

# Gloucester City Council

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 up to five written questions 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 Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	In Feb 2019 planning permission was granted for conversion of Spread Eagle Court to C4 residential use to include minor alterations and extensions.  Permission was granted for three years.  It's now four years and no attempt has been made to restore and convert Spread Eagle Court.  What is the cabinet member doing to encourage its restoration and conversion to residential apartments?
<b>Response:</b>		Officers continue to seek to engage with the private owner of the Spread Eagle Court site to ascertain the owners plans and to understand what role, if any, the council can play in the reuse of this city centre site.
2.	From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	What is the city council doing to secure a new a tenant for the former Chambers Pub in Kings Square?
<b>Response:</b>		At present Greene King are still the tenant of this property so no new tenants are being sought. We are discussing with them their plans for this current tenancy. Once any agreement has been reached with the current tenant we will then explore options available.
3.	From Councillor Pullen to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	At Budget Council in February, I expressed concern at the insufficient funding the City Council were awarding to Aspire and therefore impacting on their ability to deliver services going forward. Could the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure give an update and advise if additional funding has been identified, or whether there is still need for concern?
<b>Response:</b>		

	The city council provided additional funding of £360k in 2022-23 and has committed a further £360k of additional funding in 2023-24 to support Aspire's rising operational costs. This support was approved at the recent budget council meeting.	
4.	From Councillor Pullen to the Cabinet Member for Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	Could the Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Environment please advise whether consultants have been appointed yet to develop the Climate Change Action Plan?
<b>Response:</b> The tender process for the appointing consultants to support the delivery of Gloucester City Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, and Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, has now been completed. WSP - one of the world's leading engineering professional services firms— was appointed as the successful bidder. A meeting of the Climate Change Member Working Group has been arranged for 17 April in order to introduce members to the process and introduce them to the team at WSP who will be undertaking this important project with the Council. An agenda and accompanying papers will be circulated prior to the meeting.		
5.	From Councillor A. Chambers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	What provision is there in the contract for Ubico for maintenance of shrub beds/ city planters and park garden areas and clearance of leaves, please advise costs and figures?
<b>Response:</b> The Council contract with Ubico does not include gardening, only hedge cut backs, grass cutting and tree maintenance. There is also provision for maintaining ESIF-funded wildflower meadows within the contract.  Any formal planters or shrub beds are managed by volunteer groups. Leaves in parks are left for natural decomposition. Leaves from highway trees are swept with mechanical sweepers and becomes part of the street sweepings figures. Between October 1st 2022 and December 31st 2022 we swept up 636 tonnes of street sweepings which includes leaves.		
6.	From Councillor O'Donnell to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	With the Barretts big new development of 500 houses in Matson, how much CIL money have they paid to help the Matson Community?
<b>Response:</b> The Winnycroft sites were allocated for residential development in the Joint Core Strategy. As part of this process, the viability of development was tested. It was found that the sites were unable to support the payment of any CIL contributions. The Planning Inspector agreed with this approach. These sites are therefore not liable to pay any financial contributions under the CIL regulations.		
7.	From Councillor Chambers-Dubus to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	During the budget meeting we learned that fines to the approximate value of £48,000 were issued across the city for fly tipping offences last year. How much of that money has been collected so far?
<b>Response:</b> The total value of FPNs paid in full for this period is £10,800.  The total income that we have received through payment plans for this period is £4,050 (from 13 payment plans).		

	<p>The combined total income for that period is £14,850.</p> <p>After 6 months of the FPNs remaining unpaid, the files are prepared and forwarded to One Legal for prosecution at the Magistrates Court (please note that all fines issued by the Magistrates Court after a successful conviction are kept by HM Courts and Tribunals Service).</p>	
8.	<p>From Councillor Conder to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment</p>	<p>Since the pandemic it seems that dog ownership has increased. Many of these may not have received adequate training or socialisation.</p> <p>WRS -Worcester Regulatory Services- provides a stray dogs service for our city.</p> <p>What figures for the last three years-2020-2022- does the Council hold for dogs being reported as loose, and for dogs causing concern/injury to other residents?</p> <p>How many dogs have been removed from their owners during that time?</p>
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stray dogs reported (as contained or loose) in 2020 were 105</li> <li>• Stray dogs reported (as contained or loose) in 2021 were 106</li> <li>• Stray dogs reported (as contained or loose) in 2022 were 105</li> </ul> <p>The City Council / WRS do not hold information/data in relation to aggressive dogs causing concern/injury, which is a matter dealt with by the Police.</p> <p>WRS do not remove dogs from their owners unless requested to do so as a voluntary handover by the dog owner. WRS is unable to identify any records of dogs being handed over to them (within Gloucester) during the three years.</p>		
9.	<p>From Councillor Wilson for the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources</p>	<p>Last year, the Lib Dem group proposed a budget amendment to hold an independent inquiry into the Cyber attack focussing on</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. how it happened,</li> <li>2. How we managed it and</li> <li>3. how we ensure we are properly protected in the future.</li> </ol> <p>Although this was rejected by the administration, you give a public commitment that as soon as we had "moved into the recovery phase of the cyber incident, findings would be shared with members."</p> <p>When is this likely to happen and will the findings be shared with the public?</p>
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>We are currently still recovering from the cyber incident, once we have reached and completed the final elements, we will consult with the NCC, NCSC and the ICO to see what can safely be reported publicly. As previously agreed, I will bring a report to a future Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee once these final elements have been completed.</p>		

10. From Councillor Radley to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	<p>The friendship cafe operates the city farm and this is owned by Gloucester City Council.</p> <p>What is the current status of the lease between the friendship cafe and the City Council for this site?</p>
<b>Response:</b> Our tenant at the City Farm is Gymnasian UK Ltd. The original lease was 20 years. The lease expires on 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2031. As the lease is 'protected' the arrangement will hold over unless one party serves a legal notice on the other.	
	<p>The friendship cafe operates the city farm and this is owned by Gloucester City Council.</p> <p>Will the City Council offer a lease of 25 years or more?</p>
<b>Response:</b> Each request for a lease, a lease renewal, a surrender and renewal is based on its own individual reasoned requirements, with community needs at the heart of the discussions and decisions made. Landlord and tenant laws are complex but the Council is always open to discussion.	
	<p>The friendship cafe operates the city farm and this is owned by Gloucester City Council.</p> <p>When is it anticipated that a new lease will be agreed?</p>
<b>Response:</b> The current lease City Farm lease has 8 years left to run. It is a protected tenancy, therefore the tenants are in a very secure position. If there are any special considerations that we need to be made aware of then please encourage the tenant to reach out to relevant officers.	
13. From Councillor J. Brown to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	<p>Within Barnwood Park, there is a balancing pond designed to contain overflow water during extreme wet conditions. There is a lovely wildflower meadow planted as part of the Urban Greening Project (thanks to EU funding) and there is an area set aside for families to picnic and play. There is no official access into this area, however, there are numerous unofficial access points difficult to use even for able-bodied individuals. As a result, there is no access for individuals with wheelchairs, pushchairs, disability issues, etc. and residents regularly contact me with concerns. I have had the following response from the Council - "the Council has an obligation to make 'reasonable' adjustments for people with mobility issues." In this case the answer was "no". Could this please be looked into again so there would be at least one official access point?</p>
<b>Response:</b> There is an existing ramped footpath into the Barnwood Park balancing pond from Spire Way, which is suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs. A further entrance into the balancing pond is planned, which will provide stepped access from the footpath at the rear of Newstead Road. Because the pond was	

	constructed to provide drainage for the surrounding estate the ground is wet and muddy for a large part of the year and the potential for use by wheeled users is therefore limited. The construction of a surfaced path around the pond to facilitate year-round wheelchair access would be prohibitively expensive, and the path would be unusable at times due to the presence of standing water. Other areas of Barnwood Park including the arboretum, which is managed primarily for wildlife, are accessible to wheelchair users.	
14.	From Councillor Castle to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	When was GCC first made aware there were problems with the fire alarm system at GL1.
<b>Response:</b> Aspire is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the fire alarm system in the buildings it runs. The Council is responsible for replacement if items become unserviceable. The Council was made aware that the alarm was failing on 10 <sup>th</sup> February when multiple activations were occurring and complete failure occurred a few days later on the 14 <sup>th</sup> . We worked extremely hard collaboratively (the Council / Aspire) to get the centre back up and running as soon as was viable.		
15.	From Councillor Castle to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	What is the total break down of cost for the closure of GL1 for the two days, cause by the fire alarm failure. Including the cost of 24 security.
<b>Response:</b> We cannot comment on the cost to Aspire as this is a separate business. To date the Council has spent £11,000 on a 24 hour fire watch provision (provided by a security company) and £3,000 to supply and fit temporary alarms. The fire system is currently being replaced.		
16.	From Councillor D. Brown to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	The Urban Greening Project, made possible with the help of European Union funding, improved biodiversity across the City including in Hucclecote where the open spaces in Porchester Road and Appleton Way were planted with wild flowers and a small number of saplings. This EU funding also including a budget to maintain the areas for 15 years. Please advise how these funds have been used to date and what are the plans going forward?
<b>Response:</b> Under the terms of the EU funding agreement the Council has an obligation to maintain the biodiversity improvements at Porchester Road, Appleton Way, and other Urban Greening sites, for a period of 15 years. No additional money was provided by the EU for this maintenance work but it will be delivered by Ubico as part of the Council's contract. Maintenance of all the Urban Greening sites is carried out in line with management schedules specific to the individual sites.		
17.	From Councillor D. Brown to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	The Urban Greening Project also included significant funding to improve drainage of road surface water on Porchester Road into the brook. This improved drainage system has been in place for an extended period and has reduced the small flood risk in the area. Has this information been passed to the Environment Agency in order

		that they can reassess their “flood maps” and reduce the flood risk rating for the area?
<b>Response:</b>		
The Environment Agency is currently undertaking a national project to refresh their main river flood maps and are aware of the improved drainage afforded to the road surface water system and channel capacity on Porchester Road. The drainage works are however intended primarily to speed the removal of surface water and provide some additional, very localised, in-channel capacity. It is therefore unlikely to impact on the 30 or 100 year flood event risks on which the Environment Agency base flood zone maps.		
18.	From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	A recent report on the monuments review said the investigation had been hindered because the museum service did not have access to its collections database, due to the cyber attack.  What is and has been done to restore this database?
<b>Response:</b>		
The new server is built and the original database has been restored. As the system was upgraded by the supplier, this put both the database version and the application version out of step with the original. As the application is still under full support with the provider, we are working with them to fully transition the system to the latest and most up to date version.  This is almost complete and we aim to test it with Museum staff very soon.		
19.	From Councillor A. Chambers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	It's great to see the 13,500 trees that died which cost tax payers the best part of £48,000 and was a complete waste of money are being replanted. What safety measures are in place to prevent these replacement trees also dying as well, seeing as I have received various different responses from the city council as to why the 13500 trees died?
<b>Response:</b>		
A contract will be put in place, via the County Council, funded by the Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust, for the maintenance of the trees. This will require the appointed contractor to carry out six maintenance visits per year for a period of three years. At each maintenance visit the appointed contractor will be required to:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water as required.</li> <li>• Mulch the trees to cover the root flare to a depth of 2 to 3inch.</li> <li>• Check stakes, ties and guarding and adjust in accordance with tree growth and replaced as and when required during the establishment years.</li> <li>• Carry out formative pruning if necessary, for example removing crossing branches to promote good growth and study structural tree(s).</li> <li>• Weeding</li> </ul> After each visit the appointed contractor will provide a list of losses along with photographic evidence.  At the end of the maintenance period (3 years) the appointed contractor will remove all relevant guarding, and materials from site.		

	It is envisaged that this maintenance agreement will ensure a minimal survival rates of 85%.	
20.	From Councillor O'Donnell to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	If council are no longer accepting wet paper and cardboard, why do we still have to use the blue bags, as this does not stop them getting wet, and many of our ward members get left their blue bags unemptied? Why can we not use a box with a lid or cover, so that they are collected and kept dry?
<b>Response:</b>		
We now have an alternative off-taker for wet paper and cardboard and a method of testing moisture levels, so collecting material wet will no longer be an issue. However dry paper and cardboard has a much higher value and we do need to encourage residents to break up cardboard, stack it inside the sack and close the lid. The newer blue bags are taller and will fit more cardboard inside, these have been in circulation for around 12 months. Green boxes only have a 75L capacity, which is insufficient for cardboard and residents would still need to cover it. There is a significant cost difference between a green box and a blue sack and it is estimated that each household would need 2-3 boxes for paper and cardboard.		
21.	From Councillor Chambers-Dubus to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	During the week beginning 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2023, how many families with children under 18 were housed in the Travel Lodge at Gloucester Quays?
<b>Response:</b>		
During the week of 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2023 three families were accommodated in the Travelodge at Gloucester Quays by Gloucester City Council.		
22.	From Councillor D. Brown to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	King George V Playing Field in Hucclecote is an excellent leisure area and has several access points. However, the access points at Brookfield Rd, Lynton Rd, Claudians Close and Upton Close are restricted so that access by users of mobility scooters and wheelchairs cannot access the facilities directly. What can the City Council do to improve access for these groups and for others with mobility issues?
<b>Response:</b>		
There are currently entrances into King George V Playing Fields which are accessible by mobility scooters and wheelchairs. Officers will however carry out an audit of all entrances in order to assess the potential for further improvements.		
23.	From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	What plans do you have, working with our contractors Ubico, to improve the clearance of the autumn fall of leaves from the streets of Kingsholm & Wotton and other wards similarly affected across the city?
<b>Response:</b>		
We are aware there are a lot of leaves still to be collected and we will be bringing in the large sweeper for several weeks to do the work where access is possible alongside the bi-annual bypass work and the trunk road sweeping.  In the narrower streets Ubico will deploy the smaller sweepers. Deep cleans are scheduled in Kingsholm Road, Edwy Parade, Kingsholm Square, Sandhurst		

	Lane and Rivermead Close on 4 <sup>th</sup> April and in Pitt Street, Park Street, Hare Lane, Worcester Street, Northgate Street and Spread eagle Way on 9 <sup>th</sup> May. Kingsholm Ward Councillors are welcome to contact Dawn Fearn or Sara Boon to discuss these plans.	
24.	From Councillor A. Chambers to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods	<p>As of 2023, the crime rate in Gloucester is 48% higher than the South West and 14% higher than the England, Wales &amp; Northern Ireland overall figure.(reference <a href="http://www.crimerate.co.uk">www.crimerate.co.uk</a> ). The most common crimes in Gloucester are violence and sexual offences, with 6,384 offences during 2021, giving a crime rate of 43. This is 34% higher than 2020's figure of 4,757 offences and a difference of 11.03 from 2020's crime rate of 32. Gloucester's least common crime is theft from the person, with 70 offences recorded in 2021, an increase of 19% from 2020's figure of 59 crimes.</p> <p>What is the city council doing to do to make our City Safer against violence and sexual offences and does the cabinet member agree that the figures are very disappointing for our City?</p>
<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>The City Council continues to work collaboratively with Gloucestershire Constabulary who have responded with respect to the rates as indicated. Following the recommendations of a HMICFRS PEEL inspection conducted in 2021 Gloucestershire Constabulary were required to make improvements which included the recognition and recording of crime as per the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR).</p> <p>The force has sought to enhance the Crime Management command involving a major investment of staff and a comprehensive training programme to support understanding and application of relevant legislation (HOCR). The Crime Standard Bureau are now responsible for recording crime for the organisation ensuring there is consistency in crime recording decision making.</p> <p>The robust mechanisms introduced all work towards ensuring all crime reported to the police is correctly recorded. The work has understandably seen an increase in crime recording which is welcomed by the Constabulary.</p> <p>The increase is indicative of the national picture. The office of National Statistics provides quarterly crime recording data that is helpful in benchmarking how the Constabulary position is changing compared to other forces and national trends. Nationally there has been a 32.5% increase in crime recorded (excluding fraud). Gloucestershire has witnessed a 48% increase (excl. Fraud) which makes up for the previous identified shortfalls in crime recording of between 13-19% and is aligned to the national trend of uplift.</p> <p>The overall increases are indicative of the progress that has been made in the Constabulary's ability to deliver a reliable crime recording process, ensuring those affected are afforded the service they have a right to deserve and expect. Additionally, all officers, sergeants and inspectors have received crime recording awareness training to further enhance the forces' ability to recognise and record crime accurately and timely.</p>		

	<p>We are continuing to work closely alongside the policing teams to recognise hotspot areas and proactively identifying behaviours such as harassment/intimidation where we can step in quickly and act. Our on-going close relationships with the city protection officers and city safe allow information to be swiftly fed back to us when individuals or behaviours are noted to be a concern, most recently we received a report from one of our retail outlets regarding inappropriate sexual behaviour from an individual – we're already in the process of building a case for an anti-social behaviour injunction.</p> <p>The city is progressing the recruitment of a safer spaces officer, who we are hoping will be joining us around June time. This role will look at how we can make our spaces safer, improve consultation and engagement and react better across the community safety partnership to things that residents and visitors to the city report to us. This role was funded with part of £217k secured from the shared prosperity fund, with the rest of the funding looking to develop an app for reporting and consulting with the council.</p> <p>The Youth Violence Prevention (YVP) work via the Stronger Safer Partnership continues, and the first subgroup meeting was held on 28th February. The group will continue their work to bring the voice of the community and lived experience to help shape our partnership response to youth violence over the coming years. This work is being commissioned via Young Gloucestershire alongside work from the OPCC who are doing a data-led needs assessment for the county. Our Gloucester-focussed work will sit alongside the OPCC work to give us a fuller picture on how we as a partnership need to work to effectively tackle youth violence in our city.</p> <p>We are linking in with the OPCC and Home Office on the serious violence duty (linked to the above) and are part of working groups for the countywide strategy being developed by the OPCC.</p> <p>Following on from successful installation of the Safer Streets-funded Lighting and CCTV project at Gloucester Park, Asset Management officers are target-hardening and investing in lighting/cameras at city centre car parks to target areas with a view to reducing Anti Social Behaviour and rough sleeping.</p>
25.	<p>From Councillor Hilton to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment</p> <p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>The railway station underpass was closed on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March for initial strip out works. Network Rail have commenced refurbishment of their supporting structure for the track and platforms (sometimes referred to as the track trays). This repair and redecoration is programmed to be completed at the end of April.</p> <p>The main construction contract is being delivered by GWR. This is programmed to be commenced in May. This will improve the access to the subway, including making it step free, from both the railway station and Great Western Road. Improved drainage, new paving, lighting, enhanced CCTV and redecoration will be undertaken during the Summer. The subway is scheduled to be formally opened in September 2023.</p>
26.	<p>From Councillor A. Chambers to the Cabinet</p> <p>Why is the city council increasing an all day parking ticket by a 33% cost increase and going</p>

	<p>Member for Performance and Resources</p> <p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>The car parking tariffs are being increased to reflect inflationary pressures, and to encourage people to consider other alternative modes of transport.</p> <p>The Council is aware of the importance of car parking sites to the development and prosperity of the city. The Council owns or manages 15 car parks across the City: 13 pay and display and 2 pay on foot. The purpose of the tariff review is to ensure the charges are appropriate to cover the costs of managing the car parks, their development and maintenance, whilst remaining competitive with other providers and comparable with other local authority providers.</p> <p>The Council's all day car parking charges have been unchanged since 2012, and we have not kept pace with inflationary maintenance cost increases. We compare favourably to other charges in the City, we compare favourably to other similar local authorities' tariffs, and even at the proposed new rate, we are still cheaper than comparable all-day tariffs in other nearby car parks.</p>	back to a 2 hour minimum stay? It didn't work when tried several times in the past and it could put off shoppers from popping into town to make a quick purchase - a further nail in the coffin for our already dead city centre?
27.	<p>From Councillor A. Chambers to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources</p> <p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>The Council continues to work towards obtaining the optimum use of our assets. We are proactively working with letting agents to ensure vacant units are occupied, with interest being shown in a number of units. A number of the vacant units are currently under offer.</p>	<p>All these units are city council owned assets and they are all EMPTY</p> <p>St Oswald's Park x2 vacant retail units. Kings Walk Shopping Centre x2 vacant retail units. Eastgate Shopping Centre x16 vacant retail spaces.</p> <p><u>19a Westgate Street</u> Kings Walk Shopping Centre x1 vacant office space. Eastgate Shopping Centre x2 vacant office space. Former council offices Herbert Warehouse, Kimberley warehouse Philpott's Warehouse</p> <p>Why are these council owned buildings still empty, some after so many years it does not help our ghost city what's going to be done?</p>