

Cabinet

8 November 2022

Public Question (1 total)

1.	Question from Tess Beck to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, Councillor Max Wilkinson
	<p>In 2014 Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) set up the Cheltenham Trust as a charitable trust to deliver culture and leisure services on behalf of the council and to manage some of the council’s most significant public buildings. The specification for the council’s contract with the Trust was very detailed including what services the Trust would deliver, who would fund what, who was liable for what. And it was almost entirely public.</p> <p>In April 2022 CBC Cabinet agreed a new specification with the Trust and this agreement and the review was entirely restricted. Although a restriction of some of the financial information contained within the review may be justified, I fail to understand the reasoning for restricting the whole of the review and revised specification, given the level of public interest.</p> <p>Given that the Cheltenham Trust is charged with delivering a number of the council’s strategic priorities on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council (including helping people in Cheltenham live healthier, fulfilling and active lives, inspiring people in Cheltenham to take part in and gain valuable skills and experiences, and promote Cheltenham as a world class place to live, work, study and visit), there should be a greater level of transparency. Any argument to maintain the exemption is likely to be outweighed by the public interest in the information being disclosed. We can infer the Trust has been relieved of some responsibilities (e.g. the duty to provide tourist information services) but why can this not be made explicit?</p> <p>Can the Cabinet members and officers responsible for the report and revised specification undertake to review the documentation with a view to making as much of the information as possible public in the interests of transparency?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Thank you Tess for bringing this question to Cabinet.</p> <p>I am a firm believer that the council should be as open and as transparent as possible, including in its relationships with its commissioned providers who are delivering services on behalf of the council.</p>

You are correct in saying that when the report came to cabinet earlier this year to seek approval for the updated specification, it was restricted and therefore members of the public were unable to see some details. This was because the covering report did contain some financial information that we did not wish to be put in the public domain.

However, the specification itself, which sets out the council's specific requirements for how the agreed services will be delivered, does not contain any financial information.

I have liaised with officers and also sought legal advice and I am happy that we will now place the current specification (as agreed by Cabinet on 5 April, prior to the date on which I took over this portfolio) in the public domain.

I will do this via a delegated cabinet member decision and as such it will be published on the council's democracy pages as a decision.

I fully intend that the paperwork will be made publicly available by Friday 18 November.

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8 November 2022

Member Questions (4 total)

1.	Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Flo Clucas
	What consultation took place with children and young people (how many children were consulted, what methods were used to collect opinions and how was the information fed into the various strategies) when drawing up Cheltenham Borough Council's main policies and strategies, including, but not limited, to Social Value Policy, Place Strategy, Corporate Plan 2019-23, Cheltenham Local Plan, Culture Strategy?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Thank you Cllr Flynn for your question. It gives me the opportunity to say what has been done with our children and young people in our communities across Cheltenham, how that consultation has happened and how that has been put into practice.</p> <p>Obviously the Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on what we were able to do during various lockdowns and indeed on what our partners were able to do at that time. However, let me go through some of what has been done and since the end of the lockdown what we have been doing this year.</p> <p>Let me start with the Culture Strategy. The councillor may remember that just before Covid we had young artists from the Wilson Arts Collective, come to Council and address council before our meeting, saying what they wanted, what they needed and how they thought that should happen: work space, exhibition space and the opportunity to grow as artists through greater support. I am pleased that many of their requests are now in the draft culture strategy, and have been adopted by those that manage culture in our town.</p> <p>In terms of the council's corporate plan, No Child Left Behind is one of the council's most significant projects and has been since our first full year in 2019. The corporate plan sets out a number of other important projects that will benefit children and young people, such as ensuring that all our communities benefit from future golden valley investments, investing in our high street and public spaces, and work collaboratively to support cycling and walking projects.</p> <p>And although Covid interrupted a good deal of our plans, through No Child Left Behind, we were able to deliver projects that supported our most vulnerable young people.</p> <p>Ahead of the summer holidays in 2020, using funding made available from GCC and the 10 elected county councillors, No Child Left Behind, working with our community food providers under the #FeedCheltenham banner, devised a holiday hunger scheme to provide food to families with children on free school meals. In total over 700 family meals were delivered to local families via six local community food providers</p> <p>During the third lockdown, in February 2021, NCLB launched our #LaptopsforLearning scheme which was set up to help ensure local children have access to the right IT equipment to support their learning – both at home during that lockdown, and also when they return to school. The project saw approximately £35,000 raised and 129 devices donated.</p> <p>Again, during the pandemic, NCLB developed the NCLB Community Agreement which arose from a collective understanding that the current offer for our children and young people – in terms of early years</p>

provision, education, family support, social care support and youth support does not work well for some of our children. Across a range of partners, led by our primary schools there was a collective ambition to do more, and to commit to an enhanced level of support so that all our children have the opportunity to thrive.

This ambition was developed into a collective commitment to all children and their families in Cheltenham, called the community agreement. The agreement offers to every carer, every parent and indeed every child the opportunity to speak to somebody who can advise, who can help, who can counsel who can assist them should they have a problem or issue or a concern or worry.

In order to develop this, we obviously were, in close contact with our primary and secondary schools and with others who might have been involved actively.

The schools actively consulted the children as to what we were doing and how. If you look at the [NCLB website](#) you will see information there in relation to the [Community Agreement](#) which we believe is a fundamental path to assist those who require advice and help, whether they are parents, carers, children or young people.

More recently, during the course of the last year through NCLB, Cheltenham Education Partnership and Large Enterprise Action Group, and other partners, have met with many children and young people. The young people and children were asked to tell us what they thought about particular issues - decided by them. We asked them tell us their views, ask questions and suggest improvements.

One example:

In March and in June, via Cheltenham Education Partnership myself and other colleagues took part in the Cheltenham for Change youth debates, with in total over one hundred children taking part.

Those children came and talked about equity and equality and how they felt that it was not apparent in the work that was being done in Cheltenham.

One example given was a lack of comprehensive and meaningful engagement after the various careers fairs they had attended.

The young people found it very difficult indeed to access relevant people in companies who could say to them what they could do, how they could get involved, and how they could develop a career path without going to university.

The upshot of that is that this year with our partners in the Chamber of Commerce, Cheltenham Education Partnership and Large Enterprise Action Group we will launch a new project around skills and ambition that will be accessible to all of our children and young people. It will enable young people to have proper access to those within companies and within organisations who can actually advise them and point them in the right direction.

By bringing together businesses and schools, we hope that this project will become an instrument that young people can use to help them plan their future and more of this is being integrated into what we do during the course of the next year.

In terms of planning and playgrounds particularly where major developments were being planned, we wanted to ensure that our children had a voice. We were able to consult with children and with young people as to how they wish to see those develop. I will give you an example N W Cheltenham and Swindon Village.

The Village has a significant local green space and in order to capture the local green space and preserve it in the local plan. Children were asked for their views and there were hundreds of responses from our children, from girl guides and scouts, from our youth club, from our young people who go to school, from young people who use playgrounds, from young people who are involved through the parish council and other activities.

	<p>A significant number of changes were made as a result of that and were incorporated into the local plan. The changes were recognised by the planning Inspectorate and have therefore been retained.</p> <p>All of this has required a great deal of work and I make no apologies for thanking officers Tracy Brown and Richard Gibson and those who work in our partner organisations for the help and support that they have given for our children. It is quite significant and I know of nowhere else in the country where this has been done.</p> <p>Our young people and children have not just a voice in the future of Cheltenham so that they feel that this town is for them, that they have shaped it and made it their own.</p> <p>However, to go further with the consultation process, to capture the voices of our children and young people, make it more formal and systematic, would take significant time and resources. At the present time, with our partners, we are doing this in a different way. Listening to the views of our young people and children by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Cheltenham Education Partnership, to discuss issues with our young people and children that they wish to raise, giving answers and factoring in their concerns when we make policy or plan projects or make decisions; • Working with the Culture Board to ensure the voices of young people are heard in their strategy and by ensuring there is a young person’s representative on the board • Working with local partners working directly with children and young people. O&S recently heard from local schools about the experiences our children are facing. <p>As a result, the Council and our partners continue to place a high priority on our work to support young people and children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council’s Social Value Policy makes clear that one of the four priority communities identified for investment through our social value work is children and young people growing up in poverty. • The Communities’ Partnership has as one of its four priorities ‘ Young people have opportunities to discover their potential’; • The Culture Strategy has one of its six priorities ‘Improving the life chances of our young people’; • The Corporate Plan 2023-2027 includes two specific priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To work with schools, colleges and universities to support the cyber tech skills of young people; ○ Through No Child Left Behind continue to raise awareness of issues affecting our children, such as criminal exploitation, period poverty or healthy eating and work with partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors to tackle these and other issues.
<p>2.</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Flo Clucas</p>
	<p>How does No Child Left Behind monitor and evaluate its impact?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>In terms of monitoring the work of NCLB, I take an annual report to full council which this year this was presented to full council on 21 March 2022.</p> <p>https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s39665/2022_03_21_COU_No_Child_Left_Behind.pdf</p> <p>The update was agreed unanimously by members in the chamber. Some of the highlights in the report <i>In terms of statistics, despite the challenges of the pandemic, NCLB is having a significant impact</i></p>

	<p><i>across a range of success measures:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No of partners engaged estimated to be in the region of 120 (public sector / VCS / business)</i> • <i>Attendees at virtual training events - 163</i> • <i>Profile of NCLB– no of social media engagements 1500 followers and 23k impressions monthly (mean average across twitter and facebook)</i> <p><i>Amount of funding raised and sources = £292k which includes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>£230k for the HAF projects</i> • <i>£35k for laptops for learning</i> • <i>c.£6k from the Cheltenham Lottery</i> • <i>£15k from the OPCC</i> • <i>£6k event sponsorship</i> <p><i>Some of the positives from our work include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Whole town approach; NCLB is designed so as to have broad appeal to all Cheltenham’s children and young people – it has not sought to limit itself to just benefitting children living in poverty. By doing so we have been able to galvanise a broad base of support for NCLB</i> • <i>Demonstration of the council’s place leadership role; coordinating NCLB goes beyond the traditional role of a distract council. But using the place vision as a basis, this council has shown that it is willing to lead the debate and coordinate action on matters that impact on its residents.</i> • <i>Commitment shown by local partners including public, VCS, businesses and local schools</i> <p>In terms of more specific ways in which NCLB monitors and evaluates its work, I would like to highlight the following:</p> <p>In 2021, NCLB jointly undertook a social return on investment pilot with the Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board. The report showed that pupils had benefitted from their involvement in NCLB events including helping with their understanding of the way in which, it helped inspire them about future careers.</p> <p>The pilot took information from a range of interviews with children, parents and teachers at one local school. The plan is to roll the methodology out across a wider range of schools and other organisations working with children and young people.</p> <p>NCLB partners are currently working with a consultant employed to support the county holiday activity programme to develop a theory of change for some aspects of NCLB. Once finalised, the theory of change will help us move to a more sophisticated methodology for evaluating our impact given that NCLB has evolved over the past four years.</p> <p>The No Child Left Behind Partnership remains strong. It has built a town-wide coalition of like-minded partners who are determined to take action so that local children have the opportunity to thrive.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Flo Clucas</p>
	<p>How has signing up to the No Child Left Behind Community Agreement impacted on what those signing up do and how is the effect on the outcomes for children from sign ups to the agreement recorded?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>The Community Agreement arose from a collective understanding that the offer for children and young people – in terms of early years’ provision, education, family support, social care support and youth support did not work well for some of our children. Across a range of partners there was a collective ambition to do more, and to commit to placing kindness, empathy and understanding at the heart of everything we do.</p> <p>To date 24 schools have signed up alongside 57 organisations including 16 businesses.</p>

	<p>NCLB has supported partners through a range of learning events for signatories such as two virtual leadership summits and training courses for front-line staff with 163 attendances.</p> <p>On 9 March this year, NCLB held its annual awards event to celebrate local projects that have supported families throughout the pandemic. This event was held in partnership with Punchline (an online business publication) who have helped raise £6,000 from 12 business.</p> <p>The community agreement is delivering the aim of transforming how we address child poverty through changing the narrative and our organisation cultures.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Flo Clucas</p>
	<p>Children have the right to voice their opinions and have these be taken into account in decisions that affect them.</p> <p><i>“Children generally do not vote and do not traditionally take part in political processes. Without special attention to the opinions of children – as expressed at home and in schools, in local communities and even in governments – children’s views go unheard on the many important issues that affect them now or will affect them in the future.” UNICEF</i></p> <p>How does Cheltenham Borough Council ensure children’s views are heard on the important issues that affect them?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>NCLB is really proactive in taking opportunities to hear from children and young people about their experiences.</p> <p>We are excited to announce that NCLB is in discussion with the University to undertake a research project into the lived experiences of Cheltenham young people following Covid. This will involve direct engagement with young people across the town using a variety of methodologies. This has been prompted by partner organisations raising concerns about the impact on young people from the disruptions caused by Covid particularly as they approach adulthood.</p> <p>The aim of the research is to look at how best to support young people to achieve their potential and will include consideration of mental and physical wellbeing, along with how we ensure all young people feel safe and respected.</p> <p>In terms of other opportunities, we took the opportunity at the children’s festival in May 2022 to get young children thinking about Cheltenham and the places where they live.</p> <p>Holiday activity and food programme evaluation – over the summer, we made sure that children taking part in our HAF activities had the chance to tell us what they liked about the activity, what they would change and what activities they’d like to do in the future. We were really pleased that 245 children responded giving us valuable insight to help us with future.</p> <p>As part of our work, we are co-funding a programme of detached youth work that is being delivered in priority communities throughout Cheltenham.</p> <p>Cheltenham Borough Council, through its commitment to No Child Left Behind will continue to work with a wide range of partners to ensure that the voices of children and young people get heard on a wide range of matters that impact on their lives.</p>

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