

South Ayrshire Council – 13 October 2022

Formal Questions

Received from:	Councillor Philip Saxton
Response to be provided by:	Louise Reid, Assistant Director - Place

	<i>Question</i>	<i>Response</i>
1.	Freemans Hall Prestwick, the hall seems to be leaking from the roof area into the Rooms below, this was leased previously to the Housing Dept and subsequently leased Leased to other departments within the council, can I ask who is responsible for the Repairs and is there an up to date assessment of the damage	Following a site inspection on 7 September by the Council's Property team of the Freemans Hall I would advise that there are no leaks from the roof into the rooms below and no water ingress within the Freemans Hall The Council is responsible for repairs to The Freemans Hall as occupier. There is no requirement to carry out any repairs to the roof
2.	Prestwick Allocation of the VAT recovery funds total £270,000.00 thousand pounds, Councillors had an update about how this fund was used in each ward but omitted to explain how the funds were used in Prestwick, can you advise how Ward 2 Prestwick funding allocation was used for	Funding for Prestwick was allocated for an extension to the gym in Prestwick pool. This work has now been completed and we are seeing a significant increase in use

	Question	Response
	<p>Refurbishing of the Citadel, can you give me the up to date figure for the refurbishing costs To the Citadel and state if estimated if these costs are expected to rise and by how much, also Do the Council have a programme of work to be done and if so was this done internally or externally</p>	<p>The costs of £22.7m have not been updated since information provided to members in June 2020</p> <p>Assuming that work would not commence until June 2023 costs would be expected to increase by around 18% (6% per annum) giving total cost of £26.8m</p> <p>The costs are based on an assessment for backlog maintenance based on information provided by SAC Asset Management and an assessment by the consultants who authored the report of the elemental costs for upgrading the building fabric and services based on market rates. 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</p>

Received from:	Councillor Brian McGinley
Response to be provided by:	Leader of the Council

	<i>Question</i>	<i>Response</i>
1.	<p>Cost of Living Council Support</p> <p>At the last Council meeting you advised the Council that,</p> <p>“I and certain members of cabinet have met, along with the provost and chief executive, with VASA (Voluntary Action South Ayrshire) and various other stakeholders to see how best we can support all of our citizens because the cost-of-living crisis is here”.</p> <p>Would you advise please,</p>	
	(1) when those meetings took place,	23 June, 29 August and 6 September 2022
	(2) which portfolios carriers and stakeholders were involved in those discussions,	Portfolio Holders for Health and Social Care, Buildings, Housing and Environment and Finance, Human Resources and ICT together with VASA. Discussions also took place at Community Planning Partnership
	(3) how this work relates to the remit of the council’s working group on this topic,	This work is complementary to any activity of the Council’s working group
	(4) what were the tangible outcomes of those meetings?	Preparation of South Ayrshire Lifeline Magazine providing advice and guidance in conjunction with VASA. Magazine

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	(5) when will any proposals to combat the cost-of-living crisis, be presented to elected members for consideration?	I would expect proposals to come forward in due course from Cost of Living MOWG
2.	Air Show At the last Council meeting you advised elected members that the Air show was subject to a procurement process and advised that you knew that the Council had received several bids for this work.	
	Would you specify please how you came to learn of these bids, what else you knew about the bids and explain the nature and extent of your role in this procurement process?	<p>Two separate organisations approached the Council and asked for a meeting with myself, Portfolio Holder and Officers to discuss the potential to hold an air show in 2023. After both meetings it was agreed that a paper would come to Cabinet to seek agreement to appoint a strategic partner to work with the Council to plan the delivery of a new air show</p> <p>Cabinet agreed this proposal and after an Quick Quote Procurement Process, via Public Contracts Scotland, the Council received two bids. Members were not involved in the procurement process</p>
3.	(1) Council budget 2022/23 It is understood that the Council is operating a financial deficit being operated on the current 2022/23 budget.	
	(1) How much is that current deficit?	As outlined in the Budget Management Report (Period 3) presented to Cabinet in August, the projected in year overspend estimated at that time was £0.286m. This increased to £1.650m following approval of earmarking requests

	Question	Response
	(2) What are the reasons for running above budget?	Details are contained within the BMR report referred to above
	(3) Specifically, what were the overspends actually spent on?	Detailed information can be found in Appendix 1 to the Period 3 Budget Management report the most significant overspends relate to the Council recycling contract costs and increased utility costs
	(4) What actions are being taken to bring budgets back on target?	<p>As outlined in the BMR report, all Directors, Assistant Directors and Heads of Service have been contacted to confirm their duty in terms of Section 5.3 of the Councils Financial Regulations which states, 'It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive, Directors, Heads of Service and Assistant Directors concerned to ensure that items of expenditure in the revenue estimates of his/ her Directorate/ services are not overspent, and that the income and expenditure of his/ her Directorate/ services conform to the requirements of these regulations'</p> <p>It is expected that service managers will now limit spend and bring forward proposals in order to bring the projections back on line with budget</p>
	(5) Are there any potential impacts on uncommitted reserves due to these shortfalls?	As outlined in the BMR report the uncommitted general services reserves was projected (at Period 3) to be £5.055m at 31 March 2023. This equates to 2.3 per cent of estimated future planned spend This remains within the limits required by Council policy for uncommitted general reserves
	(6) What commitments have been made and monies taken out of uncommitted reserves since the start of this administration?	A total of £0.383m of additional commitments have been approved to be drawn from uncommitted reserves
	(7) What is the current amount of budget spent on flowers this year by the Council and what were the amounts spent in the previous budget year?	A total of £74,484 has been spent on flowers so far this year with £94,944 having been spent in 2021-22

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	<p>(11) Council budget 2023/24</p> <p>In relation to budget for 2023/24 it is understood that and the projected funding gap for 2023/24 could be in the region of £14m.</p>	
	<p>(1) What plans have the administration put in place to address this shortfall?</p>	<p>Arrangements for the preparation of 2023/24 budget are a matter for the cross party Budget Working Group established in May 2022. A member from the Labour Group was invited to participate in this group but the place has not been taken up</p>
	<p>(2) What savings have any budget plans identified so far?</p>	<p>Savings proposals are currently being developed by Directorates and, as yet, no savings have been considered by the BWG. Ultimately, any savings proposals will have to be presented to Cabinet/ Council prior to the commencement of the 2023-24 financial year</p>
	<p>(3) Will any future council cuts involve a change of the Council's non-compulsory redundancy policy?</p>	<p>As yet no decision has been made in terms of the Councils non-compulsory redundancy policy. Any such change would require Council approval</p>
	<p>(4) The administration has announced a moratorium on non-essential posts, what actions have been taken and what are the findings of this work?</p>	<p>Following the request by Cabinet in August to freeze all non-essential vacancies, this was communicated to Directorates requesting appropriate action be taken. As part of this process a list of essential post were identified where services could continue to fill post as they occur. All other requests for vacancies beyond this limited list require to be approved by the Executive Leadership Team and only approved if deemed critical to prevent service disruption or failure. The process is continuing with no conclusions yet reached</p>

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4.	Council Appointment NHS	
	Following the removal of Cllr McGinley, at the Council meeting in June 2022, from a post representing the Council on the Ayrshire and Arran Health Board, what was the rationale and text of the justification presented to the Scottish Minister to justify this decision?	Information provided to Chair of NHS - The Administration are very keen to ensure a close working relationship between the Council and NHS Ayrshire and Arran Board and recognise significant opportunities for shared accommodation which will assist in the delivery of Caring for Ayrshire. Initial discussions with the Labour Group indicated that they would support the Administration and Cllr McGinley was nominated to the Board on this basis. This support is not now being provided and Council agreed on 29 June 2022 that Cllr Lyons, as Portfolio Holder for Health and Social Care, should now be the Council's representative on the Board
5.	Lighting up of the Wallace Tower	
	(1) What was the approval process for lighting up the Wallace Tower to mark the queen's passing?	As outlined in the Leadership Panel report of 23 November 2021
	(2) Are you able to confirm that Council procedures and protocols were followed in lighting up the Tower?	Yes
	(3) How much did this gesture cost?	This was not a gesture but a recognition of reign of the late Queen – there was no cost to the Council. The Company who changed the lights did this remotely and did not charge for this to be undertaken

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	(4) Why were the colours of red, white, and blue used rather than the Queen's own standard colours in Scotland?	Red, white and blue recognised as colours of the United Kingdom
	(5) Given that the decision received widespread criticism, are there any proposals by the current administration, to alter the approval protocol to wider consultation and Council representation?	Meeting held between Leader and SNP Leader on 11 October in response to request for review of consultation process – proposals will be presented to Cabinet on 29 November 2022
6.	Meetings with Council Officers It is my understanding that you, as Leader of the Council, have been conducting 1 to 1 meetings without the presence of the Chief Executive. Please advise.	
	(1) How many of these meetings have taken place, with whom, where and what was discussed.	Various meetings since May 2022 with Chief Officers and Service Leads to receive update on service issues. It would be impossible for the Chief Executive to attend all meetings
	(2) Are there any minutes of these meetings?	No
	(3) Why you deemed these meetings necessary and in this format?	As above, previous Leaders held regular meetings with staff and I am continuing this practice