corridor comprehensively. It is certainly desirable to include all major strategic landholdings within the regeneration plans.”
11	Councillor Hilton to Leader of the Council	“The Fleece Hotel in Westgate Street remains closed. What is the Leader's vision for the future use of this important landmark building in the historic commercial heart of the city?”	“The Fleece is a great heritage asset that is currently untapped. The complex was acquired by SWRDA and will form a key element of the emerging Blackfriars proposal (a masterplan is currently out for public consultation). I would not wish to prescribe a particular use as the right solution may include residential, commercial, hotel or other use.”

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12	Councillor Hilton to Leader of the Council	“When will the City Council publish its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)?”	“The City Council intends to publish its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment at the time of publishing a consultation document on the Joint Core Strategy, which is currently programmed for November 2009.
13	Councillor Hilton to Cabinet Member for Performances and Resources	“How much taxpayers’ money lost by the Council from making investments into Icelandic Banks has so far been recovered?”	““No taxpayers money has formally been 'lost' from the Council's £2m investment in the Heritable Bank Plc, the accounts prepared for 2008/09 have made provision for an impairment in value based on a prudent accounting approach, in line with CIPFA recommended guidance. The administrators, Ernst and Young, are still carrying out their work on both assets and liabilities of the bank. They have already declared that a 'substantial' repayment of both capital and interest should be payable to investors and an interim allocation of £334,000 has recently been received, pending the outcome of their ongoing work. ”
14	Councillor Hilton to Cabinet Member for Heritage and Leisure	“The City Council has received £129,114 year 2 capital funding from the government’s Playbuilder programme, via the County Council. Has the Cabinet Member determined which play improvements schemes the money will be allocated?”	“Year 2 (2010 / 2011) Playbuilder funding has not been allocated. Officers have carried out a review of play areas in need of refurbishment and decisions will be based on priorities identified, and other sources of funding available. My officers will continue to liaise with Members and communities regarding specific sites.”
15	Councillor Hilton to Cabinet Member for Performances and Resources	“What is the total funding available from Section 106 Agreements deposited in the Council’s bank account?”	“The current balance of funds held as a result of Section 106 Agreements is £4.39million. These monies are paid by developers under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act to address the impact of new developments as well as the extra demands they may place on local public services. As such the funds can only be used for the purposes prescribed in the legal agreements.”
16	Councillor Hilton to Cabinet Member for Environment	<p>“How many statutory allotments are there in Gloucester and how many people are on the waiting list for an allotment?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How many allotments are currently let? 2. How many allotments are let but remain uncultivated? 3. What is the Council policy of recovering uncultivated allotments from tenants even though their rent is up to date?” 	<p>“The Council has recently appointed a temporary allotments’ project officer who has been tasked to review this service area, and ensure that the City’s allotments are used to their full potential. She is working closely with existing allotment associations and organised groups and seeking to establish new associations as these are proven to be beneficial.</p> <p>There are currently 654 allotment plots within the city, of which 608 are currently let. There are 524 people registered on the waiting list, and work is ongoing to ensure that the vacant plots are let as soon as possible. We are also working to create additional plots within existing sites by reclaiming overgrown areas, letting smaller plots, and reclaiming plots that remain let but uncultivated.</p>

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			I am not able to provide the number of uncultivated plots that are currently let, but will ensure that this information is provided to Councillor Hilton at the earliest opportunity."
17	Councillor Hilton to Cabinet Member for Heritage and Leisure	<p>"Further to the discussion of a report about Dimore II in Quedgeley at the Cabinet meeting on 9 September 2009, can the Cabinet Member advise me:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whether any contact has been made with Robert Hitchins with regard to resolving the outstanding issues? 2. Have Robert Hitchins stated that they are willing to co-operate in resolving the outstanding issues highlighted in the cabinet report? 3. Has a timetable to resolve these issues been set? 4. A questioner at the Cabinet did ask for all issues to be resolved by the end of this calendar year - will the Council endeavour to achieve this deadline? 5. If the outstanding issues cannot be resolved will this area of open space be lost to the residents of Quedgeley and Hardwicke? 6. Can the Cabinet Member also publicly state that the current administration is committed to retaining this area as an 'Open Space' and would not support any housing or commercial development on this site?" 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legal Services wrote to Robert Hitchins Ltd on 15 September regarding the issues raised in the Cabinet report. Copies were sent to Julian Wain, Martyn White, Paul James and Phil Staddon. 2. Letter only sent on 15 September, so no response yet. 3. Letter only sent on 15 September, so no response yet. 4. We will endeavour to conclude this issue before the end of 2009. However, this will obviously depend on Hitchins' response to the letter. 5. Hitchins have previously acknowledged that they have an obligation to transfer the land for public use. The Council also has an obligation to adopt under the S.106 agreement (2001). However, before adopting, the Council would need to be satisfied that the land was fit for purpose (i.e. use as public open space) and if there is contamination present that may be harmful to health, then it would clearly not be fit for purpose until remediated. As the land has been accessed and used by the public for recreational purposes for at least 15 years, legal rights of access may have now been established and it is unlikely that this area will be lost as an open space. 6. We would most definitely oppose any proposed development on Dimore II playing field. There would be strong arguments for retaining the open space as an established use, both in planning and legal terms."
18	Councillor Field to Leader of the Council	"Are any incentives, such as lower rents, being offered to businesses to encourage them to open shops in the city centre?"	"The level of rents in city centre shop units is a matter for landlords rather than the City Council. However, I am aware that a number of landlords are taking a pragmatic view on lettings and adjusting rents to secure tenants. The Council's Economic Development team is working hard to provide a range of support to potential investors in the city centre. Despite challenging

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			economic conditions Gloucester is attracting attention as investments such as Gloucester Quays help to drive up footfall and the city's retail ranking."
19	Councillor Field to Leader of the Council	"With regard to the empty shops in the city centre that have had the excellent photographs of Gloucester's heritage put in their windows, would it also be possible to give the shops fronts a clean and perhaps a coat of paint, as at the moment the poor state of some shopfronts is detracting from the positive impact of the promotional billboards?"	"The excellent project is being led by Marketing Gloucester. I do agree that a special effort needs to be made to present the city in its best light in these challenging economic times. I know that Marketing Gloucester is working hard to ensure that the presentation is as good as possible. I will raise the matter with MG who will make any necessary approaches to property owners and agents. If Councillor Field has any particular unit in mind I would be happy to ask the relevant officers to pursue the matter."
20	Councillor Field to Leader of the Council	"Could Members be updated on progress made on the City Council's Cultural Strategy of 2007?"	<p>"I provided a fairly detailed answer to Councillor Field at March Council which set out progress against the Cultural Strategy's workstreams. I don't intend to repeat that answer but some updates since that time include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submitting an Expression of Interest with Cheltenham for City of Culture 2013 - International Synchronised Swimming Championships - Hugely successful Tall Ships Festival - Fantastic Heritage Open Days weekend."
21	Councillor Field to Cabinet Member for Heritage and Leisure	"Now that we have an excellent plaque commemorating Ivor Gurney on the front of Boots, will the Cabinet Member give his support for further commemorative projects? An exhibition of manuscripts and artifacts relating to Gloucestershire poets and/or composers, timed to coincide with the 2010 Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester, would seem to be an example of an achievable project."	"I fully support the continued efforts to celebrate the life and works of Ivor Gurney. I believe that Councillor Field is involved with our Museum service in exploring and curating an exhibition on Ivor Gurney in 2010. I believe that we have located Gurney's piano that he used for many of his compositions and that may well become a feature in the exhibition."
22	Councillor Field to Cabinet Member for the Environment	"Given that the contractor appointed to carry out the 'pigeon-proofing' work on the Worcester Street railway bridge has unfortunately gone into administration, will the Cabinet Member please give an undertaking	"I share Councillor Field's disappointment at the unavoidable delay, and can assure him that officers are currently working to appoint an alternative contractor as soon as possible."

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		that he will try his utmost to find a new contractor, until this important work is carried out.”	
23	Councillor McLellan to Cabinet Member for Environment	“Can the Cabinet Member advise me what consultation has taken place with the public re the planned fortnightly instead of weekly refuse collections?”	<p>“The report approved by Cabinet on 15th April 2009 summarised decisions taken by Cabinet from 2005 – 2007 regarding the detail of the new service, and gave a further opportunity for residents and Members to make representations as part of the democratic process.</p> <p>The new waste and recycling service was an integral part of the partnership contract that came into effect in 2007, with a target of 50% for recycling. Members will be aware of the requirement for the City Council to meet this target and the financial penalties that would be imposed should we not reduce the amount of residual waste sent to landfill. Community organisations were engaged as part of the consultation process which led up to the tendering of the partnership contract, which included a number of representatives accompanying officers on visits to other Local Authorities where similar contracts were in place.</p> <p>Since April 2009, officers have embarked on a phase of extensive consultation with our customers on the implementation of the new service. We have presented, informed and discussed the detail of the new service with the Streetcare Forum, Streetcare Partnering Board, Scrutiny Committee, Gloucester City Homes Customer Forum and Block and Street Representatives group, and the City Centre Partnership. Roadshows exhibitions have been held at the Dukeries and the Eastgate Mall where overwhelming support for the new service was received.</p> <p>Discussion group forums will be held with residents in October to look at details such as collections from flats and other hard to reach properties, and there will be a series of Roadshows, over a 4 week period through October and November. This will be followed up by further Roadshows in early 2010 as the service is launched.”</p>

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24	Councillor McLellan to the Leader of the Council	<p>“Following the recent incursions by travellers at Plock Court and Westgate can the Leader of the Council advise me what action the City Council is taking to try to:</p> <p>a) stop travellers accessing sites;</p> <p>b) investigating measures to try to ensure a more speedy process to remove them from sites?”</p>	<p>“There is a balance to be struck between allowing access to the public and our teams, and making the sites secure against trespassers who may well be equipped with cutting and lifting equipment and towing vehicles. High security fencing would be unsightly and expensive and as a general rule we would not expect to have this level of security at all of our sites across the City. Officers are currently investigating the appropriateness of alternative deterrents at both Plock Court and Westgate.</p> <p>Whilst taking a robust approach to instances of trespass on Council land, the Council is required to follow due legal process, which includes assessment of the welfare of the trespassers and their families.</p> <p>In both instances of encampment officers used the Civil Procedure Rules under Part 55 of The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, which legal advice recommends as a well established and efficient procedure. There are other powers available to the City Council and the Police in particular circumstances and officers will continue to work in partnership to explore other alternatives and utilise these where appropriate.”</p>
25	Councillor McLellan to Cabinet Member for Housing and Health	<p>“Can the Cabinet Member advise me in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG’s) of</p> <p>a) the number of applications in the current financial year;</p> <p>b) the total amount awarded in 2007/8 and so far in this financial year;</p> <p>c) the government grant for DFG’s for both the last and current financial year?”</p>	<p>“a) the number of applications in the current financial year - 60</p> <p>b) the total amount awarded in 2007/8 and so far in this financial year</p> <p>2007/08 - £750,000 2009/10 - £313,132 (to date)</p> <p>c) the government grant for DFG’s for both the last and current financial year</p> <p>2008/09 - £360,000 2009/10 - £384,000</p>

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26	Councillor Susan Witts to Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	<p>“With reference to the Members’ Briefing for July 2009 and the New Telephone Out of Hours Emergency Line, which is now provided by a Bristol company -</p> <p>‘Other factors that helped inform our decision was for Business Continuity where if we have another disaster like the Flooding in 2007 we know they will not be affected and can assist with call handling if needed. The companies we contacted within Gloucestershire were affected by the flooding in 2007 and would not be able to assist if such a disaster occurred again.’</p> <p>How do we know they will not be affected and can assist with call handling if needed in an Out of Hours Emergency?.....when</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In July 2007 90mm of rain fell on Gloucester and caused devastating flooding. • By comparison in July 1968 120mm of rain fell on Gloucester and caused devastating flooding. That same day Bristol and the Chew Valley in Somerset took the brunt of the storm, which resulted in severe flooding and deaths there. • In March 1947 when the snow melted causing severe flooding in Gloucester, Bristol city centre only just escaped serious flooding.” 	<p>“Office Response were able to demonstrate a disaster recovery strategy which allowed us to be confident that they would have the required processes in place to deal with abnormal circumstances:</p> <p>They operate daily backups including server system state data and the core call handling software. This is then mirrored to another server allowing immediate transfer of call handling to a backup system. This data is held off site and can be accessed and made operational within 1 hour.</p> <p>They also operate a contingency procedure if their premises may become unstable to operate from. This allows them to route calls to one of their business partners that utilises the same call scripting software as Office Response to provide continuity.</p> <p>In addition because the service is a 24 hour one, at all times senior managers are on call to provide back up and an escalation point if a situation arises requiring the business continuity plan to be invoked.”</p>

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27	Councillor Heath to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture	“I have recently come across much speculation to the effect that the Annual Gloucester Fair normally held in the Park in July/August at the time of the Gloucester Festival each year is, next year, to be held at Hempsted Meadows. Can the Cabinet Member let us know if this is indeed the case?”	“I am not aware of such a proposal. Marketing Gloucester will be tasked with co-ordinating the 2010 Festival.”