

Cabinet

**Tuesday, 1st March, 2022
6.00 - 7.00 pm**

Attendees

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

Also in attendance: Gareth Edmundson, Harry Mayo, Howard Norris and Darren Knight

Minutes

- 1. APOLOGIES**
Cllr. Atherstone sent apologies.
- 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
There were none.
- 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**
The minutes of the 15th February meeting were approved and signed as a correct record.
- 4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

1.	Question from Alan Bailey to the Cabinet Member-Climate Emergency, Councillor Max Wilkinson
	<p>Page 13 Para 4 of the Connecting Cheltenham Plan indicates that CBC has a key role to play in influencing transport investment. What detailed plans have been developed with the key players to deliver safer streets? In particular, the 20mph streets now common in other towns.</p> <p>Background: Traffic in Leckhampton is severe. New development Leckhampton including a new school have now been approved. With other likely to follow. How will the infrastructure be improved to make the streets safe? Essentially delivering Sustainable transport and supporting alternative modes of transport (The Connecting Cheltenham plan). The individual plans do not connect Leckhampton to Cheltenham, GCHQ and Shurdington.</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member

	<p>Thank you Mr Bailey for the question.</p> <p>The Borough Council developed the Connecting Cheltenham report to provide an evidenced and informed submission to the review of the Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP). The LTP is much improved in its current version. However, we agree that the missing thing that flows from this is the detailed County Council plans and funding packages that will drive delivery.</p> <p>You are right that 20mph streets are common in other towns and cities. Unfortunately, the Borough Council has no powers to implement 20mph speed limits. These can only be introduced by the Highways Authority. We see this intervention as an important one to encourage a shift to walking and cycling rather than car use. As you rightly note, this forms part of the Connecting Cheltenham Strategy. To evidence this we undertook a public consultation in 2017 to test the appetite of residents for such a scheme, with the intention that this would assist with developing a pilot project in Cheltenham. The results were sent to the County Council. To date, this pilot scheme has not been taken on by the County Council despite requests by me, Cabinet colleagues, councillors, parishes, residents and community groups.</p> <p>Walking and cycling makes a positive contribution to improving health and tackling obesity, improving accessibility, tackling congestion, reducing carbon emissions, contributing to a safer environment and making residential areas more pleasant for local people.</p> <p>We have asked questions about how specific schemes, such as those you have referenced, could be realised. We have been told by the County Council that these will need to be included in the Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan (LCWIP). We have requested more information about this process, but we are yet to receive confirmation about how local communities can be involved. Despite this, we continue to be in contact with the County Council. The West Cheltenham Transport Improvement Scheme is an example where we have been working with the County Council to drive improved connections, linking this area of Cheltenham to the rest of the town. We also work with other partners, such as Network Rail and GWR, to drive opportunities for enhanced connectivity, including the Honeybourne Line extension.</p> <p>With specific reference to Leckhampton, proposed schemes will require full assessment through the planning process. The new Leckhampton School was determined by the County Council and Cheltenham Borough Council will be determining the residential scheme as allocated through the Cheltenham Plan.</p> <p>We will continue to work with the County Council, parishes and communities.</p>
	<p>Supplementary question</p>
	<p>As background, I live at 98 Shurdington Road, Leckhampton, where traffic is severe. There are a number of new developments in Leckhampton, including the school and a number of housing developments which have been approved. Essentially, we do not have a sustainable transport system, and individual plans do not connect</p>

	<p>Leckhampton to Cheltenham, GCHQ and Shurdington. I see the introduction of a 20mph limit as being essential to this, and want to establish where we are in terms of getting one.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member's responses have been good, but as I understand it, the bottom line is that CBC has made an application to GCC, which has gone through various stages and is now at the scrutiny committee, and will be up to them to decide how to deliver. The key factor is the finances – whoever is paying for it will be in the driving seat. The responses I received did not answer this. Who will be paying for it, out of CBC, GCC and national government?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Thank you Mr Bailey, you ask two very good questions there. On the first, you are right that GCC would be responsible for implementing any scheme as the highways authority, and it is currently at their scrutiny stage which suggests some progress is being made. The motions that we and our GCC colleagues have put forward over the years and the consultation run by Cllr. McKinlay in 2017 have made a difference, although not as fast as we would have liked.</p> <p>On the second question, funding will of course be key to the scheme as the TRO process can be extremely expensive. However, if one TRO can be put in place, we could then look at a borough-wide scheme, for which the cost could be limited. Typically, funding would come from the highways authority, but we will hopefully get a clear answer on this during the scrutiny process. I would be happy to discuss this with our colleagues at Shire Hall, and rest assured we will continue to campaign for 20mph limits.</p>
2.	Question from Alan Bailey to the Cabinet Member-Climate Emergency, Councillor Max Wilkinson
	<p>The Parish Council has raised a motion calling for 20 mph speed limits. This appears to be agreed in the Connecting Cheltenham Plan and the Transport Plan but as yet is indicating unfunded. What is the financial plan (how will this be funded)?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Thank you for your question, Mr Bailey. Cheltenham Borough Council has long supported the introduction of 20mph speed limits and we have passed at least two motions in favour on 20mph limits in Cheltenham. The Connecting Cheltenham document also identifies the need for 20mph limits. A Borough Council consultation on 20mph limits in 2017 was received positively by residents. The results were sent to Gloucestershire County Council.</p> <p>Most recently, Gloucestershire County Council referred this matter to its scrutiny function. We are hopeful that this will result in a formal proposal to introduce 20mph limits in Cheltenham's residential areas. The County Council, as Highways Authority, would be responsible for delivering such a scheme, as acknowledged in a recent positive letter I received from my counterpart at Shire Hall.</p>

	I support the Parish Council in its motion for 20mph speed limits and will continue to request that Gloucestershire County Council allocates funding for 20mph schemes.
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5. DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT CONSULTATION

The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency presented the report, noting that planning formed an important part of the council’s declaration of a climate emergency. Current planning regulations, both locally and nationally, were not adequate to meet the demands of tackling the climate emergency. This report was part of a bottom-up approach that would lead on the issue, and he hoped that their introduction of the SPD would feed up into the national planning agenda. He noted that last year’s attempt by national government to update planning rules had run aground partly due to local authorities not being convinced that the changes would adequately tackle climate change.

He noted that the report was clear and understandable, with infographics for clarity, and at 30 pages long it was also concise. Nobody could be left in any doubt of the standards the council was expecting of future developments, including new build homes, extensions and retrofits, both domestic and non-domestic. It came along at an important time, with the Climate Emergency Action Plan and Cheltenham Green Deal having been adopted last week, and applications for the town’s first carbon neutral homes having recently been passed by Planning Committee. It was encouraging to see that developers were already taking notice of the agenda being set by the council.

The SPD called for all developments to meet high standards, moving beyond gas-powered properties entirely. This would be beneficial not only environmentally but also in terms of energy security, with recent events making clear that global fossil fuel markets did not guarantee this. A clear message was being sent to developers that if they wanted to develop in Cheltenham, they needed to meet higher standards than before. The document would form a key part of the planning process and would inform the decisions made by Planning Committee. There was no excuse for developers to not pay heed to it. The next step was now consultation, in order to find out the views of the local community.

The Cabinet Member Housing praised the SPD’s conciseness and clarity, and emphasised the need for partners across the town, county and region to hold themselves to the same standards as this authority. Public consultation was key, and the county council had not adequately done this before removing the vegetation around the Arle Court Transport Hub.

The Cabinet Member Customer and Regulatory Services added that he was fully behind the SPD as the Cabinet Member responsible for planning. It was putting the climate emergency declaration into practice, and should put Cheltenham in the spotlight nationally as a radical leader on the topic. It set out vital steps to mitigate the dangerous consequences of climate change and the ecological crisis that goes hand in hand with it. He was pleased with the focus on biodiversity and the wide range of buildings it covered, as well as radical steps like encouraging new buildings to not connect to the gas grid.

The Cabinet Member Safety and Communities echoed this, stressing that it was an opportunity to change the way things were, especially considering upcoming major developments like West Cheltenham. It would also provide an opportunity

for other authorities to learn how they can make a difference. She hoped that the county council would follow their lead and update their own transport policies in pursuit of net zero.

The Cabinet Member Cyber and Strategic Transport emphasised the need to make major comprehensive changes in the way they did things to tackle climate change. Changes in national policy were needed too, since developers could appeal if their applications were rejected on the basis of failing to meet the SPD's requirements. They needed to be careful that the SPD was not undermined by this.

The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency thanked Members for their contributions, highlighting the importance of consultation and sending a clear message. Developers needed to know that if they did not follow the guidelines now, it would cost them in the future in retrofitting. This was especially key for larger developers, who tended to place less of an emphasis on the needs of the community. The county council had made an announcement on the 28th February about mass transit, and he was hoping to get more detail on this soon to reassure him that they were moving in the right direction too. While the council could put in place their own policy and direct things at a local level, there was inevitably a risk that national government will lag behind. Nonetheless, they needed to take their role as change-makers seriously, and take the lead rather than being passive.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The draft Climate Change SPD be approved for public consultation. The consultation is proposed to run for just over 4 weeks between 7 March 2022 and 4 April 2022.

6. SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC MARCH 2020 TO FEBRUARY 2022

The Leader of the Council presented the report, noting that it highlighted the enormous changes that needed to be made at a very fast pace at the start of the pandemic. This included moving seamlessly to virtual committee meetings by May 2020 to restore full political decision-making following the March lockdown. Over 90% staff were working from home by April 2020, making full use of the new technology introduced prior to Covid-19 as part of the council's modernisation agenda.

Staff wellbeing was an essential part of the pandemic response, and the latest survey showed that 94% of staff felt they were supported and had enough contact with their team or line manager and could raise any issues with them. 87% of staff were having either daily, twice a week or weekly contact with their line manager, and 92% of staff felt they had the technology to stay connected and do all aspects of their role effectively.

At the height of the pandemic, the Building Control Service introduced virtual inspections with the aid of video apps, allowing site operations to continue where necessary under the restrictions whilst ensuring building standards were satisfied. Recycling rates continued to improve throughout, going from 51.23% at the end of 2019/20 to 53.98% at the end of September 2020, thanks to the strong partnership the council had with Ubico.

She added that Covid-19 had presented particular challenges in tackling rough sleeping. The Housing Options Team made 125 placements into hotels for rough sleepers by August 2020, and by September 2020 had eliminated the need for hotel accommodation altogether.

Business support was another essential part of the council's response. Recognising the worry businesses had due to loss of income, the council had used its own cash reserves to ensure grant payments could be allocated as rapidly as possible. They were ultimately the first authority in the UK to commence grant payments, and as a result they received a Community & Business Champion Award from Punchline magazine.

The council had also responded proactively to the potential dangers of a 'postcode lottery' of business grants, by bringing together district councils in the Discretionary Business Grant Scheme in less than three weeks. Working on advice from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and local Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), they created a scheme that ensured both consistency of criteria and maximum impact.

The Revenues & Benefits team had continued to establish grant schemes to ensure that businesses in need received support. In December 2021, another scheme was rapidly set up with a new round of the discretionary business grants, offering financial support to pubs, clubs, bars, restaurants and travel businesses. In total, the council had distributed 10,637 grants since the start of the pandemic, totalling £48,686,982.

The council had also been one of the first in the country to publish its recovery strategy, featuring a number of initiatives to support economic growth. These included the Big Screen, supported by the government's Welcome Back fund, which was estimated to have generated between 5,000 and 10,000 visitors. The ice rink, funded and organised by CBC as part of its continued efforts to stimulate and support the town's economic recovery, was used by some 43,500 skaters, with more than 300 local families able to enjoy free or half price skating thanks to the council's partnership with No Child Left Behind.

She also emphasised the issue of access to food and essential items, which community partners had highlighted as a particular risk. At the height of the pandemic, more than 1500 food parcels were being delivered per week to vulnerable residents by the Community Food Network. Through the No Child Left Behind initiative, they established the laptops learning campaign, which raised approximately £35,000 and donated 129 devices. This enabled Cheltenham's children to have access to the right ICT equipment, ensuring they did not miss out on their education when schools went online.

Finally, she noted a minor mistake in paragraph 4.8, which should have read 'approximately £35k raised' rather than 'under £35k'.

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets thanked the Chief Executive, whom he noted was not long in the role before the pandemic began. He highlighted how partnerships and communities across the town had come together to help each other, and praised the professionalism of employees who had risen up to meet the challenge.

The Cabinet Member Safety and Communities echoed this, and added that working with communities in the town over the last two years had been an immense privilege. People across town had done an enormous amount to

ensure that their neighbours did not go without essential things during the pandemic. The Food Network was a real example of partnership working, while No Child Left Behind had made a real difference in alleviating poverty in the town. She was not aware of any other area in the country with the same level of integrated support. These needs would not diminish, only grow larger, and it was important to continue this support by maintaining the network.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

1. 'The Council's Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic' at Appendix 2 be approved.

7. CHRISTMAS ICE RINK

In the absence of the Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing and Business, the Leader of the Council presented the report, which provided an evaluation of the delivery and outcomes of the 2021 Christmas ice rink. It drew conclusions on principal learnings that would inform any future decisions on delivering another ice rink in Christmas 2022 and in future years.

The ice rink had been based in Imperial Gardens from 18th November 2021 to 2nd January 2022. During these 45 days, it attracted 43,563 skaters (more than the estimated 30k-40k) and led to increased footfall in the town centre, exceeding pre-pandemic figures. Along with the Christmas Market, it lifted the spirits of residents and visitors and provided a much-needed boost for the local economy, with retailers reporting record takings and council-owned car parks being the busiest they had been for two years. Financially, it covered its costs and made a small £5k surplus, with clear scope for this to be built upon.

She emphasised that this was a major achievement considering the challenges of the pandemic, and thanked all those who contributed to delivering its overall success. Should Cabinet agree to bring an ice rink back to Cheltenham in 2022, they would benefit from longer lead times for generating ticket sales, be able to build on key learnings from 2021, and have fewer obstacles in order to live safely with Covid.

The recommendations in the report included an early commitment to organise and deliver an ice rink for Christmas 2022, thus allowing sufficient time to secure the necessary planning consents, undertake a robust procurement of an operator, implement the proposed changes outlined in the report and improve upon the delivery, financial performance and wider outcomes achieved in 2021.

The Cabinet Member Housing added that it was a fantastic facility to have, especially after the last few years. Families had come from all around to have fun there, and he was especially pleased that discounted and free tickets were offered through No Child Left Behind. The £5k surplus was a positive but the economic boost to the surrounding area would have been much larger.

The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency noted that it had attracted around a thousand visitors a day on average, which was very impressive. It was a genuinely fun thing for people and families to do, and had provided a massive boost to the area.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

1. the overall success of the ice rink in 2021 and the impact of the ice rink on residents and Imperial Gardens, as set out in Section 6 be noted;
2. a temporary ice rink in Cheltenham for the 2022 Christmas period be approved, subject to:
 - a) a fully costed business case;
 - b) securing the necessary planning consents;
 - c) procuring an operator;
 - d) the final commitment being brought back to Cabinet for approval.
3. the ability to deliver fixed power infrastructure as identified in the Council's interim events strategy be fully assessed.

8. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency thanked CK Futures for inviting him to visit last week and present the Climate Emergency Action Plan. There had been challenging questions and a good debate, and he thanked those who had turned up. Planet Cheltenham had also invited him to a workshop in St Pauls, and he was pleased that the council would be supporting this.

The Cabinet Member Customer and Regulatory Services added that a lot of work was going on behind the scenes on two reports, one relating to CIL governance arrangements and the other on licensing for hackney carriages, and they would be brought before Cabinet and Council soon.

The Cabinet Member Safety and Communities added that she would shortly be meeting with schools and businesses to discuss the Large Enterprise Action Group. It was important to provide access to learning and mentoring within businesses, and this was a really good way to link the two and offer a solid grounding for young people in terms of their careers. The Big Local's national trust had visited last week and been very impressed by the work done in Cheltenham and the council's support. The No Child Left Behind awards would take place at the Town Hall next week, with all winners selected by the children involved in the projects. The Cheltenham Alliance for Racial Equality was also due to launch next week.

The Leader took a moment to pause for reflection on the invasion of Ukraine, and those caught up in it. She also added that on Thursday last week, she called an urgent meeting of Group Leaders so the council could put out a joint statement on the disaster happening there. A statement also went out from the Twinning Association, suspending activities with Sochi, and a letter was sent to the political leadership of Sochi to let them know this.

Decisions of Cabinet Members

The Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing and Business had taken a decision on 22nd February to enter into a funding agreement with the NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group.

The Cabinet Member Housing had taken a decision on 23rd February to expand the cohort of households that CBC had committed to accommodate from the British Forces Afghan Relocation and Assistance scheme to include families resettled through the Afghan Citizen Relocation Scheme (ACRS) and British Nationals leaving Afghanistan. He also noted that they would review their current target of rehousing 7 to 15 families across Cheltenham, with a view to increasing it in due course. This decision combined three separate government schemes to make it easier to manage, and allowed for expansion as a result of the success of the project so far. Cheltenham were the only authority in the county to have increased their commitment.

The Leader had taken a decision on 1st March to approve the continuation of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee until 31 March 2023, with delegation to the Chief Executive to agree and complete legal documentation with regard to this.

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets had taken a decision on 1st March relating to the refurbishment of internal communal areas in sheltered housing. This followed on from previous successful projects undertaken alongside Cheltenham Borough Homes, very beneficial for residents.

Chairman