

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 Leader of the Council	Two risks are identified on section 14 of agenda item 17, stating that decisions could be made by the proposed Gloucester City Regions Board, which could be detrimental to the city of Gloucester, but beneficial to the rest of the county. Will our representative on the board have a veto?
Response:		
The report makes specific reference to this issue in paragraph 4.3, viz: In order to protect the interest of partner Councils it will be necessary to agree a protocol that although the Board's decisions are by majority, the Board will not make a decision which impacts upon one council's area, without that council's agreement. The Council's representatives on the Board and the Senior Officer Group will ensure that the drafting of the protocol does not overlook this important issue.		
2.	From Councillor Hilton to the Leader of the Council	The report agenda 17 section 4.4 mentions negotiating a county deal with the government. What aspects of a county deal being considered could be beneficial to the city of Gloucester?
Response:		
A level 2 County Deal would be negotiated between the County Council and Government. Discussions are ongoing and should primarily offer the opportunity for more local oversight of services outlined in the devolution framework in the Levelling Up White Paper of February 2022. Explicitly a level 2 county deal does <u>not</u> involve the transfer of any powers from one tier of local government to another and discussions are set to continue with the full engagement of City Region Board partners.		

3. From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

The report on the capital strategy indicates capital receipts in 2024/25 of £2.668 million.

Please indicate which capital assets are to be sold to achieve these receipts?

Response:

The receipts refer to the sale of the Whitefriars apartments, phase 1 of the Forum Development. The sale of these assets formed part of the original business plan to contribute towards the costs of the development.

4. From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

The capital strategy indicates in the section on liabilities that the council will have debts of £190.438 million plus additional liability related to its pension fund deficit £45.689 million.

The council has also set aside £1.6 million for NNDR appeals.

How does this compare to the situation in March 2016?

What's was the council's total liabilities?

Response:

	2015-16	2021-22	Change
	£000	£000	£000
Total Assets	99,708	238,966	139,258
Council Borrowing	15,287	138,753	123,466
Pension Fund deficit	58,381	45,689	- 12,692
Total Liabilities	82,139	222,635	140,496
NNDR appeals (Provision)	883	1,199	316

External borrowing in 2016 stood at £15m following a significant reduction of debt which had been repaid as part of the Housing Revenue Account properties transferred to Gloucester City Homes in 2015.

Since 2016 our debt has increased and is forecast at £190m as at 31/3/24. The Council has over this period invested through its Property Investment Fund which saw the purchase of two shopping centres and a retail park. In addition, the recent completion of the Food Dock and the ongoing Forum development have increased our debt requirement while regenerating the City Centre.

The Council long term asset balance has grown at a similar rate, increasing from £99m in 2016 up to £239m in 2021/22.

The total liabilities have also increased by £140m over the period, liabilities include debt, provisions, capital grants received in advance and deferred income, therefore the figure quoted of £222m is higher than the £190m in the capital strategy which is just the forecast borrowing debt.

	<p>The Pension Fund liability has decreased by £12.692m, this is not controlled by the Council but is calculated by the pension fund actuaries.</p> <p>The NNDR provision has increased but this is in line with the increased amount of Business rates we collect, appeals are via the Valuation Office who notify the Council on any amendments required. £1.6m was the total short term provision of which £1.2m relates to NNDR. In 2015 £1m was held as a short term provision, of which £880k related to NNDR.</p>	
5.	<p>From Councillor Hilton to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources</p>	<p>The pay policy report agenda item 25 says the council employs 298 members of staff.</p> <p>How many of staff are employed on chief officer pay scale grade I or above, with minimum salary of £43,889 and how many of these officers are resident outside the county of Gloucestershire?</p>
<p>Response:</p>		
<p>26 employees are engaged on the Chief Officer Pay grades (eg: Jobsite 1 to 5 and Chief Exec/Managing Director/Offscale).</p> <p>16 of the individuals have a Gloucestershire (GL) postcode and are assumed to live within Gloucestershire.</p>		
6.	<p>From Councillor Wilson to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources</p>	<p>On February 22nd this council voted on its Budget for next year. The papers presented to the meeting showed an anticipated reduction to the General Fund of £349k. The latest Financial Monitoring Report, presented to Overview and Scrutiny, just days later, is now predicting a deficit of £683k.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did you know the closing balance quoted in the budget papers was unlikely to be realised? • Why were the Budget papers submitted to council not amended? • Do we already have a £334k hole in our budget for next year?
<p>Response:</p>		
<p>Q1 – We are still anticipating that the final outturn position of the Council will not be materially different from the balance quoted in the Money Plan. The net deficit indicated in the Money Plan is £713k, the forecast position in the Q3 Financial Monitoring Report is £683k. There are differences in the expectation of the forecast income and utilisation of the Earmarked Reserves resulting from the timing of the preparation and distribution of the reports.</p> <p>Q2 – As the Money Plan represents the best estimate of the position at the time of the budget preparation there will inevitably be differences arising against financial reports presented subsequent to its preparation. Revisions would only be made to the Money Plan should they materially impact the forecast general fund reserves position.</p>		

	<p>Q3 – We do not believe there to be a £334k hole in the budget for next year as a result of the final outturn for 2021-22 being £125k better than previously reported and the difference in the forecast income and earmarked reserves utilisation in the two reports.</p>	
7.	<p>From Councillor Field to the Leader of the Council</p>	<p>In a recent answer you stated that the council wouldn't apply for Fields in Trust status for Tuffley Park, due to the resource implications and the protections already afforded to the park.</p> <p>What are these resource implications? Are there any parks or fields in the city already on the register, and if so which ones?</p>
<p>Response:</p> <p>There are four Gloucester City Council owned parks which have Fields in Trust registration: Plock Court, King George V playing fields, Gloucester Park and Robinswood Hill. The cost of registering the land is minimal, but would require the resources of the Council's legal service. There are however ongoing fees that the Council would be required to pay to the Fields in Trust organisation for making changes to the registered parks. These changes would include fees for leasing existing buildings, holding some events, changing to the arrangements for car parking, allowing wayleaves and easements etc. It is also possible to release the park from Fields in Trust status by paying a fee of £4000.</p>		
8.	<p>From Councillor Field to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure</p>	<p>According to the council plan update there are four cultural organisations in the city which have been granted NPO status. Which four, and what does this status signify?</p>
<p>Response:</p> <p>NPO status indicates an organisation is revenue (or core) funded by Arts Council England (ACE) through their 2023-2026 Investment Programme. There are approximately 900 organisations in England with NPO status. All NPOs are required to deliver on ACE's Let's Create strategy. The four organisations in Gloucester with NPO status are:</p> <p>Gloucester Guildhall which receives an annual grant of £250,000 Gloucestershire Libraries & Information which receives an annual grant of £250,000 Gloucester Culture Trust which receives an annual grant of £150,000 Strike a Light which receives an annual grant of £249,534</p> <p>In January of this year, ACE announced they will extend the 2023-26 Investment Programme funding period for an extra year, 2026/27. All NPOs will be invited to apply for a year's extension.</p> <p>It is expected that in 2026 a new Investment Programme will be announced, open to applications from both existing NPOs and cultural organisations without NPO status.</p>		

9.	From Councillor Conder to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy	<p>At the last Planning Meeting, the Committee heard from a resident in Kingsholm that of the 33 houses in his street, only 13 were occupied by families. At Overview and Scrutiny this month the Council seems to have dismissed the prospect of obtaining an Article 4 Direction to protect three wards in the city from further proliferation of Houses in Multiple Occupation. In Kingsholm's case we not only have HMOs but various forms of supported living which further distort the family environment to which most neighbourhoods aspire. Families in Kingsholm are leaving the area because of the erosion of that community spirit.</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member look further into this matter?</p>
Response:		
<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 February discussed the Council's recent private sector stock condition survey and the associated report. The report, which is being considered at this Cabinet meeting, sets out a recommendation to determine whether there is a business case for an Article 4 Direction to be introduced to manage the conversion of existing dwellings to small HMOs in one or more areas of the city.</p> <p>Therefore, the use of Article 4 Directions has not been dismissed and where appropriate may be considered across the City to respond to evidenced need that meets the statutory requirements contained in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.</p>		