

Cheltenham Borough Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes

Meeting date: 4 September 2023

Meeting time: 6.00 pm - 7.30 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Steve Harvey (Vice-Chair), Graham Beale, Jackie Chelin, Stephan Fifield, Julian Tooke, Suzanne Williams and Emma Nelson

Also in attendance:

Darren Knight (Executive Director of Place and Communities), Maizy McCann (Climate Emergency Support Officer), Mike Redman (Director of Climate Change and Place Services) and Karen Watson (Environmental Partnerships Manager), Councillors Victoria Atherstone, Iain Dobie, Alisha Lewis and Rowena Hay

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Britter and Joy.
As Councillor Payne stood down from the Council in August, the Chair for this meeting was Vice-Chair, Councillor Steve Harvey.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

The Chair proposed an amendment to the minutes from the last meeting. He clarified that he is not a member of Cheltenham Art Council but a trustee of the Cheltenham Trust.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 03 July 2023 (as amended) were approved and signed as a correct record. He is trustee and has membership of the Cheltenham Trust which is why he declared an interest.

The Chair paid tribute to the outgoing Chair, John Payne who has stepped down. On behalf of the committee, he thanked him for his work as Chair of this committee and also for his service to his ward, Prestbury and as a colleague.

The Chair thanked Darren Knight, the Executive Director for Place and Communities, (who was leaving the council) for his advice and support to the committee and wished him the best of luck in the future.

The Chair also thanked Mike Redman, Director of Climate Change and Place for his service and for his work on the climate agenda in particular.

4 Public and Member questions, calls for actions and petitions

There were no public or member questions.

5 Cabinet Briefing

No questions were raised.

6 Matters referred to committee

A Member asked for an update on the Chairmanship for the Overview and Scrutiny committee and plans in place for that process.

The Executive Director Place and Communities confirmed that this will be addressed at October Council.

7 UBICO Annual Report

Karen Watson, Environmental Partnerships Manager presented the report and highlighted the following:

- UBICO has been leading the way in respect of the Climate change pathway in that a number of vehicles have been moved from diesel to hydrogen treated vegetable oil, not palm oil. There has been an approximate reduction of 492 tonnes approx. of CO₂e greenhouse gases since May 2023 when it was measured. This is a result of CBC funding the equipment and UBICO operating and bringing it in.
- Enhanced vehicle has resulted in nearly 9000lts of fuel being saved, whether that be HVO or diesel.
- There was a budget underspend last year of £80,000 and performance of the quality of the service was above target at 99.92%.
- Risks to the business include inflation, fuel, salaries and Health and Safety which is significant part of this industry.

- The risks around street cleansing and ground maintenance relate to a lack of skills within the industry at an affordable price but this is being tackled with in housing training and apprenticeships.

Marvyn Langston, Head of Operations highlighted the following:

- Driver behaviour training was ongoing to encourage operators to drive in a more eco-friendly manner
- Work to reduce sickness and absence levels included the presence of mental health nurses on site to signpost staff to professionals where required. There had been a significant drop in the number of people taking time off work.

Members made the following comments:

- the availability of mental health support was welcomed
- both performance and achieving an underspend was recognised and praised
- It was encouraging to note the amount of recycling boxes being requested and
- Ubico's commitment to training and keeping staff was acknowledged

The following responses were provided to Members questions:

- Reason for less waste may be due to cost of living crisis as people are not able to buy as much, and manufacturers are looking at less packaging.
- Complaints increase and compliment decrease may be due to new technology being used to log them as these were now being logged and captured better than previously.
- The closed bin lid and no side waste policy needs to be enforced in a more robust way and further education was required to encourage recycling.
- Garden waste subscription is net figure.
- Fly tipping decreased despite the changes in hours to the Swindon Road recycling centre; this may be due in part to cost of living crisis. These are UBICO figures and will be double checking with the Neighbourhood Team for their figures.

Member questions with responses were published prior to the meeting.

8 Cheltenham Borough Homes - Carbon Footprint Report

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report, highlighting the following points:

- Greenhouse gas emissions over the past three years have seen gradual decline across all three scopes and the percentage change on the original base line in 2019 shows an overall decline of 14.66% across all three scopes.
- 94% of CBH carbon emissions arise from the large number of housing stock that CBH manages on behalf of CBC, which is key to understanding why it is so important that the funds continue to be available for the government social housing decarbonisation fund. It is key driver to supporting our net zero target

and it also improves the lives of residents across the town, as less energy efficient homes result in higher energy costs.

- This funding has meant that 250 homes have increased from below to EPC Level C to Level C.
- A challenge for CBH is their building services fleet with transport for building maintenance and services. This is being approached in conjunction with the various leases of the vehicle plans.
- Wastewater and purchasing has not been accounted for in the last three years, but will be a focus in the next 12 months.
- Behavioural change is a key driver for CBH, working with various neighbourhood works programmes, community engagement activities and one-on-one support for customers in terms of energy advice and energy related cost of living support.

A Member thanked CBH for the report, looked forward to seeing projects delivering net zero homes, and said how important sustainable social housing is for the future.

The Chair was pleased to see the joined-up approach with working in partnerships and collaborations.

The following responses were provided to Members' questions:

- CBC and UBICO meet regularly and are sharing ideas around initiatives and plans. Through working with UBICO, CBH has managed to achieve its aim of decarbonisation of the fleet by the supply of plant-powered instead of diesel-powered vehicles.
- Since starting to measure carbon emission reduction for the three scopes, the data has been refined, and with 94% of the emissions arising from the existing housing stock, that has become a strong focus for emission reduction.
- The level of reduction CBH is able to achieve is entirely dependent on government funding. We need to deliver carbon direct measures at a viable pace and scale and at the moment that looks like delivering the government minimum standard of EPC Level C, which still relies on investment and relies on external government funding. Officers recognise that this isn't net zero however, and they will continue to maximise the amount of funding available from central government via the social housing decarbonisation fund.

Member questions with responses were published prior to the meeting.

9 Climate Emergency Overview

The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency introduced this item with background about climate change and its effect on various services, such as the leisure centre, scout huts, food banks and religious spaces.

She thanked the team for the report and Mike Redman, Director of Climate Change and Place, for the progress made.

Mike Redman added that net zero is a huge challenge not just for borough but also nationally. He is proud of the climate team and the pace at which they have delivered initiatives locally, but they have to keep up the pressure, getting into the public consciousness and trying to keep up a degree of momentum behind it. Cheltenham can be proud of its progress but there's more to be done, challenging budgetary situations to manage locally, and other priorities alongside the climate. We need to recognise that we don't necessarily have the necessary resources to achieve the 2030 goal.

Members commented on the steep aspiration that may not be reached, but thanked the team for their work, their report, and collaborative working with GCC.

The Executive Director for Place and Communities suggested it may be worth the committee inviting the flooding team for future agenda item on that topic.

The following responses were provided to Members' questions:

- flooding is an area where we need to invest in partnership working. The flooding team at CBC has regular meetings with Gloucestershire County Council; the challenge is with funding.
- Recruitment for the senior post will be picked up by the Chief Executive and the recent LGA peer review gives insights to the expertise needed. Climate is a top priority for the Council, to ensure we have the best skills and capabilities within the team. The climate impact tool is a national, awarding-winning tool and it is important to use it at the start of decision-making process.
- The Zellar platform is an online app service that we are providing via our shared UK prosperity fund. It allows businesses to input information, and provides them with customised and personalised suggestions for where they can make changes, such as changing energy suppliers and the way they are operating.

The Chair thanked the climate team for their report.

Member questions with responses were published prior to the meeting.

10 Feedback from other scrutiny meetings attended

The Chair thanked Councillors Bamford, McCloskey and Clucas for attending the county level meetings and asked the Councillor Bamford to look into funding for pharmacies as people are being encouraged to go to pharmacies in first instance. The reports were all noted.

11 Draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-2023

There were no questions on the annual report.

12 Updates from scrutiny task groups

There were no active scrutiny task groups.

13 Review of scrutiny workplan

The Chair suggested inviting Gloucestershire Airport back to committee sooner than in one year, and also inviting Gloucester City Council Overview and Scrutiny colleagues to join CBC to discuss the airport as it is jointly owned.

Members asked about inviting the CBC flooding team to attend CBC, and about the accessibility report which is overdue. This was noted.

14 Date of next meeting

30 October 2023

15 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED THAT:

In accordance with Section 100A(4) Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining agenda items as it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, if members of the public are present there will be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 5, Part (1) Schedule (12A) Local Government Act 1972, namely:

Paragraph 3: Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Paragraph 5: Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings

16 Exempt Minutes

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 03 July 2023 were approved and signed as a correct record.