

Council

16 December 2024

Public Questions (16 total)

1. Question from Mr Craig Storey to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

Could you tell what the tonnage (or similar) is per recycled type that is recycled on a weekly or monthly basis. That I presume tells us what the top three items are by weight, and also what will need to be found another home for recycling. I imagine the figures will be fairly high so what is the expected impact on other sites that will have to take this extra recycling. And if those figures are high surely its your duty to keep the site open.

Member response:

I am pleased to respond to your question which raises some helpful points about our decision to implement a prolonged closure of the site.

We know from figures reported for the last full financial year which was 2023/24 that a lot more residual waste (rubbish) than recycling is taken to the HRC – approximately 3,983 tonnes of residual waste per year compared to 834 tonnes of recycling. 910 tonnes of garden waste is also being taken to the HRC.

I am proud of our excellent kerbside waste and recycling services in Cheltenham and we are confident that the additional refuse (rubbish) can be absorbed within our kerbside service – we already pick up about 18,500 tonnes of rubbish each year. We all need to do our bit with this and try to reduce the amount of waste we are generating for the sake of the planet and our pockets. We are all part of a throw away society these days and this has to change.

It would be great if we all recycled everything we could, not just some of it and this would help improve our recycling rate as we only recycle just under half of what we throw away at present and our government target is to reach 65% by 2035. I have just signed off on the purchase of a new fleet of recycling vehicles which will be able to cope with future demands for recycling other materials like cartons and flexibles. These new vehicles have a larger capacity and again we are confident the kerbside service can accommodate extra recycling capacity from residents recycling more even when the HRC at Swindon Road is closed. Putting recycling in a kerbside box at home is much easier than driving it to Swindon Road or anywhere else for that matter although we do have our bring banks around the town if residents do want to get rid of extra recycling. Again, the bring banks will be serviced more regularly including the introduction of a Saturday collection to ensure they are able to deal with any additional recycling.

2. Question from Mr Craig Storey to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

What analysis has been done on the reported 1 million pounds required for redevelopment in an attempt to mitigate or reduce those potential costs? A major concern identified is that particular waste may leach into the ground. What type of waste is it. Can the identified troublesome waste not be simply transferred to wig moor?

Member response:

Thank you for your question. One of the reasons for the prolonged closure is the need to further understand all of the costs that would be involved in the re-opening of the site and how cost effectively this could be achieved. We have already sought initial quotes for the works involved including a new permit, the grounds works to remove the existing concrete surface, replace it with appropriate grade reinforced concrete with kerbing to contain fire water, drainage, as well as reconfigure the site layout to fit within the new slightly smaller boundary including electrical works. In addition to this we will need to have covered storage areas for some materials going forward and all of this comes to around £1million at present.

I am pleased to confirm that the site currently operates in compliance with all current legislation and regulations however any waste on the site could cause issues with run off water in the event of a fire or day to day activities if adequate measures are not in place. One of the considerations around the future of the site is its much smaller size in comparison to the ones Gloucestershire County Council have to provide. You will notice that the GCC operated sites collect a much wider range of materials than we are able to due to our space constraints and residents may prefer to load up their cars with this much wider range of materials and drive straight to Wingmoor with it all? The prolonged closure will help us and GCC assess this as part of the prolonged closure.

3. Question from Mr Matt Box to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

The Review of Waste and Recycling report to Cabinet on 26 November recommending the prolonged closure of the Swindon Road recycling centre provided in its justification "CBC's focus has to remain on delivering a high quality and expanded waste and recycling collection service". Does the Cabinet Member therefore share my disappointment that those properties in the borough due to have their residual waste collected on 25th, 26th and 27th December have had the collection cancelled altogether and face a full four week wait from the last collections on 11th-13th December until the next scheduled for 8th-10th January?

Member response:

Thank you for the opportunity of explaining the Christmas waste and recycling collection changes, I have another similar question to answer so sorry if I am repeating myself but the question is an important one, as is the answer.

We are doing things a bit differently this year and trialling a different approach to allow our waste and recycling teams to enjoy some proper time off and celebrate Christmas with their families. They work hard for our town all year round, including catch up collections after bank holidays, so I am glad we could offer them a real break.

These changes will also allow all collections to get back to normal much more quickly than in previous years, with collections starting again immediately after Christmas week when the volumes of waste and recycling are at their highest.

We appreciate some residents will have to wait for a collection, however any extra waste and recycling can be presented on the next scheduled collection as we will take extra waste and recycling as part of a 'bumper' collection. You can also take any additional recycling to bring banks and household recycling centres, and I would encourage all residents to use food waste caddies at home as much as possible.

Flats who would normally have a collection on 25, 26 and 27 December will have an extra collection which will take place the following week on 30 and 31 December and we will be monitoring black bag waste in the affected areas the week after collection.

We all need to look to reduce the amount of waste we generate and I appreciate it isn't always easy for everyone but trialling this alternative method for collections this year for the reasons I have already set out will also test out this different approach to collection frequency at this time of year. If it doesn't work I am happy to hold my hands up and say that we tried it and it didn't work. We won't know this until the New Year and I know Cheltenham residents want to be responsible with their waste.

4. Question from Mr Matt Box to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

Will the Cabinet Member commit to reintroducing additional weekend and/or bank holiday collections over the Christmas period in future to ensure residents experience a high quality waste collection service and to ensure the Council adheres to the DEFRA guidance that states residual waste collections should be "prioritised and maintained to prevent waste from building up and to protect public health and the local area"?

Member response:

Thank you for the opportunity of explaining the Christmas waste and recycling collection changes. We are doing things a bit differently this year and trialling a different approach to allow our waste and recycling teams to enjoy some proper time off to celebrate Christmas with their families. They work hard for our town all year

round, including catch up collections after bank holidays, so I am glad we could offer them a real break.

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Flats who would normally have a collection on 25, 26 and 27 December will have an extra collection which will take place the following week on 30 and 31 December and we will be monitoring black bag waste in the affected areas the week after collection.

I would encourage everyone to recycle as much as they can over Christmas, as the more we recycle, the more our service provider Plan-B gives us in donations to support Cheltenham's Foodbanks, which is really needed, particularly at this time of year.

Regarding your comments around DEFRA's guidance, I am pleased to confirm that in their most recent policy update on 29 November 2024, DEFRA have said that they "recognise that as recycling services are expanded and improved, local authorities may want to review residual waste services to ensure they are providing best value for money in line with local need. The government's priority is ensuring that households' needs are met, and we expect local authorities to continue to provide services to a reasonable standard. Councils and other waste collectors will retain the flexibility to make the best choices to suit local need."

I want to assure you that I don't expect to be changing our residual waste collection frequency away from fortnightly but the changes over Christmas are a bit different and will help us understand whether our new trialled approach for Christmas should continue next year or not. We need to trial new things to see if they work or not and be honest with the public if they don't work.

Christmas and new year revised waste and recycling collection dates are set out here as a reminder but they are also in the Local Answer which has gone to every household and also on the Liberal Democrat Christmas card.

| Normal collection day | Revised collection day |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Monday 23 December 2024 | Monday 23 December 2024 |
| Tuesday 24 December 2024 | Tuesday 24 December 2024 |
| Wednesday 25 December 2024 | Wednesday 8 January 2025 |

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Thursday 26 December 2024 | Thursday 9 January 2025 |
| Friday 27 December 2024 | Friday 10 January 2025 |
| Monday 30 December 2024 | Monday 30 December 2024 |
| Tuesday 31 December 2024 | Tuesday 31 December 2024 |
| Wednesday 1 January 2025 | Thursday 2 January 2025 |
| Thursday 2 January 2025 | Friday 3 January 2025 |
| Friday 3 January 2025 | Saturday 4 January 2025 |

5. Question from Mr Tim Harman to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

In the light of the decision by Cheltenham Borough Council to close the Swindon Road Recycling Centre, has the Council assessed the impact on the well-used bring sites such as Bath Terrace?

Member response:

Thank you for your question and I am pleased to be able to share our plans for bring sites including Bath Terrace.

As I have previously said, the prolonged closure of the HRC will allow us and GCC to test out in the real world what the impacts are and we won't know this until after the site closes on 10 January 2025.

I do hope that residents use the excellent kerbside recycling collection service and the recycling bring banks for their recycling rather than driving it to the GCC HRC at Bishops Cleeve.

We have arranged for extra collections from the bring banks, including Saturday collections for some busier bring banks, to ensure that they can cope with the extra recycling.

I hope to be able to find another bring bank site in Cheltenham to replace the Swindon Road bring banks as soon as possible and would be pleased to have any suggestions we can take away and explore.

6. Question from Mr Tim Harman to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

Can the Cabinet member say if the Council has plans to close any or all of the bring sites as well as the Swindon Road centre?

Member response:

I am grateful for the opportunity to clarify my position in relation to bring banks and the HRC.

I have committed to extra collections at the bring banks to ensure they can cope with any extra demand during the prolonged closure of the Swindon Road HRC and this includes trying to identify an additional bring bank site and again, if anyone has any suggestions we can explore do let me know.

Regarding the future of the HRC at Swindon Road, I think the cabinet report fully sets out our position regarding this site. We need to properly assess its future, looking at the cost of the works required as well as giving us and GCC a proper opportunity to look at the capacity of HRC provision in this part of the County and what their plans are. Once the site closes we will be able to test out the impacts on the existing GCC HRC provision as well as our bring banks and the kerbside services.

I am sure you will understand that I cannot prejudge the outcome of all of this which is why we have a prolonged closure and not a definite decision to close at this time.

7. Question from Mr Chris Mason to Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Alisha Lewis

In previous years, CBC have allowed some free parking on Thursdays in selected town centre car parks to boost the town's Christmas economy. As at the date of submitting this question (4th December) I have not seen anything advertised. What plans, if any, are there to do something similar this year?

Member response:

Free parking to coincide with pre-Christmas late night shopping has been offered at Town Centre East car park in previous years. Due to on-going maintenance requirements this car park is close to being full most days so has limited capacity. The closure of North Place car park, which is run by a private provider, is expected imminently and will significantly reduce car parking capacity in the town. This will place an even greater demand on the Council's car parks and limit availability.

8. Question from Mr Chris Mason to Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Alisha Lewis

How much longer will the installation of the 10 EV's in the Bath Terrace Car Park take? These EV's were scheduled to be in place by the end of November. There are currently 28 bays closed for the installation, on top of the 12 bays lost to the relocated bring banks. During the Literature Festival, and now with increased shopping activity leading up to Christmas, I have regularly witnessed potential users being understandably frustrated at the reduction in spaces.

Member response:

I would like to thank Mr Mason for his question. We were expecting the EV charging points to be operating by November however we have experienced delays with the Distribution Network Operator who in this case is National Grid. As you can appreciate the implementation of this type of infrastructure involves a large number of stakeholders and this can create complexities. The Council is still committed to delivering EV charging facilities across the town and it is expected that this pilot will be open in the new year.

9. Question from Mrs Emma Nelson to Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins

I am concerned at the lack of enforcement action on the Miller site in Leckhampton where 350 homes are now under construction plus of course the ongoing 131 Promenade fiasco.

Can you please advise how many post-holders there have been, with their length of tenure, over the past five years, for the following:

- Head of Planning
- Enforcement Officers
- Conservation Officers
- Planning Officers

Member response:

Thank you for your question. I can provide the following information; please note that this relates to permanent post holders only and does not include temporary contractor/agency staff.

Head of Planning

- 1 x 1 year 7 month
- 1 x 1 year 3 months

Enforcement Officers

- 1 x 2 years 3 months
- 1 x 2 years 9 months

Conservation Officers

- 1 x 3 years 10 months
- 1 x 2 months (current Conservation Officer)
- 1 x 1 month (current Senior Conservation Officer)

Planning Officers

- 1 x 2 yrs 3 months
- 1 x 2 yrs 11 months
- 1 x 3 yrs 4 months
- 6 x 5 yrs 8 months (six current Planning and Senior Planning Officers)
- 1 x 3 yrs 8 months
- 1 x 2 yrs 8 months
- 1 x 1 yr 9 months (current Principal Planning Officer)
- 1 x 7 months

10. Question from Mrs Emma Nelson to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Alisha Lewis

Can the Cabinet Member confirm if the refurbishment of the public toilets in Montpellier Gardens is overdue on its completion date and if it is likely to overspend its budget?

Member response:

I would like to thank Mrs Nelson for her question. The refurbishment of the public toilets in Montpellier Gardens was set out in our Corporate Plan for 2023-2027 which received cross party support when it was approved by Full Council in February 2023. I am pleased to report that although delays have been experienced with the contractor procured to undertake the work, the project is not expected to be overspent on completion. This is a credit to the hard work of officers in the Major Developments team who have managed the work, kept key stakeholders informed of progress and used their knowledge and experience to hold this contractor to account. The project is expected to be complete in the new year when we will re-open to the public refurbished toilets which will include the latest Changing Places facilities in the town centre. Not only has the project safeguarded and repaired a listed building in one of our iconic parks but with refurbished disabled facilities, gender neutral family facilities and parity of male and female toilets demonstrates our council's commitment to inclusivity.

11. Question from Ms Julie Harris to Cabinet Member for Major Developments and Housing Regeneration, Councillor Peter Jeffries

This question is really for the Liberal Democrats. Would like to ask is there in the future any plans to rejuvenate Coronation Square shopping area. Looks run down but is definitely a much-needed area for the neighbourhood. Shops very much needed and pharmacy, dentist, supermarkets etc, I'm sure Coronation Square brings in much needed revenue for the area, but it looks run down. Maybe rethink the area? specially the front pavement area which is so vast and could be made for short stopping time parking 20mins. Around the back of the shops half of the car park for

long term parking and build some more houses? Library could also do with new lease of life. I have lived in this neighbourhood for nearly 50 years and have very fond memories of Coronation Square and how vibrant this community was.

Member response:

Thank you, Ms Harris, for a very good question and one that is close to my own heart. Like yourself, I too have lived in the area for many years and know how important Coronation Square is to the local community. And, as you rightly observe, it is indeed looking tired and in need of a refresh.

Unfortunately, the shopping parade, is not controlled by the Borough Council but rather, by a third-party property investor, who, along with the Highways Authority, also control the frontage and pavement areas. Likewise, the library is controlled by the County Council. The Borough Council does, however, control the car park to the rear.

There have been various discussions over the years with the investors of the shopping parade as to how we could work together to secure investment into the area and give it the facelift it richly deserves. However, whilst the size of the car park is relatively large, the layout makes development of this area in its own right difficult in isolation without major redevelopment of the shopping parade itself. This would, unfortunately, not be currently viable for the owners of the shopping parade at this point in time. Regardless, we continue to speak with them and as recently as October this year (2024), invited them to put forward proposals for any new ideas that they may have, in the absence of major targeted grant funding for local development schemes.

With the excellent progress that the Borough Council is making with the Golden Valley development, right on the doorstep of Coronation Square, this will generate hundreds of millions of pounds of investment within this part of Cheltenham, in turn creating thousands of jobs and new homes. It is therefore expected that the area will benefit hugely from increased custom and expenditure and encourage further investment into the area, including investment into this vital neighbourhood centre. The Borough Council will therefore continue to work collaboratively with all parties involved to ensure that opportunities for future investment are explored, in order that Coronation Square remains the vibrant part of the community that we both know it has been for many years.

12. Question from Mr Rich Newman to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

I believe the "New Environment Laws" referred to as necessitating the £1m spend on the Cheltenham Household Recycling Centre (HRC), are covered by the Environment Act of 2021. I understand that the rules around HRC Health and Safety etc were due to come into force in November 2024, but following the change in

Government in July this is now deferred. If this is the case, then why the last-minute decision to close the HRC? Surely there should have already been plans and budgetary allowances made to ensure compliance by the November 2024 deadline? Why was the council unable to ensure compliance?

Member response:

Thank you for your question and I am pleased to clarify the timing of the decision.

You are correct we did originally expect the new permitting regulations to come into force in November 2024 and we were working with a specialist consultant well in advance of this to understand what would be required, including engaging with the Environment Agency. A lot of the legislation around the Environment Act 2021 has been delayed for varying reasons and it wasn't unexpected that this would also be delayed further however at some point during the next financial year we expect it to come into force and we must make appropriate budgetary provision for this.

We did not however know until more recently how significant and expensive the required works to the site would be.

Draft council budgets need to be set by this time each year to go out to public consultation before being agreed early in February every year requiring a decision at this time about whether we had the £1million funding available for the works. In the coming year, without slashing other public services, there is not available budget to fund the required £1million investment however as you rightly point out we don't want a rushed decision over its future hence the prolonged closure to be able to make this decision in the fullness of time over the next year or so.

13. Question from Mr Rich Newman to the Leader, Councillor Rowena Hay

What will happen to the staff currently working at the HRC? Will they be assured jobs elsewhere? How much notice were they given prior to the public announcement on 18th November? How well were they forewarned?

Member response:

Thank you for asking a question about the well-being of the staff involved in the prolonged closure of the HRC.

The staff concerned are all employed by Ubico Ltd, not Cheltenham Borough Council, however I am assured that they have all been offered suitable alternative employment. Staff were briefed on Monday 18 November before the cabinet papers were published and a media release was issued.

14. Question from Mr Crispian Webb to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing and Culture, Councillor Martin Horwood

The Prince of Wales Stadium is used extensively by local clubs and groups, in particular Cheltenham and County Harriers. The Harriers pay nearly £4,000 per month to use the facility, and yet cannot host licensed matches there as the track failed testing and needs to be replaced. What funding has been allocated and in what timescale in order to complete this essential work?

Member response:

I would like to thank Mr Webb for his question and for the efforts of Harriers members to highlight this issue and the importance of future planning for the restoration and future maintenance of a high-quality track at the Prince of Wales Stadium, capable of hosting licensed athletic matches.

I understand the latest estimate (Oct 2024) to resurface the track to reach licensed meeting standard was £489,000. This represents a substantial capital investment. This represents a substantial capital investment.

In 2023 the council agreed to make a £1m provision over two years for more substantial capital investments to be identified by the Cheltenham Trust who operate the stadium and other landmark properties in Cheltenham on the council's behalf, particularly investments which would sustain and grow the Trust's income. The most recent agreed expenditure against this budget was £244,390 on refurbished and replacement gym equipment at Leisure@ which is expected to start raising extra revenue in the new year. The majority of this budget has now been committed and does not include a specific item for track renewal or replacement which would now significantly exceed the available budgeted funds.

The council's risk register has already identified that if the council does not have a long term vision and investment plan in place for its leisure and culture venues then significant unplanned maintenance, repairs & investment may be required to keep the venues running and it may undermine the ability of the Trust (or any future provider) to run leisure and culture services. In mitigation of this risk, in April this year, the cabinet agreed to move towards an options appraisal of future provision of both the stadium and the Leisure@ centre, including indicative capital costs. This is a potential major project for the council and I am currently finalising the brief for this options appraisal with officers. I have asked them to make sure it includes consultation with key stakeholders including Cheltenham & County Harriers and that it aims to build a business case for investment that will take both facilities up to a level that can attract bigger competitions. I hope to present the result of this options appraisal in the new year.

15. Question from Mr Crispian Webb to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing and Culture, Councillor Martin Horwood

Cheltenham and County Harriers pay approximately £48,000 per annum in hire fees for the Prince of Wales Stadium. The last time the track was resurfaced was some 20 years ago; tracks last around 10 to 15 years. Can you advise how much money has been set aside year on year to cover this known replacement cost?

Member response:

Maintenance and replacement costs are budgeted for year by year. The council's planned maintenance programme for 2024-2025 totals £598,950, and included £65,000 at Leisure@ to investigate water ingress to swimming pool drainage channels, replace heat pumps, carry out anti-corrosion work and install drainage to overcome flooding, £15,000 to restore stonework and install a kitchen fan at the art gallery & museum, £35,000 for various remedial works at the Town Hall and £65,000 for various replacements and repairs to plasterwork, stonework, the dome and skylights at the Pittville Pump Room but nothing for the Prince of Wales Stadium.

The proposed planned maintenance programme for 2025/26 includes an investment of £5,000 into the jumps area of the track.

In the light of the Harriers campaign, and other similar issues that have arisen this year, I have arranged to meet with senior council officers shortly to review this maintenance budget and how it is created, monitored and reviewed.

16. Question from Mr Richard Lawler to Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Victoria Atherstone

What is the Cabinet Member's view on using a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) to remove the 10-minute leeway that parking enforcement officers currently have to give to anti-social and illegal parking around schools in Cheltenham? This leniency undermines enforcement efforts, especially during peak school drop-off and pick-up times when even brief illegal parking can lead to significant congestion, obstructed visibility, and increased risks for pedestrians, particularly young students. A PSPO offers more robust control by allowing immediate enforcement without any obligatory grace period, and the legislative flexibility would enable enforcement officers to take swift, direct action to address hazardous parking practices, thereby reinforcing compliance and creating a stronger deterrent against anti-social behaviour. well-justified and highly effective measure in protecting the safety and welfare of students, school staff, and residents, enhancing traffic flow and promoting community well-being.

Member response:

Thank you for your question. Gloucestershire County Council has responsibility for highways management and the enforcement of on-street parking. Depending on signage, the 10-minute leeway you refer to does not apply on zigzag lines or double yellow lines close to schools so the county council enforcement officers are already able to enforce illegal parking without a PSPO being in place.

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