

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 Pullen to the Cabinet Member for Environment	Complaints are being made from residents who do not have online access, about problems trying to register, renew or pay for the garden waste collection service. Is there a problem processing applications from people who do not have online access?
<b>Response:</b>		
With the introduction of in-cab technology and to reduce fraud the council needed a new process to collect garden waste payments from our customers. This has led to the introduction of a new online portal with which to both register and pay for the garden waste service. Any customer who is unable to access our online system can contact our customer services team on 01452 396396 who will be happy to help them. All feedback is welcomed and will be used to improve processes and our communications.		
2.	From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Environment	When is the 12 panel stained glass window (the Gloucester Window) going to be installed at the bus station?
<b>Response:</b>		
The panels are completed and awaiting installation into the Bus Station. The negotiations are taking place between the fabricators of the panels and Stagecoach to agree an installation date. This is based on ensuring minimum disruption to passengers and bus timetables.		
3.	From Councillor Hilton to the Leader of the Council	In paragraph 5.2 on agenda item 8, it says: 'The Local Government Finance Settlement for Gloucester City Council in recent years has seen unprecedented reductions in settlement funding assessment.'

		<p>I assume you are unhappy with the revenue support grant that the council has received for the coming financial year compared to that of 2016/17.</p> <p>Should we be disappointed with the government?</p>
	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>Funding has reduced across the sector as the government balances the books. However, I have written to both the local MP and the Chancellor to highlight national pressures such as temporary accommodation, high utility costs and general inflation.</p>	
4.	<p>From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Environment</p>	<p>Spread Eagle Court on Northgate Street is listed as a positive building within the London Road Conservation Area.</p> <p>What has your administration done to secure this fine building's repurposing and restoration?</p>
	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>Officers have engaged with the owner of the property periodically, but have been unable to secure an agreeable solution for its redevelopment to date. As you will be aware, the building is in private ownership and as such the council does not have direct control over its future.</p>	
5.	<p>From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources</p>	<p>Kings Walk Shopping Centre has had a refit, but I notice there are a few vacant units.</p> <p>In square footage terms how much retail floor space is there in the shopping centre, how much is let and how much is vacant?</p> <p>And, what is being done to acquire new tenants?</p>
	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>The total ground floor retail floor space in Kings Walk shopping centre covers 97,835. Sq ft Vacant space currently stands at 15,582. Sq ft All of the vacant units are currently on the open market with external agents actively marketing the space.</p>	
6.	<p>From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy</p>	<p>Agenda item 8 states that the New Homes Bonus for 2024/25 is £811,000</p> <p>How many new homes have been built each year in Gloucester since and including 2016/17?</p> <p>And what's the best estimate of the income this council would have received for 2024/25 budget if the New Homes Bonus had been maintained as originally set out?</p>

	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>The number of new homes built in Gloucester each since 2016/17 is as follows:</p> <p>2016/17 - 438  2017/18 - 487  2018/19 - 544  2019/20 - 468  2020/21 - 610  2021/22 - 420  2022/23 - 534</p> <p>Unfortunately, due to the complexities associated with the calculation of New Homes Bonus, officers are unable to provide a best estimate of an alternative allocation for 2024/25 based on a different funding calculation than is currently the case.</p>	
7.	<p>From Councillor Conder to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy</p>	<p>After many months of waiting, the outcome of the Housing Stock Survey is apparently now available. Why has the Cabinet declined to give advance information of its outcome to Kingsholm Councillors, whose ward is greatly affected by applications for change of use from family homes?</p>
	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>The Access to Information Protocol in the Constitution sets out the correct processes to be followed for the release of Council information. The Housing Stock Condition Survey report is still in draft form so, as set out in the Protocol, this limits a Councillor's right to access at this time. Once the report has been finalised, all Councillors and the wider public will have a right of access.</p> <p>This was a decision taken by the Managing Director, not Cabinet, in consultation with the deputy Monitoring Officers and the Leader of the Council.</p>	
8.	<p>Councillor Wilson to the Cabinet Member for Environment</p>	<p>Why have the residents of Orchard Park in Hucclecote had their Green Bin service withdrawn without notice?</p>
	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <p>There were numerous collections affected last year due to blocked access issues. Green Lane is very narrow in the area leading up to the park and residents park their cars on the lane making it impossible for the lorry to get through. In addition, residents of the park have in the past parked in the turning circle at the entrance to the park, making it impossible for the lorry to turn around. There has been occasions when they have had to reverse all the way out of the lane which is contrary to safe systems of work. Safety of the public and our operatives will always remain our first priority.</p>	
9.	<p>Councillor Wilson to the Cabinet Member for Environment</p>	<p>Why were the residents of Orchard Park not told, in advance, they were going to lose their Green Waste service? They only found out when some tried to renew it online. There was zero communication from the Council. Is this an acceptable way to treat people who were only trying to do the right thing?</p>

	<b>Response:</b>	
	The Ubico investigation and site visit has now taken place and it has been agreed that residents can keep their service subject to certain conditions. If the access to Orchard Park is blocked there will be one further attempt by Ubico to collect the bins. If on the second attempt access is still blocked there will be no return until the next collection day and no refund will be given. Residents were aware of the issues of collections in the past and this matter was resolved in time for the start of the service on 1 <sup>st</sup> February. Direct Debits are due 5 <sup>th</sup> February and their first collection is due on 13 <sup>th</sup> February.	
10.	Councillor Wilson to the Cabinet Member for Environment	Why did the Council go out of its way to make it as difficult as possible for residents to pay for their Green Bin service by either Telephone or at their local Post Office?
	<b>Response:</b>	
	Along with most other councils, Gloucester City is promoting its digital online channels as they enable a more efficient and cost-effective service. The new process uses a different income management system that no longer facilitates payment at the Post Office. Any resident who needs assistance to make their garden waste payment can contact our customer services team on 01452 396396 who will be happy to help. As with all new processes, teething issues can occasionally happen and when these are identified we look to correct them as soon as possible. All feedback is welcomed and will be used to improve processes and our communications.	
11.	Councillor D Brown to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	The footbridge on the direct route between Castlemeads car park and the Docks is closed for repair. Pedestrians are now faced with a significant diversion, almost 3 times longer. This at a time when there is greater pressure on city centre parking as the Longsmith Street multi-storey is closed. When will the footbridge be safe for use?
	<b>Response:</b>	
	The Castlemeads Footbridge was closed on the afternoon of 26/01/2024 as a precautionary measure, following the January floods and a routine inspection of the bridge. An assessment is underway to determine whether repairs to the bridge are required or not. Until that assessment is complete, I am unable to provide a date for when the footbridge will be re-opened.	
	I appreciate that the bridge closure means pedestrians will need to use different routes to access the Castlemeads Carpark and/or Alney Island. An alternative route to the carpark/to the city centre is signposted at both ends of the bridge and in the Castlemeads carpark itself. I would not describe the alternative route as a 'significant diversion' (it is approximately 320m longer, an extra 3 minutes at normal walking pace).	
12.	Councillor D Brown to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	When will Longsmith Street multi-storey car park be safe for public use?

	<b>Response:</b>	
	Initial surveys have been carried out which has identified the level of work required. A more detailed specification is currently being developed ready for consideration.	
13.	Councillor D Brown to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	The regular spreadsheet sent to Councillors showing staff joiners, leavers and movers is helpful, but it is limited to changes during the previous month. Could this be expanded to show changes since January 1 <sup>st</sup> 2023?
	<b>Response:</b>	
	No other Councillors have requested a different format but we are happy to either supply you separately or to amend the report provided to all, either to (a) amend the report going forward to be staff joiners, leavers and movers in the 12 months to date or (b) provide a single report of this nature for the 12 month period Jan 23 to Jan 24 each year, whichever is most useful for your query.	
14.	Councillor D Brown to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	How many responses were received from the public to the Budget Consultation?
	<b>Response:</b>	
	147 responses.	
15.	Councillor D Brown to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	Was anything different done this year in an effort to increase the number of responses from the public?
	<b>Response:</b>	
	The budget consultation was promoted across social media via paid for adverts and promotions.	
16.	Councillor J Brown to the Cabinet Member for Environment	When the City Council receive a complaint about flyposting what action is taken?
	<b>Response:</b>	
	In most cases, an officer will identify the 'owner' of the sign and ask them to remove it (usually within 48 hours) In some cases (and if the 'owner' or person(s) responsible cannot be identified) officers, or our street cleaning partners Ubico, will remove flyposting ourselves.	
	If we experience prolific or repeated flyposting that cannot be resolved by a warning, this could prompt an investigation and Officers would look at what further action could be taken under the legislation, which sits under the Town and Country Planning Act.	
17.	Councillor J Brown to the Cabinet Member for Environment	How many reports of flyposting have been received during this Council year?
	<b>Response:</b>	
	Since April 2023 we have received 14 reports of flyposting or unauthorised signage.	

18.	Councillor J Brown to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	Residents who are not aware that The Gateway opening times have changed, or of the need to make a prior appointment, still visit expecting it to be open. Could a clear notice be prominently displayed to make people aware of the opening hours and the need (and procedure) to book an appointment?
<b>Response:</b>		
<p>Our opening times were changed in March 2020, as a result of the pandemic and this was made public at that time. A trend that started prior to the pandemic and one that has accelerated since, the Council has seen a significant change in how our customers are choosing to contact us. These trends are an increase in online, phone and email communication and a drop in demand for face-to-face contact. There are many reasons for these changes, enhanced confidentiality, ease of access and convenience to name a few.</p> <p>For those customers who need face-to-face appointments, pre-bookable appointments are available at the Gateway on a Tuesday morning and Thursday afternoon where customers can see an officer. The demand for these appointments is very low and predominantly used by those in need of specialist housing support.</p> <p>We display signage in The Gateway to advise customers of the need to pre-book appointments and the process of how to do this by contacting 01452 396396 or to use the telephone located in the lobby area that is open Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri 9am – 5pm and Thurs 10am – 5pm, but we will ensure we check this is still visible and has not been removed.</p> <p>Further to this, in the lobby of the Gateway there is a free direct dial telephone so that customers can contact us to get support.</p> <p>The council regularly reviews the demand on its face-to-face appointment and it is felt that the current provision of appointments is correct.</p>		
19.	Councillor J Brown to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources	At the December Cabinet meeting steps were agreed about the future of The Gateway services. When will the move take place?
<b>Response:</b>		
The exact timeline for the move is still being finalised by the project team. However, the move is projected to be complete by September 2024.		