

Cabinet

Meeting date: 10 June 2025

Public questions (6 total)

1. Question from Crispian Webb to the Leader, Councillor Rowena Hay

As Leader of the Council and I understand also the person who instigated the idea of the Cheltenham Trust as a way to subsidise non-revenue producing properties, including the Wilson Art Gallery and Museum, by grouping them with revenue generating properties; can I ask Rowena Hay how effective the Trust has been in managing the Prince of Wales Stadium specifically – a key local facility that was passed as unfit to stage England Athletics licensed events in 2022; and as at today's date still has not got a date for resurfacing to take place?

Member response (from Councillor Izaak Tailford, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Wellbeing and Public Open Space):

Thank you for the question, Crispian. In Rowena's absence, please allow me to answer your question as it falls within my new cabinet portfolio.

The Cheltenham Trust delivers the council's leisure and culture services and manages five properties (The Wilson, Town Hall, Pittville Pump Room, Leisure@Cheltenham, Prince of Wales Stadium) under a management agreement that started in October 2014. The Trust is paid an annual management fee for their services.

The council manages the relationship with the Trust via a quarterly liaison meeting involving the chair of the trustees, the lead cabinet member and senior officers from both the council and the Trust. This meeting reviews the Trust's financial performance, key performance indicators and key governance targets such as health and safety.

In terms of the Prince of Wales stadium, the Trust is responsible for the day-to-day management of the facility such as cleaning and compliance matters as well as managing the relationship with Harriers and other stadium users.

The council however is responsible for the structure of facility including for the athletics track. Whilst we acknowledge that the track does not currently meet the criteria for England Athletics it does remain open, accessible and safe for general use.

2. Question from Crispian Webb to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries

Cheltenham and County Harriers pay around £4,000 per month / £50,000 per year to use the Prince of Wales Stadium. The track surface was assessed as needing to be replaced in 2022. Three years on, there is no date set for the resurfacing to take place. It is around 20 years since the track was resurfaced. How much has been set aside year on year towards the known cost of track replacement?

Member response:

Thank you for your question.

Any rent/fees paid by the Harriers or any other third parties for the use of the track goes directly to the Trust and is not passported to the council.

At this time the Council does not have a capital fund set aside to replace the track – which in October 2024 was estimated to cost £489k. However, in recognition that both Leisure@ and the Prince of Wales are ageing facilities the Council has recently commissioned an options appraisal that will consider a needs analysis, site assessment, facility mix options, financial appraisal and will make recommendations for the Council to take forward.

The track was last refurbished in 2012 at which time the track surface was re-topped with a 4mm layer of 'crumb', which was designed to extend the life of the track.

3. Question from Polly Symondson to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Wellbeing and Public Open Space, Councillor Izaac Tailford

As part of Cheltenham Borough Council's Physical Activity and Sports Strategy the guidance states: *'Our physical and community infrastructure is accessible and affordable but also high-quality and sustainable'*. Could I ask how the council continues to allow the Prince of Wales Stadium to fall well below the required standard?

Member response:

Thank you for your question Polly.

Whilst we acknowledge that the track does not currently meet the UK Athletics competition standard it remains open and accessible to users, meets all relevant health and safety requirements and continues to provide an affordable entry to athletics.

An inspection in 2022 identified issues with the shock absorbency of the main track surface and as a result UK Athletics advised that they would be unable to licence the track for competitive sports until such time the issues with the shock absorbency

were addressed and tested to an acceptable level. However, the track can still be used for training purposes and non-competitive events.

4. Question from Polly Symondson to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Wellbeing and Public Open Space, Councillor Izaac Tailford

As you know, the athletics track at the Prince of Wales stadium failed the trackmark accreditation test by England Athletics in 2022 and as such cannot stage licensed competitions. As a result, Cheltenham Harriers have been unable to hold 24 matches to date. Can I ask you to list the practical measures the Council has been implementing to address the situation and when she envisages work will commence in order the track is fit for purpose?

Member response:

Thank you for your question.

Via the planned maintenance budget, the council has recently completed some works to the track including addressing pitting in the track, line-marking, and recently restoring the hammer cage. The council is also looking at replacing the sand in the sand-pit to provide more cushioning for jumpers. In addition the council works with Ubico to ensure that vegetation in and around the Stadium is kept under control.

The council has recently commissioned an options appraisal that will consider a needs analysis, site assessment, facility mix options, financial appraisal and will make recommendations in relation to both Leisure@ and the Prince of Wales Stadium for the council to take forward. I look forward to sharing an update on this when possible, but in the meantime I am meeting with Harriers to discuss their concerns.

5. Question from Jane Woolley to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Wellbeing and Public Open Space, Councillor Izaac Tailford

As a Team Manager of the U17/U20 Cheltenham & County Harriers Athletics team, and administrator for U13/U15 athletes' training, I am severely disappointed to see their training facilities are still in poor condition, contributing to some injuries our athletes are suffering. I am asking when will some money be allocated and invested into repairing the track, which was deemed unsuitable for competition by England Athletics in 2022? There has been a lot of talk and no action, and money allocated to other parts of the Cheltenham Trust. Our club is producing some national standard junior athletes and spends in excess of £50k pa for hiring the training facility which is current unfit for purpose, but there is no alternative.

Member response:

Thank you for your question, Jane.

Whilst we acknowledge that the track does not currently meet the UK Athletics competition standard it remains open and accessible to users, meets all relevant health and safety requirements and continues to provide an affordable entry to athletics

Any rent/fees paid by the Harriers or any other third parties for the use of the track goes directly to the Trust and is not passported to the council.

The Council has recently commissioned an options appraisal that will consider a needs analysis, site assessment, facility mix options, financial appraisal and will make recommendations in relation to both Leisure@ and the Prince of Wales Stadium for the Council to take forward.

I am also personally meeting with Harriers and Smiths Rugby to better understand their concerns and develop the relationship between them and the council.

In terms of Council funds allocated to other parts of the Trust, investment has been prioritised to those works required to ensure venues can remain open safely to the public.

6. Question from Jane Woolley to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Wellbeing and Public Open Space, Councillor Izaac Tailford

How much money will be set aside to pay for the repair of the track, a facility that needs replacing every 10 years and should have been budgeted for annually?

Member response:

Thank you for your question.

At this time the Council does not have a capital fund set aside to replace the track – which in October 2024 was estimated to cost £489k. However, in recognition that both Leisure @ and the Prince of Wales are aging facilities the Council has recently commissioned an options appraisal that will consider a needs analysis, site assessment, facility mix options, financial appraisal and will make recommendations for the Council to take forward.
