



**Oversight and Governance**

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## **CITY COUNCIL – QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC**

Monday 16 September 2024  
2.00 pm  
Council House, Plymouth

## City Council

### 5. Questions by the Public

(Pages 1 - 32)

To receive questions from and provide answers to the public in relation to matters which are about something the council is responsible for or something that directly affects people in the city, in accordance with Part B, paragraph 11 of the Constitution.

Questions, of no longer than 50 words, can be submitted to the Democratic Support Unit, Plymouth City Council, Ballard House, West Hoe Road, Plymouth, PL1 3BJ, or email to [democraticsupport@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:democraticsupport@plymouth.gov.uk). Any questions must be received at least five complete working days before the meeting.

**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Paula Boeira

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Environment

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

Vegan diets result in 75% less GHG emissions and land use than diets with 100g of meat daily. They cut wildlife destruction by 66% and water use 54%. Will Plymouth join 24 councils, including Edinburgh, Exmouth and Norwich by endorsing the Plant Based Treaty and developing a plant-based food strategy?

**Response:** (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members / Chairs)

Thank you for your question.

The City Council recognises that significant emissions are caused by current food production and consumption practices.

We are acting locally to raise awareness of this issue and in particular to promote nature recovery, consistent with many of the Plant Based Treaty's proposals. The Plymouth Sound National Marine Park is leading the way on marine citizenship. The Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest has seen thousands of new trees planted across the city. Poole Farm and our Green Community Hubs give people the chance to feel more connected with nature and to improve neighbourhoods for wildlife.

Through our latest Net Zero Action Plan, we have made a strong commitment to engaging with residents, businesses, and communities to promote a change in all our behaviours, which includes consumption and food habits. Our Climate Connections website includes messaging on how we can reduce the environmental impact of food and supports low carbon food projects.

One of the specific commitments in the Net Zero Action Plan is to “collaborate, as part of the Food Plymouth Partnership and network, on improving access to low carbon food choices and work towards achieving the Sustainable Food Places Gold award.” Cambridge, Bristol and Brighton are the only cities who have reached this prestigious level – which I hope offers some reassurance on how seriously we are taking food sustainability.

Our school meals company CATERED have also committed to exploring new approaches to promoting sustainable food choices, starting with a Veganuary initiative at the start of 2024.

Whilst I appreciate that an increasing number of people will need to transition to more plant-based diets as part of global efforts to tackle the climate emergency, behaviour change can be more compelling and long-term when individuals feel that they have made the choice for themselves.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Mr Kelly

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** The Leader

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

Cllr Evans do you support and agree with the Chancellor & the Prime Minister in removing the £300 Winter Fuel Allowance that will have a detrimental effect on thousands of pensioners living in Plymouth?

**Response:** (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members / Chairs)

We are committed to ensuring that the residents of Plymouth of pension age are economically stable and able to heat their homes effectively during the Winter.

But we know that people are missing out on benefits that they could be accessing to support them.

To this end we are supporting the Government's campaign to ensure that everybody who is eligible gets support to access Pension Credit. This will also automatically passport them to receive the Winter Fuel Payment. The Winter Fuel Payment is worth £300 for households with someone aged 80 or over. Households with someone aged 66-79 will receive £200.

They will also be eligible for Household Support Fund, extended by the current government to support vulnerable households for the cost of essentials this winter.

We are working with the Citizens Advice Plymouth to contact people we know could be eligible for Pension Credit to offer advice and support on benefits, grants, and financial management. Alongside working with our partners in the Voluntary and Community Sector we are also offering a programme of outreach drop-ins where advisors are based in local community spaces. The timetable is available on our website and Council officers and our partners will be helping to promote it.

If you get Pension Credit you can also get other help, such as:

- [Housing Benefit](#) if you rent the property you live in
- [Winter Fuel Payment](#)
- [Support for Mortgage Interest](#) if you own the property you live in
- a [Council Tax discount](#)
- a [free TV licence](#) if you're aged 75 or over
- help with [NHS dental treatment, glasses and transport costs](#) for hospital appointments, if you get a certain type of Pension Credit
- help with your heating costs through the [Warm Home Discount Scheme](#)
- a discount on the [Royal Mail redirection service](#) if you're moving house
- Free bus travel [Bus pass | PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK](#)

It is also worth noting that the new full state pension has risen this year by over £900, an increase of 8.5%, and is expected to rise again by £460 a year from April 2025. This increase is pegged to wages, which have gone up by 4%. Under the "triple lock" arrangement, the state pension goes up each year by either 2.5%, inflation, or earnings growth - whichever is the highest figure. Created in 2010, it was designed to ensure the value of the state pension was not overtaken by the increase in the cost of living or the incomes of working people. The Government has committed to keeping this until the end of the current Parliament.

We want to everybody to help get the word out. We would encourage friends and families to help share the message and encourage pensioners do a simple online check to see if they are eligible. There is updated information on the Council website, we are sharing messages on social media and providing information leaflets with our staff and centres including libraries and wellbeing hubs.

Finally we are also coordinating an Ageing Well Advice and Information Fair, promoting all types of services and opportunities that support ageing well across the city, including advice and support regarding benefits on the afternoon of October 4<sup>th</sup> at the Memory Matters Hub in the City Centre.

**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Mr Bridgeman

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Strategic Planning and Infrastructure

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

The Joint Local Plan calls for a high-quality restoration of the Palace Theatre. Potential investors are unwilling to buy the Palace and adjoining Great Western Hotel unless they know that their proposed uses will be approved. For what specific purposes will the Council allow these buildings to be used?

**Response:** (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members / Chairs)

The acceptability of any development proposal can only be determined through the formal planning process (planning application). The Local Planning Authority does however provide a comprehensive pre-application planning service to enable prospective purchasers and/or developers to obtain informal advice about the likely acceptability of proposals prior to submitting a formal application. Pre-application services can be tailored to the customer's needs. It is strongly recommended that any prospective purchaser and/or developer contacts the Local Planning Authority to obtain such advice.

The Palace Theatre is a Grade II\* Listed Building situated in Union Street Conservation Area. Union Street benefits from a specific policy in the Joint Local Plan (Policy PLY34) which includes specific reference to the Palace Theatre. The policy states:

*The role of Union Street will be promoted as an urban street connecting the west of the city and linking the communities of north and south of Stonehouse. It will provide a mix of uses along its length, with high quality building design and associated public realm improvements. Development proposals should provide for:*

*Section 4(ii) 'A high quality restoration of the Palace Theatre, appropriate to the special architectural and historic character of the building that provides daytime as well as nighttime activity'.*

Policy PLY34 and other relevant policies in the JLP provide a framework within which a broad range of uses may be considered for the Palace Theatre having regard to the heritage value of the building/conservation area, impact on local amenity and impact on local centres.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Grace Strickland

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Cabinet Member for Community Safety

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

When is a suitable bus service, street lighting, and pavement being installed along Hayes and Meredith Roads to ensure the safety of pedestrians when travelling to and from the new crematorium to attend funeral services?

**Response:** (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members / Chairs)

With regards to a bus service to the Crematorium, I can advise that, at present, it is our understanding that none of Plymouth's bus operators are currently looking to provide a commercial bus link to the new facility. This means that any service would need to be funded by the Council and become part of our tendered bus network.

The Council's tendered bus service budget is currently fully allocated and hence we are not in a position to financially support the bus link at the moment. However, opportunities to provide this link, as a kick-start service, in order to demonstrate public need for the connection will be kept under review, as part of our ongoing review of Plymouth's tendered bus network.

With regard to the provision of a footway, the planning application for the Crematorium (number 18/02088/FUL) was subject of extensive consultation during 2018, prior to planning permission being granted in April 2019.

Public consultations were held at various venues across the city, as well as consulting with numerous other organisations. Following the consultation it is my understanding that planning permission was granted on the understanding that the Crematorium site is not linked to the public footway network, nor served by public transport although at the time the applicant (PCC) indicated a willingness to review possible options for public transport provision in the future, should there be a recognised demand and it was further considered there could be the possibility of a potential link onto a future cycle path associated with the Sherford development.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Cllr Chris Oram (South Hams Council)

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Planning and Infrastructure.

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

There is a demand for a bus service that works for everyone in Plymstock and Plympton for commuters and elderly residents. Will the Council pressure CityBus to bring back service 19 between Plymstock and Plympton stopping at Sherford, Saltram, the new crematorium and at Drake Memorial Park?

**Will you be attending the meeting in person to ask your question?** Yes

**Response:** (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members / Chairs)

With regards to a bus service to the Crematorium, I can advise that, at present, it is our understanding that none of Plymouth's bus operators are currently looking to provide a commercial bus link to the new facility. This means that any service would need to be funded by the Council and become part of our tendered bus network.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Neal Stoneman

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Cabinet Member for Finance

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

Why did it take 4 years to get a capitalisation directive for £73 million and how did the council set a legal budget in the previous 4 years when this money was not accounted for in the accounts?

**Will you be attending the meeting in person to ask your question?**

**Response:** (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members / Chairs)

Thank you for your question.

The Capitalisation Direction relates to a single transaction in October 2019, falling within the 2019/20 Financial year, and was relevant to our auditor's financial statements audit work for that year. This work was unable to commence ahead of the publication of our draft accounts, and due to Covid-19 the deadline was extended from the usual 31 May to 31 August 2020.

Following the publication of the draft accounts, legal advice was taken by both the council and our auditors on the technical difference of opinion on whether the transaction was revenue or capital and the way in which it should be treated for accounting purposes. The auditors were unable to sign off the accounts for the year 19/20 until the correct accounting treatment was clear. There is no suggestion that this money was not accounted for in the accounts and the question of the accounting treatment took time to resolve due to the innovative and unique nature of the transaction which the auditors acknowledged would provide the Council with significant savings in the pension contribution deficit in the long-term.

Discussion with the government department on a Capitalisation Direction commenced in July 2023. The "minded to" letter was received by the Leader February 2024.

The council has been able to set legal budgets for each financial year due to the nature of the discussions with both auditors and more recently MHCLG.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Lyndsay Hunt

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Leader

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

Without a motorway, and with a very unreliable train service, Plymouth is in desperate need of better connections to the rest of the world. When do you expect to regain control of the lease for Plymouth City Airport from Sutton Harbour Group?

**Response:** (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members / Chairs)

Thank you for your question. The legal process is continuing which prevents me providing an update today, rest assured I will update Council as soon as I am able.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Glenys Ewing

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Leader

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

What is happening regarding the broken terms of the lease with SHG, We were told proceedings were taking place to recover the lease, please advise on advancement?

**Will you be attending the meeting in person to ask your question?**

**Response:** (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members / Chairs)

Thank you for your question. The legal process is continuing which prevents me providing an update today, rest assured I will update Council as soon as I am able.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** David Coles

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Leader

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

In March 2024 Tudor stated that the Council will continue to safeguard the opportunity for general aviation use of the airport site until the acquisition of the land reached its conclusion. Has the threatened legal action against SHG for breach of lease covenants been accomplished?

**Will you be attending the meeting in person to ask your question?**

**Response:** (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members / Chairs)

Thank you for your question. The legal process is continuing which prevents me providing an update today, rest assured I will update Council as soon as I am able.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Mr Danny Bamping

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Leader

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

Would liking or sharing pornographic images on social media via a Plymouth city councillors account be a breach of the councilor's code of conduct?

**Will you be attending the meeting in person to ask your question?** Yes

**Response:** (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members / Chairs)

The Council has an established process for complaints against councillors. Any member of the public with a complaint should direct it to the Monitoring Officer in the first instance, details are available on the Council's website.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Alan Ramage

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Environment

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

The United Nations set up SDTI - the Scientifically Determined Target Initiative - to help organisations, businesses, etc., ensure their low/net zero plans are reliably and independently verified. Does/will PCC subject its plans to this procedure and so set an example to its suppliers and the wider community?

**Will you be attending the meeting in person to ask your question?**

**Response:** (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members / Chairs)

The Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) provides companies with a pathway to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement goals. Plymouth City Council is pleased to see that over 6,000 businesses around the world are working on this initiative. However, the initiative is not intended to be used by local authorities. And note that the United Nations does not have a “Scientifically Determined Target Initiative”.

Plymouth City Council has commissioned the University of Exeter’s ‘Centre for Energy and the Environment’ to provide annual reviews of Plymouth’s greenhouse gas emissions. Their ‘Plymouth Greenhouse Gas Reporting and Monitoring’ report is available on Plymouth’s Climate Connections’ website.

In addition, the City Council monitors and publishes its corporate carbon emissions each year in the Net Zero Action Plan.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Chaz Singh

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Cllr Penberthy – Relevant Cabinet Member.

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

Can Cllr Penrose confirm what she has done personally and doing in her role as the Chair of the Equalities Working Group?

**Will you be attending the meeting in person to ask your question?** Yes

**Response:**

The Equalities Working Group was a management tool of the previous administration, it never had any constitutional standing and the Chair was a political appointment of the Conservative Leader. The Equalities Working Group therefore no longer exists.

This Labour Administration is taking a different approach and has appointed Councillor Angela Penrose as the Welcoming City Champion.

This Welcoming City Champion role supports the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities and other Cabinet Members in their related equalities, diversity, inclusion and community cohesion work, and the delivery of our Public Sector Equality Duty. This work is wide-ranging and has included:

- The refresh and publication of our new Equality Objectives and action plan.
- The creation of an informal critical friends group working together to support and challenge the work of the Council around this agenda.
- Arranging a roundtable for equality, diversity and inclusion leads from major employers across the city, with the potential of creating a network for ongoing support and collaboration.
- Re-tendering of the Refugee Support Service contract.
- Passing a Motion on Notice to treat Care Experience as a protected characteristic.
- Engagement in the recovery programme following the events of 5<sup>th</sup> August.

Since taking on this role Councillor Penrose has been active in this work and in attending various community events – some in representation and others in support. She is actively engaged with Portfolio Holders in monitoring the delivery and review of the Public Sector Equality Duty objectives and action plan and providing additional support as requested by any Cabinet Member.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Alderman Dr John Mahony

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Environment

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

The area around central park ponds is a mess, banks of earth, fencing etc. I was assured following 2 visits in the spring with Cllr Briars-Delve that the work would restart in April, why did this not happen, when will the project be completed and at what cost?

**Will you be attending the meeting in person to ask your question?** Yes

**Response:**

We were always planning on restarting the project in April. However, after a prolonged period of exceptionally wet weather, when the better weather did eventually arrive, various operational issues, including the availability of machinery and subcontractors, meant further delays.

The Central Park Ponds did however restart in July with a substantial tidy up, the cutting back of overgrown pathways and repairs to fencing. The main Contractor started on site on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> August and has made great progress. The Football field is now at engineering levels and is ready for topsoiling, the Granite Setts are being laid in Coronation Avenue to complete the last few metres of drainage and Reservoir Field is being levelled and shaped ready for seeding. The teams are also working weekends when the weather and staff capacity allow to ensure the main construction works are completed as quickly as possible.

Landscaping works to the South Pond, Swales and Mawsons Field including the Stepping Stones and a reduction in the wooden fencing will restart this month. In terms of a firm completion date, as this will be dependent on how long it takes for the landscaping to embed it is difficult to be specific. The main construction works will be completed very soon, however we are beholden to the weather and seasons regarding the tree planting and seeding – at the very latest these will all be completed early Spring 2025 and then we need to allow for a three to six month ‘settling in period’ the completion therefore is estimated to be late Summer 2025. During the settling in period some of the temporary fencing will need to stay in place to protect the new plants.

In relation to the budget I can assure we have sufficient resources to complete the works.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Jan Millar

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Leader

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

The Armada way report to Cabinet identified funding of £9,238,401 from corporate borrowing with additional short term corporate borrowing. What are the revenue consequences of this borrowing, and how is the £2.037,901 from the Climate Emergency Investment Fund justified for this scheme and what other uses were planned for this funding?

**Will you be attending the meeting in person to ask your question?** Yes

**Response:**

In accordance with the Councils Treasury Management Strategy corporate borrowing is used after external funding has been maximised. With reducing interest rates predicted, the borrowing calculation is circa £0.440m per year, which includes repayment of the debt over the asset life.

The Climate Emergency Investment Fund (CEIF) considers a number of factors to determine whether a project/initiative should be considered a priority, including the extent to which it delivers significant and sustained greenhouse gas reductions, enabling the Climate Emergency to be mainstreamed in how we deliver services in the future, and whether there are significant co-benefits in relation to other corporate needs or objectives. The Armada Way project clearly has significant long-term climate emergency benefits.

The CEIF funding is contributing towards the provision of solar canopies to power the new SuDS system, and towards construction of the vast SuDS system itself, including reed beds. This will reduce the amount of power required to be drawn from the grid to run the pumps for a system which will, in turn, significantly improve not only water quality, but the amount entering the combined sewer system by up to 78%. Carbon savings will also be captured downstream through the reduced need for filtering, clarifying and treating water entering the treatment plants. Projects and initiatives are required to bid for application for funds from the CEIF. There were no other uses planned for this defined element of funding.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Brian Cross

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Leader

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

Have the council conducted a Survey of companies within the PL Postcodes to indicate the desire / want of Companies to have access to a regional airport operating from Plymouth?

**Will you be attending the meeting in person to ask your question?** Yes

**Response:**

The City Council has conducted a number of studies which have included as assessment of Aviation demand - locally, nationally and internationally - and engagement with Plymouth businesses. These include a study by York Aviation in 2006, a study by Grant Thornton (jointly commissioned with the Chamber of Commerce) in 2011, a demand assessment by Oriens Aviation in 2011, a study by Arup in 2016, a DFT funded study in 2016 and in 2021.

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**QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC**

**Question submitted by:** Mr Mike Sheaff

**To the Cabinet Member or Chair for:** Leader

**Question (to be no longer than 50 words):**

Please provide the following details of funding for the A/W scheme:

1. When will the assets being sold for capital receipts to fund the scheme be named publicly and what alternative uses have been considered?
2. What “descoping elements” have reduced the value of the Morgan Sindall contract?

**Will you be attending the meeting in person to ask your question?** Yes

**Response:**

Capital receipts are primarily used to finance capital projects and are held collectively to support the capital programme in accordance with the Councils approved Treasury Management Strategy. A prudent approach has been taken to identify assets for sale which will generate funds sufficient to finance the scheme as set out in the cabinet report. The details of the specific assets being disposed of is commercially sensitive information, until such time the transaction has been completed.

Every asset the Council sells will have had a full consideration to alternative uses and costs of maintaining the asset both prior to marketing, and decision will be subject to sale offers received.

The report to Cabinet on 09 September 2024 entitled “The Transformation of Armada Way” identifies several scoping issues which had to be considered in finalising the final construction cost for the scheme to be delivered in the phases as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report. In addition, the specific scoping elements that have changed are clearly identified in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5 of the Cabinet report.

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