

Cabinet

**Tuesday, 8th November, 2022
6.00 - 6.55 pm**

Attendees

Councillors: Rowena Hay (Leader of the Council), Peter Jeffries (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Finance & Assets), Victoria Atherstone (Cabinet Member Housing), Flo Clucas (Cabinet Member Safety & Communities), Mike Collins (Cabinet Member Cyber, Regeneration and Commercial Income), Iain Dobie (Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling & Street Services), Martin Horwood (Cabinet Member Customer & Regulatory Services), Alisha Lewis (Cabinet Member Climate Emergency) and Max Wilkinson (Cabinet Member Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing)

Also in attendance: Gareth Edmundson, Harry Mayo, Councillor Wendy Flynn, Councillor Dr David Willingham, Judith Baker and Claire Hughes

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the 11th October meeting were approved and signed as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

Public Questions

There was one public question. As the questioner was not in attendance to ask a supplementary, the question and answer were taken as read.

1.	Question from Tess Beck to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, Councillor Max Wilkinson
	In 2014 Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) set up the Cheltenham Trust as a charitable trust to deliver culture and leisure services on behalf of the council and to manage some of the council's most significant public buildings. The specification for the council's contract with the Trust was very detailed including what services the Trust would deliver, who would fund what, who was liable for what. And it was almost entirely public.

	<p>In April 2022 CBC Cabinet agreed a new specification with the Trust and this agreement and the review was entirely restricted. Although a restriction of some of the financial information contained within the review may be justified, I fail to understand the reasoning for restricting the whole of the review and revised specification, given the level of public interest.</p> <p>Given that the Cheltenham Trust is charged with delivering a number of the council's strategic priorities on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council (including helping people in Cheltenham live healthier, fulfilling and active lives, inspiring people in Cheltenham to take part in and gain valuable skills and experiences, and promote Cheltenham as a world class place to live, work, study and visit), there should be a greater level of transparency. Any argument to maintain the exemption is likely to be outweighed by the public interest in the information being disclosed. We can infer the Trust has been relieved of some responsibilities (e.g. the duty to provide tourist information services) but why can this not be made explicit?</p> <p>Can the Cabinet members and officers responsible for the report and revised specification undertake to review the documentation with a view to making as much of the information as possible public in the interests of transparency?</p>
Response from Cabinet Member	
	<p>Thank you Tess for bringing this question to Cabinet.</p> <p>I am a firm believer that the council should be as open and as transparent as possible, including in its relationships with its commissioned providers who are delivering services on behalf of the council.</p> <p>You are correct in saying that when the report came to cabinet earlier this year to seek approval for the updated specification, it was restricted and therefore members of the public were unable to see some details. This was because the covering report did contain some financial information that we did not wish to be put in the public domain.</p> <p>However, the specification itself, which sets out the council's specific requirements for how the agreed services will be delivered, does not contain any financial information.</p> <p>I have liaised with officers and also sought legal advice and I am happy that we will now place the current specification (as agreed by Cabinet on 5 April, prior to the date on which I took over this portfolio) in the public domain.</p> <p>I will do this via a delegated cabinet member decision and as such it will be published on the council's democracy pages as a decision.</p> <p>I fully intend that the paperwork will be made publicly available by Friday 18 November.</p>

Member Questions

1.	Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Flo Clucas
	<p>What consultation took place with children and young people (how many children were consulted, what methods were used to collect opinions and how was the information fed into the various strategies) when drawing up Cheltenham Borough Council's main policies and strategies, including, but not limited, to Social Value Policy, Place Strategy, Corporate Plan 2019-23, Cheltenham Local Plan, Culture Strategy?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Thank you Cllr Flynn for your question. It gives me the opportunity to say what has been done with our children and young people in our communities across Cheltenham, how that consultation has happened and how that has been put into practice.</p> <p>Obviously the Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on what we were able to do during various lockdowns and indeed on what our partners were able to do at that time. However, let me go through some of what has been done and since the end of the lockdown what we have been doing this year.</p> <p>Let me start with the Culture Strategy. The councillor may remember that just before Covid we had young artists from the Wilson Arts Collective, come to Council and address council before our meeting, saying what they wanted, what they needed and how they thought that should happen: work space, exhibition space and the opportunity to grow as artists through greater support. I am pleased that many of their requests are now in the draft culture strategy, and have been adopted by those that manage culture in our town.</p> <p>In terms of the council's corporate plan, No Child Left Behind is one of the council's most significant projects and has been since our first full year in 2019. The corporate plan sets out a number of other important projects that will benefit children and young people, such as ensuring that all our communities benefit from future golden valley investments, investing in our high street and public spaces, and work collaboratively to support cycling and walking projects.</p> <p>And although Covid interrupted a good deal of our plans, through No Child Left Behind, we were able to deliver projects that supported our most vulnerable young people.</p> <p>Ahead of the summer holidays in 2020, using funding made available from GCC and the 10 elected county councillors, No Child Left Behind, working with our community food providers under the #FeedCheltenham banner, devised a holiday hunger scheme to provide food to families with children on free school meals. In total over 700 family meals were delivered to local families via six local community food providers</p> <p>During the third lockdown, in February 2021, NCLB launched our #LaptopsforLearning scheme which was set up to help ensure local children have access to the right IT equipment to support their learning – both at home during that lockdown, and also when they return to school. The project saw approximately £35,000 raised and 129 devices donated.</p> <p>Again, during the pandemic, NCLB developed the NCLB Community Agreement which arose from a collective understanding that the current offer for our children and young people – in terms of early years provision, education, family support, social care support and youth support does not</p>

work well for some of our children. Across a range of partners, led by our primary schools there was a collective ambition to do more, and to commit to an enhanced level of support so that all our children have the opportunity to thrive.

This ambition was developed into a collective commitment to all children and their families in Cheltenham, called the community agreement. The agreement offers to every carer, every parent and indeed every child the opportunity to speak to somebody who can advise, who can help, who can counsel who can assist them should they have a problem or issue or a concern or worry.

In order to develop this, we obviously were, in close contact with our primary and secondary schools and with others who might have been involved actively.

The schools actively consulted the children as to what we were doing and how. If you look at the [NCLB website](#) you will see information there in relation to the [Community Agreement](#) which we believe is a fundamental path to assist those who require advice and help, whether they are parents, carers, children or young people.

More recently, during the course of the last year through NCLB, Cheltenham Education Partnership and Large Enterprise Action Group, and other partners, have met with many children and young people. The young people and children were asked to tell us what they thought about particular issues - decided by them. We asked them tell us their views, ask questions and suggest improvements.

One example:

In March and in June, via Cheltenham Education Partnership myself and other colleagues took part in the Cheltenham for Change youth debates, with in total over one hundred children taking part.

Those children came and talked about equity and equality and how they felt that it was not apparent in the work that was being done in Cheltenham.

One example given was a lack of comprehensive and meaningful engagement after the various careers fairs they had attended.

The young people found it very difficult indeed to access relevant people in companies who could say to them what they could do, how they could get involved, and how they could develop a career path without going to university.

The upshot of that is that this year with our partners in the Chamber of Commerce, Cheltenham Education Partnership and Large Enterprise Action Group we will launch a new project around skills and ambition that will be accessible to all of our children and young people. It will enable young people to have proper access to those within companies and within organisations who can actually advise them and point them in the right direction.

By bringing together businesses and schools, we hope that this project will become an instrument that young people can use to help them plan their future and more of this is being integrated into what we do during the course of the next year.

In terms of planning and playgrounds particularly where major developments were being planned, we wanted to ensure that our children had a voice. We were able to consult with children and with young people as to how they wish to see those develop. I will give you an example N W Cheltenham and Swindon Village.

The Village has a significant local green space and in order to capture the

local green space and preserve it in the local plan. Children were asked for their views and there were hundreds of responses from our children, from girl guides and scouts, from our youth club, from our young people who go to school, from young people who use playgrounds, from young people who are involved through the parish council and other activities.

A significant number of changes were made as a result of that and were incorporated into the local plan. The changes were recognised by the planning Inspectorate and have therefore been retained.

All of this has required a great deal of work and I make no apologies for thanking officers Tracy Brown and Richard Gibson and those who work in our partner organisations for the help and support that they have given for our children. It is quite significant and I know of nowhere else in the country where this has been done.

Our young people and children have not just a voice in the future of Cheltenham so that they feel that this town is for them, that they have shaped it and made it their own.

However, to go further with the consultation process, to capture the voices of our children and young people, make it more formal and systematic, would take significant time and resources. At the present time, with our partners, we are doing this in a different way. Listening to the views of our young people and children by:

- Working with Cheltenham Education Partnership, to discuss issues with our young people and children that they wish to raise, giving answers and factoring in their concerns when we make policy or plan projects or make decisions;
- Working with the Culture Board to ensure the voices of young people are heard in their strategy and by ensuring there is a young person's representative on the board
- Working with local partners working directly with children and young people. O&S recently heard from local schools about the experiences our children are facing.

As a result, the Council and our partners continue to place a high priority on our work to support young people and children:

- The council's Social Value Policy makes clear that one of the four priority communities identified for investment through our social value work is children and young people growing up in poverty.
- The Communities' Partnership has as one of its four priorities 'Young people have opportunities to discover their potential';
- The Culture Strategy has one of its six priorities 'Improving the life chances of our young people';
- The Corporate Plan 2023-2027 includes two specific priorities:
 - To work with schools, colleges and universities to support the cyber tech skills of young people;
 - Through No Child Left Behind continue to raise awareness of issues affecting our children, such as criminal exploitation, period poverty or healthy eating and work with partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors to tackle these and other issues.

	Supplementary question
	Thank you for your detailed response. It seems to be that there is no idea of how many children have been consulted, that consultation has been ad hoc and mostly initiated by other organisations, and that you cannot really tell me how it feeds into the council's strategies. My supplementary is based on the part of the question concerning the Culture Strategy. What specific requests were made by young people that were then incorporated into the draft Culture Strategy?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	I am thankful for the people who have put their time, effort and money into No Child Left Behind, and wanted to thank them in a public way with a detailed response. Regarding the Culture Strategy, a few years ago we heard at Council from the young artists' collective at the Wilson about what they wanted, and this was all fed into the strategy. If you look at the Wilson now, studios are being made available to young people, showing that this has been enacted. We also have a situation where young people are part of that cultural environment, with young people on the Culture Board. This gives them a voice and helps them ensure that what they see as necessary actually happens. The organisation brought in to help develop the Culture Strategy had meetings young people all across the town and helped work these in.
2.	Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Flo Clucas
	How does No Child Left Behind monitor and evaluate its impact?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	In terms of monitoring the work of NCLB, I take an annual report to full council which was presented this year on 21 March. https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/documents/s39665/2022_03_21_CO_U_No_Child_Left_Behind.pdf The update was agreed unanimously by members in the chamber. Some of the highlights in the report <i>In terms of statistics, despite the challenges of the pandemic, NCLB is having a significant impact across a range of success measures:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No of partners engaged estimated to be in the region of 120 (public sector / VCS / business)</i> • <i>Attendees at virtual training events - 163</i> • <i>Profile of NCLB– no of social media engagements 1500 followers and 23k impressions monthly (mean average across twitter and facebook)</i> <p><i>Amount of funding raised and sources = £292k which includes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>£230k for the HAF projects</i> • <i>£35k for laptops for learning</i> • <i>c.£6k from the Cheltenham Lottery</i> • <i>£15k from the OPCC</i> • <i>£6k event sponsorship</i> <p><i>Some of the positives from our work include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Whole town approach; NCLB is designed so as to have broad</i>

	<p><i>appeal to all Cheltenham’s children and young people – it has not sought to limit itself to just benefitting children living in poverty. By doing so we have been able to galvanise a broad base of support for NCLB</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Demonstration of the council’s place leadership role; coordinating NCLB goes beyond the traditional role of a distract council. But using the place vision as a basis, this council has shown that it is willing to lead the debate and coordinate action on matters that impact on its residents.</i> • <i>Commitment shown by local partners including public, VCS, businesses and local schools</i> <p>In terms of more specific ways in which NCLB monitors and evaluates its work, I would like to highlight the following: In 2021, NCLB jointly undertook a social return on investment pilot with the Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board. The report showed that pupils had benefitted from their involvement in NCLB events including helping with their understanding of the way in which, it helped inspire them about future careers. The pilot took information from a range of interviews with children, parents and teachers at one local school. The plan is to roll the methodology out across a wider range of schools and other organisations working with children and young people. NCLB partners are currently working with a consultant employed to support the county holiday activity programme to develop a theory of change for some aspects of NCLB. Once finalised, the theory of change will help us move to a more sophisticated methodology for evaluating our impact given that NCLB has evolved over the past four years. The No Child Left Behind Partnership remains strong. It has built a town-wide coalition of like-minded partners who are determined to take action so that local children have the opportunity to thrive.</p>
Supplementary question	
	<p>Monitoring and evaluation is as much about the gaps as well as what is being done. I heard from a school recently with a very high proportion of students on pupil premiums who was not a member of No Child Left Behind, and hadn’t been involved in it at all besides the holiday play and food scheme. How is NCLB identifying these gaps and aiming to fill them?</p>
Response from Cabinet Member	
	<p>We can’t force schools to be a part of NCLB, we can just offer what we have to those schools. The list of schools participating is currently at 24, the vast majority of schools in the town. If others wish to be involved then they are more than welcome, but neither I or the council can force them to do so. The last NCLB report presented to Council gives a full overview of what we do and the outcomes – if schools see this and want to be a part of it, they can put their hand up and say yes please. If you can let me know the name of the school, I’d be happy to speak to them and see what we can do to facilitate this.</p>
3.	Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Flo Clucas

	How has signing up to the No Child Left Behind Community Agreement impacted on what those signing up do and how is the effect on the outcomes for children from sign ups to the agreement recorded?
Response from Cabinet Member	
	<p>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.</p> <p>To date 24 schools have signed up alongside 57 organisations including 16 businesses.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The community agreement is delivering the aim of transforming how we address child poverty through changing the narrative and our organisation cultures.</p>
Supplementary question	
	I have scoured the internet and intranet and have been unable to find any terms of reference, aims and objectives, consultation strategy or anything to do with monitoring and evaluation. It is really important for councillors to have that information, especially with Council due to consider the O&S referral regarding the NCLB/UNICEF motion. Can the Cabinet Member undertake to ensure that all councillors have access to this before that meeting?
Response from Cabinet Member	
	The aims and objectives of NLCB were set out in the initial framework which came to Council in 2018/2019, and haven’t changed. The annual reports show this, with the next one due in January. NCLB is not about this council dictating to others what they should do – it has instead created a town-wide organisation of groups that come together to do their best for children, despite childrens’ services being a county council responsibility. Alongside the detached youth program that we are running, we work with partners to make things better and create new opportunities for our young people.
4.	Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Flo Clucas
	<p>Children have the right to voice their opinions and have these be taken into account in decisions that affect them.</p> <p><i>“Children generally do not vote and do not traditionally take part in political processes. Without special attention to the opinions of children – as expressed at home and in schools, in local communities and even in governments – children’s views go unheard on the many important issues</i></p>

	<p><i>that affect them now or will affect them in the future.” UNICEF</i></p> <p>How does Cheltenham Borough Council ensure children’s views are heard on the important issues that affect them?</p>
Response from Cabinet Member	
	<p>NCLB is really proactive in taking opportunities to hear from children and young people about their experiences.</p> <p>We are excited to announce that NCLB is in discussion with the University to undertake a research project into the lived experiences of Cheltenham young people following Covid. This will involve direct engagement with young people across the town using a variety of methodologies. This has been prompted by partner organisations raising concerns about the impact on young people from the disruptions caused by Covid particularly as they approach adulthood.</p> <p>The aim of the research is to look at how best to support young people to achieve their potential and will include consideration of mental and physical wellbeing, along with how we ensure all young people feel safe and respected.</p> <p>In terms of other opportunities, we took the opportunity at the children’s festival in May 2022 to get young children thinking about Cheltenham and the places where they live.</p> <p>Holiday activity and food programme evaluation – over the summer, we made sure that children taking part in our HAF activities had the chance to tell us what they liked about the activity, what they would change and what activities they’d like to do in the future. We were really pleased that 245 children responded giving us valuable insight to help us with future.</p> <p>As part of our work, we are co-funding a programme of detached youth work that is being delivered in priority communities throughout Cheltenham.</p> <p>Cheltenham Borough Council, through its commitment to No Child Left Behind will continue to work with a wide range of partners to ensure that the voices of children and young people get heard on a wide range of matters that impact on their lives.</p>
Supplementary question	
	<p>I recently ran an evening for the Girl Guides on influencing and change, and the children there (aged between 11 and 15 and from three different schools) felt that adults didn’t care about their views once they left primary school. Childrens’ views are still not adequately being heard in this town. Will the Cabinet Member commit to ensuring this council has a Consultation with Children and Young People Strategy so that all our young people can have a voice?</p>
Response from Cabinet Member	
	<p>Over the last six months, we have had meetings with hundreds of children, where they were asked what needed to change. The last one of these was in June, with about 150 children present, and there were 200 at the one before, both from primary and secondary schools. The children wanted to see a greater emphasis on equity and equality, and help us find out more</p>

about their needs. One of the things that also became clear was that young people were being told that the only route out available to them was university. We were able to show them that apprenticeships could have the same positive effect, such as with this council, and there are different mechanisms available.

As for listening to young people, the Girl Guides were recently instrumental in helping to capture local green space in Swindon Village thanks to their letter writing. We listen to them and want to listen to them more over the next year or two. We have secured funding for the next year of NCLB, and hope that more will be made available thereafter. We are not the body that is wholly responsible for childrens' services, as that lies with the county council. What we are doing here is bridging the gap, ensuring that children are heard and effective action is taken, and I am pleased to say that is what is happening.

5. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The Cabinet Member Finance, Assets and Regeneration introduced the report, explaining that each year since 2013, the council had been required to set its local council tax support scheme for working age residents. Council tax support for pensioners was not localised and continued to be provided by a national scheme. Funding for this scheme was rolled into the revenue support grant and subject to annual cuts. As the council no longer received a revenue support grant, it needed to fund its share of the cost of the scheme itself.

In 2019/20, the council had approved a new scheme, one of the main aims of which was to ensure that the most vulnerable and those with the lowest incomes continued to receive 100% support. The proposed council tax support scheme from 1st April 2023 for working age people would continue to be based on five income bands, with the highest band providing support at 100% of the council tax liability, then reducing to 80%, 60%, 40% and 20% as household income increased.

He explained that due to the impact of Covid, the caseload for working age people had increased by 25% across 2020/21. On the 1st March 2020, there were 3,984 recipients totalling £3.3m, this rose to 4,988 recipients totalling £4.7m by April 2021. By October 2021, there had been a slight reduction to 4,839 recipients totalling £4.5m. This trend continued, by October 2022 there were 4643 recipients totalling £4.2m in support.

He stressed that despite the increase in the number of working age residents requiring assistance compared to pre-pandemic levels, they would continue to provide 100% support to the most vulnerable and those on the lowest incomes. Many residents were still recovering financially from the effects of the pandemic, coupled with the cost of living emergency, and this scheme would provide vital help for the most financially vulnerable residents.

He drew colleagues' attention to the fourth recommendation, which gave officers a degree of flexibility to react to possible changes from national government regarding benefits. It was important that they be in a position to make the relevant changes to the policy when the government made up its mind about what support it would give residents in receipt of welfare. He thanked

officers in the Revenues and Benefits team for their extraordinary efforts to support residents, and commended the report to Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member Housing thanked him for bringing this report forward, and highlighted the importance of the scheme. During the pandemic, they had seen the figures in need of support increase significantly, and it was good to see this declining again now. She was grateful that they were in a position to offer such extensive support.

The Cabinet Member Customer and Regulatory Services added that he was proud to see the council going above and beyond what they were required to do by law, and supporting 5,000 of the most vulnerable people in their community. The government had a tin ear when it came to the cumulative impact of their policies on vulnerable people, and the combined effects of the cost of living crisis, the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, Brexit, and the government's actions to destabilise the economy had been especially tough on people of working age. He was proud of the council's response but not surprised. He added that he had recently been working with elderly constituents who were struggling to claim support, since the qualifying criteria for pensioners was administered nationally, and those who had been proud to claim benefits in the past were not eligible. This was a clear gap in provision that needed to be closed.

The Cabinet Member Safety and Communities praised the continuing support provided to low income households, with no changes to the scheme conditions being proposed. This compared favourably to other authorities around the country, who were having to cut support in all areas. She thanked the Cabinet Member Finance, Assets and Regeneration on behalf of the children in Cheltenham living below the poverty line.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

1. the outcome of the consultation on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme in Appendix 3 be noted;
2. the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for working age customers in Appendix 4 and summarised in Appendix 5 as the preferred option for 2023-24 be approved;
3. Council be recommended to approve the proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme for working age customers for 2023/24 on 12th December 2022;
4. Council be recommended to give authority to the Executive Director for Finance Assets and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets to update any premiums, allowances and determine the income levels in line with any increase in Welfare Benefits by 20 February 2023.

6. QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING REPORT, JULY - SEPTEMBER

The Cabinet Member Finance, Assets and Regeneration introduced the report, explaining that it made for sober reading due to the cost-of-living emergency declared by the council. Since the Q1 report, inflation had further increased to 10.1% and was expected to hit 13% in the winter. Interest rates had also increased again and now stood at 3%.

The Q2 report forecast an overspend of more than £2.39m, of which £1.985m was estimated to relate to economic pressures as a result of the rising inflation, rising interest rates and the wider economic volatility. This was against a budget which, when approved, was prudent and realistic for a town recovering from a pandemic. Rising interest rates had both a negative pressure on borrowing costs and a positive effect on investment income, but overall they were left with a significant net pressure on their budgeted position. The most significant cost of living pressure faced continued to be the predicted cost of energy as they entered the crucial winter period.

He reminded colleagues of a number of actions the council was taking to reduce costs in this area, including reducing their energy usage, which also supports their campaign towards Net Zero. He thanked the Cabinet Member Climate Emergency for her hard work in driving forward this priority. The current monitoring position for the 2022/23 budget clearly showed that even with the decisions this administration had taken over the last two years, there was still very significant economic volatility and uncertainty affecting how they managed resources, delivered services and progressed their community priorities

The proposal to fund the projected overspend using general balances would provide the council with short term resilience throughout the cost-of-living crisis. With interest rates and inflation continuing to rise, their available resources would be continually reviewed to enable the council to support the most vulnerable residents in our town through the financial pressures they were also facing. He thanked all those involved in the report for the work they had undertaken, and thanked Cabinet colleagues for their continued support as they traversed the volatile financial future before them.

The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency added that residents would be sympathetic to their position, as we were all having to tighten our belts. The legacy of central government had left them in a profound financial hole, but they were in a fortunate position due to the investments they had made to secure their long-term financial future. She thanked the Cabinet Member and the finance team for ensuring that the work they did continued despite a tough financial situation.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

1. the contents of the report including the key projected variances to the 2022-23 budget approved by Council on 21 February 2022 and the actions to ensure overspends are reduced as far as possible by the end of the financial year be noted.

7. DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN

The Leader of the Council introduced the report, explaining that the current Corporate Plan came to an end in 2022/2023 and so a new one was required. The existing plan set out significant flagship initiatives which were still continuing, such as plans to make Cheltenham the cyber capital of the UK through the Golden Valley Development, the Climate Emergency Action Plan: Pathway to Net Zero, and increasing the number of affordable carbon neutral homes through our £180m housing investment plan. Our approach was therefore to refresh our existing Corporate Plan to ensure that the focus remained on these critically important initiatives that would provide huge benefits to the people of Cheltenham, as well as ensuring we are able to respond to other opportunities and challenges ahead.

She highlighted that the financial pressures facing local government continued, with further challenges needed to navigate including energy costs and wider inflationary pressures. She recognised that the council also had a role to play in partnership with others when it came to supporting residents, communities and businesses with the cost of living crisis.

The Corporate Plan was a critical document that ensured strategic direction, focused prioritisation of resources and formed a key component of good corporate governance. Without a refreshed plan, the council would be operating without an agreed framework of priorities and objectives. She welcomed comments and asked for Cabinet's support as set out in the recommendations.

The Cabinet Member Cyber, Regeneration and Commercial Income highlighted the work that had gone into this report. He had recently hosted a group of next generation leaders from the Local Government Association (LGA), who had been impressed by the town's ambition and especially projects like Golden Valley. This excitement stemmed from good corporate governance and project management. The corporate plan underlined a real focus on housing investment.

The Cabinet Member Finance, Assets and Regeneration echoed these comments. Compared to the budget monitoring report, which painted a stark picture, it was great to see a continuing focus on vital corporate priorities, and ambition rather than doom and gloom.

The Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling and Street Services highlighted the importance of working with parish councils on projects like this, and added that he was attending a meeting of the five parish councils this coming Saturday. Every level of local government needed to be engaged, particularly on topics like climate change, and it needed to be a two-way process with feedback on both sides.

The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency praised the draft plan as a spectacular document, which she was glad to see embed climate concerns at every stage.

The Cabinet Member Housing added that she had also attended the LGA visit along with colleagues. The strong relationship between CBC and CBH had also been a source of admiration. It was good to see a focus on delivering affordable homes and supporting struggling residents, and she was looking forward to delivering on ambitious goals in the future, like the pipeline of 450 homes over the next 4-5 years. She urged the public to engage with the consultation, emphasising that the more feedback the better.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

1. Consultation and engagement activities be undertaken with key community and business stakeholders;
2. The final version be recommended to February's full Council for review and approval.

8. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Member Customer and Regulatory Services reported that the borough's Air Quality Action Plan was now live on <https://haveyoursay.cheltenham.gov.uk/>. The report was data-heavy but showed that no part of Cheltenham currently exceeded the limit in nitrous oxide or PM2.5s, which contributed respiratory disorders and lung and heart issues. One small area had historically hit higher than allowed levels of nitrous oxide, and although it didn't at the moment, they had declared a limited AQMA for that specific area. There was no absolutely safe level of air pollution, and they could not be complacent. They needed to keep working across the whole town to monitor and improve levels where possible.

He explained that the plan included more than 20 actions for the whole borough, and 7 additional actions for the specific area. This issue required action not just by CBC but also by other councils, businesses, residents and communities, and specifically GCC as the highways authority due to the importance of traffic pollution. He thanked his predecessor in the portfolio (Cllr. Wilkinson) for his work on this, as well as Louis Krog, Bernadette Reed and the whole Environmental Health team. They had been out on the A40 today looking at brand new nitrous oxide monitoring equipment, and understood that they needed to go beyond their statutory obligations to deliver cleaner air.

The Cabinet Member Safety and Communities added that this meeting's agenda had been a topic of discussion at a meeting of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris, where she spoke to colleagues from Europe and across the world. She had been able to point to exactly what Cheltenham was doing to develop mechanisms for generating income far beyond government funding. She was always looking to spread the message about what Cheltenham was doing, and this would enable other places to learn from it.

The Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling and Street Services reminded colleagues that they had been the first council in the country to begin roadside recycling of coffee pods. The Podback scheme had now recycled 2 million of these, and it had cost the council nothing because it had been developed alongside the commercial sector. It had also generated a number of pocket forests, and there would be a ceremony in one of these soon to celebrate their success, with the Mayor in attendance. This was ground-breaking work which other councils were now undertaking.

The Cabinet Member Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing added that he had recently attended a meeting of the Charlton Kings Senior

Citizens Welfare Committee alongside Cllr. Boyes, and had been able to inform them of the work they were doing to support senior citizens, including warm spaces and the food network. The key question attendees had asked was about access to this support, considering the unreliability of buses. It was clear that this issue would come to a head over the winter, and he hoped that the county council would find a resolution in its discussions with Stagecoach and others to protect access to essential services.

The Cabinet Member Housing reported that she had been grateful to attend the recent CBH AGM, and put on record her warm welcome to Martin Surl as the new Chair of the Board. Martin brought vast experience of the town as the former Police & Crime Commissioner and many years' service as a police officer. She was looking forward to working with him over the next few years, and thanked the outgoing chair Jason Langley for his hard work and dedication.

The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency thanked the climate team for the implementation of the climate decision wheel. This was a valuable tool which would help visualise the climate and social impact of council decisions, and had been published as a case study by the LGA. CBC was leading the way on this kind of work. She added that the Building Management System policy had passed the Green Investment Board and would soon be coming to Cabinet for approval, and she was interested to see its impact on our energy use.

The Leader of the Council reported that the boundary review had landed, and she had attended a cross-party working group last night about this. She urged all Members to look closely at the details, noting that it was a challenge built on compromise. She also welcomed the new Monitoring Officer, Claire Hughes, to her first formal meeting.

Decisions of Cabinet Members

The Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling and Street Services had taken a decision on 12th October to extend the terms of agreement relating to the sale of recycling material to 28th February 2023 (by Deed of Variation) for five named contractors. This had been due to expire on 17th October 2022, and would now be up for further review in the new year.

The Cabinet Member Finance, Assets and Regeneration had taken two decisions: the first, on 17th October, to approve Phase Three of the Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme, and the second, on 3rd November, to dispose of the freeholds of No.12 and No. 14 St James Street.

Chair