

Paragraph 12 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.

Cabinet is recommended to

(a) Note the written questions submitted and corresponding responses.

(b) Note the supplementary questions and corresponding responses delivered verbally within the 15 minutes available for Questions by Members.

No.	Question from/to	Question
1.	From Councillor Castle to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	<p>The City Plan (Agenda Item 10 Appendix 2, 3.10) now includes the requirement to build tree-lined avenues in all new developments.</p> <p>Have you considered the resource implications for Ubico due to increase leaf fall in our city?</p>
<p>Response:</p> <p>The Gloucester Plan main modifications include a policy requirement for new streets in the City to be tree lined. This is a requirement of the revised National Planning Policy Framework, requiring all new streets to be tree lined. The City Plan Inspector considers it this policy reference as necessary to make the Gloucester City Plan sound. While the Council are not in a position to alter this provision, it should be noted that unanimous support was expressed at September 2021 Full Council for increased canopy cover across the city to ensure residents enjoy the wide range of ecosystem services delivered by urban trees.</p> <p>When new residential streets are created, there is an increase in council tax income arising from new homes. The City Council's contract with Ubico allows for new developments to be added to the waste collection and street cleaning routes, with costs incurred being charged to the Council. Currently the road sweepers clear the roads of leaf litter and reactive clearing of the pavements is done when requested. Leaves on grassed areas are left. It should also be noted that sensitive selection of a diverse urban canopy can significantly reduce revenue costs through the use of minimal fruiting and evergreen specimens.</p> <p>Given the Council's strong focus on nature-based global warming adaptation solutions, the requirement to line the pavements of all new developments with trees represents an important step in reducing damage to property, hospitalisations, and peak demand during future extreme heat and precipitation events, while securing extensive additional biodiversity, public health, and community safety benefits.</p>		

2.	From Councillor Hilton to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	The report (Agenda Item 11) says that on the 13 th of October the cabinet decided not to progress a shared IT services option with the County Council? Could you explain the rational for that Cabinet decision?
Response:		
Full rationale is detailed in the Cabinet report dated October 2021.		
3.	From Councillor Hilton to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	The report (Agenda Item 11) says that by January 2022 a complaint network had been selected and negotiations were at an advanced stage to enter a new arrangement with Civica UK Ltd. It says that Civica UK Ltd unexpectedly pulled out in February. What reasons did Civica UK Ltd give for pulling out at such an advanced stage?
Response:		
Civica has taken the decision to divest its remaining Information Technology Operations (ITO) contracts so it can focus on growing its software business, which serves public sector organisations at local and national level, throughout the UK and beyond.		
At present, the company provides services to a number of public bodies across the UK. Civica is working closely with each of these organisations to ensure a smooth and successful transition of services.		
4.	From Councillor Hilton to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	How much officer time was put into arranging managed IT services with Civica UK Ltd before they pulled out?
Response:		
The Council do not operate a time recording system. However, Officers estimate that approximately 25 days of Officer time will have been used for the period following October's Cabinet report until Civica declared their intent to withdraw from the process.		
5.	From Councillor Hilton to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	What known local authority Teckal companies are available to for the city council to consider joining to provide managed IT services? Could you list some that might be shortlisted.
Response:		
Publica is an example of a local authority Teckal company that could be considered.		
6.	From Councillor Hilton to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	The report (Agenda Item 11) states that an extension of the existing ITO agreement with Civica UK Ltd for 18 months is in process of being agreed. Has it been confirmed?
Response:		

	A letter of intent to extend the services until 30 September 2023 has been signed by both Civica and the council with a view to signing the contract change notice on 5th May, following Cabinet's decisions on the 4 th May.	
7.	From Councillor Hilton to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	The report (Agenda Item 11) also recommends bringing the IT services back in house. How long will this take?
	Response:	
	This will be dependent on detailed exit and mobilisation planning, but Officers anticipate it would take a minimum of 3 months.	
8.	From Councillor Pullen to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	Can the Cabinet Member give an update on Richard Graham's proposal to introduce a charging structure for use of the tennis courts at The Oval in Moreland. Can he explain the Council's current position and give details of any meetings that have taken place along with any decisions that have been reached?
	Response:	
	Cabinet is still considering the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) proposal that Richard Graham has communicated about. Cabinet met a representative of the LTA during May to find out more about the proposal. No decisions have yet been made.	
9.	From Councillor Conder to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	The second tendering process to carry out a county-wide housing stock survey had a cut-off date of April 21 st . Can the Cabinet member tell us if a suitable consultancy been found to carry out this urgent task, and can she say when this urgently-needed process will begin?
	Response:	
	As set out the closing date for the submissions of prospective tenders was 21 st April. The tenders are currently being evaluated and when this process is completed and the contract awarded further details will be advised.	
10.	From Councillor Conder to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	A resident has contacted me about their situation regarding a recent house move. Having moved into their new home, they are unable to sell their last one, because of the delays to searches resulting from the cyberattack. Their monthly outlay on the unoccupied house includes Council Tax, currently discounted for six months but eventually rising to £200 per month. Together with insurance, mortgage, standing charges on utilities etc, their monthly outgoings total £850, a not inconsiderable amount at an expensive

		<p>time. Renting out the property is not possible because of the uncertain timescales.</p> <p>While this situation is not of anyone's making, the resident is paying for services to the property which are no longer being used, and the City is receiving fees for services no longer being delivered.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member and her colleagues look into ways of mitigating this burden for this resident and others in this unique situation, by reducing the demand for Council tax to 0%?</p>
	Response:	
	<p>The City Council has a duty to collect Council Tax on behalf of the preceptors.</p> <p>We are unable to reduce a council tax bill to zero on the basis that the resident cannot sell their home due to land searches. During the COVID pandemic, there were similar situations where people were unable to move due to lockdown restrictions and we did not reduce council tax bills for these residents.</p>	
11.	From Councillor Gravells to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	<p>The last time the City Council had a fully adopted City Plan was in 1983. Subsequent reviews of it all fell and came to nothing. So the latest draft version of the new Gloucester City Plan in front of Cabinet now (Agenda Item 7), brings it very close to the final stages, before its eventual adoption by Full Council.</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member please outline the most likely timeline from today, right up to the eventual Full Council meeting, which will adopt the first City Plan since 1983?</p>
	Response:	
	<p>The consultation on the Main Modifications will take place from Monday 16th May for 6 weeks finishing on the 27th June. Officers will then submit the responses received and any observations they have back to the Planning Inspector as soon as possible in July August, this will be dependent on the number of responses received. The timetable is then very much in the Inspector's hands. We hope that the Inspector will be able to respond to the council by October 2022. If her report recommends that we can proceed the City Plan will be put forward to council for adoption in the winter of 2022/23. We cannot be more precise than this at this stage as we are reliant on the Inspector producing her final report.</p>	
12.	From Councillor Sawyer to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	<p>Given that the Oxstalls Tennis Centre has seen increased usage recently, resulting in much more traffic, and it is no longer able to cope with the volume of traffic as it is too narrow, full of potholes and the lights don't work.</p> <p>Does the Council, who own the access road, plan to upgrade it?</p>

	Response:	
	<p>The Council have looked at the Oxstalls Tennis Centre Road and have met local Cllrs, and County Highways representatives, to discuss potential solutions. This was a very high-level ideas discussion. Possible solutions discussed were along the lines of; road widening, improving the access, a one-way system with an additional road being built. All were considered not viable by County Highways and would not have been supported, this is in part down to the nature of the road network surrounding the road to Plock Court. Encouraging higher traffic flow was not considered an option they suggested that we investigate alternatives to discourage traffic by looking at alternatives, such as lift sharing, buses, other sustainable means of transport such as cycling or walking. The other option was to have an extensive traffic strategy for the whole area to facilitate the improvement of this single road, this could potentially cost millions and the County would look to help support the City but would not help fund.</p>	
13.	<p>From Councillor Sawyer to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy</p>	<p>What is the current average waiting time on domestic planning applications?</p> <p>How many staff process domestic planning applications?</p> <p>What is the Council doing to enable searches halted by the cyber incident to be carried out for house buyers?</p>
	Response:	
	<p>The vast majority of householder planning applications are determined within the 8-week determination period. Some may take longer, usually where there are amendments required to the scheme to make it acceptable. There are two members of the planning team that handle householder planning applications. They are also supported by staff in the business support team who carry out administrative functions and a senior officer who reviews and signs off the reports.</p> <p>It is not possible to carry out searches of planning history without full access to our IT systems. Once the system is restored searches will be able to be carried out in the normal way.</p> <p>The system associated with carrying out local land charge searches is a priority system in the ongoing recovery process, but at present we remain unable to complete any searches. From the outset, customers and other interested parties have been advised of the situation and customers have been encouraged to explore indemnity insurance to enable transactions to proceed, though we recognise that this is not suitable for all customers.</p> <p>When the system has been recovered and the service re-established, resources within the multi-skilled Business Support Team will be diverted to focus on clearing the backlog of searches as efficiently as possible. We appreciate the frustration and inconvenience resulting from the situation and thank customers for their ongoing patience.</p>	
14.	<p>From Councillor Sawyer to the Cabinet Member</p>	<p>When will residents who pay their Council Tax by means other than direct debit get their £150 rebate?</p>

	for Performance and Resources	
	Response:	
	The team are currently concentrating on delivering the energy rebates to residents, the first tranche to be paid are the residents who pay council tax by direct debit. Once the first tranche is almost complete, we hope to be in a position to open up an application process for residents who do not pay their council tax by direct debit. Officers are working on a technical solution but currently unable to give a precise launch date for this facility. All energy rebate information is updated on the council's website regularly: Council Tax Energy Rebate - Gloucester City Council	
15.	From Councillor Wilson to the Leader of the Council	When will the council be publishing the policy for discretionary funding for those not eligible for the Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme?
	Response:	
	The policy is in the draft stage, once it has been reviewed and agreed, it will be published on the website: Council Tax Energy Rebate - Gloucester City Council	
16.	From Councillor Radley to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	Residents in the city who have moved home during the cyber incident may not be able to pay their council tax due to city systems that have been disrupted. What information and support are these residents being given to help manage this delay in payment and when is it anticipated that this system will be operating normally?
	Response:	
	Residents who have moved and contacted us are being advised of the approximate amount of their new council tax liability and likely instalment amounts. They have been asked to put this amount aside and when we are able to issue their new bill, the amount can be paid at that time. The revenues team are working hard behind the scenes to bring the systems and accounts back up to date. The restoration of the systems must be done in a secure and methodical manner, with testing at each key milestone. It should also be noted that the staff restoring the revenues system are now also responsible for delivering the energy rebate to over 50,000 city residents.	
17.	From Councillor Field to the Leader of the Council	There are weeds cropping up over the City, and to clear them the Council has previously sprayed them to kill them. This is effective in removing weeds but bad for the environment. Will the new streetcare partnership move towards more environmentally friendly methods of removal such as the 'Weedo' machines?
	Response:	
	As part of our new partnership with ubico we will be reviewing the effectiveness and environmental impact of our work on the grounds and streetcars contract	

	and will review available options for improvement. This will include how we tackle weeds.	
18.	From Councillor Field to the Leader of the Council	For the last couple of weeks the mobile internet in the city centre has been very patchy. Do we know what is causing this?
	Response:	
	No.	
19.	From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	Regarding the Leisure and Cultural Services Assessment and Management Options Appraisal (Agenda Item 10). Are you disappointed at the poor performance of the culture and leisure services as noted in this report?
	Response:	
	No. The report does not demonstrate poor performance in either leisure or culture. The report does show areas and/or factors that limit the ability of the services to perform optimally. These are being addressed through the approach to procurement of the Leisure services and through a number of improvements being taken and implemented across the Cultural services. Over the past 2 years the impact of the covid pandemic on both these services has shown how the staff to be both resourceful and responsive under extremely trying conditions.	
20.	From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	Regarding the Leisure and Cultural Services Assessment and Management Options Appraisal (Agenda Item 10). Why when we have known for many years that the Guildhall and Museum are not ideal for their functions, has this work not been done before?
	Response:	
	Prior to the pandemic, the Head of Culture developed a Museum Development Plan with the museum team and the Guildhall business plan is currently in development. With the report from SLC, this has focused the direction of the work that is now required to take these services forward.	
21.	From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	Regarding the Leisure and Cultural Services Assessment and Management Options Appraisal (Agenda Item 10). Will all options be considered for the Guildhall and Museum such as repurposing them for alternative uses and will this be considered also for GL1?
	Response:	
	For cultural services – the report recommends conducting a strategic review into the cultural services. This work will be led by the Head of Culture. The cultural	

	<p>strategy recommends ongoing investment into the services. This is being approached by making appropriate applications for funding to sources such as Arts Council. There is a Museum Development Plan in place.</p> <p>For Leisure a high-level resource plan has been produced which identifies the work required. This includes a review of the potential and opportunities at GL1. This includes exploring the potential to repurpose parts of the site if necessary to achieve better alignment with the new council plan.</p>	
22.	From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	<p>Regarding the Leisure and Cultural Services Assessment and Management Options Appraisal (Agenda Item 10).</p> <p>What is the risk to the Council in terms of loss of control if we go to a multi-site trust leisure operator?</p>
	Response:	
	The risk is low.	
23.	From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	<p>Regarding the Leisure and Cultural Services Assessment and Management Options Appraisal (Agenda Item 10).</p> <p>Do you agree that this report shows that we were not ready to bid for City of Culture?</p>
	Response:	
	No, the report makes no reference to bidding for the city of culture as this was not in scope for this piece of work.	
24.	From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	<p>Regarding the Leisure and Cultural Services Assessment and Management Options Appraisal (Agenda Item 10).</p> <p>What interim measures are being considered to raise income and cut costs at the Guildhall and Museum of Gloucester?</p>
	Response:	
	<p>Gloucester Guildhall has applied for £230k by Arts Council from its Capital Investment Fund for Guildhall Galvanised. This will deliver improvements to energy consumption of the Guildhall through the replacement of lighting with LED equivalents. It will also enable the café/bar to be remodelled to maximise sales and increase turnover, resulting to improved financial performance. A business plan is being developed for the Guildhall as well as future funding bids for further investment.</p> <p>The Museum of Gloucester has been awarded £376k from the Arts Council MEND fund to be spent on improvements to the fabric of the building, including drainage, heating and air-handling systems. These improvements, which will be implemented over the next 3 years, will result in reduction in energy consumption, improve the environment that will protect collections, improve storage and display capability and more, along with ongoing council investment.</p>	

	<p>The engagement team are looking to bring income-generating exhibitions to the city to display high-quality exhibitions that are charged at the point of entry.</p> <p>All of these improvements will result in reducing costs and increasing income across both venues.</p>	
25.	From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	<p>Regarding the Leisure and Cultural Services Assessment and Management Options Appraisal (Agenda Item 10).</p> <p>Are you happy or disappointed to be inheriting the culture and leisure portfolio in such challenging circumstances?</p>
Response:		
I am very happy!		
26.	From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	<p>Regarding the Leisure and Cultural Services Assessment and Management Options Appraisal (Agenda Item 10).</p> <p>What are you doing to establish KPIs across the portfolio?</p>
Response:		
<p>In relation to Leisure, we are working closely with Aspire to agree a set of KPIs through a Partnership Delivery Plan.</p> <p>In relation to Culture, there are already a set of indicators and actions that are monitored through the council's performance reporting system Pentana and monitored by service managers and the Head of Service, which are reported quarterly to council. The Head of Culture will work with service managers to ensure that KPIs are being reported on and consider whether these need to change in future.</p>		
27.	From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	<p>Regarding the Leisure and Cultural Services Assessment and Management Options Appraisal (Agenda Item 10).</p> <p>What information was not available for compiling this report?</p>
Response:		
Some financial figures were not available due to the cyber incident at the time that prevented access to the most recent records. Everything else was made available to SLC for the purposes of this report.		
28.	From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	<p>Regarding the Leisure and Cultural Services Assessment and Management Options Appraisal (Agenda Item 10).</p> <p>Do you agree that we need many more cultural events and festivals in the city?</p>
Response:		

	The festivals and events team is running at full capacity supporting dozens of events over the course of the year. Whilst it would be great to hold more events in the city, we already typically host, support or run over 30 per year.	
29.	From Councillor Pullen to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	<p>The Leisure and Culture options appraisal paper (Agenda Item 10) recommends extending the Aspire Contract from September 2023 to September 2024.</p> <p>What will be the position if Aspire do not wish to agree to the contract extension?</p>
Response:		
We will continue to work closely with Aspire's board and management team to find a way to ensure the best for Gloucester residents. If Aspire do not wish to agree the contract extension then the current contract will terminate in September 2023.		
30.	From Councillor Pullen to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	The Leisure and Culture options paper (Agenda Item 10) recommendation 2 refers to a Partnership Delivery Plan. Does this constitute a variation to the current contract?
Response:		
No, it is not considered a variation to the contract, but will be run alongside any contract extension.		
31.	From Councillor Pullen to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	<p>In the Leisure and Culture options paper (Agenda Item 10) Appendix A refers to a preference to procure a multi-site operator.</p> <p>As Aspire is not a multi-site operator what are the implications for Aspire employees through this recommended suggestion?</p>
Response:		
The employees of Aspire will be treated in accordance with their terms of employment, which is a matter for the board and management of Aspire.		