

Cheltenham Borough Council Cabinet

Meeting date: Tuesday, 24 September 2024

Meeting time: 6.00 pm

Meeting venue: Council Chamber - Municipal Offices

Membership:

Councillors Victoria Atherstone, Flo Clucas, Mike Collins, Iain Dobie, Rowena Hay, Martin Horwood, Peter Jeffries, Alisha Lewis and Izaak Tailford

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SECTION 1 : PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1 Apologies

2 Declarations of interest

3 Minutes of the last meeting (Pages 5 - 14)

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2024.

4 Public and Member Questions and Petitions

Questions must be received no later than 12 noon on the seventh working day before the date of the meeting

SECTION 2 :THE COUNCIL

There are no matters referred to the Cabinet by the Council on this occasion

SECTION 3 : OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There are no matters referred to the Cabinet by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on this occasion

SECTION 4 : OTHER COMMITTEES

There are no matters referred to the Cabinet by other Committees on this occasion

SECTION 5 : REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS AND/OR OFFICERS

5 Housing Assistance Policy (Pages 15 - 44)

Report of Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities

6 Budget Monitoring report 2024/25 - position at 31 July 2024 (Pages 45 - 68)

Report of Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets

7 Declaration of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common as a National Nature Reserve (Pages 69 - 80)

Report of Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm

SECTION 6 : BRIEFING SESSION

- Leader and Cabinet Members

8 Briefing from Cabinet Members

SECTION 7 : DECISIONS OF CABINET MEMBERS

Member decisions taken since the last Cabinet meeting

SECTION 8 : ANY OTHER ITEM(S) THAT THE LEADER DETERMINES TO BE URGENT AND REQUIRES A DECISION

SECTION 9 : LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXEMPT BUSINESS

Section 10: BRIEFING NOTES

Briefing notes are circulated for information with the Cabinet papers but are not on the agenda

9 Local Government Act 1972 - Exempt Business

The Cabinet is recommended to approve the following resolution:-

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

10 Exempt Minutes (Pages 81 - 82)

Exempt minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2024.

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Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet

Minutes

Meeting date: 23 July 2024

Meeting time: 6.00 pm - 7.20 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Flo Clucas, Mike Collins, Iain Dobie, Rowena Hay, Martin Horwood, Peter Jeffries, Alisha Lewis and Izaak Tailford

Also in attendance:

Claire Hughes (Director of Governance and Customer Services and Monitoring Officer), Gareth Edmundson (Chief Executive), Sarah Farooqi (One Legal) and Richard Gibson (Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Atherstone.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last two meetings, held on 28 May and 11 June 2024, were approved as a true record and signed accordingly.

4 Public and Member Questions and Petitions

There were none.

5 To note the findings and recommendations from the Playing Pitch Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing and Culture said the playing pitch strategy is the next stage of work started by former Councillor Wilkinson to set an overall vision for sport and physical activities in Cheltenham. The aim is to enable everyone, regardless of location, ethnicity or gender, to benefit from the huge variety of sport and physical activities available across the town, helping them to live healthy and happy lives. He said the first detailed assessment concerned sports buildings and this report covers fields and pitches, using approved Sport England methodology and input from national and governing bodies of each sport and detailed analysis of their usage. There is more work to be done, in particular around shortfall in some capacities and the need to improve specific pitches, and this will be brought back in the autumn. The overarching strategy needs to address how to build and improve capacity, involve a wider cross-section of communities, and fulfil the vision of involving everyone in sports activities in the town.

Members made the following comments:

- the report is interesting and detailed but includes some anomalies and inaccuracies which the Member will email to the report author - in particular, the lack of reference to Cheltenham rugby clubs that don't play in the borough, and concern that the excellent facilities at Cheltenham Tigers Rugby Club could become very overused;
- a lot of pitches are situated in Cheltenham's parks and greenspaces, supported by friends groups and volunteers. Hopefully there will be funding from national organisations such as the Football Association to support their work;
- it will be good to address and capture all the areas in need of investment, such as football pitches which already exist but are not fit for purpose.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing and Culture thanked Members for their comments, and confirmed that further information needed to be fed into the refined report. He said input from Members and the public would be welcome, providing detailed local knowledge on clubs and pitches as appropriate.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the findings and recommendations of the Playing Pitch Strategy as set out in section 4.6 and attached as appendix 2 are noted;**
- 2. the Playing Pitch Strategy is shared with all the organisations and partners identified in the action plan for review;**
- 3. authority is delegated to the Director for Community and Economic Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Economic Development, Wellbeing & Culture, to make any final amendments to the Playing Pitch Strategy;**

- 4. an over-arching physical activity and sports strategy and accompanying action plan, that will deliver the council's vision and outcomes for physical activity and sports as set out in section 3, will be brought to Cabinet later this year.**

6 Household Support Fund Arrangements for 2024-25

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, the Leader introduced her report, highlighting the main issues as set out. She thanked the officer team for a very informative report, saying that although it was not a happy read, it shows that the council is doing all it can to support our most vulnerable residents.

Members made the following comments:

- the funding is welcomed and clearly vital to many families, as the previous government's solution didn't solve the problem. This proposal includes £45,240 in food support alone, with huge additional donations from our partners and other providers across the town. It will be good to see how the new government deals with the cost-of-living crisis and the desperate level of poverty in our society;
- it is amazing that the sixth richest country in the world should find itself in this position, and shameful that we are unable to do anything to change the situation – a small amount of money helps but doesn't solve the problem. The solution lies at the heart of the government.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the Household Support Fund Delivery Plan for the award of grant made by Gloucestershire County Council on behalf of the Department of Works and Pensions under the Household Support Fund Programme 2024/25, as set out in para 4.9, is approved;**
- 2. authority is delegated to the Head of Communities, Wellbeing & Partnerships in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities to determine the agreed amounts to be awarded to individual organisations to deliver the Household Support Fund Programme 2024/25.**

7 Review of waste and recycling receptacles

The Cabinet Member for Waste Services, Recycling and Public Realm began by saying that CBC has a fantastic and successful kerbside recycling scheme, but has to budget £210k per year for receptacles. Looking for a sustainable solution, it is hoped that charging for new and replacement bins will reduce any unnecessary demand and promote a more careful attitude resulting in fewer breakages and losses. with the added bonus of reducing the high environmental impact of plastic usage. He confirmed that Ubico staff would be asked to be extra-careful when handling bins, and said that Stroud District Council has introduced similar charges, with careful monitoring of the impacts and residents' concerns confirming that recycling rates had remained high.

He explained the reasons for the various recommendations as set out in the report, and said that although the charges might not be popular with a lot of people, they were necessary for financial and environmental reasons, and he hoped that Members would support the recommendations.

In response to Members' questions, he confirmed that:

- replacement receptacles will be delivered by HVO-fuelled vehicles, using a zonal approach to ensure as few trips as possible;
- other councils in Gloucestershire are already successfully charging for replacement receptacles, and Stroud District Council has been used as an example for CBC's proposals;
- new householders moving into a new housing developments in Cheltenham can expect housing developers to provide sets of bins free of charge.

There was no debate on this item.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the introduction of a delivery charge for all waste and recycling receptacles, including garden waste bins is approved, with effect from Monday 5 August 2024, of £4.99 per item as set out in paragraph 2.5 of this report. A reduced charge of £2.99 per item will apply to residents in receipt of benefits listed in 2.5 of this report.**
- 2. an increase in the cost of garden waste bags to offset increased collection costs from £17.50 for 10 bags with a £4 delivery charge to £25 for 10 bags with a £4.99 delivery charge as set out in (1) above is approved;**
- 3. the introduction of a charge for receptacles payable by developers for planning applications granted for new developments on or after 5 August 2024 as set out in paragraph 2.5 of this report is approved;**

4. **the introduction of a charge for receptacles payable by landlords, including communal properties, from 5 August 2024, as set out in paragraph 2.5 of this report is approved;**
5. **the introduction of a waste and recycling collection charge for Air B&B's from 5 August 2024 is approved and authority is delegated to the Chief Executive to agree charges and take the necessary steps to implement the decision in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm.**

8 Levelling Up Fund Award

The Cabinet Member for Major Developments and Housing Delivery introduced the report which sought Cabinet approval to accept the £20m grant from the Levelling Up Programme. He thanked officers across the council for all their work in submitting this second successful bid, which he said would help fund the National Cyber Innovation Centre and Mobility Hub. Although the council's investment is over £140m, the benefit to the town will be astronomical over the years to come – it is the biggest development and growth item in Gloucestershire and the south west - this small grant is welcome, and he hopes that the new government will recognise the significance of the project and provide further funding.

There were no Member questions or debate on this item.

RESOLVED THAT:

1. **the allocation of £20m grant funding from the Levelling Up Fund for use towards development of the National Cyber Innovation Centre and Mobility Hub is accepted.**

9 Housing Strategy Action Plan Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services said this report presents an update on work over the last few years in housing and homelessness. She confirmed that work has already started, for example a development of 255 houses in her own ward will include 93 affordable homes. The council is doing the right thing for its residents and she hoped Members would continue to give their support

The Cabinet Member for Major Developments and Housing Delivery welcomed the update, and said that although the country may never completely solve its housing crisis, the council and its partners were doing all they could to alleviate it and improve people's lives.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan update for 2024 is approved.**

10 Cabinet appointments to outside bodies

The Leader introduced the report, saying that the council makes nominations, with group leader agreement, to a variety of external organisations and groups, which then must decide whether to accept the nomination and make the appointment. If there is no group leader agreement, the matter would have to be referred to Council. There are also a small number of exceptions, such as Cheltenham Borough Homes, Gloucestershire Airport and the Cheltenham Trust, where the council has the right to make appointments to the board of directors. All appointments are for two years.

There were no Members questions or comments.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. nominations to the outside bodies as set out in Appendix 3A and Appendix 3B are approved, in accordance with the following principles:**
 - all nominations are made on the basis that the nominee is a representative of Cheltenham Borough Council insofar as that is compatible with any overriding legal duty to the outside body;**
 - Cabinet / the Leader reserves the right at any time to withdraw/terminate a nomination which it has made; and**
- 2. Cabinet Member responsibilities for the bodies/groups listed in Appendix 3C are noted.**

11 Corporate Strategy - update

The Leader introduced her report, updating Members on the Corporate Strategy, and drew their attention to the highlights of the review report, to the end of March 2024. In addition to the Corporate Plan review, the end-of-year performance report sets out the key performance indicators with an end-of-year commentary, which confirmed that overall performance has been good, but there are some areas where it could be improved.

She said that the Corporate Plan requires regular monitoring and updating, and the re-integration of CBH require a refresh to reflect the new arrangement. This will take place over the coming months, and a new set of performance metrics to support the plan and measure success will be established .

She ended by saying that this year, to ensure continuity in performance

management, service managers will be asked to report on a streamlined set of performance metrics aligned to the priorities in the existing corporate plan.

The Cabinet Member for Major Developments and Housing Delivery said the depth and breadth of what the council does is amazing, particularly in the context of the pandemic, cost-of-living crisis and financial crisis. He looked forward to the revised plan in 2025.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the corporate plan review and end of year performance report is noted;**
- 2. the intention to refresh the corporate plan is noted.**

12 Detached Youth Work Grant

The Leader introduced the report, in the absence of the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, explaining the background of the Cheltenham Detached Youth Work programme. This was originally delivered by Inspire to Aspire, later passed to No Child Left Behind who, in view of ongoing concerns about young people's mental health and wellbeing, school absence and criminal exploitation, consider it vital to continue to deliver support. With its partners, it has developed a grant pot of £47,000 for this, and the recommendation is to award it to The Rock, which offers good understanding of the needs of local young people and expertise in working with this specific cohort, together with clearly stated ambitions and details of how they will work with partners to achieve their goals.

There were no questions or comments on this item, and the recommendations were approved unanimously, as set out in the report.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. a grant of £41,000 to The Rock is agreed, to enable the delivery of a programme of detached youth work in the period August 2024 to March 2025;**
- 2. a grant agreement with The Rock is entered into, that will set out the terms and conditions for the delivery of the detached youth work, including monitoring against agreed outcomes;**
- 3. the delivery of the detached youth work project is monitored through the No Child Left Behind strategic board and brought back a report for consideration by Cabinet on completion of the funding period.**

13 Briefing from Cabinet Members

The Leader invited Cabinet Members to share recent briefings.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing and Culture shared information on a number of items:

- a recent community event held by CBC focussed on strengthening local communities through grants the council receives from the NHS and disperses as health and wellbeing grants for local groups. Last year, £100k was distributed, mostly in grants of under £10k, and used to fund some amazing projects and extraordinary work, connecting people to their communities, encouraging them to be active, healthy and creative, and making a huge difference to individual. The next funding round will distribute £170k, starting in September. This fantastic success story is led by Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships, who does an exceptional job leading his team of officers;
- congratulations to Cheltenham Festivals on the conclusion of another successful event, the Cheltenham Music Festival, and to Gloucestershire Cricket Club on the recent cricket festival, which was enjoyed by many;
- the Cheltenham Paint Festival will take place on 27-28 July, and The Suffolks Sunday Market on 28 July;
- The Wilson is currently hosting the extraordinary and exceptional Radev exhibition, connecting to the Bloomsbury Group, British art history, LGBT history and more.

The Cabinet Member for Major Developments and Housing Delivery said he has picked up work on the social baggage strategy and hopes to bring a document to Cabinet at the end of the summer. He is also working on housing delivery, and will be sharing draft documents with colleagues soon, about how this can be accelerated.

The Cabinet Member for Waste Services, Recycling and Public Realm hoped that people would be enjoying Cheltenham's amazing parks and greenspaces over the summer, and was happy to report that seven parks across the town had all retained their green flag status. Pittville Park has also received green heritage site accreditation, supported by Historic England, in recognition of its management of its historic features. This is a testament to the dedication of volunteers, Friends of groups, Ubico and the Green Space team who work hard all year round to ensure everyone can get out and enjoy the parks. He thanked them for all their work.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets thanked the finance team and former portfolio holder for the incredible amount of work they have done to produce the outturn report presented to Council on 22 July, which, she said, was testament to a year of dedicated and sensible fiscal decision-making.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control said he was lucky to have been invited to the opening of the Arle Court Transport Hub earlier in the day which is now completely open for business.

The Leader noted that BID has sponsored the painting of seven utility boxes which make a big difference and help deter graffiti. She also mentioned that the Cabinet Member for Major Development and Housing Delivery will soon be shaving his head and beard to raise funds for Cheltenham's food pantries; donations can be made via his Just Giving page.

The Cabinet Members for Climate Emergency and for Housing and Customer Services did not have any briefings to share on this occasion.

14 Cabinet Member decisions taken since the last meeting

12 June 2024: [Award of contract for provision of case management platform for CBC's Bereavement Services](#)

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm was happy to approve provision of a new technical system at the cemetery and crematorium, which would make things a lot more straightforward, simple and efficient for the user. It would also allow better record keeping, helping people find specific burial plots.

25 June 2024: [To agree the disposal of 12 Bouncers Lane, Cheltenham](#)

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets said she had made the decision to dispose of this property because although it is a high-value property, the cost of bringing it up to the required specification to be occupied is not considered worthwhile. The capital receipt from the sale will be used to provide good-quality housing elsewhere.

09 July 2024: [To allocate the third year UK Shared Prosperity Fund \(SPF\) climate funding \(total budget £87,944\)](#)

The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency said the lead monitoring officer had already confirmed that the third-year spend was appropriate and met grant fund guidelines, helping small and medium-sized local business to reduce their energy use. This work will continue through the third year, and include grants to homeowners to retro-fit their properties to make them more energy efficient.

15 Local Government Act 1972 - Exempt Business

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 A Legal Matter

The Cabinet Member for Major Developments and Housing Delivery introduced the report. Members supported the recommendations.

RESOLVED THAT

The recommendations as outlined be approved.

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet – 24 September 2024

Housing Assistance Policy

Accountable member: Councillor Atherstone, Cabinet member for Safety and Communities

Accountable officer: Mark Nelson, Team Leader, Private Sector Housing

Ward(s) affected: All

Key Decision: Yes

Executive summary:

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) provides general powers for local housing authorities to provide assistance for housing renewal, including home adaptations. The powers can only be used in accordance with a published Housing Assistance Policy.

The purpose of this report follows the rules set out in the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. It also aligns with the Housing Grants, Construction, and Regeneration Act 1996, which covers the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG).

The report sets out how Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) will provide financial support to improve and adapt homes in Cheltenham for eligible disabled persons whose needs are assessed by a County Council Occupational Therapist (OT). It also brings together all existing CBC policies for discretionary funding provided in association with adaptations to a disabled person's home.

The report also introduces some new forms of assistance for discretionary funding brought together in the Housing Assistance Policy (Appendix 4).

Publishing a Housing Assistance Policy allows the Council to use its discretion and funding wisely to provide assistance for disabled individuals beyond the mandatory requirements.

Recommendations: That Cabinet:

- 1. In accordance with the powers contained in the RRO, approves the discretionary funding contained within the Housing Assistance Policy, forming Appendix 4, and its publication;**
 - 2. approves the regular review of funding to ensure that the council's statutory duties are met and that available resources for discretionary expenditure are not exceeded;**
 - 3. approves the annual review of the Housing Assistance Policy and that minor amendments be made at the discretion of the Head of Public Protection in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, but any decision to withdraw the availability of discretionary grants be the subject of a Cabinet decision and all amendments published;**
 - 4. notes the contents of Appendix 5, debated and agreed at the DFG Forum, representing the district councils within Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust.**
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1. Implications**1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications**

The main source of funding available to support this policy for owner-occupiers, housing association tenants, private rented tenants, and occupiers of mobile homes, is the Annual Capital Grant from Central Government through the Better Care Fund (BCF).

The existing statutory framework governing the required provision by local authorities of mandatory DFG's is to continue for the foreseeable future, with continued resources available from Central Government. The Council receives a cash grant from the government each year towards the funding of DFG's. It is likely, however, that an increasing elderly population will result in a higher demand for grants and the Council may be required to bridge the gap between total expenditure on DFG's and the funding from Central Government.

Funding for the DFG is ring-fenced within the Better Care Fund.

In two tier areas the main DFG funding is paid to the County Councils, while the statutory duty to provide adaptations to the homes of those eligible people who qualify, continues to sit with District Councils.

Unless specific agreement is given by any District Council, County Councils must pass down the DFG funding to their District Councils in full, and in a timely manner, to

enable the Districts Councils to continue to meet their statutory duty.

In 2023-2024, the Council received an allocation of £1,024,524 from Central Government.

The capital monies provided through the BCF will be allocated for spending in line with decisions agreed upon in the BCF spending plan through the appropriate governance structure.

For Council owned stock, funding for the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant up to the current £30k cap must be funded from the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

It has been agreed with the Senior Commissioning Manager, Housing, Health and Care (NHS Gloucestershire/Gloucestershire County Council) that for Council stock, any shortfall above the £30k cap and applicable discretionary funding, as detailed in Appendix 4, can be funded from the BCF.

Given the requirement to be equitable across all tenures, there could be potential impact on the HRA in the unlikely event that there was any change in this agreement and the provision of discretionary grants across all tenures might then need to be reviewed.

In the last financial year £470k was funded from the HRA to provide disabled adaptations to Council owned housing stock.

If funding allows and after meeting the requirements for firstly mandatory and secondly discretionary assistance, part of the BCF funding may be allocated for specified social care capital projects in Cheltenham. The use of this funding freedom should aim to reduce the overall demand for DFGs so that more people can receive the adaptations they need.

Decisions about these allocations will be made in accordance with the jointly agreed BCF spending plan between the Council and the Integrated Care Board. The plan will follow the appropriate BCF Policy Framework and BCF Planning Guidance for the specified year (which includes guidance on Disabled Facilities Grants) and will be approved through the appropriate governance structure.

Currently DFG policy across the county is coordinated through the county DFG Forum, although it is for each individual District Council to formally approve any policy decision determining the availability of discretionary grants.

Signed off by: Gemma Bell, Director of Finance and Assets,
gemma.bell@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

This policy follows the requirements set out in the Regulatory Reform (Housing

Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 in relation to the provision of discretionary disabled facilities grants. It also aligns with the Housing Grants, Construction, and Regeneration Act 1996, which covers mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG). This allows the council to use its discretion and funding wisely to provide adaptations for disabled individuals beyond the mandatory requirements.

The Housing Grants, Construction, and Regeneration Act 1996, with amendments from the Disabled Facilities Grants (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (England) Order 2008, places a statutory duty upon the Council to consider disabled facility grant applications for the provision of suitable adaptations to homes for disabled people of any age.

The Care Act 2014 states that Local Authorities must provide services and facilities that help people live independently. The core purpose of adult care and support is to assist individuals in achieving their personal goals. The “wellbeing principle” is central to this act, emphasising the importance of promoting wellbeing and independent living.

Signed off by: Iona Moseley, Lawyer, legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

See Appendix 3

Signed off by: Maizy McCann Climate Change Officer,
Maizy.McCann@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Ensuring residents, communities and businesses benefit from Cheltenham’s future growth and prosperity.

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

See Appendix 2

1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review

Budget spend will be reviewed monthly by the cost centre manager and the policy reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that government funding and agreed use of the Better Care Fund maintains affordability for the discretionary assistance contained in this policy.

2 Background

Home adaptations are changes made to the fabric and fixtures of a home to make it safer and easier to get around and to use for everyday tasks like cooking and bathing. Adapting a home environment can help restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for individuals and their families. Adaptations can include the installation of stair-lifts, level access showers, wash and dry toilets, ramps, wider doors, and, in some instances, bespoke home extensions to existing dwellings as well as improvements to access to and from gardens.

- 2.1** Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) are capital grants that are available to people of all ages and in all housing tenures (i.e. whether renting privately, from a social landlord or council, or owner-occupiers) to contribute to the cost of adaptations. They are administered by local housing authorities in England and enable eligible disabled people to continue living safely and independently at home. This includes autistic people, those with a mental health condition, physical disabilities, learning disabilities, cognitive impairments such as dementia, and progressive conditions such as Motor Neurone Disease. It includes those suffering from age-related disabilities and can also include those with a terminal illness. The DFG is one of a range of housing support measures that a local authority can use to help enable people to live independently and safely at home and in their communities.
- 2.2** Local housing authorities have a statutory duty under the 1996 Act to provide adaptations for eligible disabled people, as well as wider powers to provide discretionary housing assistance through the Regulatory Reform Order. The administration of DFGs is the responsibility of the local housing authority, through all stages from initial enquiry (or referral) to post-completion.
- 2.3** District Councils in two tier areas have a duty to consult their social services authority (County Council) on the home adaptation needs of each disabled person seeking a DFG. While it is always the District Council who must decide an application, it would be rare for a District Council to decide not to approve an adaptation recommended by the County Council.
- 2.4** Since 2015, government has provided funding for the DFG through the Better Care Fund (BCF) in recognition of the importance of ensuring adaptations are part of an integrated approach to housing, health and social care locally, and to help promote joined up local person-centred approaches to supporting communities.
- 2.5** Government provides ringfenced DFG funding to Better Care Fund budget holders (usually authorities responsible for the provision of social services). Funding must be spent in accordance with Better Care Fund plans which are

agreed between local government and local health commissioners and owned by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

- 2.6** In two tier areas, District Councils are responsible for home adaptations and provision of DFGs to eligible recipients. In these areas, County Councils must work with District Councils to agree the use of this funding and ensure that sufficient funding is passed to Districts to meet these duties.
- 2.7** Authorities may decide to spend government funding for the DFG in 3 ways:
- Approving DFGs in accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (the 1996 Act).
 - Providing housing assistance in accordance with a locally published Housing Assistance Policy under RRO powers.
 - Using a portion of the DFG funding for other social care capital funding purposes (as locally agreed with District Councils in two-tier areas).
- 2.8** Authorities can apply a mix of these options to meet local priorities but should consider that:
- The local housing authority has a statutory duty under the 1996 Act to provide adaptations for those who qualify for a DFG.
 - The primary role of government funding is for the provision of home adaptations to help eligible people safely access their home and key facilities within it.
 - Government funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant is intended to fund adaptations for owner occupiers, private tenants, or tenants of private registered providers (housing associations). Eligible council tenants can apply for a DFG in the same way as any other applicant. However local housing authorities with a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) should self-fund home adaptations for council tenants through this account.
- 2.9** The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) provides general powers for local housing authorities to provide assistance for housing renewal, including home adaptations. The powers can only be used in accordance with a published Housing Assistance Policy.
- 2.10** By publishing a Housing Assistance Policy under the RRO, housing authorities can use government funding for the DFG more flexibly. This funding is primarily for the provision of home adaptations to help people to live independently, so it is important for any local Housing Assistance Policy to clearly set out what additional adaptations assistance is to be provided.
- 2.11** While the RRO gives discretion to local authorities, it is important to note that authorities still have a statutory duty to approve DFG applications which meet the statutory requirements.

3 Reasons for recommendations

- 3.1** The Council has legal obligations to protect and assist vulnerable members of the community.
- 3.2** The focus of this policy is to support older and disabled individuals of any age to live independently, confidently, and safely in their own homes. Housing assistance can minimise the impact of a disabling environment and promote independence, aligning with the goals of the Care Act 2014 to prevent or delay the need for care and support.
- 3.3** The introduction of specified discretionary funding will assist applicants who may not otherwise access the grant system and the benefits of improved health and well-being that this brings. This Housing Assistance Policy should have a positive impact and reduce the strain on social care provision within the county.
- 3.4** Use of discretionary assistance will also help maximise the Disabled Facilities Grant funding allocation provided by Central Government and bring Cheltenham Borough Council in line with the other district councils within Gloucestershire, national good practice, and the aims of the Better Care Fund.

4 Alternative options considered.

- 4.1** Options for discretionary assistance took account of regulatory requirements and included consideration of options within statutory guidance and discussion with partners at the County DFG Forum.

5 Consultation and feedback

- 5.1** Consultation took place through the DFG forum, which includes all 6 districts within Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust and the Strategic Housing Partnership

6 Key risks

- 6.1** See Appendix 1

Report author: Mark Nelson, Team Leader, Private Sector Housing

Appendices:

- 1 Risk Assessment**
- 2 Equality Impact Assessment**

3 [Climate Change Impact Assessment](#)

4 Housing Assistance Policy

5 Professional Services Guidance

Background information:

N/A

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
1	If central government funding is reduced, then the discretionary grants contained in this policy may become unaffordable.	Head of Public Protection	4	2	8	Accept the risk.	To ensure affordability, a review of the discretionary grants contained in this policy will then be required and if necessary, some or all discretionary assistance will need to be withdrawn.	Cabinet	
2	If the agreement to fund shortfall / applicable discretionary funding for Council owned stock from the Better Care Fund ends, then these costs may need to be funded from the Council's HRA to fulfil the requirement to have a tenure neutral policy and treat eligible disabled Council tenants fairly.	Head of Public Protection	3	2	6	Accept the risk.	To ensure affordability, a review of the discretionary grants contained in this policy may then be required and if necessary, some or all discretionary assistance may need to be withdrawn or alternative funding approved. Any assistance withdrawn will need to be done across all	Cabinet	

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
							tenures to fulfil the requirement to have a tenure neutral policy.		

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment (Screening – to be included in all Cabinet and Council reports)

1. Identify the policy, project, function or service change

a. Person responsible for this Equality Impact Assessment

Mark Nelson	Public Protection
Title: Team Leader Private Sector Housing	Date of assessment: September 2024
Signature:	

b. Is this a policy, function, strategy, service change or project?

Choose an item.

Policy

c. Name of the policy, function, strategy, service change or project

Housing Assistance Policy

Is this new or existing?

Already exists and is being reviewed

Please specify reason for change or development of policy, function, strategy, service change or project

Amalgamation with some changes to existing policy

d. What are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes and who is likely to benefit from it?

Aims:

This policy explains how Cheltenham Borough Council will provide financial help to improve and adapt homes in Cheltenham for disabled persons. It also outlines the conditions and rules for who can receive this assistance.

Objectives:

This policy allows the council to use its discretion and funding wisely to provide adaptations for disabled individuals beyond the mandatory requirements.

Outcomes:	The focus of this policy is to support older and disabled individuals to live independently, confidently, and safely in their own homes. Housing assistance can minimize the impact of a disabling environment and promote independence, aligning with the goals of the Care Act 2014 to prevent or delay the need for care and support.
Benefits:	Funding disabled adaptations through this policy allows disabled individuals to live independently, confidently, and safely in their own homes.

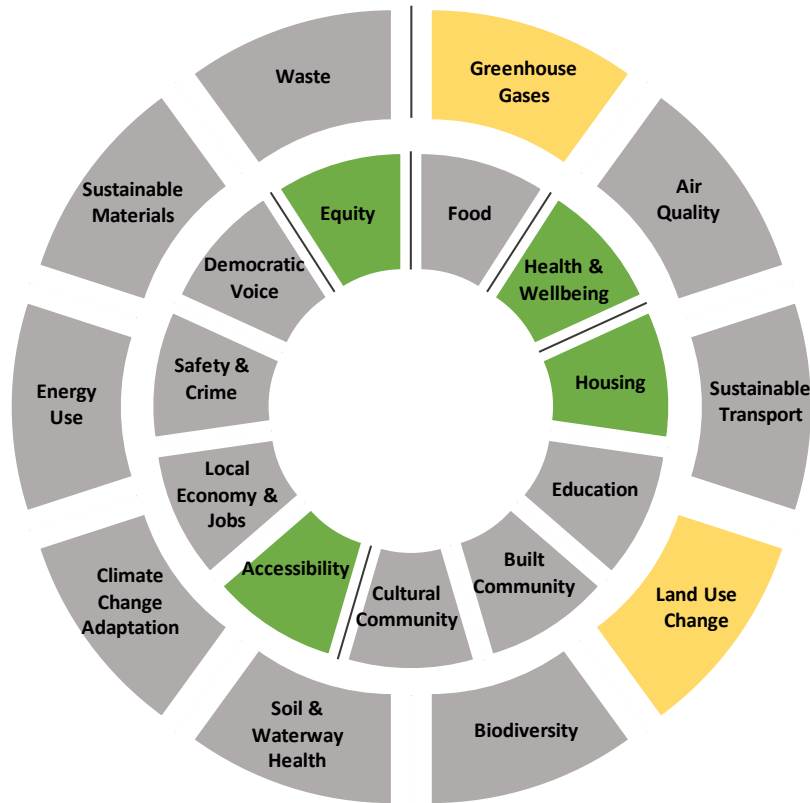
e. What are the expected impacts?	
Are there any aspects, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could have an impact on the lives of people, including employees and customers.	Yes
Do you expect the impacts to be positive or negative?	Positive
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	
As above	

If your answer to question e identified potential positive or negative impacts, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

f. Identify next steps as appropriate	
Stage Two required	No
Owner of Stage Two assessment	
Completion date for Stage Two assessment	

Please move on to Stage 2 if required ([intranet link](#)).

Housing Assistance Policy



Key

	Significant and/or long-term positive impact identified. No changes needed.
	Slight or short-term positive impact identified. No changes needed but could be reviewed to improve.
	Not applicable or no cause for concern.
	Slight or short-term negative impact identified. Review to identify possible improvements.
	Significant and/or long-term negative impact identified. Changes needed before proceeding.

CHECKS

ENVIRONMENTAL	Scores	Action	Justification	Reviewed	Recommendation
GHGs	-2	Review - identify possible improvements	Although in some cases the insulation of houses that are		
Air quality	0	No action required.	0		
Sustainable Transport	0	No action required.	0		
Biodiversity	-2	Review - identify possible improvements	0		
Land use change	0	No action required.	Some adaptations may involve ground floor extensions to		
Soil and waterway health	0	No action required.	0		
Climate Change Adaptation	0	No action required.	0		
Energy Use	0	No action required.	Some adaptations will increase energy use e.g. stair lifts, but		
Waste	0	No action required.	0		
Sustainable Materials	0	No action required.	0		

SOCIAL	Scores	Action	Justification	Reviewed	Recommendation
Food	1	No action required	0		
Health	0	No action required.	Allows disabled people to remain in their homes with increased comfort and therefore improving wellbeing.		
Housing	0	No action required.	Allows disabled persons to remain in their homes.		
Education	1	No action required	0		
Community	1	No action required	0		
Culture	1	No action required	0		
Accessibility	0	No action required.	Allows access for disabled persons to their homes.		
Local Economy and Jobs	1	No action required	0		
Safety	1	No action required	0		
Democratic Voice	1	No action required	0		
Equality	0	No action required.	Policy improves the wellbeing of disabled persons.		

Cheltenham Borough Council Housing Assistance Policy

The Housing Assistance Policy sets out agreed discretionary policies and funding available within Cheltenham Borough Council in association with adaptations to the home of a disabled person, whose needs are assessed by a County Council Occupational Therapist. The Housing Assistance Policy is published under The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 which allows Councils to use Government funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) more flexibly.

All discretionary assistance is subject to the availability of funding and any applications and awards of discretionary assistance need to be linked to an ongoing DFG application and is subject to conditions. No stand-alone applications for these forms of assistance will be considered unless specifically stated.

The Council will grant mandatory DFGs in accordance with the relevant legislation, mainly the Housing Grants, Construction, and Regeneration Act 1996, as well as subordinate Regulations and Orders (including any amendments) and guidance issued by central Government.

Information on mandatory DFGs and the application process can be found on www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants or on Gloucestershire County Council's website www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/disabilities/disabled-facilities-grants

The agreed discretionary policies and funding available in association with adaptations to a disabled person's home included in the Housing Assistance Policy are:

1. Local land charge.
2. Extended warranties and servicing of specialist equipment.
3. Funding for abortive fees.
4. Shortfall funding.
5. Funding towards disabled person's assessed contribution.
6. Funding for rapidly progressing and/or highly debilitating conditions.
7. Adaptation support grant.
8. Relocation grant.
9. Funding for temporary rehousing to facilitate adaptations.

Please note the Council will consider all requests for funding towards adaptations to a disabled person's home on a case-by-case basis. In exceptional circumstances, this may result in discretionary assistance being offered which is outside the specific examples listed in the Housing Assistance Policy.

1. Local land charge

In 2008 using the Disabled Facilities Grant (Condition relating to approval or payment of grant) General Consent, Cheltenham Borough Council introduced a grant condition which imposes a local land charge on a dwelling if it is sold or otherwise disposed of within 10 years of the date of the completed adaptations (the certified date). The local land charge is applied to all owner's applications for a mandatory DFG where the amount of grant exceeds £5,000. The maximum charge is £10,000.

Any charge repaid to the Council will be specifically used to help fund adaptations to the homes of disabled people within Cheltenham Borough Council. This policy therefore allows the recycling of some funding made available for adaptations.

If a dwelling is sold or disposed of within ten years, the Council will demand repayment, but will consider whether it is reasonable to demand repayment or part repayment of the charge considering:

- the financial hardship it would cause.
- whether the sale is due to an employment-related relocation.
- whether the sale relates to the physical or mental health or wellbeing of the grant recipient or of a disabled occupant of the premises; and

- whether the sale will enable the recipient of the grant to provide care to another disabled person.

If a grant is initially awarded for an amount of less than £5,000, an applicant will be consulted before the grant is revised if it would result in a charge being placed.

Some discretionary funding given in association with adaptations to the home of a disabled person may also result in a local land charge/additional land charge. Details of when a local land charge will be included as a condition for discretionary funding are described later in this policy. Matters considered when deciding if repayment is reasonable are the same as above.

Appeals concerning the Council's demand for payment of a land charge will be considered by the Head of Public Protection, whose decision is final in this respect.

2. Extended warranties and servicing of specialist equipment

Mandatory DFGs are available to help with the installation of specialist equipment such as stairlifts, through-floor lifts, external step lifts and wash-dry toilets. This equipment once installed becomes the responsibility of the grant applicant/disabled person and should be serviced on an annual basis to ensure it remains in good working order. Where the equipment is not serviced this could limit the length of time the equipment continues operating correctly.

For grant applicants who are council tenants and some social housing tenants, their landlords will take on the responsibility of carrying out the annual servicing and any necessary repairs (where the fault has not arisen due to mistreatment of the equipment).

For owner-occupiers, occupiers of mobile homes, private tenants and some social housing tenants the cost of the annual service and any repairs will be their responsibility. For these tenures, to ensure the essential equipment remains in good working condition and is well maintained for an extended period after installation, the Council will provide discretionary grant assistance towards an extended warranty for a period of 5 years, if possible and pay the annual service cost for the equipment for 4 years from the date the equipment was installed (certified date). The Council is not, however, responsible for the cost of carrying out any repairs that are not covered by the extended warranty.

A single grant payment will be made for the cost to install the specialist equipment and cover the cost of the extended warranty and servicing.

For owner's applications this discretionary funding will be included as part of the local land charge.

3. Funding for abortive fees

As part of the Disabled Facilities Grant process, it is strongly recommended that applicants appoint an agent/surveyor to act on their behalf to assist with the grant application, although it is the applicant's choice whether to use the services of a surveyor and who they choose to contractually appoint as their surveyor. All agents/surveyors involved with a DFG should comply with The Professional Services Guidance (see Appendix 5) which lists what is expected from the surveyor. The guidance also contains information of the level of fees eligible for grant assistance.

The appointment of an agent/surveyor is not recommended where grant assistance is provided towards the installation of specialist equipment only.

Grant assistance is available towards the cost of any professional fees incurred but only where a grant application proceeds to full approval and the grant work is completed. If the grant applicant decides not to proceed with their grant application after appointing a surveyor, it will be their responsibility to pay any incurred fees.

There are, however, certain circumstances where works are abandoned that the council will consider making a payment for abortive fees without proceeding with a grant approval or completion of adaptations. These are:

- The disabled person passes away.
- Deterioration of function/health requiring a house move.
- Death of a relative/carer resulting in moving home.

The abortive fees will be considered on a case-by-case basis having regard to the following guidelines prepared by the Gloucestershire DFG Forum. These figures will be subject to an annual review.

Fee payment stage	Stage description at time of grant is discontinued	Less complex DFG works
1	Feasibility Visit (per visit at the discretion of funding authority)	£150.00
2	Survey Completed - No other tasks initiated	£250.00
3	Drawings and/or Schedule of Works started	£350.00
4	Drawings and/or Schedule of Works issued to District Council for approval	£550.00
5	Tenders issued to contractors	£650.00
6	Tenders received & works; costs plus VAT checked.	80% of fee charged on agreed tender
7	After the building contract issued and start date confirmed	85% of fee charged on agreed contract sum
8	Grant discontinued after commencement of contract; works may not have started	90% of fee charged on agreed contract sum

The abortive fee payment stages listed are not cumulative. Final payment will be according to stage where abortive fees application has been submitted.

The abortive fees will be paid directly to the agent/surveyor.

4. Shortfall funding

On 22nd December 2020 the Gloucestershire DFG Forum agreed that discretionary shortfall funding through the Better Care Fund would be made available for mandatory adaptations exceeding the £30,000 grant limit.

Purpose: The maximum grant limit for a mandatory DFG is £30,000, although any grant assistance is subject to a means test unless the work is for a disabled child. This grant limit was first introduced in 2008 and has not been increased to reflect changes in inflation and building costs. It is therefore no longer possible to fund, for example, the cost of a ground floor bathroom extension within the mandatory DFG limit. To address this, the Council offers discretionary funding to cover the shortfall between the cost of the grant eligible adaptations and the mandatory £30,000 limit.

Grant applicants who decide to proceed with their preferred scheme (as opposed to the grant eligible minimum scheme) or wish to carry out private works when the grant is on site will not qualify for shortfall funding.

Eligible Applicants: Those eligible for a mandatory DFG

Property Tenure: All tenures

Land Charge: The full value of the assistance awarded will be placed as land charge from the date of completion of works for owner-occupiers only. If a dwelling is sold or disposed of within ten years, the Council will demand repayment, but will consider whether it is reasonable to demand repayment or part repayment of the charge.

This is in addition to any Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant land charge.

Maximum Value: The Council can offer discretionary shortfall funding up to an additional £40,000 (£70,000 in total).

If the grant eligible works cost more than £70,000, a report must be submitted to the Gloucestershire DFG Forum to obtain approval to give further additional shortfall funding.

A report for additional funding over £70,000 will not be required where a grant approval has been approved for discretionary funding and unforeseen work is identified once the scheme has started on site and the additional work takes the cost of the scheme over £70,000. Similarly, approval to cover the cost of unforeseen work on schemes costing over £70,000 will not need approval from the DFG Forum.

Means Test: DFG means test. No additional means test applied.

Eligible Works: Available towards the cost of DFG eligible works only.

Limitations: One application in relation to the property in any 5-year period

5. Funding towards disabled person's assessed contribution

On 13th July 2021 the DFG Forum agreed to provide discretionary funding through the Better Care Fund to cover the cost of a disabled person's assessed contribution where the contribution is less than £10,000.

Purpose: The level of grant assistance available through a mandatory DFG is subject to a means test unless the work is for a disabled child. The means test calculation looks at the income and savings of the disabled person and their partner, if applicable, and compares this to notional outgoings based on a variety of premiums provided by government. If there is deemed to be more money coming into the household that is needed to live on, the disabled person is expected to use some of this surplus money to fund the adaptations identified as necessary. This calculated figure is the disabled person's assessed contribution. The mandatory grant assistance available is the difference between the disabled person's assessed contribution and the actual cost of the proposed adaptations.

The premiums used within the means test calculation have not been increased since 2008 but since that time state benefits, salaries, occupational pensions etc have increased. This means that a disabled person calculated as having no assessed contribution in 2008 may be calculated as having a contribution in 2024 despite their financial circumstances being the same. To address this, the Council offers discretionary funding to cover the cost of a disabled person's assessed contribution where the contribution is less than £10,000.

Eligible Applicants: Those eligible for a mandatory DFG.

Property Tenure: All tenures

Land Charge: For owner's applications this discretionary funding will be included as part of the local land charge.

Maximum Value: £10,000

Means Test: DFG means test.

Eligible Works: Available towards the cost of DFG eligible works only.

Limitations: If a disabled person's assessed contribution goes over £10,000, they will be required to pay the full cost of their assessed contribution before receiving any mandatory grant assistance.

6. Funding for rapidly progressing and/or highly debilitating conditions.

On 22nd November 2022 the Gloucestershire DFG Forum agreed that all local authorities within Gloucestershire will offer discretionary funding for rapidly progressing and/or highly debilitating conditions through the Better Care Fund based on the below criteria:

Purpose: This discretionary funding has been introduced to assist disabled people with a rapidly progressing and/or highly debilitating conditions such as Motor Neurone Disease (MND). Often people with MND want to continue to work during the early stages of the disease, which can make them ineligible for a DFG through means testing. But by the time they can no longer work an un-adapted home can make day to day activities very difficult to manage. To assist with these cases the Council will fast track any requests for grant assistance from a disabled person with a rapidly progressing and/or highly debilitating condition and carry out a provisional Test of Resources (ToR). If the disabled person is calculated to have a high assessed contribution which means they would not be eligible for a mandatory DFG, but it is anticipated that their medical condition will impact on their financial circumstances in the future, they will be offered discretionary funding for works up to £15,000. As this discretionary funding is only available to disabled people where their medical condition will impact their future financial circumstances it is most likely to benefit disabled people who are currently in work or have partners who work.

It is envisaged grant assistance up to a limit of £15,000 will cover the cost of smaller adaptations such as bathroom adaptations/improved access, work that could be implemented quickly.

Eligible Applicants: Applications for this discretionary funding will be identified by the Occupational Therapist (OT) carrying out the assessment of the disabled person. The OT will highlight within their referral if the disabled person has a medical condition that is rapidly progressing and/or highly debilitating such as Motor Neurone Disease. Applications will only be accepted after the OT has consulted with their clinical lead for approval. Palliative conditions, where the appropriateness of the proposed work has been thoughtfully considered, can also be included.

Property Tenure: All tenures

Land Charge: None

Maximum Value: £15,000

Means Test: Once the provisional TOR has been carried out there is no further means test.

Eligible Works: Available towards the cost of DFG eligible works only up to the maximum cost of £15,000.

Limitations: This grant is a "one-off" grant. It would not, however, prevent the disabled person making an application for mandatory grant assistance at some point in the future if there is a change in circumstances. The grant applicant/disabled person will be required to privately fund the cost of any work exceeding the £15,000 limit.

Once the work is on site, if any unforeseen/additional work is identified this will be required to be privately funded if the total cost exceeds the £15,000 grant limit.

7. Adaptation support grant.

Purpose: This discretionary grant is available to carry out repairs or other work required to support or facilitate the completion of the DFG eligible works. The most common example of this would be works carried out to upgrade the electrical installation at a property to enable the installation of an electric shower or a stairlift. The work needed to upgrade the electrics would be classed as a repair and not an adaptation, but the adaptation cannot be completed without the repair.

The maximum grant assistance given towards support to complete adaptations is £10,000.

If the cost of work needed to ensure the completion of the adaptations is more than £10,000 and the grant applicant/disabled person cannot afford to fund this work privately then a decision will be taken about whether it is reasonable to proceed with the proposed adaptation.

Eligible Applicants: Those eligible for a mandatory DFG

Property Tenure: All tenures although it is most likely to benefit owner occupiers and occupiers of mobile homes if the support is required to fund repairs to facilitate the completion of adaptations. If a property is occupied by a council tenant, housing association tenant or private tenant, any essential repairs would usually be considered to be the landlord's responsibility.

Land Charge: The full value of the assistance awarded will be placed as land charge from the date of completion of works for owner-occupiers only. If a dwelling is sold or disposed of within ten years, the Council will demand repayment, but will consider whether it is reasonable to demand repayment or part repayment of the charge.

This is in addition to any Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant land charge.

Maximum Value: £10,000

Means Test: DFG means test. No additional means test applied.

Limitations: Only one application in relation to the property in any 5-year period.

8. Relocation grant

Purpose: This discretionary grant is designed to assist with relocation costs and/or purchasing costs of a new property where adaptations to existing accommodation are considered less appropriate or too costly and a cheaper option is to assist with re-housing and if necessary, to assist with carrying out adaptations to an alternative property.

Eligible Applicants: Those eligible for a mandatory DFG. Applications must be supported by a community Occupational Therapist who must confirm that the new property will meet the needs of the disabled person or be suitable for adaptation at a reasonable cost.

Property Tenure: All tenures although it is most likely to benefit owner occupiers.

Land Charge: None

Maximum Value: There is no upper limit to the Relocation Grant but the cost to adapt the disabled person's existing home set against the cost to re-house and if necessary, carry out adaptations to their new home will need to be considered. If relocation remains a more affordable option and represents value for money for the Council the Relocation Grant will be considered.

Means Test: DFG means test. Applicants will be eligible for a Relocation Grant if they are calculated to have an assessed contribution less than £15,000.

Families with a disabled child will not be subject to a means test.

Eligible Works: The specific eligible relocation expenses are:

- Estate agent fees
- Solicitor costs
- Survey costs

- Stamp duty
- Removal expenses (lowest of at least two quotes)

Limitations and conditions: Applicants must currently live within Cheltenham Borough Council boundaries and be looking to relocate in Cheltenham.

Assistance will not be given towards the purchase price of a property.

If the move is aborted at the fault or choice of the applicant, costs will not be paid.

9. Funding for temporary rehousing to facilitate adaptations

Purpose: This discretionary funding is available in exceptional circumstances to help with the cost of providing temporary accommodation whilst adaptations are undertaken at the disabled person's home.

It is normally expected that the disabled person and their family remain at their home while any adaptation work is carried out. If the work on site causes a specific problem for the disabled person, it may be possible to arrange respite care for the disabled person while the remainder of the household remains at the property. Funding for the respite care will be arranged through the Occupational Therapist. There may, however, be occasions where neither the disabled person nor their family can remain at the property while the building works are on site. Applicants will need to demonstrate they have considered other options such as moving in with relatives or taking a holiday while work is carried out on site before consideration will be given to providing discretionary funding towards temporary accommodation costs.

Eligible Applicants: Those eligible for a mandatory DFG.

Property Tenure: All tenures

Land Charge: None

Maximum Value: £10,000

Means Test: DFG means test.

Eligible Works: The specific eligible temporary accommodation expenses are:

- Rental costs for temporary accommodation
- Council tax charge relating to temporary accommodation, if applicable
- Gas and electricity bills associated with temporary accommodation.

Limitations and conditions: Only one application in relation to the applicant in any 5-year period.

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Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) - Professional Services Guidance **Gloucestershire**

It is strongly recommended that you appoint an agent/surveyor to act on your behalf to assist you through the grant process, although it is your choice whether or not you use the services of an agent and who you choose to appoint as your agent”.

Agents hired in respect of works that are grant aided will be expected to operate under the following guidance.

Works carried out by an agent and associated costs incurred before grant approval is given are usually the responsibility of the client to pay. Reasonable costs, i.e. surveyors' fees etc could be approved before full application and approval (but not retrospectively). Discretion will be applied to situations where the grant cannot proceed for reasons outside the client's control.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) – Professional Service Guidance Gloucestershire document is adhered to by Cheltenham Borough Council, Cotswold District Council, Stroud District Council, Forest of Dean District Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council.

Gloucester City Council have their own specific protocols in place for Agents/Contractors to follow. Please visit Gloucester City Council website; Help available to support people with disabilities live independently - Gloucester City Council.

Works should not commence until written grant approval is obtained.

Glossary

Act = Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

Agent = surveyor, architect, project manager or other suitably qualified professional that would be eligible for ancillary charges under S.2 (3) of the Act.

Client = Applicant for a DFG in accordance with S.24 of the Act, may also be known as the Service User.

Grant Officer = Officer from the (District / Borough / City) Council. They could also be called a Technical Officer, Private Sector Housing Officer or an Environmental Health Officer (EHO).

Section 1 – Agent requirements

1.1 - Works should not commence until written grant approval is obtained.

1.2 - Agents must have full professional indemnity insurance.

1.3 - Agents should provide a clear written statement of intent to their clients detailing their service; indicating their costs and a proposed timetable of works, including arrangements for payments. Agents should make it clear to clients when they may be available to start work.

Section 2 – Contractual Issues

2.1 - There should always be a written contract and the JCT Minor Works Contract or equivalent should be used where the proposed scheme costs more than £10,000.

2.2 - Agents are advised to ensure that the standard contract is amended such that their clients' interests are protected in respect of damages arising due to possible delays on site, or in grant payment, as a result of the grants procedure. Such damages cannot be funded by the grant system.

2.3 - Grants are approved on the basis they will be paid in whole on completion of the works and interim grant payments are only available subject to local policy and obtaining prior written agreement.

2.4 - District Council will consider interim payments for specialist, complex and large-scale projects for agents and contractors. In these instances, it has to be confirmed in writing with the relevant awarding district council.

2.5 - Clients may self-fund via savings or loans, apply for charitable funds or a social care grant. Refer to Your Circle - DFG for more information. Agents are encouraged to inform district council where they feel clients require support with their applications for additional funding wherever possible.

Section 3 - Schedule of Works

3.1 - Agents must produce a detailed specification/schedule of works based on the information issued by the grant officer. The specification shall be produced in full consultation with the client, grant officer and occupational therapist. The scheme of works will require written agreement from all parties prior to the required tender procedure.

3.2 - The Schedule of works must include details of any specialist equipment, in consultation with the occupational therapist, who may provide quotes from suppliers.

3.3 - The Schedule of works must state quantities of materials, such as, stating areas of tiling, decoration.

3.4 - Alterations to schedule of works (SOW) after occupational therapist and grant officer approval may result in additional work for the agent but should be covered by the likely increase in the approval amount and therefore agent's percentage.

Section 4 – Progressing the work

4.1 - All agents/contractors must adhere to CDM 2015 regulations which covers all ACMs and Health and Safety on construction projects.

4.2 - Agents should not give their clients the impression that they will be awarded a maximum grant nor build an expectation that the grant will be approved, prior to receiving

the formal written approval document. They must stress also that grant funding is only available for eligible work, subject to agreement by all parties.

4.3 - Clients must be appraised of plans, specifications and builders' quotations and be provided copies of each for their records. On completion of the works, agents/contractors must provide clients with originals of all guarantees, certificates, warranties etc.

4.4 - To enhance and support efficiencies of DFG service delivery digital copies of warranties are acceptable.

4.5 - Works must be inspected at the key building stages and there should be regular site visits as required by the complexity of the work (minimum of a visit every 2 weeks for complex adaptations). Under no circumstances should an agent take leave of absence, without making arrangements for a suitably qualified person to meet this requirement.

4.6 - Where delivery of DFG can be enhanced to help increase efficiencies for the delivery of the DFG service – it is permissible to use modern technology e.g. Video conferencing to enable these site visits to be completed in a time sensitive way.

4.7 - Agents must not allocate or sub-contract work to other agents without the written permission of the client and the council.

4.8 - Agents should note that the main contractor is not permitted to sub-contract the scheme of works to another contractor without prior notice and agreement by the client and the district council in writing.

4.9 - All visits should be fully and legibly recorded in accordance with good practice and the file or log should be available for inspection by the client or the district council on request.

4.10 - Agents must have no external business interests which may be detrimental to work undertaken on behalf of their client.

4.11 - Gifts or inducements of any description must not be offered to council staff.

4.12 - Contractors invited to tender for grant aided work must be competent, familiar with good building practice, relevant British Standards, Building Regulations and be fully insured.

4.13 - The contractor that carries out the grant aided work must not be the applicant for the grant or a member of their family. For further clarification on this matter contact the grant officer.

4.14 - In the event of the contractor who has been awarded the work being unable to proceed, the agent **must** consult with their client and the grant officer.

Section 5 – Quotes

5.1 - Unless specially agreed by the district council in writing, at least two (or three where work exceeds £30,000) fully itemised competitive tenders must be sought for each contract to comply with the district council procurement rules. The two lowest fully itemised and priced tenders must be submitted to the district council as part of the grant application.

5.2 - Where the works are urgent, or specialist one quote may be accepted but only with the clear agreement of the district council and the occupational therapist.

5.3 - The district council can request breakdown of costs to ensure sound public expenditure – these demands should not however be unreasonable and delay the process. Invoices describing the item of works and the sub totals completed, following the referencing of a fully itemised and priced Schedule of Works will minimise delays and breakdowns requests.

5.4 - Any problems relating to the approved scheme, or its progress must be immediately notified to the client, occupational therapist, and the district council.

5.5 - Planning permission, listed building consent and/or building regulation approval, party wall agreements, flood risks and asbestos report be obtained where appropriate for grant aided works. Grant approval is not building regulation approval and agents should note that in the case of grant works subject to building regulations, the works may be supervised by both a grant officer and a building control officer

Section 6 – Additional works and Variation Orders (VO)

Note: Agreement to the payment of grant aid in respect of additional or unforeseen work cannot be given by a Building Control Officer or Occupational Therapist.

6.1 - All additional or unforeseen work or a change of contractor must immediately be notified to the grant officer and client. The client should be notified to explain that the Variation Order may result in an increase in the charge on a property on completion of the adaptations. There is no commitment on the part of the district council to pay for such works until specific written agreement is given for the Variation Order and is subject to the maximum grant allowed.

6.2 - Agreement is subject to both the provision of a specification of the additional works from the agent together with a reasonable price for the work from the contractor on site and sufficient funds being available to the district council.

6.3 - District Council will be focussed on ensuring that Variation Orders are completed within 1 working day. A prompt response will be provided through district Council - It is recognised that delays in funding approval for variations increases the risk of lost working days on site and potentially increases the delay for the client in receipt of the service.

6.4 - All variation requests must be followed up in writing, detailing the works and costs.

Section 7 – Payments and fees

7.1- Payments are made directly to the contractor, not via their agent.

7.2 - If the client has an assessed client contribution, then on production of the contractor invoice it is expected that the contribution will be paid prior to payment from the DFG. If the client wishes to carry out additional private work, they will need to make their own payment arrangements with the agent/contractor. Written confirmation and contractor invoice must be sent to the district council.

7.3 - Where the value of a single contract exceeds £10,000 'agents will arrange for a contractor to return to sort out any queries/snagging items within the 12-month warranty period.

7.4 - In the event the works are abandoned for reasons within the client's control, then the costs for any work carried out by agent will be payable by the client and must be settled as soon as possible.

7.5 - Agents should note that under most circumstances the council will not fund professional fees which are in excess of a fixed percentage of the final grant eligible contract sum.

7.6 - Any increase would need to be an individual agreement with the district council concerned.

7.7 - The maximum percentage is currently fixed at 15% plus VAT, subject to the maximum grant limit. But Agents should note that this is usually the maximum sum payable, and each scheme will be judged on its complexity. Maximum fees can only be paid where the agent completes all works to the grant officer's, client, and occupation therapist satisfaction.

7.8 - Agents fees will be capped at £7,500.00 plus VAT and this will be applied to larger cases (such as ground floor extensions). This limit may be raised at the district council's discretion where significant extra work from the agent is identified and agreed in advance.

Note: Professional fees can usually only be considered for grant purposes where an application proceeds to full approval, however, please reference the section titled Abortive fees within the document for instances where assistance can be provided at the discretion of the district council.

7.9 - In the event the works are abandoned for reasons not within their control e.g. where an agent/contractor is providing a service through DFG and:

- A client passes away;
- Deterioration of function/health requiring a house move;
- Death of a relative/carer resulting in moving home etc

Then abortive fees will be considered by the district council on a case-by-case basis. agents/contractors are encouraged to liaise directly with the district council to discuss the abortive fee to be awarded in each particular instances.

7.10 - **Abortive fees – Fee proposal DFG cases Gloucestershire**

Fee Payment Stage	Stage Description at time of grant is discontinued	Less complex DFG works
1	Feasibility Visit (per visit at the discretion of funding authority)	£150.00
2	Survey Completed - No other tasks Initiated	£250.00
3	Drawings and/or Schedule of Works started	£350.00

4	Drawings and/or Schedule of Works issued to District Council for approval	£550.00
5	Tenders issued to contractors	£650.00
6	Tenders received & works; costs plus VAT checked.	80% of fee charged on agreed tender
7	After the building contract issued and start date confirmed	85% of fee charged on agreed contract sum
8	Grant discontinued after commencement of contract; works may not have started.	90% of fee charged on agreed contract sum

- **Complex DFG cases abortive fees proposals (such as ground floor extensions) need to be discussed directly with the district council.**
- **The determination will be made through the circumstances of each case and the discretion to award remains with the district council.**
- **Abortive Fee payment stages listed is not cumulative. Final payment will be according to stage where abortive fees application has been submitted.**

7.11 - Fees shall be calculated using the latest estimate/tender cost provided.

7.12 - Feasibility fees can be increased, at the district council's discretion, where the work involved in that visit/study is more complex - i.e. planning and ancillary charges may be considered on a case by case basis

Section 8 – Final payments and sign off

8.1 - The following documents (where appropriate) must be submitted before final payment can be made: -

- Contractor's Invoices
- Completed Customer Satisfaction Certificate*
- Agent Completion Certificate
- Agent fee invoices
- All warranties and guarantees relating to works carried out. Digital copies are sufficient.
- All certificates including Electrical, Gas Safety, FENSA etc.
- Building Regulations compliance confirmation.
- Invoices / receipts for all ancillary services.
- Written approval of completed works from the OT.
- Any other relevant documents as requested by the grant officer **



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*The grant officer will be flexible regarding the requirement for a customer satisfaction certificate and grant payment

**The grant officer should make any requirements for further documentation known at the tendering stage rather than when work is complete

8.2 - Once all documents are submitted and the local authority are satisfied all the statutory requirements are met for the funding to be approved; the district council will process the payment within 30 days.

8.3 - The Agent/Contractors have the right to raise concerns/complaint in regard to delays for payment to be actioned through the district council complaints process. Please reference each district council complaints process for full details on how to report concerns.

Cheltenham Borough Council

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disabledfacilities@cheltenham.gov.uk

Cotswold District Council

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housing.grants@cotswold.gov.uk

Forest of Dean District Council

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Gloucester City Council

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Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet Meeting – 24 September 2024

Budget Monitoring Report 2024/25 – position at 31.07.24

Accountable member:

Cllr Alisha Lewis – Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets

Accountable officer:

Gemma Bell - Director of Finance and Assets (Deputy Section 151 Officer)

Accountable scrutiny committee:

Budget Scrutiny Working Group

Ward(s) affected:

All

Key/Significant Decision:

No

Executive summary:

This report provides the monitoring position statement for the financial year 2024/25 against the budget approved by Council on 23 February 2024. The purpose of this report is to notify members of any known significant variations to the budget for 2024/25 and highlight any key issues.

Regular budget monitoring exercises for services are carried out in liaison with Directors and cost centre managers. The budget is also regularly discussed with the Lead Member for Finance and Assets and the Cabinet. One of the key purposes of this exercise is to identify any major variations from the current approved budget that are anticipated to occur in the financial year. Any variations of more than £50,000 to revenue budgets identified at 31 July 2024 are outlined in this report.

The 2024/25 budget forecast that £629,942 would be added to general balances by

the 31st March 2025. This monitoring report shows that we are currently reporting estimated overspend of £734,000. This means that if the forecast remains in this position by the end of the financial year we will need to make a further withdraw from balances and reserves to bridge our budget gap. This would potentially leave our general balances falling below £1m for the first time.

Recommendations: That Cabinet:

- **notes the contents of this report including the key projected variances to the general fund and Housing Revenue Account (“HRA”) 2024/25 revenue and capital budgets approved by council on 23 February 2024 and the actions to ensure overspends are reduced as far as possible by the end of the financial year.**
-

1. Implications

1.1. Financial implications

As detailed throughout this report.

Signed off by: Gemma Bell, Director of Finance and Assets (Deputy s151 Officer), gemma.bell@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

None arising from the report recommendations.

Signed off by: One Legal, legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

1.3 HR implications

No direct hr implications arising from the report at this time.

Signed off by: Julie McCarthy, HR Consultant, julie.mccarthy@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.4 Environmental and climate change implications

The investment set out in the capital programme and through the countywide Climate Co-ordinator role will help progress countywide carbon reduction initiatives. However, increased revenue investment is needed to maintain progress against the actions set out in the Climate Emergency Action Plan and this will continue to present a challenge for the council's budget without further funding support from central government.

Signed off by: Maizy McCann, Climate Emergency Officer

1.5 Property/asset implications

None specifically directly arising from the recommendations.

Signed off by: Gemma Bell, Director of Finance and Assets, 01242 264124

1.6 Corporate policy framework implications

Taking action to ensure overspends are reduced as far as possible by the end of the financial year will help ensure that the council can continue to deliver its corporate objectives as set out in the 2023-2027 Corporate Plan.

Signed off by: Ann Wolstencroft, Head of Projects, Programmes and Risk

2 Background

2.3 On 23 February 2024, Council approved the budget for 2024/25, including setting the Council Tax. The 2024/25 approved budget identified ambitious savings target of £2.741m.

2.4 This report draws together the Council’s budget forecast for 2024/25 at 31 July 2024 against the general fund revenue and capital budgets approved on 23 February 2024. It also summarises the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue and capital budgets.

3 General Fund Net Revenue Budget Position

3.1 The current net forecasted overspend for 2024/25 is £734k. This is made up of the total budget variances against all the current service expenditure and the forecast position of the savings programme for 2024/25. Service expenditure is forecast to be underspent by £131k and the slippage on the savings programme is currently expected to be £865k. This means the net position on the budget at year end is currently forecast to be a £734k overspend. The table below details the breakdown of the variances against the approved budget with further explanation provided in Sections 3, 4 and 5.

Significant budget variances	Overspend / (Underspend) £	Para. Ref.
All Directorates		
Staffing Vacancies	(250,000)	4.1
Finance, Assets & Regeneration Directorate		
Bereavement Services	107,000	4.2

Housing & Communities	(21,000)	4.3
Property – Repairs & Maintenance	(47,000)	4.4
Housing Benefit – Rent Allowances	80,000	4.5
At Risk Savings	865,000	5.1 – 5.3
Total projected overspend for the year	734,000	

4 Base Budget Variances

- 4.1** Due to the vacancies being carried across the organisation, staffing budgets are £250,000 underspent for the first three months of the year. The organisation is working to integrate shared teams across the organisation following the transfer of housing services back into the Council on 1 July 2024. Consequently, a number of vacancies are being held within both the general fund and housing revenue account. The 2024/25 pay award for the NJC is still pending agreement with the outcome expected before the end of the calendar year. Our budget provision included a 4% increase in the majority of roles, with a 2% increase for senior management and an additional 1% contingency. The latest offer made to unions has been incorporated into the forecast but may be subject to revision, contingent upon the outcome of negotiations between the NJC and unions.
- 4.2** Bereavement services are currently forecasting a £107,000 overspend on the base budget. An additional investment of £80k is required to proceed with badger mitigation works due to a habitation that has occurred in a heavily memorialised area. Additionally, goods for resale are currently performing under budgeted levels, resulting in an overspend of £22,000 for the cost of sales. Furthermore, while the Plotbox system capital investment has been made, the revenue budget needs provision for maintenance and support, requiring an additional £16,000. These budgetary shortfalls amongst some small underspend net to a total anticipated overspend of £107,000.
- 4.3** Housing and communities is forecast to be £21,000 underspend as a result of a windfall grant received in 2024/25, part of the grant relates to activities we are delivering as part of the base budget and the funding can be used to offset our core costs.
- 4.4** Across the property portfolio there is a forecast underspend of £47,000. Repairs and maintenance budgets across our property portfolio have cost pressures due to the age of our properties. There have been significant remedial repairs at Recreation Centre and Swindon Road Depot already this year which are expected to continue to require budgets originally allocated to other sites. These overspends

are expected to be compensated for by a reduction in utility expenditure across the entire portfolio. We have pre-purchased the entirety of our anticipated usage for 2024/25 at much lower prices than in the previous two years and are not expecting to be impacted by price increases in October.

4.5 The housing benefits budget for rent allowances is currently forecast to be £80,000 overspent. Despite the transition from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit for many recipients, the overall annual Housing Benefit expenditure remains constant. However, the composition of this expenditure has changed, with a significantly higher proportion of claims coming from supported accommodation. The current Government policy is that supported accommodation managed by an organisation that is not a Registered Provider does not qualify to receive full Housing Benefit Subsidy. This means a greater contribution is required from the Council. Work is ongoing nationally to influence a change in the policy to ensure councils can continue to support residents in this type of accommodation without creating local financial pressure on other services. The Council are also working with the organisations in the town currently impacted by this policy to support their transition to become Registered Providers.

General Economic Pressures

4.6 Although there are a number of specific base budget variances outlined in the section above, we are still experiencing uncertainty across the budget where small changes in economic growth, customer demand or economic conditions could shift our forecasts significantly. Interest rates are still high but the base rate is reducing, slightly increased tonnages of recycling on the kerbside are generating more income than last year, customer engagement has begun in preparation for the ice rink event at Christmas and growth in the Council Tax base is expected in 2024/25 and 2025/26 as some of the larger developments move forward.

4.7 All of these areas are currently moving in a positive direction for the Council however remain highly volatile. Small positive or negative changes can have significant financial impacts on our budget and Councillors should be mindful that we should not become complacent as we move into the Autumn. General balances are still lower than the Section 151 Officer's assessment and need strengthening.

5 Delivery of the 2024/25 Savings Strategy

5.1 As part of the 2024/25 approved budget, a four-year savings strategy was approved which was weighted towards delivering £2.741m of base budget savings in 2024/25. This is an incredibly ambitious target, particularly in the current economic environment and the Council cannot afford complacency in the urgency of the delivery. Below is a table categorising the progress to date.

Description	Planned 2024/25 £	On track 2024/25 £	Risk
Debt Management			
Reduction in levels of temporary borrowing	200,000	-	High
Repayment of principal debt to reduce annual revenue provision	121,000	121,000	Low/Medium
Implementation of the Council's Commercial Strategy			
Income from MX profit share	100,000	-	High
Income from EV charging points	50,000	35,000	Low/Medium
Income generated from property portfolio	250,000	150,000	Low/Medium
Disposal of property interests in line with the Council's Asset Management Strategy - cost savings and contribution to property resources	150,000	150,000	Medium
Review of Resources against Corporate Plan			
Channel shift of services to digital platform	60,000	60,000	Low/Medium
HRA re-charge of uplifted annual audit fees	50,000	50,000	Low
Review and re-alignment of resources for discretionary services	200,000	50,000	High
Review of the Council's facilities management services	60,000	60,000	Medium
Sub Total	1,241,000	676,000	(565,000)
Transition of housing services back in-house	1,000,000	850,000	Medium
Environmental Services Review	500,000	350,000	Medium
Sub Total	1,500,000	1,200,000	(300,000)
Total	2,741,000	1,876,000	(865,000)

5.2 Action has already been taken by officers and Members on the £1.876m of savings forecast as on track in the table above and these will continue to be monitored through the rest of the financial year. The current expectation is that these will all be delivered and the budget adjustments made by 31 March 2025.

5.3 This significant work to do on £865k of savings which are forecast as red or, in the case of the environmental services review, where the plans do not cover the entire target for that area. In the case of the reduction in temporary borrowing and income from MX profit share, the pressures which remain on gilt prices and uncertainty on the cost of debt means that these savings are unlikely to be generated in year.

5.4 Likewise, although significant work has been undertaken on the transition of the housing services back to the Council and reviewing the cost of the environmental service, some of the financial benefits will not be experienced until 2025/26.

5.5 To offset this, Senior Officers have been working with the Cabinet to review spend across all service areas against the Corporate Plan to determine whether services can be delivered differently and ensure our resources are aligned with key priorities. Proposals and options will be discussed through September and October with action taken in advance of the 2024/25 revised budget being produced.

6 The 2023/24 Capital Programme

6.1 A monitoring exercise has been carried out to ensure that the capital programme, approved by Council on 23 February 2024, are being delivered as planned within allocated capital budgets, some of which are timetabled to straddle two or more financial years. The approved 2024/25 capital programme totals £10.579m. The total of the capital programme increased to £15.861m as part of the outturn report in July 2024 once unspent budgets were approved to be carried forward and two new projects were added. See Appendix 2 attached to this report for a breakdown of the individual capital projects.

6.2 At present, the capital projects are all forecast to be delivered on or under budget with only a small overspend variance based on the activity incurred to date and the planned activity until 31 March 2024.

6.3 During the 2024/25 financial year, other projects and schemes may come to light which require investment by the Council. These proposals will be considered by the Cabinet and approval will be requested through the relevant channels in line with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Rules.

7 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 Contributions

7.1 In December 2023, the Council agreed to pool its strategic CIL monies with its Strategic and Local Plan partners Gloucester and Tewkesbury through the governance of a Joint Committee. The first meeting of the CIL Joint Committee will take place Autumn 2024 and will agree the prioritisation methodology for the future allocation of CIL monies. The total strategic CIL pooled across the three Councils is currently £15,441,761.75 to the end of quarter 1.

7.2 The parish element of CIL monies is paid directly to the Parish Councils, the neighbourhood element is held by the Council and spent on the community's behalf via the CIL Neighbourhood Panel. The last allocation of neighbourhood monies was made on the 22 June 2023 in which £128,355.00 was allocated across a range of neighbourhood projects. £65,472.26 of this allocation has already been spent leaving £62,882.74 committed. This CIL pot is currently being built up again ahead of a future allocation of funds, with another £52,884.31 added since 22 June 2023.

- 7.3 5% of CIL is allocated to the administration of CIL and this contributes to staff costs, purchase and management of software and supporting administrative activities.
- 7.4 Section 106 has over £3.990m carried over from 2023/24. The bulk of this sum is set aside for affordable housing and has to be spent between five and 15 years from when received. In relation to public art contributions, there are a number of commitments, one is against the Honeybourne project with a committed spend of £86,500. The project scope is currently being refined to ensure that the S106 outputs meet existing commitments. Maintenance, there is c. £3,000 of maintenance works be programmed for this year, the remainder will be spent next financial year following condition surveys. Play Spaces maintenance expenditure of £15,632 is to be spent within this financial year. The remaining £153,351 has to be spent within ten years from when it was received in November 2023.
- 7.5 See Appendices 4 & 5 for a breakdown of the amounts held in CIL and Section 106 contributions.

8 Housing Revenue Account

Revenue Budget

- 8.1 The current net forecasted housing revenue account surplus has reduced from £356k in the 2024/25 budget to £255k. The table below details the breakdown of the variances against the approved budget with further explanation provided below.

Significant budget variances	Overspend/(Underspend) £	Para. Ref.
Housing Revenue Account Income	46,000	7.2
Expenditure		
Repairs and Maintenance	51,000	7.3
Management Costs – housing service	(400,000)	7.4
Interest Payable	400,000	7.5
Net variances < £50,000	4,000	
Reduction in net operating surplus	101,000	

- 8.2** The forecast for dwelling rents is below budget due to a reduction in the number of acquisitions expected to be purchased this year from 25 to 18 (including 2 LAHF properties). There were five Right to Buy sales to the end of July which is in line with budget of 20 for the year. Two additional LAHF property acquisitions were completed on 20 June 2024 utilising additional Government grant funding.
- 8.3** In the repairs team, agency staff are being used to cover eight vacant positions in order that the programmed works can continue without delay. This has resulted in a forecast overspend on the budget.
- 8.4** The budget for housing services was set on the basis of a full CBH staffing budget. The savings related to the HRA for the transition of the housing service are currently estimated to be £400k for the year. This includes changes to the executive team, HR and governance.
- 8.5** In March 2024 a change was made to the calculation of loan interest to better reflect the interest payable on loans drawn down in the current year and internal borrowing between the General Fund and HRA. This approach was adopted following approval of the budget leading to a higher forecast interest charge in 2024/25.
- 8.6** The funding of the capital programme has been reviewed and in order to strengthen the HRA revenue reserve in 2024/25, the revenue contribution to capital costs has been reduced to zero. Alternative capital financing is available to the programme.
- 8.7** The current forecast will increase the HRA working balance from £936k to £1,191k. The reserve remains below our target of £1.5m due to additional costs in 2023/24 leading to a lower opening revenue reserve balance than originally budgeted. This is expected to partially recover in 2024/25 because of the savings generated from bringing the housing services back within the Council.

Capital Budget

8.8 The HRA Capital spend is currently forecast at £28,614k against a budget of £28,164k. This represents a £450k additional spend for the year. Further detail is included in Appendix 3. The three areas driving this variance are as outlined below:

- Internal improvements – the new term contract for internal improvements, including kitchens, bathrooms and void works, is expected to start in Q4 following delays in the procurement process. The programmed kitchen and bathroom renewals will therefore move back into 2025/26 and the following years.
- Fire protection works – a provision of £550k has been made to cover the

cost of additional fire protection works in the current year. This includes delivering existing outstanding fire risk actions as well as required remedial works from new compartmentation surveys and potential remedial actions from external cladding surveys to be undertaken this year.

- New Build – the budget includes expected works beginning on 320 Swindon Road, planning and design costs for Monkscroft Schools, market acquisitions and the Swindon Farm S106 scheme. The final draft contract for the Swindon Farm scheme shows an accelerated development period by the contractor compared to the original budget increasing the payments on account and completions expected in 2024/25. The total 4-year capital programme budget approved by Council in February 2024 has not changed, only the timing of the spend.

9 Conclusion

9.1 The current monitoring position of the 2024/25 budget demonstrates that even with the financial planning decisions taken by Officers and Members over recent years, we are still facing significant uncertainty and volatility in managing the resources available to the Council to deliver services to our residents and communities.

9.2 The proposal to fund the projected overspend using balances and reserves will potentially mean general balances will fall below £1m for the first time. However, with the volatility of some of our budget areas outlined in this report, this is not a sustainable funding mechanism.

9.3 Balances and reserves have reached their lowest levels in years and we cannot continue to rely on finite resources to meet the budget gap without restoring reserve levels closer to their 2019/20 levels. To continue providing high-quality services to residents, decisions need to be taken about savings and efficiencies in order to replenish the resources used since 2020/21.

10 Consultation

10.1 Appropriate members and officers were consulted in the process of preparing the monitoring position and associated reports and appendices.

11 Performance management – monitoring and review

11.1 The budget position will continue to be monitored by the Finance team throughout the year and a revised budget will be presented to the December Cabinet with the 2025/26 draft budget proposal. The Budget Scrutiny Working Group will also meet in the Autumn before the 2025/26 budget process begins.

Report author:

Jon Whitlock, Chief Accountant

Appendices:

1. Risk Assessment
2. General Fund Capital Programme Monitor to 31 July 2024
3. Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme Monitor to 31 July 2024

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	If the Council is unable to come up with long term solutions which close the gap in the medium term financial strategy then it will find it increasingly difficult to prepare budgets year on year without making unplanned cuts in service provision.	Cabinet	5	3	15	Reduce	The budget strategy projection includes 'targets' for work streams to close the funding gap which aligns with the council's corporate priorities.	ED Finance and Assets	Ongoing
	If the Budget Strategy (Support) Reserve is not suitably resourced insufficient reserves will be available to cover anticipated future deficits resulting in the use of General Balances which will consequently fall below the minimum required level as recommended by the Section 151 Officer in the council's Medium Term Financial	ED Finance and Assets	5	4	20	Reduce	The MTFS is clear about the need to enhance reserves and identifies a required reserves strategy for managing this issue. In preparing the budget for 2020/21 and in ongoing budget monitoring, consideration will continue to be given to the use of fortuitous windfalls	ED Finance and Assets	Ongoing

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	Strategy						and potential future under spends with a view to strengthening reserves whenever possible.		
	If income streams from the introduction of the business rates retention scheme in April 2013 are impacted by the loss of major business and the constrained ability to grow the business rates in the town then the MTFS budget gap may increase.	ED Finance and Assets	5	4	20	Accept & Monitor	<p>The Council joined the Gloucestershire pool to share the risk of fluctuations in business rates revenues retained by the Council.</p> <p>The Gloucestershire S151 Officers continue to monitor business rates income projections and the performance and membership of the pool / pilot.</p> <p>Work with members and Gloucestershire LEP to ensure Cheltenham grows its business rate base.</p>	ED Finance and Assets	Ongoing

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	If the robustness of the income proposals is not sound then there is a risk that the income identified within the budget will not materialise during the course of the year.	ED Finance and Assets	4	4	16	Reduce	Robust forecasting is applied in preparing budget targets taking into account previous income targets, collection rates and prevailing economic conditions. Professional judgement is used in the setting / delivery of income targets. Greater focus on cost control and income generation will be prioritised to mitigate the risk of income fluctuations.	ED Finance and Assets	Ongoing
	If the assumptions around government support, business rates income, impact of changes to council tax discounts prove to be incorrect, then there is likely to be increased volatility around future	ED Finance and Assets	5	3	15	Reduce	Work with Publica and countywide CFO's to monitor changes to local government financing regime including responding to government consultation on changes Business	ED Finance and Assets	Ongoing

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	funding streams.						Rates and the Fair Funding review. The assumptions regarding government support have been mitigated to a certain extent by the acceptance of a multi-year settlement agreement.		

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Appendix 2 - The Capital Programme

Code	Directorate / Scheme	Scheme Description	Total Scheme Budget £	Budget 2024/25 £	Actual Spend 2024/25 £	Forecast Spend for 2024/25 £
FINANCE, ASSETS & REGENERATION						
CAP026	IT Infrastructure	5 year ICT infrastructure strategy	250,000	288,767	3,395	288,767
CAP035	Civic Events Space	Funding for an event space to become a potential Council Chamber and meeting space following the sale of the Municipal Office building.	500,000	500,000	-	-
CAP036	Resurfacing of the Regent Arcade Car park	To meet the obligations of the lease, resurfacing of the car park.	170,000	170,000	-	170,000
CAP037	Decarbonisation of Leisure@	To finance the investments in LED lighting and pool covers.	349,200	349,200	13,383	349,200
CAP109	Pittville Steps	The restoration of the Pittville Pump Room steps which is to be funded by external resources and project managed by CBC.	63,300	5,777	-	5,777
CAP227	Housing Delivery	Enabling the delivery of Private Rented Sector (PRS) Housing through Cheltenham Borough Homes	4,500,000	4,500,000	-	-
CAP228	Housing Enabling	Expenditure in support of enabling the provision of new affordable housing in partnership with registered Social Landlords and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)	252,746	252,746	-	252,746
CAP515	Minster Innovation Exchange	20,000 sq ft purpose-built commercial space adjacent to the Minster	5,657,539	618,847	633,095	633,095
CAP517	Imperial Gardens Railing Restoration	The restoration of the Imperial Gardens Railing to be funded by external resources and project managed by CBC. £100k	100,000	-	19,000	19,000
CAP518	Sandford Park toilets	Provide for new public toilet provision at Sandford Park	150,000	150,000	-	-
CAP521	Montpellier Toilets	To improve public toilet provision in the town.	581,091	581,091	167,730	581,091
CAP522	Electric Vehicle Charging Points	Infrastructure to support the delivery of EV charging points	75,000	75,000	-	-
CAP526	Leisure @ EVO Project	To upgrade the AHU and Heating system to air and ground source heat pumps in line with the SALIX funding bid.	347,502	347,502	-	-
CAP606	Crematorium Scheme - existing chapel	Redevelopment of existing chapel	285,000	261,723	155,139	151,000
				8,100,653	991,742	2,450,676
PLACE & COMMUNITIES						
CAP010	Digital Platform	Implementation and roll out of the new digital platform across the Council	180,000	54,000	1,050	54,000
CAP014	Digital Platform for Cem & Crem	To develop a digital platform to replace the current records system used by Bereavement Services	55,000	55,000	55,390	55,390
CAP030	Carbon Neutral agenda	Seed funding to deliver the actions needed, as outlined in the report to Full Council in October 2019, to facilitate the Council's ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030.	332,016	90,885	42,112	90,885
CAP034	UK Shared Prosperity Funding - Capital Projects	Delivery of the capital projects in line with the UKSPF funding bid	394,494	300,000	22,373	300,000
CAP101	Play Areas (Section 106 & CIL Grants)	Developer Contributions	15,560	21,376	21,376	21,376
CAP102	Play Areas Enhancement	We are tendering one large playground improvement contract.	80,000	152,026	58,404	152,026
CAP135	Commercialisation opportunities within the Cheltenham Trust	Invest a sum of £1m to pump prime the commercial opportunities identified by The Cheltenham Trust (including investment which both sustains and grows income at the Town Hall);	1,000,000	391,180	58,800	391,180
CAP201	CCTV	Additional CCTV in order to improve shopping areas and reduce fear of crime	346,511	346,511	-	65,000
CAP204	Public Realm Investment - Town Centre East Car Park	Improving linkages to the High Street, signage and decoration.	115,500	115,500	-	-
CAP205/6/7	Public Realm Improvements - High Street Phase 2	Public Realm in the Strand / Cambray	412,914	191,385	60,571	191,385
CAP221	Disabled Facilities Grants	County Council Grant funding for the provision of building work, equipment or modifying a dwelling to restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for individuals and their families.	500,000	500,000	153,518	500,000
CAP223	H&S, vacant property & renovation grants	Assistance available under the council's Housing Renewal Policy	206,400	3,001	-	3,001

CAP224	Warm & Well	A Gloucestershire-wide project to promote home energy efficiency, particularly targeted at those with health problems	40,200	40,200	-	40,200
CAP301	Vehicles and recycling equipment and receptacles	Replacement vehicles and recycling equipment	3,824,700	5,292,686	1,091,716	5,292,686
CAP306	In Cab Technology	The introduction of an In-Cab system would reduce the mileage required to be completed by Ubico, because it would guide the crew around their collection route and would largely eliminate mistakes.	150,000	50,000	-	50,000
CAP501	Allotments	Allotment Enhancements - new toilets, path surfacing, fencing, signage, and other improvements to infra-structure.	161,000	154,608	-	-
CAP607	The Burrows Improvement Project	Forward funding for the Leckhampton playing field works.	584,000	-	2,670	2,760
CAP608	Naunton Park Improvements	Contribution to pathways and drainage work	25,000	6,098	-	6,098
CAP609	Burrows Storage Facility	Contribution to the works required to build the storage room for Leckhampton Rovers	25,000	1,955	-	1,955
				7,766,411	1,567,980	7,217,942
TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME				15,867,064	2,559,722	9,668,618

Funded by:

General Fund Capital Receipts		7,851,325	1,237,981	6,616,871
Capital Reserve		-	-	-
RCCO (funded from reserves)		54,000	1,050	54,000
Prudential Borrowing		5,968,047	646,478	982,295
Partner Funding		263,479	21,670	285,239
Capital Grant or Contribution		1,168,637	477,649	1,168,637
Better Care Fund		540,200	153,518	540,200
s106 Funding		21,376	21,376	21,376
Total		15,867,064	2,559,722	9,668,618

Appendix 3 - HRA Capital Programme

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT & MAJOR WORKS						
Programmes of Work	Description of Works	2024/25 Original Budget	Rollover	2024/25 Revised Budget	2024/25 Actual	2024/25 Forecast
EXTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS	External improvements to the external fabric of existing homes including roofs, chimneys, rainwater goods, fascias, repointing of walls	1,603,000	-	1,603,000	561,000	1,603,000
INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS	Internal improvements to existing homes including replacing kitchens, bathrooms, showers, rewires, consumer units	4,409,000	-	4,409,000	203,200	3,309,000
PATHS, FENCES & WALLS	Renewal of fences, ramps, paths and boundary walls	332,000	-	332,000	37,400	332,000
NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKS	Improvements to external communal areas including sheds, outbuildings, that generate higher amenity value	600,000	327,000	927,000	150,900	927,000
ENERGY EFFICIENCY & OTHER SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES	Improving the energy efficiency of the existing housing stock to meet the targets for 2030 - measures include the installation of top up loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, external wall insulation, and new heating systems such as ground source and air source heat pumps	3,330,000	-	3,330,000	401,000	3,330,000
RENEWAL OF HEATING SYSTEMS	Replacement energy efficient boilers and full central heating systems, plus high efficiency programmable electrical heating as required in existing homes	329,000	53,000	382,000	110,800	382,000
MAJOR REFURBISHMENTS TO VOID PROPERTIES	Renovating existing homes that become vacant prior to reletting and which require significant works, such as DMC, major building works and plastering	1,470,000	-	1,470,000	360,100	1,470,000
WINDOWS & DOORS	Replacement PVCu windows and composite or timber entrance and communal doors; fire doors installed where required	250,000	-	250,000	3,600	250,000
ASBESTOS	Removal of asbestos from existing homes as required to facilitate internal and external improvement works under other programmes	400,000	-	400,000	80,400	400,000
SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION	Improvements to communal areas in existing sheltered schemes including renewing furniture, fixtures and fittings and other equipment	160,000	-	160,000	-	160,000
DOOR ENTRY SCHEMES	Renewal of door entry systems on sheltered and general needs blocks	134,000	-	134,000	21,900	134,000
STRUCTURAL WORKS & SURVEYS	Structural works to reinstate the structural integrity of buildings typically those subjected to cracking through ground movement or existing structural defects and provision for stock condition surveys	775,000	-	775,000	3,100	775,000
COMMUNAL WORKS	Renewal of services serving communal areas such as wiring, lighting, fire detection, flooring, CCTV	243,000	-	243,000	1,000	243,000
FIRE PROTECTION	Improvements to communal areas and existing homes identified through fire risk assessments to ensure the Council adheres to regulatory requirements	161,000	62,000	223,000	29,700	773,000

LIFTS	Replacement of passenger lifts, through floor lifts and installation of new chair lifts as required	231,000	-	231,000	-	231,000
NON TRADITIONAL HOMES (CORNISH UNIT PROPERTIES)	Renovation of thirty Cornish, non traditional build, type properties and further energy efficiency measures	180,000	-	180,000	50,000	180,000
GARAGE IMPROVEMENTS	Major works to existing garage blocks	30,000	-	30,000	-	30,000
WARDEN CALL UPGRADE	Renewal of the existing analogue warden system with a new digital compatible system	510,000	128,000	638,000	37,200	638,000
ADAPTATIONS FOR THE DISABLED	HRA property related capital disabled adaptations	600,000	-	600,000	154,000	600,000
REPURCHASE OF JDC DWELLINGS	Provision to cover requirement to repurchase JDC dwellings if sold by the shared owner	60,000	-	60,000	-	60,000
INVESTMENT TEAM MANAGEMENT CHARGE	Management fee for staffing to manage the above programmes of work	1,202,000	-	1,202,000	326,400	1,202,000
TOTAL BUDGET FOR EXISTING PROPERTIES		17,009,000	570,000	17,579,000	2,531,700	17,029,000

NEW BUILD & ACQUISITIONS						
		2024/25 Original Budget	Rollover	2024/25 Revised Budget	2024/25 Actual	2024/25 Forecast
NEW BUILD (APPROVED)						
320 SWINDON ROAD	Land led scheme for 24 low carbon homes on Council land	1,650,000	-	1,650,000	10,150	2,364,600
MONKSCROFT SCHOOL	Land led scheme for 70 low carbon homes on Council land	730,000	-	730,000	168,000	450,000
S106 PURCHASES	Developer led schemes for the acquisition of completed homes under a mix of tenures under section 106 agreements	3,350,000	-	3,350,000	5,000	4,287,200
MARKET PURCHASE	Acquisition of individual properties from the local market to support the wider strategies within the HRA business plan	4,125,000	-	4,125,000	42,000	2,970,000
MARKET PURCHASE (LAHF)	Acquisition of 2 homes from the private market to support refugee families from Ukraine and Afghanistan	-	-	-	459,000	501,700
OTHER SCHEMES	Provision for new land led schemes and s106 schemes not currently in contract	730,000	-	730,000	1,200	1,011,500
TOTAL BUDGET FOR NEW BUILD & ACQUISITIONS		10,585,000	-	10,585,000	685,350	11,585,000

TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME		27,594,000	570,000	28,164,000	3,217,050	28,614,000
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FUNDED BY	Leaseholder contributions	300,000
	Major repairs reserve	6,064,000
	Capital receipts	3,504,000
	Grants	2,319,000
	New borrowing	16,427,000
		28,614,000

APPENDIX 4 - SECTION 106 STATEMENT 2024/25								
Detail	Contributions	YEAR of receipt	Balance @ 1/4/24 £	Receipts/ Refunds in year £	Amounts Applied to fund Cap expend £	Committed to be spent in 24/25 or future years £	Transferred to Revenue £	Grants & Contributions @ 31/7/24 £
RECEIPTS IN ADVANCE								
Short Term								
DEV114	Cotswold Beechwood SAC- s106	23/24	(27,840.00)	(27,886.00)				(55,726.00)
B6261 CAPITAL			(27,840.00)	(27,886.00)	-	-	-	(55,726.00)
Long Term								
DEV005	High St, Brewery phase 3 - affordable housing	17/18	(4,078.08)					(4,078.08)
DEV008	Newland Homes Prestbury Road - affordable housing	20/21	(39,637.20)					(39,637.20)
DEV009	Vistry Homes- Starvhall Farm-affordable homes	22/23	(2,184,947.30)					(2,184,947.30)
DEV010	Bromford Dev Ltd - Village Road	22/23	(5,000.00)					(5,000.00)
DEV011	Pate Court S106 Contribution	22/23	(663,917.53)					(663,917.53)
DEV012	Miller Homes re Shurdington Road	23/24	(4,000.00)					(4,000.00)
DEV013	Brookworth Homes Ltd - Parabola Rd development	23/24	(209,640.72)					(209,640.72)
B7410 CAPITAL			(3,111,220.83)	-	-	-	-	(3,111,220.83)
DEV403	Cold Pool Lane Grounds Maintenance	11/12	(53,303.83)					(53,303.83)
DEV406	Rosebay Gardens Grounds Maintenance	13/14	(41,835.83)					(41,835.83)
B7420 REVENUE			(95,139.66)	-	-	-	-	(95,139.66)
TOTAL GRANTS RECEIPTS IN ADVANCE			(3,234,200.49)	(27,886.00)	-	-	-	(3,262,086.49)
CAPITAL GRANTS UNAPPLIED								
SECTION 106								
Housing Enabling (affordable housing)								
DEV004	Pegasus Life - John Dower House	16/17	(470,550.00)					(470,550.00)
			(470,550.00)	-	-	-	-	(470,550.00)
Public Art								
DEV101	Dunalley St-Public Art	10/11	(4,250.00)					(4,250.00)
DEV102	Rosemullion-Public Art	07/08	(1,340.57)			1,340.57		-
DEV103	75-79 Rowanfield Road-Public Art	08/09	(5,342.50)			1,659.43		(3,683.07)
DEV106	12/13 Hatherley Lane (B&Q) - Public Art	12/13	(7,371.68)		2,949.00			(4,422.68)
DEV107	Devon Avenue - Public Art	12/13	(1,414.96)					(1,414.96)
DEV110	Spirax Sarco St Georges Road	13/14	(6,500.00)			6,500.00		-
DEV111	Public Art - Midwinter site	14/15	(50,000.00)			50,000.00		-
DEV112	Wayfinding - University Pittville Campus	14/15	(1,257.05)					(1,257.05)
DEV113	Taylors Yard, Gloucester Road - Public Art	17/18	(30,000.00)			30,000.00		-
			(107,476.76)	-	2,949.00	89,500.00	-	(15,027.76)
PlaySpaces								
DEV201 & DEV001	S106 Playspace-Adult/Youth		(5,370.65)			5,370.65		-
DEV267	S106 Playarea - St. Peters/Chelt Walk	17/18	(10,261.35)		1,260.34	9,001.01		-
DEV303	131 Old Bath Road Playspace	19/20	(1,260.34)			1,260.34		-
DEV010	Bromford Dev Ltd - Village Road	23/24	(153,351.00)					(153,351.00)
			(170,243.34)	-	1,260.34	15,632.00	-	(153,351.00)
Other								
DEV302	Former Gas Club flood defence maintenance contribution	18/19	(8,000.00)					(8,000.00)
			(8,000.00)	-	-	-	-	(8,000.00)
Section 106 Totals - Capital Grants Unapplied (BAL101)			(756,270.10)	-	4,209.34	105,132.00	-	(646,928.76)
TOTAL Section 106			(3,990,470.59)	(27,886.00)	4,209.34	105,132.00	-	(3,909,015.25)

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CIL-Statement from 2019/20 to 2024/25

		Invoices Raised	TBC Admin	Parish Share	Neighbourhood Share	CBC Strategic Share
2019/20	From Exacom Sytem	£73,982.72	£3,699.14	£2,908.20	£7,431.71	£59,943.68
	Paid out in 19/20					
	Carrying amount		£3,699.14	£2,908.20	£7,431.71	£59,943.68
2020/21	Opening Amount		£3,699.14	£2,908.20	£7,431.71	£59,943.68
	From Exacom Sytem	£212,051.82	£10,602.59	£8,875.61	£22,881.14	£169,692.48
	Paid out in 20/21			£11,834.83		
	Carrying amount		£14,301.73	-£51.02	£30,312.85	£229,636.16
2021/22	Opening Amount		£14,301.73	-£51.02	£30,312.85	£229,636.16
	From Exacom Sytem	£1,013,760.27	£50,688.01	£96,948.91	£53,818.59	£812,304.76
	Paid out in 21/22		£9,958.79	£10,821.33		
	Carrying amount		£55,030.95	£86,076.56	£84,131.44	£1,041,940.92
2022/23	Opening Amount		£55,030.95	£86,076.56	£84,131.44	£1,041,940.92
	From Exacom Sytem	£1,350,168.95	£67,508.45	£151,423.47	£48,149.63	£1,083,087.40
	Paid out in 22/23		£47,616.20	£156,218.47		
	Carrying amount		£74,923.20	£81,281.56	£132,281.07	£2,125,028.32
2023/24	Opening Amount		£74,923.20	£81,281.56	£132,281.07	£2,125,028.32
	From Exacom Sytem	£954,727.25	£47,736.36	£98,810.30	£43,409.47	£764,771.12
	Paid out in 23/24		£69,548.20	£162,210.02	£62,972.26	
	Carrying amount		£53,111.36	£17,881.84	£112,718.28	£2,889,799.44
2024/25 Qtr1	Opening Amount		£53,111.36	£17,881.84	£112,718.28	£2,889,799.44
	From Exacom Sytem	£148,808.12	£7,440.41	£16,382.45	£5,548.77	£119,436.49
	Paid out in 24/25			£16,629.54	£2,500.00	
	Carrying amount		£60,551.77	£17,634.75	£115,767.05	£3,009,235.93

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Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet – 24 September 2024

Declaration of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common as a National Nature Reserve

Accountable member:

Councillor Izaak Tailford - Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm

Accountable officer:

Adam Reynolds - Green Space Manager

Ward(s) affected:

N/A

Key Decision: ~~Yes~~/No

Executive summary:

Natural England have identified Leckhampton Hill as a potential site for declaration as a National Nature Reserve (NNR). They would like to work with the Council to achieve this and request our approval to undertake the declaration process.

NNRs include some of the best examples of England's wildlife and geology. England's NNRs are considered among the most important places for nature, managed an exemplary way and are places to inspire people, promote learning and encourage actions in the wider landscape.

Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common are already designated a *Site of Special Scientific Interest* due to the importance its Jurassic limestone grassland on the escarpment slopes and the diversity of the associated flora and fauna.

The NNR status would recognise the national importance of its geology and associated habitats and species and acknowledge the exemplary standard in which

the site has been and continues to be managed. It would join a wider England-wide network of 221 NNRs. at the time of writing this report.

Recommendations: That Cabinet:

- 1. authorises the council's application to Natural England to become an Approved Body pursuant to section 35 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981;**
 - 2. consents to the designation of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common as a National Nature Reserve;**
 - 3. authorises all necessary actions to facilitate the designation process in collaboration with Natural England for Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common as a National Nature Reserve**
-

1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

The site is already managed in a manner commensurate with NNR status. A walk over of the site's geological features with representatives of Natural England revealed only minor work required in connection with the declaration. This consisted of minor selective vegetation removal at the exposure sites, and the potential for interpreting the site (for example through information panels) to allow the public to better understand the geological importance of the site. Grants are widely available that would fund the installation of interpretation panels.

The Council will continue to own and manage the site as it does now through a combination of government land grants, conservation grazing, and volunteer support from the Friends of Leckhampton Hill.

Signed off by: Ela Jankowska, ela.jankowska@cheltenham.gov.uk

Date: 22/08/2024



1.2 Legal implications

"The declaration of a National Nature Reserve is a statutory process undertaken by Natural England under Section 35 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and section 19 of the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended). The declaration does not confer additional legal protection beyond existing designations but recognises the site's national importance. The Council will retain ownership and the main implications are that the Council would need to be approved by Natural England as an Approved Body, commit to managing the land as a nature reserve long-term, and (upon application from the Council) Natural England could make byelaws for the protection of the

reserve. The Council would need to continue managing the land as a nature reserve to maintain the National Nature Reserve status. If it ceased to do so, Natural England would need to make a declaration to that effect causing the loss of its status.

Signed off by: Michael Ronan, Locum Planning Lawyer, One Legal

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common provide local people with an opportunity to connect with nature and the relationship between geodiversity, biodiversity and our own interaction with the natural world. This reinforces the connection between human behaviour and biodiversity loss, intrinsically linked to climate change. The management of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common maintains and enhances a diverse mosaic of habitat creating a landscape more resilient to environmental and climate change.

Signed off by: Maizey McCann maizey.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

Whilst not directly related to the Council's corporate priorities, the declaration will only serve to heighten the importance of Leckhampton Hill in both biological and geological terms. The site serves as an educational resource of the highest quality for scientists and students of palaeontology, carbonate sedimentology and ancient environments, the understanding of which underpins current thinking around climate change.

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

The designation will have no direct impact on residents.

2 Background

2.5 National Nature Reserves (NNRs) are exemplary, nationally important nature reserves, where nature conservation is the primary land use and significant other benefits may be provided for people and the environment. They are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, as amended by Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2006. These principles are used by Natural England to select all new and extended sites and were developed in partnership with other organisations that manage NNRs.

2.6 The core purpose of an NNR is nature conservation, science and people, and its status is intended to secure the nature reserve for the long-term (>30 years or in perpetuity).

2.7 NNRs can be held by Natural England (NE) or by bodies approved by NE (“Approved Bodies”) to hold and manage NNRs, which may include NGOs large and small, local authorities, other government bodies, private estates, companies. The Council would need to apply to Natural England to become an Approved Body but this, in the case of a local authority, would just be a formality.

2.8 NNR is a statutory designation with Natural England being the approving authority. The designation is voluntary, and declared wholly, or in part, through a legal process undertaken by Natural England. The status does not confer any further new protection on the site than already exists.

2.9 It does not entitle additional funding, though doesn’t prevent managing organisations being funded from their existing or future sources. Leckhampton Hill is currently under the Government’s Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (to be replaced by the Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship Scheme) and has received payments from National Grid for the “Restoring Cheltenham’s Escarpment Grassland” project.

3 Process

3.5 The declaration process is relatively simple and is carried out by NE (although Approved Bodies provide site information, maps etc). NNR proposals are made by NE Area Team with support from the approved body (CBC). Proposals are assessed against the NE selection principles, and successful cases are taken through a formal approval process. New NNRs and major extensions are approved by NE Board, other extensions can be approved at Director Level. Documentation is then prepared by NE (map and covering paper) then declaration made by NE Head of Legal (under seal).

3.6 The extent of the designation is largely a matter for the Council to lead on in conjunction with NE. It would not extend beyond the boundary of the existing Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Boundary (Appendix 2), which covers all of the areas of geological note, (appendix 3). It does not cover any of the Council’s agricultural land, or barns on Hill Farm.

3.7 Following declaration, the designation must be publicised, and it is usual to celebrate the designation.

3.8 An indicative time frame for designation is that simple NNR proposals can be completed in around 6 months, and complex, multi-partner NNRs typically take 2-3 years to develop and complete. It is anticipated that Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common could be completed in Spring 2025, however this is in the control of NE.

4 Site Significance

- 4.5 Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common has long been known by geologists for its unique exposures. The site exposes a 60-metre section of Jurassic sediments known as the Inferior Oolite. These rocks were laid down in a shallow marine environment some 165 - 170 million years ago and are exposed in the quarries on and under Leckhampton Hill and characterise the Cotswold Hills and escarpment. They are important for the fossils they contain and the evidence of past conditions and processes they represent.
- 4.6 Leckhampton Hill exposes the thickest sequence of the Inferior Oolite Group in the Cotswolds. It has a long history of geological research going back to the early 19th Century and was central to developing our understanding of Jurassic Period. It is a key site for understanding the sedimentology and changing environment of the shallow tropical Jurassic Sea and for comparison to rocks of a similar age in different depositional environments to the north and south. The key value of the geology of the Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the potentially complete exposure of the whole of the Lower Inferior Oolite formation in one outcrop area - a feature almost unique in the Cotswolds. The rock exposures are all classified as ED1 (nationally important disused quarry / Exposure site) in the Earth Science Classification Code and the landslip and gravel sites as IS2 (Regionally important, static geomorphological / integrity site)
- 4.7 It comprises a network of disused quarries operated during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries supplying building stone to Cheltenham, Gloucester and the surrounding villages, creating the characteristic limestone buildings of the Cotswolds.
- 4.8 There is an intimate and mutually beneficial relationship between this underlying geodiversity and the site's nationally important biodiversity. Former quarried faces and vegetated quarry spoil provide extensive areas of unimproved calcareous grassland supporting nationally scarce plants such as fly orchid and purple milk vetch, and butterflies such as the Chalk Hill Blue and the rare Duke of Burgundy fritillary. Managed scrub and woodland extend the diversity of habitat, flora and fauna across the site providing cover and a source of food for nesting birds such as meadow pipit and grasshopper warbler, as well as shelter for invertebrates and small mammals.

5 Future Maintenance / Investment

- 5.5 Although the designation itself does not come with additional funding, as part of the NNR series the status that comes with it will only serve to enhance future funding applications to external bodies, and the potential to collaborate across the NNR network.
- 5.6 Very little additional maintenance is required to the quarries themselves other than sensitive management of vegetation to allow access and enjoyment of the exposed geology, and to prevent vegetation causing damage to the rock faces. This also

maintains habitat mosaics across the site, benefitting both biodiversity and geodiversity. Any such additional work can be picked up in routine operations undertaken by contractors or volunteer work parties.

5.7 Initially it will be beneficial to introduce signage interpreting the geology for visitors to the hill, and to encourage safe behaviour in, and around, the quarry sites. The cost of such signage is not considered to be prohibitive, and like many other similar examples in parks and gardens, will more than likely be eligible for external grant funding.

6.0 Reasons for recommendations

6.1 To recognise the national importance of the site in both geological and biological terms and to support Natural England in securing and protecting such sites for future generations.

6.2 To support achieving the [National Nature Reserve Strategy](#) which has the ambition that England's National Nature Reserves are the most important places for nature, managed in an exemplary way, inspiring people and promoting learning and through working in partnership NNRs will be a core part of achieving successful nature recovery. Contribution to a wider ambition to tell England's geological history, through existing NNRs, or where there are gaps in the story extending or creating new NNRs such as Leckhampton Hill.

7. Alternative options considered

7.1 Not approve the designation. Cheltenham would not benefit from having a site nationally recognised in this way. Other LA's have promoted similar designations as selling points for visitors and tourists.

8. Consultation and feedback

8.1 Engagement with Natural England on the practicalities of implementation and any risks linked to this.

9. Key risks

9.1 Increased publicity brought about by the designation could lead to increased footfall, and erosion of the rock exposure from fossil hunters. This, however, is not anticipated beyond current levels and can be carefully managed through local publicity and collaboration, and sensitive site related information.

Report author:

Adam Reynolds – Green Space Manager 01242 264260

Email: adam.reynolds@cheltenham.gov.uk

Appendices:

1. Risk Assessment
2. Site of Special Scientific Interest Boundary
3. Areas of Geological Interest
4. Climate Change Assessment Tool Summary

Background information:

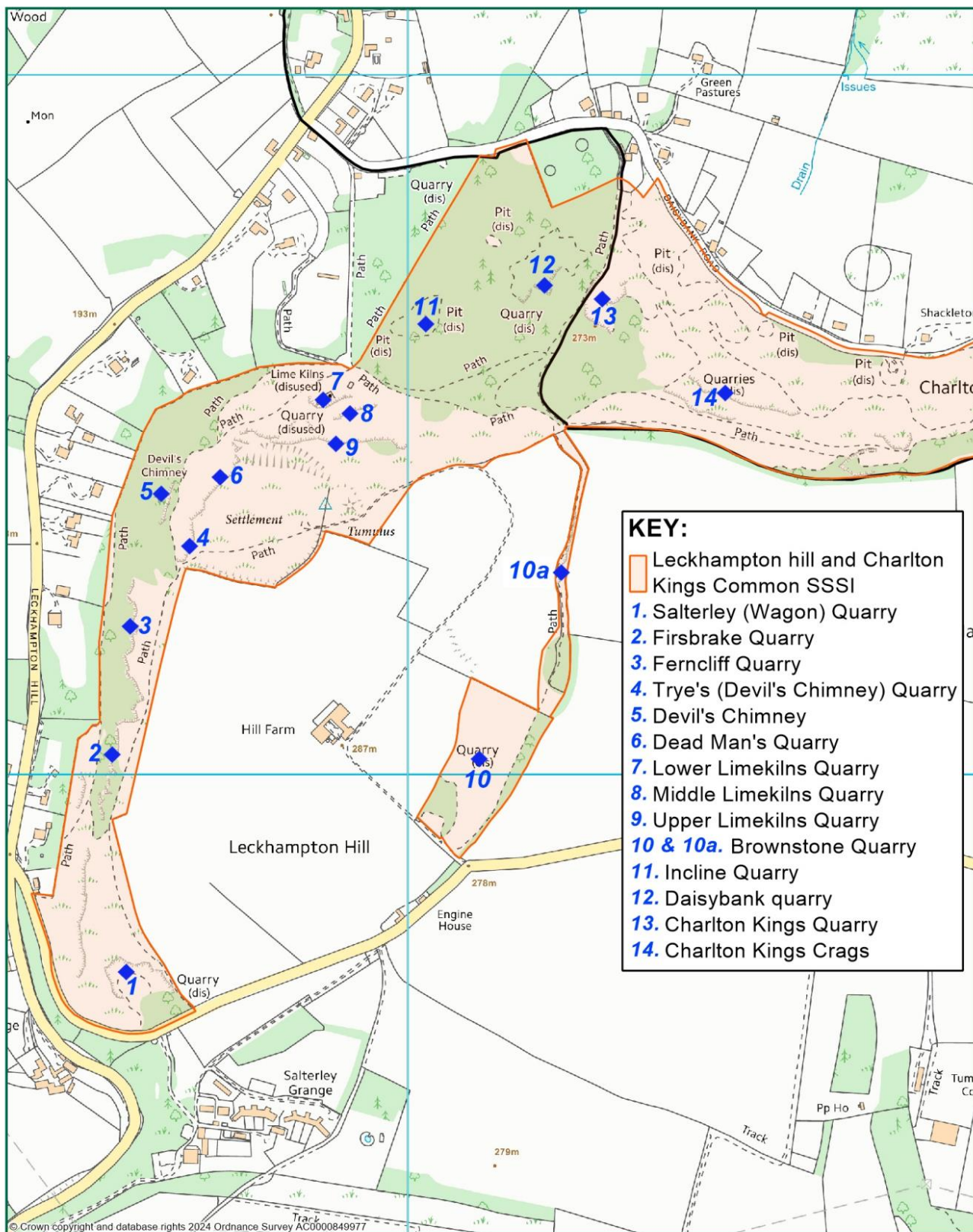
National Nature Reserves Joint Strategy:

[The Strategy for England's National Nature Reserves - NE807 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk/nature/nature-reserves/strategy)

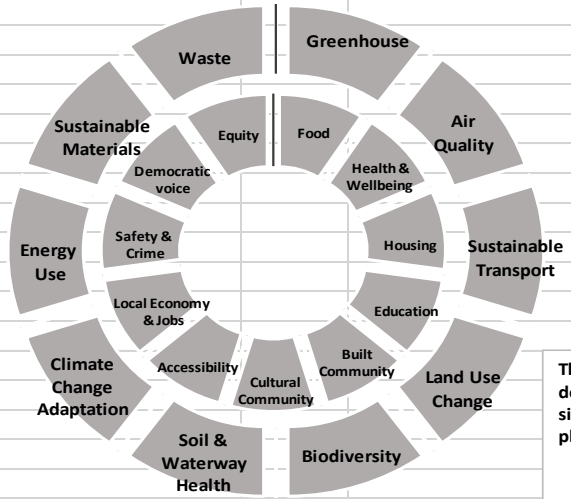
Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
1	Erosion brought about by initial increased footfall following publicity of the designation, and erosion of the rock exposure from fossil hunters.	Green Space Team	2	3	6	Lower the risk	Develop interpretation and responsible use signage, outlining good / safe practice	Green Spaces Manager	Ready for official dedication /public announcement
2	Potential future cost implications arising from NNR designation	Green Space Team	2	3	6	Accept	There has been engagement with Natural England in respect of the risk of any future funding obligations that may arise from NNR designation. It should be noted that this designation is not the same as other designations (for example strategic and accessible green space SANG) that is purposefully designed at mitigating the human	Green Spaces Manager	Ongoing overview of NNRs and regular engagement with Natural England

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
							impact on key sites. As set out in this report, the focus on the NNR in this location is exposing the geology of the site.		



Designation of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common



Key	
	Significant and/or long-term positive impact identified. No changes needed.
	Slight or short-term positive impact identified. No changes needed but could be reviewed to improve.
	Not applicable or no cause for concern.
	Slight or short-term negative impact identified. Review to identify possible improvements.
	Significant and/or long-term negative impact identified. Changes needed before proceeding.

This summary of the CIAT should be used to aid your decision making. Please note that red/amber segments simply mean that mitigations and changes should take place not that the project cannot go ahead.

Environmental	Scores	Justification	Recommendation
GHGs	0	This is a site designation only. There will be no physical change to the site	0
Air quality	0	This is a site designation only. There will be no physical change to the site	0
Sustainable Transport	0	This is a site designation only. There will be no physical change to the site	0
Land use change	0	This is a site designation only. There will be no physical change to the site	0
Biodiversity	0	The designation relatesd to geological elements	0
Soil and waterway health	0	This is a site designation only. There will be no physical change to the site	0
Climate Change Adaptation	0	This is a site designation only. There will be no physical change to the site	0
Energy Use	0	This is a site designation only. There will be no physical change to the site	0
Sustainable Materials	0	This is a site designation only. There will be no physical change to the site	0
Waste	0	This is a site designation only. There will be no physical change to the site	0
Social	Scores	Justification	Recommendation
Food	0	The designation recognises the geological quality of the site	0
Health	0	The designation recognises the geological quality of the site	0
Housing	0	The designation recognises the geological quality of the site	0
Education	0	The designation recognises the geological quality of the site	0
Community	0	The designation recognises the geological quality of the site	0
Culture	0	The designation recognises the geological quality of the site	0
Accessibility	0	The designation recognises the geological quality of the site	0
Local Economy and Jobs	0	The designation recognises the geological quality of the site	0
Safety	0	The designation recognises the geological quality of the site	0
Equity	0	The designation recognises the geological quality of the site	0
Democratic Voice	0	The designation recognises the geological quality of the site	0

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