

Cabinet

19 December 2023

Public Questions (2 total)

1. Question from Mr David Redgewell to Cabinet Member for Customer and Regulatory Services, Councillor Martin Horwood

The large increase in graffiti and tags on public and private buildings and bus shelters all around the town is making the town centre look uncared for and feel unsafe, especially at night. What action is the council taking, in partnership with the police, bus companies, and other agencies, to catch the people responsible for this criminal damage?

Cabinet Member response

The council adopted a [new graffiti policy](#) this year. We also [increased the fine](#) for graffiti offences from £150 to £500.

This policy has a dual purpose:

1. Clarifying roles and responsibilities and the council's enforcement approach to dealing with unwanted graffiti and tags; and
2. Clarifying the council's requirements on businesses and residents on the removal of unwanted graffiti and tags on property they are responsible for.

Catching people responsible for graffiti and tags is a difficult and complex task because they purposely operate under the cover of darkness and in areas not covered by surveillance. However, council officers are proactive in both pursuing all lines of enquiries and evidence that they can obtain.

This includes, for example, proactive operations with the police, scrutinising CCTV footage where this is available and gathering information on serial taggers to build up intelligence around their activities (including online).

Where there is sufficient evidence to prosecute offenders, the council will always seek to do so because we recognise the adverse impact this sort of crime has on communities.

It is important that people report graffiti because it helps officers build an intelligence and an evidence base that helps with catching people who blight the town with their unlawful graffiti and tags.

2. Question from Mr David Redgewell to Cabinet Member for Customer and Regulatory Service, Councillor Martin Horwood

Does Cheltenham Borough Council have a cleaning budget, as other councils in the area do, to remove graffiti and tagging, including at the Royal Well bus station? Is there a service level agreement with Ubico, and would the council consider serving notice on building owners to clean the graffiti on their buildings?

Cabinet Member response

There is a service level agreement (SLA) between the council and Ubico. The SLA outlines the duties Ubico is responsible for including, amongst other things, graffiti removal. Ubico's work to remove graffiti on behalf of the council is funded through the contract sum agreed by the council as part of the budget setting process. Individual requests for graffiti removal are actioned in accordance with Ubico's agreed prioritisation process.

Neighbourhood Officers, employed by the council, also have funding available to deal with small areas of graffiti that does not require a response by Ubico.

Under the newly adopted graffiti policy, the council does specify the timescales for removal and consequences for not doing so. The policy stipulates:

- **Priority 1 - Offensive** - Must be removed within 14 days of receiving formal notice from the authority requesting removal.
- **Priority 2 - Other** - Must be removed within 28 days of receiving formal notice from the authority requesting removal.

Failure to action this process may result in a Community Protection Notice (CPN) being issued.

The policy makes some provision for delays caused by factors outside resident's and businesses' control.