



CHELTENHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Notice of a meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 31 October 2022
6.00 pm
Council Chamber - Municipal Offices

Membership	
Councillors:	John Payne (Chair), Steve Harvey (Vice-Chair), Graham Beale, Nigel Britter, Jackie Chelin, Stephan Fifield, Tabi Joy, Louis Savage, Julian Tooke and Suzanne Williams

The Council has a substitution process and any substitutions will be announced at the meeting.

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The Chair will confirm this at the start of the meeting.

If you make a representation to the meeting, you will be deemed to have consented to be filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for broadcasting and/or training purposes.

Agenda

1.	APOLOGIES Cllr. Harvey.	
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
3.	APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM VICE-CHAIR Objective: To appoint an interim Vice-Chair during Cllr. Harvey's leave of absence.	
4.	MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING Minutes of meeting held on 5 th September	(Pages 5 - 12)
5.	PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS, CALLS FOR ACTIONS AND PETITIONS	
6.	CABINET BRIEFING Briefing from Councillor Hay, Leader (if she has an update, or if O&S Members have questions for her)	

		Objective: An update from the Cabinet on key issues for Cabinet Members which may be of interest to Overview and Scrutiny and may inform the work plan	
7.		MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE Matter referred to O&S by Council on 17 th October	(Pages 13 - 14)
8.	6.15 pm	PUBLICA ANNUAL REPORT Objective: Consider the annual report: where is performance good, what needs improving, and where are they with the CT recommendations? Jan Britton (Managing Director, Publica) Bill Oddy (Group Manager – Commercial Development, Publica)	(Pages 15 - 38)
9.	6.35 pm	BIODIVERSITY Objective: How does the council ensure that biodiversity is always a priority in decision-making in relevant areas? Liam Jones (Head of Planning) Mike Redman (Director of Climate Change and Place Services) Adam Reynolds (Green Space Development Manager) Laura Tapping (Climate Emergency Programme Officer)	(Pages 39 - 46)
10.	7.00 pm	RESPONSE TO COUNCIL REFERRAL ON 18TH JULY REGARDING UNICEF CHILD FRIENDLY STATUS AND NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND Objective: To consider the discussion paper provided in response to the 18 th July Council referral, and consider any next steps. Richard Gibson (Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships)	(Pages 47 - 56)
11.		FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee (22 nd September) – update from Cllr. McCloskey to follow Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel (26 th September) – update from Cllr. Willingham to follow Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (18 th October) – update from Cllr. Bamford to follow	
12.		UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS Update from Scrutiny Task Group on Tackling Multiple Deprivation Harry Mayo (Democracy Officer)	(Pages 57 - 58)
13.		REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN	(Pages 59 - 64)

14.		DATE OF NEXT MEETING 28 th November	
15.		<p>LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXEMPT INFORMATION The committee is recommended to approve the following resolution:-</p> <p>“That in accordance with Section 100A(4) Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining agenda items as it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, if members of the public are present there will be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in paragraph 3, Part (1) Schedule (12A) Local Government Act 1972, namely:</p> <p>Paragraph 3; Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).”</p>	
16.	7.30 pm	<p>HIGH STREET DEFECTS Objective: Briefing on situation with High Street defects.</p> <p>Sophie Barton (Townscape Manager) Darren Knight (Executive Director Place and Communities)</p>	(Pages 65 - 70)
		Informal de-brief What went well? Can we identify opportunities for improvement or training needs?	

Contact Officer: Harry Mayo, Democracy Officer,
Email: democratic.services@cheltenham.gov.uk

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Overview & Scrutiny Committee**Monday, 5th September, 2022****6.00 - 8.00 pm**

Attendees	
Councillors:	John Payne (Chair), Graham Beale, Nigel Britter, Jackie Chelin, Stephan Fifield, Tabi Joy, Louis Savage and Julian Tooke
Also in attendance:	Harry Mayo, Judith Baker, Darren Knight, Councillor Victoria Atherstone, Louis Krog, Bernadette Reed, Martin Stacy and Councillor Rowena Hay

Minutes**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllrs. Williams and Harvey.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the 4th July meeting were approved and signed as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS, CALLS FOR ACTIONS AND PETITIONS

There were none.

5. CABINET BRIEFING

The Leader shared the following information with Members:

- the corporate plan is still a work in progress, due to be launched early next year. Members will see it in good time to add their input, and it will be brought to Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) in due course;
- some Members will remember a residents' survey carried out a few years ago; another survey is about to be launched, with cross referencing to show trends. A sample of 1500 people will be involved, via direct mail, on line and via telephone. The results will be brought to Council, Cabinet, and to O&S in due course;
- from next month, public sector bodies will have to comply with accessibility regulations which require published documents to meet the needs of all users, including people with impaired vision, motor difficulties, cognitive impairments or learning disabilities. Democratic Services are working on updating standard templates for Council and Cabinet reports and Modern.Gov webpages, and towards producing accessible versions of agenda, decision and minute templates, all as part of wider project to make

websites and other digital services accessible to all customers. The changes to reports will be largely formatting issues (tables, borders), with the structure retained but laid out differently and the risk assessment streamlined. Officers are being trained on how to deliver accessible documents.

In response to questions from Members, the Leader confirmed:

- that the use of colour in reports and documents caused accessibility problems for some users and also needed to be addressed;
- that documents and reports sometimes have to include formal statutory language but the use of simple words, avoidance of acronyms, and inclusion of a glossary are all important ways to help ensure that reports were as easy to understand as possible for everyone.

6. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

The Chair reported that Council on 18 July referred matter to O&S, regarding UNICEF Child Friendly status. In response, a discussion paper is scheduled to come to 31st October meeting, written by Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Well-Being and Partnerships.

7. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The annual report of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had been circulated, and he thanked Members for the opportunity to attend the meeting to discuss it and answer questions. He highlighted the following:

- the focus on strengthening the constabulary to be stronger, bigger and better- resourced. 200 extra police have been recruited in the last year, working towards the manifesto target of 300;
- the focus on dealing with anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood crime, which dropped by 59% in last year;
- from the government's Safer Streets initiative, two successful bids totalling £3m have been awarded, to help tackle anti-social behaviour, violence against women and girls, and rural crime. This makes Gloucestershire the second most successful force out of 43 in that bidding process, and although not the most dangerous county in the country, there are definite crime hotspots in Cheltenham, Gloucester and elsewhere, which justify this government funding;
- after a difficult first year balancing the budget, and an overspend of £1.4m last May, projected to go up to £10m over four years, the last financial year has produced an underspend of a few million which can be put to use in growing the constabulary, and for emergency IT infrastructure, which is desperately needed within the force;
- the constabulary has been in 'special measures' since 2021 when HM Inspectorate found it to be inadequate in five key areas: investigating crime, supporting victims, recording data about crime, responding to the public, protecting vulnerable people and good use of resources. This is a serious situation, and the PCC is working hard with the chief constable and the force to improve matters as soon as possible.

In response to questions from Members, the PCC stated that:

- resident concern about policing levels during race week is taken seriously, and although the festival as a whole is well run, anti-social behaviour and

street safety has always been a problem. A stakeholders' meeting was held recently, involving the PCC, police, county council, borough council and race course, to discuss what more could be done. At the moment, about 100 officers provide security inside and outside the grounds; the festival organisers don't provide any financial support for policing outside the grounds, and it is up to the Chief Constable to make operational decisions as to where officers are deployed. Bringing in more support from outside the force would incur cost, or result in fewer officers to deal with issues elsewhere. In view of its huge commercial advantage, he feels the Jockey Club should do more, providing more marshals, supported by police, particularly on the main route between the town and racecourse, and this is his focus at the moment;

- it is true that law and order is a matter for the police, but officers would be on hand to support Jockey Club marshals when necessary. It is all a question of balancing resources;
- the legal situation is that event organisers do not pay for policing outside the event grounds, which is why encouraging the Jockey Club to pay for additional marshals seems a suitable solution. If they refuse, he would be minded to lobby for a change to the law requiring big event organisers to pay for police outside the grounds;
- he is also aware of harassment of serving and hospitality staff during race week, and covert officers are deployed, in particular to target people being aggressive towards women. In addition, action can be taken by the licensing authority if rules are not being followed;
- these discussions can be continued outside the meeting, as he has great sympathies with anyone trying to protect the interests of their community;
- it is important not to think that the force is failing, despite being in 'special measures' - the Inspectorate described it as 'good' in four categories - but a good way to get to grips with improving the areas described as inadequate was to reach out to other forces which are doing better in those areas. Six forces, including Durham and Avon and Somerset, have been visited in the last year, to pick up detailed information based on their experience and practices;
- road safety is a particular passion, and encouraging a county-wide strategy through a new approach with GCC is important. Any attempt to reduce speed limits will usually bounce against Gloucestershire Highways saying a reduction from 30 to 20 mph won't work unless traffic calming measures are introduced and will not be popular with the police. A number of firms offer low-cost, low-tech speed cameras which definitely have the potential to improve road safety. Getting people to think differently is a slow process, but if suitable stretches of road can be identified and, with the agreement of GCC and the police, a number of the low-cost cameras installed, it could help bring about a behavioural change. The cameras clock the speeding vehicle, send information to the police, the police send warning letters, with enforcement and fines deployed if the speeding continues. He hopes that this more pragmatic, affordable, quick and simple approach could work, with pilots in different areas;
- anyone caught speeding via the speed cameras, who has not done so in the previous three years, is offered a course to refresh their knowledge of the Highway Code, rather than receive points on their licence straight away. This is the normal procedure, and generally works well;
- he is aware of the growing problem of bike theft and subsequent re-sale on eBay, and is talking to the constabulary about developing a protocol for

dealing with this, to consider how the police work out their lines of enquiry, and look at new ways to upload information. As usual, finding the resources is a problem, but bike theft could be better handled;

- hare coursing is a dreadful crime, involving many cross-border criminals, and Gloucestershire is working other forces in the south-west to tackle it. A new fleet of drones and high-performance equipment, together with excellent WhatsApp groups, are helping, as well as strengthening the constabulary and specials to fight crime in local communities;
- fly-tipping is a recognised problem, usually the responsibility of the local authority; the police generally defer to them, but if fly-tippers are caught in the act, the police will get involved. There are mechanisms to deal with the issue, including neighbourhood police, or an email direct to the PCC, who will then pass it to the appropriate body;
- the target for 101 call wait time is two minutes, the average is eight minutes, but unfortunately sometimes people are waiting as long as 30-40 minutes for a response. Better telephony could help – advising people where they are in a queue, for example – and more call handlers in the force control room. Unfortunately, the same call handlers deal with 101 and 999 calls, so callers often drop off a 101 call when they fail to get a response and call 999 instead, so creating a vicious circle;
- concerning low-level ASB, CBC's SOLACE team works well – the best in the county - and is set to improve with the Community Trigger, which is activated when three ASB incidents are reported in three months, to review the case and ensure best practice.

The Chair thanked the PCC for his report and honest responses.

8. CBH RESPONSIVE REPAIRS SERVICE

Emma Wall (CBH Executive Director Property & Communities) introduced the paper, highlighting the need for CBH's responsive repairs service to be of the highest quality. Their two key goals were a high level of resident satisfaction and value for money. She acknowledged that lockdown restrictions had had a significant impact on the delivery of repairs in tenants' homes, as well as on the residents themselves, and CBH was grateful for the patience residents had showed throughout the pandemic.

The report also set out CBH's response to the pandemic, and she was pleased to say that the benchmarking of its performance over that period found it to be in quartile 1 and quartile 2, while residents' satisfaction had increased in the last few months. The paper also set out the change programme that CBH commenced in August 2021, ensuring that it continued to invest in the service to make sure it remained fit for purpose.

In response to Members' questions, the following responses were given:

- tenants were surveyed in two ways, both in a transactional survey after the completion of each repair (which had a 90% satisfaction rate) and in quarterly acuity surveys carried out by an independent organisation (which had a satisfaction rate between 78% and 81%). Their aim was to get this higher, but for now it compared favourably to other housing organisations;

- in terms of employee recruitment, CBH was looking to 'grow their own' wherever possible by giving employees opportunities to take the next step up. They were also working with local colleges to bring young people through the apprenticeship route;
- in terms of employee retention, CBH tended to lose relatively few members of staff to competitors, as it offered good hours, flexible working and benefits that were not typical for the trade;
- the total number of repairs per property (on average just under three per year) was slightly below to the average for the industry. They tried to do as much as possible in one visit to avoid excessive travel and labour time.

The Chair thanked Emma for her paper and responses to Member questions, and praised CBH for its fine work with the council.

9. SOCIAL HOUSING WHITE PAPER

Emma Wall (CBH Executive Director Property & Communities) presented her paper, which sets out the progress made towards delivering on the framework set out in the government white paper, published in 2020. No legislation was included in the white paper, but as legislation is brought forward by government in response to regulatory requirements and any consultation, it is CBH and CBC's role to respond in a prompt and efficient way to ensure that all requirements are being met. The outcome of two self-assessment activities are complete and included in the paper, demonstrating a positive direction of travel. Key deliverables for the next 12 months are also set out, to ensure the requirements of the white paper continue to be met.

In response to Members' questions, the following responses were given:

- the white paper was a reaction to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, and the government had taken forward two main bills – the Fire Safety Act and the Building Safety Act, which include wide-ranging building regulatory reform involving significant changes to the way buildings are managed. Buildings are categorised as higher and lower risk, and Cheltenham is fortunate in having only lower risk buildings – no high-rise towers – although reasonable precautions and various measures and actions are still required for low-risk buildings. These are reported through the audit risk committee, which reports progress towards meeting the requirements to CBC on a monthly basis;
- CBH is working with ward councillors and CBC to address residents' concerns about the standard of some social housing in mixed residential areas in Benhall and The Reddings ward, the potential fire risk they pose, and the lack of any communication on the subject since last year. The longevity of some pre-fab buildings – intended to last for 20 years, now 70 years old – is an issue, and work is being carried out in the background at present, to be reported soon, to move the project forward and ensure tenants can live in homes of which they can be proud. Some of the homes aren't as energy-efficient as they could be and CBH doesn't want tenants living in these conditions;
- the white paper puts residents and their welfare at the centre, and CBH and CBC are in the fortunate position of delivering housing in the community for the community, unlike housing associations which may manage 30k houses

across several counties. Tenants are involved on the board, are part of a strong scrutiny panel, and help make the right decisions for other tenants;

- the biggest challenge is still around culture, and the ability of colleagues to empathise, understand, and really hear what tenants are saying, but CBH will continue to listen and act to ensure the best service possible for its tenants;
- regarding when the legislation associated with the white paper might come into being, some acts are already in place (building safety, fire safety); the housing ombudsman has introduced a number of changes to which housing authorities must quickly respond; and other legislation (such as smoke and carbon monoxide detectors) is taking its time due to the distractions of the last six months but will be coming forward in the next 12-24 months. Other legislation is further down the line, and will not materialise for 7-8 years.

The Chair thanked Emma for her presentation, and proposed inviting her back in 12-18 months' time to report on progress.

10. AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN AND GENERAL UPDATE

Louis Krog (Head of Public Protection and DEPLO) introduced the paper, explaining that Cheltenham used to have a borough-wide Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) until it became clear through extensive monitoring that most of the borough was complying with statutory limits, and it was only specific areas that exceeded them. The AQMA was reduced to incorporate this smaller area, which meant the previous Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) became obsolete and a new one was needed. A draft had been published in December 2020 with the approval of DEFRA, and although there was a statutory requirement to finalise the action plan within twelve months of its creation, this was changed to two years due to Covid, and the deadline was now September 2022. He was working closely with the Cabinet Member, Cllr. Horwood, and felt it was close to being ready to go out for consultation. He added that a number of relevant topic areas did not sit with CBC, as the county council and Highways in particular were responsible for traffic and transport. He also noted that as vehicles became cleaner over time, there was a sense that the government was shifting its focus towards particulate emissions. There were control zones in Cheltenham where the burning of things like firewood was restricted, but these needed updating.

In response to Members' questions, the following responses were given:

- 35 areas across the borough were currently being monitored, and this would be expanded going forward subject to further discussions;
- they were currently using mesh tubes to measure emissions and particulates, but were looking to procure more specialised equipment too;
- the data they were currently gathering was reasonably comprehensive, and gave a clear overview of air pollution in the monitored areas;
- the new Transport Hub being built at Arle Court would be a reasonable place for additional monitoring, and concerns from residents about it being a pollution hotspot due to increased vehicular activity were being taken into account;
- the draft action plan addressed other relevant policy areas and projects like the airport and Golden Valley, in order to ensure they were sustainable and green;

- it was clearly key to collaborate with projects like West Cheltenham and get ahead of the game rather than having to retrospectively implement enforcement measures;
- officers were fairly confident that the county council were on the same wavelength with regard to reducing emissions, both from a public health and a highways point of view, though GCC would also have to get the other district councils on board. There was already a strong existing partnership between CBC and GCC;
- public transport was a key part of reducing emissions, and officers were aware of complaints from residents about the effects of outsourcing and cuts on this;
- the action plan aimed to lower the limit from the statutory 40 µg/m³ to 30 µg/m³, which was likely to expand the AQMA;
- the team was working closely with climate change officers to ensure their goals were aligned. The Executive Director Place and Communities added that both teams, as well as other departments such as parks and gardens, were all under the same umbrella and he would ensure they pulled in the same direction.

11. 2021/22 ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair said he had no responsibility for the content of this excellent report, which all fell under the chairmanship of his predecessor, Cllr. Chris Mason. Cllr. Mason was due all the credit for the progress of O&S, the variety of issues covered, and the engagement with organisation providers. It was the role of O&S to be a critical friend and to challenge, and he hoped he and the present committee could continue with this process.

12. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED

The updates from other scrutiny meetings were taken as read.

13. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

The update from the Scrutiny Task Group on Tackling Multiple deprivation was taken as read. The Democracy Officer added that since the note had been circulated, a meeting had taken place on 31st August with a range of representatives from community organisations. The group was due to next meet on 4th October.

14. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

There were no comments on the scrutiny workplan.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

3rd October.

16. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXEMPT INFORMATION

Members resolved to move into exempt session.

17. COUNTER FRAUD UNIT PARTNERSHIP

Emma Cathcart, Head of Service, Counter-Fraud and Enforcement Unit (CFEU) presented her report and responded to Members' questions.

John Payne
Chairman

Overview and Scrutiny, 31st October 2022

Matters referred to committee – referral from 17th October Council

At the Council meeting on Monday 17th October, Members passed an motion requesting that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee review the issues raised within it and prepare a report on potential next steps for Cabinet’s consideration, taking the council’s budgetary position into account.

The full motion agreed by Council is as follows:

Motion B Amended	Proposed by: Councillor Peter Jeffries	Seconded by: Councillor Alisha Lewis
	<p>Council notes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severn Wye Energy Agency estimates around 14,000 Cheltenham households could experience fuel poverty this year. • Cold homes and fuel poverty contribute to the phenomenon of excess winter deaths. England saw an estimated 63,000 excess winter deaths in 2020-21, 10% of which have been directly attributed to fuel poverty. (Institute of Health Equity). • CBC is working with organisations including Vision 21, Severn Wye Energy Agency, Planet Cheltenham and Cheltenham Zero to alleviate fuel poverty, but acknowledges that the work currently planned will not be enough to prevent serious hardship and exacerbate health inequalities, especially in the immediate future. • According to FOfE, 57% of homes in Cheltenham are rated EPC D to G, and as such are not sufficiently energy-efficient. Around 9,300 homes across Cheltenham would benefit significantly from free loft insulation, and around 9,800 would benefit from free cavity wall insulation. The government recommends that all homes be EPC C or above by 2035. To achieve that target, at least 3,621 homes need to be insulated per year to avoid unnecessary cold and financial hardship. • A great deal of housing stock is heritage and privately rented, with property managers failing to upgrade them to prevent damp, mould, heat loss and electrical faults. • This Council declared a ‘Cost of Living Emergency’ in July 2022, and following from the declaration of a ‘Climate Emergency’ in 2019, must aim to end fuel poverty in the area by 2030, in a way that also reduces domestic energy use and helps meet climate commitments. <p>Council recognises the hard work and dedication of its Councillors, officers, and partner organisations in their ongoing work to tackle poverty of all kinds across Cheltenham.</p> <p>This work includes, but is not limited to:</p>	

- The Warm & Well Scheme in partnership with Severn Wye, which provides access to advice and grants to tackle fuel poverty.
- The Award Winning No Child Left Behind scheme, which is supporting the #FeedCheltenham and #WarmCheltenham schemes.
- Cheltenham Borough Council's recent foodbank grants
- Cheltenham Borough Council's super-fast rollout of recent support grants from the Government.
- CBH's tenant support packages, which cover housing rights, benefits access, and debt advice.
- CBH's focus on improving the energy efficiency of poorer performing homes.
- Investment in improving energy efficiency in council homes via the Decarbonisation Fund.
- Homelessness prevention work via the Housing Options Service.
- Partnership working with Citizens Advice providing housing rights advice, which includes private renters.
- The Private Sector Housing team inspecting and raising housing standards in homes across Cheltenham.
- The Council tax support scheme that provides maximum support to our most vulnerable residents.

In acknowledging this work, Council remains ever dedicated to finding new ways to help the people of Cheltenham at this time of crisis. A crisis created, first and foremost, by the negligence of this Westminster Government.

As such, Council resolves that the O&S Committee be requested to review the issues raised in relation to fuel poverty, alongside its ongoing work reviewing our support for deprived areas and prepare a report on potential next steps for Cabinet's consideration. This report should be considered within the bounds of our budgetary position and the powers this authority and our partners hold.

Information/Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny - Monday 31st October

Publica Annual Report

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 Cheltenham Borough Council is one of the four shareholder councils of Publica Group Ltd. As a shareholder Publica is required to report back on progress of work undertaken by the company on an annual basis via the company's Annual Report.

2. Summary of the Issue

- 2.1 The purpose of the paper is to provide background information on the Publica Annual Report, and the process that sits behind it, to enable the committee to consider the report and then discuss it with Publica executives during the meeting

3. Summary of evidence/information

- 3.1 Publica is a local authority company that was established in 2017 and is owned equally by the shareholder councils who are: Cheltenham Borough Council, Cotswold District Council, Forest of Dean District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.

3.2 Publica delivers a range of services on behalf of the shareholder councils' and Finance, HR, and ICT services to Cheltenham Borough Council.

3.3 The company has a Board consisting of four Executive Directors, four Independent Non-Executive Directors, and one Non-Executive Director appointed by Cheltenham Borough Council who is Councillor Paul McCloskey.

The Annual Report 21-22

3.4 Publica produces an annual report for the business every year covering the period from September of the previous year to September of the current year. The Annual Report 21-22 was considered at the Shareholder Forum meeting on 7th October 2022 and sent to all CBC councillors as shareholders on 11th October.

3.5 Publica also produces a business plan each year which is agreed by the Publica Board and Shareholders. It sets out the strategic direction for the company and where it will focus its resources. The current business plan was published in May 2022, was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier this year and is [available on the Publica website](#).

3.6 The purpose of the annual report is to highlight key achievements from the year in question and to update on progress against the company Business Plan.

3.7 The report for this year includes key delivery against the Publica priorities set out in the business plan of:

- People: Being a 'Great Place to Work'
- Planet: How we are tackling climate change
- Place: Delivering for businesses and communities

- How we are supporting partner councils meet their financial challenges

4. Next Steps

4.1 The Managing Director of Publica, Jan Britton, will be attending the meeting to discuss the annual report and answer any questions the committee may have.

Background Papers

Contact Officer

Jan Britton, Managing Director of Publica,
jan.britton@publicagroup.uk

Accountability

Gareth Edmundson, Chief Executive

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Building a partnership to deliver great services: Our progress in 2021/22

PUBLICA

PUBLICA

Hello and welcome to the Publica Annual Report for 2021/22. This past year has seen some real development for Publica both as an organisation and partnership. We have emerged positively from the Coronavirus pandemic but still continue to operate in what is a turbulent and challenging time for local government.



Sally Walker
Chair of the Board



Jan Britton
Managing Director

We are proud to present the Publica Annual Report for 2021/22. This past year has seen some real development for Publica both as an organisation and partnership. We have emerged positively from the Coronavirus pandemic but still continue to operate in what is a turbulent and challenging time for local government. We have been able to push forward on becoming a great place to work, tackling the climate emergency, delivering for communities and supporting councils with their financial challenges. This came together in the ambitious business plan for Publica we published earlier this year. However, we still need to recognise that while the pandemic has become less of a focus, Publica and the councils have still had to work hard on Covid recovery and underlying financial challenges, while also responding to external factors such as the Afghan and Ukraine refugee schemes, distributing grants and now supporting residents with the cost of living crisis.

This year has also seen a change in administration at one partner council and updates of priorities at others to which we have had to respond, adapting our delivery in response to the requirements of our partner councils. Through all this real progress has been made both in terms of developing Publica as an employer (including being recognised with an Investors in People accreditation), improving our service delivery and also delivering some brilliant

projects that have been recognised at a national level with awards. There is no doubt we are still on a journey to improve what we do and how we do it, but this year reinforces the potential we have in our partnership. We will continue to build on the solid foundations built over the past couple of years in the work delivered through the previous Business Plan.

Our new Business Plan will guide us as we now push on to achieve greater and more exciting things in the future in partnership with our councils and partners. Our strengths are our shared knowledge, experience, creativity and resources which have served us well this past year, leading to more nationally recognised projects and service delivery. As shown in the finance section of this report, it also puts us in a strong position to manage the budget shortfalls all the councils are facing.

We would like to thank all the councils for their support over the past year through what continues to be a very challenging period and we are very excited about what the future holds for the partnership as we continue to work better together and deliver for the residents we serve. This report really highlights and celebrates what has been achieved in the context of our journey for continuous improvement. It also shows the fantastic work our staff have delivered and their dedication to delivering for local communities.

Living the Publica values

As we have set out in our business plan, we don't want to be just a standard public service provider, we want to be so much more. Publica is not about cuts; we are about delivering modern and efficient public sector services that cost less but still deliver results.

Through harnessing the power of our partnership and our unique approach we can be more than the sum of our parts, delivering much more for residents and businesses than would otherwise be possible if the councils and other public sector service providers worked alone.

Publica's operating model

To ensure we deliver great modern services for our shareholder councils, our customer first model uses automation and technology to deliver high-quality services that residents and businesses use every day to report, apply and pay for services they receive. We know that if we provide good quality digital products and services 24/7 it will provide not only

a better customer experience, but also minimise the need for customers to contact the councils to obtain information, report something, or make an application.

We also know that 10% of UK residents do not use the internet and that some residents and businesses will need to contact their council by telephone or face to face and so we need to continue to work for them as well.

This year we have made good progress on continuing to improve our services in line with our operating model. Below are some good examples of what we have achieved:



Launching the Open Portal

This year the Open Portal was launched, an online platform where residents and businesses can easily access their council tax and business rate account information 24/7. It allows people to access information and carry out actions that previously they would have needed to call customer services to access.

It was a system jointly commissioned by three of the partner councils and is expected to save more than £160,000 a year.

It means residents and businesses get better service and we can reduce demand on customer services. So far over 10,000 households and businesses have signed up across the partnership.

Delivering savings and improvements through the Environmental Services Innovation Programme (ESIP)

Waste and recycling collection represents one of the most fundamental municipal services that local government offers, presenting councils with huge challenges and potential opportunities in terms of emerging agendas around the environment, climate emergency and digital services.

The Environmental Services Innovation Programme is a partnership between the councils, Publica and Ubico (the councils' waste company) to deliver

shared innovation projects around waste and recycling management with a focus on service improvement and efficiency.

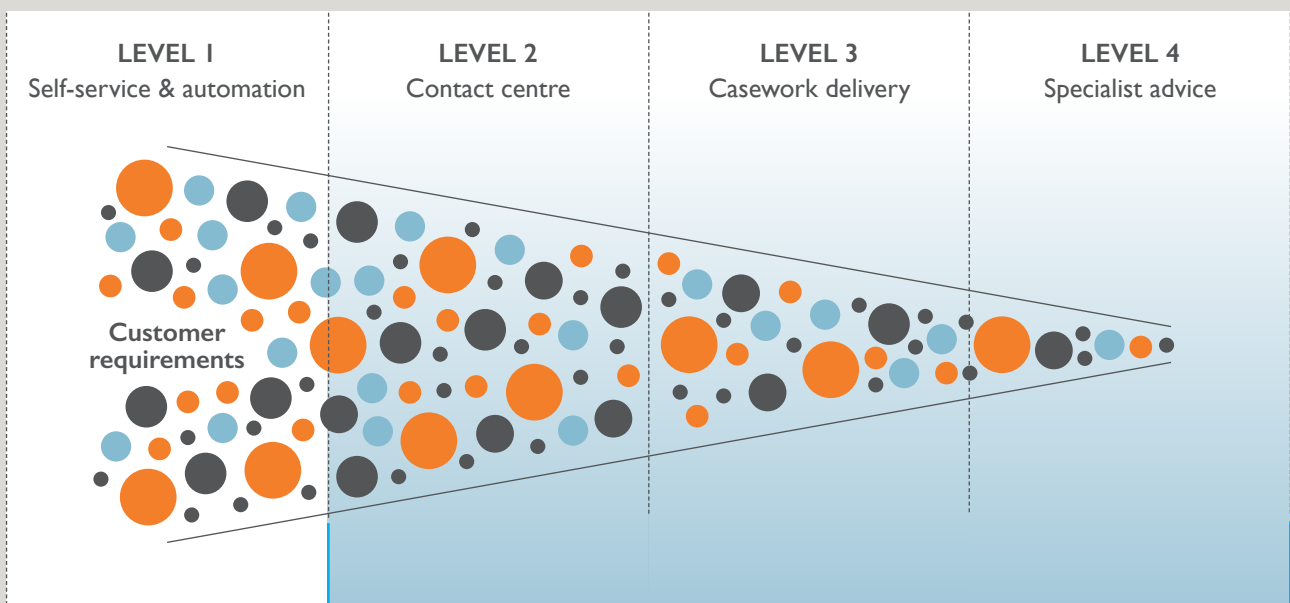
In the past year the programme has delivered over £850,000 additional income and efficiency savings delivered back to our shareholder councils including:

- New IT systems in the waste collection vehicles at Cotswold and West Oxfordshire making the collection service more efficient, delivering more than £25,000 in savings, 62 tonnes less CO2 and a 47% reduction in missed collections
- Improved approach to vehicle maintenance saving £34,000 a year
- Removal of community recycling sites in West Oxfordshire saving £112,000 in cleaning work with no impact on fly-tipping

Creating a shared planning validation service

When a planning application is submitted a wide range of information has to be provided by the applicant. Our validation service then checks all the required information has been submitted correctly so the application can be reviewed for a decision.

The validation service has been redesigned, creating a shared service across the partners councils that uses appropriate staff at each stage and a new case management system.



As a result, backlogs built up through the pandemic were reduced by 75% and processing time has dropped from 35 days to 10, providing residents with an improved service. We also introduced career graded planning posts to retain and develop good staff. We know there is more we need to do in planning as set out in our Business Plan. More work will be delivered over the coming years to improve the service.

Improving our Freedom of Information service

Across our partner councils we processed more than 1,140 Freedom of Information requests last year.

We analysed the requests we were getting and introduced a new customer journey to improve their experience. We put in place a new database to help

people access information we publish regularly in an easy way and put new processes in the back office to make it easier to process requests.

As a result we have made it easier for people to access what they need and had a 70% reduction in requests we have to process, freeing up officer capacity.

Preparing for emergencies

Over the past year we have had to respond to multiple severe weather emergencies including the red warning for wind issued by the Met Office where the response included evacuating a care home during the night. We have also been doing additional work to improve our resilience including improving our cyber security following recent local government cyber attacks in the region.



Staying true to the Publica Values

The values developed at the company's inception hold strong today and continue to help guide us to achieve our purpose and improve our services. They are:

Authentic

We act genuinely and transparently. We do the right thing for our customers, our organisation and each other.

Modern

We are not set in our ways. We are constantly looking to find ways to innovate and do things smarter.

Flexible

We are agile and we adapt how and what we do to meet the demands of our customers, our colleagues, our local communities and the needs of the modern world.

Thoughtful

We take pride in delivering a great service, taking the time to understand and care about the planet and the environment, as well as our customers and their needs.

Managing our finances and supporting the councils with theirs

A decade of austerity, continuing local government funding uncertainty, rapidly increasing delivery costs, increased cost of fuel to operate the councils waste fleet and heat leisure centres and income shortfalls during the pandemic is putting council finances under great strain. The scale of the challenge is very significant with the latest forecasts suggesting that our shareholder councils collectively will need to fill an emerging funding gap of £15m by 2026, this represents some 30% of their net revenue budget.



Publica is working hard to support the councils in this challenge through a number of different ways outlined in our Business Plan. Over this year we have made good progress and many of the projects highlighted in this report, such as the Cotswold Climate Investment, which we helped Cotswold District Council to deliver, and the Environmental Services Innovation Programme, are generating significant savings and/or income for partner councils. Some of our other work includes:

Bringing in external funding for the partner councils

We have worked with external partners and applied for funding to bring in millions of pounds to the partner councils over the past year. Some examples are:

- Over £382,000 was brought into the partner councils via Government funding to improve accessible toilet facilities. The new funding will support accessible, step-free access to toilet and baby change facilities at key locations.
- Working with health delivery partners we have brought in over £500,000 across the partnership to deliver local health improvement projects such as YouMove, that helps low income families get active, social prescribers and support for people with diabetes.

- Working with partners we brought in over £1.7m across the partnership to support Covid recovery including marketing for town centres, active travel schemes, community food projects, debt and welfare support, mental health support among many other projects.

Launching the Publica Innovation Programme

This year saw the launch of the Publica Innovation Programme where the organisation will be proactively working with shareholder councils and looking at opportunities to generate additional income and improve services in the context of the need to significantly reduce council revenue expenditure in the coming years. The aim is to make the savings through more efficient working and income generation to preserve service delivery.

£382,000

Over £382,000 was brought into the partner councils via Government funding to improve accessible toilet facilities

Working together to deliver efficient services: Publica's progress since 2017

In 2015 the four partner councils started their journey of joint working with the ambition to save money and operate more efficiently, with Publica created in 2017 as part of the project. By March 2022 the partnership had delivered £5.83m of recurring annual revenue savings, meeting its target six years ahead of schedule. Publica has also delivered

£1.8m in one-off savings that the councils have been able to reinvest in services for residents. In total the cumulative savings since 2015 have reached almost £27m. By the end of the forecasted period up to 2028, it is estimated the partnership will have saved £63m, a tenfold return on the initial investment of £6.1m from the partner councils.

Financial Review 2021/22

Over the full financial year Publica has met its budget targets. The budget target for 2021/22 incorporated an additional savings target of £500k, this has been met together with an additional £215k of one-off (non-recurring) savings.

The financial year has been another difficult one for all partners with continued demands being placed on local government from central government to play a range of roles outside of the norm for local government as a consequence of the global pandemic. As one of the major delivery partners, Publica has had to be 'fleet of foot' to pick up these new roles whilst also delivering core services for the councils and residents. Additional activities carried out

over the year include administering business grant payments, supporting Covid 19 testing/vaccination centres and supporting refugee programmes.

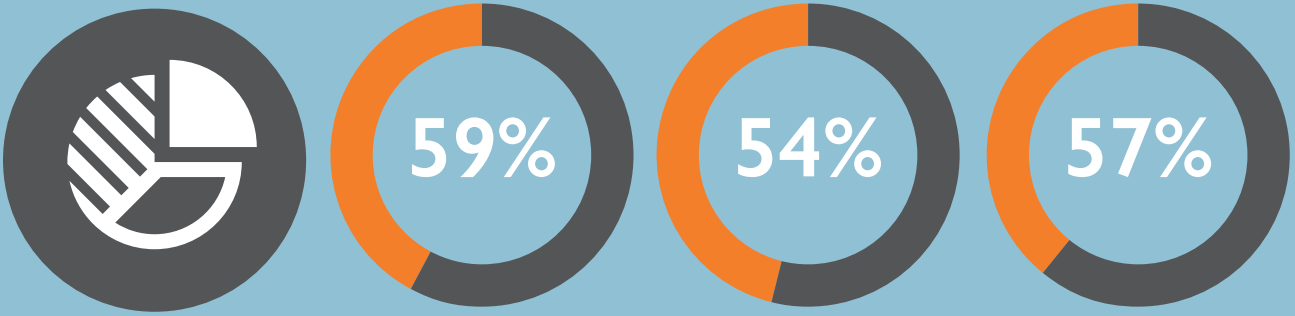
As a trusted 'not for profit' partner we have sought to pick up most of the additional work within the core contract with variations only being sought where additional expenses were incurred. For example, the various business grant schemes which have been largely run by core staff but with a small amount of additional resource organised by Publica being billed directly to councils and therefore not impacting on contract values.

The outturn position is shown below:

BUDGET VS ACTUAL 2021/22	BUDGET Q4	ACCRUED Q4	(+) / -
	£000s	£000s	£000s
SALES			
Contract income	27,028	27,028	0
DIRECT COSTS			
Salaries (Inc. oncosts)	(22,994)	(22,349)	(645)
Agency costs	(15)	(473)	458
Contractor costs	(65)	(77)	12
Employee transport and travel	(300)	(126)	(174)
Other staff costs	(496)	(509)	13
GROSS SURPLUS	3,158	3,494	(336)
Administration expenses	(1,852)	(1,965)	113
Other operating expenses	(12)	(12)	0
OPERATING SURPLUS	1,294	1,517	(223)
Net interest (payable)/ receivable	10	2	8
SURPLUS BEFORE TAX	1,304	1,519	(215)
Tax	0	0	0
Contract fee refund	(1,288)	(1,288)	0
RETAINED SURPLUS	16	16	16
Additional surplus / (deficit) distribution	0	215	(215)

Delivery in numbers across the partnership (August 2021-2022)

Working in partnership with Ubico and Biffa we have delivered some of the highest recycling rates in the country - Cotswold 59%, Forest of Dean 54% and West Oxfordshire 57%



2,530



food hygiene checks and inspections

Over 832 reported abandoned vehicles investigated

832+

4,550



planning applications processed

Working with Ubico and Biffa we have collected over 28 million waste bins with a collection rate of over 99%

28m



51 car parks managed



2,172

vulnerable people helped to stay independent through our alarm monitoring service

276 disabled facilities grants approved

81,040

benefits and financial support claims processed

1,286



households supported to find a new house through Homeseeker Plus

3,698

fly tips responded to



Over 10,000 households signed up to our new OpenPortal

10,000+

£12,122,250

distributed in council tax energy support grants



377

sponsors supported on the Homes for Ukraine scheme

£306m

collected in council tax and business rates

Over 1,780 pre-application enquiries supported

1,780+

421



taxis licensed

770+

Over 770 affordable homes completed



255,994

calls answered by customer services on behalf of the councils

Over 671 placements were made into emergency accommodation to make sure people always had somewhere to stay

671+

£4,717,364

Distributed £4,717,364 in Omicron Business Grants

Planet: How we are tackling climate change

Tackling climate change is the challenge of our generation, and with each shareholder council declaring a climate emergency as well as an ecological and biodiversity emergency, our response is becoming central to all we do.

We are making progress towards our target of being net zero by 2030. This includes:

Working in an agile way to reduce our carbon footprint

We have reinforced and updated our approach to agile working during the pandemic recovery, making sure that we are delivering a working approach for staff that is flexible for them and also helps to reduce our carbon footprint by reducing travel and building usage.

This year we have progressed plans to change the way we use our buildings across the partnership, looking to reduce our carbon footprint by around 100 tonnes of CO₂ annually. By allowing staff to work more flexibly we expect to reduce travel by around 90,000 miles a year, saving another 350 tonnes of CO₂. This is in addition to the councils' own carbon reduction plans.

“By continuing to build on the new ways of working the pandemic accelerated, we can operate in a much more efficient way for the councils and the environment. By making the best use of technology and our buildings, we can reduce our carbon footprint by minimising staff travel, work more effectively across the wide geographical footprint Publica covers and also free up space in council buildings for other uses. Not only this, we are providing staff with the working arrangements people have now come to expect with a hybrid approach to office and home working. Without this we will not be able to attract or retain great staff.”

Sue Pangbourne, Executive Director



Working together to reach a target
of net zero carbon by

2030

Our electric vehicle car scheme

A new Green Car Scheme has been introduced for staff at Publica to allow them to more easily afford electric vehicles through NHS Fleet Solutions. On top of this we are also offering staff £750 to purchase charging points to make it more financially achievable for staff to own an electric vehicle. So far eight staff have taken up the scheme in the first few months.

Rolling out Carbon Literacy training to staff

To date, 60 key staff from across the organisation have participated in Carbon Literacy training as we embed our response to the climate emergency in everything we do. This will be pushed forward over the coming years as we aim for at least 50% of our staff to have participated in Carbon Literacy training by 2025.

Staff using corporate volunteering days to support biodiversity and carbon reduction activities

Staff are now actively encouraged to use their two days a year they have available for local volunteering activities that support biodiversity or carbon reduction. In the past year staff have spent 310 hours taking part in tree planting, clearing local waterways and conservation work at country parks among other activities.

Tackling the climate emergency within our communities:

Electric Vehicle charging points installed across the partnership

The past year has seen electric vehicle charging points being installed across the Publica partnership either through local schemes or in partnership with county councils. 72 charging bays are now live.

Supporting biodiversity and protecting open space

In West Oxfordshire officers have been working hard to protect and enhance biodiversity. This has included working with local communities to protect local wildlife in Kilkenny County Park. Not only that, the Council has purchased Langel Common in Witney to maintain it as open space for use by wildlife and the public and protect it from development.

Exploring a Biosphere Reserve

Working with Forest of Dean District Council we have been exploring the options of creating a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve covering the Forest to protect the local environment, help the economy and promote learning and education. If agreed by the Council the Forest of Dean would become one of more than 720 Biospheres worldwide.

720

Working with Forest of Dean District Council we have been exploring the options of creating a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve covering the Forest to protect the local environment, help the economy and promote learning and education. If agreed by the Council the Forest of Dean would become one of more than 720 Biospheres worldwide.

Cotswold Climate Investment - using community investment to fund local initiatives

Cotswold District Council was one of the first five UK councils to become part of the Green Finance Institute and Abundance Investment's Local Climate Bond campaign. The first Local Climate Bond was very successful raising £500,000, which will fund Electric Vehicle Charging Point roll-out and decarbonisation of Trinity Road office. New investment opportunities will be rolled out in the future.



INVEST LOCALLY TO CREATE
A GREENER COTSWOLDS



Decarbonising buildings

This year saw the completion of a decarbonisation scheme in the Cotswold leisure centres which included the installation of solar panels and air source heat pumps in the main leisure centre in Cirencester; reducing the Cotswold District Council emissions by 30% and saving £20,000 per year in running costs. Also the Forest of Dean Council Office in Coleford has had solar panels installed and cavity wall insulation installed that will significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the building.

Aurora Project: Working with international partners to tackle climate change in the Forest of Dean

Forest of Dean Council has been successful in being selected to take part in a European project, working with partners across the continent to explore how we can help local communities lower their carbon footprint. The project will bring in up to £250,000 investment to the area for engaging communities to reduce their carbon footprint and installing solar panels.

Delivering low-carbon homes

Across the partnership Publica staff have been working with developers to look at ways we can introduce more low-carbon homes. This has resulted in the development of a number of national firsts including the zero carbon self-build scheme in Chipping Norton and the low-carbon development in Down Ampney.

£20,000

Installation of solar panels and air source heat pumps in the main leisure centre in Cirencester, has reduced the Cotswold District Council emissions by 30% and saving £20,000 per year in running costs.

People: Being a ‘Great Place to Work’

We will only accomplish our aims and deliver our shareholder council priorities if the very best people work for Publica. We need to use the advantages we have as a Teckal company to bring in people who are enthusiastic about change and are committed to delivering great public services.



We are continuing to build our reputation as a great employer; a great place to work and somewhere people can be ambitious and fulfil their full potential. Our employees need to feel well-led, supported, rewarded and empowered within a healthy workplace culture.

The key areas for development of our people are linked with the Investors in People framework (IIP) which will assist us in continuing to develop the right conditions for improving services and delivering services and key projects for our shareholder councils.

This year we have made some fantastic progress improving Publica as a ‘Great Place to Work’, however we know we are on a journey with far more to do which is outlined in the Business Plan.

“This year we have made some fantastic progress improving Publica as a ‘Great Place to Work’ however we know we are on a journey with far more to do which is outlined in the Business Plan.”

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™ We invest in people Standard

We are now an Investors in People (IIP) accredited employer

In July we were delighted to receive IIP Standard Accreditation meaning we meet the international standard for the scheme. We are using the IIP framework to continue our journey as set out in the Business Plan and we will now be aiming to meet their Silver standard to continue our improvement as an employer.

“We opted in to Investors in People not because of the allure of an award but because IIP really does provide a comprehensive framework for good people management. Achieving the accreditation this year was a boost. We have always said that the journey is more important than the destination but the award itself does no harm as a tangible sign of progress and recognition of the hard work by staff. The higher Silver accreditation is our motivational target for reassessment in two years time”.

Jan Britton, Managing Director of Publica

Closer working between our staff and leadership team

The Staff Forum was introduced in the last year which discusses key issues and topics affecting the business, providing feedback and working with our senior leadership to deliver the best outcomes. We have also introduced a Shadow Board who attend Publica board meetings, observing and providing feedback on the strategic leadership of the company from a staff perspective.

Our new mental health first aiders

There are now 13 mental health first aiders across the business who provide additional support for staff on top of the corporate support package available to all our people. All the mental health first aiders are Publica staff who have been trained to provide support and signpost to sources of help for colleagues if it is needed.

There are now 13 mental health first aiders across the business who provide additional support for staff on top of the corporate support package available to all staff. All the mental health first aiders are Publica staff who have been trained to provide support.

Improving professional development, training and career progression

Offering professional development, training and progression is key to retaining great staff. This past year has seen the introduction of career-graded posts in planning and other areas where staff can grow and develop with us, providing them a clear career path and helping us retain officers. We have also introduced new peer coaching groups, professional development courses, a new google classroom for all staff and have carried out a review on what training is needed across the organisation to help structure our new approach to organisational development.

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Growing our leaders

We completed our Leadership Development Programme in partnership with Oxford Brookes University to grow our senior leaders across Publica and retained staff in the partner councils. Our next step will be rolling out a wider leadership programme for more staff members over the coming year.





“The benefit of the Leadership Development Programme will be growing leaders who collaborate, have honest conversations and use a coaching style of leadership. By operating in this way across the organisation we will better enable staff to maximise their potential and feel valued and motivated. Leadership isn’t about a job title; it is about the attitude and behaviours we all bring to a situation. This training will help boost our leadership skills across Publica.”

Philippa Lowe, Business Manager for Localities,

Improving our recruitment in a challenging market

Across 2021 and 2022 the recruitment market has been challenging with many organisations across different sectors struggling to recruit. Publica has been no different but we have been working hard to improve our processes and offer to help attract the best staff. We have introduced a new recruitment

system to make it simpler and easier for candidates to apply. We will be continuing our development in this area over the coming year with improvements to our employment package, website and systems.

Introducing our new Group Manager for Organisational Effectiveness

Zoe Campbell is new to this role which is a real investment in our people and her priority will be to help us move from good to great as we improve our business and the services we provide for our councils and other partners.

2021 / 22

Across 2021 and 2022 the recruitment market has been challenging with many organisations across different sectors struggling to recruit.

LGC Awards

2022

West House, London



Place: Delivering for businesses and communities

We are committed to providing great services to local communities and delivering key projects with the shareholder councils, being flexible where we need to be and sharing resources and ideas.

Our shareholder councils share some ambitions but they also each have local needs and priorities that will deliver against their own corporate plans. Publica respects their individual identities, while also making the most of delivery through the partnership. We achieve more together by collaborating and pushing the boundaries of what we do to showcase the very best in place-based delivery. Over the past year some amazing work has been delivered in communities across the partnership.

Crowdfund Cotswold win Local Government Chronicle Award

Publica has been proud to support the delivery of Cotswold District Council's Crowdfund Cotswold project which won the 'Community Involvement' award at this year's prestigious Local Government Chronicle Awards. The project is a crowdfunding approach to generate funding for local projects. To date more than £400,000 has been raised for 24 different projects with the council putting in £130,000 funding to help.

Cost of Living crisis

The rising cost of living has hit communities hard. In response, work has been started to see how the partnership can respond. It has initially included:

- Advice on shareholder councils websites and leaflets produced for all three councils advising residents on how and where to get support
- Reviewing the council tax support schemes to see how more people can be helped
- Administering the Governments £150 energy rebate scheme, distributing over £12m across Cotswold, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire
- Distributed more than £700,000 of Household Support Funding, with a primary focus on households with children and pensioners
- Working with county partners to deliver the Holiday Activity and Food Programme

Work in this area will continue over the coming months as the country responds to continuing increases in costs to households.

Recovering from the Coronavirus Pandemic

While the direct response to coronavirus has become less of a focus, councils have still been working hard to help local people and businesses recover from the impact of two years of restrictions.

Our teams have provided a wide range of support including helping local community groups with funding and supporting health initiatives. For example in West Oxfordshire we launched the Be Kind to Your Mind campaign to support people's mental health and we worked in partnership with Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire, the Housing team and the Community Food Network to distribute £126,000 of Household Support Funding to families and individuals struggling to afford food.

We have also continued to provide financial support. We distributed:

- The Omicron Business Grants totalling £4,717,364
- Additional support for businesses through the Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund of £4,282,013
- Additional support to those having to self-isolate through the administration of the Test and Trace reliefs totalling £914,500

£914,500

Additional support to those having to self-isolate through the administration of the Test and Trace reliefs totalling £914,500

Supporting Ukraine and Afghan refugees

In response to the crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine all partner councils were asked to be part of the national and local response to supporting refugees coming into the country. Teams across Publica have worked hard coordinating local support, making sure housing was safe and appropriate, handing out funding, supporting host families and many other tasks to make the refugees feel welcome and hosts for the Ukraine scheme feel supported.



FOREST OF DEAN DISTRICT COUNCIL
OUR LOCAL PLAN
WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER FUTURE

YOUR
COTSWOLD
YOUR **PLAN**
CREATING A FUTURE
THAT IS GREEN TO THE CORE

Developing Local Plans with our partner councils

Forward planning is a key activity for any district council and we have been working hard to do so in a different way that better engages local communities in the future of their area.

We have been successful in round one and two of the Governments Proptech Fund, bringing in

£171,000 to use new digital tools to engage local communities. This has led to the award nominated local plan consultation at Cotswold District Council and a new approach in West Oxfordshire. We have also worked closely with the lead member in Forest of Dean to deliver the 'Our Plan' consultation, changing the narrative on how a local plan can be delivered in partnership with communities.

Regenerating local areas

Great progress has been made this year by all the partner councils on projects to regenerate key areas or buildings to boost local communities and economies:

Destination Lydney Harbour

The project has made fantastic progress with the opening of a new cafe and toilets for the public and the installation of public artworks to local and regional acclaim. The planned highway improvements are currently in progress and the premises for the community-led boat building project has been identified.

Bringing the Old Station back to life

A project has started to regenerate the Old Station building in Cirencester with a partnership formed with Historic England to use it as a test for how to regenerate an old building in a way that is environmentally friendly.

Levelling up the Forest Of Dean

Following the successful bid for £20m to the Governments Levelling Up Fund, the implementation has progressed at pace with the demolition of the old buildings on the Five Acres site and engagement on the new designs taking place. Work is also well underway with LUF partners. Hartpury University/ College have almost finished construction of their new EVCP car park and Cinderford Town Council have completed their first solar PV installation at Rheola House.

Protecting open space to enhance local areas

Public officers worked with councillors and local residents in West Oxfordshire to purchase part of Langel Common in Witney. The addition to this popular open space was bought by the council in collaboration with local residents to preserve the meadow, maintain public access and protect it from future development.



Delivering affordable housing

All the shareholder councils want to deliver affordable housing where the market is not delivering sufficiently to meet the needs of local people. We have continued to deliver affordable housing in partnership with developers and housing providers, pushing the boundaries with exemplar design to maximise the delivery of development schemes that are sustainable and align with net-zero carbon ambitions.

National first self-build scheme in Chipping Norton

The scheme at Walterbush Road in Chipping Norton will be the first of its kind in the country with the council providing land and funding for net-zero carbon, self-build affordable homes.

30% affordable housing scheme in Lydney

The Mirum Park scheme in Lydney will provide 30% of the total houses built as affordable, either for social rent or shared ownership, helping local people purchase a local home. It is one of many across the partnership where we are pushing the limits of including affordable housing in developments.

Developing a net zero scheme in Down Ampney

The groundbreaking scheme in Down Ampney will be the first in partnership with Bromford to develop a truly low carbon affordable housing estate, making use of the latest technologies to demonstrate how this sort of scheme can be delivered using the councils' nationally recognised Net-Zero Carbon Toolkit.

770+

This year has seen more than 770 affordable homes built across Cotswolds, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire.

Helping build local communities

Our Community Builders Team has been working across the Cotswolds, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire to bring together local people and help set up local initiatives such as in Worcester Road, Cinderford, where community builders went into a community with known issues around anti-social behaviour and drug and alcohol mis-use to use an asset based approach to talk to residents and help facilitate a community meeting. The engagement highlighted a need for more exercise classes which were delivered. Also a local business connected with the community to provide its corporate volunteer day to redecorate the underused community centre.

As the contact on the ground, community builders empower individuals and groups to work together to take action and enable community driven initiatives.

Supporting local economies

Our teams at Cotswold, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire continue to work closely with local businesses to support the local economies. This includes helping the Royal Agricultural College to access additional funding towards a new innovation village, working with town centres across West Oxfordshire to help them survive and running business start-up grants in the Forest of Dean to help grow local businesses.



The Publica partnership

Publica is a not-for-profit company owned by Cotswold District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, Forest of Dean District Council and Cheltenham Borough Council. We are a partnership, working together to share skills and resources to allow us to deliver more for the councils and residents we serve.

Each of the partner councils and organisations retain their independence and identity, but by working together and sharing resources, we seek to maximise mutual benefit for all. Set up in 2017, we are on a journey of continued improvement, and we are looking for new ways to effectively deliver local services for each council and the communities they represent.

So far we have transformed the way services are delivered within the three districts, helping the councils deliver great services for local residents. Over the coming years we will strive to deliver even better services, innovate in the way we deliver them and continue to deliver the council priorities.

Putting residents at the heart of what we do

Publica is a customer focused organisation driven by real user needs. We are here to deliver great public services for the councils and residents we work for. In all our work we strive to:

- Deliver services to a high standard that are responsive, flexible and focused on individual and community needs
- Staff who are warm and approachable, who take the time to listen and understand people's needs
- Have a seamless approach to handling complex service requests that cut across more than one team
- Be open and honest about what we can and cannot provide/deliver
- Be willing to hear and consider ideas about how we can improve services and work collaboratively and in partnership



PUBLICA

Information/Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 31st October 2022

Biodiversity

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

This paper has come to scrutiny at the request of Councillor Julian Tooke, who has requested that the overview and scrutiny committee look into the issue of biodiversity, and specifically how the council ensures it is taken into account in its decision-making.

2. Summary of the Issue

Biodiversity is already an important consideration for the authority, as we manage a significant proportion of the green space in the borough, including in particular, our parks and gardens, Leckhampton Hill and some 11 hectares of cemetery-related land.

Whilst the authority is acting to reduce carbon emissions to help tackle climate change, impacts are already taking place and scientists predict that these will increase over time, regardless of the mitigation measures we take to slow the rate of change. This is impacting significantly on nature, which is already in crisis as a result of human impacts on wildlife habitat across the globe and which is now being accelerated by rising temperatures/sea levels and an increase in climate related extreme weather events, including droughts, wildfires and flooding.

Discussions have taken place at Climate Leadership Gloucestershire which is recommending that a 'climate risk and vulnerability assessment' should be jointly commissioned by authorities in the county, to assist with contingency planning and prioritisation in relation to key issues such as flooding, drought and wildfire risks, storm events and increased risks to health, for example from heat events and new diseases, or diseases which currently affect only hotter countries but may become more prevalent here. Whilst these issues are likely to pose an increased threat to human populations, they are also likely to adversely affect biodiversity.

Biodiversity is also directly impacted by a number of the Council's functions which are already responding to this agenda, for example:

- The Council has adopted recognised best practice in the way it manages green space to encourage biodiversity;
- Cabinet recently approved the Climate Impact Assessment Tool, aimed at helping the

Council to evaluate and help mitigate the environmental impact of its service delivery, policy development, corporate projects and associated decision-making;

- Plans are already in place to identify local sites (including sites in CBC ownership) where biodiversity net gain (BNG) contributions, generated through the planning process, can be invested for local biodiversity gain. A minimum 10% uplift in BNG through the planning system is proposed to be made mandatory from late 2023.
- In partnership with the University of Gloucestershire, the Council has been awarded a grant to create a “Planting Toolkit”, to assist local land owners to better understand biodiversity and how to encourage and promote it.
- Through its function undertaking local flood management the Council undertakes maintenance of watercourses in a way which encourages biodiversity and encourages developers to adopt sustainable urban drainage and flood mitigation systems which also support wildlife. The Council is also exploring the feasibility for natural flood management techniques upstream of the urban area which encourage biodiversity.

3. Green Space Management

Biodiversity is now a consideration in everything the Council's Green Space Development Team does. For many years Cheltenham's Parks have been associated with well-manicured, and highly ornamental gardens, and whilst this is still the case there have been a number subtle, and less subtle interventions to introduce bio diversity into green spaces. Over the last four years, we have been gradually replacing seasonal annual bedding plants with flowering perennials. Bedding plants are resource hungry. They require heated green houses in production, intensive labour, and lots of irrigation water during the growing season. They are grubbed up and planted twice every year. Many of the plant varieties have had their ecological benefits bred out, in favour of dense flower heads whose food sources are inaccessible to pollinating insects. Perennials remain in the ground, and once established require very little water. They provide attractive flowers and foliage from Spring through to Autumn, and are beneficial to pollinating insect as well as a food source for birds when flowers and seed heads are left in place over Autumn and Winter.

Possibly the largest and simplest change we can make is in grassland management. Allowing grass to grow long will create an instant habitat for insects, by providing food sources, with the insects themselves a food source for birds and small mammals. It can also lower our fuel usage by drastically reducing the frequency of mowing rounds. There are many examples of this in our green spaces; Pittville Park, Cox's Meadow, and Springfields Park, are all large scale examples, while there are numerous open spaces and playing fields where perimeters, and other areas are deliberately left and then cut and collected at the end of every growing season. Occasionally, some areas are selected and sown with meadow seed mixtures to intensify the effect or to introduce more flowering species for effect. We take part every year in the “No Mow May” campaign. Another indirect benefit of long/perennial grassland management is a positive impact on the establishment rate of young trees. Such long grass significantly reduces ground temperatures and therefore evaporation of water which would otherwise be available to young trees. Water drawn by the grasses/meadows appears relatively insignificant. As we look to expand areas of meadow grassland it will be important to balance the need for short grass recreational space to ensure there is still ample opportunity for informal sport and dog walking.

Opportunities to enhance biodiversity are considered on all new landscape and recreation

projects. Recent playing pitch improvements at Burrows Playing Field included a native copse planting on the perimeter of the field. Planned enhancements of Naunton Park will incorporate proposals to develop meadow areas with excavated soil from adjacent paths, and swales as part of the drainage scheme. One of the best examples is the transformation of Springfields Park in Hesters Way from a conventional playing field into a diverse landscape combining mixed habitats, with natural play opportunities (see pictures in appendix 1).

Our green spaces offer further opportunities to sequester carbon through tree planting. The Council's Community Park Ranger has developed an annual programme for tree and copse planting with three or four community projects undertaken every year over autumn and winter. This year plans include Swindon Village and QEII playing fields, Clyde Crescent and Chargrove Lane open space as part of the Queens Canopy Jubilee planting initiative. They are a good way of engaging local people in environmental issues

The Council's Tree Officers undertake a programme of specimen tree planting in parks and green space, many of which are funded by private sponsors, and they liaise closely with Gloucestershire County Council on street tree planting. A Borough Tree Strategy is currently being suggested. It is anticipated that such a Tree Strategy would cover procedures and standards associated with the planning process (primarily privately owned trees) as well as procedures and practices in relation to CBC and CBH owned trees.

All of the changes described above have a knock on effect on Ubico, and it is important that maintenance practices are adapted. Traditional grass cutting machinery is not suitable to cut long grass, and therefore the fleet replacement programme has been adapted to include specialised machinery. All new trees and perennials require water to establish them, and there are competing demands on Ubico to continue watering traditional seasonal bedding schemes, and new perennials and native copses. This year being so hot and dry, has tested their capacity to the limit. Similarly, long grass can present fire risks in prolonged dry spells, so it is important to consider the safety of local residents when planning meadow areas and ensuring adequate precautions are built in.

4. Cheltenham's Climate Impact Assessment Tool

In autumn 2022, the Council will deploy Cheltenham's Climate Impact Assessment Tool, to make sure that we are appropriately considering climate impacts in all of our decisions. Use of this tool will help ensure projects and policies are aligned to CBC commitments to the climate and ecological emergency, helping to shape projects which have maximum positive impacts on the wellbeing of residents and the environment we live in. The tool prompts officers to review how a proposal or decision may impact plants, animals and microorganisms in the district and nudges for the consideration of a range of habitats, protection of key species and soil and waterway health. This tool will be used early on in project or policy design and will enable officers and Members to make changes to mitigate any anticipated negative impacts stemming from a decision.

5. Planning Policy and Development Management

In order to ensure that biodiversity is a priority within the planning department the team are guided by National and Local Planning Policies that seek to consider the impact of development proposals upon biodiversity. 'Biodiversity' or the resultant potential 'impact upon biodiversity' is a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications and there is a strong policy framework in place which seeks to ensure protection

of biodiversity.

National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF')

The NPPF sets out National Policy in connection with development proposals. Specific reference can be found for the Policy in terms of the need for the planning system to contribute to the achievement of 'sustainable development'. Sustainable development means the planning system has three overarching objectives; economic objective, social objective and an environmental objective. A key component of the environmental objective is the need to improve biodiversity. Accordingly development plans shall be in accordance with the sustainable development principle. Section 15 of the NPPF refers to 'conserving and enhancing the natural environment' and there sets out that policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity as well as minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity. A key principle in the NPPF (Para. 180) is that if significant harm to biodiversity, resulting from development cannot be avoided, mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be required.

Of particular note to Cheltenham is paragraph 177: When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. More can be found [here](#).

Planning Practice Guidance

Development plans and planning decisions have the potential to affect biodiversity. LPAs and neighbourhood planning bodies can work collaboratively with other partners, including Local Nature Partnerships, to develop and deliver a strategic approach. Brownfield land of high environmental value be taken into account. A strategic approach to green infrastructure can provide many benefits including a strong economy, healthy communities and mitigating climate change, among others. Local Plans can designate Local Wildlife Sites & Local Geological Sites. These are areas of substantive nature conservation value and make a contribution to ecological networks and nature's recovery. Cheltenham Borough has 5 (p.40 of the Cheltenham Plan). Local Record Centres are effective mechanisms for facilitating access to environmental information. Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records is our partner.

The Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership was commissioned by the Gloucestershire Joint Economic Growth Committee and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to develop a Natural Capital Baseline for the county, to allow planners, developers, ecologists and land managers to understand the spatial distribution of the ecosystem services in Gloucestershire. This baseline is a valuable resource which can help guide investment in promoting biodiversity, whilst also ensuring that development proposals have due regard to conserving the natural capital we already have in the county.

Joint Core Strategy ('JCS')

The Joint Core Strategy is the development plan for the area and planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Biodiversity is given priority through Policy SD9

'Biodiversity and Geodiversity'. This sets out the principle that development should avoid or satisfactorily mitigate harm to biodiversity or geodiversity of any site, be it designated or not. In addition Policy ENF3 'Green Infrastructure' sets out protection of the green infrastructure network through improving quantity and quality of assets and improving linkages. The policy sets out that existing green infrastructure will be protected in a manner that reflects its contribution to ecosystem services which includes biodiversity.

Cheltenham Plan

The Cheltenham Plan is the adopted District Plan and should be read in conjunction with the JCS. It has guidance on a number of topics including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Regionally Important Geological Sites and more. It further includes specific policies in terms of protecting local green space from development (Policy GI1), protection and replacement of Trees (GI2 and GI3) and protection of the Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (Policy BG1 and BG2).

Planning applications

When considering individual planning applications the planning team must consider the impacts of the proposed development on a wide variety of material planning considerations. This could include, for example, visual impact, impact upon the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, impact upon highway safety and other impacts. Biodiversity is a material consideration and ensuring there is no adverse impact is a priority for planning officers when considering proposals in respect of the above mentioned planning policy framework.

Environment Act

The Environment Act received Royal Assent on 9 November 2021, albeit very few provisions are yet in force.

The provisions of particular interest to planning are as follows:

- Environmental targets for air quality, water, biodiversity, resource efficiency and waste reduction and soil health and quality.
- A 'policy statement on environmental principles' explaining how the environmental principles should be interpreted and proportionately applied by Ministers of the Crown (in England) when making policy (except policies for defence, national security and taxation), to which those Ministers must have regard.
- The establishment of the Office for Environmental Protection, which describes its duty as to "protect and improve the environment by holding government and public authorities to account".
- Provisions relating to water and waste, which will have particular impacts on those sectors and consequential impacts on their planning.
- Biodiversity net gain becoming (in due course) a condition of planning permission and a requirement for nationally significant infrastructure projects. And related to this, a system of purchasing biodiversity credits in order that developments can meet the biodiversity net gain objective.
- Local nature recovery strategies covering the whole of England, with boundaries to be determined by the Environment Secretary.
- Species conservation strategies and protected site strategies.

- A power for the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to amend general duties within the Habitats Regulations.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) will have to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain from November 2023. BNG will be measured using Defra's biodiversity metric and habitats will need to be secured for at least 30 years. This sits alongside:

- a strengthened legal duty for public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity,
- new biodiversity reporting requirements for local authorities, and
- mandatory spatial strategies for nature: Local Nature Recovery Strategies or 'LNRS'.

6. Planting Tool Kit

In partnership with the University of Gloucestershire, the CBC Climate team is developing an 'urban greening toolkit' aimed at landowners and residents of Cheltenham, who often lack the knowledge or confidence to identify plant and site selection for optimal climate mitigation effects. By looking at the role of landowners and stakeholders in providing valuable habitats through green infrastructure, and addressing some of the barriers which prevent land being used to its full potential, this toolkit for urban greening will create a more resilient town in the face of the climate emergency.

7. Local Flood Management

CBC are currently investigating scope to deliver an annual volunteer scheme to pull Himalayan Balsam along the River Chelt. In order to effectively reduce the presence of this non-native, invasive species (which has flood management implications due to bank erosion) the flooding and greenspace team are looking to coordinate a series of control days throughout summer periods.

More directly, sustainable urban drainage systems have the potential to not only to reduce flash flooding during high rainfall, but also in the creation of wetland habitats through retrofitting into existing green spaces and urban areas. Informal swales and top soil scrapes are an integral part of the Springfields Park landscape scheme and reflect a relatively low cost way of achieving similar results.

Watercourse maintenance is approached in a way which encourages biodiversity, in that channels are generally allowed to grow naturally unless maintenance is required as an identified risk to flooding. The council is also exploring areas of watercourses in the Cheltenham catchments where floodwater can be held back through natural barriers and other Natural Flood Management (NFM) techniques. This will likely be in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council who are appointing a NFM Development Officer.

8. Next Steps

Work will continue on all of these fronts over the coming year and officers will update on progress through regular member and cabinet member briefings.

Background Papers

Cabinet Report – Cheltenham’s Climate Impact Assessment Tool
<https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/document/s/s41487/Agenda%20Item%207-%20Cheltenham%20Climate%20Impact%20Assessment%20Tool.pdf>

Cheltenham Climate Emergency Action Plan: Pathway to Net Zero
https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/61/climate_and_sustainability/1731/climate_emergency_action_plan_-_pathway_to_net_zero#:~:text=Our%20Climate%20Emergency%20Action%20Plan,in%20the%20following%20web%20pages.

Contact Officers

Adam Reynolds, Green Space Manager, 01242 264260, adam.reynolds@cheltenham.gov.uk

Mike Redman, Director of Climate Change and Place Services, 01242 264209
mike.redman@cheltenham.gov.uk

Accountability

Cllr. Iain Dobie, Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling & Street Services

Appendix 1

Picture Gallery

Springfields Park

2005 before enhancement. Low value biodiversity, high levels of vehicular anti-social behaviour



After biodiversity enhancement in 2010 – aquatic habitat



2010 Contouring and boulders provide habitat and natural play, and have reduced anti social vehicle access



2022 New plant species have appeared over time. One grass cut per year (excluding football pitches)



Information/Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 31st October 2022

Response to Council referral on 18th July regarding

UNICEF child friendly status and No Child Left Behind

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 At full council on 18 July, Cllr Wendy Flynn [introduced a motion](#) (see full wording of the motion in appendix 1) that would commit the council to working towards achieving UNICEF child friendly status for Cheltenham.
- 1.2 Cllr Flo Clucas tabled an amendment to the motion that raised a concern about the timescale and the amount of work that might be required to achieve child friendly status.
- 1.3 Council agreed to refer the Motion to Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look at the situation, the proposal and its implications and then report back to Council for a decision to be taken.
- 1.4 In proposing the amendment, Cllr Flo Clucas described the work and successes of the No Child Left Behind initiative which included debates with children and significant partnership working.

2. Summary of the Issue

- 2.1 The issues for discussion by O&S are as follows:
- 2.2 What is UNICEF child-friendly status and how does this compare with No Child Left Behind?
- 2.3 Given current council priorities, would working towards UNICEF child-friendly status add value to our work?
- 2.4 Is it realistic, given current workloads for the council to lead the work to achieve child-friendly status alongside its existing priorities and its commitment to No Child Left Behind?

3. What is UNICEF child-friendly status and how does this compare with No Child Left Behind?

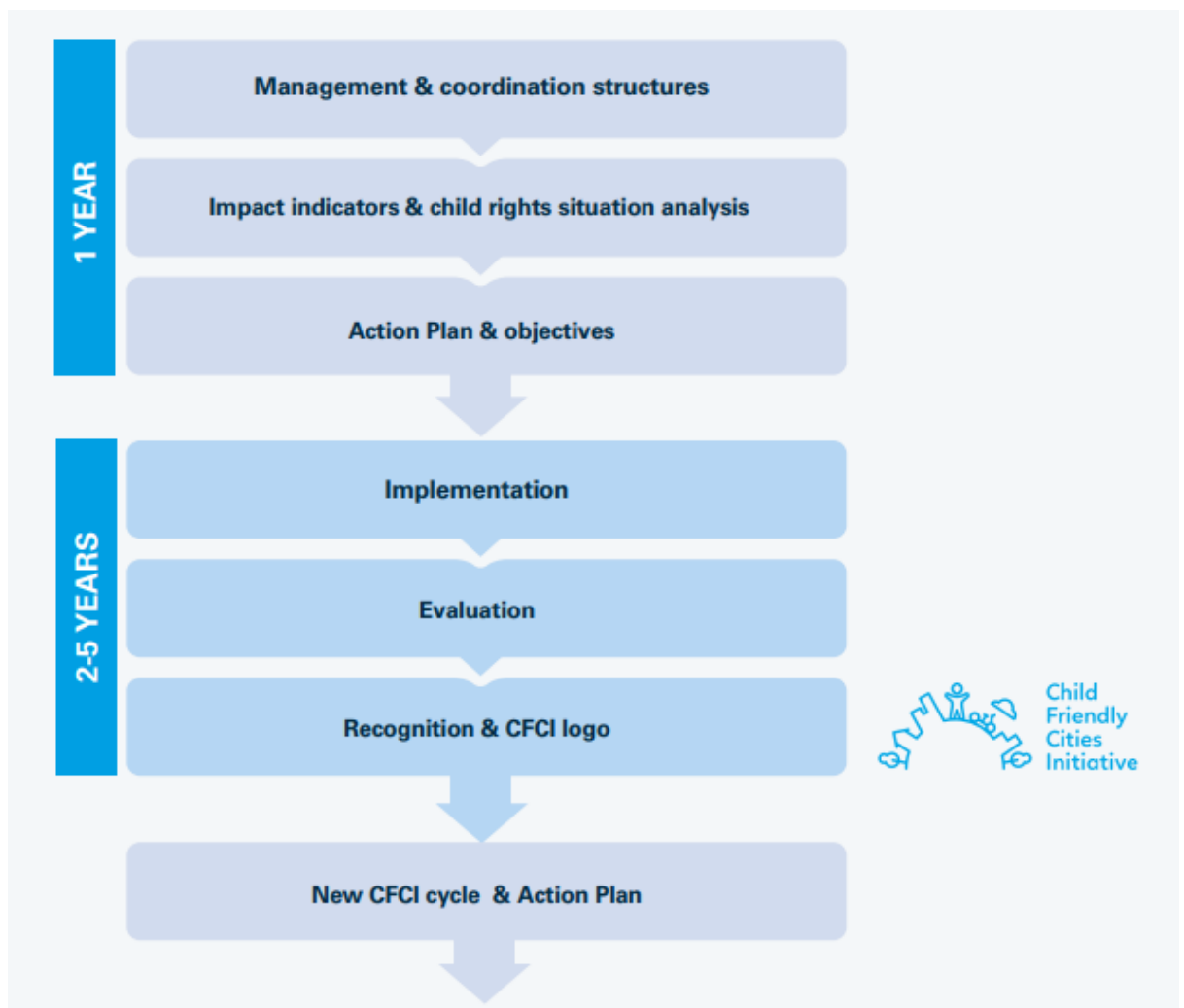
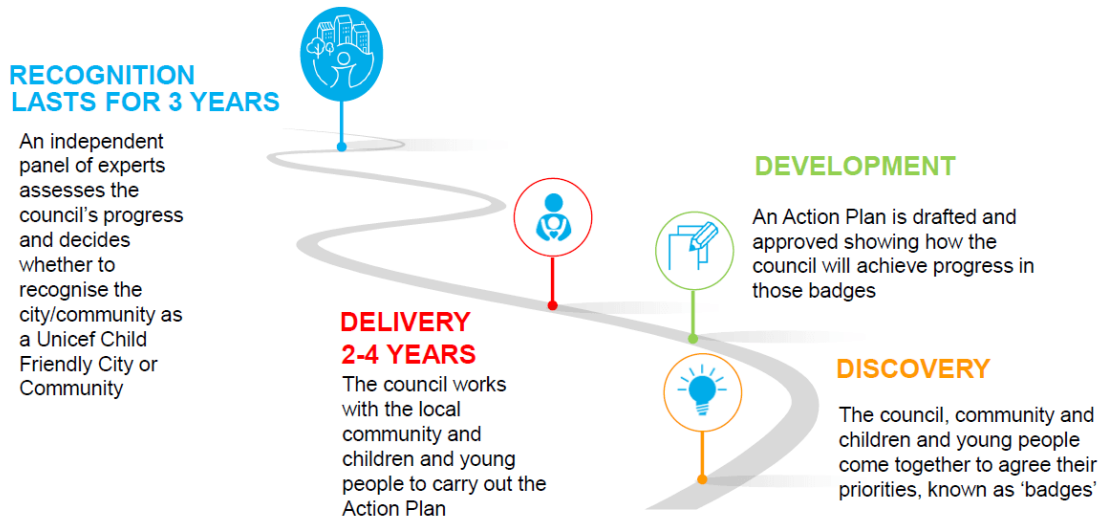
- 3.1 The [Child Friendly Cities Initiative](#) (CFCI) is a UNICEF-led initiative that supports councils across the world in realising the rights of children at the local level using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as its foundation.
- 3.2 The initiative was launched in 1996 by UNICEF and UN-Habitat to act on the

resolution passed during a United Nations Conference on Human Settlements to make cities liveable places for all. The UN Conference declared that the wellbeing of children is the ultimate indicator of a healthy habitat, a democratic society and of good governance.

- 3.3** A child-friendly city (CFC) is a city, town, community or any system of local governance committed to improving the lives of children within their jurisdiction by realizing their rights as articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 3.4** In practice, it is a city, town or community in which the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions and where children:
- Are protected from exploitation, violence and abuse;
 - Have a good start in life and grow up healthy and cared for;
 - Have access to quality social services;
 - Experience quality, inclusive and participatory education and skills development;
 - Express their opinions and influence decisions that affect them;
 - Participate in family, cultural, city/community and social life;
 - Live in a safe secure and clean environment with access to green spaces;
 - Meet friends and have places to play and enjoy themselves;
 - Have a fair chance in life regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or ability.
- 3.5** While the primary responsibility for ensuring that children’s rights are realised lies with governments, other stakeholders such as civil society organizations, the private sector, academia and the media, as well as children themselves, also have an important role to play in building child-friendly cities.
- 3.6** Within the UK, the child friendly programme, aims to create cities and communities in the UK where all children – whether they are living in care, using a children’s centre, or simply visiting their local library – have a meaningful say in, and truly benefit from, the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives.
- 3.7** In the UK, there are currently 9 cities with (or working towards) child friendly status:
- Aberdeen
 - Cardiff
 - Derry City & Strabane District
 - Lambeth (London)
 - Liverpool
 - Nottingham
 - Redbridge
 - Southampton
 - Wokingham

What are the key phases in the Child Friendly City programme?

- 3.8** It is generally recognised that attaining child friendly city status is a 3 to 5 year long programme that is split into 4 key phases starting with the “Discovery Phase”. This first phase takes from 6 months to a year. The two charts overleaf show the process that is normally followed.



3.9 The [process](#) is quite tightly prescribed with set methodologies for each step of the process. Given the multi-agency dynamic of the child friendly framework the guidance suggests establishing a local coordinating unit to lead, facilitate and coordinate the development and implementation of the Action Plan.

- 3.10** It is also suggested that any staff appointed to coordinate the process within the local authority should have sound knowledge of child rights, and need to be in a strategic position in relation to the local administration.
- 3.11** The guidance also makes it clear that the child friendly process requires a budget with clear allocations for each activity to ensure adequate resource commitment. Hence before launching and deciding on the scope of the child friendly process, the guidance makes it clear how important it is to consider available financial and human resources.
- 3.12** As the process extends beyond the remit of Cheltenham Borough Council and into the remit of Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire NHS, Gloucestershire Constabulary among others, it would be critical that these partners are fully on-board to supporting the journey.
- 3.13** In dialogue with Dame Janet Trotter, chair of Gloucestershire Childrens Coalition – she confirmed that some 2 or 3 years ago, when the Coalition was in its early stages they did think about joining the UNICEF scheme.
- 3.14** They subsequently decided not to pursue child friendly city status due to the cost and the nature of Gloucestershire. They noted that all of the other successful areas which had signed up were unitary authorities which had more control over the running and organisation of services to ensure integration and more effective cross-sector working.
- 3.15** Dame Janet did go onto say that the Coalition is now gaining traction and is playing a major role in ensuring cross-organisational working and locality planning at a district level, involving voluntary and community sector partners.
- 3.16** It is therefore clear that undertaking the journey to become a child friendly city requires:
- Dedicated staffing resources
 - Sufficient budget for not only staff but also to undertake the supporting methodologies.
 - Willing partners from across the public, private and VCS who are willing to commit to the process.

What is No Child Left Behind

- 3.17** No Child Left Behind is a local partnership that is working to:
- Raise awareness of the issue of child poverty;
 - Address the inequality gap through events and activities; and
 - Work together to make transformational change over the longer-term.
- 3.18** In 2018, local partners commissioned a children's needs assessment that set out that there were 4,300 children and young people growing up in poverty. And that those children, when compared to their more affluent peers were then facing significant challenges.
- 3.19** The statistics were particularly worrying given Cheltenham's reputation as an affluent town that prides itself on the quality of its regency architecture. its festivals and its green spaces. Partners responded by delivering a year of action on child poverty called No Child Left Behind in 2019.

No Child Left Behind Community Agreement

- 3.20** The Community Agreement arose from a collective understanding that the offer for children and young people – in terms of early years' provision, education, family support, social care support and youth support did not work well for some of our

children. Across a range of partners there was a collective ambition to do more, and to commit to placing kindness, empathy and understanding at the heart of everything we do.

- 3.21 To date 24 schools have signed up alongside 57 organisations including 16 businesses.
- 3.22 NCLB has supported partners through a range of learning events for signatories such as two virtual leadership summits and training courses for front-line staff with 163 attendances.
- 3.23 On 9 March this year, NCLB held its annual awards event to celebrate local projects that have supported families throughout the pandemic. This event was held in partnership with Punchline (an online business publication) who have helped raise £6,000 from 12 business.
- 3.24 The community agreement is delivering the aim of transforming how we address child poverty through changing the narrative and our organisation cultures.
- 3.25 The No Child Left Behind Partnership remains strong. It has a built a town-wide coalition of like-minded partners who are determined to take action so that local children have the opportunity to thrive.

Comparison between two

Element	Child Friendly	No Child Left Behind
Recognition	Internationally recognised	Local recognition – Cheltenham and within Gloucestershire
Values framework	Based on UN conventions on the rights of the child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-discrimination • Best interests of the child • The inherent right to life, survival and development • Respect for the views of the child 	The Community Agreement asks signatories to commit to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working hand in hand with families • Understand the effects of poverty and trauma • Being compassionate and strengths-based
Focus	Strategic – getting the right policies and procedures in place within the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws and policies • Advocacy & awareness raising • City-wide plan • Budget allocation • Child / youth participation • Coordination and partnerships • Data collection and monitoring progress 	Strategic: working to change the narrative around child poverty and working to avoid stigma Tactical: getting the right organisational culture in place: Operational: Delivery of projects such as holiday schemes and summer of play
Process for sign-up	Via embarking on the defined process – 3-5 years	Via signing the community agreement

CBC resources required	Probably 2 FTE minimum, plus managerial support Southampton have suggested that the total cost of their investment to achieve CFC status is £84.3k pa for 5 years = £421,500	1 FTE No Child Left Behind Officer, in base budgets plus managerial support. No base budget
Partner resources required	Would require significant input from partners particularly GCC Childrens Services, NHS Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire Constabulary, local schools. There is not an option for Cheltenham BC to deliver the framework by ourselves. This report has not tested the appetite of partners to commit to the framework	Significant number of partners are already committed to NCLB

4. Given current council priorities, would working towards UNICEF child-friendly status add value to our work?

4.1 There is no doubt that successfully gaining Unicef Child Friendly designation for Cheltenham would be a significant achievement which would place us alongside the other 9 cities within the UK and also attract International acclaim.

4.2 The attached table shows the potential added value across both CFC and NCLB.

Priority	Possible added value from Unicef CFC	Possible added value from NCLB
Golden Valley and wider inward investment	Will ensure that local children and young people's are involved in the design and development process. Children will benefit from inclusive and participatory education and skills development	NCLB is already captured within the emerging social value framework to ensure the GV development levers in resources and support for children and young people Via the Large Enterprise Action Group, NCLB wishes to develop more defined careers and skills pathways in conjunction with local schools and employers
Climate Emergency	Will provide a more robust framework to ensure that local children are given the opportunities to express their opinions and influence	NCLB has made the climate emergency one of its themes and this includes climate related activities at the children festival and

Priority	Possible added value from Unicef CFC	Possible added value from NCLB
	decisions about how we reach the Chelt Zero target in 2030	<p>celebrating climate achievements via one of the NCLB awards.</p> <p>Via Chelt Education Partnership, there has been a dedicated programme of work around the climate emergency called CEP change-makers</p> <p>NCLB plans to relaunch an engagement programme with local children to find out more about their views. This will feature climate change</p>
Town centre	Provides a robust rights-based framework to ensure that children can enjoy a safe secure and clean environment with access to green spaces	<p>Through the wider NCLB network, partners are funding a detached youth work project that works in the town centre amongst other areas.</p> <p>NCLB is involved in discussions with enforcement colleagues about how we work to manage anti-social behaviour in the town centre. NCLB is keen to ensure that the voices of young people are heard in the development of response plans.</p>
Housing investment	Provides a robust rights-based framework to ensure that local children get a good start in life and grow up healthy and cared for and live in a safe secure and clean environment with access to green spaces	<p>CBH is a key partner in NCLB and is delivering events and projects that benefit local children. They also fund ACE / trauma informed programmes supporting young people to resilience</p> <p>NCLB will play a role in advocating for quality youth work and children facilities as part of the strategic housing developments.</p>
Culture and wellbeing	Provides a robust rights-based framework around children having rights to	Via No Child Left Behind, the draft culture strategy places a specific focus on

Priority	Possible added value from Unicef CFC	Possible added value from NCLB
	meet friends and have places to play and enjoy themselves.	children with the emphasis being on giving them greater ownership of their creative and cultural expression, with the aim of empowering them

5. Is it realistic, given current workloads for the council to lead the work to achieve child-friendly status alongside its existing priorities and its commitment to No Child Left Behind?

- 5.1 Given current workloads and budget restraints, the council will need to review whether it is currently realistic to expect the council to lead the work to achieve Child Friendly City status. There is also a significant note of caution over the involvement of partners such as GCC Childrens Services, NHS Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire Constabulary, local schools and other partners.
- 5.2 But it is up to members on Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss whether they feel the Child Friendly City process should be made a priority.
- 5.3 If members of Overview and Scrutiny committee were to recommend that CFC be made a priority, it would be realistic to expect that the council would have to re-prioritise its collective workloads to free up officer capacity and to identify budgets.
- 5.4 Members are also encouraged to discuss how our current No Child Left Behind programme could be used to meet some of the Child friendly city ambitions – particularly in how we hear children’s voices in our most significant decisions

6. Next Steps - possible next steps for the committee to consider, e.g. potential witnesses, further report, site visit etc.

- 6.1 It is for Members on Overview and Scrutiny Committee to determine the next steps and report back to Council for a decision to be taken.

Background Links	https://childfriendlycities.org/ https://nclbcheltenham.org.uk/
Contact Officer	Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing & Partnerships
Accountability	Cllr Flo Clucas, Cabinet Member Safety and Communities

APPENDIX 1 - Full wording of motion

Council notes that to achieve UNICEF's child-friendly status, Cheltenham Borough Council will have to show that it is a place where more children feel safe, heard, cared-for, and able to flourish. Council believes that members of our communities and town will only benefit through the principles of child friendly city/community status being adopted. These include:

- Non-discrimination
- Best interests of the child
- The inherent right to life, survival and development
- Respect for the views of the child
- Equity and inclusion
- Accountability and transparency
- Public Participation
- Effectiveness and responsiveness
- Adaptability and sustainability

Council believes that the adoption of these principles will allow all sectors of the council structure to deliver more play space, safer roads, cleaner and greener neighbourhoods, cycle infrastructure, better education, child safety – all areas which will benefit families and communities and allow Cheltenham to become an even better place to live and work.

Council recognises that there is an inter-dependence on the County Council, NHS, schools and police to deliver aspects of the framework – particularly in relation to social care, health, education and safety. It further recognises the great work done by No Child Left Behind in creating a foundation of child-centred partnership working that can be built on to achieve UNICEF child friendly status. UNICEF's child rights-based approach to public services has consultation with children and young people at its core.

Council believes that consultation is vital to developing our communities, where children and young people can:

- Have a say about decisions that affect them.
- Express their views freely and are encouraged and supported to do that.
- Access good health, education, transport, and other service.
- Feel safe, prioritised, and protected from discrimination and harm.
- Enjoy public spaces and meet other children and young people freely

Council resolves to:

- Promote the benefits of the UNICEF Child Friendly city/community status to partner organisations.
- Work with partners to agree a timetable for signing up to the UNICEF programme and begin the process to become a recognised Child Friendly city/community.
- To implement/ improve the principles of the UNICEF status, within this motion, as soon as possible
- To develop a consultation strategy which includes the principles of young people inclusion as stated above.

ENDS

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Overview and Scrutiny, 31st October

Update from Scrutiny Task Group – Tackling Multiple Deprivation (as of 19th October)

Since the last O&S meeting, the task group has met twice to discuss the topics of community outreach and health inequality. Representatives from food banks, community groups, Citizens Advice, No Child Left Behind and other council partners attended the first meeting, while the second featured contributions from social prescribers, nurses and the county council's director of public health.

The goal of both meetings was to understand the key issues that residents, community organisations and the health service were facing, the areas in which the council could make a positive difference and the levers it could pull to do this. Members suggested a number of potential recommendations for the group's final report, which will be determined in the last meeting in January.

The following meetings are yet to take place:

1. Education (3rd November)
2. Housing and housing enforcement (including crime/policing/antisocial behaviour) (24th November)
3. Economic growth (esp. Golden Valley) and employment (14th December)

This will be followed by a 'mopping up' session on 26th January 2023 to agree the recommendations for the final report to go back to O&S.

The final task group report is scheduled to go to O&S on 27th February 2023, and can then go to Council on 20th March 2023 if required.

Harry Mayo (Democracy Officer)

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee work plan – 2022/23

Item	Objective	What is required?	Author/presenter
Monday 31st October 2022 (deadline 19th October)			
Publica annual report	Consider annual report: where is performance good, what needs improving, and where are they with the CT recommendations?	Annual report and discussion paper	Jan Britton (Managing Director), Sally Walker (Chair)
Biodiversity	How does the council ensure that biodiversity is always a priority in decision-making in relevant areas?	Discussion paper	Adam Reynolds (Green Space Development Manager), Mike Redman (Director of Climate Change and Place Services), Liam Jones (Head of Planning), Laura Tapping (Climate Emergency Programme Officer)
Response to Council referral	Response to Council referral on 18 th July regarding UNICEF child friendly status and No Child Left Behind	Discussion paper	Richard Gibson (Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships)
High Street defects	Briefing on situation with High Street defects (EXEMPT)	Discussion paper	Sophie Barton (Townscape Manager), Darren Knight (Executive Director Place and Communities)
Monday 28th November 2022 (deadline 16th November)			
Corporate Plan	To consider the Corporate Plan for 2023-27 before its final approval in February	Discussion paper, draft plan	Darren Knight (Executive Director Place and Communities)
SWAP (South West Audit Partnership)	Performance review, data and analysis (EXEMPT)	Discussion paper	David Hill (Chief Executive, SWAP), Lucy Cater
Building Control	General overview and performance review (EXEMPT)	Discussion paper	Ian Smith (Building Control Manager)
Golden Valley	Detailed look at the possible impact of the site on local residents, and how risks relating to this are being addressed (EXEMPT)	Discussion paper	Paul Minnis, Paul Jones
Monday 16th January 2023 (deadline 4th January)			
Cheltenham Trust	How is the Trust performing relative to its business plan? Risks, opportunities and challenges.	Discussion paper	Laurie Bell (Trust CEO), Richard Gibson (Head of Communities, Wellbeing and

Overview and Scrutiny Committee work plan – 2022/23

			Partnerships), Louis Eperjesi (Chair of the Board)
Residents' survey	Detailed look at the results of the residents' survey, including benchmarking against the last results in 2019.	Discussion paper	Darren Knight (Executive Director Place and Communities)
Budget proposals for coming year	Update from the Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group on the group's response to the 2023/24 budget proposals.	Update	Cllr. Matt Babbage (Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group), Gemma Bell (Director of Finance and Assets)
Gloucestershire Airport	Following on from 28th March Gloucester City Council meeting : looking at GAL's financial sustainability, both in relation to recent improvements and in the long term (EXEMPT)	Discussion paper	Karen Taylor (Managing Director), Mike Morton (Chair), + Chair of Gloucester City Council O&S?
Municipal Offices	Update on progress with the Municipal Offices (EXEMPT?)	Discussion paper	Emma Morgan (Project Manager), Paul Jones (ED Finance and Assets)
27th February 2023 (deadline 15th February)			
Tackling Multiple Deprivation STG report	To consider the final report of the Scrutiny Task Group on Tackling Multiple Deprivation, including the proposed workplan and any recommendations to Council	Discussion paper, STG report	Richard Gibson (Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships), Harry Mayo (Democracy Officer)
Monday 17th April 2023 (deadline 5th April)			
Minster Exchange	Project learning, benefits realisation. Is it generating the occupancy/income we expected, and if not what are we doing about it?	Discussion paper	Jane Stovell (Project Manager), Bruce Gregory (Workshop Group), Mark Sheldon (Director of Corporate Projects), Paul Jones (Executive Director Finance and Assets)
Monday 5th June 2023 (deadline 24th May)			
Monday 3rd July 2023 (deadline 21st June)			

Overview and Scrutiny Committee work plan – 2022/23

Items for future meetings (date to be established)			
Public Art Panel	Consider its effectiveness, successes and difficulties faced	To be scheduled once SWOT has been concluded	Tracey Birkinshaw (Director of Planning) and Chair of Public Art Panel
North Place and Portland Street	Update on these sites (EXEMPT)	TBD	Paul Jones (ED Finance & Assets)
Christmas Ice Rink	Possible: evaluating the 2021 ice rink and looking ahead to its return in December	Autumn	Tracey Birkinshaw (Director of Planning), Helen Mole (Head of Place Marketing and Inward Investment)
Business continuity	To consider the robustness of CBC business continuity arrangements in the event of a cyber incident, and update the cyber business continuity plan (EXEMPT)	TBD Discussion paper, FAQ responses	Darren Knight (Executive Director People and Change), Ann Wolstencroft (Program Manager, HR), John Chorlt (Chief Technology Officer, Publica)
Wheelchair access	How does the council ensure that disabled access is always carefully considered in CBC's decision-making, and implemented wherever possible?	TBD Discussion paper	TBD

Overview and Scrutiny Committee work plan – 2022/23

Annual Items		
Budget proposals for coming year	January	Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group
End of year performance review	June	Richard Gibson (Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships)
UBICO annual report	July	Ubico, Client Officer and Cabinet Member
Overview & Scrutiny annual report	September	Democracy Officer
Annual report of the Police and Crime Commissioner	September	PCC (Chris Nelson)
Publica annual report	October (after Publica AGM)	Jan Britton (Managing Director), Bill Oddy
Quarter 2 performance review?	November	Richard Gibson (Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships)

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