

Council

Monday, 19th July, 2021
2.00 - 5.55 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Steve Harvey (Chair), Sandra Holliday (Vice-Chair), Victoria Atherstone, Matt Babbage, Paul Baker, Garth Barnes, Dilys Barrell, Ian Bassett-Smith, Angie Boyes, Nigel Britter, Jonny Brownsteen, Barbara Clark, Flo Clucas, Iain Dobie, Stephan Fifield, Bernard Fisher, Wendy Flynn, Tim Harman, Rowena Hay, Alex Hegenbarth, Peter Jeffries, Alisha Lewis, Chris Mason, Guy Maughfling, Paul McCloskey, Andrew McKinlay, Tony Oliver, John Payne, Richard Pineger, Julie Sankey, Louis Savage, Diggory Seacome, Simon Wheeler, Max Wilkinson, Suzanne Williams and David Willingham

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors Collins, Horwood, Nelson and Stafford.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June were approved and signed as a correct record.

4. COMMUNICATIONS BY THE MAYOR

The Mayor wished to put on record his warmest congratulations to the Cheltenham Swimming and Water Polo Club who recently became the national men's water polo champions.

He wished to report his recent acceptance of a donation from City Fibre towards the laptops for learning project of the No Child Left Behind initiative which has now raised over £35k.

He also paid tribute to Cheltenham Borough Homes, working in conjunction with Cheltenham Borough Council, to use a brownfield site at 320 Swindon to build 24 new affordable or social houses-a tremendous initiative in the current climate as part of the council's housing investment programme.

He also wished to thank democratic services for setting up this meeting in Pittville Pump Room and thanked the Cheltenham Trust for hosting. He informed that he had been invited to open the Trust's Heritage Trail in September and also took the opportunity to commend the Trust on the success of the Heritage Café.

5. COMMUNICATIONS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Firstly, the Leader informed that Councillor Jonny Brownsteen would be taking up the vacant position on the Asset Management Working Group.

She had hoped to bring news that an expression of interest was made by Gloucester with a letter of support from the District council leaders across the county, to DCMS for the opportunity to have Gloucester for Gloucestershire as a City of Culture. Sadly this will not be the case as Gloucester had decided not to submit an application.

The Leader informed Council that the announcement of the preferred development partner for the Golden Valley will be made on the 30th July following the Cabinet decision on the 13th.

The Leader wished to send thoughts to all those in Germany who have lost family, homes and businesses due to the recent devastating flooding. She also extended this to all our European countries that have also been affected by the torrential rain, an inevitable effect of climate change. She highlighted the importance of addressing this at pace.

6. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

There were none.

7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

1. Question from Louisa Meehan to Councillor Max Wilkinson, Cabinet Member Climate Emergency
<p>Why are the bike stands still not reinstalled outside the Regent Arcade, Regent Street entrance, in Ormond Place. I had an enlightening conversation with one of the Optician at Harper & Cooper: the unintended consequence of the stands' removal means people are inclined to attach their bikes to the lamppost outside their premises, which results in blocking the use of the ramp for wheelchair access. The coffee shop opposite has a not very inviting sign which reads, 'no bicycles', so it's a fair guess bike parking has been a problem for them too. What happened to the old bike stands? Why can't they be put back, or am I to assume more Council money has been chucked on a skip?</p> <p>In previous correspondence with the Council I have been told that this is to support economic recovery, this area has been licensed to some of the café premises for a temporary period in order to support them with an outdoor area as we try to ease out of lockdown from the pandemic..."</p> <p>Harpreet Kular, Bsc(Hons), McOptom Optometrist Prof Cert CX, Harper & Cooper Opticians: <i>"The area has been licensed to accommodate café premises. 'The Find' was the local café that had use of the plaza area and has not used the area since 12th April 2021 when restrictions were lifted and indoor seating was permitted...."</i></p> <p>The Council's previous response that there are other bike parking facilities elsewhere is not a valid argument. They are usually full and are elsewhere.</p> <p>* 'The Value of Cycling' Fiona Rajé and Andrew Saffrey Department of Transport, University of Birmingham states <i>"Catering for cycling is steadily rising on the agenda of business leaders and city mayors. Per square metre, cycle parking delivers 5 times higher retail spend than the same area of car parking, investment is effective in increasing usage</i></p>

	<p><i>cyclling has a lower capital cost than other forms of infrastructure”.</i></p> <p>There is a simple, elegant solution available that supports everyone’s needs and inconveniences no one, would support the Council’s green credentials and underscores its recognition of the rights of those with disabilities with no detrimental impact. And this is not a demand to create a new facility, but a very reasonable request to reinstate, backed up by all the evidence given above. Therefore please will you agree to the reasonable and logical refitting of the cycle stands, to the benefit of all. An action that simultaneously removes an amenity and also creates a barrier to access, particularly for those with disabilities, to a much needed service cannot be in anyone’s interest. Cycling has many benefits, and accessibility is a right.</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>I thank Ms Meehan for her question and can assure her that cycling is very much a priority for the Council. We are currently speaking to various organisations on how we can improve capacity for the future which reflects our ambitions as set out in our strategy Connecting Cheltenham https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/61/climate_and_sustainability/1649/connecting_cheltenham.</p> <p>We recognise the County Council’s role as the transport authority and hope to work with them on realising our ambitions.</p> <p>To address the point about this specific cycle parking location, we are exploring how we can provide more cycle parking and storage space in the town centre, including in secure indoor locations. We will take into account the area referred to in the question when we look at new cycle parking locations.</p> <p>We must do this while balancing other priorities, and this includes supporting businesses responding to the challenges brought by the pandemic. Hospitality is one of the key parts of our economy that has been hit the hardest and we have been working hard to support the sector.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Louisa Meehan asked where the environmental and economic improvements cited in the Connecting Cheltenham strategy were in terms of implementation. She was concerned that the council was failing to meet its statutory obligation under the Equality Act 2010, as a consequence of the removal of the 4 bike stands and highlighted the disadvantages to a retailer due to the council’s failure to act. She asked when the Council was going to meet its obligation under the Equality Act?</p> <p>In response the Cabinet Member questioned which part of the Equalities Act the Council was not meeting but offered to meet the questioner in person to discuss the issues further. He explained that there were many parts of the Connecting Cheltenham strategy and bicycle stands and secure bicycle parking was part of it. .</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Question from Sam Thomas to the Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing and Business, Councillor Victoria Atherstone</p>
	<p>a) Cheltenham has a number of distinguished women who have made a major contribution to both town and country, including Josephine Butler and Dorothea Beale. What are the steps the Council recommends to get a statue raised to celebrate a notable Cheltenham woman?</p> <p>b) Given Cheltenham has multiple statues honouring men’s contributions to the town and country, why are there no statues in the town honouring the contribution of a woman?</p>
	<p>I agree there are numerous examples of distinguished women who have made a significant contribution to the town. I cannot however give reason as to why historic decisions were taken in respect of statues of men.</p>

	<p>The council has an advisory group The Public Art Panel that has been considering the issue and investigating a future commission that celebrates women. To help mark International Women’s Day, Cheltenham’s Public Art Panel worked with No Child Left Behind on a schools-based project that asked children to share some writing or artwork about women they find inspiring. This work will be displayed virtually (coming soon) and will form the basis of a report to the Public Art Panel that will help inform the vision for a future art installation that will celebrate women in Cheltenham.</p> <p>Children and young people were asked to create some art or writing about either or both of the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Which woman or women inspires you? 2) How do you see women represented around you e.g. in the media or art? How would you like to see them represented? <p>https://nclbcheltenham.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/IWD21.pdf</p> <p>Public art is funded through developer contributions and fundraising. At this time, there is insufficient funds to deliver a project, however we will be using the report as outlined above to inform next steps on an appropriate commission.</p> <p>In addition, the council is currently working with key stakeholders on a culture strategy, this will be inclusive in its cultural vision and will support issues of equity as well as equality.</p>
--	---

8. MEMBER QUESTIONS

1.	<p>Question from Councillor Paul Baker to the Cabinet Member Climate Emergency, Councillor Max Wilkinson</p> <p>The issue of poor air quality is a very important one particularly for older residents and children who are more vulnerable to its effects.</p> <p>I appreciate Government sets the criteria for air quality, which many consider to be too low, and the County Council is responsible for our highways, however I am concerned that the Borough Council should be doing everything it can to improve air quality especially around schools like Naunton Park, on routes to schools and on heavily trafficked routes through shopping areas like the Bath Road.</p> <p>Gathering data is particularly important both to support initiatives to reduce traffic and to reassure the public that the air quality in their area is safe. Can the Cabinet Member tell me what actions we are taking to address this issue?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <p>Thank you to Councillor Baker for raising this important issue. Air Quality in Cheltenham is actively monitored throughout the borough and has been for many years in line with Government Guidelines.</p> <p>Monitoring data on Nitrogen Dioxide levels can be found on our website here Nitrogen dioxide (NO2) monitoring data Cheltenham Borough Council and our associated reports on air quality are available here https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/downloads/download/693/air_quality_reports</p>

	<p>Progress is being made, however, improving air quality around schools can only happen quickly if people ditch their cars for the school run and fewer car trips are made generally and in particular, in the vicinity of schools. The Borough Council has for some time supported the School Streets initiatives being trialled by the County Council. We hope this approach will be built upon in due course.</p> <p>The Borough Council is responsible for air quality monitoring and producing an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). The latest AQAP is under production and must as a minimum cover our Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), which is around the lower high street. However, we are going further and will be producing a strategy document that covers the wider borough. This will advocate a more dynamic approach to air quality monitoring, including around schools, building on the significant network of monitoring points the Council already operates. This will include a more dynamic approach to air quality monitoring, including around schools. The monitoring work for this has already begun and we hope to report back soon, but you are absolutely right to say that we cannot tackle poor air quality alone. That's why we intend expanding our approach far beyond the statutory minimum set out in legislation and are working with organisations that can help us, including the county council, the NHS and others. We are also in discussion with Royal Mail, which has a delivery depot at the centre of our AQMA.</p>
2.	Question from Councillor Alisha Lewis to the Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie
	<p>Clarification on the shower cap bin lid trial plans:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you confirm plans to trial shower cap style lids on recycling bins in Cheltenham – with a timescale? 2. Can you confirm whether St Paul's will be included in any pilot/test scheme?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>As Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Street Services I am keen to support initiatives which encourage wasting less and recycling more. Our recycling rate in Cheltenham currently stands at 52.05% and we need to do better but it will take all of us working together, trying different things to achieve this.</p> <p>I am pleased to confirm that there are plans to trial the shower cap style recycling BOX lids in parts of the town and officers are planning how this can be implemented and what the timescale will be, hopefully later this summer but officers are rightly being cautious due to Covid-19 and the impact this is still having on the community and Ubico.</p> <p>St Pauls is definitely one area where I would be keen to trial these type of recycling box lids. For those that don't know what these type of lids are, they are the same as the ones issued in parts of Gloucester. The benefit of these different type of lids is that they are tied onto the recycling boxes so don't blow. In some areas when lids blow away they end up in the road, get run over and then broken meaning boxes end up with no lids and recycling blowing around creating a mess. In some areas, for some residents they may be helpful and we are keen to trial them to see if they make a difference.</p> <p>Ward members will be updated when more details are available.</p>
3.	Question from Councillor Tim Harman to the Cabinet Member Waste,

	<p>Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie</p> <p>Residents have raised with myself and other Councillors their concerns about the use of some prays used by Ubico for weed control. Particular concern has been expressed due to the use of glyphosate herbicide. I understand that the Council are working with Ubico on alternatives.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member advise Council of the actions being taken in this direction and indicate a timescales for introducing more acceptable alternatives?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <p>Supporting climate emergency initiatives including biodiversity is very important to me as cabinet member and I am committed to reducing the use of any herbicides in Cheltenham which is why we are talking with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to help us do this-the recent press release outlined this.</p> <p>I am sure all councillors will remember my answer to a very similar question raised at the last council meeting on 21 June 2021 fully explaining what Cheltenham’s agreed approach to weed control and weed spraying is but if not I can reiterate part of it.</p> <p>“Members may recall last year during COVID we trialled alternatives to weed spraying. However our conclusion at the end of the year, when we published an update as part of the Environmental Services Strategy approved by Cabinet in October 2020, was that, in addition to other manual and mechanical weed removal, one weed spray would be necessary this year and this will take place over the next few weeks starting at the end of this week.</p> <p>The targeted weed spray will start in the town centre then moving on to Lansdown, the Park, St Pauls, Springbank, Swindon Village and the rest of the borough over the next 6 weeks or so. Residents will notice the weeds dying off after a week or so.</p> <p>I am committed to reducing weed spraying to support the climate emergency and am pleased to say that the council is starting discussions with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to look at how we can reduce this further moving forward. I am pleased to say that we have achieved a 50% reduction in weed spraying which is line with the commitment publicised last year.</p> <p>The most up to date information is available in the briefing note that I asked Karen Watson to email to all members on 7 July or on the council’s website https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/weed-control</p> <p>Members will also find the weed control policy on the council’s website setting out all the information available to date but I have included a link here to help you find it. This document sets out in more detail this brief summary which I will read out: Weed control policy Street cleaning and weed control Cheltenham Borough Council</p> <p>To clarify, currently glyphosate is licenced by the European Chemical Agency until 2022, with the European Food Agency stating that it is unlikely to pose a public health risk. National agencies across the world have declared glyphosate to be safe to use however some countries have now decided to ban glyphosate or severely curtail its use but the UK continues to say glyphosate based products are safe to use.</p>

	<p>The Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) recently provided a briefing to its members on glyphosate. Some notable points:</p> <p>There is no right or wrong answer to the question “is it safe to use glyphosate products”</p> <p>There are few alternatives to glyphosate and those which are seen as alternatives are often still in a pilot phase and much more expensive to use</p> <p>There may be a need for the public to accept higher levels of weeds if the use of glyphosate is banned</p> <p>Ending the use of pesticides on hard surfaces will likely mean that there will be more visible weeds for longer periods of time. However weeds do contribute to biodiversity by providing a habitat and source of food for bees and other insects.</p> <p>Of particular note, APSE says “it may be prudent for all local authorities to carefully consider the scale of glyphosate use, the likely risks arising, the potential to limit the reliance on glyphosate-based products and the ability to find a suitable alternative product to prepare for the future”.</p> <p>In Cheltenham, during 2019/20 and 2020/21 some trials of alternative methods of vegetation control have been undertaken in order to assess their effectiveness and suitability in Cheltenham although less than planned due to COVID-19. Similarly where reliable test data is available from other local authorities and professional bodies this will also be reviewed.</p> <p>Early signs indicate there is no direct chemical replacement for glyphosate and alternative treatments such as hot foams, acids, electricity and flame throwers are far less efficient in terms of material cost and labour involved applying them.</p> <p>While we keep our approach to weed control under regular review, we hope that the growing demand for alternatives to glyphosate based weed sprays will encourage manufacturers to develop cost effective alternatives before too long but in the meantime here in Cheltenham we will continue working hard to reduce weed spraying and increase manual weed removal within available budgets to protect our environment.</p>
--	---

9. FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2020/21

The Cabinet Member Finance introduced the report and explained that the council had been on the front line of the response to the pandemic in Cheltenham, on matters including licensing and business grants, providing support to vulnerable people who were shielding, setting up community testing facilities and taking on the most challenging contact tracing, all the while keeping existing services running.

The delivery of the response had placed unprecedented financial pressures on resources, in addition to the £6.8m cuts to Government funding experienced over the past decade and following the first national lockdown, it was estimated that coronavirus would create a budget deficit of £1.831m in 2020/21 as a result of additional unbudgeted expenditure and irrecoverable income losses.

He reported that Council approved a recovery budget in November 2020 to close the gap by implementing a strategy to review surplus assets owned by the

Council for disposal. These would generate an estimated £4m of capital receipts which would be used to balance the budget. This work was ongoing and at pace.

He reported that by November 2020, a Government grant of £1.5m to cover expenditure relating to the pandemic response was received with an additional £300k required from internal resources.

There was also a huge impact on the income generated from sales, fees and charges. The recovery budget took this into account and at this point, even with the Government's income compensation scheme it was estimated that total losses would be just less than £1.5m.

He was pleased to report a £394k underspend against this recovery budget. In addition since the start of the pandemic £95m of financial support had been awarded to Cheltenham businesses.

The pandemic had still cost the authority £1.47m and the damage to the economy has been acute and recovery would take time. It was proposed to use the underspend from the 2020/21 budget to fund the first steps towards the long term, green sustainable recovery of the town.

£250k would be ring-fenced to fund initiatives and projects aimed to support making Cheltenham a place for everyone to thrive. This could include:

- Working with the Cheltenham BID to put on events to increase the footfall into the town centre.
- Investing in our communities to ensure residents are supported through our recovery plan
- Investing in our public toilets to ensure they are safe, accessible and fit for purpose.
- Investing in our green spaces to ensure there are adequate places for our residents to gather and celebrate as restrictions are released.

A number of proposals were being reviewed and he asked that authority be delegated to Officers in consultation with himself to approve spending on these projects to ensure the council can continue to be responsive to the needs of our town, businesses, partners, and residents.

He wished to put on record his thanks to the council's executive team and every member of staff, including our partner organisations, for the tremendous efforts they have put in over the last 15 months. Notably, he mentioned the Head of Finance and her team who had worked so hard to close down the 2020/21 financial year and bring this comprehensive report forward. He was looking forward to working closely with them over the next 12 months to support the green economic recovery of the town and further in the future as we move closer to achieving financial sustainability.

In response to Member questions the Cabinet Member responded as follows :

- Appendix 9 of the report detailed S106 funding in terms of public art but not spend; he proposed a meeting directly with the Member to discuss further but assured her that the funding was still available
- The Executive Director Finance and Assets clarified that the £250 k outstanding sundry debt related to a Highways contract and he confirmed that this invoice had now been paid.
- Functional Public art-the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets acknowledged the necessity to use every force in face of the climate

emergency. He would pick up this issue directly with the responsible Cabinet Member and make relevant recommendations to the Public Art Panel.

- Allocation of play spaces funding-the Cabinet Member would request officers to circulate the annotated S106 report so ward Members can follow up on the spending of that money
- The Cabinet Member Finance agreed to provide Members with details as to the level of support that the council had provided to landlords of its own investment properties around the town
- The Executive Director Finance and Assets undertook to circulate a breakdown of the annual £144k allocated for maintenance and repair of the Prince of Wales stadium and noted he was aware of the damage to that property due to flooding last year, which would be reimbursed through an insurance claim. He reminded Members that they had the opportunity to reprioritise resources at February budget setting.

In the debate that followed the Leader stated that it was a remarkable achievement that the council had delivered an underspend in light of the pandemic whilst continuing to deliver services throughout the pandemic. This was testament to a whole team effort of both council officers and partners.

She acknowledged the support Councillors had also provided to communities during the pandemic and wished to place on record her thanks to all those involved.

The Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing and Business welcomed the support to economic recovery and in particular green economic recovery. The Cheltenham Economic Recovery Task Force had been working hard with key stakeholders across the town and its work had not finished.

The Cabinet Member Safety and Communities emphasised the importance of the recovery of people and emphasised the ongoing work on building resilience within communities and opportunities for children and young people. She cited the developments at West Cheltenham as a significant opportunity in that respect. She thanked all those who had been actively involved in this ongoing project and in particular to the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets, the Executive Director Finance and Assets and his teams and all those who are concerned with ensuring that our children and young people do not go without.

A Member noted that whilst Cheltenham was a very affluent town, there were pockets of significant deprivation and it was important to be mindful that when recovery is realised, that those communities are not forgotten. There were particular issues, such as income deprivation affecting children and young people and it was likely that they would continue to live in poverty as they grow up.

The Mayor reiterated the congratulations awarded to the Executive Director Finance and Assets and the finance team who had all acted as exemplars in local government.

In summing up, the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets thanked Members for their questions and undertook to provide answers to those requesting them. He emphasised that over the last 15 months communities in the borough had shone through with the council continuing to work alongside them. Those young people growing up in poverty were at the forefront of our minds.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the financial outturn performance position for the General Fund, summarised at Appendix 2 be received, and it be noted that in delivering services in 2020/21, there was an underspend of £394,663 against the recovery budget approved by Council in November 2020;**
- 2. £609,345 of carry forward approved by the Section 151 Officer under delegated powers at Appendix 5 be noted;**
- 3. the proposal for the use of the underspend after the carry forward requests outlined in Section 2.10 of this report be approved and authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Finance and Assets in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance and Assets to ensure the underspend it spent in line with this proposal;**
- 4. the annual treasury management report at Appendix 7 and note the actual 2020/21 prudential and treasury indicators be noted.**
- 5. the capital programme outturn position as detailed in Appendix 8 and approve the carry forward of unspent budgets into 2021/22;**
- 6. the year end position in respect of Section 106 and CIL agreements and partnership funding agreements at Appendix 9 be noted;**
- 7. the outturn position in respect of collection rates for council tax and non-domestic rates for 2020/21 in Appendix 10 be noted;**
- 8. the outturn position in respect of collection rates for sundry debts for 2020/21 in Appendix 11 be noted;**
- 9. the financial outturn performance position for the Housing Revenue Account for 2020/21 in Appendices 12 and 13 (as detailed in Section 11) be received and the carry forward of capital budgets in 2021/22 as set out in paragraph 11.9 be approved.**

10. MINSTER INNOVATION EXCHANGE-ADDITIONAL FUNDING REQUEST

In introducing the report the Leader explained that the Minster Exchange (MX) was a key project of this Council, and as a result of considerable hard work by both council officers and Workshop Cheltenham and significant progress had been made towards its delivery which she detailed.

The Leader informed Members that there remained considerable pressure on

the construction industry resulting in short supply of materials and price inflation of circa 20 % and significant demand. The council was aiming to deliver a operationally carbon efficient building for the MX project. The additional cost pressures were detailed in the report but included additional construction costs, increased specification of work including a building management system to manage utilities and the potential additional cost of linking to the power supply. A commitment had also been made to the virtual Growth Hub which is being delivered and additional legal advice was sought to support the joint venture and the complex procurement process. There was also an additional contingency required to ensure that the project could be delivered within the challenging funding deadlines. The overall impact was an additional budget requirement for the MX increasing the council's investment from £1 million to £1.995 which was £295k above the original level of the £1.7 m investment agreed by Council in March. She explained that the exempt Appendix 3 demonstrated that the additional borrowing could be repaid by the joint venture with Workshop Cheltenham over the initial 10 year period.

She reminded Members that this project had the potential to completely transform a much neglected area with significant antisocial behaviour into a new cultural and creative quarter where people will be able and want to spend time. This formed part of the council's key recovery plan from the pandemic and supports the development of the cyber eco-system of the Golden Valley Development. It also addresses reducing the carbon footprint in the town.

In the debate that followed Members made the following comments :

- There was an acknowledgement of the exceptional construction costs
- The benefits of the project in terms of accommodating start up and accelerating businesses and theatre and community groups, outweighed the costs, recognising the long term nature of the investment
- Caution should be taken in the construction phase due to the 'tightness' of the site and concern was expressed relating to unknown costs, in particular relating to the electricity substation requirements

In summing up, the Leader thanked Members for their comments and highlighted the long term nature of the investment. It would be an excellent use of space-opening out on to the Minster gardens which would be subject to long awaited improvements to footpaths and lighting. It also represented a feeder into the Golden Valley Cyber Central programme. She reassured Members that whilst the exact cost of electricity supply was not known, this had been included in the revised budget requested.

RESOLVED THAT

- 1. Additional borrowing of £995k and upper borrowing requirement limit of £1.995m to deliver the Minster Exchange project be approved.**
- 2. A revised gross capital budget for Minster Exchange of £5.666m be incorporated into the Council's budget and capital programme for 2021/22.**

3. the Investment and Treasury strategy for 2021/22 be revised to include the revised borrowing limit for Minster Exchange of £1.995m.

11. CABINET APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES

This agenda item was withdrawn.

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

Motion A – Call to scrap the Government’s planning White Paper

Council notes:

- The significant concerns expressed by communities, including at the recent by-election in Chesham & Amersham, over the Conservative Government’s Planning Reforms.
- The concessions already made to Conservative backbench MPs over concerns about the impact of planning deregulation on home counties.
- Local resident concerns about their reduced ability to object to building works under Permitted Development Rights which have been extended under this Government.
- Widespread concern and condemnation of the Planning White Paper proposals across Local Government, the Planning and Architecture Sector and organisations concerned with protecting green spaces and heritage.
- The high environmental standards being pursued as part of the Golden Valley development at West Cheltenham.

Council is concerned that:

- The Government is not using the Planning White Paper to improve environmental outcomes from planning and building standards fast enough. This is at odds with the declaration of a climate emergency by many local authorities, including Cheltenham Borough Council.
- Government proposals to deregulate planning will water down the rights of residents to influence development where they live.
- The Government's proposals will put at risk the character of Gloucestershire’s city, towns and villages.

Council believes that:

- Residents have the right to a say over developments that will change the area they live in;
- Local councils, in consultation with their businesses and residents, are best placed to understand the issues in their area and respond with a housing strategy tailored to that area.

Council calls for the Leader to write to the Government to scrap its Planning White Paper and instead:

- **Undertake a wholesale review of Permitted Development Rights;**
- **Introduce rules which enable local areas to achieve much higher environmental standards in planning;**
- **Make the Planning Inspectorate more accountable to local people;**
- **Implement stronger controls to ensure Ministers making decisions on planning applications are not connected either financially or personally with the developers or related parties to the application;**
- **Strengthen the ability of local areas to secure affordable housing from private developers;**
- **Calls on Government to ensure that developers build on land with planning consent but not bank on it for their future profit.**

The motion was proposed by Cllr. Wilkinson and seconded by Cllr. Baker.

In proposing the motion, Cllr. Wilkinson recognised the limitations on all sides of the planning system, and emphasised that the government had made things worse through the enforced sale of council houses and its failed regional strategies and national policy framework. He had hoped that the White Paper on planning reforms would strengthen local government's hand to make plans to benefit the local area and bolster their ability to build affordable, sustainable housing and fight climate change. However, Planning For The Future did not do this. The truncated time period would simply not work and the lack of community engagement and climate considerations were worrying. While the council and CBH were pressing ahead with delivering affordable housing across the town, the government was seeking to free the private sector from its local obligations. He stressed that he welcomed change and progress, but the White Paper was wrong for both the town and the country.

In seconding the motion, Cllr. Baker noted that as a long-serving Member of Planning Committee he had seen how the authority struggled to influence and implement developments that properly addressed climate change. Housing accounted for 40% of UK carbon emissions, with some 50 tons of CO2 emitted per new home built. Planning policy must enable the council to deliver new homes, and contribute to biodiversity by actively reducing flood risk rather than just not increasing it. Land banking was a serious problem and should be tackled proactively.

The Mayor moved to the debate, where Members made the following points in support of the motion:

- Developers who had planning consent for homes but were not actually building them should be encouraged to use it or lose it. The proposer agreed to add this to the motion as an additional point.
- Local residents must have a real voice in the planning process, rather than it being a 'top-down' approach based on zonal planning.
- The White Paper failed to address many key issues and ultimately raised more questions than answers.

- The number of different Ministers of State for Housing over the last decade had caused a lack of continuity in government policy.
- Donations from housing developers were the major influence on government policy, rather than the public interest.
- The housing crisis was not being caused by local government red tape, and removing restrictions would not solve the problem.
- Housing needed to be built to a high standard, and removing regulations would make it easier for developers to avoid this.
- There needed to be greater oversight of the minority of landlords who exploited tenants, but the White Paper would reduce that instead.
- The White Paper did nothing to fix the structural problems of the housing system, and prioritised private developers over affordable housing.
- Residents had raised concerns about the lack of public engagement in the process.

Members also made the following points in opposition to the motion:

- The motion was premature, as the White Paper's proposed reforms had not yet become legislation.
- The council should take a more constructive role in the consultation and join the consultation rather than calling for it to be scrapped.
- The motion was cynical politicking in the aftermath of a by-election where the proposed planning reforms had been a key issue.

Cllr. Wilkinson thanked Members for their contributions to an interesting debate and summed up the key points.

The motion was approved.

Motion B – Response to voter ID reforms proposed in the Queen's Speech

This Council notes that:

- **The UK Government revealed in the Queen's speech, on 11 May, its intention to introduce laws requiring all eligible voters to show voter ID in all future elections;**
- **The UK Government claims this is to tackle electoral fraud;**

This Council further notes, however, that:

- **The Electoral Commission has stated that there is "no evidence of large-scale electoral fraud";**
- **That between 2017 and 2019, there were just 6 convictions and 12 police cautions relating to electoral fraud – the majority of which did not relate to ID fraud;**
- **That nearly 10 per cent of eligible voters do not have the necessary identification at present, and that previous trials of voter ID saw many hundreds of voters disenfranchised – including 750 people during the 2019 trials.**

This Council believes that:

- **The proposed legislation is a solution to a problem that doesn't exist and only serves to make it harder for some**

sections of Britain's electorate to vote – most notably minority groups and young voters;

- **The greater priority should be encouraging voter registrations within those groups that are typically under-represented during elections.**

This Council therefore resolves to:

- **Write to the Prime Minister and the Minister for the Cabinet Office outlining this Council's firm belief that the voter ID reforms proposed in the Queen's speech are an illiberal barrier to democratic participation;**
- **Work with scrutiny to investigate ways the Borough Council can encourage more people to participate in future elections in Cheltenham – with a particular focus on the next Borough Council elections in 2022 and 2024.**

The motion was proposed by Cllr. Fisher and seconded by Cllr. Clark.

In proposing the motion, Cllr. Fisher noted that the motion had originally been submitted by Cllr. Willingham, who was unable to attend the meeting in person. He emphasised that the government's plans for voter ID would disenfranchise a huge number of people, particularly from marginalised communities, without making elections any safer.

The Mayor moved to the debate, where Members made the following points in support of the motion:

- The reforms were an overblown solution to a problem that hardly existed at all. The government ought to focus on real issues that affected a lot of people.
- The least well-off in society would be most affected by the reforms, especially those unable to pay for ID and homeless people without an address.
- People could easily end up being disenfranchised by circumstances beyond their control, and this would affect lower income groups most of all.
- There are already checks within the system to prevent voter fraud.

Members also made the following points in opposition to the motion:

- It was not unusual to require people to show proof of identity in all manner of situations, and it was a requirement to vote in many liberal countries including France, Germany and Spain.
- Voter fraud did exist and was a real problem which should be tackled head-on.
- ID cards would likely be available for free, so nobody would be disenfranchised by income, and the rules would be enforced in a sensitive and light-touch way.

Cllr. Fisher thanked Members for their contributions and summed up the key points. He stressed that voter fraud was incredibly rare, with only 6 convictions and 12 cautions out of million votes across the 2017 and 2019 elections.

The motion was approved.

Motion C – Call to adopt 20mph maximum speeds in areas where vulnerable road users and vehicles mix

This Council:

- **Believes that 20 is plenty in residential areas.**
- **Agrees with and supports the UK Government’s recent endorsement of The Stockholm Declaration, which stipulates in Resolution 11 that a council should “mandate a maximum road travel speed of [20mph] in areas where vulnerable road users and vehicles mix...except where strong evidence exists that higher speeds are safe.”**
- **Calls on Gloucestershire County Council, as the Local Highways Authority, to consult the county’s District Councils, Parish Councils and communities to identify all the roads which should adopt a 20mph speed limit no later than 30 April 2025 and to make significant progress towards realising these changes in tandem - establishing 20mph limits in identified places quickly if communities agree.**
- **Calls on Gloucestershire County Council to provide the necessary funding to achieve the goal of making our residents safe across Gloucestershire.**

The motion was proposed by Cllr. Lewis and seconded by Cllr. Clark.

In proposing the motion, Cllr. Lewis noted that the motion had originally been submitted by Cllr. Brownsteen, who was unable to attend the meeting in person. She noted that it was the council’s job to improve the wellbeing of people in Cheltenham, but every day constituents were travelling on roads that could be made safer, especially for cyclists. She described the issue as being above party politics, and something that all Members could surely agree on.

In seconding the motion, Cllr. Clark emphasised the importance of road safety and the need for the council to do all it could to keep residents safe. She related the story of a personal loss due to a lack of road safety and her hopes that this would not happen to others.

The Deputy Mayor moved to the debate, where Members made the following points in support of the motion:

- It would be a default limit of 20mph rather than a blanket limit, so there would be room for adjustment depending on circumstances.
- The motion did not make unreasonable demands of the county council, allowing them until 2025 to put this in place.
- Residents had been campaigning for lower speed limits for a long time and have been frustrated by the county council’s inaction.
- The county council set up a task group on road safety more than a year ago, but it was still yet to meet.
- Many areas in Cheltenham were largely built before cars were widely available and are simply not designed for high speed travel.
- 20mph limits have been implemented successfully all over the country.

Members also made the following points in opposition to the motion:

- The county council was not against any of the requests in principle.
- Many areas in Cheltenham already enforce 20mph limits, and plenty more do not allow cars to go over 20mph in any case due to the amount of traffic.

Cllr. Lewis thanked colleagues for their contributions to a lively debate, and hoped that the motion would be just one step of a longer process towards making Cheltenham safer.

The motion was approved.

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

None.

Steve Harvey
Chairman