

Council

Monday, 17th February, 2020
2.30 - 6.55 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Roger Whyborn (Chair), Victoria Atherstone, Matt Babbage, Paul Baker, Dilys Barrell, Angie Boyes, Nigel Britter, Jonny Brownstein, Flo Clucas, Chris Coleman, Mike Collins, Stephen Cooke, Iain Dobie, Bernard Fisher, Wendy Flynn, Tim Harman, Steve Harvey, Rowena Hay, Alex Hegenbarth, Karl Hobley, Peter Jeffries, Steve Jordan, Paul McCloskey, Andrew McKinlay, Tony Oliver, Dennis Parsons, John Payne, Louis Savage, Diggory Seacome, Malcolm Stennett, Klara Sudbury, Simon Wheeler, Max Wilkinson, Suzanne Williams and David Willingham

Minutes

- 1. APOLOGIES**
Apologies were received from Cllrs. Barnes, Holliday, Horwood, Mason and Stafford.
- 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
Cllr. Jordan declared an interest in agenda item 11 as a member of the Business Improvement District board, Cllr. Sudbury declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in the budgetary items as a county councillor, and Cllr. Williams declared an interest in the same items as a Board Member of Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH).
- 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**
The minutes of the meeting on 16th December 2019 were approved and signed as a correct record.
- 4. COMMUNICATIONS BY THE MAYOR**
The Mayor spoke about a number of recent events, including Holocaust Memorial Day and the No Child Left Behind awards, praising those involved.
- 5. COMMUNICATIONS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**
The Leader of the Council expressed his sympathy to Cllr. Stafford, who recently suffered a personal bereavement and is expected to take a break for several months as a result.
He concurred with the Mayor's praise of the No Child Left Behind awards, and noted that he was pleased to see the return of Light Up Cheltenham, which is likely to be very popular during the half-term week.
- 6. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS**
There were none.

7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

1.	Question from Amber Astron Christo to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman
	<p>Why does the Council continue to fail to sweep up the leaves in the roads throughout Cheltenham?</p> <p>If you do not sweep up the leaves, they are rapidly reduced to silt in wet weather, which sits as deep mud on the roadsides/pavements and then gets washed into the drains, causing flooding in the roads and further afield as the silt moves into the Chelt and the river system; then, in dry weather, the micro-particles become airborne and create breathing problems when inhaled.</p> <p>Why bother with slogans like ‘Clean & Green’ while you are failing the people of Cheltenham at the most basic level?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>I do not share your view that the Council is failing the people of Cheltenham. Cheltenham is proud of the amount of trees it has in the town and we are actively encouraging the planting of more trees as part of a response to the climate emergency. The many trees we have in the town in streets, parks and open spaces do however mean that a lot of leaves fall on the ground, not just during the Autumn period.</p> <p>Ubico, on behalf of the Council, undertakes road sweeping operations using two 15T mechanical road sweepers throughout the borough all year round, irrespective of the leaf fall period. In addition to the mechanical road sweeping, teams of operatives manually clear leaves from pavements, grass verges, open spaces and roads. A planned maintenance programme, including deep cleans, takes place each year which includes leaf clearance and digging out detritus from gullies. For information, the December 2019 deep clean programme covered the following roads:</p> <p>9 Dec: Edward St, Brandon Place, Tryers Road, Suffolk St</p> <p>10 Dec: Painswick Road (Suffolk Road - Grafton Road)</p> <p>11 Dec: Painswick Road (Grafton Road - Shurdington Road)</p> <p>12 Dec: Grafton Road</p> <p>13 Dec: St Philips Street, Norwood Road, Shurdington Rd (Bath Rd –Moorend Pk Rd)</p> <p>16 Dec: Park Place</p> <p>17 Dec: Gratton Road</p> <p>18 Dec: Ashford Road</p> <p>19 Dec: Andover Road & Andover Street</p> <p>24 Dec: Princes St & Sydenham Road North</p> <p>To further improve the quality of street cleansing the Council, working in partnership with Ubico, is actively seeking better joined up working arrangements with</p>

	Gloucestershire County Council Highways.
	Supplementary Question
	The questioner did not take the response as read.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	I do not accept the premise of the question. There is a continuous process of cleaning up leaves, as outlined in the original answer.
2.	Question from Amber Astron Christo to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>a) Do you wish to install Uber in Cheltenham, seeing as it was recently exposed in London as failing to do security checks on all their drivers, while destroying the livelihoods of local cabbies?</p> <p>b) By insisting on larger wheelchair access vehicles only, why are you are prioritising access to a minority of wheelchair-using passengers over the majority, who either have no wish to use a large van-like vehicle to travel from town, or passengers who have back/knee problems or other disabilities, which make accessing these higher vehicles painful and difficult?</p> <p>c) Why can't you come up with a formula to have a reasonable number of cabs on the ranks accessible for wheelchair users (perhaps they could have their own area on the rank), rather than insisting on all of the cabs being of this type?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>a)Uber is able to operate in Cheltenham without being licensed to operate here through a combination of deregulation of licensing laws and weak primary legislation dating back to 1847.</p> <p>Taxi and private hire licensing law has become very complex but in very simple terms, as long as the Uber vehicle and driver is licensed by the same authority as the Uber operating licence, there is a “right to roam”. This means that, in this case, Uber cars can roam anywhere and accept bookings provided that the journey is properly booked in advance (via the phone app) and the journey is recorded against the operating licence associated with the Uber vehicle being hailed.</p> <p>Therefore, an Uber car licensed, for example, by Bath and North East Somerset Council can accept bookings in Cheltenham if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The driver and vehicle are also licensed by Bath and North East Somerset Council; and • The hailing is made via the Uber phone app (and therefore not plying for hire); and • The booking is recorded against the Uber operating licence issued by Bath and North East Somerset Council (and therefore dispatched by Uber Bath). <p>Ms Astron Christo may be interested to read a fuller explanation of this in the May edition of the Trade Times: https://mailchi.mp/2e47c96bf93a/trade-times-may-</p>

	<p>19?e=[UNIQID]</p> <p>Provided that Uber cars comply with the rules outlined above, this council is powerless to act. Where Uber cars do not comply with the rules, the council can act and has, for example see: https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/news/article/1836/london_uber_driver_prosecuted_for_illegally_plying_for_hire_in_cheltenham https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/news/article/2368/drivers_prosecuted_for_illegally_plying_for_hire</p> <p>b) The council’s decision to adopt a policy requiring public hire vehicles to be wheelchair accessible was thoroughly consulted on and scrutinised. The council is of the view that it is important that the travelling public have equal access to services, recognising that disability comes in a variety of forms.</p> <p>Members of the public who may struggle with access to licensed vehicles due to the policy change can continue to use saloon type vehicles through the private hire trade.</p> <p>c) Officers considered a variety of ways to implement a wheelchair accessible policy. However, there was no fair way of doing so other than applying the policy to the whole trade. There was recognition that the policy will incur additional costs on the public hire trade and there was no approach that would have made it fair for some licensed vehicles to have incurred the costs and for others not.</p> <p>There is no legislative approach or statutory guidance on an approach to implement a partial wheelchair accessible policy that Members could rely on to provide some form of legitimate basis.</p> <p>The overriding concern for Members remained equal access to services however and based on this, Members took the view that a full fleet of wheelchair accessible vehicles is appropriate.</p>
	<p>Supplementary Question</p>
	<p>The questioner did not take the response as read.</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>I do not accept the assertion that having wheelchair-accessible vehicles discriminates against non-disabled people. Some people have very specific requirements which are not met by the majority of vehicles and have to make specific arrangements. It is difficult to hire private hire vehicles who can offer these specific arrangements, and often not possible while standing at a taxi rank.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Question from James Lodge to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan</p>
	<p>Within the West Cheltenham Strategic Master Plan, SPD dated December 2019, there are references to the need for high density developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 12, objective E • Page 29, B4 ‘and a key driver to increase densities’ • There are other areas within the document that seem at odds with the above statements:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 34, C2 relating to the existing topography and strategic landscape character, with consideration given to long views to the Cotswolds and Hayden Hill. • Pages 51 and 53 mentions 2 recent developments as being ‘examples of cutting edge development’. Neither of these have building elevations anywhere near those proposed within this document i.e. page 58 states ‘up to 6 storeys’ <p>Would you please provide the financial calculations that identify the need for high density buildings, especially as relating to buildings of 3 storeys and above?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>High density does not necessarily mean 3+ storey buildings, although both high density and higher than traditional (2 storey) buildings are referenced in the SPD.</p> <p>The reasons for considering high density and/or higher (vertically) than traditional 2 storey development include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Efficient use of land (i.e. high density development accommodates more activity on a fixed space than lower density development) - Creating a sufficient population in a given area to support service and facility provision - To enhance economic productivity <p>The eventual densities and heights across the site will be determined through the planning application process. This will be a balance between meeting the final SPD’s aspirations and identified constraints, understanding the contributions made through the planning application consultation process and the financial implications of developing high density, high (vertically) buildings, amongst other things.</p>
4.	Question from James Lodge to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>Parking</p> <p>Also relating to the Cheltenham Strategic Master Plan, SPD dated December 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 47, item D7 mentions that ‘large expanses of surface parking will not be permitted’ <p>Will this also be applied to current GCHQ parking, so that the existing surface parking area would be replaced by a multi storey facility, which is urgently needed to alleviate the excessive and extensive on-street parking all around this facility?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The planning system (for example through Supplementary Planning Document) cannot require existing operations to make physical changes in the way implied through the question. Parking provision at GCHQ is the responsibility of GCHQ, although the Council has been working with them and Gloucestershire County Council as Highways Authority to minimise the impact of commuter parking in the area.</p>
5.	Question from Trudie Wheat to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan

	On page 18 of the West Cheltenham Strategic Master Plan, SPD dated December 2019 item 3.2.3 mentions solar/wind potential. If wind turbines are being considered, what would be the maximum height from ground level and what would be the maximum blade length?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The Draft SPD is seeking to explore and establish principles, in this case for renewable/green energy sources. No turbines are identified at this stage, but they may form part of the energy solution for a future scheme. Should turbines be considered appropriate as part of the energy strategy for detailed proposals, they would be the subject of a planning application which would specify size/height/location etc.
6.	Question from Maureen Dolan to the Leader of the Council, Steve Jordan
	What plans, if any, are being made for Fiddlers Green Lane? My concerns (which I share with many others) are firstly the volume of traffic and the weight of the vehicles using the lane, i.e. double loaded car transporters, coaches and 18 ton lorries, to name but a few.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough Councils are currently consulting on the 'Cyber Central Garden Community West Cheltenham Strategic Masterplan Draft Supplementary Planning Document' https://cybercentral.commonplace.is/schemes/proposals/view-the-full-supplementary-planning-document-spd-what-happens-next/details . This consultation document contains the emerging strategic masterplan (not final plans) for the land west of Fiddlers Green Lane. I would encourage anyone with views to feed them in to the consultation which closes on 17th February.
7.	Question from Maureen Dolan to the Leader of the Council, Steve Jordan
	Can Fiddlers Green Lane be made to only allow cars to use it? Taking into account this would have to be after the turning into Meadow Close up to Telstar Road. I would like to see traffic calming in the form of narrowing of the lane as in chicanes. These would slow down the traffic and reduce parking.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	It is too early to determine exactly what, if any, changes need to be made to the road network in West Cheltenham to accommodate proposed growth at West Cheltenham (Cyber Central). This will be done through the planning application process.
	Supplementary Question
	The questioner was not present and so no supplementary question was asked.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The Leader of the Council added that the closing date for the consultation referred to in the question was the day of this meeting, Monday 17 th February.

8.	Question from the Charmian Sheppard, Hesters Way Neighbourhood Plan Forum, to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>Seven and a half thousand employees and 3000 dwellings will create a massive increase in traffic, despite noble schemes for improving green alternatives to coax people away from the car. The Hester's Way Neighbourhood Plan Forum and residents neighbouring the new Cyber Central Garden Community area are concerned about the increase in traffic along Fiddlers Green Lane and nearby roads that this development will bring and the impact on their quality of life. The Government's Garden Communities Prospectus does make reference to the need "to build places people are happy to call home... places that lift our spirits whether we live in them or merely pass through."</p> <p>The SPD "Cyber Central Garden Community" not only recognises the importance of upgrading Junction 10 when it comes to the new development and traffic management, it seems to hinge on it.</p> <p>It is understood that if Junction 10 is not upgraded, other road infrastructure improvements will have to take place at a cost to developers of the site. This would reduce the funds available for high quality environmental sustainability, may mean less affordable homes and would almost certainly impact on the community offer. It would undermine the entire SPD and what it seeks to achieve, certainly in the context of a Garden Community.</p> <p>Will the Leader commit to ensuring a new SPD is drawn up for the site should Junction 10 upgrading not happen or the work be planned so far into the future that the initial phases of the development would be completed before the Junction upgrade?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Should M5 Junction 10 not be upgraded, it is possible/likely that the SPD would need to be revised to take into account alternatives. We are expecting an announcement on Junction 10 as part of Governments Spring Budget announcements in March 2020, before we plan to present the SPD to Full Council in April 2020.</p> <p>If Junction 10 is approved but the works are far into the future, it may be that controls would be imposed to limit development until such a time that works to deliver an all movement junction had been completed.</p>

8. MEMBER QUESTIONS

1.	Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>Members will doubtless welcome the shrinking of the town's air quality management area - this is a notable success in improving the air quality experienced by local residents. However, the legislation governing AQMAs is useful but blunt. It does not take into account spikes in pollution at certain times of day - for example school pickup and drop-off, when the lungs of vulnerable children are subjected to harmful vehicle pollution at the school gate. In answer to a previous question at council, the cabinet member suggested he was open to discussions on using council equipment to monitor air quality outside schools. This possibility was again acknowledged by Gareth Jones, Senior Environmental Health</p>

	Officer, at January's O&S meeting. Now we have spare monitoring equipment due to the redrawing of the AQMA, will the redeployment of monitoring equipment outside schools be part of our future activities?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The Air Quality legislation does include short-term exposure limits for some pollutants. Of note, is the short-term limit for NO₂, which is set at 200ug/m³ and can be exceeded up to 18 times per year. This limit is not exceeded at any measurement location in Cheltenham and research has shown that such levels would coincide with an annual mean level in excess of 60ug/m³, which is also not breached in any part of the town. Further details are contained in the annual reports submitted to DEFRA, which are available on our website.</p> <p>We don't have 'spare' monitoring equipment as a result of the changes to the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). All existing equipment will be re-deployed as necessary to monitor sites in and around the new AQMA, or at other areas of concern. One of these sites is immediately outside a primary school.</p> <p>The Environmental Protection team is in the early stages of working with Gloucestershire County Council to develop a project to work more closely with local schools on local air quality. This will also support the request from CBC Overview and Scrutiny Committee to work with schools to improve air quality. There are likely to be significant costs associated with the proposed project, particularly if further monitoring equipment is required, along with staff resources to help deliver successful outcomes; this will therefore require a project proposal and business case being produced for CBC's approval and funding consideration.</p>
	Supplementary Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Thank you for clarifying that although the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is shrinking, air quality monitoring is not stopping in that part of town. On the question of schools, it is important to be able to make the case for intervention against wasteful journeys, which are bad for the environment and public health. Will the council work with schools and pressure the county council to do more about this?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Yes, we will do so, since schools are the responsibility of the county council rather than the borough council. Air quality monitoring must be consistent rather than short-term, outside schools in particular – the data gathered is not as valuable if it only offers a 'snapshot' of the situation, rather than being able to identify long-term trends. The data produced must be fully developed and continuous.
2.	Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles, Councillor Flo Clucas

	<p>Cold War Steve is making his International Exhibition of The People artwork freely available to anyone who wishes to host it. This is an opportunity to fill an empty shopping unit, make use of a derelict building, or display the work in a new and unusual location. Cheltenham BID has agreed to make initial enquiries. Will the council support the initiative to boost local tourism and will the cabinet member commit to working with other organisations, such as the Cheltenham Trust, to make this a reality?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>The Cabinet Member is happy to spread the word about the availability of this free to download exhibition, but as there will still be costs associated with printing, mounting and displaying the 23 images, plus decisions about the suitability of some of the images for family consumption, she will leave it to others to determine whether this would be viable.</p> <p>For more information:</p> <p>https://www.coldwarsteve.com/2020/01/28/you-me-cold-war-steve-the-international-exhibition-of-the-people/</p>
	<p>Supplementary Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles, Councillor Flo Clucas</p>
	<p>Thank you for your answer. I am pleased to see that there are background discussions going on. Projects like this are an opportunity to bring more volunteers into the Trust and involve people in civic life. Is the council working with the Trust and BID in resourcing any possible exhibitions?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>I am willing to look into how the council can best do this. Once a strategy is identified, then the key aims can be pursued.</p>
	<p>3. Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan</p>
	<p>The landlords of 17 empty shops in Cheltenham have not bothered to reply to local requests for their engagement in ensuring our town centre thrives. Many local people will be disturbed by this news and will want these absentee, unaccountable property owners to be held to account. Unrealistic rents are undoubtedly a problem in finding future tenants, as is the government's steadfast refusal to abolish the failed business rates system. Cheltenham is definitely doing better than comparable destinations, but the leader rightly recognised in a recent radio interview that we must not be complacent. What representations is the leader making to local retail property landlords and the government to ensure we are doing all we can to make the right case to those in positions of power, including influencing harmful national policies?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>

	<p>As a Council we have always aimed to invest in the town to make it an attractive place to live, work or visit. The issue of engaging property owners remains a challenge. Cheltenham has perhaps been more fortunate than other towns due to the fact that it has both a BID and a Development Task Force; both of which have delivered significant transformation through active dialogue with property investors and end users.</p> <p>Both agencies have held round table discussions with local and national property companies and commercial agents to explore what can be achieved with existing portfolios, given the challenges being faced by retailers.</p> <p>Some of these bear fruit as in the case of Metro bank and their landlord; the change of use to the upper floors of the Radley retail unit, and the window treatment at the former Austin Reed store, but equally it is difficult to successfully access other players.</p> <p>In addition to supporting the work of the BID and Task Force, I have written separately to the owners and occupiers of Cavendish House given the importance of this site.</p> <p>This O&S committee have equally asked for an update on the performance of the town for their meeting on 24th February 2020.</p> <p>In October last year an all-party group of MPs demanded change to business rates system by spring 2020. There remains a plea from the Association of Town Centre Managers and other commercial groups. The Retail Gazette of 13/02/20 notes that more than 50 major retailers have written to the Chancellor demanding business rates overhaul in the Budget next month. I am also writing to the new Chancellor to encourage urgent reform to business rates.</p>
4.	<p>Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member Housing, Councillor Peter Jeffries</p>
	<p>The news that our £100million investment in affordable houses for Cheltenham people has been signed off will be welcomed locally. Communicating this news to the wider public is a key goal for the council. Can we be assured that local ward members whose areas will benefit from investment will be involved with these schemes, so members can spread the good news? And will sites funded by the scheme be branded accordingly before and during construction?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>Communicating the significance of this council's £100m investment in providing high quality homes and thriving communities for families and young people is a high priority for me, and this Liberal Democrat administration. As such we will be promoting this investment as a significant vote of confidence, investing in Cheltenham's future.</p> <p>We will do this via a range of mechanisms. This will include, as referenced in your question, site specific promotion activities, both before,</p>

	<p>during and upon completion of construction.</p> <p>CBC and CBH communication teams have been working together on an interim communication plan and within this we have identified the importance of engaging with local ward councillors, which we have and will continue to do.</p> <p>The longer term communications plan, soon to be finalised, will be more comprehensive so as more projects start to come to fruition and our housing supply increases, there will be more opportunities to promote what we are doing – and this will include using a recognisable brand to give the housing investment plan a sense of identity.</p>
5.	Question from Councillor Louis Savage to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>The addition of a height restriction barrier at the car park at Queen Elizabeth II Park has been warmly welcomed by local residents, but unfortunately does not impact on lower level antisocial behaviour and drug dealing at this site. What additional action can the council and its partners take to reduce or stop these behaviours and their adverse impact on local residents?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>We encourage residents and park users to report any criminal activity such as drug dealing to the police in the first instance on 101 for non-emergency matters or 999 if an incident is in progress. Specific concerns in relation to envirocrime issues e.g. littering, fly tipping or graffiti or non-police matters such as the antisocial use of alcohol, legal highs, music, BBQs etc., can be reported using the online 'Report it form' on www.cheltenham.gov.uk or by calling 01242 262626. Cheltenham Borough Council and SOLACE have not recently received any complaints of lower level ASB or drug dealing at the site, but can work with partners such as the police and parks team if evidence is received. This might include monitoring the area through physical patrols, use of CCTV, or resident logs of incidents; holding a community and/or multi-agency 'case conference'; and developing an action plan to engage with the potential perpetrators, support or divert them away from ASB and crime and to take enforcement action when necessary and appropriate.</p>
	Supplementary Question from Councillor Louis Savage to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>Can you clarify what the process would be if local residents wished to install CCTV in their area?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The first job is to contact the council, who will consider the key initial concerns such as privacy, and start the ball rolling.</p>

6.	Question from Councillor Louis Savage to the Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman														
	<p>The play areas at Queen Elizabeth II Park and Ewen’s Farm are considered by many residents to be dated and in poor condition, particularly when compared with renovated areas in Pittville and Fairview. With no other play facilities in easy walking distance, will the cabinet member consider what funds can be found to improve these facilities for local families living in Ewen’s Farm?</p>														
	Response from Cabinet Member														
	<p>£10,000 is allocated in the annual play area improvement programme (2021/22 financial year) for enhancements to the Ewens Farm play area that will enable some of the older pieces of equipment to be replaced with more modern and inclusive items. Officers normally undertake local consultation beforehand, and are always willing to work with the local community to bring added value to the scheme (i.e. community grants).</p> <p>QEII, whilst it may not look as new as Pittville or Fairview, still provides a high level of play value, and received substantial investment from the “Play Builder programme several years ago that saw the installation of a wooden trail and climbing unit. The wooden fencing has been identified as being in need of repair, and this will take place later this year from existing revenue budgets.</p> <p>Both play areas are inspected regularly by Council staff to ensure safety compliance, and surveyed once annually by an independent inspector. The current survey predicts that the equipment has life expectancy of between 10 and 15 years.</p> <p>Similar play areas elsewhere in the Borough have benefited from budgets held by County Councillors for public realm projects, and officers would be happy to discuss the possibility of such funding being made available for both QEII and Ewen’s Farm play areas with the local County Councillor.</p>														
7.	Question from Councillor Louis Savage to the Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman														
	<p>What was CBC’s recycling rate in 2018/19 and what is their recycling rate so far in 2019/20? How does this compare to other districts in Gloucestershire?</p>														
	Response from Cabinet Member														
	<table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">NI192</th> <th style="text-align: center;">17-18</th> <th style="text-align: center;">18-19</th> <th style="text-align: center;">19-20</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Cheltenham</td> <td style="text-align: center;">48.39%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">50.74%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">50.77%</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Cotswold</td> <td style="text-align: center;">58.71%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">58.95%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">61.54%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			NI192	17-18	18-19	19-20	Cheltenham	48.39%	50.74%	50.77%	Cotswold	58.71%	58.95%	61.54%
NI192	17-18	18-19	19-20												
Cheltenham	48.39%	50.74%	50.77%												
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Forest Of Dean	54.49%	54.38%	55.76%
Gloucester City	41.69%	42.60%	43.98%
Stroud	61.15%	59.94%	60.48%
Tewkesbury	54.55%	52.59%	53.13%

Cheltenham's performance has improved year on year as shown above and is most comparable with Gloucester. We are both urban in nature with similar amounts of communal properties and transient population groups, e.g. students.

It is important to note that the year-end recycling rate for 2019/20 may be higher or lower than the % recycling rate quoted above which is the rate at this point in the year only.

8. Question from Councillor Steve Harvey to the Chairman of Licensing Committee, Councillor David Willingham

I have recently seen Uber vehicles operating in Cheltenham. Could the Chair of Licensing please explain whether these vehicles are licensed by Cheltenham to operate in our town?

Response from the Chair of Licensing Committee

Uber is not licensed in Cheltenham. They can however operate in Cheltenham relying on their operating licences elsewhere in the southwest. This is made possible through a combination of deregulation of licensing laws and weak primary legislation dating back to 1847.

Taxi and private hire licensing law has become very complex but in very simple terms, as long as the Uber vehicle and driver is licensed by the same authority as the Uber operating licence, there is a "right to roam". This means that, in this case, Uber cars can roam anywhere and accept bookings provided that the journey is properly booked in advance (via the phone app) and the journey is recorded against the operating licence associated with the Uber vehicle being hailed.

Therefore, an Uber car licensed, for example, by Bath and North East Somerset Council can accept bookings in Cheltenham if:

- 1) The driver and vehicle are also licensed by Bath and North East Somerset Council; and
- 2) The hailing is made via the Uber phone app (and therefore not plying for hire); and
- 3) The booking is recorded against the Uber operating licence issued by Bath and North East Somerset Council (and therefore dispatched by Uber Bath).

	Members may be interested to read a fuller explanation of this in the May edition of the Trade Times: https://mailchi.mp/2e47c96bf93a/trade-times-may-19?e=[UNIQID]
	Supplementary Question from Councillor Steve Harvey to the Chairman of Licensing Committee, Councillor David Willingham
	What are the processes by which CBC help taxi drivers preserve their business?
	Response from the Chairman of the Licensing Committee
	<p>CBC is proud of its taxi drivers, who form an important part of the local economy.</p> <p>The primary duty of licensing is public safety, but it must also seek to support taxi drivers. In order to do this, the council undertakes test purchasing during busy periods, and this has already proved successful, with 9 unlicensed drivers having been prosecuted for unlawful hire offences during the Cheltenham Festival.</p> <p>The Local Government Association and Institute for Licensing are working together on proposals for parliamentary bills that would update the current antiquated legislation, but these face a difficult road ahead due to a lack of support from the government. Although the council has high standards for taxis locally, the national government does not take these matters seriously.</p>
9.	Question from Councillor Angie Boyes to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	Every year more than 17,000 students at UK universities study or work abroad as part of their degree. Erasmus (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) funds opportunities to study abroad, teacher training partnerships between colleges and universities but also schemes to share best practice in education and youth policy. MPs voted against an amendment to keep the UK in Erasmus after the Brexit transition period. Losing Erasmus would be a huge loss to students not only in Cheltenham but across the UK by limiting their educational horizons. As the Co Vice-Chair of Twinning in Cheltenham, I will be writing to our MP and the Secretary of State for Education to request confirmation that the UK will remain in the Erasmus programme and I would like to ask the leader of the Council if he will do the same.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	I am more than happy to write as requested as the Erasmus programme has been of great value to UK students.
10.	Question from Councillor Angie Boyes to the Cabinet Member Housing, Councillor Peter Jeffries
	Cheltenham has been declared a Town of Sanctuary for refugees. In recognition of this, will Cheltenham Borough Council be prepared to

	<p>finance a plaque to celebrate this as other towns and cities have done, such as Bristol. It will not only serve as recognition of our status but also as a permanent reminder of our commitment to refugees as a Council, as a town and as individuals.</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>Since December 2015, Cheltenham's Liberal Democrat administration, the resident volunteer group Cheltenham Welcomes Refugees & Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) have been very pro-active working in partnership by welcoming 121 refugees into Cheltenham. In February 2019, this administration extended Cheltenham's invitation further, to include an arrangement with UK Visas & Immigration to accommodate up to approximately 25 Asylum Seekers during the first 12 months.</p> <p>We are now reviewing our arrangements again, with a view to extending our offer to refugees during 2020.</p> <p>As a result, Cheltenham has welcomed more refugees than any other district in the county since December 2015. This would not have been possible without the support of our residents working so collaboratively, with such passion, kindness and empathy.</p> <p>Cheltenham Welcome refugees discussed and supported the desire for Cheltenham to become a Town of Sanctuary and on the 25th of March 2019 full council passed a motion to "adopt the title of Town of Sanctuary, and to take practical steps to welcome and include refugees and seek ways of supporting refugees wherever it can".</p> <p>Given Cheltenham's track record, we now feel it is the right time to apply officially for a City of Sanctuary award. These are given to organisations to recognise and celebrate their commitment to the values and vision of the City of Sanctuary network. Following submission of our application, this will be appraised by a local panel. If we are successful we will then be eligible to display an official City of Sanctuary certificate. This will then be framed and displayed in a prominent position within the Municipal Offices. Further discussion / work with our partners would need to take place in celebrating more widely Cheltenham as a Town of Sanctuary.</p> <p>There is more information about the award process here.</p>
11.	<p>Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan</p>
	<p>The Hester's Way Neighbourhood Forum, recognised by Cheltenham Borough Council as an official consultee in planning issues, submitted a comprehensive, professionally produced, master plan for the Hester's Way ward part of the SPD area. Forum members and residents attended events and gave their views yet there is little evidence in the draft SPD that the Forum and the community's views have been taken into account. An area of particular concern, and one which was given great weight in the Forum's master plan, is the lack of a buffer zone along Fiddler's Green Lane between the existing two-storey residential buildings and the up to seven-storey, densely situated technology buildings and multi-</p>

	<p>storey car park.</p> <p>Paragraph 12 of the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government Garden Communities Prospectus states “residents must have a meaningful say in developing the proposal from design to delivery” (my emphasis). Paragraph 13e states a key quality of any development should be that it is “designed and executed with the engagement and involvement of the existing local community.”</p> <p>What clear evidence is there that shows the views of the Forum and the views of residents of Hester’s Way ward influenced and shaped the draft SPD?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>There has been active engagement with local residents both through the community drop ins during September 2019 and the most recent public consultation. This engagement enabled direct access to the consultancy team and council officers to discuss and understand the views of residents. Hesters Way Neighbourhood Forum attended a workshop of stakeholders on 3rd September 2019. Feedback from residents’ at the most recent public consultation event has recognised changes that have occurred in the drafting of the Supplementary Planning Document. I can confirm that the masterplan as prepared by the Hesters Way neighbourhood Forum has formed part of the evidence base that has informed the Cyber Central SPD as drafted.</p>
12.	<p>Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan</p>
	<p>The Draft SPD, Cyber Central Garden Community, has aspirations that the new development will be an integrated and connected extension of west Cheltenham. On page 14 it details a number of key benefits to the wider area, which are to be welcomed. In particular it says one of the benefits is that of “Significant new jobs created in this growth sector and inspiration to future generations seeking to address the current levels of deprivation in surrounding areas.”</p> <p>If there is a real commitment to using the development and the jobs it creates to inspire and improve the employment situation of the residents of West Cheltenham, why has an employment and training charter not been included in the draft SPD, that includes both construction phase and for when the park is completed?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>This is a really important point and one that we are discussing both corporately and in the context of this particular scheme. The SPD should be read alongside the Cheltenham Plan in which we now have a policy for the requirement of an employment and skills plan to accompany applications over for commercial uses over 1,000 sqm (policy EM4). Proposals for Cyber Central will therefore need to set out how the development will enable opportunities for employment and skills development of local people through the implementation of the</p>

	development proposal.
13.	Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	The Cyber Central Garden Community draft SPD makes many references to community facilities, ones that will serve the new development as well as the existing residents of West Cheltenham, yet gives no details as to what these will be, who will run them and where they will be located. Will the final SPD be clearer on what community facilities will be included and propose who might run them?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The SPD is a strategic masterplan and it would be inappropriate for the SPD to set this level of detail. This detail will need to be set out in the context of future planning applications.
14.	Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Steve Jordan
	Having seen for myself the security gauntlet that has to be run to get in, out and even just between buildings on the Benhall GCHQ site, I am in doubt as to whether there will be much in the way of pedestrian traffic between the Doughnut and new Cyber Hub on a day to day basis and therefore little benefit to having the Cyber Central Hub located so close to the Doughnut as in the SPD. There are however huge disadvantages to sandwiching and isolating residents in Fiddlers Green between GCHQ, with around 7000 employees/contractors, and the new cyber hub, with 7500 workers, not least the disadvantage of a huge increase in vehicle movements. When drawing up the draft SPD, "Cyber Central Garden Community", has serious consideration been given to locating the Cyber Central Hub in the north of the SPD area?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Engagement with the business sector, including GFirst LEP and relevant government departments clearly articulates the benefits of being closely located to existing GCHQ facilities. This was also tested through the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy, policy A7 of this plan has guided the preparation of the SPD. It is not proposed to change the location of the cyber central hub to the north of the site.

9. UPDATE TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services reported that the Constitution Working Group had met on the 27th January to discuss proposals for constitutional amendments. He suggested that since the proposed amendments cover a wide variety of issues, they should be approached one by one.

a) A change to Article 7, paragraph 7.2 of the Constitution to read "The Cabinet shall consist of the Leader of the Council together with at least

two, but not more than nine Councillors”, allowing the introduction of two new portfolios for the climate emergency and the economic development in West Cheltenham.

The Conservative group leader added that the opposition agreed with this recommendation. The Leader of the Council explained that although the Cabinet role is assumed at two days a week, it is unfair to assume that this is automatically what is available. He added that GCC has increased its Cabinet size in the last few years, and this change brings CBC into line with similar councils and accounts for the Cabinet’s increased workload.

VOTE:

FOR: 29

AGAINST: 6

ABSTENTIONS: 0

b) A reduction in the size of Planning Committee from 15 members to 11. This would require Council approval at Annual and Selection Council on 18 May 2020 and, once approved, would have immediate effect.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services suggested that this reduction would also bring CBC into line with other councils around the country. The Chair of the Licensing Committee added that Licensing has 10 members and meets 4 times a year, while there are 5 members on the sub-committee which meets 8 times a year, and 3 on the alcohol sub-committee. He suggested that reducing Planning to 11 therefore seems sensible. He also noted that the Chair’s casting vote is no less important as it is still an odd number, and planning applications can still be appealed to the Planning Inspectorate. One member suggested that if Planning is too big, this might mean that the council itself is too big too.

VOTE:

FOR: 31

AGAINST: 2

ABSTENTIONS: 2

c) The introduction of the electronic voting system as an alternative to the show of hands currently required

One Member asked whether every vote could be a recorded vote. The Cabinet Member Corporate Services responded that the names of all councillors will appear on the main screen with their choice next to them. One member asked whether votes would be definitely recorded accurately, considering the possibility of user error. The Cabinet Member Corporate Services responded that members would likely know when they had pressed the wrong button and would be able to raise a point of order to have that noted. Members stressed that confidence in the system was key.

One Member asked about secret votes, while another asked how members can be sure that their vote had been recorded correctly. The Head of Law clarified these questions. A test vote and a secret vote were demonstrated for the benefit of members. One member noted that he could not remember the last example of a secret vote. He stressed that votes have to be open and accountable whenever possible.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services responded that secret voting can be essential in some very specific circumstances. One Member added that he is averse to secret ballots for transparency reasons, though there can be good reasons to enter private sessions. He noted that during the test votes, a councillor sat next to him had been able to vote on his behalf. One Member added that under the present Code of Conduct, when a member is on an outside body or trust, they must leave the chamber so that they cannot influence votes.

The Head of Law clarified the difference between standard votes and recorded votes. Votes on exempt items are not secret votes – they are normal votes, just in exempt session. She explained that in order to move to all votes being recorded, a separate constitutional amendment would need to be approved by Council.

One Member asked whether, given the caveats expressed by members, it would be wise to simply retain the show of hands. The Cabinet Member Corporate Services clarified that the electronic system is being added to the constitution alongside a show of hands, rather than replacing it, so both options will be possible.

One Member asked that the system take into account members not being present. The Head of Law agreed that this would be better prepared at future meetings. One Member added that he was familiar with electronic voting at his previous council, and a key advantage was that it saved on having to do a roll call of all 40 members. He acknowledged the risk of human error, but noted that this is possible in any situation. One Member asked what would happen if a councillor with limited vision needed to vote. The Cabinet Member Corporate Services responded that the council needs to be as adaptable and inclusive as possible, and a solution would be found on a case-by-case basis.

The Mayor reiterated that the proposed change is simply to add the possibility of electronic voting to the constitution, not to do away with manual voting entirely.

VOTE:

FOR: 33

AGAINST: 2

ABSTENTIONS: 0

d) Moving the start time of Council meetings from 2:30pm to 6:00pm in the Council Diary for 2020/21.

One Member stressed that the answer to this depends more on when meetings finish than when they start. If a meeting goes on past 10pm or 11pm, members run the risk of losing focus. He advocated leaving the start time as it is, at 2:30pm.

VOTE:

FOR: 0

AGAINST: 32

ABSTENTIONS: 3

e) Delegating to the Borough Solicitor authority to make any textual or other amendments which are necessary to ensure accuracy, consistency and legality of the Constitution when incorporating the revisions authorised by Council.

VOTE:

FOR: 35

AGAINST: 0

ABSTENTIONS: 0

RESOLVED THAT

- 1. A change to Article 7, paragraph 7.2 of the Constitution to read “The Cabinet shall consist of the Leader of the Council together with at least two, but not more than nine Councillors” be approved.**
- 2. The financial implications that will arise from Recommendation 1 be approved.**
- 3. It be noted that the proposed change in size of Planning Committee will require Council approval at Annual and Selection Council on 18 May 2020 and once approved would have immediate effect.**
- 4. The use of the electronic voting system as an alternative to a show of hands currently required be approved.**
- 5. Authority be delegated to the Borough Solicitor authority to make any textual or other amendments which are necessary to ensure accuracy, consistency and legality of the Constitution when incorporating the revisions authorised by Council.**

10. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - REVISED FORECAST 2019/20 AND BUDGET PROPOSALS 2020/21

The Cabinet Member Finance presented the report and delivered a speech, which is attached to these minutes as an appendix.

The Conservative group leader responded that the opposition supported many things in the report, but queried whether point 3.1, which speaks in terms of moving towards a carbon-neutral housing portfolio, had a specific target in mind. The Cabinet Member Finance responded that CBH were allocating £50k in order to look at what they can and can't do in relation to existing stock. She was unable to be specific at this point, but CBC's stated aim is 2030. The Cabinet Member Housing added that, with both a housing crisis and a climate crisis, priorities invariably need to be balanced, but he reassured Members that Cheltenham Borough Homes' aims were aligned with those of the council. He stressed that the council needs more support from national government, both in terms of funding and in terms of information about the planned direction of travel of housing policy.

The People Against Bureaucracy group leader thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for putting together a sound report with both social and business issues at the forefront. He asked about the 500 homes of mixed tenure which are currently planned, and stressed his support for making the new homes carbon-neutral. However, he asked whether the Cabinet Member Finance believed that the building of these houses to be carbon-neutral will impact on the number of houses delivered. The Cabinet Member Finance responded that the relevant officers will be able to respond in more detail.

One Member congratulated officers on a number of good initiatives, but queried the £900k of funding allocated to heating. He asked whether the intention was to put heat pumps in instead of boilers, citing environmental concerns and the phasing out of gas boilers. The Cabinet Member Housing clarified that there was no provider at the moment who can provide what the council needs at the desired scale, so the replacement program is currently reliant on older technology.

One Member placed on record his thanks to CBH for its socially compassionate policy approach, citing the section on non-traditional stocks, which were very relevant to his ward.

One Member added his thanks, particularly to the Head of Community Services and the Estates team for their work on the subject, especially regarding a number of difficult issues. CBH has moved efficiently and proactively to help those who are most in need. One Member echoed this praise and added that she had worked closely with CBH over the last few years, and had been impressed by how it leveraged local support and built up communities.

One Member echoed the praise for CBH and sought to place it in a different context, suggesting that CBH is the council's partner both in name and in need. The key with the new houses is that they are affordable, something which Cheltenham currently lacks. She mentioned the Thrive program as a particular example of a successful and positive scheme.

One Member added his support for the report, observing that local authorities can play a significant role in alleviating the effects of austerity, so it is excellent to see a plan for 500 affordable homes by 2023. He praised the Cabinet Member Housing's work and agreed that a sustainable approach is needed to ensure that benefits are felt in years to come. Another Member noted that

although more technologically advanced systems can be expensive in the short term, they are of significant long-term benefit. He praised CBH's focus on pushing these ideas forward, adding that it will help to lower their cost in the long term. One Member emphasised the national context of housing issues, noting the importance of the government in Westminster as well as broader issues like climate change. Any policy must take into account those who are worst off first.

The Cabinet Member Housing thanked members for their positive comments and put on record his thanks to the CBH board, who worked constantly with the council's Executive Leadership Team. The Cabinet Member Finance also thanked members for their contributions to the debate, and for their positive comments.

A recorded vote was taken.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT

- 1. the revised HRA forecast for 2019/20 be noted.**
- 2. the HRA budget proposals for 2020/21 (shown at Appendix 2) including a proposed rent increase of 2.7% and changes to other rents and charges as detailed within the report be approved.**
- 3. the HRA capital programme for 2020/21 as shown at Appendix 3 be approved.**

VOTE:

FOR: 33 – Atherstone, Babbage, Baker, Barrell, Boyes, Britter, Brownstein, Clucas, Coleman, Collins, Cooke, Dobie, Fisher, Flynn, Harman, Harvey, Hay, Hegenbarth, Hobley, Jeffries, Jordan, McCloskey, McKinlay, Oliver, Parsons, Payne, Savage, Seacome, Stennett, Wheeler, Whyborn, Wilkinson, Williams, Willingham.

11. GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL – REVISED BUDGET 2019/20 AND FINAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2020/21

The Cabinet Member Finance presented the report and delivered a speech, which is attached to these minutes as an appendix. The Leader of the Council seconded the report.

One Member asked a technical question about accreditation statuses. FC responded that these make it possible for the authority to retain their portfolio status. Accreditation experts look at everything owned by the council, comprising some 250,000 different objects. One Member asked whether the use of the term 'pump-priming' in the report means that removing money from the Town Hall improvement is imminent. The Cabinet Member Finance responded that the money is allocated to the Trust, on condition of a full business case. One Member outlined the situation at the Trust, reassuring members that it does not need rescuing, based on figures seen in the last couple of months. She praised the new Chief Executive of the Trust for turning around its financial situation. The council is working with the Trust to help it become more commercially focused. The new Chief Executive has overseen

positive changes in other areas of the Trust, e.g. more bookings across the board, and she was satisfied that the £1m allocated to the Trust will make a significant difference.

One Member suggested an amendment to paragraph 6.13, adding in reference to the Chancellor and the specific Secretary of State for Export. He suggested that this change would be a simple addition with a significant effect, and urged its adoption. The Cabinet Member Finance agreed that this would not change any of the costs of the budget besides two extra stamps, and accepted the incorporation of the amendment.

One Member asked about the toilet allocation in Sandford Park. She has recently been in contact with the Friends of Sandford Park group, who wanted to know when this would be received. The Cabinet Member Finance responded that she did not know at that moment, but would let her know when she had the relevant information.

KS also queried some ambiguous wording in paragraph 6.5, and asked whether the wording could be changed to 'originally allocated to the restoration of the unsafe bridge in Pilley Nature Reserve which has led to the closure of the public footpath behind old pats'.

One Member asked about the £200,000 investment in in-cab system, comparing it to Smart Meters and asking how the council can be sure that the projected savings will actually happen. The Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment explained how the technology improves the system for customers by reducing errors, while helping the council achieve its climate change goals by making journeys shorter and more efficient.

One Member queried a figure on page 64, which refers to a figure of £458,000 earmarked for Budget Strategy Support Reserves. Later on, a figure of approximately £250,000 is cited – is this discrepancy because it is additional funding or a small part of the reserve? The Executive Director Finance and Assets referred to figures in Appendix 2 and Appendix 6 and also cited the overall strategy as detailed in Appendix 10.

One Member asked a further question about the growth proposals. In response the Cabinet Member Finance explained that funding had been set aside for the bridge restoration. The bridge had a number of footpaths to enable crossing, however the budget would be better off allocated to delivering more benefit for the whole town by being in the climate emergency budget. She reported that ward councillors had been working with their residents to help them secure alternative transport and routes. The benefit for the whole town must be considered.

One Member asked about the splash pad at the leisure centre, which had resulted in fewer people paying for admission. What exactly is the £200k for? The Cabinet Member Finance responded that £200k is not being added to its budget – instead, if the Trust cannot pay the loan back for any reason, this funding would be used to cover it. This represented a sound financial contingency plan. The Executive Director Finance and Assets suggested that all budgetary papers need to be considered in the context of the Section 25 report. As we move into the 2021/22 financial year, there was considerable uncertainty due to funding reviews. The strategy intended to map out the worst case

scenario and plan accordingly. £902,000 would be required from the budget support allowance in the worst case scenario, and this was currently not there. Any fortuitous underspend or increase in income will be returned.

One Member asked about the timeframe of planned industrial units, welcoming a development in his ward. The Cabinet Member Finance responded that these plans are already in action, evidenced by the current state of the site, and expected to be completed within the next financial year.

The Conservative group leader delivered his statement, outlining the alternative budget amendments proposed by the Conservative group. He advocated reducing the size of Cabinet to 6 members and moving to 4-yearly elections, suggesting possible savings of £45k p/a and £32k p/a. He suggested that reducing the size of the Cabinet would be possible considering its workload and the recent outsourcing of certain responsibilities. He believed there was sufficient capacity within the present Cabinet to achieve its present goals. Of the 6 district councils in the area, all do 4-yearly elections bar Cheltenham. He suggested that only putting half the councillors up for election every two years is rationing democracy. He also suggested an allocation of £52k p/a to the climate emergency. The proposals were seconded by Cllr. Babbage.

He added that a Councillor Community Fund ought to be created at a cost of around £20k p/a, which would help Members engage with their wards. He also advocated adding additional recycling Bring Site emptying at peak times, which would cost £5k p/a and benefit local residents, and suggested that these changes are all modest and achievable.

The People Against Bureaucracy group leader did not propose any amendments. He thanked the Cabinet Member Finance for a complex and detailed report, and thanked the finance team for their work in putting it together. He praised the balanced budget, considering the difficult economic situation, and particularly cited the investment in commercial opportunities that will pay off in the future.

Members debated the amendments proposed by the Conservative group. One member commended the group's recommendations and emphasised that the people of Cheltenham are not clamouring for more elections, or for more money to be spent on biannual elections. He also praised the proposal for a Councillor Community Fund and the intention to allocate more money to tackling climate change.

One Member responded that the Conservative group had suggested the same changes for several years running, and suggested that four-yearly elections are a saving that cannot be made considering the current plan. She suggested that the amendments are not a credible alternative, and disagreed with the proposals – though she praised the intention behind the Community Fund. The group leader acknowledged that the Conservative group's proposals have been repetitive, but if they had been accepted when first offered, then the council would be seeing the savings now.

The Cabinet Member Finance agreed that these savings were not feasible. The plan for four-yearly elections has been repeatedly rejected before on the grounds that two-yearly elections are more democratic, giving the public a more

frequent chance to have a voice. The proposal brings nowhere near large enough a saving to justify losing this benefit. She also cited the frequency of national elections brought about in the last few years by the Conservative Party.

She also criticised the proposal for reducing the number of Cabinet Members to 6, citing the county council's increase in size to 10 members. Cabinet Members have to monitor commissioned services more closely, so their workload has not decreased. One Member asked whether the leader of the Conservative group, in his role as a county councillor, believed that the size of the county cabinet should also have been reduced.

One Member clarified how the savings from four-yearly elections would work, suggesting that it would help to build up a reserve. He reminded members that the county council has a considerably larger budget than the borough council, and that each individual county Cabinet member likely oversees more resources than the whole of CBC.

Members discussed further issues in the alternative budget amendments. One member criticised the main budget's proposal for a one-off figure of £350k for climate change, and £150k on a Cabinet Member for climate change over 10 year. The alternative proposal was for £52k p/a, totalling £520k over 10 years. He also suggested that the recycling amendment offers a major public benefit for a relatively small amount of money.

Cllr. Parsons stated his intention to excuse himself from the substantive vote on the motion, in his role as a trustee on the Cheltenham Trust.

Members voted on the Conservative group's alternative budget amendments.

VOTE:

FOR: 5

AGAINST: 26

ABSTENTIONS: 2

The Leader of the Council formally seconded the budget report, and praised the officers and members involved in its collation. He noted that there are key unknown factors when considering the future of the council's funding, with the main one being government policy. Business rates are particularly important, with increasingly unfair discrepancies between towns and rural areas. Any rise in council tax must be considered in detail, but this is a relatively modest rise, which is lower than the police and the county council's rise.

He emphasised his delight at some of the programs funded in the budget, including progress in Sandford Park and improvements to the High Street. Funding for fighting climate change must be spent in the most effective way possible.

Members voted to continue the session after it reached the four-hour mark.

A Member praised how CBC has set aside funds to enhance the efficiency of Ubico services.

A Member praised the planned maintenance program for the Honeybourne Line, a significant portion of which is in his ward. The site will be preserved as much as possible, demonstrating the council's conservation efforts.

A Member responded to a point raised at a recent county council meeting, and outlined figures relating to land development in Cheltenham.

A Member welcomed efforts to tackle the climate emergency, citing recent flooding in the local area. She reported that she had attended the last county council meeting and was disappointed by the level of pantomime involved in its discussions of climate policy. She also praised the progress on the toilets in Sandford Park, which had been a real source of frustration for local residents.

A Member echoed criticisms of the alternative budget, noting that the county council, on which two of the Conservative members sit, had rejected a proposed £2m climate change initiative days earlier, only to offer a £50k increase now. He also criticised the scope of the Community Fund proposal, suggesting that £1000 for each ward would barely cover local potholes, which the county council is responsible for. He praised the main budget's emphasis on climate change and high street improvement, and criticised a lack of support from national government, citing the loss of the Revenue Support Grant.

A Member also emphasised the importance of a positive, progressive budget and reiterated that national government funding cuts are hugely significant. Local progress will always be limited as long as national government fails to fund key policy areas.

The Cabinet Member Finance added that the Community Fund had been advocated and supported several years previously, but had to be shelved due to budget cuts. She added that the budget's effect on people and change must not be underestimated.

The Mayor moved to a recorded vote.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. The revised budget for 2019/20 be approved.**

Considering the budget assessment by the Section 151 Officer at Appendix 2 the following recommendations be approved :

- 2. the final budget proposals including a proposed council tax for the services provided by Cheltenham Borough Council of £214.08 for the year 2020/21 based on a Band D property (an increase of 2.39% or £5.00 a year for a Band D property), as detailed in paragraphs 4.11 to 4.16.**
- 3. the growth proposals, including one off initiatives at Appendix 4.**

4. a lending (overdraft) facility of up to £100,000 to the Cheltenham BID to facilitate the delivery of an ice rink as detailed in Section 7.
5. the Executive Director Finance and Assets (in consultation with the Borough Solicitor) be authorised to take such actions and make such arrangements as are necessary for the implementation of the above lending facility to Cheltenham BID.
6. the savings / additional income totalling £826,000 and the budget strategy at Appendix 5 be approved.
7. the use of reserves and general balances be approved and note the projected level of reserves, as detailed at Appendix 6.
8. the capital programme at Appendix 7 be approved.
9. the programmed maintenance programme at Appendix 8 be approved.
10. Note that the Council will remain in the Gloucestershire business rates pool for 2020/21 (paragraphs 4.4 to 4.10).
11. the Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21, including the continued payment of a living wage supplement at Appendix 9 be approved.
12. the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) detailed in Section 5 and Appendix 10 be approved.
13. a level of supplementary estimate of £100,000 for 2020/21 as outlined in Section 13 be approved.

FOR: 27

For: Atherstone, Baker, Barrell, Boyes, Britter, Brownstein, Clucas, Coleman, Collins, Dobie, Fisher, Harvey, Hegenbarth, Jeffries, Jordan, McCloskey, McKinlay, Oliver, Payne, Stennett, Sudbury, Wheeler, Whyborn, Wilkinson, Willingham.

AGAINST: 0

ABSTENTIONS: 6

Abstentions: Babbage, Cooke, Harman, Parsons, Savage, Seacome.

12. COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2020

The Cabinet Member Finance introduced the report and explained that now that the Council had agreed the budget and level of Council Tax for 2020/21 it was now required to formally approve the total Council Tax for the residents of Cheltenham, including the Council Tax requirements of the precepting organisations,

The total Council Tax to be paid by residents of Cheltenham in 2020/21 by council tax band, including the precepting authorities, was contained in Appendix 2.

She explained that by way of an explanation of how the precept was divided on a band D property the total council tax would be £1816.65 of which CBC received £214.08, GCC £1345.32, the Police £257.25. In percentage terms this equated to the County getting 74%, Police 14% and the Borough 12%

She then expressed caution that Parliament had yet to debate the final settlement albeit there were no changes expected.

The Mayor moved to a recorded vote.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT

the formal Council Tax resolution be approved

For: Atherstone, Babbage, Baker, Barrell, Britter, Brownsteen, Clucas, Coleman, Collins, Cooke, Dobie, Fisher, Harman, Harvey, Hay, Hegenbarth, Jeffries, Jordan, McCloskey, McKinlay, Oliver, Parsons, Payne, Savage, Seacome, Stennett, Sudbury, Wheeler, Whyborn, Wilkinson, Williams, Willingham

13. NOMINATIONS FOR MAYOR ELECT AND DEPUTY MAYOR ELECT 2020-21

The Chief Executive presented the report and explained that Councillor Sandra Holliday had served as Deputy Mayor since last year's Annual Council Meeting and Members would be asked to elect her as Mayor at this year's Annual Meeting.

He reported that the Members shown towards the head of the Order of Precedence in Appendix 2 had been approached to ascertain if they were willing and able to have their name put forward for appointment as Deputy Mayor for 2020-21. Councillor Chris Coleman indicated a willingness to put his name forward as Deputy Mayor subject to no other eligible councillor wishing to do so and pending the outcome of the May 2020 elections.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT

1. the Order of Precedence in Appendix 2 be noted.
2. Councillor Sandra Holliday be put to the Annual Council Meeting for election as Mayor for the Municipal year 2020 – 2021.

- 3. Councillor Chris Coleman be put to the Annual Council Meeting for election as Deputy Mayor for the Municipal year 2020-2021, subject to his re-election.**

14. RECOMMENDATION TO ADOPT THE INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE ALLIANCE (IHRA) WORKING DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM

The Leader of the Council presented the report, explaining that the Council has received a formal request to adopt the working definition of anti-Semitism provided by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

One member noted that he had submitted a similar request in October 2019, and was pleased to see it progress to this stage. Another member added that he was very happy to support the definition, and praised recent commemorative events.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT

the IHRA Working Definition on antisemitism be adopted for use across the Council ensuring that this is reflected in its Equality and Diversity Scheme and other relevant policies.

15. NOTICES OF MOTION

There were none.

16. ANY OTHER ITEM THE MAYOR DETERMINES AS URGENT AND WHICH REQUIRES A DECISION

None.

17. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 -EXEMPT INFORMATION RESOLVED THAT

“That in accordance with Section 100A(4) Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining agenda items as it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, if members of the public are present there will be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in paragraph 3, Part (1) Schedule (12A) Local Government Act 1972, namely:

Paragraph 3; Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

18. EXEMPT MINUTES RESOLVED THAT

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.

Roger Whyborn
Chairman

Thank you Mayor,

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Since Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) was set up in 2003 there have been significant improvements in services, tenant satisfaction and levels of engagement; millions of pounds have been awarded and invested into homes; new services have been developed to meet the needs of local people and are successfully delivering great outcomes that help change lives for the better. CBH are working in collaboration with this Council to significantly increase the number of quality, affordable homes available to the great communities of Cheltenham, it is worth mentioning that CBH already manage almost 1 in 10 homes in our town, and through the joint commitment to invest £100 million will deliver an additional 500 homes over the next four years and enable the supply of homes in the private rented sector.

The current year marks the successful completion of a four-year plan to mitigate the rent reduction policy imposed by Government. The new social rent policy of allowing annual rent increases of CPI + 1% p.a. for five years before a further review. The CPI for September last year was 1.7% giving a rent increase of 2.7% for 20/21, the new rent policy will commence in April 2020. The rent change together with the abolition of the debt cap, leaving the level of borrowing to be controlled by the prudential code, will allow a significant increase in the new build program subject to the identification of appropriate sites and financial viability. This is reflected in the capital program proposals at Appendix 4.

The 30 year HRA Business Plan has been updated to reflect, anticipated revenue outturn for 2019/20, the proposed development and acquisition program for the period from April 2020 to March 2023 which is forecast to deliver 500 new affordable units.

A contingency budget of £5.5m for regeneration projects based on the assumption that there will be no additional revenue benefit from the investment.

A refreshed assessment of the 30 year “need to spend” on existing stock for both capital and revenue expenditure.

The plan confirms the financial viability of the proposed investment program detailed at Appendix 4, with sufficient resources available to repay debt in the longer term.

The revised forecast for 19/20, at Appendix 2 shows a reduction in operating surplus of £95,700 compared to the original budget. Significant variations (greater than £30,000) within the 2019/20 revised forecast have been identified in budget monitoring reports and are summarised in the table at 5.1.

Under the budget proposals at 6.1 significant changes to the HRA (greater than £30,000) in 2020/21 as compared to the revised forecast for 2019/20 are itemised in the table at 6.4. There is a reduction of £115,000 in the operating surplus for the year when compared with the 2019/20 forecast.

Revenue contributions totaling £1,350,400 will be used to fund capital expenditure in the year, leaving revenue reserves at the contingency level of £1,500,000 at 31st March 2021.

The revised capital program for 2019/20 reflects variations identified during the year, most notably the acquisition of land in West Cheltenham (£11.5m) to enable the future development of new affordable housing.

The detailed capital program for 2020/21 and indicative programs for the following two years are shown at Appendix 4. These reflect both the investment requirements for existing stock, and a recent review of the 30 year capital program. The sum set aside for component replacements each year will vary in line with anticipated lifecycles.

The program includes: ongoing funding to complete the replacement of windows and doors through most of the stock.

A new showers program - currently approximately 2,500 homes have either an over bath shower or shower cubicle/wet room leaving a further 2,000 homes without such a facility. The program will fit over bath showers to these properties over a period of 10 years at a total cost of £2.4m. This expenditure and the subsequent cost of maintenance and renewal will total £7.7m over 30 years, which can be accommodated within the business plan. A replacement warden call system for sheltered schemes is also planned.

The capital program also includes an ambitious program of new build and acquisitions delivering a further 500 affordable homes by 2023/24. A range of tenures will be provided with units developed for social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership. The mix and number will be dependent on the financial viability of each site, but an emphasis will be placed on affordability. A contingency of £50,000 has been included in the revenue budget to support the delivery of this enhanced program.

There are currently 996 universal credit claimants (November 2019) with 1,050 being anticipated by March 2020. Under present regulations there could eventually be up to 2,000 claimants, potentially placing considerable pressure on rent arrears which currently sit at 1.6%. CBH is conducting a proactive campaign to provide support to all tenants affected by these changes. The impact on arrears will be closely monitored and the budget proposals reflect an increasing provision for bad debts.

This Council has declared a climate emergency with an aspiration of being carbon neutral by 2030.

Areas that CBH will be focusing on include: - Moving towards a housing portfolio that is carbon neutral, Retrofitting existing stock to use as demonstrators and to educate homeowners in the Borough and a Carbon zero fleet. In consultation with the Council, CBH will develop a strategy and delivery program to meet these challenges and a sum of £50,000 has been included in the 2020/21 budget to commence this work. It is anticipated that it will require a very significant investment in the existing stock but that has not yet been quantified for inclusion in the HRA Business Plan. The program will also impact on the unit cost of new build and acquisitions.

The significant project to install new windows and doors across all properties has already made a difference to tenants use of heating, together with the installation of a further 400 new boilers, which will further improve the average SAP rating of the stock – this has already increased year on year for the past 3 years. There will need

to be further improvements in energy efficient heating as part of a comprehensive review of all major component replacements.

It is important to look behind the numbers to see what has been delivered through the HRA for the last financial year I would like to highlight a few, 10 new Council owned houses built, 7 new homes acquired from the open market making good use of money received from properties sold under the right to buy, 99.6% of homes meeting the decent homes standard, 99% satisfaction from approx 400 new tenants of the sign up process, in the 3rd year of a six year program 873 new doors and 930 windows have been installed.

This councils housing provider is much more than landlords, it also provides added value to people with support and advice, in the last year 68 people have been helped back into work & 225 into education and training, alongside the housing options team securing 2 million pounds in unclaimed or backdated benefits & a further 1.2 million secured to help those who are struggling in one form or another.

They also provide for communities across our whole town through the delivery of 5 community investment plans, supported by a diverse range of partners and connecting with over 2,000 residents per quarter. Supporting community projects and initiatives – through sourcing external funding and ‘in-kind’ support from our partners, procurement activities, and making best use of the resources and support provided by community organisations to increase capacity.

Enhancing their role as a local community builder – to work with partners to deliver locality based community investment

Partnership working – Complimenting the direct delivery approach with benefits offered by partnership working
Reporting and monitoring our Social Value – to demonstrate the social value they deliver for our communities.

Thank you to everyone at CBH and congratulations on the Thrive scheme success and the awards won at No Child Left Behind.

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Thank you Mayor,

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Members I said two years ago that rather than have cuts, we want growth and that we needed to be brave and bold to achieve this.

I am pleased to present to you today this administration's final Budget proposals.

This administration is portrayed by the opposition as having no vision for our town; I will today dispel that myth.

Part of our drive towards financial sustainability includes identifying new opportunities to generate income and investment in projects which provide good financial returns. Our commercial strategy aligns closely with other key strategies including place- making, economic growth, digital transformation, workforce and skills development, investment and asset management which have a combined message that this Council has entered a new era of business enterprise, growth and innovation. We will work with partners who share our ambition and values and will continue to put the best interests of Cheltenham residents at the heart of everything we do.

In June 2019, the National Municipal Journal achievement awards recognised Cheltenham Borough Council for its efforts in making significant local investments, and long-term financial planning to ensure continuity of frontline services and public realm investment. This approach has helped us manage the impact following the loss of £6.8m funding since 2010, where the Council was successful in winning the 2019 award for Best Commercial Council, and further validated by winning the APSE award for Best Commercial Council and Entrepreneurship Initiative, this did not happen without a vision and a lot of hard work.

Our Corporate plan clearly sets out a vision with 5 key priorities:

We will work toward making Cheltenham the Cyber Capital of the UK; a national first, which will deliver investment in homes, jobs, infrastructure and enable the Council to deliver inclusive growth for our communities.

Deliver a number of Town Centre and wider public enhancements that will continue the revitalisation of the town ensuring its longer-term viability as a retail and cultural destination.

Deliver enhancements to our environmental services and develop the way we commission these services.

We will be seeking new opportunities to bring in additional resources, as well as leveraging more value from our assets and commissioned providers.

Improve the way services and information are accessed by residents and businesses by maximising new technology opportunities and different ways of working, the outcome of which will contribute towards our financial self-sufficiency.

Our current business model for 20/21 for gross expenditure is £23.4 million directly provided, £12.1 million provided by contractors jointly owned by this council, £1 million through shared working and £0.2 million in joint working.

This Council is operating in a challenging and uncertain economic environment. The UK's progress negotiating its exit from the European Union, together with its future trading arrangements, will continue to be a major factor for 2020/21. The financial impact of Brexit on the country and on local government is unknown, but potentially significant in terms of legislation, inflation, interest rates and economic growth.

The impact on the UK economy may affect aspirations for the Government's spending program, despite the notion that the Government has stated that austerity is over. Therefore the amount of funding available to local government from 2021/22 is still uncertain.

The MTFS for 2020/21 to 2023/24 recognises the significant changes to the national funding system, through the business rates reset and fair funding review, as well as locally driven cost pressures and political choices. We have therefore taken a risk based approach in reviewing the financial pressures facing the council and how they should be mitigated across the medium term.

The Council no longer receives Revenue Support Grant funding from the Government and will have to rely on income generated in the Borough to fund services.

The intention is for each local authority to be set a new baseline funding allocation based on an assessment of relative needs and taking into account the relative resources of local authorities. The timeline for its introduction is 2021, the government have committed to putting in place transitional arrangements to 'smooth' the impact, they are working on the principles that there will be no redistribution of council tax or fees and charges between authorities and they do not intend to reward or penalise authorities for exercising local discretion, the government therefore intends to use a notional council tax level rather than the actual council tax level, which will determine whether a council's share of total need is higher than its share of tax base.

Business Rate income generated under the Retained Business Rates funding mechanism is an important income stream, but is complex and potentially volatile. It places considerable financial risk on the Council in terms of fluctuating business rates and funding the costs of business rate appeals, which directly affect the income that the Council can recognise. Alongside the FFR, the government is also consulting on how the new scheme post 2021 can continue to reward and incentivise growth, whilst mitigating the risk of appeals.

Under the current system roughly £13bn per year of rates income is kept by Central Government to fund local authority services. This is referred to as the “Central share” and is redistributed to councils in the form of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and other grants including New Homes Bonus (NHB). In future, if this sum is retained by local authorities, new burdens of a broadly similar value will be passed across to local government. As a result local government will not initially have more funding; over the longer term this will depend on whether Business Rates grow faster or slower than local authority service demands and costs, and to add further complication will depend on where the revised business rates baseline is set for the council from 2021/22.

The council’s MHCLG set business rates baseline is £2.841m whilst, as a result of economic growth, £4.217m is now forecast to be generated and support the base budget in 2020/21.

In previous years, local authorities have been funded through a mixed structure of grant for example RSG and locally driven income, Council Tax and Business Rates which provided some mitigation of risk. Moving to a 75% retained system means more risk transfers to local government.

New Homes Bonus (NHB) will continue for another year but the government very clearly intends to phase it out by 2023/24. For now, there is no change in the operation of the scheme in 20/21: the scheme works in the same way and applies the same threshold baseline of 0.4% housing growth under which no New Homes Bonus grant is paid.

The major change in NHB is that the new amounts earned in 20/21 will only attract an NHB reward for one year, in 21/22, rewards will only be paid in respect of years 18/19 and 19/20, and in year 2022/23 only for year 2019/20. It is worth mentioning that despite delivering over the last 12 months an additional 423 new homes for occupation, with the base line set at 0.4% we only receive NHB for 215 which seems rather unfair. The financial impact on CBC is that we will receive circa £29k.

Council tax is considered an increasingly important mode of local government financing by Central Government. This is reflected in the decision to allow districts to increase council tax by £5 per annum or up to 1.99%, whichever is higher. Current projections also assume growth in the tax base of 0.80% per annum, there is a corresponding cost to increasing the tax base with additional properties and residents to service which needs to be recognised and captured at certain steps or “trigger” points for example refuse & recycling collections, we will need to consider what levels of growth are likely and financially sustainable.

A significant proportion of the Council’s funding comes from fees and charges. This is fast becoming an ever more important funding mechanism and one which is within the Council’s control, subject to any legislative, economic or political constraints.

However, as more reliance is placed on income there is added pressure to understand current performance levels coupled with the risks and opportunities arising from each income stream whether it is new or existing. It is also important to consider how “recession-proof” an income stream is so that appropriate levels of mitigation can be put in place under a Reserves Strategy to meet dips arising in a recession.

The last recognised recession was in 2008; it is likely that the country is closer than ever to the next economic dip. Economic peaks and troughs are a recognised inevitability and the council’s finances should be managed with this in mind – save during the peak years to support spend during the troughs. Taking this approach will see more emphasis placed on maintaining increasing levels of reserves, than in previous financial years.

This Council is aspirational and horizon scanning in the approach it takes to delivering its services, and supporting those it works with in partnership to ensure Cheltenham is a vibrant and desirable place to live, work and invest. As a result, when funding has become available either through budget underspends or one-off funding, a strategy of utilising opportunities for improving and investing in the town has been followed.

However, recognising the change in the council’s short to medium term finances has required an alternative approach to be taken over the next few financial years with a focus on delivering services within approved budgets and enhancing the council’s reserves to ensure it is able to meet any unforeseen costs in the future and also mitigate known risks and forecast cost pressures, particularly those arising from changes in the way local government is financed post 2020/21.

As part of the 2016/17 budget setting, the Budget Strategy Support Reserve was established to provide greater resilience and time for the council to embed its savings strategy and allow for slippage in savings delivery.

The BSSR will need to be suitably resourced to not only mitigate any delay in the delivery of savings but also be robust enough to support any reported slippage during the MTFS period.

The Business Rates retention reserve (BRRR) should aim to be maintained to a target of £500k to allow for the potential reduction in income arising from the risks. There is currently £150k in general balances specifically to cover fluctuations arising from pooling arrangements together with £387k projected to be held in the BRRR at 31st March 2021.

General Balances are held to protect existing service levels from reductions in income levels as a result of economic downturn and other unforeseen circumstances, over a number of years, this council has earmarked significant funds for specific reserves and as part of the budget setting process we must consider the establishment and maintenance of them.

“The Cabinet’s overriding financial strategy has been, and is, to drive down the Council’s net costs via a commercial mind-set”

One of the strengths of the Cheltenham economy is its diversity. With the exception of GCHQ, we are not overly dependent on one or two major employers or on the performance of a specific industrial or service sector. It is possible to influence how Cheltenham is shaped, by supporting and encouraging existing and new businesses, marketing the town’s rich cultural and dynamic offer and promote inward investment and building a strong and cohesive community. The place strategy is closely linked to the commercial strategy. Driving growth, increasing gross value added (GVA), investment into Cheltenham, encouraging businesses to thrive and improving employment opportunities; the town’s economy will grow, as should the council’s income through Business Rates and Council Tax, providing longer term financial sustainability.

In previous years, budgets have been prepared under a general philosophy of no growth in services unless there is a statutory requirement or a compelling business case for an ‘invest to save’ scheme. However, the Council’s aspirations to modernise its offer, become financially sustainable and be carbon neutral by 2030, requires realignment of resources to deliver the outcomes.

Members will recall that an allocation was agreed by the Council in April 2015 to facilitate the redevelopment to the Town Hall. A separate briefing attached to the Cabinet agenda in December outlined the progress made to date but essentially concluded that all of the options identified are currently outside the financial envelope of affordability available for the Council to progress.

Of the original allocation, £1.6m is still available and the Cabinet is recommending the following reallocation:

Invest a sum of £1m to pump prime the commercial opportunities identified by The Cheltenham Trust including investment which both sustains and grows income at the Town Hall);

Allocate £50k to fund 2 full-time documentation officers to ensure the collection receives accreditation status,

Allocate £200k in a contingency fund to fund the associated costs of the investment in leisure@ in respect of the splash-pad;

In February 2019, Full Council unanimously called on the Cabinet to declare a Climate Emergency, which was duly announced in July 2019. As part of the motion, Council requested that a report be presented back within six months, with the local actions the Council could take to help address this emergency. A report was presented to Full Council in October 2019 outlining the actions needed and an indicative timetable, as well as recommending the initial resources required for the authority to effectively gear up to delivering the scale of

actions required by 2030. There is widespread public concern addressing climate change issues with more than four in five Cheltenham residents agreeing that the Council should play a role in tackling air quality issues (83%), enabling people to walk/cycle more (82%) and enabling public transport use (81%).

The report recommended initial 'seed funding' of £150,000 per year, to fund additional staffing resources in order to create the capacity and capability to develop the business cases for the initiatives outlined in the roadmap and to identify and secure external funding to enable climate emergency projects to progress. I am proposing that Council allocates £350k from the original Town Hall allocation to address the resources required. In addition I am proposing to allocate £75k from the planned maintenance reserve (originally allocated to the restoration of Pilley Bridge) on the grounds that it needs to prioritise its resources to the delivery of corporate plan priorities.

Whilst telematics technology is now being fitted to our vehicles which Ubico operate to ensure they are being used effectively and efficiently, including reducing fuel consumption, there is a need to ensure that the technology which supports the delivery of services provided by Ubico, particularly domestic and trade waste collections, is in place and can integrate with other business systems as necessary including any Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system CBC may purchase going forward.

The Cabinet therefore proposes to allocate £200k, subject to a business case, for the purchase of an 'In Cab' technology system. It is anticipated that the implementation of this system would offer a number of financial, service related and carbon reduction benefits to the council and its residents.

The introduction of an In-Cab system would reduce the mileage required to be completed by Ubico, because it would guide the crew around their collection route and would largely eliminate mistakes. This would have a direct benefit in reducing the fuel used and associated carbon usage. In addition, it's likely that the council would see missed collections reduce meaning that return journeys to collection areas would not need to be made, which would again contribute in lowering the fuel and carbon usage. This investment would also support wider process improvements for waste collections.

The future provision of public conveniences was presented to Cabinet on 5th November 2019. Within that report, recognition for redeveloping the provision at Sandford Park was identified, with a recommendation to set aside funding for a new facility within the 2020/21 budget proposals to be considered by Council in February 2020. In order to satisfy that commitment, the budget proposals include a sum of £143,500 in the proposed capital program for 2020/21

The Council has recently been advised that funding gifted to the Friends of Imperial Square Heritage and Conservation (FISHAC), has been secured for the restoration of railings to Imperial Gardens. The Council will hold the funds and undertake a tender exercise to appoint a suitably qualified metal work contractor to undertake the work that will include the Holst entrance pillars, and railings along the western Promenade perimeter of the gardens.

The list of proposals for growth, including page 41 e off initiatives, can be seen at Appendix 4.

I would like to reassure members that the proposed investments that are put before you at Council today are underpinned by strong resident satisfaction that show overall 84% of Cheltenham residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live. This score is higher than the Local Government Association (LGA) benchmark (80%).

Many members of this Council have long-held ambitions to deliver an ice rink in Cheltenham as part of the run-up to Christmas for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

The Cheltenham BID has progressed this initiative and plans to hold an event in 2020. However, the structuring of the deal with the proposed operator (whereby costs to the operator are paid in advance of ticket sales) has led to a request from the Cheltenham BID to support cash-flow.

I am therefore proposing that the Council offers the Cheltenham BID an overdraft facility, on terms no less favourable than what is offered to other organisations, up to £100k. Indicative cash-flow analysis supports the business case that any overdraft facility in respect of this particular event would be fully repaid by the end of January 2021.

If Council is with me on the proposed budget then we will be able to continue delivering our vision and ambition for Cheltenham.

I am going to take this opportunity to highlight some of the initiatives we have already taken to help deliver what I have said.

In August 2019, we completed the purchase of 112 acres of strategically important land which forms part of the West Cheltenham, it will enable the delivery of the Cyber Central vision in June 2019 the government announced that Cyber Central had been awarded 'Garden Communities' status. the £37.5m investment into this site will enable the rapid growth of Cyber Tech and innovative industries as part of a thriving integrated community, a place where people can live, work and recreate. It is a significant step forward in achieving the council's corporate plan priority of Cheltenham becoming the UK capital of cyber. Our Housing Investment Strategy commitment to deliver on the £100m investment in Housing across the Borough will play a leading role in shaping the residential aspect.

Strengthening the town's cultural offer, and in particular a focus on the town centre. Working in collaboration with other partner organisations such as the BID, investment programs for the high street have seen increased footfall, increases in cycle visits, car parking numbers and bus usage rise

With new stores and business opening in Cheltenham, The cabinet have also committed to the reallocation of £400,000 to continue improvements.

Proposals for the Council to take a leading role in the **Page 42** project will bring about an innovative box park concept, forming a hub for small start-up business in the creative and tech sector. The project will use under-utilised car parking space in partnership with Creative England, Cheltenham Festivals, the Gfirst LEP and Workshop Cheltenham. It will create new jobs, regenerate the surrounding area, bring in rental and business rates, but more importantly act as a growth magnet, encouraging investment and footfall on the fringes of the town centre.

The acquisition of 4 new commercial investment properties has already resulted in us over-achieving our new revenue income target, and the new additional industrial units at the Enterprise centre both, helping to secure increased income generation on our journey to self sustainability.

Other initiatives such as the Cheltenham Lottery supporting our local good causes with much needed funds, the amazing No Child Left Behind that is playing our part to support a child friendly Gloucestershire and the Folk2Folk lending investment to support local small to medium business expansion.

All in All Mayor I know that we will deliver on our vision, because we are a well-run council. We have adapted to the austerity inflicted upon us. You don't have to take my word for it, just listen to the Municipal Journal, which awarded us the best commercial council. Just listen to APSE which gave us the award of best commercial **and** Entrepreneurial Innovative Council, I believe this budget shows vision and ambition under the Liberal Democrat administration, for all who live here work here or visit our Town for recreation.

After debate Summing up.

One area that I did not address in my speech was People and Change the contribution that this will make should not be underestimated, Modernisation will bring cash savings, as set out in the MTFs, but also deliver non-cash savings, which will allow resources to be freed up to support existing, emerging and future corporate priorities. Investment in our staff and their environment should never be undervalued, their contribution is what gives our council, a track record of strong financial management and on the ground delivery to our residents, my thanks to each and everyone of you.

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