

South Ayrshire Council – 29 June 2022

Formal Questions

Received from:	Councillor Peter Henderson
Response to be provided by:	Council Leader

	<i>Question</i>	<i>Response</i>
1.	There are procedures set out in Standing Orders relating to Meetings for changes to Council policy and decisions. Can you confirm when Council decisions in respect of the Leisure Centre and High Flats being reported in the local press and stated at public meetings were changed please?	There has been no change to the Council decisions in respect of the High Flats or the Leisure Centre

Received from:	Councillor Laura Brennan-Whitefield
Response to be provided by:	Council Leader

	<i>Question</i>	<i>Response</i>
1.	It has been reported that the Administration are proposing to allocate £1m to each of the Council wards, has budget provision been made for this proposal in revenue or capital budget?	An allocation of £1m per ward was included in the Conservative budget presented in March 2022. The Conservative budget was not approved

Received from:	Councillor Brian McGinley
Response to be provided by:	Director - Place

	<i>Question</i>	<i>Response</i>
1.	<p>The Labour Group notes with concern that burial chambers purchased for Ayr and Troon cemeteries have proven to be defective</p> <p>What measures are being taken to investigate and identify the causes of the leaks, attribute liability, learn lessons for future procedures and reclaim the additional costs to public funds?</p>	<p>The report from the Assistant Director - Place to Cabinet of 14 June provided an update on the investigation into water ingress to the burial chambers and rectification works being carried out. Further investigations will be required to consider cause and potential liability</p>
2.	<p>The Labour Group notes with concern, from Cabinet papers, that the timescale for achieving financial close on the Ayr Leisure and Wellbeing centre will not be met</p> <p>To ask, should this project not go ahead:</p> <p>a) How much would it cost for a full refurbishment programme of the Citadel to bring it up to modern, carbon neutral, legal and operational standards?</p>	<p>The costs to completely refurbish the Citadel and bring it up to modern standards, and compliant with building regulations at the time, were estimated at £22.7m in June 2020 for the Strategic Outline Case document that was circulated in a Member Briefing 17 June 2020. The costs are based on an estimated amount for backlog maintenance and elemental costs for upgrading all the building fabric and services. This work would include strip out/down-takings, fabric repairs/upgrade of roof/facades, renewal of mechanical and electrical plant, renewal of specialist floors, windows, doors, decoration and replacement of fixtures and fittings. The earliest these works could be undertaken (factoring in the design</p>

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		<p>process) would be June 2023 and would be subject to inflation in the region of 18% (6% per annum). This would potentially increase the original £22.7m figure to £26.8m. This cost is based on full closure of the facility whilst the works are undertaken</p>
	<p>b) How much asbestos is there in the building and how much would it cost to remove?</p>	<p>Various asbestos surveys have been undertaken over the years, but these have been targeted at specific areas where work was to be undertaken. If any asbestos was present, then it would have been removed prior to the work starting. As there is no comprehensive survey of the entire building, it is not clear how much asbestos is still present, and subsequently how much it would cost to remove</p>
	<p>c) How long would the programme of works take to complete and what period of closure would this involve?</p>	<p>This would depend on whether the building was closed, and the contractor given full access to the building, or a rolling programme of works was implemented where targeted areas of the building are closed off and refurbished before moving on to the next. If a contractor had full access to a closed building, then it is anticipated the works would take approximately 12 to 18 months to complete. In comparison the rolling programme scenario would obviously take longer but could be implemented in a way that minimises disruption to users and allows access to certain parts of the building at certain times</p>
	<p>d) What disruptions and problems are anticipated that this closure would cause to the service and how would these be mitigated?</p>	<p>Loss of income – The Citadel attracts just over £1million in annual membership income from gym, fitness, and swim lesson memberships. It is anticipated that 80-90% of this income would be lost during a facility closure as the service would not be able to accommodate members elsewhere. It may take over</p>

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		<p>5 years to rebuild this level of income as existing customers will have chosen to train elsewhere</p> <p>Loss of footfall – The Citadel currently attracts over 350,000 users and visitors each year. It is anticipated that only 8-10% of this footfall would be able to be displaced to other SAC (South Ayrshire Council) venues leaving 90% of this footfall being lost during a full facility closure</p> <p>Loss of Membership - Like many other businesses, the fitness industry is built on customer loyalty. The Citadel currently offers one of the best equipped fitness gyms in South Ayrshire and the service prides itself on delivering the largest fitness class programme for members anywhere in Ayrshire. Facility closures would provide local fitness gym competitors with an opportunity to attract Citadel members away and retain their business long-term. The Citadel has a membership of 2200 individuals who specifically access the gym and fitness class programme on a regular basis. It is anticipated that many of these members will look to train elsewhere during a closure resulting in the service having to rebuild the business upon reopening</p> <p>Swim Lesson disruption - The closure of the Citadel swimming pools will have a significant impact on swimming lesson delivery and result in waiting lists escalating to an unmanageable level to address as and when the facility reopened. The Citadel accommodates between 800-1000 children learning to swim each week. It is anticipated that only 10-20% would be able to be accommodated at other pools. Like the challenges faced by the service after the Covid-19 pandemic, the potential number of children unable to</p>

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		<p>progress their skills/ability during a facility closure will result in a significant bottleneck in the full Learn 2 Swim programme and will lead to hundreds of local children unable to learn to swim</p>
	<p>e) What would happen to the staff and the services available to the current membership and service users during the refurbishment period?</p>	<p>65fte staff currently work from the Citadel. 60% (40fte) of all Citadel staff are frontline workers unable to work from home. During a facility closure, it is unlikely that the service would be able to temporarily displace any more than 8-10% of all Citadel frontline workers (Lifeguards, Leisure Attendants, Supervisors, Instructors, Receptionists and Cleaners) to other facilities. It is anticipated that the full closure of the Citadel would affect over 35fte unable to work. Due to the number of part-time contracts, it is possible for this 35fte can equate to between 50-60 individual members of staff</p> <p>To ensure the service remains compliant with industry standards, many frontline workers at the Citadel require to undertake monthly training assessments to ensure their specific qualifications do not lapse. Pool Supervisors, Lifeguards, and Instructors unable to work and train on a regular basis will present significant financial and operational challenges to the service upon reopening facilities</p> <p>As outlined in 2d, the services available to current membership and service users would be significantly impacted. The size and unique spaces available in the Citadel means that it is difficult or impossible to accommodate the demand at any other venue in South Ayrshire when the facility is closed. The retention of members and users of the facility is not something that can be paused for a period and</p>

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		<p>then switched back on as soon as the facility is reopened. If we cannot accommodate gym and fitness members, they will choose to look for private fitness providers locally and the service will struggle to attract them back after they have left</p>
	<p>f) What is the current position of the £20million 'levelling up' fund bid to help finance this initiative and would this money be lost if the leisure centre was not built?</p>	<p>An update report on the LUF is being presented to Council on 29 June 2022. It is seeking approval for the submission of 3 bids. The deadline for submissions is 6 July 2022 with a decision expected to be announced in October 2022. South Ayrshire Council is submitting a bid for £20m for the new leisure centre project as one of the 3 bids. The funding is project specific and can only be used for this project. If the bid was successful and the project then doesn't go ahead, any funding received may have to be returned</p>