

Cabinet

Tuesday, 12th September, 2017
6.00 - 6.45 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Steve Jordan (Leader of the Council), Flo Clucas (Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles), Chris Coleman (Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment), Rowena Hay (Cabinet Member Finance), Peter Jeffries (Cabinet Member Housing), Andrew McKinlay (Cabinet Member Development and Safety) and Roger Whyborn (Cabinet Member Corporate Services)
Also in attendance:	Councillor Max Wilkinson and Councillor David Willingham

Minutes

- 1. APOLOGIES**
There were none.
- 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**
The minutes of the last meeting were approved and signed as a correct record.
- 4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

1 Question from Councillor Wilkinson to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay

In light of the review of taxi licensing in Cheltenham being discussed on tonight's agenda, and the ongoing Air Quality Management Area designation, has the borough council considered the possibility of improving air quality by encouraging more taxi operators to switch from polluting vehicles to electric vehicles?

Response from Cabinet Member

Yes we have put forward proposals to improve air quality by setting out policy guidelines for taxi and private hire operators to switch from polluting vehicles to high standard. The proposals have been published as part of appendix 2 of the report (https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s22821/2017_09_12_CAB_Review%20of%20Taxi%20Appendix%202.pdf). Cheltenham's AQMA is likely to be reviewed soon to reflect the fact that nitrogen dioxide levels are generally within limits, and to help focus resource and action where further improvements to AQ can be made.

2 Question from Councillor Wilkinson to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay

Following on from 1, have any studies been carried out aimed at investigating how the necessary recharging infrastructure could be provided to enable a shift to electric taxis?

Response from Cabinet Member

We have not carried out any investigations for electric taxi infrastructure and are not aware of any at GCC for the Cheltenham area.

In a supplementary question Councillor Wilkinson asked whether the Cabinet Member would consider making representations to Gloucestershire County Council with regard to introducing more electric vehicle charging points in the town.

In response the Cabinet Member Development and Safety said that there were ongoing discussions with the County Council in the context of the transport infrastructure work in the town centre and looking at a sensible plan for the introduction of more charging points could be included in this dialogue.

3 Question from Councillor Wilkinson to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay

Does the council monitor whether the currently licensed taxis use the most harmful type of fuel, diesel, as well as the number of petrol and electric vehicles in use? If so, what proportion of the current taxi fleet is in each?

Response from Cabinet Member

Emission standards	Proportion of licensed fleet
Vehicles on Euro 3 emission standards*	4%
Vehicles on Euro 4 emission standards*	32%
Vehicles on Euro 5 emission standards*	55%
Vehicles on Euro 6 emission standards*	9%

* <https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/advice/know-how/euro-emissions-standards/>

In a supplementary question Councillor Wilkinson stated that the emissions standards did not mention electric vehicles at all and in the future the council should seek to find out about any low emission vehicles. He urged the council to work with representatives of the taxi trade when vehicles expired/due to be replaced in terms of encouraging them to adopt electric vehicles instead. In response the Cabinet Member Development and Safety explained that it was a question of practicality. He referred to the proposed policy change in the consultation which was to phase out older vehicles so to get all petrol vehicles to at least Euro 5 standard by 2020 and to get all diesel vehicles to Euro 6 standard by 2020. He highlighted that at the current time there was a limited supply of electric vehicles and these were expensive. As more electric vehicles became available, the policies would reflect this as an option.

5. REVIEW OF TAXI LICENSING POLICY

The Cabinet Member Development and Safety introduced the report and explained that the Council's current Licensing policy, guidance and conditions for private hire and taxis (taxi policy) was adopted in July 2014. He stated that whilst there was no statutory requirement to undertake a review of the taxi policy, there was a commitment set out in the policy to do so at least once every three years to ensure the policy remained up to date and relevant.

The Cabinet Member explained that to facilitate the review and better engage with key stakeholders a taxi policy review working group was set up by the Licensing Committee in April this year. Representatives from the trade, council officers and Councillors sat on the working group

He highlighted that the key points of the proposed policy changes were as follows :

- Introduction of a "three strikes policy" to enable the council to be more effective in its ability to deal with lower level types of complaints and misdemeanours not captured by the "relevance of convictions policy"
- Amendments to the knowledge test to include the introduction of a learning day to cover safeguarding, equalities training and awareness, and taxi and private hire rules
- Working hours-to set out a reasonable expectation on working hours for licence holders, implementing a mechanism whereby licence holders may need to keep a record of their working hours and to submit these records to the council
- Vehicle Standards-phase out older vehicles so as to get all petrol vehicles to at least Euro 5 standard by 2020 and get all diesel vehicles to Euro 6 standard by 2020
- Fitness standards-apply higher fitness standards for licensed vehicles by limiting new permitted wheelchair accessible vehicles to those that are side-loading only. Rear loading vehicles currently on the public hire fleet will be gradually phased out when these vehicles are replaced

In response to comments made by Cabinet with regard to the "three strikes" rule the Cabinet Member explained that the collection of three offences were not captured by the "Relevance of convictions" policy but could be serious enough to be acted on in terms of being subject to an automatic review of their licence. He agreed that some of the infractions should be given a higher weighting than others. With regard to a question on working hours the Cabinet Member explained that government guidance was loose but the council should be able to tackle abuse of the system. He stressed that this was a consultation exercise and the most important objective was to protect the public. The current system was being undermined by double strike offences or the amount of hours worked. Members discussed the obligatory use of a tacograph such as that used by hgv drivers to address the situation. The Cabinet Member informed that Government felt that a similar requirement placed on taxi drivers would be deemed unreasonable. However, he felt that if this was suggested during the consultation exercise then it could be considered further. In response to a comment on taxi drivers coming in to the borough for business he highlighted that the rules which applied to licensing taxis in Cheltenham only applied to Cheltenham and the

council had no powers to prevent outsiders touting inside the borough as they were licensed by other authorities.

RESOLVED THAT

the proposed policy changes as outlined in Appendix 2, 3 and 4 of this report be approved for consultation.

6. POWERS TO ACCOMMODATE ROUGH SLEEPERS

The Cabinet Member Housing introduced the report and explained that nationally rough sleeping had increased by an estimated 134% since 2010. Over the past two years there had also been a significant rise in rough sleeping in Cheltenham. He referred to the introduction of the Solace initiative between the police and the council to tackle anti-social behaviour which supported individuals to take responsibility for their actions, encouraging them to engage with a range of support services that were available whilst challenging those who did not. The purpose of this report was to seek approval to extend the support options further by focussing on a particular group of rough sleepers for whom the current range of accommodation options were relatively restricted due to the fact that they had little or no support needs so did not satisfy one of the key tests. The Cabinet Member highlighted the risk that if this group failed to secure alternative accommodation quickly then they may slip in a downward spiral of increasing support needs. Further to conversations with the Assertive Outreach Services and Cheltenham Borough Homes the council could expect to assist approximately 4-6 rough sleepers with little or no support needs in any given year. However, given that these are only estimates of need, it was appropriate to pilot this initiative for a period of six months in order to fully consider any unanticipated impacts arising as a result of the council's decision to use its discretionary power.

Members welcomed the report and appreciated the ongoing work to support rough sleepers in the town.

RESOLVED THAT

1. the council's use of its discretionary power under section 192 of the Housing Act 1996 be endorsed to secure accommodation for rough sleepers on the terms proposed within the body of this report, initially as a pilot for six months, commencing Monday 2nd October.
2. **It be noted that the Cabinet Member Housing will be delegated authority by the Leader to approve the continuation (or otherwise) of the council's use of this discretionary power, following the review of this pilot towards the end of the six month period.**

7. BUSINESS RATES REVALUATION RELIEFS

The Cabinet Member Finance introduced the report which sought approval to award three separate relief schemes to help business ratepayers facing large increases in bills as the result of the 2017 revaluation of business premises using discretionary powers introduced by the Localism Act.

She explained that this represented one off funding which could not be transferred and it was important that the council supported as many local businesses as possible. She reported that extensive modelling had been undertaken to capture as many small businesses as possible within Cheltenham. The core principles of the scheme were set out in paragraph 2 and in full at appendix 2. She explained that the reliefs were a temporary measure over 3 years and were not transferrable between years. Cheltenham had been allocated £271k and some 1200 ratepayers already paid nothing due to receiving 100 % small business rate relief.

The Cabinet Member said that the scheme would capture more than 300 businesses totalling some £220k and there would be a contingency kept for any that had not been identified in the modelling as set out in paragraph 2.8. She was particularly pleased to be proposing in the local scheme that any business occupying no more than two properties in Cheltenham who met the criteria, relief would be available on both properties. The level of relief was set at a 3 % increase or £50 whichever was greater and the business would get 50 % of any increase.

Finally, the Cabinet Member thanked the Head of Revenues and Benefits for her contribution in maximising the value for as many businesses in the town as possible.

RESOLVED THAT

- 1. a local discretionary revaluation support scheme for 2017/18 as set out in appendix 2 be approved**
- 2. the relief scheme for pubs to be awarded in accordance with the detailed guidance in appendix 3 be approved**
- 3. the Supporting Small Businesses relief scheme to be awarded in line with the detailed guidance in appendix 3 be approved**
- 4. Due to the volume of cases decisions relating to the application of these reliefs be delegated to the Head of Revenues and Benefits and officers in the Business Rates team. In the case of a dispute a reconsideration is to be made by the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance**

8. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles informed Members that the Chief Executive had recently taken a decision regarding grant arrangements for improvements to Leisure@.

The Cabinet Member Housing reported that CBH were undertaking a series of consultation events in the west of the town on their vision for west Cheltenham.

The Cabinet Member Finance referred to the commitment by the council of £1 million to the CCLA Property fund. She also paid tribute to the successful hosting of the Tour of Britain.

The Leader also referred to the Tour of Britain the previous weekend and thanked all those who had been involved, in particular the Cabinet Member Finance. A cost benefit analysis would be undertaken on the event and it was hoped that a Cheltenham Festival of Cycling be continued into the future.

The Leader referred to this week's meeting of Overview and Scrutiny which had raised the issue of deprivation in the town and how successful the measures in place have been to tackle it. Officers would be requested to analyse the statistics on progress being made and feedback to the committee. He also had thanked O&S for the report of the Street People Scrutiny Task Group and confirmed to scrutiny members that the process for dealing with the recommendations was already being acted upon.

The Leader updated Members on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee which had confirmed that it would create a Strategic Planning Officer post whose role would be to standardise the database and evidence base and coordinate communications. It was proposed that the County Council would fund this post 50% with the districts and the LEP each contributing £5k. A formal decision would be taken at the November meeting of the committee. He informed that as the council's representative on this body if he was required to take a decision on this he would publish it in advance of the meeting to facilitate scrutiny. The actual decision of the Joint Committee would be subject to scrutiny by the countywide scrutiny committee.

The Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment reported that the launch of the new improved recycling service would take place on 16 October. Residents were understanding the message and officers would continue their conversation with the press. He also reported that the new recycling vehicles had arrived which had received good press coverage.

The Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment informed Members that a successful gate review process had taken place the previous day on the Crematorium project. Following legal advice regarding process, this allowed the Head of Property and Asset Management to accept a revised offer from the contractor Willmott Dixon to proceed with the construction phase for the new crematorium and associated access roads. He informed that officers were finalising the supporting documentation and it was expected that a decision would be finalised and published this week. The revised contract sum following the tender of work packages is within the originally agreed programme budget and the scheme remained on track to deliver the benefits originally set out. Those risks which remained with the Council had been mitigated as far as practicable at this stage of the process.

9. CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST MEETING

Leader	Allocation of community pride grants and community building grants
Leader	Ubico-amendment to governance
Leader	Ubico- Vehicle maintenance contract
Leader	Set up of Publica (Support Ltd)
Cabinet Member Housing	County rough sleeper impact bond project - inter authority agreement
Cabinet Member Finance	Appointment of NKS Contracts (Central) Ltd- lighting/electrical infrastructure CBH communal areas
Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment	Recycling Material Reprocessing Contract- Textiles and Shoes

Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment	Recycling Material Reprocessing Contract- Loose Wood Material
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Chairman