

Paragraph 12.01 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 the Leader of Council or any Cabinet Member.

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

**Council is recommended to**

- (a) Note the written questions submitted and corresponding responses.
- (b) Note the supplementary questions and corresponding responses delivered verbally within the 45 minutes available for Questions by Members.

No.	Question from/to	Question
1.	From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	<p>The Gateway on Westgate Street was opened with a fanfare in July 2019. It was to provide in-person advice to residents of the city of Gloucester. A public gateway to council services.</p> <p>It closed its doors at the beginning of the COVID 19 pandemic and has yet to reopen.</p> <p>The Gateway on Westgate Street provided much needed public access to council services.</p> <p>When will it reopen?</p>
<b>Response:</b>		
<p>The Gateway reopened post Covid in July 2021 for appointments. It then closed in December 2021 due to the network impact of the cyber incident which meant Officers could not work from there and the building has been utilised for cyber recovery purposes since then. Between July and December 2021 we had an average of 1 appointment per month. We have been continually monitoring customer feedback in relation to how customers contact the Council and are not seeing a demand for Face to Face appointments, however, preparations are being made to reopen the Gateway for appointments so we can monitor uptake, and an opening date will be announced soon.</p>		
2.	From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	<p>How many full-time office based staff does the city council employ?</p> <p>And how many of them work more than 50% of their contracted hours from home rather than from the council offices based in Gloucester?</p>
<b>Response:</b>		
<p>The City Council employs 168 full-time office based staff.</p> <p>The City Council offers agile and hybrid working policies and recognises the health and wellbeing benefits this brings to staff as well as the recruitment and</p>		

	retention benefits this brings to the Council. The City Council's policies allow staff to work each day from a location where they are most productive (which could be at home or in the office) with the proviso that staff attend the office and/ or other City Council location when required. Given this agile and flexible approach we are unable to specify how many full-time office based staff work from home more than 50% of their contract hours, as this will naturally vary from individual to individual.	
3.	From Councillor Pullen to Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	Assuming the Greyfriars Levelling Up bid is successful and that the Eastgate Market is relocated into the Eastgate Shopping Centre, can an assurance be given that there will be no changes to the terms and conditions for market traders and no increase in rent?
	<b>Response:</b>	
	There are a variety of agreements in place within the market at present. Any move of the market will be accompanied by a review and regularisation of terms and conditions, and rents.	
4.	From Councillor Pullen to Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	It is good that the council has moved into new offices at the Eastgate Centre but why are staff being discouraged from inviting visitors and customers to the new offices?
	<b>Response:</b>	
	The move from Shire Hall to Eastgate was to move the back office element of the Council to space owned by the Council. As was the case at Shire Hall we are not signposting customers to this space. Where officers arrange meetings they will arrange directly with their visitors, as was the case with Shire Hall.	
5.	From Councillor A. Chambers to the Cabinet Member for the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	How many street and community parties were there in Gloucester during the Queen's platinum jubilee celebration weekend? How many of these events involved alcohol and how many were requested by the city council to submit a licence and how many did submit a licence?
	<b>Response:</b>	
	Gloucestershire County Council managed Street and Community Party applications during the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend for events on the highway that would have involved the closure of roads as an example. You would need to contact County Council for the number of applications that they received.	
	For events taking place on City Council owned land then an application through the City Events Team would have to be made. During the Queens Jubilee weekend the City Council received two applications, one requested the sale by retail of alcohol and the other did not require alcohol. The one requesting alcohol by retail were asked to submit a Temporary Event Notice application, which was received and granted.	
6.	From Councillor A. Chambers to the Cabinet Member for the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	Out of these licence applications how many had submitted site plans, public liability insurance certificates, risk assessments, event application forms, TEN forms?
	<b>Response:</b>	
	The two applicants submitted all of the documents as requested on the Council's City Events application form.	

7.	From Councillor A. Chambers to	What's happening with the garden on the corner of London Road and Wellington Parade? It's been boarded up since 2018 and nothing has been done?
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>Redevelopment of the 'Rose Garden' (corner of London Road/Great Western Road) has been completed and, following consultation with close residents and ward councillors, the garden is due to be opened in October.</p>		
8.	From Councillor A. Chambers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	<p>The new bus station/transport gct opened in October 2018. One of the planning conditions was for a piece of public art, which was announced as being a series of stained glass windows depicting events in Gloucester's history. This has still not been installed.</p> <p>What's happening with it? Does this mean the Council is in breach of its planning condition? Is the Council taking any action against itself?</p>
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>The public art historic glass panels at the Transport Hub are progressing for installation expected early in 2023. Extensive testing in situ of the light levels were undertaken to inform the detailed design of twelve panels depicting part of the history of Gloucester. This is a particularly specialist design, manufacture and install which was on hold as a result of Covid and furlough implications. The manufacture process has now been agreed and is in hand. The Council do not believe that they are in contravention of any planning condition associated with the original construction of the Transport Hub.</p>		
9.	From Councillor A. Chambers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	<p>In January 2020, Dowdeswell Estates were announced as the preferred bidder to convert the former Council Offices at the Docks into a hotel. What progress has been made on this since?</p> <p>In particular, has any legal commitment been entered into with Dowdeswell?</p> <p>Has any planning application been submitted and if not is there a date when one is expected to be submitted?</p> <p>Does the Council have a date when it expects a) a start to be made on site and b) the project to be completed?</p> <p>What are the annual holding costs for the buildings while they remain empty?</p>
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>Discussions have continued with Dowdeswell Group Limited following their successful competitive bid to acquire and convert the HKP warehouses to a four star hotel. However, the hotel market has changed significantly driven by the Covid pandemic and now inflation factors. Whilst there is no legal Agreement in place with Dowdeswell Group they have continued to diligently attempt to bring forward a viable option to proceed. Presently there is no date agreed either for a</p>		

	<p>planning application or a start on site. The holding costs for these three warehouses for the financial year ending 31st March 2022 were £166,262.</p>	
10.	<p>From Councillor A. Chambers to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources</p>	<p>-How much money was used for cyber attack prevention after 2014?</p> <p>-Exactly what was this money spent on?</p> <p>-whose advice was taken?</p> <p>-Who oversaw the programme of upgrades?.</p> <p>-Why did the city council pull out from the county council IT joint services?</p> <p>-Who's decision was it to pull out from the county council it services?</p> <p>-What was the Managing directors decision on not joining the county council IT services?</p>
<p><b>Response:</b></p>		
<p><i>How much money was used for cyber-attack prevention after 2014?</i></p> <p>The council does not operate a separate cyber prevention budget. Security, including cyber prevention, is a key consideration when reviewing IT spend and for some it may feature more highly than in others. It is estimated that since 2014, the council has invested approximately £2m in products and services.</p> <p><i>Exactly what was this money spent on?</i></p> <p>Investment in:</p> <p>Refresh of end-of-life products such as servers and laptops  Install, support and maintenance of security products and services both hardware and software  Migration to cloud services such as Microsoft Office 365  Staff training and awareness, policy management, annual IT health checks</p> <p><i>whose advice was taken?</i></p> <p>Civica and security subject matter experts, including the likes of the NCSC and the LGA.</p> <p><i>Who oversaw the programme of upgrades?.</i></p> <p>The ICT Strategy and Information Governance Boards, with involvement of business partners and subject matter experts as required.</p> <p><i>Why did the city council pull out from the county council IT joint services?</i></p> <p>The Council has not been in a joint IT service with the County Council</p> <p><i>Who's decision was it to pull out from the county council it services?</i></p>		

	<p>The Council has not been in a joint IT service with the County Council</p> <p><i>What was the Managing directors decision on not joining the county council IT services?</i></p> <p>The option to join a shared service with Gloucestershire County Council was considered by Cabinet as part of an options appraisal into the future provision of ICT services. Reasons for not proceeding with this option are detailed in the <a href="#">‘ICT Services: Options Report’ at Cabinet on 13 October 2021</a>.</p>	
11.	<p>From Councillor A. Chambers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment</p>	<p>The City Council announced in January 2020 that it had bought the Eastgate Shopping Centre. What steps has it taken to improve the centre since then? What is the Council's long-term vision for the centre?</p>
	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>Since the acquisition of the Eastgate Shopping Centre, actions taken to improve the centre include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The procurement of a single managing agent to manage Eastgate, Kingswalk, Kings Square and St Oswalds retail centre in a comprehensive manner</li> <li>• Continued negotiations to retain existing traders and add new uses (eg 100 Heroines and the Council’s new offices)</li> <li>• The preparation and submission of a grant funding bid of c.£12m through the Governments Levelling Up programme, for investment in the centre and surrounds.</li> </ul> <p>The long term vision for the centre is (and always has been) appropriate redevelopment to ensure its ongoing viability and introduce additional uses onto the site. Should the aforementioned Levelling Up bid be successful (due to be announced Autumn 2022) that will be the beginning of that redevelopment. Officers have begun to consider the redevelopment options across the site, and these will be presented in due course.</p>	
12.	<p>From Councillor A. Chambers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment</p>	<p>In June 2020, the Cabinet approved the establishment of a City Centre Commission to come up with a 10 year vision for the city centre. What is that vision?</p>
	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>The Gloucester City Centre Commission continues to meet to gather the necessary evidence to inform an emerging 5 year vision. In parallel a wide scoping public engagement exercise has been commissioned from the University of Gloucestershire to capture residents’ and businesses’ views and aspirations for the future of the city centre. Both processes will be concluded during the Autumn when we will be able to issue a vision for the city centre.</p>	
13.	<p>From Councillor A. Chambers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment</p>	<p>The Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy on the Council's website covers the period from 2016-2021. We're now in the second half of 2022. What's the strategy now?</p>
	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>Cllr Chambers has already made reference to the emerging vision for the City Centre being prepared by the Gloucester City Centre Commission. This will underpin our next Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy as well as</p>	

	<p>other policy documents. Work on the preparation of the strategy will commence upon the completion of the 5 year vision for the city centre later in the current financial year. It will guide the Council's future regeneration programme as well as the operational policies and interventions we will make to continue to support a thriving and growing local economy.</p>	
14.	<p>From Councillor A. Chambers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment</p>	<p>Please advise what the current level of vacant units is in the city centre, both by number and percentage of total units. How does this compare with the national average and what plans is the Council putting in place to address this?</p>
<p><b>Response:</b></p>		
<p>Officers have assumed that 'vacancy rates' referred to in the question relates to vacant ground floor commercial premises in Gloucester City Centre. Officers collect monthly city centre vacancy statistics based on analysis of individual units. In August the number of vacant units was 100 out of 580 in the city centre, which represents 17%. We do not have directly comparable statistics for the national average as there are a number of variables (eg the exact area used to define a city or town centre) which make comparisons difficult.</p> <p>The vacancy rates in Gloucester have remained relatively stable in Gloucester since the start of the year increasing slightly over the past few months. The Centre for Cities classified Gloucester City Centre as 'strong' performing city centre, noting that vacancy rates are just one of a number of indices of success (<a href="#">Cities-Outlook-2022-2.pdf (centreforcities.org)</a>)</p> <p>City centres across the UK are transitioning and that there is often an oversupply of aging retail stock, particularly in peripheral areas. As a response, in Gloucester the City Plan encourages the diversification of uses to enable the centre to adapt to changing needs. The major developments underway, including the Forum and the City Campus, are creating a more diverse business base whilst other developments are enabling more people to live in the city centre.</p> <p>The Council and its partners continue to work with the owners of empty units to fill vacant shops. In Cathedral Quarter the Council has taken steps to redevelop historic properties and to encourage visitors and investment. We collectively put on a year round cultural events programme and encourage meanwhile uses, all intended to increase footfall and increase investor confidence in the city centre.</p> <p>The Gloucester BID has an important role to play in this regard and we work with them to market the city centre and attract more occupiers to empty units.</p>		
15.	<p>From Councillor A. Chambers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment</p>	<p>The City Council's Managing Director has since 2015 been a shared post with the County Council as a Commissioning Director there. According to the organisational chart on the City Council website (25/07/2022) that is still the case. Has the position changed? If so, when did it happen, who took the decision and why, and what is the additional cost to the City Council?</p>
<p><b>Response:</b></p>		
<p>The website has now been updated. The role of Managing Director reverted to a full time position in January 2022, as part of a review of the City Council's senior management structure. The decision was taken by the Senior</p>		

		<p>Appointments Committee on 2 December 2021, following the retirement/resignation of the two Corporate Directors and subsequent advice from the Local Government Association. Full details of the rationale for the decision can be found in the report to the Senior Appointments Committee and the restructure saved the council £136,000 per year.</p>
16.	<p>From Councillor A. Chambers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment</p>	<p>Please could you issue myself with a detailed plan of what streets get litter picked on what days?</p> <p>Or a rota for what areas (including streets) are being litter picked for the rest of the year.</p> <p>The reason I ask for this is I would like to monitor litter picking and street cleaning progress against the areas.</p> <p>Please could I have a hard copy handed to me in full council or by email before.</p>
<p><b>Response:</b></p>		
<p>The most recently updated schedule, which is used by the street cleansing team, has been provided via email and can be provided to other Councillors on request. Ubico are midway through a street cleansing service review and this schedule is subject to change whilst the review is ongoing and again once we move to greater digital management of working next year.</p> <p>Streets in red are high footfall areas which are cleaned every day.</p>		
17.	<p>From Councillor J. Brown to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment</p>	<p>Recently, when I reported an overflowing litter/dog bin, I had the following response from Here 2 Help.</p> <p>“Thank you for contacting Gloucester City Council's Contact Centre. Sorry to have to come back to you, however, when we log a request for the depot we need as much information as possible. Unfortunately the bin numbers on their own isn't enough. Could you please let us know exactly where these bins are please.”</p> <p>Please advise when and if mapping will be done to enable Gloucester City Council to deal with these requests more efficiently.</p> <p>Please also advise how regularly these public litter/dog bins are emptied, as I am reporting on a weekly basis bins that have not been emptied.</p>
<p><b>Response:</b></p>		
<p>A digital service project team from Ubico are looking at the integration and improvement of our IT systems, the majority of which should be in place by summer 2023. The mapping of litter and dog bins has already been highlighted as a priority and Ubico have committed to map them all by Christmas 2022, once done the frequency of emptying will also be captured. Bins are emptied on various frequencies and vary between daily and once a week.</p> <p>In the meantime, using the “Report It” system allows you to add a location, the bin number and a picture to your report.</p>		

18.	From Councillor Conder to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	<p>The Council went to tender in April for a county-wide Housing Stock Survey.</p> <p>Is it possible to have an update on the progress of this survey, given that it was the intention that the survey should take place in the summer months?</p>
<b>Response:</b>		
<p>The contractor for the countywide Private Sector Stock Condition Survey was appointed at the end of May and preparatory work has been ongoing since then. Officers are working closely with the contractor and letters introducing the Survey will be sent to those households randomly selected to be surveyed during the week commencing 3rd October, with surveying work starting the week commencing 17<sup>th</sup> October. It is anticipated that the surveying work will take up to 8 weeks.</p>		
19.	From Councillor Pullen to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	<p>During the summer months excessive amounts of weeds have grown on roadsides, pavements and kerbsides across the city. Why have these weeds been allowed to grow and left untreated ?</p>
<b>Response:</b>		
<p>This year weed spraying was delayed until the end of May due to the essential equipment not arriving in time and the need to train new staff in the safe use of chemicals.</p> <p>The city is sprayed twice each year and Ubico are now <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> of the way through the second spray. Spraying can only take place in certain weather conditions and should not happen during high winds, rain or very hot temperatures. Legislation also states that weeds must be “green and growing”. After the spray has taken place, it is 14 days before dieback begins. All of these factors affect the overall appearance but are beyond our control.</p> <p>Ubico are currently undergoing a full review of street cleansing which will include whether it is still feasible to spray weeds or whether a mechanical weed ripping process would provide a better solution.</p>		
20.	From Councillor Pullen to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	<p>Why are the public still unable to access consultation responses to planning applications (comments and objections etc) on the councils planning portal and when will this be remedied?</p>
<b>Response:</b>		
<p>Recovery of Public Access following the cyber incident, is continuing and the front end of the system that allows users to view details of applications, such as key dates and proposals, has just gone live. The related system that enables users to view documents associated with individual applications will not be operational at the same time and work on that system remains ongoing.</p> <p>Documents relating to planning applications from January 2022 onwards are also available via the council’s website - <a href="#">View planning applications online</a>.</p>		
21.	From Councillor Chambers-Dubus to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	<p>Now the council have moved to the Eastgate Shopping Centre, are there any plans for signage so people know where the council is based?</p>
<b>Response:</b>		
<p>No - The move from Shire Hall was to move the back office element of the Council to space owned by the Council and will deliver ongoing revenue</p>		



	savings. As was the case at Shire Hall we are not signposting to this space. Where officers arrange meetings they will arrange with the participants as was the case at Shire Hall.			
22.	From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	<p>It just over nine months since the cyber attack severely compromised the council's IT systems.</p> <p>Can you confirm which services are fully restored and which are work in progress?</p>		
<b>Response:</b>				
<p>The following have continued to operate throughout the incident; the contact centre solution, Website, Email, in house telephony, Microsoft teams for collaboration both internally and with trusted 3<sup>rd</sup> party partners.</p> <p>All of the following applications have been fully restored:</p> <p>Xpress ModernGov Civica Financials and Financials hosted Uniform (excl) Document Management System Terrier Ferret Open Revenues Granicus</p> <p>Although the above systems have been restored, in some instances staff are continuing the reinstatement of data that has been manually processed since the incident. .</p> <p>Outstanding system restoration work is: Restore and integration of the DMS elements of Uniform transferred from Information @ work.</p>				
23.	From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	Can you confirm how much it has cost this council so far to restore its IT systems and what the estimated final bill will be?		
<b>Response:</b>				
<p>£787k spent to date (£142k Capital works and £645k Revenue costs), the Council received £250k in grant funding and has placed £380k into a cyber reserve. These costs include an element of IT improvement works which the Council would have had to undertake in the future.</p> <p>We do not have a final estimate, however costs are been kept to a minimum whilst still delivering the security the Council requires.</p>				
24.	From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	As a result of the cyber-attack, could you confirm how much it has cost this council to restore and renew the postal vote electoral register?		
<b>Response:</b>				
<p>The costs are made up of the IT recovery work, plus the costs associated with writing out to affected electors and scanning returned applications.</p> <p>The costs incurred to date are:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="279 1960 1385 2031"> <tr> <td>IT recovery work for the Electoral Management System as a whole</td> <td>£13,000</td> </tr> </table>			IT recovery work for the Electoral Management System as a whole	£13,000
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(costs relating specifically to the postal vote recovery element are not itemised)	
Printing (initial write out and first reminder to non-responders)	£3,368
Outgoing Postage	£10,544
Incoming Postage (estimated)	£6,040
Scanning (estimated)	£4,156
Total to date (estimated)	£37,108

The current statutory requirement to renew postal vote applications every five years means that the council incurs costs each year by writing to all electors whose postal vote applications are due to expire to invite them to re-apply, and by sending reminders to non-responders. This requirement will be reduced to every three years when the relevant provisions of the Elections Bill come into force in January 2024. Therefore, even without the cyber incident, the majority of the printing and postage costs set out above would have been incurred by the council at some point over the next two years, as electors would have been invited to re-apply in line with the revised statutory requirements. The council incurred no postal vote refresh costs in 2021/22 and, as a result of this cyber recovery exercise, will now not incur any further postal vote refresh costs until 2024/25.

72% of affected electors have submitted a new application in response to the initial write out and a reminder has been sent to the remaining 28%, some of whom may not respond because they no longer require a postal vote. A final reminder will be sent towards the end of the year after annual canvass communications have helped to identify individuals who have moved out of the area.

25.	From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	How much has it cost the council to fit out the new offices based at the Eastgate Street shopping centre?
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**Response:**  
The Council has spent £400k on the move to Eastgate. The initial estimated costs were £300k, but as part of the move the Council took the opportunity to replace the gas heating within the offices and replace with more environmentally friendly air conditioning and fresh air systems as part of the Council's climate change commitments. We have taken the opportunity to further invest in hybrid working technology. The bulk of the additional costs relate to these two variations against the initial plan.

The move to the Eastgate Office delivers ongoing rent payable saving of £250k per annum.

26.	From Councillor Field to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	Some Gloucester residents have reported a problem whereby they have not received their new green bin stickers showing they have paid for the garden waste service, despite having paid on time. Are you aware of this issue and what is being done to resolve it?
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**Response:**  
Officers have been aware of this issue for a while and working on resolutions. In response to this the council's webpage content has been updated to advise customers to present their garden waste bin displaying the 2021/22 or 2022/23 sticker. Customers that have chosen to pay by cash or card but have not

	<p>received a sticker are advised to present their bin because the council has it on record that payment is received.</p> <p>Customers that contact the council directly regarding the issue are advised to present their bin because records show payment is received. The garden waste bin is collected as scheduled.</p> <p>New sign ups to the Garden Waste Service closes on 30 September 2022, after this date residents will be able to sign up from 1 February 2023.</p>
27.	<p>From Councillor Field to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment</p> <p>What is the annual budget for repair and replacement of street name plates in Gloucester?</p>
	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>Street nameplate replacement requests are graded according to damage, safety and legibility. We cap replacements at 120 each year, this number is based on the available resource to carry out the necessary surveys and fitting. The policy is available on our website.</p>
28.	<p>From Councillor Field to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment</p> <p>What plans do you have to increase the recycling rate in the city?</p>
	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>We continually look at ways to reduce the amount of residual waste being generated in the city, this is the most effective way of increasing the percentage recycled.</p> <p>In recent weeks we have focussed on the terraced streets in an intensive project which involved waste education, letters and door knocking to 1600 homes. We have a closed lid policy for waste, we carry out dozens of waste audits each month and have recently attended a Freshers event at Hartpury college (many of whose students live in the city). We recognise that waste education is an important part of our role.</p> <p>The recycling service offered in Gloucester is already a comprehensive one, we collect paper, cardboard, aluminium, steel, plastics, glass, cartons, food, small electrical items and garden waste. Our vehicles are fully utilised, and it would be impossible to collect anything else significant enough to alter the recycling rate, without additional vehicles and staff. Within the coming weeks we are introducing coffee pod collection, a grant funded scheme in partnership with Podback.</p> <p>Gloucester's recycling rate is circa 44% which is in line with the national average.</p>
29.	<p>From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure</p> <p>Regarding the Blackbridge Project - are you committed to ensuring that what has been a council plan priority for many years will be delivered?</p>
	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>Yes</p>
30.	<p>From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure</p> <p>I am aware that a survey was undertaken on all outdoor tennis courts in Gloucester. Will this report be shared with all ward councillors?</p>
	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>No survey was undertaken by the council.</p>

31.	From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	With the Chief Executive of Gloucester Culture Trust now moving on, what support will the GCT receive from the council, to enable it to thrive in the future?
<b>Response:</b>		
The council continues to work closely with the Gloucester Culture Trust and supports them through the provision of both office and artist studio accommodation on the first floor of Kings House. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure attends board meetings and the Head of Culture meets regularly with the Chief Executive Officer.		
32.	From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	Who will have responsibility for programming events in the new King's Square performance space?
<b>Response:</b>		
The city council owns Kings Square and holds overall responsibility for programming and permitting activity to take place on the Square. The council consults with a range of stakeholders including Gloucester Culture Trust, The Music Works, University of Gloucestershire and others on the types and frequency of such events.		
33.	From Councillor Conder to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	<p>At present there is no way for the public to visit the council to see officers face to face. The only option is over the phone, email or website and since the cyber incident you can't do much online.</p> <p>I am told an elderly lady came to the new offices with a council tax issue as she couldn't get through on the phone and can't use a computer. Nobody would come out to help her as they weren't seeing people face to face.</p> <p>In the end the compassion of the officer led to them having to call a manager who was at home to ask if they could go out to see the lady and help her. Initially another officer was going to send her to go and use the phone at Gateway to talk to them which was picked up as ridiculous.</p> <p>The issue is that there are no face-to-face appointments for any vulnerable residents.</p> <p>To lead onto my question from that: under the Homeless Code of Guidance, section 11.14 states that homeless assessments will require at least one face to face interview. It appears there are no face-to-face appointments being offered since March 2020 to any resident or vulnerable person.</p> <p>What is being done to correct this lack of public duty given that the Council has the facilities and infrastructure at the Gateway?</p>
<b>Response:</b>		
For clarity, the paragraph in the Homelessness Code of Guidance referred to actually reads:		
11.14		

*In most circumstances assessments will require at least one face to face interview. However, where that is not possible or does not meet the applicant's needs, assessments could be completed on the telephone or internet or with the assistance of a partner agency. For example, an applicant who is in prison, hospital or in other circumstances where they cannot attend an interview, could have an assessment completed through a video link or with the help of a partner agency able to complete an assessment form, provide information and assist with communication where needed.*

During the initial Covid lockdown from March 2020 it was clearly the case that in person face-to-face homelessness interviews were not possible. To respond to this change, the Housing Service used telephone appointments and virtual meetings to ensure that customer's needs were met and to accord with the Code of Guidance.

When the Gateway re-opened in July 2021 face-to face homelessness interviews were offered to customers alongside the continuation of telephone appointments and virtual meetings to enable customers to have the full choice of options to meet their particular needs or preferences.

Unfortunately, following the cyber incident in November 2021 the use of the Gateway was no longer possible due to the loss of the IT network in the building and homelessness interviews reverted to being predominantly telephone appointments and virtual meetings with customers. However, where individuals requested face-to-face interviews, or where specific needs were identified that warranted face-to face interviews, these were undertaken by officers.

At no point has the Council conducted its homelessness interviews in any way contrary to the relevant Code of Guidance.

34. From Councillor Conder to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

I have received a comment that the Council number 396396 was not being answered at 9.45 on a weekday.

What steps are being taken to ensure residents can contact the Council by telephone?

**Response:**

The telephone number for Gloucester City Council of 01452 396396 is available for customers to contact the council during our opening hours. These are 9am to 5pm, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 10am to 5pm on Wednesday. Closed weekends and public bank holidays. Our telephone lines are closed until 10am on a Wednesday to allow for staff training and development. There is a direct dial telephone available, during these times, located in the lobby of The Gateway for those customers who do not have access to a telephone.

Outside of our opening hours, emergency out of hours support is available and details of these contact numbers can be obtained when listening to the "closed" message on 01452 396396 when we are closed.