

Council

Monday, 16th November, 2020
4.00 - 7.15 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Roger Whyborn (Chair), Sandra Holliday (Vice-Chair), Victoria Atherstone, Matt Babbage, Paul Baker, Garth Barnes, 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, Martin Horwood, Peter Jeffries, Steve Jordan, Chris Mason, Paul McCloskey, Andrew McKinlay, Tony Oliver, Dennis Parsons, John Payne, Louis Savage, Diggory Seacome, Malcolm Stennett, Jo Stafford, Klara Sudbury, Simon Wheeler, Max Wilkinson, Suzanne Williams and David Willingham

Minutes

1. **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies. Cllr Savage had advised that he would be late.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Willingham declared an interest in agenda item 8 and did not participate in the debate.

Councillor Babbage declared a personal interest in agenda items 8 and 10.

Cllr Barrell's declared a personal interest in agenda item 8.

Councillors Boyes, Cooke and Savage declared an interest in agenda item 10, motion A and did not participate in the debate.

3. **COMMUNICATIONS BY THE MAYOR**

The Mayor reported that it continued to be a very unusual year but that he had been able to participate in the Remembrance Day celebrations and also to put a poppy wreath on a train to Paddington on Armistice Day itself.

He had also visited some allotments to thank the allotment holders who had kindly donated 33 bags of fresh produce to local food banks and he reported that his own food bank fund had raised more than £13,000.

The Mayor was pleased to report that the County Council and Borough Council's help hub was continuing throughout this lock down. Many people were being affected again so he advised members that the phone number for the Help Hub had not changed and he asked them to make their constituents aware accordingly.

4. COMMUNICATIONS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council expressed his regret that the country was again in lockdown but spoke positively about the strides being taken on developing vaccines. He said it was critical now to continue to follow the guidelines until vaccines were widely available. He said the continued work of the council to support the help hub was important, particularly the work to strengthen the food network and that at a special cabinet meeting the following day they hoped to agree the latest business grants. As well as national grants, the council would be receiving about £2.3m for discretionary grants locally and the leader expressed his appreciation to the Head of Revenues and Benefits and her team for allocating these grants out. He also expressed his thanks to all council staff and partners for everything they are continuing to do.

5. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

7. MEMBER QUESTIONS

1.	Question from Councillor David Willingham to Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor Rowena Hay
	<u>Covid-19 recovery revised budget 2020/21</u> In section 3.38 it has been mentioned that some properties have been reassigned from domestic council tax to business rates, can I seek a confirmation that regulatory and counter fraud checking will be done to ensure that such changes are legitimate and have appropriate regulatory approvals where those are required?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The property owners/leaseholders appealed to the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) to have the properties reassigned to business rates and where the VOA was satisfied the requirements were met the change was made by the VOA. The properties are being monitored but ultimately only the VOA can make the decision to move properties between council tax and business rates and vice versa.
	Supplementary Question
	Councillor Willingham wished to ensure that any changes made by the VOA were made aware to the planning enforcement and licensing teams to ensure they had all the relevant approvals.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The Cabinet Member replied that as far as she was aware there were no structural changes to the buildings that would require a planning application, just a change from residential to business use. Should it be a change of use then planning or licensing approval would be needed.
2.	Question from Councillor David Willingham to Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor Rowena Hay
	<u>Covid-19 recovery revised budget 2020/21</u> In section 4.25 it has been noted that certain assets could be disposed of; while not wishing to obstruct disposal of assets, I note that the BT phone boxes outside the Ambrose Street public conveniences seem to be mainly used for antisocial behaviour such as drug dealing, and that BT

	appear to be reluctant to address this. Could I seek an assurance that the conditions on disposal of this asset will not make it any more difficult for CBC and our partners to try to tackle this ASB?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	I believe that if the decision is made to dispose of this asset then once it is sold or the site redeveloped, the daily activity around the property is likely to deter anti-social behaviour, This is an important site with potential to be an attractive space connecting the two parts of the high street. Any development should make it easier to deal with any ASB should it still occur. In the meantime, further attempts will be made to persuade BT to remove the phone boxes,
3.	Question from Councillor David Willingham to Cabinet Member Cyber and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	In the Borough Council's car park strategy, Malvern Walk was proposed to be used to accommodate overflow staff parking to facilitate the use of space for the Minster Innovation Exchange. The residents I represent in the Taylor's Yard development have some concerns about ensuing that parking on the ramp doesn't impact on them. In light of more staff working from home, can I seek clarification of the current status of Malvern Walk car park in light of the changes to the current budgets?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	In light of the significant and on-going impact which Covid-19 is having on car park patronage, the works to provide bespoke arrangements for staff parking at Malvern Walk have been put on hold, pending further consideration of the required future capacity for car parking to support access to town centre shops and other businesses/services. There may well be a permanent change in the demand profile, especially if home working patterns established during the pandemic become long term. If this proves to be the case and in light of the council's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030, it may no longer be appropriate to invest in the proposed parking scheme at Malvern Walk.

8. COVID-19 RECOVERY REVISED BUDGET 2020/21

The Cabinet Member Finance presented the Covid-19 recovery revised budget 2020/21 and a copy of her speech is attached to these minutes.

The following responses were given to Member questions:

- Bereavement services- Cremations were taking place but without the full extent of the service for relatives and mourners due to Covid restrictions. As a result, the fee income had reduced.
- Additional cost to Ubico-this was due to the changing nature of the profile of the waste and recycling crews were collecting. Recycling figures were increasing but there was an increase in residual waste collection resulting in an added cost.
- Council tax and business rates-it was acknowledged that there would be a significant impact on cash flow but it was deemed too early to make a judgement as to the magnitude of the losses and how much would be

irrecoverable. Once this was known there would be significant lobbying of Government to seek further loss of income compensation.

Group Leaders were invited to address Council.

On behalf of the Conservatives, Cllr Harman thanked the Executive Director Finance and Assets for his significant contribution in bringing forward these innovative proposals. He acknowledged the ongoing crisis and recognised the government's flexibility for authorities to use capital receipts to support budgets in the short term. Longer-term, the reconfiguration of the council was necessary and with the successful shift to home working there had been a significant change to the delivery of services. He expressed his support for the proposals.

On behalf of the PAB, Cllr Stennett welcomed the proposals and fully supported them. He expressed caution that when disposals were undertaken sight should not be lost of consultation and adherence to procedures. He wished to put on record his thanks to the Executive Director Finance and Assets and the finance team.

The Leader acknowledged that this council had suffered significantly because of Covid. There were two things he wished to highlight, firstly that the Council would remain in existence to assist with the crisis and secondly that it was able to continue with its long-term plan in the community by delivering its high priority projects. He recognised that the council was in a better position than some authorities to tackle the situation. This was partly due to sound financial planning over decades, which meant that the authority owned assets, which it could capitalise on over a three year period. It was also due to the flexibility and innovation of the response to the situation and in that regard, he paid tribute to the Executive Director Finance and Assets and the Cabinet Member Finance.

In the debate that ensued the following points were made by Members :

- The Chair of Budget Scrutiny explained that the group had examined the proposals and whilst spending capital receipts to meet revenue was not ideal, it was recognised that this was a short-term approach and the group were happy to support.
- The proposed solution was innovative and met legal requirements.
- The extent to which the council was committing assured the town's future, e.g. continuing the rapid development of the golden valley and cyber central project to its conclusion. Thanks were given to those officers who were supporting this project.
- The Chair of Audit, Compliance and Governance highlighted that the independent auditors had given high praise to the council at the recent committee meeting and this was due to the decades of prudent fiscal responsibility. Many councils in the country were looking at Cheltenham as a template of fiscal resilience, which was a credit to the Executive Director Finance and Assets and his team and the Cabinet Member Finance.
- The commitment to the provision of affordable homes in the town was welcomed. The proposals also aimed to continue supporting those that needed support to address issues of homelessness.

- Members recognised the need to look at the council's asset base, particularly in light of changing work habits and the impact this has had, for example, on the use of council owned car parks. It was also suggested that going forward it may be time to look at the airport which was jointly owned with Gloucester City Council.
- Emphasis was placed by some Members on prioritising mixed use developments, particularly in the town centre, as lifestyles of residents had changed as a result of Covid 19.

In summing up, the Cabinet Member Finance highlighted that due to the authority's diverse investment portfolio the pandemic was having little impact. This budget provided the council with three years 'breathing time' to plan carefully and think ahead.

The Chair moved to a recorded vote.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT

1. **the estimated position in respect of collection rates for council tax and business rates for 2020/21 (paras 3.37 to 3.44) be noted.**
2. **the revised Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy as detailed in Appendix 2 (paras 4.12 to 4.16) be approved.**
3. **the revised capital programme with £1.7m capital receipts previously allocated to the High Street works to be reallocated to repaying the MRP as detailed in paras 4.19 to 4.20 be approved.**
4. **the identified asset disposals as detailed in paras 4.22 to 4.29 be noted.**
5. **the virements as summarised in Appendix 3 be approved, in order to produce a balanced General Fund (GF) revised budget for 2020/21.**
6. **It be noted that future budget monitoring reports will assess the position against this revised budget and further decisions may be required depending on the economic impact being experienced as the year progresses.**
7. **the additional budget and funding for Cyber Central (Golden Valley development) as set out in section 5 be approved.**
8. **the flexible use of capital receipts strategy as detailed in Appendix 4 (paras 5.21 to 5.26) be approved.**
9. **the budget-setting timetable at Appendix 5 and note the 2021/22 budget process outlined in section 6 be approved.**
10. **Notes the intention for this Council to remain in the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool in 2021/22 as outlined in section 7 and note that the Council reserves the right to withdraw after the local government finance settlement announcement.**
11. **the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revised budget for 2020/21 as summarised in Section 8.**

FOR : Cllrs Atherstone, Babbage, Baker, Barnes, Barrell, Boyes, Britter, Brownsteen, Clucas, Coleman, Collins, Cooke, Dobie, Fisher, Flynn, Harman, Harvey, Hay, Hegenbarth, Hobley, Holliday, Horwood, Jeffries, Jordan, Mason,

McCloskey, McKinlay, Oliver, Parsons, Payne, Seacome, Stafford, Stennett, Sudbury, Wheeler, Whyborn, Wilkinson, Williams

AGAINST: 0

ABSTENTIONS: 0

9. MINSTER INNOVATION EXCHANGE (FORMERLY WORKSHOP CHELTENHAM)

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and reminded Members that Council had taken a decision to invest in the Workshop Cheltenham (WSC) scheme. However, in July 2020, in response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government announced a £900m 'Getting Building Fund', administered by the LEP, to fund shovel ready schemes which supported the economic recovery. Council Officers and Directors of Workshop Cheltenham submitted a bid and the council was awarded £3.114m to fund an enhanced scheme. As a result of this grant, a reduced level of council investment was required. The rebadged Minster Innovation Exchange scheme has the potential to completely transform a neglected area of the town and forms part of the council's key recovery plan from the impact of the pandemic.

The LEP requested that Cheltenham Borough Council took over the commissioning lead for the construction of the building and promoter role and this has resulted in the need to waive the council's contract rules to ensure that the work undertaken by WSC is progressed in a timely manner. Given the revised approach on the commissioning lead, the Cabinet Member was requesting Council to approve the overall budget for the enhanced project.

In response to Member questions, the Cabinet Member confirmed that:

- Workshop Cheltenham Ltd was a completely separate entity to Cheltenham Borough Council. Hub 8 represented a group of entrepreneurs who instigated the concept, are independent and have no links to the council. They are not investing themselves but take a profit share out of it.
- The project was time limited and was ready to go, as the Building Better Fund was all about shovel ready schemes and if they were not completed by a certain time, the government would request the funding back. That was why it had come as an urgent item to full council. An Officer confirmed that the project had to be delivered by next Christmas so the intention was to use a highly fast construction method with modular buildings to be able to meet that delivery date.

One member referred to paragraph 4.2 of the report which considered the delivery of the project and the one option to use CBC staff, but questioned whether CBC staff would be able to fully resource this. The Cabinet Member replied that the scheme was fully funded and part of the funding included project management which would be undertaken by WSC. The Member also referred to the removal of hundreds of cars in 3.3 of the report, suggesting this would not happen, they would just use a different car park.

The chair moved to debate and a Member expressed his full support for this excellent scheme for Cheltenham which was vital to reenergise the economy at this difficult time particularly as there were very few development opportunities in the town centre. It represented an excellent use of land and the government funding was to be welcomed.

Upon a vote it was RESOLVED THAT

The gross capital budget for MIE of £4,671,000, as per Appendix 5, be incorporated into the council's budget and capital programme for 2020/21.

10. NOTICES OF MOTION

Motion A: Proposed by Councillor Clucas, seconded by Councillor Horwood

Gloucestershire County Council's Health & Overview Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) meeting on 15.09.20 approved the Hospital Trust's proposal to extend the three-month closure of Cheltenham's Type 1 A&E Department for a further six months.

Council appreciates the work the NHS Trust has done, particularly during the current pandemic, and understands the original three-month closure was to help keep Cheltenham General 'COVID Free', during the height of the COVID transmission, so elective surgery - such as orthopaedic and cancer surgery could be resumed.

Council is concerned that A&E at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital does not have the capacity to cope with all A&E patients from the whole County. It is also less accessible from large parts of the county and does not have the Emergency Ambulance capacity. Council is also concerned the additional six-month extension could become a long term or permanent change.

*Council appreciates the Hospital Trust is committed to re-opening the A&E Department at Cheltenham General "when it is safe to do so", but should like to hear more about what plans the Trust has to re-open the Department when it is possible. Council also seeks assurance the new plans for redevelopment of Cheltenham General will include the existing Type 1 A&E Department, or a new Type 1 A&E Department. Cabinet welcomes their promise to HOSC that a further downgrade of Cheltenham A&E to a Minor Injuries Unit **would not be included in** their permanent change proposals.*

Cheltenham Council urges the Trust not to downgrade our Type 1 A&E at all (i.e. to an Urgent Treatment Centre) and to present local councils with a long-term plan for the full restoration of a 24 hour Type 1 A&E at Cheltenham.

For the avoidance of doubt, Council remains opposed to permanent closure or downgrading of Accident and Emergency (A&E) facilities at Cheltenham General Hospital. This follows decisions formerly taken by Cheltenham Council.

Council is pleased to see Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group and Gloucestershire Hospitals' Trust are presenting their latest proposals at an all-member event, to which all Cheltenham Members have been invited.

Further, Council recognises that the Trust's permanent change consultation are under way. Proposals may yet include another permanent move of general surgery to Gloucester Royal Hospital. Council is requested to prepare a consultation submission reflecting the observations and direction in this motion. Council can formally agree such submission prior to submission.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Clucas recognised and thanked those who worked in the health service. She stressed that the consultation on the future of the hospital was poorly timed and should be deferred to a later date, but that it was still important to respond properly to the consultation despite objecting to how it was being run. She added that some of the questions in the consultation were, in her view, inadequate and clearly sought to lead respondents towards a particular answer. The consultation period was due to end shortly after the next Council meeting on December 7th, so this was an urgent issue.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Horwood echoed her words about NHS frontline and support staff, criticised the timing of the consultation and stressed the importance of restating the commitment to restoring Cheltenham's A&E. He added that Cheltenham Hospital must not become a satellite of Gloucester Royal.

One Member emphasised that there were no borough or county councillors who did not want reinstatement of the full A&E, and suggested that all concerned parties demonstrate unity by signing a letter on the subject. Councillor Clucas responded that this would not be enough, as the issue affected everyone in Cheltenham and the surrounding areas.

Several Members criticised the Gloucestershire NHS Trust for not giving weight to public concerns and failing to provide an adequate service for residents. One Member warned that the loss of staff was a serious issue, and would continue if not directly addressed. Members agreed that NHS hospitals must be run in a way that delivered for the people of the town. One Member noted that transferring patients from Cheltenham to Gloucester and vice versa without providing adequate transport back could pose problems for vulnerable people.

Members agreed that honest conversations were needed about the delivery of healthcare services in the long term. One Member stressed the importance of maintaining a constructive relationship with the Trust and being a critical friend.

In summing up, Councillor Clucas thanked Members for their comments and stressed that the question was not political, but rather what the council could say as a united body. She emphasised the importance of the public feeling that they were being treated at a centre of excellence, and the need for hospital staff to feel valued and looked after. She hoped that residents would come forward based on what they had seen in the consultation, and that officers would take advice from senior medical professionals when producing their response.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

Motion B:

Given the swiftness of the announcement of a second lockdown and its immediate impact on families, particularly children, locally;

Recognising that many local organisations, voluntary and church groups have been instrumental in providing essential supplies and food to those most affected by the pandemic;

Recognising that such groups require support financial support to continue their work;

Recognising that Cheltenham Borough Council has a Social Value Policy;

The Chief Executive is requested to contact all of its suppliers and contractors to request support, either financial or in kind, for the food network, so that residents badly affected by the pandemic, immediate lockdown and its consequences, can be helped.

Further, Council requests County Councillors representing Cheltenham divisions to advise the Chief Executive if they are able, once again, to support the network financially as some have already done during this last year.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Clucas thanked local groups, partners, suppliers and contractors for their support during a hugely difficult time, and explained that the motion asked for any further support they could give. She acknowledged that no solution would be a quick fix, and that Members needed to understand that they were in for the long haul.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Jeffries noted that the first lockdown had been a real shock to the system, but that he had seen real empathy between communities, neighbours and friends. He stressed that those who needed help needed to ask for it, and that there was no shame in that. The borough council was asking for help and would try to direct it straight into the communities that need it the most. Members agreed that tough times often brought the best out of people by bringing them together.

One Member praised the generous support received from all around the town, particularly the innovative solutions put together by local groups. He acknowledged that some businesses were on their knees, but others were in a better situation and were able to give. One Member agreed with this, stressing the need to consider the wide range of experiences during Covid, and the tough choices people were forced to make. Another Member stressed that although Cheltenham was a relatively prosperous town, not everyone was able to share in that. There was a major wealth discrepancy in the town, and it was not right to think in binary terms of 'haves' and 'have-nots'.

One Member echoed the praise for local groups, singling out the Big Local as an example of this good work. They advised talking to supermarkets to suggest that they donate foodstuffs with a short lifespan that would otherwise go to waste. One Member expressed their sadness that this kind of charity was

necessary in such a wealthy country, and suggested that basic human rights like food should be provided unconditionally in the first place.

One Member stressed that all donations had to be entirely voluntary, and that it should be made clear to partners that not donating would not have any negative influence on their future relationship with the council. Councillor Clucas agreed that this would be emphasised in the correspondence.

In summing up, Councillor Clucas added that the food network were working towards giving people more choice over what kind of food they received. She expressed her sadness that people were falling through the regulatory cracks and ending up with next to nothing. She stressed that even the smallest amount of support could be invaluable, especially in the lead up to Christmas. She requested the Mayor and Chief Executive to write a joint letter to local groups as well, to demonstrate that it was not just a bureaucratic exercise.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

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

None.

Roger Whyborn
Chairman

Each budget over the last 10 years has been a challenge as we have seen our central government funding reduce by 6.8 million. There is no point in bemoaning what you cannot change as I have said before, what we can and have done is rise to the challenges, this Council has an excellent track record in delivering pioneering solutions to the budget pressures faced.

Over the same 10 year period, the Council has delivered savings and additional income in excess of £9.6m – this is broken down as £2.916m from staff reorganisation and service reviews; £3.378m through the creation of innovative shared services with other local authorities and the creation of alternative delivery models such as Ubico and the Cheltenham Trust; and £3.669m from additional income generation and effective asset management.

All was going well with our budget monitoring position then along came a unique challenge which requires a unique response. Covid-19 has tested Cheltenham's communities, economy and way of life in a way that has not been seen since the Second World War. Our Borough has lost loved ones, business has been disrupted and we have all had to re-learn a new existence that tries to retain our human connections while being apart. We have been humbled by the dedicated and caring values shown by all to support and shield those who need help and we are proud to witness the strength and resilience of our town in the face of this challenge. Overcoming Covid-19 involves more than finding a medical cure, we must also focus on how we can rebuild our economy and communities to be stronger than before. Nevertheless, the challenge of this global pandemic requires a response that is more innovative and ambitious than we might have thought previously possible.

So a bit of context. Despite the significant input from Central Government to cover some of the additional expenditure and lost income we are still facing a budget deficit in this financial year of £1.831m. That is more than 12% of our net budget! This could be replicated in future years as we wait for the economy to recover and adapt to some of the changes that have been imbedded such as home working, all of which impacts on our income base. Section 3 of this report documents in detail where and why these have happened and I do not propose to go through them in detail now.

In determining the strategy for us and working closely with our Section 151 Officer, I have recommended ruling out 3 other options as follows:

We could blow a great proportion of our reserves to balance the books but that leaves us exposed in future years as no-one really knows how long the recovery process will take. Members would need to make extremely difficult choices in terms of what services would be provided in future years to enable the Council to replenish its reserves and for that reason, this is not an option I could support we have successfully come through the years of austerity with no cuts to services.

We heard only last week that a London Borough found itself in the situation whereby it had to issue a Section 114 notice. Our Section 151 Officer could issue a Section 114 Notice which would effectively put a stop to all expenditure on discretionary services, the very services that make Cheltenham what it is. This would damage future plans for growth, reduce employment, job creation and leave the spaces and places of Cheltenham in an increasingly deteriorating state. Once again not an option I would wish this Council to fall in.

We could go cap in hand to the Government but this is unlikely to come in the form of additional grant. It is likely to come with various conditions and effectively take the control away from us in determining our own future so once again not an option I wish to pursue at this moment in time.

So that leaves us with the strategy that is being proposed. Clever in so many ways yet simple to implement! As I have mentioned many times, we have a significant asset portfolio valued at in excess of

£0.5Bn, and that, fundamentally, is why Cheltenham is unique compared to many of our neighbouring authorities.

The capital strategy approved by council annually & the investment property portfolio have clear aims and objectives as set out at 4.22, bearing that in mind, the immediate focus has been on those assets held in our portfolio that are deemed surplus to operational requirements and are currently low yielding in terms of delivering a return to our residents.

They are, however, strategically placed to drive economic activity and the creation of jobs to deliver much needed housing and commercial opportunities for the wider benefit of the whole town and its communities, these have the potential to realise capital receipts in excess of 4 million pounds, it is important to say at this point that what I am asking of council today is to NOTE the potential disposal as there would of course need to be all of the normal due diligence and consultation done before cabinet would accept any decision.

The strategy, utilising existing legislation, allows us to utilise capital funds to replenish revenue and the best way I can articulate this is to steal from Paul Jones explanation at the recent staff briefing which I was at and thought what a simple way to explain that makes it relevant !

Many of us will have a mortgage, paying monthly repayments through our monthly pay. If you are fortunate enough to be able to generate a capital sum say from the sale of another asset, you are permitted to make a lump sum repayment against your mortgage, thus reducing future repayments. In layman's terms this is what we are proposing.

So the result of this strategy means we will be able to release £1.7m to fund this years budget and ensure it is balanced without the need for any further cuts in services.

It provides a further £1.7m to act as a cushion for next year whilst we await some of our income streams to recover and it provides a further £1.4m in 2022/23 to provide additional resilience. That is almost £5m over the next 3 years to ensure the financial sustainability of this Council.

It is imperative that we ensure there is stability for our whole town over the following two years , we cannot rely upon central government to financially support us as we know not when, how or if they will, that said we are thankful for the support we have received to date, what our Town deserves right now is strong and clear leadership that is not afraid to propose and make difficult decisions, the Cabinet accepts that some of the proposals may not be universally supported by some members and some individuals and groups in our communities but that they are put forward for the benefit of the whole Borough and to ensure the ongoing viability of the Council and the delivery of its priorities.

The proposals before you today also provides a further £1.5m to realise our ambition to make Cheltenham the cyber capital of the UK through the Golden Valley Development through the use of Section 106 monies and the adoption of a flexible use of capital receipts strategy as detailed in Appendix 4.

It also ensures we can continue with our major house building investment of £100 million, the work of the economic recovery taskforce to support our business's, ensuring that our communities are strengthened and empowered, working together with our partners tackling the Environmental climate challenge.

Our housing revenue account also puts forward a revised budget forecast for members consideration today.

The forecast revenue position after the first six months of 2020/21 shows a negative variance of £149,000 from budget, reducing the operating surplus for the year to £1,201,000 (previously £1,350,000). The significant revenue variations can be seen in the report at 8.1, Cheltenham Borough Homes have been

affected mainly by lockdown restrictions causing Page 13r capital programme has also been significantly delayed as members can see at 8.2 of the report.

It is customary for me to present the budget strategy for the following financial year at this time of year and the report details this in sections 6 and 7.

Mayor lastly I would like to give my sincere thanks to Paul Jones in particular for the very detailed report he has given us my thanks go also to each and every member of this authority and its partners for their involvement.

We have the people, ambition and skills to ensure we are best placed to recover from Covid and it is the coming together of everyones efforts over the last 9 months that has enabled this.

Happy to take any questions and as we are accustomed to now relevant cabinet members will answer questions around their own portfolios.

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