

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 Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	<p>Out of solidarity with the people of Ukraine this council has been flying the Ukrainian flag next to the Union flag outside the North Warehouse.</p> <p>From time to time, I have noticed that it hasn't been flying and the flagpole isn't displaying any other flag.</p> <p>What might be the reason?</p>
Response:		
Sadly, there have been several incidents whereby the Ukraine flag has been torn down by unknown members of the public. We are not sure what motivates this but the flagpole then remains empty whilst a replacement flag is sourced. A new one has arrived and is now being flown. We do also remove / change flags to ensure that we comply with the rules and guidance of flying the Union Jack and any other civic flags that are suggested on certain days of the year.		
2.	From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	Could the cabinet member please provide me with a date when I as a member of the public can use the Barton Pool to enjoy a swim?
Response:		
Members of the public were able to enjoy a swim at the Barton pool from Saturday 11 th November.		
3.	From Councillor O'Donnell to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	Since being an elected councillor since the beginning of 2021 the city council have said they are open and transparent. Why have the City council meetings still not been live streamed?
Response:		
I am pleased to advise that, since I advised you of the timetable for the project at the July Council meeting, work has remained on track and the new system will be installed by early December. As previously advised, following testing and training phases, it is anticipated that meetings will begin to be live streamed by January.		

4.	From Councillor O'Donnell to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	Can the constitution be changed to allow city councillors who are unable for medical reason/emergency attend full council meetings by Teams or Zoom, it was allowed during the pandemic why is it not allowed now?
Response:		
The requirement for elected Members to be physically present to take part and vote at formally constituted Council and Committee meetings is set out in the Local Government Act 1972 and as such, the Council has no power to permit remote attendance. The requirement was relaxed during the Covid-19 pandemic under emergency legislation. The legal requirement to hold meetings in person was reinstated on 6 May 2021. Local government organisations have continued to lobby the government for remote attendance to be permitted, however, the High Court has ruled that a change to primary legislation would be required and, at present, there are no plans for any such legislation to be introduced.		
5.	From Councillor A. Chambers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	Can the city council give a discounted taxi licence fee and other concessions to taxi drivers who operate a disabled friendly taxi?
Response:		
The Council can set the fees and charges for taxi and private hire licences in order to recover its reasonable costs as allowed by the relevant legislation. This means that it is difficult to reduce a fee for a particular vehicle if the same process is applied when an application is made. The current fees and charges are about to be reviewed.		
In September, the Licensing and Enforcement Committee approved a wheelchair assessable vehicle (WAV) policy exempting WAV's from the age and Euro emissions standards that apply to saloon vehicles. The reason for this decision was to make it easier for operators to invest in a WAV and also making sure existing ones were able to carry on serving the public.		
6.	From Councillor Conder to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	Liverpool has recently reported a 47% increase in rough sleepers from September 22-September 23. That City has also seen a 50% increase in families staying in temporary accommodation for longer than the statutory limit of 6 weeks. Does the Cabinet Member have up-to-date figures for Gloucester's rough sleepers and for families in temporary accommodation?
Response:		
The number of people sleeping rough does fluctuate and as of 8 November there were 17 people sleeping rough in Gloucester of which 9 were considered to have a local connection to Gloucester.		
Similarly, the number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation fluctuates, and as of 7 November there were 84 families with children accommodated in temporary accommodation.		
7.	From Councillor Field to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	Is it now the policy of this council that Ubico 'will not respond to individual requests for weed spraying', as was quoted to me?
Response:		

	<p>We had anticipated that weed spraying would cease at the end of October, but some limited spraying has continued in the last week due to the mild weather continuing. Over the winter months weeds can be knocked out on request rather than sprayed and requests for this work are welcomed.</p>																															
8.	<p>From Councillor Bowkett to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment</p>	<p>Is there any partnership arrangement with the County Council and the Environment Agency to manage and reduce (a) surface run-off pollution from industry and roads entering watercourses within the city boundaries and (b) the increased risk of flooding, taking into consideration riparian ownership of waterways, but also the Environment Agency's limited Influence on urban and transport development and management?</p>																														
<p>Response:</p> <p>There is no formal partnership arrangement between the County Council and the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency is a specific consultee in relation to the Local Plan and development proposals and are engaged accordingly.</p> <p>Both City and County Council work closely via networks such as the Risk Management Authority (RMA) meetings and day-to-day contact with officers. A key route to manage surface run-off pollution lies with the planning process and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) to which the Environment Agency are a specific consultee.</p> <p>Stakeholders such as Severn Trent Water, County and City Council along with charity and volunteer groups, such as Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT) hold meetings to discuss opportunities and funding for potential schemes to retro-fit SuDS to aid with water quality, flooding and biodiversity improvements. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and flood alleviation schemes provide multiple benefits including wellbeing, biodiversity and flood risk reduction and water-quality improvements.</p> <p>Both the Environment Agency and City Council carry out asset inspections on waterways. Any significant defects that pose a risk to flooding would be raised to the appropriate landowner for them to undertake mitigation works. Any works or building adjacent to a watercourse would need approval from the Environment Agency prior to commencement.</p>																																
9.	<p>From Councillor Wilson to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources</p>	<p>What percentage of our core budget is currently being spent on providing temporary accommodation for the homeless? How does this compare to previous years?</p>																														
<p>Response:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2019-20</th> <th>2020-21</th> <th>2021-22</th> <th>2022-23</th> <th>Forecast</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th>£'000</th> <th>£'000</th> <th>£'000</th> <th>£'000</th> <th>2023-24 £'000</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total spend</td> <td>746</td> <td>448</td> <td>725</td> <td>795</td> <td>1,519</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Core Budgeted Expenditure (excl. HB Subsidy)</td> <td>24,942</td> <td>26,540</td> <td>31,692</td> <td>34,041</td> <td>33,085</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Percentage Spent of Temporary Accommodation</td> <td>2.99%</td> <td>1.69%</td> <td>2.29%</td> <td>2.34%</td> <td>4.59%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Forecast		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	2023-24 £'000	Total spend	746	448	725	795	1,519	Total Core Budgeted Expenditure (excl. HB Subsidy)	24,942	26,540	31,692	34,041	33,085	Percentage Spent of Temporary Accommodation	2.99%	1.69%	2.29%	2.34%	4.59%
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10.	<p>From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for</p>	<p>The first quarter financial outturn report to cabinet 11th October showed a projected overspend of £1.4</p>																														

	Performance and Resources	<p>million on 31st March 2024, which would put the general fund balances into the red by £377,000, wiping out the council's rainy-day reserves.</p> <p>How much of this £1.4 million overspend have you clawed back and what is your latest projected overspend for the financial year end?</p>
	Response:	
	The forecast overspend at the end of Q2 is £974k, an improvement on the Q1 forecast position of £430k arising from the actions that the Council has taken during Q2 and the receipt of additional grant funding for homelessness from the Government.	
11.	From Councillor O'Donnell to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	Why did Gloucester City Council give Aspire £1.5m of tax payers money knowing full well they were paying themselves approximately 25% pay rise (half a million pay rise)?
	Response:	
	The £1.5m referred to is the total of the additional financial support provided over the period from March 2020 to September 2023 to assist the Charity with their recovery from the impacts of the covid pandemic and increased costs of utilities and other operational items.	
	Whilst there was an increase in the total staffing and wage costs for 2023-24, this represents a combination of an increase in the staffing numbers and a pay increment of 9.3%.	
	The pay-rises for the staff of the Charity were a matter for its Board of Trustees to agree upon within their available budget.	
12.	From Councillor A. Chambers to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment	How do you justify spending £110 million on the new forum when there is no budget for new play equipment in the city's most deprived wards which are ranked in the countries top 10% most deprived / poorest areas.
	Response:	
	The Council is not spending £110m on The Forum. Full Council approved a business case for the expenditure of £107m in 2021 for a number of projects in Kings Quarter including the new Kings Square, residential and commercial development at Whitefriars, The Forum and public space improvements. The business case was based on the regenerative benefits of this package of investment and underpinned by a financial case which sees a long term financial return to the council in excess of the cost.	
	The Council's decision to lead this significant City Centre regeneration is already having significant broader benefits including the attraction of the University of Gloucestershire to the former Debenhams building (which will attract 4,500 students into our city centre once complete) and upgrades to the railway station that are ongoing.	
	I am confident that this council's investment, together with that of our partners, will have significant benefits for the whole city.	

	New play equipment is usually secured through the planning process (via s106 and/or CIL) and is usually provided either on the site of new development or close to new development.	
13.	From Councillor Conder to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	Does the Cabinet Member have recent figures for numbers of no-fault evictions from private rented accommodation?
	Response:	
	This is data that is not available to the council in respect of evictions in Gloucester. This is because there is no notification requirement where landlords issue notices seeking possession on any grounds.	
14.	From Councillor Wilson to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	Are we aware of any instances of properties being made available to the council for temporary accommodation as a result of landlords evicting their current tenants (a process known as flipping)? What is the Council's policy on such practices?
	Response:	
	We currently procure temporary accommodation working with housing providers and are not aware that the use as temporary accommodation displaces existing tenants. It would clearly be counter-productive for the council to be implicit in potentially making residents homeless in securing temporary accommodation for homeless households, and we check that this is not the case.	
15.	From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	The Home Secretary has described rough sleeping as a "lifestyle choice" while defending her suggestion to restrict the use of tents by homeless people on the streets of Britain. Do you agree with her?
	Response:	
	I do not believe that anyone makes a lifestyle choice to live in a tent on the streets of Gloucester. There are numerous and complex reasons why this may happen. We as a city council must work with our partners to engage and support individuals sleeping rough, with the ultimate goal of helping individuals find long term sustainable accommodation.	
16.	From Councillor O'Donnell to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	How many hotels in Gloucester City Council wards are full of illegal immigrants and how many illegal immigrants are in Gloucester?
	Response:	
	There are currently two hotels being used by the Home Office in Gloucester to accommodate people seeking asylum. The latest data provided by the Home Office advises that as of 30 June 2023 there were 463 individuals seeking asylum (including all members of family households) accommodated in Gloucester.	
17.	From Councillor A. Chambers to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	What community events are held by the 'city council alone not stake holders' for homeless and rough sleepers?
	Response:	
	The council does not work in isolation with respect to people who experience homelessness or are rough sleeping, and we engage with a wide range of partners to deliver a sensitive and compassionate approach to find a suitable	

	resolution. Rough sleepers in particular may be vulnerable individuals with varied and complex needs and there is no single approach that can be assumed to be effective to resolve their housing need.	
18.	From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	When will the housing data and recommendations from the housing stock survey be published?
	Response:	
	The results of the private sector stock condition survey will be reported to Cabinet in March 2024.	
19.	From Councillor A. Chambers to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	How on earth is the City Council spending £110 million on the forum, yet selling off 3 dock land warehouses for only £666 each (£2m combined) the docks warehouses are in a more thought of part of the city and has a similar floor space.
	Response:	
	<p>The Council is not spending £110m on The Forum. Full Council approved a business case for the expenditure of £107m in 2021 for a number of projects in Kings Quarter including the new Kings Square, residential and commercial development at Whitefriars, The Forum and public space improvements. The business case was based on the regenerative benefits of this package of investment and underpinned by a financial case which sees a long term financial return to the council in excess of the cost.</p> <p>The Council's decision to lead this significant City Centre regeneration is already having significant broader benefits including the attraction of the University of Gloucestershire to the former Debenhams building (which will attract 4,500 students into our city centre once complete) and upgrades to the railway station that are ongoing.</p> <p>I am confident that this council's investment, together with that of our partners, will have significant benefits for the whole city.</p> <p>The Herbert, Kimberley and Philpot Warehouses are significantly smaller than the scale of work at Kings Quarter, or indeed The Forum alone. This site is being disposed of on the open market and requires investment in order to return it to a suitable use.</p> <p>There is no comparison to be drawn.</p>	
20.	From Councillor A. Chambers to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	What are the concrete ceiling structural issues with the Kingswalk building where Janes Pantry had to urgently close?
	Response:	
	<p>The ceiling has been assessed by a structural engineer who has indicated the potential issues with the building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As the slab is uninsulated, the steam from the coffee machine and other kitchen appliances directly below the corrosion could be condensing on the soffit allowing for water ingress. Kitchens are also typically an aggressive environment due to the chemicals used for cleaning. - An element of the waterproofing above has failed allowing for water ingress. - Carbonation of the concrete could have taken place removing the passivity that concrete provides to the steel which prevents corrosion. 	

<p>The structural engineer has recommended a further type of concrete carbonisation testing which has been instructed. Temporary repairs in line with their recommendations have been carried out and the unit has been deemed safe to open.</p>
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