

# Council

23 March 2026

## Public Questions (8 total)

### 1. Question from Elliot Craddock to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling, Parks, Gardens, and Public Green Space, Councillor Paul Baker

What progress has been made in reopening the Swindon Road tip, since it was closed on January the 10th 2025, well over a year ago?

#### Cabinet Member response

Thank you for your question.

As you rightly point out Cheltenham Borough Council closed the Household Recycling Centre (HRC) in January 2025 because to comply with the new licensing regime of the Environment Agency we would have had to spend around £1m on improvements. Given the significant constraints of Local Government financing following 14 years of cuts imposed by the previous Conservative government and now extended for the next 3 years by the Labour government, this money was simply unavailable.

Notwithstanding the above you will appreciate that the HRC function falls under the remit of Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and not Cheltenham Borough Council. When the HRC was closed the then-conservative administration at GCC refused point blank to offer any support whatsoever to re-opening it, pointing out the 'nearby' facility they operate at Wingmoor Farm.

The good news, to a point, is that the new Liberal Democrat administration at GCC have been far more engaging with us about the future of the HRC. Numerous meetings and an exploratory site visit have been held, and we are now awaiting to hear back from them following their review of options at the Swindon Road depot.

Needless to say, whatever the outcome, the site still requires significant investment which will need to be funded by GCC but in our view there is no question that Cheltenham, as the largest urban centre in the county, must have its own HRC for the convenience of its residents and the expanding population.

In the meantime, Cheltenham Borough Council continues to expand the range of its kerbside recycling options which are soon to include tetra paks. In addition,

the trial scheme for the collection of flexible plastic bags and packaging collection is ready to be rolled out across the town.

**2. Question from Elliot Craddock to the Leader, Councillor Rowena Hay**

Before Christmas, Ed Davey wrote to the Equality and Human Rights Commission to complain that cancelling elections was against human rights. In January Rowena Hay confirmed the council was asking to postpone the local elections. Now that we know elections are going ahead anyway, who was wrong?

**Cabinet Member response**

The Government was wrong. It was their decision to postpone elections and also their decision to u-turn on that decision. Cheltenham Borough Council had all-out elections for the whole chamber in 2024. Our mandate is less than two years old and is a stronger mandate than almost all our district neighbours. While we maintain that holding elections is not the best use of taxpayers' money, and despite the mess the government has made of its decisions, we now look forward to holding elections in May.

**3. Question from Gill Hewlett to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing, Culture and Public Realm, Councillor Izaak Tailford**

What are Canada Life's plans for the former Cavendish House site, when will they begin, how long do they anticipate taking to completion, and what measures have the council taken to accelerate the process ? - the area is becoming increasingly derelict and without significant, and effective council intervention I cannot see how this will not deteriorate further.

**Cabinet Member response**

Thank you for your question Gill. Unfortunately, these questions are mostly a matter for Canada Life to answer. It is their building, and timelines on getting definitive plans for the future of the building are outside of the council's control.

However, we all know how important Cav House is to our town centre and local economy, particularly for the businesses in the immediate area on and around The Prom. So please rest assured we are doing all we can to encourage Canada Life to take action as swiftly as possible. You may have seen Cheltenham Borough Council has publicly called for Canada Life to progress its plans and to put forward positive plans for the building. As a company they promote their values of investing in and making a positive difference to communities, and this council will continue to hold them to account on this commitment and encourage Canada Life to deliver a successful future for this critical town centre site.

I am pleased to advise that Canada Life has recently engaged with the council in its role as local planning authority on pre application of a revised scheme. I cannot advise any further at this point but actively encourage Canada Life to bring forward a positive planning application for the site at the earliest opportunity.

#### **4. Question from Gill Hewlett to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing, Culture and Public Realm, Councillor Izaak Tailford**

There are significant amounts of unwanted graffiti around the town, a notable example being the end of the lower high street, by the railway bridge and the Honeybourne Gate complex. Knowing the highly possible links of graffiti to gang culture, how much have the council allocated in the budget to clear up graffiti in the town, and what are the timescales for tackling it?

#### **Cabinet Member response**

Thank you for your question, it is something that I, and my cabinet colleagues, feel strongly about. Following years of budget cuts from central government, local authorities across the country, including Cheltenham, are doing their best to fund the cost of removing increasing amounts of graffiti in our borough. We rely on support from the police to catch the perpetrators, but police resources are also stretched, and they have to prioritise their resources on more serious crimes.

The council is responsible for removing graffiti on public buildings. However, on non-public buildings, our policy states that offensive graffiti should be removed by the property owner within 14 days of receiving formal notice from the authority requesting its removal; failure to do so may result in a Community Protection Notice (CPN) being issued to the property or Premises/Business owner. Other non-offensive graffiti should be removed within 28 days.

The council's environmental services partner, Ubico, seeks to remove graffiti from public buildings within 10 days of receiving a request to do so. Generally, offensive graffiti is removed within one working day where possible.

In parts of Cheltenham town centre, there has also been a very successful pilot scheme with the Cheltenham BID, collaborating with the Council and the Police, for graffiti removal on business premises within the BID area. This has recently entered its second phase, though I note it does not cover the area of lower high street mentioned in your question.

Also, on the Honeybourne Line, we currently have an active project brief live for targeted public art works there – which could include covering up of graffiti. I look forward to updating you more as this progresses.

Annually the council spends around £1.7 million on street cleansing and it is within this budget that graffiti removal is funded, along with litter picking, litter bin emptying, fly tip removal, mechanical sweeping of pavements and roads, and jet washing pavements. The council does not currently separate out the cost of graffiti removal.

If you spot any graffiti in Cheltenham, please do report it to us so it can be logged and action can be requested from the responsible party.

**5. Question from Tim Harman to the Leader, Councillor Rowena Hay**

Can you please update me on the position with regard to the possible sale of Gloucestershire Airport?

**Cabinet Member response**

Thank you for the question. Cheltenham Borough Council, alongside joint shareholder Gloucester City Council, have been unable to reach agreement with Horizon Aero Group (HAG). The councils are disappointed that we were unable to accept the terms put forward by HAG.

It is important that the shareholding councils will now maintain close contact with operators, tenants and stakeholders to explore alternative options.

As Leader, I understand that and appreciate that this will be a cause for concern for all those working at the airport and for business owners who operate from there.

I want to assure you that we are committed to engaging with all parties so that we can reach a positive outcome for the future of the airport.

**6. Question from Tim Harman to the Leader, Councillor Rowena Hay**

Can you please update me on the possible sale of the Municipal Offices?

**Cabinet Member response**

The council has entered into an exclusivity agreement for the sale of the Municipal Offices. The preferred bid proposes to re-develop the building into a hotel, spa and banqueting/conferencing destination.

The exclusivity agreement continues to progress and we will provide further updates when a more definitive timetable for the sale is known.

**7. Question from Rich Newman to Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins**

Why did no borough councillor call in to committee The Bell Inn's planning proposal? That could have saved it.

**Cabinet Member response**

Thank you for your question, I assume that you are referring to planning application ref. 25/01196/FUL which was granted in October 2025. The approved scheme involves the conversion of the upper floors of the Bell Inn and part of the ground floor to three flats, with the remainder of the ground floor used for commercial purposes.

The application was determined under delegated powers; it was not called to the Planning Committee. Members themselves are best placed to set out why they did not call the application to committee. It is not appropriate for me to put words in members' mouths, but it is the case that planning applications may only be called to committee if there are legitimate material planning reasons for doing so and when it is in the public interest (this is set out in our adopted Scheme of Delegation); in this case it can only be assumed that members felt that no material planning reasons were present and that there was no necessity, in public interest terms, for the application to be debated and determined by the committee.

**8. Question from Rich Newman to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries**

How much of the council's budget goes towards paying pensions of previous employees?

**Cabinet Member response**

The Council is a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme with the Gloucestershire Pension Fund that is administered by Gloucestershire County Council on behalf of member bodies.

The Fund collects employer and employee pension contributions in relation to active employees of relevant organisations and meets the cost of pension benefits due to current and former employees including those within Cheltenham Borough Council. The pension scheme is a defined benefit scheme and has to demonstrate it can be fully funded through triennial reviews, the latest of which was completed during 2025.

Following this actuarial review, the council has set a budget for the financial year 2026/27 to pay £2,319,870 for primary pension contributions and £290,000 for secondary contributions. These secondary contributions cover off the liabilities for past service. In total, £2,609,870 of the council's 2026/27 budget is allocated to pension-related costs.

The contribution rate is equivalent to a 17.1% which is a significant reduction on the prior period due to the improved overall financial position of the pension fund mainly due to stronger future investment returns.

# Council

23 March 2026

## Member Questions

### 1. Question from Councillor Cathal Lynch to Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins

There is a strong local interest in the nature of the frontage at the 131 restaurant/bar on the Promenade. Given how long the current structures have been present, can we have some clarity on if and why there have been any delays in changes being made as previously directed by the council?

#### Member response:

Thank you for your question.

The marquee structures currently situated forward of 125-133 Promenade are unauthorised and do not have the benefit of planning permission. An Enforcement Notice requiring these unauthorised structures to be removed, was served on the property owner in January 2024. The legislation is such that when an appeal is lodged against an Enforcement Notice, the Enforcement Notice is suspended until such time that the appeal has been determined.

In this case, the property owner lodged an appeal with the Planning Inspectorate shortly after receipt of the Enforcement Notice (February 2024); the Notice is therefore currently suspended, and this will remain the case until the Planning Inspectorate determine the appeal. The Planning Inspectorate has now been dealing with this appeal for over two years, and to-date has declined to provide a meaningful update.

Notwithstanding the live appeal, the property owner may remove the marquees at any time and replace them with the permanent structures which were granted planning permission in March 2025, but to-date has not done so. The council has no power to force the property owner to remove the marquees while the Enforcement Notice is suspended by the appeal proceedings.

### 2. Question from Councillor David Willingham to Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins

Planning application forms contain the following declaration which must be accepted by the applicant or agent: "*I/We confirm that, to the best of my/our knowledge, any facts stated are true and accurate and any opinions given are*

*the genuine opinions of the person(s) giving them.*" Could the cabinet member for planning please advise how many cases in the previous and current municipal year have misstatements been identified and reported by a) officers, b) councillors, and c) others, and how many applicants or agents have suffered any sanctions or consequences for making untrue or knowingly inaccurate statements on planning applications (including details if the matters are not *sub judice*)?

**Member response:**

Thank you for your question.

The planning department does not record this data in a numerical format and so the number/frequency of individual circumstances of inaccurate information within planning submissions cannot be reported.

The submission of inaccurate information is uncommon and when it does occur it is often because of a genuine error or misunderstanding. The correct and reasonable approach when receiving inaccurate information is to seek its withdrawal and/or correction and this is what our Planning Officers do. If the revised corrected information is material, re-consultation of neighbours etc. will usually follow. No further sanctions are necessary.

**3. Question from Councillor David Willingham to Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services, Councillor Flo Clucas**

The Cheltenham Borough Council Housing Voids Policy suggests the majority of properties are supplied unfurnished and without white goods such as a cooker, washing machine or fridge-freezer. Where a person or family being housed do not already have these items, the cost of new white goods is considerable, and options such as commercially renting them weekly or credit/borrowing are very expensive and depending on an individual's credit history may not even be available. Would the cabinet member for housing agree to explore how CBC Housing could assist tenants to acquire and pay for white goods as part of their agreement with CBC and help them avoid exorbitant weekly charges or debt interest and the financial risks those options can lead to?

**Member response**

Thank you for your question.

I'm pleased to be able to share that the Council already does a number of things to help our tenants who do not have white goods. For example, we have our Help2 scheme and we make referrals for grants to places such as the Barnwood trust and the Household Support Fund alongside using the Turn2us grant tool which identifies further charities and grants that our tenants may be eligible for.

In addition, our Empty Homes Team are really skilled at finding out upon viewing/sign up what the tenant may be missing and referring tenants to our benefit and money advice team so that they can look to see what help we can provide.

Last year we also ran a Home Starter pack scheme which provided those who were homeless and moving into our properties for the first time with a new home starter kit. It included items such bedding, towels, cutlery, crockery and either a microwave, slow cooker, or air fryer. The scheme was so successful that we have set aside enough budget within the 26/27 financial year to run it again this year.

Please be assured that we do absolutely everything we can to support our tenants.

#### **4. Question from Councillor Jan Foster to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries**

The sale of Gloucestershire Airport seems increasingly uncertain, yet earlier this month the leader of Gloucester City Council was reported as saying that “nothing has been worked out” with regard to a plan B, but options were available.

Have the councils started to work on a plan B yet and if so, what options are they considering?

#### **Member response**

Thank you for the question. Cheltenham Borough Council, alongside joint shareholder Gloucester City Council, have been unable to reach agreement with Horizon Aero Group (HAG). The councils are disappointed that we were unable to accept the terms put forward by HAG.

It is important that the shareholding councils maintain close contact with operators, tenants and stakeholders and will now explore alternative options.

As Leader, I understand and appreciate that this will be a cause for concern for all those working at the airport and for business owners who operate from there.

It would be premature to talk about alternative options until we have engaged further with the current Board and employees at the airport and had meaningful discussions with businesses and operators to listen to their views so we can draw up proposals for the way forward.

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