

**Wiltshire Council**

**Full Council**

**18 July 2023**

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**Item 13 – Members’ Questions**

**From Cllr Dr Mark McClelland – Salisbury St Francis and Stratford**

**To Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Military-Civilian Integration, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, Health and Wellbeing / Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Leisure, Libraries, Facilities Management, and Operational Assets**

**Question (23-18)**

The importance of City Hall for the cultural vitality of Salisbury and South Wiltshire cannot be overstated. Can the Leader confirm that it remains the intention of this Council to reopen City Hall as a live entertainment venue and that rumours to the contrary are deeply regrettable? And given the repair work that is necessary before it can reopen and the obvious risk to public safety until that work is carried out, will the Leader condemn the deeply irresponsible and reckless campaign started by Cllr Sample and Salisbury’s Liberal Democrat councillors to immediately reopen City Hall?

**Response:**

We remain fully committed to reopening City Hall as a live entertainment venue. We continue to investigate funding options which could see the existing building enhanced, creating a modern entertainment venue as part of an overall cultural quarter for the city. Officers are in the process of preparing a report on the options on how we can enhance and open City Hall and that should be with me within the next two and a half months.

Our surveyor’s instruction to us was to keep acoustic stress to an absolute minimum until further investigations had been undertaken and I have had clear advice from officers that repair work should be undertaken before we can think about reopening the venue. The council’s insurance policy contains a material damage policy that has a general clause stating that a building must be kept in good repair, otherwise the policy is invalidated. Additionally, our public liability policy would likely be invalidated in the case of an incident and/or injury.

Therefore, it is regrettable, frustrating and in my view deeply irresponsible (in light of the health and safety implications of the surveyor’s comments for anyone attending live music at City Hall which have been made available to the members running the campaign) that a petition and campaign, led by some members, are underway to demand that City Hall reopen immediately. For the reasons I’ve clearly outlined, it

simply isn't possible to reopen City Hall as a live entertainment venue at the moment and if we did we would be placing the public at risk.

There has been a lot of recent public discussion about City Hall, and it's clear that people are extremely passionate about this venue which has been part of the city's cultural fabric for many years. We all want the same thing – a thriving City Hall that's befitting of Wiltshire's only city. We'll continue to work hard to ensure that happens.