

Cabinet

**Tuesday, 15th February, 2022
6.00 - 6.55 pm**

Attendees

Councillors: Rowena Hay (Leader of the Council), Peter Jeffries (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Finance & Assets), Victoria Atherstone (Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing & Business), Flo Clucas (Cabinet Member Safety & Communities), Mike Collins (Cabinet Member Housing), Iain Dobie (Cabinet Member Waste & Recycling & Street Services), Andrew McKinlay (Cabinet Member Cyber & Strategic Transport) and Max Wilkinson (Cabinet Member Climate Emergency)

Also in attendance: Paul Jones, Gareth Edmundson, Harry Mayo, Bev Thomas, Howard Norris and Martin Stacy

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the Cabinet Member Customer and Regulatory Services.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Cabinet Member Safety and Communities suggested that in the Infrastructure Funding Levy item, it should be made clearer that parish councils with a Neighbourhood Plan received 25% of CIL funds while those without received 15%.

With that change in mind, the minutes were approved and signed as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

1.	Question from Luka Renna (on behalf of Montpellier Skatepark) to the Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing and Business, Councillor Victoria Atherstone
	Since 2005, there have been various research papers that highlight the benefits that a skatepark can bring to a community. These include an improvement in young people's health and mental wellbeing, along with a reduction in youth crime. With these in mind, would the Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing and Business, work with myself and others to look at improving the town's skateboarding facilities?

	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Yes, I would be delighted to meet with you to explore how the council can work closely with local groups like yourselves to improve skate parks. Like you, I believe in the positive impact skate parks can have on young people's physical and mental wellbeing, and have seen many skate parks across the UK first-hand, including the skatepark on London's South Bank. It stopped me in my tracks to watch the skaters, as the teenagers and adults were very skilled. Many others stopped to watch them too.</p> <p>I understand that officers from the Council's Green Space team have very recently met with representatives from the local skateboard community, and had very constructive discussions about the potential upgrading of the Montpellier Gardens skate park. The current five year improvement plan for play and recreation facilities is coming to an end, and condition surveys are underway to inform proposed refurbishment priorities over the next five years. The process involves evaluating the physical condition of equipment, safety, accessibility, and play value. I have requested that particular attention be given to Montpellier skate park with a view to incorporating some improvements to it in 2023/24. Security and lighting considerations will also form part of this.</p> <p>Thinking more strategically, early discussions are underway around the subject of commissioning a sports and physical activity strategy for Cheltenham that will look at both the physical infrastructure and the community infrastructure to increase physical activity and mental wellbeing – so skate parks could well form part of this.</p>
	Supplementary question
	How can we work together to efficiently and effectively raise the funding needed to build a skatepark, especially considering the tight financial situation due to Covid?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The first step would be to create some kind of forum where we and other interested parties can come together informally to work out our collective ambitions going forward. In addition to this, our plans for a new sports and recreation strategy for the town will help us to outline objectives more clearly, including things like skateboarding. Once this is done, we will be able to try and find funds to support it, which can be done in a lot of ways – though we must be mindful that this is not something that will happen overnight.
2.	Question from Peter Frings to the Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie
	In 2020, Clean Air Cheltenham hosted a webinar on the Workplace Parking Levy, presented by a speaker from Nottingham City Council. Clean Air Cheltenham also supplied (to the Director of Environment, in September 2021) information and costs for a feasibility study led by Nottingham City Council officers. Nottingham has raised over £75m through the scheme for investment in local transport infrastructure. Oxford intends to implement a WPL in 2023, and Leicester is currently consulting on introducing one. Oxford, like Cheltenham is a two-tier authority – so the scheme can be applied by a 'non-unitary' local

	<p>authority.</p> <p><i>Have any approaches been made to Gloucestershire County Council to jointly undertake a feasibility study?</i></p> <p><i>Are there any plans to undertake a feasibility study, or has the idea of a Workplace Parking Levy been ruled out?</i></p> <p><i>If so, what were the reasons for this decision?</i></p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>Cheltenham Borough Council does not itself have the powers to introduce such a levy. The initiation of any such scheme would need to come from Gloucestershire County Council and any levy monies collected would be spent by that authority. We would advise the questioner to raise this matter with Gloucestershire County Council in the first instance.</p> <p>Cheltenham Borough Council would then be in a position to engage, based on the County Council's response to any such question.</p> <p>Our proposed 'Climate Change Mitigation Pathway' will be considered for approval by Council on the 21st February. It sets out eleven actions in Section E of the document, under the heading 'Active Travel, Transport and Air Quality' which will support both improvements in local air quality and a reduction in transport-related carbon emissions.</p>
3.	<p>Question from Peter Frings to the Cabinet Member Climate Emergency, Councillor Max Wilkinson</p>
	<p>Cheltenham's Air Quality Action Plan expired in 2019. Questions chasing the preparation of a new AQAP have been asked at the January 2020 cabinet meeting; at the February 2021 Council meeting (by Cllr. Mason); and most recently at the April 2021 Cabinet meeting.</p> <p><i>When will a draft be published for consultation?</i></p> <p><i>Is there a timetable for when the final plan will be published?</i></p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>Despite the additional public protection staffing challenges arising from the pandemic, we have been busy consulting key partners on the content and proposed actions. The final document will include two sections: a formal Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) which covers the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), and a section covering our town wide approach. The formal AQAP will focus on an area which follows the road corridor from St George's Street to the junction of Tewkesbury Road with Gloucester Road. The publication of this document for consultation is imminent.</p> <p>I specifically requested that publication of the new AQAP and the wider strategy should take place simultaneously, following discussions with the questioner and Clean Air Cheltenham. This was to avoid giving any false impression that the Council's focus for improved air quality was solely in relation to the AQAP area, rather than as it is, town wide. Indeed, we are</p>

	<p>undertaking significant air quality monitoring across the wider borough.</p> <p>I anticipate that both documents will be published before the end of March 2022.</p>
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5. ROUGH SLEEPER INITIATIVE GRANT FUNDING BID

The Cabinet Member Housing presented the report and emphasised that the circumstances that led a person to become a rough sleeper were never the same, so they could not take a one-size-fits-all approach to dealing with it. Cases were often complex and deeply entrenched, involving substance or alcohol abuse, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), the leaving of residential care, hospital or the services, PTSD or simply bad luck, and it was important not to judge anyone who found themselves in that position.

The funding for the initiative came from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and gave local authorities the opportunity to apply for grant funding to reduce rough sleeping in their area. For the last five years, RSI grant funding had been made available by DLUHC on an annual basis and CBC had been able to support a number of successful initiatives as a result. This time however, the funding applied for would be available for a three year period to March 2025, potentially enabling CBC to undertake longer term planning to tackle rough sleeping in Cheltenham and introduce even more support.

It was a joint bid involving all the local housing authorities in the county, with Gloucester City Council submitting the bid as lead partner. If successful, the grant would cover funding for a number of jointly commissioned county-wide services, focusing on preventing rough sleeping; supporting those currently sleeping rough to move off the streets; supporting those who had slept rough in the past to ensure they did not return to the streets; and ensuring that systems and structures were in place to embed change and to monitor progress. In addition to this, a ‘Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub’ would continue in Cheltenham.

The value of the grant would be somewhere between £2m-£3m, and would enable the council to commission Multiple Disadvantage Team and Complex Need Navigators, an Assertive Outreach Service and an Offending Housing Interventions Officer. Alongside these county-wide initiatives, CBC would fund an ACE-led trauma-informed post and an Intensive Tenancy Management post.

He highlighted section 2.3 of the report, which outlined the Cheltenham-specific initiative. This required £96k funding over three years, which both CBC and Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) had committed to match-fund via the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget due to be approved by Council on the 21st February. If successful, this funding would enable an ACE-led, trauma-informed post and an Intensive Tenancy Management post to complement the Enhanced Housing Support Service. These posts would be managed by CBH, and would focus on working with the six ex-rough sleepers who had been accommodated within their housing-led properties, and they would then expand their work to include the next six rough sleepers as and when suitable properties became available to accommodate them – thus doubling the

council's provision to twelve. The deadline for submitting the bid was 25th February.

The Cabinet Member Cyber and Strategic Transport praised the report and thanked the Cabinet Member Housing for highlighting the most important points. Rough sleeping was a complex issue that was often not as simple as just not having access to accommodation. He asked whether there was sufficient flexibility in their approach to adapt to changing needs. The Cabinet Member Housing responded that he was confident that this was the case, and that they would constantly monitor progress so they knew when to adapt.

Martin Stacy, Lead Commissioner – Housing, added that the three-year contract would provide revenue certainty and allow them to plan more solidly for the future. Their approach focused on intensive support early on so people could live independently sooner rather than later, rather than relying on support that could be reduced or removed at the end of the three year period.

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets echoed the need to provide continual support to those who needed it most, and to prevent them becoming disconnected from their community people. He was pleased to see that they were not playing politics with the issue, and were working closely with the county council and other bodies wherever they could help.

The Cabinet Member Safety and Communities highlighted the focus on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which overlapped with the council's work on No Child Left Behind. There would always be plenty of work still to do, and the council had a responsibility to do all it could to support vulnerable residents.

The Leader moved to the vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED THAT:

1. Cheltenham Borough Council be included in the joint bid for RSI grant funding 2022-25, to be submitted by Gloucester City Council;
2. The grant funding offer be accepted (in the event that the grant funding bid is successful) and authority be delegated to the Lead Commissioner – Housing to enter into any relevant agreements associated with this bid. ;
3. Authority be delegated to the Lead Commissioner – Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Housing and s.151 Officer, to agree to any uplift to Cheltenham Borough Council's financial commitment in respect of this grant funding application (should this be required prior to the funding bid deadline of 25th February 2022);
4. Our provision of housing-led accommodation be increased from 6 to 12 dwellings, as detailed at section 2.2.5 of this report, provided that our grant funding application for the extension to our Enhanced Housing Support Service is successful.

6. ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2022/23 - 2026/27

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets presented the report, noting that since the council's current strategy had been approved in 2015, their asset portfolio had risen in value from £293m to £490m. Making best use of assets was a key part of generating income in order to serve residents' needs. Extensive consultation had taken place with colleagues across the council through the Asset Management Working Group and Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and it would be discussed by all members at Council on the 21st February.

The Leader moved to the vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The approval of the Asset Management Strategy included in Appendix 2 be recommended to Council;
2. Responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy be delegated to the Head of Property, Finance and Assets (Deputy s151 Officer), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets and the Asset Management Working Group.

7. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2021/22 - POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets presented the report, noting that the previous budget monitoring report projected an overspend of £1.044m, largely due to the £817k commercial income not recovered during the pandemic. Since then, significant work had been undertaken to monitor and review the situation, and the forecast for the 2021/22 budget as of 31st December was an overspend of £615k.

The Leader praised the work of the finance department and put on the record her pride at the council's transparency and attention to detail on financial matters.

The Leader moved to the vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The contents of this report, including the key projected variances to the 2021/22 budget approved by Council on 22 February 2021 and the expected delivery of services within budget, be noted;
2. It be noted that these variances have been incorporated into the final budget for 2022/23 for approval by Full Council on 21 February 2022.

8. FINAL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 2023 - REVISED BUDGET 2022

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets presented the report, noting that no significant changes had been made to the draft budget proposals that went out for consultation. It had been a tumultuous year in terms of finance, but the council had continued to work towards its key priorities and commitments on West Cheltenham, cyber, housing investment, No Child Left Behind, and net zero carbon.

The Cabinet Member Safety and Communities added that it was a huge credit to the Cabinet Member and the finance team that CBC was not in the same situation as many authorities across the country, which were struggling to meet their statutory obligations due to a lack of funding.

The Leader moved to the vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The revised HRA forecast for 2021/22 be noted;
2. The HRA budget proposals for 2022/23 (shown at Appendix 2) be approved, including a proposed rent increase of 4.1% and changes to other rents and charges as detailed within the report;
3. The proposed HRA capital programme for 2022/23, as shown at Appendix 3 and Appendix 4, be approved.

9. FINAL GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2023

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets presented the report, noting that it also did not differ significantly from the proposals put out for consultation. Officers' predictions for the local government funding settlement based on the Budget speech had been essentially dead on, which showed their knowledge and experience. The budget aimed to reset and refocus so that corporate priorities could continue to be delivered even when facing financial challenges. He thanked officers for their diligence and hard work.

The Leader thanked the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets for his work on the finance reports considered by Cabinet, and moved to the vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The revised budget for 2021/22, which is also reported separately in the 2021/22 budget monitor for 31 December 2021, be approved;
2. The budget assessment by the Section 151 Officer at Appendix 2 be considered in agreeing the following recommendations;
3. The final budget proposals be approved, including a proposed council tax increase for the services provided by Cheltenham Borough Council for the year 2022/23 based on a Band D property (an increase of 2.28% or £5.00 a year for a Band D property), as detailed in paragraphs 4.14 to 4.19;
4. The savings/additional income totalling £1,507,000 and the budget strategy at Appendix 4 be approved;
5. The use of reserves and general balances and note the projected level of reserves, as detailed at Appendix 5, be approved;

6. The capital programme at Appendix 6 be approved;
7. The programmed maintenance programme at Appendix 7 be approved;
8. The flexible use of capital receipts strategy as detailed in Appendix 8 be approved;
9. It be noted that the Council will remain in the Gloucestershire business rates pool for 2022/23 (paragraphs 4.4 to 4.13);
10. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) detailed in Appendix 9 be approved;
11. The Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23, including the continued payment of a living wage supplement at Appendix 10, be approved;
12. A level of supplementary estimate of £100,000 for 2022/23, as outlined in Section 14, be approved.

10. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Member Safety and Communities updated Cabinet on the defibrillators in the town centre. There were now twelve in the town centre, with more on the way, and they had been used twice in the last week. She thanked the officers responsible for this, not just at CBC and the BID but also at Public Hearts. She also asked the Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing and Business whether she would be willing to put up signs in public play areas raising awareness of peanut allergies. The Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing and Business suggested that they set up a meeting with the Parks team and the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets, since this was an issue linked to all their portfolios.

The Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing and Business reported that the council now had a membership with a local business community group called Circle to Success, which she was looking forward to engaging with.

The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency reported that he had visited the From The Ground Up festival at the weekend, and it had been great to see over 800 people attending. He had spoken about the Climate Emergency Action Plan and Cheltenham Green Deal, which would go before Council shortly. He had also given a talk to Prestbury Parish Council on the same topic, and thanked them for inviting him. He thanked Laura Tapping, Alex Wells and Mike Redman for their hard work in putting these reports together, and the finance team for their support.

The Leader placed on record her thanks to Cllr. Maughfling, who would be stepping down as Chair of the Audit Committee shortly.

Decisions of Cabinet Members

The Cabinet Member Cyber and Strategic Transport reported that he had made two decisions: to extend a contract supporting the Cyber Central project, and to submit comments on behalf of CBC in relation to the M5 Junction 10 improvement scheme, in collaboration with Tewkesbury Borough Council.

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets reported three decisions and an officer decision involving a contract waiver. He had taken two decisions to amend the Additional Restriction - Discretionary Business Grant Scheme for rounds 6 and 7 of applications, and had signed off on a deed of variation to a contract with Lloyd Bank for the provision of banking services. In addition to this, the Head of Property, Finance and Assets and Deputy Section 151 Officer had taken a decision to upgrade the fire alarm system at Swindon Road Depot, which needed reporting as it had involved the waiving of contract rules.

The Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling and Street Services had taken two decisions to award contracts, one for the supply of a Waste Materials Handler and the other for a refuse collection vehicle, both of which had been overdue a replacement.

The Cabinet Member Housing added that he had awarded grant funding of £500 for the financial year of 2021-22 to Gloucestershire Action of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS), and hoped that in the future they would be able to provide more funding to support their invaluable work.

The Cabinet Member Safety and Communities had taken two decisions, one relating to the Springbank Community Project and the other to the Paint Festival.

Chairman