

Cheltenham Borough Council

Council

Minutes

Meeting date: 20 March 2023

Meeting time: 2.30 pm - 4.45 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Sandra Holliday (Chair), Matt Babbage (Vice-Chair), Glenn Andrews, Victoria Atherstone, Paul Baker, Adrian Bamford, Garth Barnes, Graham Beale, Nigel Britter, Jackie Chelin, Ed Chidley, Barbara Clark, Mike Collins, Iain Dobie, Stephan Fifield, Bernard Fisher, Wendy Flynn, Tim Harman, Steve Harvey, Martin Horwood, Peter Jeffries, Tabi Joy, Alisha Lewis, Paul McCloskey, Emma Nelson, Tony Oliver, John Payne, Richard Pineger, Julie Sankey, Diggory Seacome, Izaak Tailford, Julian Tooke, Simon Wheeler, Max Wilkinson, Suzanne Williams and David Willingham

Also in attendance:

Paul Jones (Executive Director of Finance, Assets and Regeneration), Claire Hughes (Monitoring Officer), Gareth Edmundson (Chief Executive) and Mike Redman (Director of Climate Change and Place Services)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs. Bassett-Smith, Boyes, Clucas and Hay, while Cllr. Harvey was late.

2 Declarations of interest

Cllr. Babbage declared an interest in the second motion as a member of the county council's Pension Committee, and left the Chamber during that item.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the 20th February meeting were approved and signed as a correct record.

4 Minutes of the last meeting

The Mayor sent condolences to the families of Peter Barlow and Phil Awford, who had both passed away recently. Peter Barlow was a stalwart of Remembrance Day services down the years, the former chairman of the Royal British Legion and a well-known figure in Cheltenham, especially for organising many poppy appeals and parades. Phil Awford, meanwhile, represented the Highnam division on the county council for more than 20 years.

She added that she had been delighted to meet and congratulate four young people aged between 10 and 13, after they had assisted a Springbank youth worker who had been assaulted by a member of the public. It was great to meet these young men, who were a credit to their families.

She also put on record her thanks to those who supported the council during race week, including the Love Our Turf campaign. In particular, she highlighted the efforts of Louis Krog and his brilliant team, as well as licensing officers from Tewkesbury, South Gloucestershire and Wolverhampton, and Avon and Somerset Police's Taxi Licensing Officer. She also thanked Gloucestershire Constabulary for working with the council's licensing team to perform stops and vehicle checks on out-of-town private hire vehicles, all of which made a significant positive difference.

Finally, she reminded Members about the quiz night on Friday 31st March.

5 Communications by the Leader of the Council

In the absence of the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader thanked council staff and partners again for the effort, extra hours and dedication that they showed during race week to keep the town looking its best. Before the races, the council worked hard to promote a message of personal responsibility and while it was disappointing to see a small minority ignore this, he thanked the vast majority of attendees who had fun but respected the town during the festival.

Following his update at the last Council meeting, he confirmed that he had written to Cllr. Gravells at the county council regarding the provision of NHS dentistry services, and looked forward to a response.

He added that the council had now received more detailed feedback regarding its Levelling Up bid. The feedback was that while it was a strong bid, they were not shortlisted for funding due to needing to strengthen the impact the funding would have from a cultural perspective, as well as more information on the positive impact on the community. He was confident that the Golden Valley development would do both of these things, and had they had more clarity on the contents of the bid then these were things they could have addressed in the last round. This was part of the challenge of having to face repeated competitions to receive government funding. In his view, funding should be awarded on the strength of need and the strength of the project and not on the strength of the bid alone. Nevertheless, the council would continue to engage with partners and review its position if and when a new funding round was announced.

He was delighted to report that the council had been awarded Bronze at the iESE public sector transformation awards, which celebrated the most innovative practice in transforming public services. CBC's climate impact assessment tool was one of 30 nominations in the

innovation category. It was good to see positive recognition of the hard work undertaken by the climate team.

Finally, he added that CBC had hosted the LG Challenge on the 7th and 8th of March. This was local government's version of The Apprentice, and they had the pleasure of hosting ten of local government's best and brightest. The challenge set was for them to look at how they could ensure that the Golden Valley development delivered inclusive growth and opportunity to those communities and families who faced the biggest challenges in our town. The work they completed in less than 24 hours was truly astonishing, and he looked forward to using and developing their ideas as the project progressed.

6 To receive petitions

There were none.

7 Public Questions

(4 total)

1. Question from Mike Farmer to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries

Voter ID costs

I note that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities has allocated 'new burdens' funding to Cheltenham Borough Council for the costs of introducing Voter ID Ref [New Burdens Funding Allocations 22/23 and 23/24: voter ID, accessibility, training & contact centre costs \(England and Wales\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#), and that these allocations total £7,610 (£4,750 for Financial Year 2022/23 and £2,860 for Financial Year 2023/24).

Could the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets state:

- Whether these allocations are sufficient to cover the Council's costs, during these two financial years, associated with preparing for the introduction of Voter ID in local and general elections scheduled to be held in Cheltenham in the financial year 2024/25?
- What additional funding the council would require to cover the costs of voter ID requirements, were a general election to be called during the 2023/24 financial year?

Response from Cabinet Member

Thank you Mr Farmer for your questions. It is fair to say that under normal conditions, cost recovery for elections are well practiced. Adding the requirement of voter ID gives a variable that all local authorities will be grappling with, the outcome of which, financially, will not be known until after each election.

The New Burdens funding is being provided using a hybrid approach of upfront grant payments, Justification Led Bids and a combination of both. The upfront grants are a proportion of the funding available. The upfront grant for Cheltenham (£4,750 for Financial Year 2022/23 and £2,860 for Financial Year 2023/24) has been calculated based on the fact that we do not have any scheduled elections for May 2023 and we do not have a large number of polling stations. Should the upfront grant funding not be sufficient to cover the councils costs, then the Justification Led Bid process will allow additional funding to be

released retrospectively. Funding for the financial year 2024/25 will follow the same pattern, with the first payment awarded via upfront grant in April 2024, followed by the JLB process.

Costs incurred for UK parliamentary elections as a result of the Elections Act will be met by the Consolidated Fund, rather than the New Burdens funding. In the event that an early election is called during the financial year 2023/24, should there be any costs arising, above the grants already awarded, because of voter ID requirements they would be met through this process.

Supplementary question from Mike Farmer

At the end of the first paragraph, it says that the financial outcome will not be known until after the next election. Has the council made any assessment of the cost of introducing voter ID and the adequacy of government funding for it?

Response from Cabinet Member

Making a specific assessment is difficult because the relevant legislation and guidance was not finalised until January, so it is an ongoing process, and the funding mechanisms are complex. The government made an assessment based on their knowledge and allocated funding accordingly, but we won't know the specific cost of Cheltenham's needs until after the next election.

2. Question from Rich Newman to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie

As the council has now agreed to spend £25,000 to light a part of the park, are there any plans in place to light the rest of Sandford Park? Namely the Eastern side of the park between college road and Keynsham Road? As the petition clearly asked for the entirety of the park to be lit. And your current plans only cover about a 3rd of Sandford Parks paved area.

Response from Cabinet Member

The Council has been working with Gloucestershire County Council to assess and suggest improvements to lighting in Sandford Park. The recommendation is to upgrade the lighting along the cycle path between College Road and Barretts Mill Lane, replacing two columns with five at closer spacing. An additional column is also proposed near the friendship circle, with an additional one under consideration in the Annecy (High Street) Garden. The cost to undertake this is between £25k - £28K. Potential funding sources have been identified (including £3k from GCC) and will be subject to funding bids for which applications are currently being prepared in partnership with the Friends of Sandford Park; who support this approach.

There are no plans to extend the lighting to all of the park, as it was identified in the report that this was not necessary and could be quite damaging to wildlife having a quite negative impact on biodiversity.

3. Question from Peter Frings to the Cabinet Member for Cyber, Regeneration and Commercial Income, Councillor Mike Collins

Clean Air Cheltenham has circulated, to all councillors, on Monday 13th March, a document summarising the huge benefits Nottingham City Council have gained from implementing a Workplace Parking Levy 10 years ago. Many other councils - both unitary and non-unitary (e.g. Oxford) - are also implementing a Workplace Parking Levy scheme. Nottingham Council have confirmed that they can deliver a full feasibility study to explore the benefits of such a scheme in Cheltenham, at a cost of £25k. Can the Cabinet Member responsible confirm that Cheltenham Borough Council will commission such a feasibility study within the next 6 months?

Response from Cabinet Member

I would like to thank Mr Frings for his question, which was recently raised via the council's budget consultation 2023/24. In response to that and reflected again here, the Workplace Parking Levy functions by allowing revenues to be invested in transport schemes, offsetting the impact on businesses. In my view this could only be efficiently introduced and implemented by the highways and transport authority, Gloucestershire County Council who are the decision makers in respect of highways.

I am aware of the legislation that enables this levy, but also of the wider challenges, particularly at a time of ever increasing financial pressures on businesses and individuals. The contribution of this type of intervention to a wider modal shift strategy may play a future role but this is a consideration alongside all possible future interventions. I am not in a position to commit the Council to funding a feasibility study, but I am happy to commit to raising the question with my county council colleagues.

4. Question from Peter Frings to the Cabinet Member for Cyber, Regeneration and Commercial Income, Councillor Mike Collins

If the council is not willing to explore the potential benefits of a Workplace Parking Levy, by what other means does the council propose to raise the major investment needed to start the process of building a continental standard, sustainable transport system in Cheltenham... without which it is very difficult to see how there will ever be any significant improvement in Cheltenham's air quality?

Response from Cabinet Member

Again, thank you Mr Frings for your question. I have addressed a similar question in respect of the members questions posed to me today. Gloucestershire County Council is the highways authority and therefore our role is one of campaigning on our priorities and seeking to work in collaboration. Data from our recent residents' survey noted that 68% of residents will choose to walk, cycle or use public transport more instead of using a car in the next few years.

As you rightly point out addressing transport, which is one of the key contributors to air quality and climate change impacts is a priority. Through our work on [Connecting Cheltenham](#) we set out our ambitious vision for transport to help tackle the climate change emergency, enable inclusive transport options and make better connections across the borough. This work remains relevant and continues to guide our engagement with the County Council.

8 Member Questions

(6 total)

1. Question from Councillor Tim Harman to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, Councillor Max Wilkinson

Cheltenham Borough Council's contribution to tourism is "The Cheltenham Pod" in the High Street, which is a locked up leaflet dispenser and is rarely staffed, together with a modest stand distributing leaflets in the reception of the Municipal Offices. Surely we can do better than this for this great town.

Will he undertake an urgent review of the council's modest contribution to tourism, including comparing this council's approach with those of other comparative towns and cities across the country?

Response from Cabinet Member

The Cheltenham Pod was opened thanks to a grant from the government's Welcome Back Fund. It was never intended to be a 24/7 location for Tourism Information. As Cllr Harman is aware, thanks to the interest in this matter of his colleague Cllr Nelson, the Council hosts Tourism Information in the Municipal Offices reception on weekdays. As he will further be aware, as a result of recent questions, the Council has also been considering for some time how to provide in-person tourism information to visitors on weekends. Cllr Harman will be pleased to hear that a trial scheme is soon to launch. This will involve visitor welcome staff being stationed at the Cheltenham Pod on weekends and Bank Holidays and the job adverts are now live. While market research shows that the vast majority of tourists will access information online in advance of visits, we accept that this will not be the case for everyone – particularly older visitors. Therefore, the new seven-day-a-week provision will help provide cover for those requiring extra help. This authority, via Marketing Cheltenham, is currently working with other local authorities on a review of regional tourism marketing. This is as a result of a request from the government, via Visit England.

Supplementary question from Cllr. Harman

I understand the pod is not staffed full time, but I was surprised to find out that there was nobody there last week during the racing festival. Would the Cabinet Member be happy to bring a report to Overview & Scrutiny in six or nine months' time on how the strategy is progressing? It is important to keep watching this, and I'm sure we share the ambition of doing more for tourism than we currently are.

Response from Cabinet Member

The short answer is probably yes but I'm willing to expand on it as we go. It is useful for us to discuss and debate this. If we were seeking a route, we probably wouldn't start from here, with a background of funding cuts in local government and the loss of the existing tourist information repository during the pandemic. The emerging strategy can be positive and innovative, and the old 9-5 approach in the same place was neither financially sustainable nor particularly effective. In line with many other local areas, we are pursuing something slightly different, and if it doesn't work we will look at alternatives. Having people stationed at the pod on weekend will give people somewhere to go and chat with people with local knowledge, if they don't have a mobile phone or access to the internet. Defaulting to digital is fine in most cases, but there are a lot of people in different demographic groups who are less likely to use digital services. It's important that we still have physical repositories for tourist information, we'll continue to do this and are getting positive feedback on the progress we've

made so far. I'd be happy to work with Marketing Cheltenham to bring an item to O&S when we can make a judgement on whether the approach is working for Cheltenham.

2. Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Councillor Alisha Lewis

How many litres of water were needed for the Christmas 2021 ice rink, what refrigerants were used to cool this water and what was the environmental impact of these?

Response from Cabinet Member

We do not hold on record information about the quantity of water used in 2021. The previous supplier and consultant involved in delivering the 2021 ice rink have been contacted to source this information but unfortunately, it has not arrived prior to the deadline for submitting this question response. When a response comes through, we will ensure that you are given a copy. Information on the coolant used is attached:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561057/ethylene_glycol_general_information.pdf

3. Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, Councillor Max Wilkinson

The Ice Rink report to Cabinet on 1st March 2022 agreed to explore, as a priority, the installation of fixed power supplies to the Council's main event sites. What progress has been made on this over the last year?

Response from Cabinet Member

A funding application was submitted to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in August 2022 and one of the capital projects included in the bid was to support the installation of fixed power supply in the Imperial Gardens area to service events such as the ice rink. The council was advised in December that this was successful and since that time, council officers have:

- Commissioned initial surveys of the area
- Contracted with an electrical expert to provide advice and expertise on the scale and type of connections required
- Worked with local festival and event organisers to assess requirements
- Commenced work to engage a firm of engineers to develop the design of the fixed power supply and support the project management of any construction

Work on installing a fixed power supply continues to be a priority for the council in line with the Corporate Plan 2023-27 and the requirements of the UKSPF funding.

Supplementary question from Cllr. Flynn

It doesn't look like there will be any fixed power supply in place for this year's rink. Is that the case, and will an ice rink go ahead without one?

Response from Cabinet Member

It doesn't look like there is going to be, but the intention is to still go ahead. Cllr. Flynn will recall from last year's discussions about the ice rink, which ended up not going ahead, that we intended to pursue an alternative strategy that did not rely on traditional a diesel

generator, and I'm confident that if we don't have electrical infrastructure in the gardens for this winter then we will not be going for a traditional diesel generator. Some of the technologies available to us produce substantial carbon savings, which shows a positive trajectory. The climate decision wheel will guide our decisions, but it won't just stop everything happening. In order to bring the public along with us on climate change matters, the worst way to do this would be to say they can't enjoy things.

4. Question from Councillor Wendy Flynn to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, Councillor Max Wilkinson

I welcome the Council's commitment to tackling ASB during Race Week but note from media releases that the "hydrophobic" paint (containing hydrocarbons, C9-C12, n-alkanes, isoalkanes, cyclics, aromatics, petroleum distillates and hydrotreated light) that is being used in the War on Wee campaign is a simple water repellent sealer. From my research, every other town and city hoping to reduce public urination by coating walls with hydrophobic paint have used Ultra-Ever Dry paint. The Ultra-Ever paint uses 2 distinct coats to create a surface textured with tiny prongs that cause drops of water to hover, a phenomenon known to biologists as the "lotus leaf effect", and results in "bounce back" of urine. What technology is utilised in the No Nonsense Water Sealer (as shown in media photos) being applied to walls in Cheltenham, as part of the War on Wee campaign, to create the bounce back effect and how much further does the No Nonsense Water Sealer bounce back the urine stream of an anti-social public urinator than that which would normally be expected from a wall?

Response from Cabinet Member

I thank Councillor Flynn for her question and her interest in this subject.

Managing the races presents a substantial challenge for the council, partners, residents and businesses. The council, with partners, review planning every year as part of the normal debrief process in order to identify areas for improvement for future years.

Councillor Flynn will be aware of the horrendous anti-social behaviour and public urination seen last year particularly around Pittville Park and along the Evesham Road. Videos shared on social media show public urination in the park, but it is well-known that a minority of racegoers choose to urinate in various locations.

Hydrophobic, water repellent paint, is one of a number of things implemented to address these issues. Cllr Flynn will have noted the posters on display, social media and pre-festival media coverage. Other measures include additional toilets, support for the "Love Our Turf" campaign and additional police and council staff deployment in these areas. I have also contacted the Police and Crime Commissioner to request that those caught urinating in public are fined. We must not accept "it's race week" as an excuse for offensive behaviour that would not be tolerated for the other 51 weeks of the year.

We received 22 expressions of interest from a range of residents, charities, businesses and public spaces (via the BID). Through the initiative, we were therefore able to support residents, charities and businesses.

In relation to the paint distributed this year, it is described as a "high performance waterproof treatment" that "repels water". Based on this, we decided it would be appropriate to use for the initial trial which was on a small scale this year.

We will review the impact and success of the “War on Wee” initiative in the coming weeks and, based on this, may decide to roll it out on a larger scale in the future. If we do, we may consider alternative products.

Supplementary question from Cllr. Flynn

This did not answer my question, and looking at it I've drawn the conclusion that the paint didn't have any effect compared to a normal wall. Could the Cabinet Member assure me that the War On Wee campaign was a solid action to address a serious problem residents are concerned about and not a gimmick to gain political capital?

Response from Cabinet Member

I haven't tested the paint myself, so I can't tell you if the effect was any better than a normal wall, but the suggestion from its makers is that it does work. We will assess the campaign's success and look to adjust in future. Over race week, there were still plenty of reports of public urination in a number of wards. It is a real problem that affects public health, safety and equality, and we are taking it very seriously. We are pleased with the work we've done this year and will do a proper review. People visiting Cheltenham need to know that public urination isn't any more acceptable during race week than in the other 51 weeks of the year.

5. Question from Councillor Tabi Joy to Cabinet Member for Cyber, Regeneration and Commercial Income, Councillor Mike Collins

Reflecting on the tragic incident of an scooter collision in Nottinghamshire last June, will Cheltenham Borough Council be campaigning Gloucestershire County Council for reliable cycle paths, through Cheltenham town centre and surrounding suburbs that scooters can share to avoid roadways and pavements?

Response from Cabinet Member

Thank you Councillor Joy for your question. As you are aware, Gloucestershire County Council is the highways authority and therefore our role is as you point out one of campaigning on our priorities and seeking to work in collaboration. Data from our recent residents' survey noted that 68% of residents will choose to walk, cycle or use public transport more instead of using a car in the next few years.

Through our work on Connecting Cheltenham we set out our ambitious vision for transport to help tackle the climate change emergency, enable inclusive transport options and make better connections across the borough. This work remains relevant and continues to guide our engagement with the County Council. A few specific points to note;

- GCC are investing significantly in a Gloucestershire spine cycle network with Cheltenham to Gloucester underway, with the Cheltenham A40 section complete.
- GCC have been a key partner in working with CBC, Network Rail and GWR to extend the former Honeybourne Line connecting the A40 via Shelburne Road to the railway station car park. Construction of the extension is expected to start in March/April 2023 and is due to be completed in September/October 2023.

- I understand the Cheltenham to Bishops Cleeve route now has funding and is in design phase. I believe this is due to begin winter 2023. However I haven't been fully briefed on this yet so don't know where/if this links to Cheltenham centre.
- We are working with GCC to invest in better cycle infrastructure in the way of cycle parking across the town centre.
- We have allocated UKSPF funding to open a cycle hub in the town centre.

Whilst some of these actions are not directly linked to enabling scooter movement, they are linked to enabling choice in transport mode.

As a point of clarity it is illegal for an scooter to ride on the pavement. Scooters are classed as a vehicle and therefore have the right to use the road, just as cars and bikes do.

Supplementary question from Cllr. Joy

While scooters are illegal to use on the pavement, people still regularly use them there, and it makes sense to have that third option just in case. In a number of places, like Lansdown Road, bike lanes are bumpy and there are often vans and cars parked in the way. Looking at the county-wide spine or Bishop's Cleeve to Cheltenham route misses the point when people aren't confident driving in the town centre. Will there be a way that we can prioritise the needs of the poorly maintained and unreliable town centre-specific sites?

Response from Cabinet Member

I'd like to start off by saying how sorry I am about the tragic death of Linda Davies as a result of this incident in Rainworth, Nottinghamshire, last year. It is important to give some of the background here: the individual who caused Mrs Davies' death was a 14 year old riding a privately owned scooter illegally on the pavement without insurance or a driver's licence. I'm sure we've all seen young people riding scooters illegally on the pavement with no regard to the law of the road. This tragedy was not caused by a lack of a safe cycle path, but rather the actions of someone who chose to break the law.

We have been working, and will continue to work, with the county council to ensure that safe and accessible networks of walking and cycle paths are available across the town. The Connecting Cheltenham report also goes some way to answering the concerns raised. It also worth reiterating that GCC are the highways authority, and not the borough council.

6. Question from Councillor Tabi Joy to the Cabinet Member for Cyber, Regeneration and Commercial Income, Councillor Mike Collins

Has the council received adequate reassurance that the Gloucestershire Airport fuel spill of May 2022 will not be repeated? What specific mitigations have been put in place by Cheltenham Borough Council following the investigation of the incident?

Response from Cabinet Member

Thank you Councillor Joy for your question. For the benefit of all Members I feel it is worth setting out what happened. On Friday 27th May at approx. 07.45am the operative arrived on site at the Gloucester Airport Tank Farm to make a delivery of 38,000 litres of JET 34 Fuel. During the process of delivering fuel the operative believed that the product was not being pumped correctly and therefore tried to trouble shoot however he noticed the product on the

floor, and then fuel gushing over the sides of the top of the trailer's tank. At this point the operative stopped the pump immediately and it was also at this point our refueller noticed the spill and called for the Airport fire service to attend.

It is believed the spill was in the region of 3,000 litres which was contained by the site and reached as far as the interceptor. The Environmental Agency and local Water Company attended and confirmed that no product had reached the water course. At first the Airport internal fire brigade arrived on the scene, who then called for the local external fire service to assist in the clean-up operation after laying a foam blanket.

A number of actions have been put in place to mitigate a similar occurrence which include :

- A modification has been made to all aviation trailers to ensure that pumps will only operate in the forward direction
- A re-training program on 'pump-off' deliveries has been put in place for operatives
- Procedures for pumped aviation deliveries has been updated to ensure clarity on pump and direction test to be carried out before hoses are flooded
- Investigating the possibility of fitting a non-return valve to the pipework of the receiving tank

These actions provide adequate reassurance that the Gloucestershire Airport fuel spill of May 2022 will not be repeated.

9 Capital, Non-Treasury Investment, Treasury Management and MRP Strategies and Statements

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets presented the report, recalling the council's journey in recent years. With a decade of austerity and a commitment to fund discretionary services, this council looked to commercialise its operations wherever possible. With the cost of services at £22m and income from local taxation and grants equalling £14m, they had to fill the void of £8m with trading and investment income. How the council used capital and managed investments was more important than ever, in order to ensure it was maximising the returns generated to support the general fund budget.

The documents presented to Council set out how they planned to do this over the next 12 months. These strategies were all mandatory for local authorities and should be reviewed and approved by Council each year. Together with the asset management strategy, they provided the framework for all our capital, asset and investment decisions for the coming year. He also presented for approval the annual Minimum Revenue Provision statement, which explained how the payment of their borrowings had been calculated. There had been no significant changes to their approach for the coming year as they were still waiting for a formal response to the government consultation from 2021, which had still not been published.

The Mayor moved into Member questions:

- One Member noted that some property purchases used short-term loans, and queried the possible impact of this when it came to renewal, with interest rates creeping up. The Executive Director Finance, Assets and Regeneration clarified that they took a hybrid approach, and all the investments they classified as operational were subject to long-term borrowing. Four or five years ago, when they made a

number of strategic investments in the town including a supermarket and a number of office buildings, these were financed using what was called a basket of maturities. Instead of taking one loan over 40 years, they took 40 loans over 40 years, with the first loan maturing each year and so on. All of those were fixed. The rationale for that was that it saved some £990k in interest over the 40 years. The only strategic investment they now had in short-term borrowing was the land acquisition at West Cheltenham. The rationale for this was that if they got it right, over time they would release plots to developers to develop out, and obtaining capital receipts to offset this debt repayment. He reassured Members that they were not in a situation where the majority of their debts were short-term loans.

- One Member asked about the opportunity costs and time and effort needed to seek the available sources of funding from the government. The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets agreed that officers had to spend a lot of time working on bids when they could be doing other things, but unfortunately this was how the government chose to operate now. Funding was only made available through limited windows and they had to compete with other authorities for it.

There being no further questions, the Mayor moved into debate, where the following points were made:

- The appendices were more accessible and easier to read than the usual black and white, with descriptions also provided for key terms with which the public might not be familiar. This was a positive step which ought to continue. The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets was pleased with the documents' accessibility and intended for it to continue. Readability was key so that the public could fully understand the decisions being made.
- The capital and investment strategies were closely linked to the new Corporate Plan, and it was particularly good to see a focus on building affordable net zero homes.
- One of the key priorities on page 32 (to enhance Cheltenham's reputation as the cyber capital of the UK) had already started, and they were hosting a delegation from Canada in the next few days on cyber. Cheltenham's reputation was already growing around the world, and this would provide further income to offset some of their costs.
- The investment in housing was welcome, but the council needed to avoid relying on Golden Valley, and instead ensure a balance across different priorities. The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets disagreed that they were reliant on Golden Valley, but acknowledged the project's importance considering the economic challenges they faced.

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets thanked Members for their contributions, and summarised that Cheltenham always did things differently and sought innovative solutions.

The Mayor moved to the vote, which was carried unanimously.

FOR: 34

AGAINST: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

10 Carbon Footprint Report 2021-22

The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency presented the report, emphasising that it showed real progress towards the council's climate goals. Their overall carbon footprint reduction was the key figure, and had been delivered despite many different factors putting pressure on the council. Overall, they had reduced their footprint by even more than would be needed each year to achieve their target of Net Zero by 2030. Cheltenham was leading the way, and they were receiving positive feedback from other councils.

She was also pleased to announce that the council's bid for funding to deliver a heat pump at Leisure At had been successful, and would help to protect a valuable local resource for residents to enjoy. Alongside their ambitious plans to develop solar, working with CBH to deliver carbon neutral homes and testing the viability of heat networks, they had a real plan to get the town and council to net zero. Finding the right solutions to the climate crisis in the face of a lot of changing technology and high heritage standards was a tough challenge, but they were investing in Cheltenham's future today. She thanked officers for their dedication in drawing the report together, and commended it to Council.

The Mayor moved into Member questions:

- One Member had submitted some questions in advance, and was happy that these had been taken into account.
- One Member thanked the Cabinet Member for her open and transparent approach to an important subject. They asked how confident she was that the baseline used for these figures was sound, and not just based on an estimate or national average. The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency responded that she was confident of this, and added that they had made some adjustments to their methodology since the last report to get it as accurate as possible, working with an industry expert. This report went into more depth than previous years, though there were always areas where they could go further, for example a breakdown across individual properties.
- One Member noted that the risk assessment in Appendix 1 listed a number of particularly high scoring risks, and asked whether the Cabinet Member could reassure Members that the appropriate mitigation measures were in place. The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency confirmed that they were, and noted that the risks of not properly tackling the climate crisis was naturally high. This was an incredibly important investment that the council were taking very seriously.
- One Member praised the seriousness and enthusiasm with which the Cabinet Member approached her portfolio. There was great news about the air source heat pump at Leisure At, that would have a real impact on the running of that facility. Could that information be shared with the Lido, since they were having similar issues? The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency was happy to share what they had learned once it was complete, and added that CBC had a strong and long-running relationship with the Lido.
- One Member asked whether there was any update on the boiler situation in the Municipal Offices. The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency confirmed that they had transitioned away from gas to electric there, which contributed to the carbon saving in the report. They were always looking to get more sustainable, and things that were in need of repair were the ideal subject for this.
- One Member asked what the council would do to ensure there was equal scrutiny of CBH's emissions and contributions towards net zero, given that they were not included in this report. The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency clarified that this was so CBH could produce their own separate report specifically about their

properties and emissions. She was sure that they would be happy to discuss it at O&S and in other forums once it was published. It would be useful to compare and contrast their results with CBC's, and transparency was key.

- Another Member added that since 26% of UK emissions came from domestic properties, it would be useful to include CBH's figures. The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency suggested that CBH could publish their report around the same time as CBC's, in order to compare and contrast. CBH were a key partner organisation, so CBC shared their methodology with them.
- One Member asked whether flight emissions as the airport were accounted for. The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency responded that they were not included as CBC emissions, since they were the airport's own footprint. The airport was due to come to Overview & Scrutiny soon.

There being no further questions, the Mayor moved into Member debate, where the following points were made:

- The work of the Cabinet Member and officers had seen substantial progress in the last few years, illustrated by the good news about Leisure At.
- A number of carbon reduction initiatives were in place as part of the Waste, Recycling and Street Services portfolio. CBC had funded two electric vans for use by the green space, grounds maintenance and toilet maintenance teams, while their waste and recycling vehicles had used a renewable alternative fuel rather than diesel since October. This alternative was 87% cleaner, and thanks to these changes they had reduced their CO2 emissions by more than 220 tons.
- The council's declaration of a climate emergency wasn't just symbolic, but had been followed up with real action and progress. The way the figures had been calculated likely meant that the council was saving even more, as they purchased a pure green tariff from West Mercia Energy. The council was taking real initiative to reduce its footprint.
- At the previous Council meeting, the opposition's proposed budget amendment would have done away with the climate portfolio. The carbon literacy training given to Members was valuable and had led to changes in habits already.
- Cheltenham Borough Homes took carbon reduction very seriously. Various pots of funding were available for social housing decarbonisation, and would be an essential part of their goal to get their properties to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) A or B rather than the current C. CBC and CBH collaborated closely together and were all working towards the same goal.
- It was useful to have a dedicated Cabinet Member working closely with officers on such a complex and important subject.
- The council could look into ways of bulk purchasing solar power technology and making it available to residents. The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency confirmed that they had plans to do this, but then received legal advice that the scheme they were looking at wasn't quite the right one. It remained a goal, and was a work in progress.
- A Cheltenham resident had set up retrofitting sessions to educate others in their ward, and they were now planning to roll this out across Cheltenham.
- It was essential to reach young people and ensure they were engaged in this so that everyone did their bit.
- The report was welcome, as was the seriousness with which the council treated the climate.

- Parks and green spaces were a key part of the council's green strategy, and they could consider things like ground source heat pumps.
- The council had significantly reduced its carbon emissions over a very short time. Public sector change rarely happened this quickly, and it needed to be reflected elsewhere.
- It was good to measure everything internally and be transparent, and they had to bring residents along in enabling change. This was a responsibility which they could not shirk, and they had to look outwards and lead others forward. This mission was shared across all parties on the council.

In summing up, The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency thanked Members for their contributions and support. She emphasised the importance of sustainable investment, and the need to engage with young people across Cheltenham.

The Mayor moved to the vote, which was carried unanimously.

FOR: 34

AGAINST: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

11 Notices of Motion

Motion A

Proposed by Cllr. Wendy Flynn and seconded by Cllr. Tabi Joy.

Cheltenham Youth Council

This Council resolves:

To establish a Cheltenham Youth Council.

In proposing the motion, Cllr. Flynn reminded Members that in 1997, CBC had initiated a programme of work called 'Investment in young people – a strategic framework'. This recommended the creation of a Youth Affairs post to deliver actions outlined in the strategy, including the formation of a youth council.

'Right here, right now – a strategy for young people', approved in 2001, further developed the arguments for creating opportunities for young people to engage with the council. It stressed the importance of working with partners to help young people develop the skills needed to ensure they had influence, and looked to ensure young people could become active citizens, in their communities and through the ballot box. The latter strategy noted that all young people suffered a disadvantage through a lack of influence in decision-making. It focused on 10-19 year olds but involved some work with young people outside of that age range, and demonstrated a commitment to Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In February 2003, a report went to the council's Social & Community O&S Committee, highlighting the work of the youth council and including wide-ranging consultation with other young people. The paper stated that CBC was addressing this democratic deficit in a number of ways, including by having a strategy for young people, a youth council representative on O&S and youth spokespersons for each party who worked and met with

the Young People's Council on a regular basis. Cabinet decided in 2011 to cease funding for the youth council denying young people a vehicle for meaningful engagement with the council since.

She was pleased that there was a focus on the views of young people in the draft Culture Strategy, to the extent that there was a recommendation to have a young person sit on the board. This stance on including young people was one the council should follow. She noted that the new Corporate Plan made no commitment to actively involve young people in the making of decisions or policy. There was little mention of children and young people's democratic participation in any of the council's policies since 2011, suggesting that giving young people a democratic voice had been relegated to the back of their mind.

Last month, six councillors heard from the Youth Climate Group that young people did not feel represented in power-holding structures, that there should be an integration of youth voices into the decision-making process and that there should be a structure for long-term participation for young people. When O&S reported back to Council after looking at UNICEF child-friendly city status, it was clear that there was not currently a mechanism for young people to influence what the council did.

She added that Stroud's District Youth Council had been founded in 2000. District Youth Councillors acted as representatives of their community, advocating the issues faced by young people in the area. The youth council and nine locality-based youth forums represented the views of young people, enabling them to collectively use their right to have a voice and be heard on relevant issues of concern. They engaged with decision makers to influence change and make a positive contribution to improving the lives of people in the communities they represented, and interact with elected district members. They were also involved in the district council's performance monitoring and policy and strategy work, and had focus groups for topics such as Health and Wellbeing, Democracy, Anti-Bullying, Young People's Rights and Local Transport. She asked that councillors take a look at Stroud Youth Council's website for evidence of the positive impact of Stroud's commitment to giving young people a voice.

In summing up, Cllr. Flynn noted that a youth council could be set up in many different ways, as explained in the link submitted with the motion. What it would look like was for the young people of the town to lead on. All Members were being asked to do was to vote to start the journey to give young people in Cheltenham a vehicle for their voices to be truly heard.

In seconding the motion, Cllr. Joy suggested that there were a number of strong options for improving democratic engagement among young people. It was important to include both those who could not yet vote and those who could but lacked understanding and familiarity with the political system. There was a clear appetite for engagement, and it was about empowering young people with practical and accessible ways to participate.

She added that an ongoing and structured process for youth participation, in addition to clarifying areas of ambiguity (for example students not being sure whether they could vote in their university constituency or hometown) could make a big difference. There were many options open to the council that would not be too expensive or time-consuming. Offering young people a voice in their local community would also help to build roots between them and the area, at a time when many young people chose to move away from their home towns.

She acknowledged that there would be associated costs and burdens on officer capacity, but this motion would simply get the ball rolling on an issue where the stakes were very high. Hopefully, this would be an iterative process which all parties could take part in at their

discretion, and did not necessarily need to be CBC focused. There were several councillors in their 20s, but with 19% of Cheltenham's population aged 15-29 according to the 2021 census, this demographic was still significantly underrepresented.

It was good that the Accessibility Forum was in place to take disability concerns into account, and that racial and cultural equity measures were being adopted, but young people needed to be included in outreach work as well. A number of measures had been adopted successfully elsewhere, like work experience placements, support to attend council meetings, shadowing councillors and officers, representation on committees, and creating strategy groups where motions could be brought forward. All of these options would help to empower young people and equip them to absorb information and give back to their communities. It would be a long-term investment, and something that should be considered with the future in mind.

Cllr. Tailford proposed an amendment to the motion, seconded by Cllr. Chidley.

Motion A (Amendment)

Cheltenham Youth Council

Cheltenham Borough Council and its partners are proud of the outreach work undertaken to ensure that young people have a voice in the democratic process.

Council welcomes ongoing work to broaden this engagement strategy, including visits by the Cabinet Members Climate Emergency and Safety & Communities to meetings with local young people as part of the Cheltenham Education Partnership, and engagement by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing with GlosCol supporting their construction skills agenda.

This Council resolves:

To refer the issue of mechanisms by which we can further involve young people in Cheltenham Borough Council life to Cabinet and the relevant Cabinet Member (Safety and Communities) to explore feasible additional outreach and inclusion options – with a youth council or youth forum as options to be costed and considered.

In proposing the amendment, Cllr. Tailford thanked Cllrs. Flynn and Joy for bringing the initial motion forward. It was important to get the ball rolling and make a difference for young people. He felt that the amendment offered more scope to find a solution for Cheltenham and its young people. There was a clear need to do more across the UK to engage young people in democracy, particularly at a time when they were feeling increasingly disenfranchised.

There were two key groups in play: the 18-25s feeling disenfranchised across the country, and the under 18s who had very little say in the political system. At a recent climate event, he spoke to those involved in Stroud's youth council, which was the only one in the county, to try and find out its cost and feasibility. In terms of officer time, including transport and qualified youth workers, it cost them around £125k per year, a figure out of reach during the current financial crisis. They needed to find more affordable ways to get young people engaged, and he had looked into options for this alongside Cllr. Boyes.

He emphasised the need to ensure that the options chosen and implemented were the best ones for Cheltenham, with long-term solutions rather than quick fixes. This might be a youth council, but they might also find that other options were more appropriate, and worked more effectively alongside existing initiatives in the town.

Cllr. Flynn raised a point of order, suggesting that the amendment negated the motion. The Monitoring Officer clarified that the amendment sought to refer the motion to Cabinet for further explanation, and did not seem to negate it entirely as it did not reject the youth council proposal out of hand. The motion and amendment would both be referred, and would return for a future Council debate as a larger piece of work that assessed all options.

In seconding the amendment, Cllr. Chidley thanked Cllr. Tailford for bringing it forward. During the recent election campaign in Battledown, many residents had remarked that it was rare for someone under 30 to be involved in politics, and he had found out after his election that he was now one of the youngest councillors in the region. This was not a brag, but the sign of a real problem. He cited the YouGov Youth Survey in 2021, which showed a worrying trend of young people losing faith in democracy. He supported the proposal for a platform to increase youth engagement in the local system, reminding the next generation of politicians that real change could occur at a local level. It would be wise for this to be well-researched and thought through first, to ensure as many young people as possible gained access as a result.

The Mayor clarified that the amendment asked Members to refer the motion to Cabinet. One Member queried whether Members could comment before the referral. The Monitoring Officer clarified that Council was not being asked to approve or reject the motion at this time, just to refer it to another committee for consideration, and it would come back in the future for a full debate.

The Mayor moved to the vote on referral to Cabinet, which was carried.

FOR: 31

AGAINST: 0

ABSTAIN: 2

Motion B

Proposed by Cllr. Tabi Joy and seconded by Cllr. Wendy Flynn.

Divestment Commitment

This council will divest from its own investment holdings in fossil fuel funds, and will request that all pensions managed by Gloucestershire County Council are similarly divested.

In proposing the motion, Cllr. Joy explained that it covered both CBC's and GCC's investment holdings, the latter of which were more extensive. It called for divestment of any fossil fuel holdings, which represented nearly 5% of the total sum. Figures published in 2021 suggested that the total fund was worth £2.2bn, meaning that the proportion invested in fossil fuels totalled £100m through either direct or indirect investment. Investments in coal represented around £38m, while oil and gas were around £62m.

She added that the final stage of the IPCC report had come through on the day of the meeting, suggesting that it was now or never for the topic of climate breakdown. She reflected on risk management, but it was difficult to predict the effects of climate breakdown on wider society. Fossil fuel use had a profound negative impact worldwide, especially on air pollution. Investing in renewables offered a new set of opportunities, and the council needed to be diligent about where its money was. There were also financial incentives to divest, as fossil fuel investments could end up being stranded assets.

She acknowledged that most of these reserves were ring-fenced, making it more difficult to divest, but CBC reviewed its strategy every three years. They needed to avoid destructive short-termism in the pursuit of profit. They could request certain measures, for example that the county council create a task force on this topic, or appoint a dedicated responsible investment officer. The primary aim in this urgent situation was monitoring and promoting environmental, social and governance investment. She hoped colleagues would weigh up the proposal carefully and ensure the council was doing its due diligence.

The Monitoring Officer asked for clarification on the task force proposal. Cllr. Joy explained that one possible part of the GCC request could include suggesting that they set one up, but that this did not form part of the motion.

In seconding the motion, Cllr. Flynn echoed the points made by Cllr. Joy. She added that fossil fuel divestment aimed to reduce carbon emissions by accelerating the adoption of the renewable energy transition through the stigmatisation of fossil fuel companies. It was an attempt to reduce climate change by exerting pressure for institutional divestment of assets.

She highlighted the second key priority in the new Corporate Plan, which referred to the council making changes themselves before asking residents to make the same changes to their organisations and lives. The council needed to lead on this and set an example to businesses and individuals. Plenty of time had passed since the declaration of a climate emergency declaration to divest fully from fossil fuels. The county council had also had four years to do this, which was too long.

Cllr. Beale proposed an amendment to the motion, seconded by Cllr. Jeffries.

Motion B (Amendment)

Although the council's discretionary services are under immense fiscal pressure during of a cost-of-living crisis, Cheltenham Borough Council maintains its commitment to deliver services in an equitable and sustainable way.

Cheltenham Borough Council continues its commitment to divest from funds which include fossil fuels. We are already making positive progress on divestment. However, to mitigate financial losses we will action this when it is financially prudent to do so. Ultimately, this will align our investment strategy with our values but also protect CBCs investment strategy and the vital services which residents rely on everyday.

To be clear, no new investments in fossil fuel funds will be undertaken. Cheltenham's Green New Deal serves as an example on how we will be investing in a sustainable future for our town.

This Council resolves:

To invite a representative from the Gloucestershire County Council pension fund to host a members briefing in Cheltenham to understand how they are exiting from fossil fuel funds at County level.

In proposing the amendment, Cllr. Beale thanked Cllrs. Joy and Flynn for bringing the motion forward, and recognised the importance of accountability and ensuring that rhetoric matched action. Nothing was more important to the council than its commitment to the planet. It was incumbent on everyone to do better and reach new standards together.

The council had committed to the climate emergency several years ago and since then had viewed everything through this lens. Net Zero was the ultimate challenge and they needed to

continually review their efforts to move towards a better future. He reiterated the council's commitment to divest from funds which included fossil fuels. As of the end of February, the equities they held in fossil fuel-focused organisations comprised 0.7% of their overall investment portfolio, but they intended to make that 0.

These equities were part of a larger pooled investment which was managed as a fund, and currently returned £120k per year into the council's budget, which was used towards local services. Leaving this fund now would incur significant losses in the region of £383k, and require cuts to services as a result. Financial officers and advisors were closely monitoring the situation and would exit from the fund at the earliest opportunity. Of course, they would prefer to make this change immediately, but in a climate of increasing inflation and decreasing government support, they owed it to residents to exit in a controlled manner.

Finally, he noted that staff pension arrangements were held and managed by the county council. CBC would be pleased to organise a briefing for all Members where GCC could demonstrate their commitment to divest from fossil fuels.

Cllr. Flynn raised a point of order, suggesting that the amendment negated the motion. The original motion made a clear request, but the amendment did not. Cllr. Joy queried whether the amendment could be submitted as a separate motion. The Monitoring Officer clarified that it could, but not at this meeting due to the notice required. She also clarified that there were some parts of the amendment that were similar to the original motion, as well as a clear next step of requesting that GCC come and explain what they were doing to divest, so the amendment did not negate the original motion.

Cllr. Joy emphasised the need for urgent action considering the situation. It was imperative to enact more concrete steps, as they were both time- and resource-poor. If the amendment's proposers didn't feel it was appropriate, they could vote against it. Whatever resulted from this meeting, it needed to be a long-term plan.

The Mayor moved into debate on the amendment, where the following points were made:

- Divestment from fossil fuels needed to be a responsible financial decision, and it would cost in excess of £400k to do it immediately. The council's Treasury Management Strategy had just been passed unanimously as the previous item on the agenda, and included a commitment to gradually reduce these investments over time.
- The Green group could instead have brought an amendment to the previous Budget meeting calling for CBC to divest immediately, and explaining where the £400k would come from to pay for it due to the legal requirement for a balanced budget.
- Every council, including Green-led ones, had some level of investments in fossil fuels, and they were all reducing this over time. However, they couldn't justify dumping them overnight given the cost to the rate payer. The opposition had not explained how they would account for the £400k loss.
- The council needed to be proactive, considering that four years had already passed since their climate change emergency commitment.
- Constructive dialogue with the county council was key so both authorities could learn from one another. Inviting them to the borough council to understand their direction of travel would be of more value than telling them what to do. CBC's commitment to divesting from unclean investments was clear.

Cllr. Beale thanked Members for their comments on his amendment. The county council's commitment to Net Zero was reassuring and he looked forward to hearing from them about how they were approaching it.

Cllr. Joy, as the proposer of the original motion, indicated that she wished to accept the amendment, and advocated a proactive and realistic approach that built on the council's declaration of a climate emergency in 2019. She was happy to support the amendment as one part of an ongoing forward process.

The Mayor confirmed that the amendment had become the substantive motion, and moved into debate on it, where the following points were made:

- The pension fund under consideration here was worth some £3.1bn, so trying to understand what this was invested in and how to divest was a very complex job. Members needed to ensure they did not act rashly and put pensioners in difficulty.
- Divestment was a gradual process as it concerned significant financial commitments, and immediately pulling funds would have a major cost.
- Accepting the amendment was a welcome example of pluralist, consensus-based politics.

There being no further comments, the Mayor moved to the vote on the amended motion, which was carried unanimously.

FOR: 31

AGAINST: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

Motion B

Although the council's discretionary services are under immense fiscal pressure during of a cost-of-living crisis, Cheltenham Borough Council maintains its commitment to deliver services in an equitable and sustainable way.

Cheltenham Borough Council continues its commitment to divest from funds which include fossil fuels. We are already making positive progress on divestment. However, to mitigate financial losses we will action this when it is financially prudent to do so. Ultimately, this will align our investment strategy with our values but also protect CBCs investment strategy and the vital services which residents rely on everyday.

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12 Any other item the Mayor determines as urgent and which requires a decision

There were none.