

Council

Meeting date: 18 March 2024

Motions (3 total)

Motion A

Proposed by: Councillor Martin Horwood

Seconded by: Councillor Richard Pineger

The Nature Emergency

This council:

1. **Declares that there is a nature emergency**, recognising:
 - a. That nature is in long term decline and urgent action must be taken to reverse this, that the UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries - in the bottom 10% globally and the worst in the G7 - and with only about half its biodiversity left that it is far below the global average¹;
 - b. That a thriving natural environment underpins a healthy, prosperous society, that it benefits our physical and mental health, feeds us, cleans our air, moderates urban heat, absorbs carbon, makes towns like Cheltenham beautiful and that its survival and diversity is essential to human life;
 - c. That the nature crisis and the climate emergency are intrinsically linked and that the impacts of the climate crisis drive nature's decline, while restoring nature can help to tackle the climate crisis.
2. Notes the positive work already begun and planned by this council including
 - a. Policy SD9 of the current Joint Core strategy with Gloucester and Tewkesbury which commits us to protect and enhance biodiversity and to establish and reinforce resilient ecological networks²

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-58859105>

² https://jointcorestrategy-my.sharepoint.com/personal/website_jointcorestrategy_onmicrosoft_com/_layouts/15/onedrive.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2Fwebsite%5Fjointcorestrategy%5Fonmicrosoft%5Fcom%2FDocuments%2FJoint%20Core%20Strategy%20%28JCS%29%20website%2FHome%2FJCS%20Plan%20Adopted%20Verison%20%28PDF%2E%2010MB%29%20Formatted%2Epdf&parent=%2Fpersonal%2Fwebsite%5Fjointcorestrategy%5Fonmicrosoft%5Fcom%2FDocuments%2FJoint%20Core%20Strategy%20%28JCS%29%20website%2FHome&ga=1

- b. The Parks, People & Wildlife green space strategy and the work already undertaken to promote biodiversity in the council's own parks, gardens and cemeteries, watercourses, local Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), woodland, three Local Nature Reserves³ and other natural areas.
- c. The 16 Local Green Spaces already designated in the 2020 Cheltenham Plan safeguarding access to nature and ecosystem services for communities in the urban area⁴
- d. The example set by development plans like the Golden Valley supplementary planning document (SPD) which won the Building with Nature Policy Award⁵
- e. The establishment, with partners, of the Gloucestershire Nature & Climate Fund to help restore and enhance nature when business and developers cannot meet Biodiversity Net Gain goals entirely on site⁶
- f. The imminent recruitment of the town's first borough ecologist
- g. The planned development this year of an Ecology, Nature Recovery & Biodiversity SPD for the whole town

3. Commits to embed nature's recovery at the heart of all strategic plans, policy areas and decision-making processes, including the forthcoming Cheltenham, Gloucester & Tewkesbury Strategic & Local Plan

4. Having declared a climate emergency in 2019, commits to tackling the climate and nature emergencies together and investing in nature-based solutions to the challenges posed by climate change including mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to increased climate risk such as flooding and extreme summer heat.

5. Develop and agree on an evidence-based strategy and action plan for nature's recovery and report on the progress made, building on the 2007 Cheltenham biodiversity audit and work already begun by the Gloucestershire Nature Partnership including the Gloucestershire Natural Capital Mapping Project, Gloucestershire's Local Nature Recovery Network, identified Nature Improvement Area and local Strategic Nature Areas⁷.

6. Set clear strategic and measurable goals for nature's recovery by 2030, for example, covering the following areas:

³https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/33/parks_and_open_spaces/612/parks_people_and_wildlife_-_a_green_space_strategy/4

⁴https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/downloads/file/8169/cheltenham_plan

⁵<https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/project-list-blog/2022/9/27/golden-valley-spd>

⁶<https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s43946/Officer%20report%20-%20Approval%20of%20countywide%20Memorandum%20of%20Understanding%20-%20Co-operation%20on%20Biodiversity%20.pdf>

⁷<https://naturalcapital.qcerdata.com/>

- a. Contributing to the national commitment to protect 30% of land for nature by 2030, in line with the UK's international commitment to biodiversity.
- b. Increasing space for wildlife and long-term maintenance and expansion of the Nature Recovery Network.
- c. Reducing pressure on wildlife.
- d. Improving doorstep access to nature, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those wards already identified as having the worst access to nature.
- e. Supporting communities and businesses to make better decisions and take action to support nature's recovery.

7. Work with local communities and organisations, including with schools, colleges and young people, to achieve the strategic goals, particularly engaging with disadvantaged and underrepresented sections of society.

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Motion B

Proposed by: Councillor Flo Clucas

Seconded by: Councillor Paul Baker

Special needs in schools

Our schools in Cheltenham are not receiving the full entitlement of assistance from County for children with special needs. Those children, staff and other pupils are suffering as a result.

This Council:

Calls for the Leader to contact the Cabinet Member at GCC for information and response to children's needs in schools, as set out below:

1. Council is concerned that in some of our schools in Cheltenham, those children with special educational needs, and those children with particular issues in relation to the speaking and understanding of English, are not receiving the help and support they need.
2. Our children with special educational needs – an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) - are entitled to such help.

As the County Council itself states:

3. 'An Education, Health and Care Plan is a statutory plan that has replaced a Statement of SEN. An EHC Plan may be needed when a child or young person's educational needs cannot be met with the existing additional resource already delegated to the school. The Local Authority assess this need based on the evidence provided. '

4. Too many of our children who have such needs are being failed by a system, which is grossly underfunded by central government. As a consequence, additional stress and workload is being placed on teachers and teaching assistants and their desire to remain in the service and is adversely impacting those children who are already disadvantaged, their parents and carers.

5. In addition, in some schools, young children are being asked to act as translators, as assistance is not being provided by the County to those whose first language is not English and who have little or no English language ability.

6. Council requests that the Leader writes to the Cabinet Member responsible at Gloucestershire County Council to ask them to state:

- a) How many children in Gloucestershire have an EHCP?
 - b) How many of those are not receiving the care they should through the EHCP?
 - c) When will that assistance, so needed by children, young people and schools, in relation to EHCP and language translation needs, be made available?
 - d) How many decisions for ECHP applications take longer than 20 weeks to be completed?
 - e) What is the financial shortfall for schools both primary and secondary of needed assistance?
 - f) What is the impact of such delay and cost on schools?
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Motion C

Proposer: Cllr Max Wilkinson

Seconder: Cllr Adrian Bamford

GP capacity in Cheltenham

Council notes:

Concerns about the capacity of the primary care sector in Cheltenham, including evidence that demand for routine GP appointments regularly exceeds supply.

Primary Care is delivering a record number of appointments, but Gloucestershire has the worst figures in the country for patients waiting over 28 days for an appointment, based on the latest figures available (October 2023, as reported at HOSC). Clearly existing capacity is insufficient to meet current need and all estimates indicate that need will continue to increase at pace.

The ongoing impact of national policies that have encouraged doctors trained in the UK to move abroad for better terms and conditions.

That the government has acknowledged the shortage of doctors and seeks to address this as part of its NHS workforce plan.

That there are many examples of local best practice in primary care and that GPs are working hard under significant pressure.

The challenges presented by the level of investment in Primary Care and the financial complexities of delivering new surgeries.

That long waiting lists for hospital treatment, combined with difficulties in social care and A&E, are placing additional pressures on GPs.

Council welcomes:

The inclusion of a new GP surgery as part of the CIL projects list included in the Cheltenham Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic Local Plan and approved by this council.

The local petition of more than 1600 names calling for a new GP surgery in Cheltenham.

The potential availability of council-owned land for delivering such a project in partnership with others, as part of this authority's prudent approach to use of its assets.

The desire to include a new surgery as part of new commercial and residential developments at West and North West Cheltenham.

Council resolves:

To reiterate support, first expressed as part of the paper on the CIL schedule, for a new GP surgery for Cheltenham.

To request that officers further explore with the health care commissioners and current GP provider service, possibilities for delivering new surgery premises:

- a) Via the provision of new premises for existing surgeries seeking to move and/or expand into more appropriate, accessible buildings
- b) At strategic sites, as part of the growth of Cheltenham

To report back with progress and options to a full meeting of council on, or before, the scheduled full council meeting on 14 October.