

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 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.

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 Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	<p>In a letter dated 13th July 2023 to the Chair of Aspire Trust you said: "The Council re-iterated its position to you that with <i>certain conditions</i>, it would continue to provide financial support to Aspire to cover any operational deficits to enable Aspire to continue trading as a going concern until we are able to procure a new leisure management contract."</p> <p>What were those conditions you mention in your letter to Aspire?</p>
Response:		
<p>The conditions that the council were seeking were the Aspire Trust to collectively address the 4 key recommendations in the Hazelwoods' report commissioned by the Council which provided a review of Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust's finances (June 2023). These were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transparent Financial Reporting - Aspire should be required to provide detailed and transparent financial reports, including a breakdown of its overhead costs, particularly the energy bill. This information will allow the Council to better understand the current financial situation and identify areas where cost-saving measures can be implemented. 2. Collaborative Revenue Enhancement Plan - Aspire needs to develop a comprehensive plan to enhance revenue for the swimming pool. This plan should include innovative strategies for increasing visitor numbers, exploring partnership opportunities with local businesses, and implementing effective marketing campaigns. By working collaboratively with the Council, Aspire can ensure that financial burdens are shared, and revenue-generating initiatives are effectively pursued. 		

	<p>3. Independent Energy Audit - Given the concerns surrounding Aspire's substantial energy bill, an independent energy audit should be conducted to assess the pool's energy usage, identify potential energy-saving measures, and estimate the financial impact of implementing those measures. This audit will provide valuable insights for both Aspire and the Council, enabling them to make informed decisions about reducing energy costs and promoting sustainability.</p> <p>4. Assessment of staffing costs: the budget for 2023/2024 allocates an increase of almost £500k on 2022/2023. It is important to see where the money is being spent, pay rises, addition heads etc and whether the expenditure is essential.</p>	<p>These measures were then inserted into to the Partnership Delivery Plan which was shared with the board of Aspire Trust for agreement.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure</p>	<p>On 17th of July Aspire wrote to you about several matters and they made special reference to issues with the swimming pool, they said: “To address the issues with the swimming pool, rapid and substantial investment is needed. This would cover, amongst other things the reinstatement of the seating in the main pool, refurbishment of the shower and changing facilities, and a fully operational fire system.</p> <p>How did you respond to these requests?</p>
<p>Response:</p>		
<p>We responded in the following ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reinstatement of seating - old spectator seating in the Barton pool was removed. New seating, approved by the Aspire CEO (on 17th August) was ordered and is due for installation in October 2023. 2. Refurbishment of the shower and changing facilities – was to be addressed as part of an agreed annual plan of repairs and maintenance. Operational meetings held between members of the Council’s Asset Management team and Aspire Trust continued and we were working towards a mutually agreed planned schedule of maintenance and capital improvements. 3. The fire system at GL1 was replaced at the council’s cost this year with new fixtures and fittings and completed to the satisfaction of Aspire. It was confirmed as fully operational on 8th August 2023 by Fire Safety Officers and qualified engineers. 		
<p>3.</p>	<p>From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure</p>	<p>You have issued a press release suggesting that the council’s sports facilities may open within weeks following the collapse of Aspire. You said: “Getting these facilities open and allowing our community access to them is our number one priority at the moment”</p>

		When do you plan to reopen the swimming pools at GL1?
Response:		
We are working hard to contract with a leisure services operator to run all our leisure facilities at both Oxstalls and GL1. We are confident that once the interim provider is up and running and has the correct staffing levels and safety procedures in place, swimming will be able to be reinstated. Subject to Council approval of the necessary delegations to officers, we aim to have a provider in place within a matter of weeks and will work with them to establish a timeline for re-opening the facilities as soon as possible.		