

Council

Meeting date: 20 March 2023

Public Questions (4 total)

1. Question from Mike Farmer to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries

Voter ID costs

I note that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities has allocated 'new burdens' funding to Cheltenham Borough Council for the costs of introducing Voter ID Ref [New Burdens Funding Allocations 22/23 and 23/24: voter ID, accessibility, training & contact centre costs \(England and Wales\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#), and that these allocations total £7,610 (£4,750 for Financial Year 2022/23 and £2,860 for Financial Year 2023/24).

Could the Cabinet member for Finance and Assets state:

- Whether these allocations are sufficient to cover the Council's costs, during these two financial years, associated with preparing for the introduction of Voter ID in local and general elections scheduled to be held in Cheltenham in the financial year 2024/25?
- What additional funding the Council would require to cover the costs of Voter ID requirements if a general election were to be called during the 2023/24 financial year?

Response from Cabinet Member

Thank you Mr Farmer for your questions: It is fair to say that under normal conditions, cost recovery for elections are well practiced. Adding the requirement of voter ID gives a variable that all local authorities will be grappling with, the outcome of which, financially, will not be known until after each election.

The New Burdens funding is being provided using a hybrid approach of upfront grant payments, Justification Led Bids and a combination of both. The upfront grants are a proportion of the funding available. The upfront grant for Cheltenham (£4,750 for Financial Year 2022/23 and £2,860 for Financial Year 2023/24) has been calculated based on the fact that we do not have any scheduled elections for May 2023 and we do not have a large number of polling stations. Should the upfront grant funding not be sufficient to cover the councils costs then the Justification Led Bid process will allow additional funding to be released retrospectively. Funding for the financial year 2024/25 will follow the same pattern, with the first payment awarded via upfront grant in April 2024, followed by the JLB process.

Costs incurred for UK Parliamentary elections as a result of the Elections Act will be met by the Consolidated Fund, rather than the New Burdens funding. In the event that an early election is called during the financial year 23/24, should there be any costs arising, above the grants already awarded, because of voter ID requirements they would be met through this process.

2. Question from Rich Newman to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie

As the council has now agreed to spend £25,000 to light a part of the park, are there any plans in place to light the rest of Sandford Park? Namely the Eastern side of the park between college road and Keynsham Road? As the petition clearly asked for the entirety of the park to be lit. And your current plans only cover about a 3rd of Sandford Parks paved area.

Response from Cabinet Member

The Council has been working with Gloucestershire County Council to assess and suggest improvements to lighting in Sandford Park. The recommendation is to upgrade the lighting along the cycle path between College Road and Barretts Mill Lane, replacing two columns with five at closer spacing. An additional column is also proposed near the friendship circle, with an additional one under consideration in the Anney (High Street) Garden. The cost to undertake this is between £25k - £28K. Potential funding sources have been identified (including £3k from GCC) and will be subject to funding bids for which applications are currently being prepared in partnership with the Friends of Sandford Park; who support this approach.

There are no plans to extend the lighting to all of the park, as it was identified in the report that this was not necessary and could be quite damaging to wildlife having a quite negative impact on bio diversity.

3. Question from Peter Frings to the Cabinet Member for Cyber, Regeneration and Commercial Income, Councillor Mike Collins

Clean Air Cheltenham has circulated, to all councillors, on Monday 13th March, a document summarising the huge benefits Nottingham City Council have gained from implementing a Workplace Parking Levy 10 years ago. Many other councils - both unitary and non-unitary (e.g. Oxford) - are also implementing a Workplace Parking Levy scheme. Nottingham Council have confirmed that they can deliver a full feasibility study to explore the benefits of such a scheme in Cheltenham, at a cost of £25k. Can the Cabinet Member responsible confirm that Cheltenham Borough Council will commission such a feasibility study within the next 6 months?

Response from Cabinet Member

I would like to thank Mr Frings for his question; one which was recently raised via the councils budget consultation 2023/24. In response to that and reflected again here, the Workplace Parking Levy functions by allowing revenues to be invested in transport schemes, offsetting the impact on businesses. In my view this could only

be efficiently introduced and implemented by the highways and transport authority, Gloucestershire County Council who are the decision makers in respect of highways.

I am aware of the legislation that enables this levy, but also of the wider challenges, particularly at a time of ever increasing financial pressures on businesses and individuals. The contribution of this type of intervention to a wider modal shift strategy may play a future role but this is a consideration alongside all possible future interventions. I am not in a position to commit the Council to funding a feasibility study, but I am happy to commit to raising the question with my county council colleagues.

4. Question from Peter Frings to the Cabinet Member for Cyber, Regeneration and Commercial Income, Councillor Mike Collins

If the council is not willing to explore the potential benefits of a Workplace Parking Levy, by what other means does the council propose to raise the major investment needed to start the process of building a continental standard, sustainable transport system in Cheltenham... without which it is very difficult to see how there will ever be any significant improvement in Cheltenham's air quality?

Response from Cabinet Member

Again, thank you Mr Frings for your question. I have addressed a similar question in respect of the members questions posed to me today. Gloucestershire County Council is the highways authority and therefore our role is one of campaigning on our priorities and seeking to work in collaboration. Data from our recent residents' survey noted that 68% of residents will choose to walk, cycle or use public transport more instead of using a car in the next few years.

As you rightly point out addressing transport, which is one of the key contributors to air quality and climate change impacts is a priority. Through our work on Connecting Cheltenham we set out our ambitious vision for transport to help tackle the climate change emergency, enable inclusive transport options and make better connections across the borough. This work remains relevant and continues to guide our engagement with the County Council.

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Council

Meeting date: 20 March 2023

Member Questions (6 total)

1. Question from Councillor Tim Harman to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, Councillor Max Wilkinson

Cheltenham Borough Council's contribution to tourism is "The Cheltenham Pod" in the High Street which is a locked up leaflet dispenser and is rarely staffed together with a modest stand distributing leaflets in the reception of the Municipal Offices. Surely we can do better than this for this great town.

Will he undertake an urgent review of the Council's modest contribution to Tourism including comparing this Council's approach with those of other comparative towns and Cities across the country.

Response from Cabinet Member

The Cheltenham Pod was opened thanks to a grant from the government's Welcome Back Fund. It was never intended to be a 24/7 location for Tourism Information. As Cllr Harman is aware thanks to the interest in this matter of his colleague Cllr Nelson, the Council hosts Tourism Information in the Municipal Offices reception on weekdays. As he will further be aware, as a result of recent questions, the Council has also been considering for some time how to provide in-person tourism information to visitors on weekends. Cllr Harman will be pleased to hear that a trial scheme is soon to launch. This will involve visitor welcome staff being stationed at the Cheltenham Pod on weekends and Bank Holidays and the job adverts are now live. While market research shows that the vast majority of tourists will access information online in advance of visits, we accept that this will not be the case for everyone – particularly older visitors. Therefore, the new seven-day-a-week provision will help provide cover for those requiring extra help. This authority, via Marketing Cheltenham, is currently working with other local authorities on a review of regional tourism marketing. This is as a result of a request from the government, via Visit England.

2. Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Councillor Alisha Lewis

How many litres of water were needed for the Christmas 2021 ice rink, what refrigerants were used to cool this water and what was the environmental impact of these?

Response from Cabinet Member

We do not hold on record information about the quantity of water used in 2021. The previous supplier and consultant involved in delivering the 2021 ice rink have been contacted to source this information but unfortunately, it has not arrived prior to the deadline for submitting this question response. When a response comes through, we will ensure that you are given a copy. Information on the coolant used is attached: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561057/ethylene_glycol_general_information.pdf

3. Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, Councillor Max Wilkinson

The Ice Rink report to Cabinet on 1st March 2022 agreed to explore, as a priority, the installation of fixed power supplies to the Council's main event sites. What progress has been made on this over the last year?

Response from Cabinet Member

A funding application was submitted to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in August 2022 and one of the capital projects included in the bid was to support the installation of fixed power supply in the Imperial Gardens area to service events such as the ice rink. The council was advised in December that this was successful and since that time, council officers have:

- Commissioned initial surveys of the area
- Contracted with an electrical expert to provide advice and expertise on the scale and type of connections required
- Worked with local festival and event organisers to assess requirements
- Commenced work to engage a firm of engineers to develop the design of the fixed power supply and support the project management of any construction

Work on installing a fixed power supply continues to be a priority for the council in line with the Corporate Plan 2023-27 and the requirements of the UKSPF funding.

4. Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, Councillor Max Wilkinson

I welcome the Council's commitment to tackling ASB during Race Week but note from media releases that the "hydrophobic" paint (containing hydrocarbons, C9-C12, n-alkanes, isoalkanes, cyclics, aromatics, petroleum distillates and hydrotreated light) that is being used in the War on Wee campaign is a simple water repellent sealer. From my research, every other town and city hoping to reduce public urination by coating walls with hydrophobic paint have used Ultra-Ever Dry paint. The Ultra-Ever paint uses 2 distinct coats to create a surface textured with tiny prongs that cause drops of water to hover, a phenomenon known to biologists as the "lotus leaf effect", and results in "bounce back" of urine. What technology is utilised in the No Nonsense Water Sealer (as shown in media photos) being applied to walls in Cheltenham, as part of the War on Wee campaign, to create the bounce back

effect and how much further does the No Nonsense Water Sealer bounce back the urine stream of an anti-social public urinator than that which would normally be expected from a wall?

Response from Cabinet Member

I thank Councillor Flynn for her question and her interest in this subject.

Managing the races presents a substantial challenge for the council, partners, residents and businesses. The council, with partners, review planning every year as part of the normal debrief process in order to identify areas for improvement for future years.

Councillor Flynn will be aware of the horrendous anti-social behaviour and public urination seen last year particularly around Pittville Park and along the Evesham Road. Videos shared on social media show public urination in the park, but it is well-known that a minority of racegoers choose to urinate in various locations.

Hydrophobic, water repellent paint, is one of a number of things implemented to address these issues. Cllr Flynn will have noted the posters on display, social media and pre-festival media coverage. Other measures include additional toilets, support for the “Love Our Turf” campaign and additional police and council staff deployment in these areas. I have also contacted the Police and Crime Commissioner to request that those caught urinating in public are fined. We must not accept “it’s race week” as an excuse for offensive behaviour that would not be tolerated for the other 51 weeks of the year.

We received 22 expressions of interest from a range of residents, charities, businesses and public spaces (via the BID). Through the initiative, we were therefore able to support residents, charities and businesses.

In relation to the paint distributed this year, it is described as a “high performance waterproof treatment” that “repels water”. Based on this, we decided it would be appropriate to use for the initial trial which was on a small scale this year.

We will review the impact and success of the “War on Wee” initiative in the coming weeks and, based on this, may decide to roll it out on a larger scale in the future. If we do, we may consider alternative products.

5. Question from Councillor Tabi Joy to Cabinet Member for Cyber, Regeneration and Commercial Income, Councillor Mike Collins

Reflecting on the tragic incident of an scooter collision in Nottinghamshire last June, will Cheltenham Borough Council be campaigning Gloucestershire County Council for reliable cycle paths, through Cheltenham town centre and surrounding suburbs, that scooters can share to avoid roadways and pavements?

Response from Cabinet Member

Thank you Councillor Joy for your question. As you are aware, Gloucestershire County Council is the highways authority and therefore our role is as you point out one of campaigning on our priorities and seeking to work in collaboration. Data from our recent residents' survey noted that 68% of residents will choose to walk, cycle or use public transport more instead of using a car in the next few years.

Through our work on Connecting Cheltenham we set out our ambitious vision for transport to help tackle the climate change emergency, enable inclusive transport options and make better connections across the borough. This work remains relevant and continues to guide our engagement with the County Council. A few specific points to note;

- GCC are investing significantly in a Gloucestershire spine cycle network with Cheltenham to Gloucester underway, with the Cheltenham A40 section complete.
- GCC have been a key partner in working with CBC, Network Rail and GWR to extend the former Honeybourne Line connecting the A40 via Shelburne Road to the railway station car park. Construction of the extension is expected to start in March/April 2023 and is due to be completed in September/October 2023.
- I understand the Cheltenham to Bishops Cleeve route now has funding and is in design phase. I believe this is due to begin winter 2023. However I haven't been fully briefed on this yet so don't know where/if this links to Cheltenham centre.
- We are working with GCC to invest in better cycle infrastructure in the way of cycle parking across the town centre.
- We have allocated UKSPF funding to open a cycle hub in the town centre

Whilst some of these actions are not directly linked to enabling scooter movement, they are linked to enabling choice in transport mode.

As a point of clarity it is illegal for an scooter to ride on the pavement. Scooters are classed as a vehicle and therefore have right to use on the road, just as cars and bikes do.

6. Question from Councillor Tabi Joy to the Cabinet Member for Cyber, Regeneration and Commercial Income, Councillor Mike Collins

Has the council received adequate reassurance that the Gloucestershire Airport fuel spill of May 2022 will not be repeated? What specific mitigations have been put in place by Cheltenham Borough Council following the investigation of the incident?

Response from Cabinet Member

Thank you Councillor Joy for your question. For the benefit of all Members I feel it is worth setting out what happened. On Friday 27th May at approx. 07.45am the operative arrived on site at the Gloucester Airport Tank Farm to make a delivery of 38,000 litres of JET 34 Fuel. During the process of delivering fuel the operative believed that the product was not being pumped correctly and therefore tried to trouble shoot however he noticed the product on the floor, and then fuel gushing over the sides of the top of the trailer's tank. At this point the operative stopped the pump immediately and it was also at this point our refueller noticed the spill and called for the Airport fire service to attend.

It is believed the spill was in the region of 3,000 litres which was contained by the site and reached as far as the interceptor. The Environmental Agency and local Water Company attended and confirmed that no product had reached the water course. At first the Airport internal fire brigade arrived on the scene, who then called for the local external fire service to assist in the clean-up operation after laying a foam blanket.

A number of actions have been put in place to mitigate a similar occurrence which include :

- A modification has been made to all aviation trailers to ensure that pumps will only operate in the forward direction
- A re-training program on 'pump-off' deliveries has been put in place for operatives
- Procedures for pumped aviation deliveries has been updated to ensure clarity on pump and direction test to be carried out before hoses are flooded
- Investigating the possibility of fitting a non-return valve to the pipework of the receiving tank

These actions provide adequate reassurance that the Gloucestershire Airport fuel spill of May 2022 will not be repeated.

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