

Council

Meeting date: 19 June 2023

Deadline for questions: 08 June 2023

Public Questions (3 total)

1. Question from Mr Jay-Jay Potter-Peachey to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, Councillor Max Wilkinson

Having passed a [motion](#) to agree to a Rainbow Crossing installation here in Cheltenham. Can I ask for an update and whether or not this is going to be happening soon. The motion passed agreed that Cheltenham should have one and as per the motion from GCC it also identified a location.

Response from Cabinet Member

Thank you to Jay-Jay for his question. I am a supporter of Pride in Gloucestershire and an ally of the LGBTQ+ community and I know that he has been an effective campaigner on this subject for many years. I welcome and applaud his ongoing commitment to the cause. As Jay-Jay will be aware from his involvement in the rainbow crossing scheme in Gloucester, these projects must be overseen by the Highways Authority, Gloucestershire County Council. The County Council's response to Cheltenham Borough Council is several hundred words and not appropriate for inclusion in an answer, but I am happy to share it separately. While the County Council expressed support for the aims of Pride, the view expressed was that rainbow crossings are costly when compared with other potential support that might be given to the cause. The County Council also referenced the very many other considerations it takes into account, including safety and site selection. The County Council concluded that it would not support or be funding a rainbow crossing in Cheltenham and, even if Cheltenham Borough Council had sufficient budget to fund a scheme, Highways Officers would recommend other ways to spend the money. Jay-Jay may wish to consider further engagement with the County Council on the subject of the rainbow crossing and other options for infrastructure and street furniture. In terms of potential funding from the Borough Council, there are various annual grants available that could support public engagement activities for Pride, as well as the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund. I am of course happy to meet Jay-Jay and discuss this at his convenience. I would recommend that if and when a meeting is convened, a member of the County Council Highways team is in attendance.

2. Question from Hon. Alderman Anne Regan to the Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie

People's homes in Hatherley were recently photographed by recycling staff using an iPad.

- a. Does the council have legal permission to invade residents' privacy?
- b. If the front door bearing the house number is on the side of the house will this photography contribute to trespassing?
- c. Many people have justifiable reasons for not leaving their recycling boxes outside their premises, Age constraints, holidays, business travel etc are reasons for not having their boxes out. Why is the council taking this heavy-handed approach?
- d. How many telephone calls in the last 6 months, per week, has the council received from residents asking for a second collection?
- e. What is the legality of this action and what financial toll does the council propose to fine residents?

Response from Cabinet Member

The Council has a statutory responsibility to collect waste and recycling for residents in Cheltenham just like all other waste collection authorities across the country. Collection crews collect from the kerbside, in other words, the pavement, unless residents give their permission for collections to be made from an agreed location on their land as part of an assisted collection.

Collection crews now have access to 'in cab technology' allowing them to take photographs of any operational issues which are relevant to delivering that service for residents. These photographs are stored securely in the system for 30 days, then deleted, and only shared with the resident at that property if there is an issue raised by the resident regarding their collection, for example, a missed bin report. The photographs are intended to evidence that a collection has or hasn't been made, or other operational issues, and I am assured does not constitute any invasion of privacy or trespassing. The same image may well be available on Google Maps Street View.

Unfortunately we are unable to provide any telephone statistics on 'second collections' as they are not identified as such.

The Council has no powers to fine any resident for failing to present waste or recycling, nor do we have any plans to seek to do so.

We are actively encouraging the reduction in waste across the borough and we applaud residents who do not present refuse bins because they do not have any waste. We are however keen to ensure that tax payers money is not wasted in

funding crews having to return to collect refuse bins from properties who had failed to present in time for their scheduled collection.

Equally we are keen for residents to present sorted recycling for collection but not all do. Photographing unsorted recycling boxes will help us support residents to sort their recycling.

3. Question from Hon Alderman Anne Regan to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries

The council-owned site in Hayden Lane was used as a gardening centre for the council. I understood the land was to be sold for housing development many years ago.

Why has nothing been achieved on this site when we are so desperate for social housing in this town?

Response from Cabinet Member

Thank you Mrs Anne Regan for your question, as an ex Cheltenham borough councillor you will undoubtedly be aware of the pressures we face in Cheltenham because of the national housing crisis. This crisis has been going on for decades, and differing governments have over this time not really grasped the depth of the crisis and provided any meaningful impact in bring about positive change. I am sure you will be supportive of this administrations housing investment plan being a key priority. Investing £180 million pounds in providing more affordable housing will make a meaningful difference in providing more much needed homes in our town.

I'm sure you will agree that one of the key challenges we face in reducing the housing pressures across Cheltenham is where are homes going to be provided and what site are appropriate.

Following the decision to close operations at Arle Nursery, the site was allocated and adjoining land within the Cheltenham Plan for housing development. The council have been exploring the various issues involved in securing redevelopment, with the objectives of maximising housing delivery, maximising housing options (including provision of affordable to rent housing and shared ownership housing) and maximising the latent value of the site to generate a capital receipt for reinvestment into the council's corporate priorities and capital programme.

The site and adjoining land is constrained by various matters, including highways and access, flooding along the line of the nearby River Chelt, ecology and wildlife and most pertinently, two high-pressure gas pipes running north to south between the Nursery and the adjoining allocated land. This has two implications: firstly, the

need maintain a protection zone along the line of these pipes; and secondly, the requirement for substantial engineering works in order to provide an access road over the line of them, which is both challenging and expensive.

Having undertaken various surveys, including ecological, legal, ground and utilities, the site was originally appraised for development by the councils housing arm, Cheltenham Borough Homes. However, they were unable to deliver a scheme that would meet all of the objectives for this site. The council therefore re-evaluated the delivery options and determined a partnership approach with a third party was most likely to deliver on the core objectives.

Subsequently, the council has been working with another housing provider who has been able to overcome the constraints within the site area and are now completing the necessary site investigations as part of the preparation and submission of a planning application. The council and its partners are working together to deliver a consented scheme by March 2024, with construction starting shortly thereafter, and the first new dwellings being ready for occupation towards the end of 2024.

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Member Questions (5 total)

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

Following his response to my question at the last Council meeting with regard to Tourism, will the Cabinet Member urgently look at the signage that is in a number of locations which shows that the Tourist Information Centre is located at the Wilson which it has not been for some time which is potentially misleading ?

Response from Cabinet Member

Through this question, Councillor Harman has rightly raised that, at the time of asking, a number of signs in the town centre still referred to the Tourist Information Centre which was previously based at the Wilson Art Gallery and Museum. Some months ago, officers removed all fingerpost directional signage and reported to me that this had been dealt with. It has since come to officers' attention that there were some residual totem signs which referred to this location but had been missed at the time. This was an oversight but I can confirm that these have now been updated temporarily with a longer term, more permanent, redesign in the process of being commissioned.

I would like to take this opportunity to update members on the reinstatement of seven-day-a-week in-person tourist information provision, which has been a subject of debate in this chamber and elsewhere. I thank members of this council and members of the public for raising this important issue. I'm happy to report that we now have uniformed Visitor Welcome Assistants in the town centre on weekends and bank holidays during the key footfall hours of 11am-3pm. Based at The Cheltenham Pod on the High Street, the staff provide information, directions and a friendly welcome. This initiative has been well received and they are providing an important service for both visitors and residents. This is in addition to the in-person information provided by reception staff at the Municipal Offices on weekdays

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

It is good news that three trees have now been planted in the Bath Terrace Car Park entirely funded by the splendid Suffolk Traders.

It is also good news that other trees have been planted and funded from other sources across the town including from the County Council Build Back Better Fund.

Since declaring a Climate Emergency, how many trees has the council planted and funded itself?

Response from Cabinet Member

Response from Cabinet Member

Bath Rd Traders generously gave £500 towards the cost of installing the trees in Bath Terrace car park.

Glos County Council paid for the trees themselves, as well as providing the planting accessories (stakes, cages etc).

CBC paid for the actual planting, whilst also providing aftercare and watering.

Tree planting numbers since 2019:

2019: 2,600

2020: 2,500

2021: 1,800

2022: 2,100

These tree planting numbers are for trees planted by this council only within the Cheltenham borough.

The numbers must be taken in context and do not necessarily reflect the number of trees which will reach maturity.

Many of the planted trees are very small (approx. 1.2m high). These were planted by public volunteers as mixed native species groups of trees. As the trees establish and grow, many of them (>80%) will need to be “thinned out” so as to retain the “best” trees for the space in which they will be planted.

CBC plants “large” (3-3.5m high) trees as “landscape features” in parks, gardens and open spaces. Many of these trees will be replacements for trees felled/removed.

Approx 40 such trees are planted each year. These combine a mix of native and exotic, long and short lived, large and small tree species. This wide palette gives a wide range of arboricultural interest, as well as helping to mitigate the impact of

climate change and newly introduced pests and diseases (e.g. ash die-back, red band needle blight, *Phytophthora ramorum* etc).

Similarly, a proportion of the trees will fail to establish, be vandalised, or simply become suppressed and die as a result of dominating more vigorous neighbouring tree(s).

Tree planting numbers are only the very start of the journey towards the canopy cover target for the town. Subsequent to planting, there is a relatively high level of husbandry (watering, mulching, occasional fencing etc) so as to help ensure successful tree establishment.

Members of public are able to “sponsor” the establishment of a tree (£350). Tree sponsorship numbers have remained relatively constant over the years (approx. 25 per annum).

Gloucestershire Highways (with a 50% financial contribution by CBC) plants 70 x 3.5m high mixed species trees each year. The majority of these trees are replacement trees for trees previously removed.

3. Question from Councillor Stephan Fifield to Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Well-being, Councillor Max Wilkinson

Could the cabinet member please give an update on waters at the Pump Room and when they will be made accessible to the public?

Response from Cabinet Member:

Thank you to Cllr Fifield for his question. I know he takes a keen interest in this matter. The spa water at Pittville Pump Room is unfortunately still not available to the public due to presence of bacteria in the water.

Work is underway to understand whether the bacteria is coming from the water source or the system. If we find the source of the water is contaminated then my understanding is that it is unlikely that the water will ever be made fit for human consumption.

If the source is not contaminated, then there maybe scope to disinfect the system. However, the UV filters have been cleaned and replaced a number of times, and the system has been disinfected but bacteria was still present.

An alternative option might be to replace the whole system, but clearly that would come at some cost to local taxpayers and if the source is indeed contaminated this work would still not result in drinkable Spa water being available.

For clarity, Cheltenham Borough Council is responsible for the building works that may arise and the repairs and maintenance of the system.

The Cheltenham Trust, which has responsibility for the testing of the spa water, has asked a specialist contractor to undertake a site visit within the next two weeks to review the system condition. That contractor has been asked to supply an options and costs proposal.

4. Question from Councillor Stephan Fifield to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries

Could the cabinet member please give an update on the status of Idsall Drive Car Park? Back in 2020 it was common knowledge that the Council was looking to sell the car park. Could the member give an update on whether this is still a possibility?

Response from Cabinet Member:

Thank you for your question Cllr Fifield, It is a matter of public record that in November 2020 as part of the Council's COVID-19 Recovery Budget there was a recommendation to note a list of assets for disposal which included Idsall Drive car park. This recommendation was approved by Full Council as part of the report which identified a total of eight sites for disposal. The proposal to dispose of these assets to generate a capital receipt were put forward for the benefit of the whole Borough and to ensure the ongoing viability of the Council and the delivery of our key priorities, for the benefit of our residents across Cheltenham.

In 2021/22, negotiations for the sale of Idsall Drive car park to Prestbury Parish Council halted. Whilst the car park remains earmarked for disposal, on the grounds that it is surplus to our operational requirements, no scheme has been brought forward for its disposal. Work is ongoing in relation to this asset disposal and the Cabinet have given a commitment to both Ward Councillors that they will be directly consulted before any proposals are brought forward.

5. Question from Councillor Emma Nelson to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie

It's good to see the hanging baskets going up around the town recently and the formal beds in front of the Municipal Offices being planted up.

Please would the Cabinet Member confirm whether there will be the usual window boxes on two floors at the front of the building and the hanging baskets in the window archways?

Response from Cabinet Member:

Thanks to Councillor Nelson for her question. I am pleased to confirm that the hanging basket and window boxes that were installed on 15th June at the Municipal offices are the same as we have done in recent years.

I hope all members will agree that the floral displays across Cheltenham including all the wind flowers, look amazing and I would like to thank the Ubico staff for all their hard work planting up and installing them, even in this heat.

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