

Cheltenham Borough Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 21 October 2024

Meeting time: 6.00 pm

Meeting venue: Council Chamber - Municipal Offices

Membership:

Councillor Tabi Joy (Chair), Councillor Jackie Chelin (Vice-Chair), Councillor Graham Beale, Councillor Julia Chandler, Councillor Stan Smith, Councillor Chris Day, Councillor Richard Pineger, Councillor Juan Carlos Garcia Clamp, Councillor Sandra Holliday, Councillor Frank Allen and Councillor Cathal Lynch

Important notice – filming, recording and broadcasting of Council meetings

This meeting will be recorded by the council for live broadcast online at www.cheltenham.gov.uk and <https://www.youtube.com/@cheltenhambc/streams>. The Chair will confirm this at the start of the meeting.

If you participate in the meeting, you consent to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for broadcasting and/or training purposes.

If you have any questions on the issue of filming/recording of meetings, please contact Democratic Services.

Contact: democraticservices@cheltenham.gov.uk

Phone: 01242 264 246

1 Apologies

2 Declarations of interest

3 Minutes of the last meeting (Pages 5 - 12)

Minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2024.

4 Public and Member questions, calls for actions and petitions

5 Cabinet Briefing

Briefing from Councillor Hay, Leader (if she has an update, or if O&S Members have questions for her)

Objective: An update from the Cabinet on key issues for Cabinet Members which may be of interest to Overview and Scrutiny and may inform the work plan

6 Matters referred to committee

7 Biodiversity Duty First Consideration Report (Pages 13 - 36) 18:10 30 mins

Objective : Examining current management arrangements for our green spaces alongside best practice in terms of biodiversity and wildlife management.

Javier Guerrero, Planning Policy Officer

Malcolm Walls, Community Parks Development Officer

8 Grants Policy (Pages 37 - 56)

18:40 20 mins

Objective : To consider the policy prior to Cabinet consideration.

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance and Customer Service.

9 Scrutiny Task Group Tackling Multiple Deprivation - Progress report (Pages 57 - 80) 19:00 30 mins

Objective : Report back on progress on recommendations of the Scrutiny Task Group report submitted in July 2023. Reflecting on success of, or barriers to, implementing recommendations and identifying further actions.

Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships.

10 Feedback from other scrutiny meetings attended (Pages 81 - 88)

[Gloucestershire Health O&S Committee](#) 15th October 2024 – an update from Councillor Bamford will be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny on 25 November.

[Gloucestershire Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee](#) 20th September 2024 – update from Councillor Orme –the draft minutes from that meeting have been provided (attached).

[Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel 6th September 2024](#) – update from Councillor Atherstone – TO FOLLOW

11 Updates from scrutiny task groups

There are currently no active scrutiny task groups.

12 Review of scrutiny workplan (Pages 89 - 92)

13 Any other item that the Chair determines to be urgent

14 Date of next meeting

25 November 2024

Informal de-brief

What went well? Can we identify opportunities for improvement or training needs?

This page is intentionally left blank



Cheltenham Borough Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes

Meeting date: 9 September 2024

Meeting time: 6.00 pm - 8.00 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Tabi Joy (Chair), Jackie Chelin (Vice-Chair), Stan Smith, Chris Day, Richard Pineger, Juan Carlos Garcia Clamp, Sandra Holliday, Frank Allen and Julian Tooke

Also in attendance:

Councillors Bamford, Collins, Davies, Hay, Tailford and Willingham

Tracey Birkinshaw (Director of Community & Economic Development), Chris Gomm (Head of Development Management, Enforcement and Compliance), Karen Watson (Environmental Partnerships Manager) and Claire Hughes (Director of Governance and Customer Services and Monitoring Officer)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Chandler, Barrell and Beale. Councillor Tooke acted as a substitute for Councillor Barrell.

The following Members of Audit, Compliance and Governance committee were in attendance for the purposes of agenda item 8 – Local Enforcement Plan :
Councillors Bamford, Davies and Willingham.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the March meeting held on 25 March were approved and signed as a correct record.

4 Public and Member questions, calls for actions and petitions

There were none.

5 Cabinet Briefing

The Leader addressed the committee with her update and confirmed that the transition of CBH back in-house had gone smoothly. She thanked the Committee for supporting the process through the Scrutiny Task Group. She highlighted that the Municipal Offices would soon be listed on the open market and that press interest had been increasing around the future/condition of the High Street. Councillor Hay explained that due to the fact that the Council is taking action and are in litigation no further comments are being made to the press.

6 Matters referred to committee

There were none.

7 UBICO Annual Performance Report

The Head of Operations for UBICO introduced the report as published. He highlighted a number of initiatives successfully introduced during the year that have decreased accidents, improved reporting using in-cab evidence gathering, helped to reduce the carbon footprint and improved efficiency. He noted that the year had seen slight reductions in general waste and increased garden waste volumes..

The questions that were submitted in advance of the meeting and the answers to those questions have been published previously please see [Member Questions and Answers](#).

The response to additional Members' questions were as follows:

- The issue identified with the double counting of food caddies has led to no overcharging to the Council.
- There has been a large increase in sickness absence across both UBICO and the industry as a whole, possibly due to the increased ease in securing sick notes. A Head of People has been employed and is working closely with HR to help those who are on long-term sick leave return to work or identify those whose positions will need to be filled.

- The Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm and Environmental Partnerships Manager will be working with the Enforcement Team to understand the data behind the significant increase in fly tipping requests. They will consider whether there has been any impact due to the reduced hours of the Swindon Road Recycling Centre but noted that the increase is also likely to reflect that people have been encouraged to report fly tipping issues and a duplication of reporting on individual cases.
- The underspend in the report represents the 2023-2024 budget not the current year. Conversations are still ongoing on the budget for the next financial year and will consider what can be allocated to UBICO through their contract to allow backfilling of absences through agency staff to allow them to meet their service responsibilities whilst also reflecting the £500k savings target identified.
- The existing diesel fleet have had their engines updated to run on hydrogen treated vegetable oil, these vehicles will be replaced in line with the 7 year lifespan of fleet vehicles. The fleet currently also includes 3 electric vehicles. Industry statistics suggest that the use of electric vehicles should lead to lower running, repair and maintenance costs but as early adopters CBC currently do not have the figures to confirm this information.
- Issues have been identified with colleague retention with an average staff turnover of 6 years across UBICO. This is sometimes exacerbated by training requirements, for example HGV drivers need to renew their training every 5 years and those approaching retirement are choosing not to leading to a shortage in drivers. Difficulties in recruiting have been identified particularly for workshop technicians and mechanics, and for grounds maintenance. UBICO have been successfully offering apprenticeships for the technician and mechanic roles with 5 currently running but have had low interest in grounds maintenance apprenticeships. They are discussing a potential partnership approach to this issue with Hartpury College and the Royal Agricultural University in Cirencester. They are continuing to develop a response to the challenges with the Head of People and will consider the potential to use competency matrixes to allow progression outside of the traditional management structure.

8 Local Enforcement Plan

The Chair welcomed the opportunity to pre-scrutinise and contribute to the draft Local Enforcement Plan before it was considered by Cabinet, saying she hoped this proactive approach would be used more going forward. She was pleased that members of Audit, Compliance and Governance Committee were also present to share in the discussion.

The Head of Development Management, Enforcement and Compliance introduced the report and draft Local Enforcement Plan, which was designed to set out the

overall approach to planning enforcement for councillors, members of the public and developers. This is a completely new document rather than an updated version of the 2014 plan, and included what could or couldn't be investigated, priorities, target timescales, and the overall approach on how to resolve established breaches, as summarised in Paragraph 3.4 of the report.

The Director of Communities and Economic Development added that it should be noted that although enforcement is a discretionary service, it is taken very seriously by the council and clear messages need to be sent in appropriate ways, by updating and formalising its current position.

Members made the following comments:

- whilst respecting planning officers and committee members who do a difficult and often thankless task, the planning compliance function should be a potent deterrent and the threat of action significant enough to protect our beloved town. Unfortunately, the paper is ill-thought through and self-defeating, with the damage amplified by it being shared publicly;
- it doesn't cover the responsibility of owners of Cheltenham's 2,600 listed buildings to maintain their properties, or the council to monitor this and ensure that our cultural inheritance is passed to the next generation; lack of staff should not be the basis for setting strategy;
- the report talks about managing planning enforcement proactively but seems to depend on waiting for breaches to be reported; a proactive approach would be to actively look for infringements, perhaps through an annual tour of the town;
- it is surprising to learn that planning enforcement is discretionary;
- the decision as to whether or not it is expedient to act seems to rest entirely with officers – Members are not involved.

In response, officers confirmed that:

- a case could be made for planning enforcement officers to be more proactive in identifying breaches but the reality is that the overwhelming majority of reports of breaches are from third parties. When the team is fully-staffed, there will be an opportunity to be more proactive in monitoring conditional compliance and S106 compliance on key issues;
- patrolling the town looking for infringements would be very difficult and not really worthwhile with regard to the resources it would take and the fact that most identifiable breaches are reported by the public. This not something that other councils do;
- the decision whether or not to take action is delegated to officers, and is perhaps something Members might like to consider under the scheme of delegation;
- the neighbourhood team, housing officers, environmental health officers and others all act as the eyes and ears of the council on the street and help to identify infringements, and queries from neighbours, businesses and visitors all feed into the workflow;
- when planning committee members want to add conditions to a permission, these must be enforceable; officers and members work together on these to ensure that they are, and there has been extensive work reviewing planning conditions to ensure these are tightened;

- the recent Member engagement session on planning enforcement was positive, but the issues with resourcing is a national problem, not specific to Cheltenham. It is a hard specialism to recruit to.

A Member understood the logic of retrospective applications after negotiation, but suggested that this was cost intensive and perhaps the developer should bear that cost via a small fine or contractual agreement. The Head of Development Management, Enforcement and Compliance said that planning enforcement tends to be remedial rather than punitive, and retrospective planning applications are invited where the harm caused by the breach is not problematic, although some are refused. It is in the applicant's interest to apply for retrospective permission as unauthorised development often shows up during a property sale. In addition, the council has no authority to levy a fine on a developer of person who has carried out work without planning permission; only later in the process, following non-conformity with an enforcement notice, is there any option to prosecute.

A Member made the following observations:

- the wording of planning conditions needs to be very carefully considered to ensure that they are carried out to the full;
- there must be equity to ensure all neighbours receive fair consideration and treatment;
- conservation areas outside the town centre must be protected;
- S215 notices on derelict land must be followed up to ensure areas aren't left to fly-tippers, and it must be clear that the policy is set by Members and will be enforced by officers without fear or favour – everyone will be treated in the same way;
- there is also the matter of derelict properties as a result of anti-social behaviour or arson, and no mention of compulsory purchase as a final outcome.

The Director of Communities and Economic Development said that a lot of today's discussion comes into the public interest test and how that is applied. It might be useful to add a section to the policy about this, as cases will be tested within that context if they end up in court. She will discuss this with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control and it can be added to the report for further clarity.

A Member echoed the concerns about empty properties which can deteriorate significantly and be subject to exploitation and criminal behaviour. She wondered if, in view of the under-resourced planning team, law enforcement or other agencies could be included as part of the strategy.

Officers confirmed that the paper and plan were on a journey to Cabinet, and a summary of points raised today will be added, in particular wording about the public interest test touched on by Members in their various reflections.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control thanked officers for their report, welcomed the new plan, and said that points raised today would be incorporated.

9 Progress Report in Respect of the 2023 Planning Peer Review

The Head of Development Management introduced the report as published and explained that it set out progress against the 12 key recommendations made by the peer review and additional improvements identified since his appointment.

The questions that were submitted in advance of the meeting and the answers to those questions have been published previously please see Member Questions and Answers.

The response to additional Members' questions were as follows:

- The potential to extend planning liaison activities to neighbourhood forums and resident associations will be considered to reduce the stress on the council and further empower residents, including the potential for involvement when planning breaches occur. Neighbourhood plans for two areas are being developed which may offer a best practice approach with these forums which will be discussed with the Communities Team. The availability of the weekly planning list should also be advertised to forums; ward members play an important role in encouraging engagement.
- Support with local and public engagement is continuing to be provided by the Planning Advisory Service following the peer review. The Director of Communities and Economic Development recently served on a Local Government Association (LGA) peer review team at another council which has provided opportunities to learn alternative ways engagement can be developed.
- We are addressing the national challenge in recruiting planning officers in a number of ways to provide an enticing offer for potential employees. The team have been working closely with HR since they were brought back in-house and have been exploring opportunities outside traditional recruitment such as the professional press, which is seeing less engagement. Actions have included the use of direct recruiters, benchmarking salaries, ensuring recruitment is supported by strong, positive messaging about working in Cheltenham and the outcomes you can drive, flexibility in the recruitment approach, and sourcing consistent feedback from contractors to identify improvements. The teams are also continuing to develop Cheltenham's 'grow your own' offer through the use of apprenticeships, the development of new career graded role profiles targeted at graduates to provide clear opportunities for career development, and ongoing conversations around collaboration with further education establishments.

10 Feedback from other scrutiny meetings attended

The update from the Gloucestershire Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee had been published as a supplement to the agenda.

Cancer waiting times are impacting a significant number of people in Gloucester, reflecting the national picture and wider issues with the NHS meeting increasing medical demand due to resourcing and funding challenges. Increased awareness is needed of the issues impacting departments beyond A&E and pressure needs to be placed on the government to tackle the needs of the NHS. The Gloucestershire Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee will continue to look at local actions that can ensure a better service for the county.

Councillor Willingham provided the Committee with a verbal update on the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel. He explained that they had discussed the police response to the potential civil unrest, reviewed the medium-term finances including the increase in borrowing and the reduction in the reserves and the pausing of recruitment of police community support officers (PCSOs).

The response to additional Members' questions were as follows:

- The Police and Crime Commissioner is currently setting the budget and will be providing further detail to the Panel in relation to the borrowing and future financial plans in due course.
- Investigations are ongoing in relation to misinformation spread via social media about potential civil unrests.

11 Updates from scrutiny task groups

The Chair introduced the final report of the scrutiny task group overseeing the CBH transition and thanked members for the robust work carried out and the expertise and support provided to officers.

The Chair referenced feedback from a member of the scrutiny task group who felt the group's engagement was helpful, with many of its comments taken on board especially in relation to tenant engagement and going forward the need to retain staff. There were concerns about anti-social behaviour (ASB) as being one of the main sources of complaint and it was hoped this would be addressed in due course.

The Leader suggested that the Committee should carry out a follow-up review of the CBH transition in a year's time. She noted that the responsibility for ASB is shared with other local organisations and that CBC will continue to play its part in deterring and responding to ASB. The Chair highlighted the importance of having colleagues within communities who are well placed to notice patterns, work productively with communities and put early interventions in place.

12 Review of scrutiny workplan

There were no decisions to be made, however one Member asked for an update on the planned review of accessibility. It was confirmed that accessibility had been reviewed by the Committee as part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy,

public engagement and feedback is currently being sought on the revised police and action which includes a specific piece of work around accessibility.

13 Any other item that the Chair determines to be urgent

There were none.

14 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Monday October 21 at 6pm.

Information/Discussion Paper

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 21st October 2024

Biodiversity Duty - First Consideration Report

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

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 Within the Overview and Scrutiny workplan, officers have been asked to “*examine current management arrangements for our green spaces alongside best practice in terms of biodiversity and wildlife management.*”
- 1.2 The timing of this activity has arrived at a very opportune time as the planning policy team were drawing together a report to respond to our Biodiversity duty. We have therefore taken the opportunity to tie in the ask from Overview and Scrutiny with the outputs needed to meet our statutory responsibilities. In doing so, we hope that this provides the Committee with a full overview of our activities in respect of green spaces and biodiversity.

2. What is the Biodiversity Duty

- 2.1 Public authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This is the strengthened ‘biodiversity duty’ that the Environment Act 2021 introduces. Cheltenham Borough Council, as a public authority, must:
 1. Consider what you can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
 2. Agree policies and specific objectives based on your consideration.
 3. Act to deliver your policies and achieve your objectives.
- 2.2 To meet our statutory duty, we must prepare what is termed a ***First Consideration Report***, essentially this draws together the activities we undertake, the policies and partnerships we have in place and sets out the action we intend to take to enhance biodiversity across the borough. It has been prepared in the context of the requirements of the Environment Act 2021.
- 2.3 The draft of the First Consideration Report is circulated with this covering paper and provides an opportunity to reflect on what the Council is already doing that contributes to conserving and enhancing biodiversity, including through working with partners. This has been used as a basis for exploring the approach we take going forward.

- 2.4** This item on the Overview and sPage 14ida offers members the opportunity to scrutinise the draft report and comment on its contents before it is published.
- 2.5** This report contains a chronological collection of information on green space, wildlife and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) information and actions, both adopted and emerging, supporting the Objective “*Examining current management arrangements for our green spaces alongside best practice in terms of biodiversity and wildlife management*” under the “*Climate and the environment (biodiversity net gain)*” Title of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2024-2025.
- 2.6** This ‘first consideration’ report is in practice report ‘zero’, with the first full report on our biodiversity duty to be completed before January 2026.
- 2.7** Agreed actions should then be reconsidered within five years of completion of the previous consideration with subsequent rolling reconsiderations at a frequency of no longer than every five years.
- 2.8** The first consideration report is helpful in drawing together activities and actions from across the council and informs our collective action to help deliver our corporate plan priorities and commitments to climate change, enhancing biodiversity, delivery of biodiversity net gain and sustainable development.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1** A copy of the draft Biodiversity Duty – First Consideration Report is appended to this paper, Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s feedback and reflections are welcomed.
- 3.2** Further to this engagement with Overview and Scrutiny, the final report will be agreed with Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control and subsequently published on the Council’s website.

Background Papers	Draft Biodiversity Duty – First Consideration Report (October 2024, attached) DEFRA Guidance (gov.uk) on Reporting your Biodiversity Actions
Contact Officer	Javier Guerrero, Planning Policy Officer, javier.guerrero@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Cllr Mike Collins Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control Tracey Birkinshaw, Director of Communities & Economic Development, tracey.birkinshaw@cheltenham.gov.uk



CHELtenham
BOROUGH COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY DUTY
FIRST CONSIDERATION REPORT
October 2024

CONTENTS:

1. Background	3
2. Reporting Structure	4
3. Cheltenham Borough Council’s Description	4
4. Adopted and Emerging Actions	7
4.1 Adopted Actions.....	7
4.2 Emerging and Future Actions.....	12
5. Strategies and Partnerships	17
5.1 Cotswold Beechwoods Sac Recreation Mitigation Strategy.....	17
5.2 Strategic and Local Plan.....	17
5.3 Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.....	17
5.4 CBC Members Appointed to Outside Bodies.....	18
6. Biodiversity Net Gain Information	19
6.1 Highlights.....	20
6.2 Challenges.....	21

FIGURES:

Figure 1: Location of Cheltenham within Gloucestershire.....	4
Figure 2: Wards of Cheltenham (after 2023 changes made by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England)	5
Figure 3: Political Composition of Cheltenham Borough Council.....	5

TABLES:

Table 1: Adopted Actions.....	7
Table 2: Emerging and Future Actions.....	12
Table 3: Elected members appointed to outside bodies.....	18
Table 4: BNG Obligations and Actions.....	19
Table 5: BNG Applications.....	20

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report raises awareness of the Biodiversity Duty for Local Authorities as set out in the 2021 Environment Act. In doing so it highlights the key plans, partnerships and Biodiversity Net Gain information from Cheltenham Borough Council in complying with the Duty.
- 1.2 Section 40 of the [Natural Environment and Rural Communities \(NERC\) Act 2006 \(as amended\)](#) requires that: *“Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, as far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.”*
- 1.3 The [Environment Act 2021](#) subsequently amended Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 to strengthen this ‘biodiversity duty’. Public authorities, such as Cheltenham Borough Council, to: Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity; Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration; and Act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.
- 1.4 Similarly, in January 2023, the government published the [Environmental Improvement Plan \(EIP23\)](#) setting out the nation’s commitments to halt the decline in species abundance and to protect 30% of UK land and sea for nature through the Nature Recovery Network by 2030. Moreover, by 2042, it sets the ambition to increase species abundance by at least 10%; create 500,000 hectares of wildlife habitats; reduce the risk of species extinction and restore 75% of one million hectares of protected sites to a favourable condition.
- 1.5 In this context, to inform a baseline of its biodiversity duty, public authorities are required to publish a ‘first consideration’ report setting out what actions it will be taking and how it will develop its objectives and policies to meet the biodiversity duty. Agreed actions should then be reconsidered within five years of completion of the previous consideration with subsequent rolling reconsiderations at a frequency of no longer than every five years.
- 1.6 This first consideration report is in practice report “zero”, with the first full report on our biodiversity duty to be completed before January 2026.

2. REPORTING STRUCTURE

- 2.1 [Government guidance on reporting biodiversity duty actions](#) states that local planning authorities must mandatorily cover its current plans, partnerships, future actions, and information about Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Similarly, it is optional to report information about the local authority, achievements, impact, community work, performance indicators and BNG highlights and challenges.
- 2.2 Therefore, this report will structure the required information by covering: Cheltenham Borough Council's description; Adopted and emerging actions; partnerships and strategies; and Biodiversity Net Gain information.
- 2.3 This report was produced thanks to the collaboration of the Planning, Parks and Public Realm, and Climate teams of Cheltenham Borough Council.

3. CHELTENHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL'S DESCRIPTION

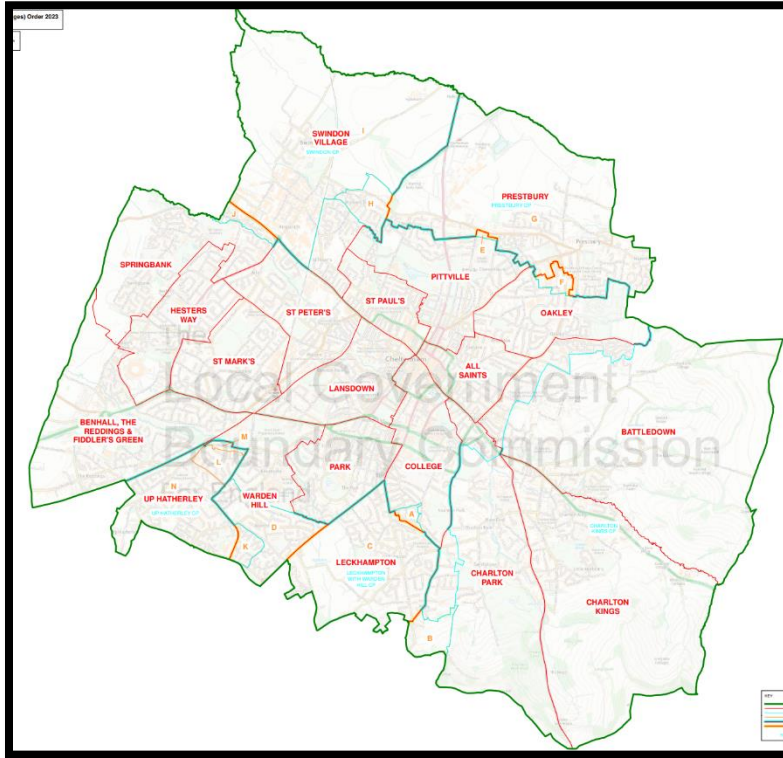
- 3.1 Cheltenham is a district in the South West region of England. Located within the county of Gloucestershire, it is enclosed geographically by the neighbouring districts of Tewkesbury to the west and Cotswold to the east. The town has a population of 118,800 and a median age of 40 years according to the 2021 Census (Office for National Statistics).

Figure 1: Location of Cheltenham within Gloucestershire.



3.2 For administrative purposes, the town divides itself into 20 wards:

Figure 2: Wards of Cheltenham (after 2023 changes made by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England)



3.3 The Council’s political composition consists of a cabinet system of nine executive posts with a Liberal Democrats majority encompassing 36 of 40 seats ([May 2024 Election Results, Cheltenham Borough Council](#)).

Figure 3: Political Composition of Cheltenham Borough Council.

Political group	Seats won	Percentage of seats
Liberal Democrats	36	90%
Green Party	3	7.5%
People Against Bureaucracy	1	2.5%
TOTAL	40	100%

3.4 The Council has a [Corporate Plan 2023-2027](#), which sets out five key priorities.

1. Enhance Cheltenham's reputation as the cyber capital of the UK.
2. Working with residents, communities, and businesses to help make Cheltenham net zero by 2030.
3. Increasing the number of affordable homes through our £180m housing investment plan.
4. Ensuring residents, communities and businesses benefit from Cheltenham's future growth and prosperity.
5. Being a more modern, efficient, and financially sustainable council.

3.5 Cheltenham is surrounded by the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Green Belt. Several villages including Prestbury, Leckhampton and Charlton Kings lie within the borough, surrounding the tree-lined promenades and regency townscape in the centre.

3.6 Regarding Cheltenham's biodiversity, the town contains many habitats that harbour a rich array of wildlife. Ponds, railway cuttings, hedges and verges, small copses, parks, cemeteries, school playing fields, allotments and even old buildings all host a wealth of species ranging from larger mammals like foxes and badgers to wildflowers and butterflies.

3.7 Cheltenham has a long and distinguished history of tree cover dating back to the creation of the town and the then popular desire to plant both native and exotic trees. Some of these "original" trees are still alive today. However, the comparatively dense tree population in both private and public ownership fosters the same spirit of canopy cover, tree lined streets, and the varied and exotic nature of trees within public parks, gardens and open spaces of yesteryear.

3.8 The rural areas of the Borough also contain some very significant habitats; the limestone grassland flora of Leckhampton Hill (which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), rich in plant and insect species, and the ancient woodlands of the Cotswold escarpment being the most prominent features. Most areas of natural vegetation in the countryside support a great diversity of wildlife.

3.9 Many wildlife habitats are under severe threat from development and agricultural pressures; even a minor environmental change not requiring planning permission may radically alter the ecological balance and lead to the loss of valuable species. At the same time, wildlife areas need to be managed to ensure that certain invasive species do not destroy more sensitive flora and fauna. For example, sycamores and gorse can rapidly overrun a habitat and destroy the ecosystem's ability to support a diversity of wildlife.

4. ADOPTED AND EMERGING ACTIONS

4.1 ADOPTED ACTIONS:

The following table details the plans that Cheltenham Borough Council has set to meet its biodiversity duty, in chronological order.

Table 1: *Adopted Actions.*

Action	Description
<p><u>Biodiversity Audit 2006</u></p>	<p>In March 2006 Cheltenham Borough Council commissioned Middlemarch Environmental Ltd to undertake a biodiversity audit of Cheltenham Borough with the purpose to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a consistent biodiversity baseline resource. • Provide management prescriptions. • Identify the potential for wildlife corridors. • Inform the Local Development Framework (LDF). • Inform the council’s Green Space Strategy. <p>The desk study identified 31 protected species within the Borough and identified the many benefits that an ecological assessment of Cheltenham Borough Open Space sites can yield. Where areas have been indicated as having high biodiversity value or where a protected species has either been recorded or has the potential to occur it is recommended that specific surveys are undertaken, at the appropriate time of year, to determine the precise value of the site. Such surveys would be particularly important prior to such sites being developed or a change in management being implemented.</p> <p>The management prescriptions are generic because of the scale at which the sites were assessed. Therefore, while the surveys and management prescriptions provide a good baseline it is recommended that detailed site-specific management plans are developed, particularly for the larger sites that have greater potential for habitat enhancement.</p>
<p><u>Green Space Strategy 2009-2024</u></p>	<p>A landmark document that joins-up the various elements of green space provision and management with strategic land management, sustainability, biodiversity, and resilience to climate change.</p>

	<p>Overall, the audit found that the borough has a significant amount of green space with almost 13% of the land mass of the area. Of the accessible green space, three quarters of the spaces are less than 0.5 hectares in size and only 2 sites (less than 1% of the total number) are over 20 hectares in size. The quantity overall equates to around 3.1 hectares per 1000 population.</p>
<p><u>Green Infrastructure Strategy 2014 (in the context of the JCS)</u></p>	<p>Green Infrastructure (GI) is the strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high-quality green spaces and other environmental features. The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) GI strategy has its focus on connectivity and water, as brooks and streams flow through the principal settlements connecting people and wildlife.</p> <p>Recommendations for Cheltenham:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further improvements to Leckhampton Hill to increase its attractiveness to people and wildlife. • Improvement to pinch points. • Increased connectivity and habitat improvements along the Honeybourne railway line and links to open countryside. • Further develop GI asset of the old Kingham line, particularly links to open countryside. • Better management of GI assets within public ownership, particularly habitat improvements along brook corridors. • Make the most of development opportunities on the periphery of the settlement to increase GI asset and facilitate connectivity with wider countryside, towards the Cotswolds and washlands of the River Severn. • Promote SUDS guidance that supports GI through an adopted design guide.
<p><u>Cheltenham Borough Council Open Space Study Standards Paper 2016</u></p>	<p>This document assessed the quality, quantity and accessibility standards of current open spaces and provided six recommendations to inform local plan and supplementary planning documents, such as the inclusion of standards and identification of low-quality sites for enhancement. It helps identify the deficiencies and surpluses in existing and future provision. Moreover, thresholds were given for on-site and offsite new open space contributions from developments.</p>

<p><u>Joint Core Strategy 2017</u></p>	<p>The development policies for biodiversity are as follows:</p> <p>Policy SD9 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal safeguarding for European and National protected species. • Local sites contributing to a wider biodiversity network. • Encouraging new developments to include wildlife corridors. • Encouraging the creation of priority habitats and species. <p>Policy INF3 - Green Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving linked green corridors. • Protect and contribute to ecosystem services. • Integrate and provide for future schemes.
<p><u>Carbon Neutral Cheltenham Report 2019</u></p>	<p>Within the roadmap to eliminate the Borough carbon footprint, gave recommendations on rewilding and large tree planting schemes.</p>
<p><u>Cheltenham Plan 2020</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Charlton Kings Common and Leckhampton Hill for which Natural England must be consulted over any planning applications for development within, or which may indirectly affect, the SSSI. • Identify the habitats of the barn owl, badger and bat as relevant for protected species. • Identifies two Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) at Little Herberts Railway Cutting and at Charlton Kings Common. • Identifies five Local Wildlife Sites at: Kingham Line; Ravensgate Hill (Wistley Hill); Hartley Hill Field; Ashgrove Farm, and Glenfall Wood. • Identifies two designated Local Nature Reserves at Griffiths Avenue and at Pilley Bridge.

<p><u>Climate Change SPD 2020</u></p>	<p>This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides guidance on how applicants can successfully integrate a best-practice approach towards climate and biodiversity in their development proposals.</p> <p><i>"All proposals need to protect existing and enhance future biodiversity value"</i> (p.26) by taking into consideration the proportionality and scale of the development, being assessed using the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectivity of natural spaces. • Context – appropriate to the area. • Diversity and complexity of habitats. • Wellbeing – Connecting people with nature. • Nature recovery – delivering BNG. • Resilience to climate change and not requiring irrigation.
<p><u>Climate Impact Assessment Tool 2022</u></p>	<p>As part of Cheltenham Borough Council’s commitment to becoming a net zero Council and Borough by 2030, environmental and social implications of all projects, policies and decisions need to be considered at the earliest of stages. The council approved the introduction of a Climate Impact Assessment Tool (CIAT) that prompts officers and Members to consider such implications and shape robust projects or policies by highlighting climate positive areas and areas with scope for improvement.</p> <p>Biodiversity is a section of the CIAT, meaning that all projects and policies which are approved at Council/Cabinet have considered the impacts to biodiversity, and through a review process have conducted consultation to mitigate any negative impacts.</p>
<p><u>Cheltenham Borough Council Corporate Plan 2023-2027</u></p>	<p>Within key priority 2 – Net Zero Cheltenham, there are two specific commitments to biodiversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an Ecology and Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document. • Retain Green Flag status for Cheltenham’s parks and gardens.
<p><u>Climate Emergency</u></p>	<p>2020-2023 targets:</p>

<p><u>Action Plan</u> <u>(2024 update)</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing Tree cover: Update local planning strategies and work closely with other authorities, including GCC, to significantly increase tree cover across the borough and ensure existing trees are properly protected, to store carbon, support nature, aid flood protection and deliver health and wellbeing benefits. Increased canopy cover can also provide shade for people and buildings, cooling the air and ground temperatures in extreme heat. 2024 Update: 1000 trees were planted during 2023, and support has been secured from GCC to plant a further 600 looking forwards. These were a mix of native and non-native species, large and small, short- and long-lived, with both insect and wind pollinated species. • Managing Council Owned Land to Increase Biodiversity: Manage council-owned land to increase biodiversity and reduce carbon pollution, i.e. through reduced pesticide use and mowing and increased planting of wildflowers and perennials. 2024 Update: The Green spaces team provide a comprehensive annual summary to pick out the wide range of activities undertaken to improve biodiversity across the borough during 2023, this has included the implementation of no-mow May policy across a range of site, alongside perennials/ wildflower planting and work to reduce invasive Himalayan balsam. Furthermore, a seedbank of local wildflower species has been collected from North-facing grassland on Leckhampton Hill, to support wider replanting schemes across the borough.
<p><u>Tree Inspection Protocol</u> (2024)</p>	<p>The council has a protocol setting out its approach to managing its tree stock, this was reviewed September 2024. It is an operational document that sets out the council's approach to managing its tree stock. It outlines our systems of management with the objective of maintaining canopy cover in an acceptably safe manner within the context of resources available together with setting out our approach to risk management of publicly owned trees within Cheltenham.</p> <p>It does not relate to trees situated within the public highway (which are the responsibility of Gloucestershire County Council) nor trees on private or other land. It is striving to achieve a balance between the many and varied benefits of the existence trees in both an urban and rural setting and the risks posed by such trees through the implementation of what is reasonable and what is practicable in terms of management of such risk.</p> <p>The protocol is underpinned by 5 key principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trees provide a wide variety of benefits to society, 2. Trees are living organisms that naturally lose branches and fall, 3. The overall risk to human safety is extremely low, 4. Tree owners have a legal duty of care, 5. Tree owners should take a balanced and proportionate approach to tree safety management.

	<p>It was updated in 2024 to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflect relevant arboriculture guidance and best practice on the management and maintenance of tree stock, and 2. Take account that Cheltenham Borough Council and Cheltenham Borough Homes, as of the 1st of July 2024 became a single organisation. This protocol covers all assets across Cheltenham Borough Council ownership.
<p><u>Ash Die Back Management Plan (2024)</u></p>	<p>Ash dieback (ADB) <i>Hymenoscyphus fraxineus</i>, (formerly <i>Chalara fraxinea</i>), will likely lead to the gradual death of most ash trees within Cheltenham borough and indeed the country. The scale of death will be greater than the impact of Dutch elm disease in the 1970s. There is no way to reduce the rate of spread of infection and the demise of these native (and exotic species) of ash trees. The council can only react to this die-back.</p> <p>The ADB management plan is an operational document which supports the management of ADB as it affects Cheltenham. It is not possible to give precise numbers of ash trees on land controlled by public authorities across Cheltenham. There are 420 significant trees and groups of ash trees under routine inspection by Cheltenham Borough Council’s Tree team. Some of these groups of trees are large (10,000+) and dense and there is a considered variable but generally low adjacent target. Whilst such a group is recorded as one tree, in reality there may actually be several hundred/thousand ash trees of varying size and maturity.</p>

4.2 EMERGING AND FUTURE ACTIONS:

The following table details the plans that Cheltenham Borough Council has set to meet its biodiversity duty, in chronological order.

Table 2: *Emerging and Future Actions.*

Action	Description
Community activities	Cheltenham Borough Council continues to work with community groups and organisations to engage and involve the public in delivering, managing, and monitoring biodiversity improvement, with actions including:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trusts Adder project to survey, monitor and improve habitats on Leckhampton Hill within the project area.• Helping five community orchards and adding another four this Winter, which are being maintained by community groups.• Working with Gloucestershire University and the Gloucestershire Bat Group to undertake bat walks and data capturing and sharing throughout the council's green spaces.• Working with the local Butterfly Trust to undertake butterfly and moth surveys. The data captured goes on the national database for species monitoring. Survey have been undertaken at Griffiths Avenue and Weavers Field and we a looking at expanding across Cheltenham.• Continue to work with current emerging local interest groups such as the Newt Conservation Trust.• Cheltenham Borough Council Flooding and Greenspace teams have been collaborating to control the non-native invasive Himalayan Balsam and remove litter from the river Chelt. The strategy included work with staff and local volunteers engaging and educating behind the reason to control the species and taking ownership of any Balsam in their local patch. Volunteer days have been organised by CBC with initial training and consultation provided by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. Consultation with Environment Agency flood risk management team also took place to ensure vegetation cutting does not occur before balsam is pulled by hand at certain locations. Approximately £1.5k of funding has been provided by CBC for training and equipment costs for volunteer sessions and public information boards. For 2024 we have had 6 volunteer sessions between June and August covering a 5 km stretch of the river. 276 letters have been delivered to riparian owner properties in the last 2 years, in addition to the installation of information boards displayed in 5 key locations along the river. This has resulted in an increase in reported sightings by the public, which have been mapped to guide future control efforts. Progress can already be seen in the second year with locations pulled last year showing signs of less regrowth and the possibility of replanting more native plant species in their place.• In 2023, the Climate Changemakers project, funded 11 resident led initiatives, 4 of which were biodiversity based. 1. St Peter' Orchard comprised of fruit tree planting in communal areas in St Peters. 2. Tree Planting in Sandford Park. 3,. Love your streets – Planting flower species
--	--

	key for pollinators in St Pauls. 4. Nourish the bees – Planting wildflowers on the Honeybourne Line and local awareness raising.
--	--

<p>Grounds maintenance and management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of intensive grass maintenance and increase in meadow style grass management. Examples, NO MOW MAY, Urban greening project and Habitat Cheltenham. • Reduced intensive maintenance of green space and playing field perimeters to encourage natural vegetated edges. • Most weed spaying has ceased in green spaces and long grass around obstacles trees and fences is largely accepted for its biodiversity benefits. • Review of grounds maintenance standards has commenced. This includes developing best practice guides for UBICO staff, volunteers, and park users. Pictorial guides will be published on the website and used as a service standard. • Mapping all CBC green space assets and UBICO operations on GIC database. This will assist in developing a mosaic of habitats across the urban environments. • Utilise GWT HabiMapping data to adapt current and future maintenance operations and link to Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership Nature recovery strategy. HabiMapping has currently been undertaken by volunteers at Pittville Park, Leckhampton Hill and Benhall open space. • Since 2017 the Council has been transitioning former annual floral bedding displays to more sustainable perennial planting schemes that are more beneficial to urban wildlife and use less energy and resources in their production and maintenance. • Management of hedges, shrubberies and copses is undertaken to comply with wildlife and countryside act to ensure nesting birds and other important habits are not disturbed. • To encompass all the above best practice (and more) the council uses the national Green Flag park standard as a quality benchmark for management and maintenance of its green spaces. • Continue to undertake conservation grazing on Leckhampton hill SSSI using a small herd of Belted Galloway cattle to sustainably manage the limestone grassland.
---	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of the council's tree stock, including works needed to address Ash Die Back. • A number of staff and volunteers attended pollinator training sessions, which aimed to increase biodiversity awareness, with a focus on solitary bees (largest group of bees in UK), to encourage and identify improvements to managing greenspace and project development. Through education, it increased internal understanding, enabling a more holistic thinking and approach to our work across the Council/Ubico, when considering biodiversity.
Ongoing studies	<p>The Council is undertaking a study to review CBC-owned landholdings to identify potential habitat banks for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and their suitability to deliver Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) capacity. Similarly, the Council is securing funds to review and update its Tree Strategy.</p>
Climate Emergency Action Plan (ongoing actions)	<p>Sets out the following biodiversity actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop opportunities for Natural Flood Management (NFM) schemes across the borough to help mitigate flooding and adapt to climate change, using nature to hold and slow water run-off. • Seek to actively restore and expand ecosystems, with a focus on enhancing biodiversity and natural carbon sinks, including through market-based mechanisms that improve and safeguard our natural environment, such as the development of a habitat bank for biodiversity net gain credits. • To work with neighbours via the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership, ensuring nature and ecosystem restoration opportunities in Cheltenham are developed in tandem with broader regional strategies.
Nature Recovery SPD	<p>CBC is making preparations for the creation of a Supplementary Planning Document about biodiversity, nature and BNG delivery.</p>

5. STRATEGIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

5.1 COTSWOLD BEECHWOODS SAC RECREATION MITIGATION STRATEGY:

[The strategy](#) published in 2022 collectively by the district councils of Stroud, Cheltenham, Cotswold, Gloucester, and Tewksbury, provides a framework under which applications for development likely to have a significant effect on the Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) can be permitted so that any adverse effects on the integrity are avoided. From mid-late 2023, CBC has been collecting payments for Suitable Natural Alternative Greenspaces (SANGs) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) delivery. In April 2024, [the Cabinet committed](#) to bringing forward a detailed action plan for Cheltenham borough that will look to utilise existing parks, gardens, public open spaces, accessible private green spaces and designated Local Green Spaces, including raising awareness of less well known spaces as well as considering new areas in each of these categories that may have the potential for enhanced public access and wherever possible deliver benefits for those communities most impacted by development and those with least access to nature in their neighbourhoods. Work is underway to bring this action plan forward.

5.2 STRATEGIC AND LOCAL PLAN (SLP):

Cheltenham Borough Council is currently working with Tewkesbury Borough Council and Gloucester City Council on a joint plan, called the [Strategic and Local Plan \(SLP\)](#). The SLP will replace the 2017 JCS and will provide strategic policies for the entire area as well as local policies specific to each local authority's boundaries.

The SLP will play an important role in establishing the principles of BNG in terms of providing clear policy wording, focusing on local and strategic priorities for biodiversity and identifying and allocating potential off-site areas for BNG, focusing enhancements which fit into local and strategic biodiversity priorities. The SLP is at [Reg 18 stage](#), it had a [first part of consultation](#) on spatial options and key policy areas during early 2024 and a second phase is planned to consult on its preferred options next year.

In the context of this partnership, we issued a joint response to the Government's public consultation on the proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), supporting the proposals that relate to our biodiversity duty, such as the 'brownfield first' principle and the encouragement of green energy and green infrastructure developments.

5.3 GLOUCESTERSHIRE LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY (LNRS):

England is considered one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world following historic and ongoing declines. The government has made legally binding commitments to end these declines and for nature to recover it will require targeted, coordinated, and collaborative action.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies' purpose is to provide local maps of key habitats and set priorities for recovery. There are 48 responsible authorities across England to lead on preparing an LNRS, being [Gloucestershire County Council](#) the local one through the [Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership](#), of which Cheltenham Borough Council is part of.

The LNRS will inform the priority habitats and species in the emerging SLP and its policies, expected to be published next year. Furthermore, it will be a key evidence document for any biodiversity requirements (e.g. higher than 10%) and nature-related policies in the new SLP. For instance, it will give higher value in some areas when calculating Biodiversity Net Gain Units.

5.4 CBC MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES:

These are [a number of organisations](#) which are independent of Cheltenham Borough Council but have an impact on our service areas in relation to biodiversity. In order that the council can maintain effective partnerships with a number of these organisations, the following elected councillors sit on the various committees and forums that are responsible for them.

Table 3: Elected members appointed to outside bodies.

CBC Member	Outside body	Description
Councillor Martin Horwood, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing and Culture	Cotswold National Landscape	The Cotswolds National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, looked after by a small team working in partnership with a number of other organisations to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds, increase understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities, and foster the social and economic well-being of local communities.
Councillor Paul Baker	Friends of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common	Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common lie on the edge of the Cotswolds escarpment, the main aspect of the hill being a cherished landscape feature clearly visible from many parts of Cheltenham.
Councillor Angie Boyes	Friends of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common	The Friends of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common (FOLK) was formed in 2000 to represent the ecological, historical and recreational interests of all those who use and love the area.

6. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN INFORMATION

The following table summarises the actions CBC has taken to meet biodiversity net gain (BNG) obligations ([using DEFRA Guidance](#)).

Table 4: BNG Obligations and Actions.

BNG Obligation	Actions by CBC
Check that all required information is submitted with planning applications for development that would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition	CBC has employed a Senior Planning Ecologist since June 2024
Check metric calculations submitted with planning applications for development that would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition	CBC has employed a Senior Planning Ecologist since June 2024
Check habitat survey information submitted with planning applications for development that would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition	CBC has employed a Senior Planning Ecologist since June 2024
Enter into legal agreements to secure biodiversity net gain being delivered	Is developing bespoke Section 106 agreement templates for BNG delivery with their legal teams, using the Planning Advisory Service's templates developed by Dentons. Conservation Covenants will be used where necessary.
Working with developers who wish to buy statutory biodiversity credits	CBC has employed a Senior Planning Ecologist since June 2024
Review and approve biodiversity gain plans submitted	CBC has employed a Senior Planning Ecologist since June 2024
Check the biodiversity gain sites register for off-site gains	CBC has employed a Senior Planning Ecologist since June 2024
Check the right statutory credits have been purchased (where necessary)	CBC has employed a Senior Planning Ecologist since June 2024
Monitor BNG where Cheltenham Borough Council is party to the legal agreement securing BNG	CBC is exploring options to improve their enforcement resources. Therefore, BNG will be monitored in line with the details of all Biodiversity Gain Plan and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans (HMMPs) approved by the council, by the enforcement team and the Senior Planning Ecologist
Set local policies to support BNG	Is developing a Strategic and Local Plan with Gloucester City Council and Tewkesbury Borough

	Council, in which BNG and nature recovery policies will be included. CBC is considering producing a CBC Nature Recovery Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) alongside this (Covered in Parts 1 and 2 of this report)
Facilitate transactions of biodiversity units between buyer and sellers	CBC has employed a Senior Planning Ecologist since June 2024

Since BNG became mandatory for major applications on 2nd February 2024 and minor applications 2nd April 2024, Cheltenham Borough Council has approved one planning application where mandatory BNG was applicable.

Table 5: BNG Applications.

Application	Description	BNG calculation	Planning stage	Biodiversity Gain Plan approved
24/00236/FUL	Development of car park for 147 dwellinghouses (Class C3) incorporated into a part 4 storey / part 3 storey apartment block and 3 storey townhouses with associated works	122.90% net gain in area habitats 225.81% net gain in hedgerow habitats	S106 being finalised prior to decision notice being issued.	Conditioned

6.1 CHALLENGES:

- Considering regulations and restrictions on BNG delivery within CBC-owned land and small sites within the Borough.
- Resources to enforce BNG hierarchy for projects considering all possible scenarios.
- Guidance uncertainty in which data management is required for the 5-yearly Biodiversity Reports.

6.2 HIGHLIGHTS:

- The BNG regulations are being communicated on all non-exempt planning applications, improving local developers understanding of BNG because we have a part-time planning ecologist in the post reviewing BNG proposals.
- Our new senior ecologist has been undertaking internal staff training to the Planning, Tree, Climate, and Regeneration teams, with scheduled training for the Housing team during the following weeks, to raise awareness on CBC's biodiversity duty.
- We are updating the local validation list to better reflect our requirements for BNG from developers.

This page is intentionally left blank

Cheltenham Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 21 October 2024

Cabinet 26 November 2024

Grants Policy

Accountable member:

Councillor Alisha Lewis, Cabinet Member Finance and Assets

Accountable officer:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance and Customer Services

Ward(s) affected:

N/A

Key Decision: No**Executive summary:**

Cheltenham Borough Council is proud to be able to support the voluntary and community sector and businesses in Cheltenham through the operation of our community grants schemes and via the distribution of grants that we receive from third parties such as the NHS. We acknowledge that as a Local Authority we are entrusted with public funds and that we have a duty to ensure that funding is distributed properly and spent lawfully and that processes used to determine grants are fair and transparent.

This policy has been developed to set out the processes to be followed when managing grants, including applying for external funding, developing and launching a new grant scheme and the distribution of funds. It lays out our aims and principles in awarding grants and sets out the specific checks that we need to undertake, whilst at the same time ensuring that we are maximising outcomes, minimising risk and delivering the greatest benefit to our communities.

Recommendations:

1. That Cabinet approves the Grants Management Policy (Appendix 3).
-

1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

This policy will ensure that the council has robust systems of financial control in place for the management of grants. Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from the implementation of the policy, relevant financial implications must be taken into consideration as part of the application for any grant funding and the development of any grant schemes.

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

1.2 Legal implications

There are a number of powers given to councils to provide grant funding. The most appropriate power for grants to small voluntary and community sector grants is the general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. The subsidy control position for all grants, regardless of value must be considered before setting up a grant scheme and One Legal can provide support with this.

One Legal has prepared template grant agreements for use by the Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships team for smaller grants. One Legal should review funding agreements from central Government and draft bespoke agreements to pass on this funding to local groups.

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

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

An environmental and climate change impact assessment has been completed and identifies this policy has having a neutral impact. However, individual grant schemes should consider their environmental and climate change implications when being developed.



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

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

- Ensuring residents, communities and businesses benefit from Cheltenham's future growth and prosperity
- Being a more modern, efficient and financially sustainable council

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

An Equality's Impact Assessment Screening questionnaire has been completed and is attached at

Appendix 2. The impact for this policy is neutral. However, individual grant schemes should consider their equalities impact when being developed.

1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review

Deliverability of grants schemes will be monitored via the relevant performance and monitoring arrangements as set out in individual grant agreements.

2 Background

2.1 An internal audit of grant income in December 2023 found that although the Council manages various grant schemes currently, it does not have an over-arching policy or procedure that provides guidance to staff on its governance and approach for administration and management of its grant income. The recommended actions from the audit were:

- We will prepare and implement a grants management policy/procedure that includes the key stages to administer and manage the Council's grant income. The guidance will include:
 - Roles and responsibilities.
 - Funding agreements.
 - Performance outcomes.
 - Eligibility criteria.
 - Assessment and awarding process.
 - Conflicts of interest.
 - Segregation of duties.
 - Due diligence checks.
- The grants policy/procedure will be reviewed and approved by the relevant manager.
- The grant management policy/procedure will be communicated to managers and staff involved in the administration and management of the Council's grant income.

2.2 The draft grants management policy (Appendix 3) sets out the processes to be followed when managing grants, including applying for external funding, developing and launching a new grant scheme and the distribution of funds. It lays out our aims and principles in awarding grants and sets out the specific checks that we need to undertake, whilst at the same time ensuring that we are maximising outcomes, minimising risk and delivering the greatest benefit to our communities.

2.3 The Council may also be tasked by Central Government with providing emergency funding or grants on an ad hoc basis at short notice following national emergencies such as flooding, pandemics, welfare issues and humanitarian crises etc, this policy will also apply to the distribution of those funds.

2.4 Different types of grant funding schemes will have very different eligibility criteria, but all require an application process, due diligence, verification checks and decisions regarding eligibility that should be transparent, consistent, fair and auditable. The Council may also have to agree to a mandated Government application, verification or audit process before commencing payments, so it is important the scheme is legally and meticulously implemented.

2.5 All grant schemes require a named lead officer with defined responsibilities for the lifetime of the grant. They will be responsible for the key stages of the grant giving process outlined in paragraph

- 5.1 of the grants management policy, ensuring consultation and approval as appropriate.
- 2.6 The policy includes guidance on developing a community grant scheme including application guidelines, timescales, promotion, and assessment of applications. It also includes guidance about funding agreements with grant recipients and performance monitoring and reporting.
- 2.7 An additional grant toolkit will provide guidance on the minimum verification and due diligence checks which must be undertaken. These checks should be determined at the start of the grant process and relevant documentation should be provided with every new grant application request, regardless of whether an organisations as received funding before.
- 2.8 Due regard should also be given to the internal processes and systems required to administer a grant scheme as detailed in paragraph 11 of the policy (Appendix 3).

3 Reasons for recommendations

- 3.1 To provide an over-arching policy that provides guidance to staff on the councils governance and approach for administration and management of grant income, in order to ensure that we are maximising outcomes, minimising risk and delivering the greatest benefit to our communities.

4 Alternative options considered

- 4.1 None

5 Consultation and feedback

- 5.1 The Counter Fraud Enforcement Unit has assisted in the development of the policy and are developing the grants toolkit which will be used in conjunction with this policy.

6 Key risks

- 6.1 A risk assessment has been completed and is attached at Appendix 1.

Report author:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance and Customer Services

Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Equality Impact Assessment – Screening
- iii. Draft Grants Management Policy

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 the council does not have an over-arching policy or procedure that provides guidance to staff on its governance and approach for administration and management of its grant income then we may be open to accusations of unfair, non-transparent or unlawful distribution of funds.	Claire Hughes	3	2	6	Reduce the risk	To adopt the grants management policy and ensure it is communicated to managers and staff involved in the administration and management of the Council's grant income	Claire Hughes	November 2024

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment (Screening)

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

a. Person responsible for this Equality Impact Assessment

Officer responsible: Helen Down	Service Area: Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships
Title: Participation and Engagement Lead Officer	Date of assessment: 27.9.24
Signature: H Down	

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

Policy

If other, please specify:

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

Grants management policy

Is this new or existing?

New or proposed

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

In response to internal audit report December 2023 which identified that although the Council manages various grant schemes currently, it does not have an over-arching policy or procedure that provides guidance to staff on its governance and approach for administration and management of its grant income.

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

Aims:

To ensure there is clear guidance on the processes to be followed when managing grants, including applying for external funding, developing and launching a new grant scheme and the distribution of funds. The grants management policy sets out the specific checks that we need to undertake, whilst at the same time ensuring that we are maximising outcomes, minimising risk and delivering the greatest benefit to our communities.

Objectives:	To have a robust process in place and to provide clear guidance to staff involved in the management of grants.
Outcomes:	To minimise the risks associated with not having a clear and transparent policy in place around the distribution of funds To have clear roles and responsibilities at each stage of the grant making process.
Benefits:	Communities will benefit as the policy seeks to ensure that funding is fairly and lawfully spent and distributed so that the outcomes are maximised.

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.	No
Do you expect the impacts to be positive or negative?	No impact expected
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	
No impact from the policy however individual grant schemes should consider relevant equality impacts	

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	

This page is intentionally left blank

Cheltenham Borough Council Grants Management Policy

Version control

Document name: Grants Management Policy

Version: 1.0

Responsible officer: Director of Governance and Customer Services

Approved by: Cabinet

Next review date: November 2026

Retention period: 6 months after revision

Revision history

Revision date	Version	Description
September 2024	1	New Policy

Consultees

Internal

- Leadership Team
- Relevant Cabinet Members
- Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit

External

- N/A

Distribution

All staff

Contents

1. Introduction and purpose of the policy.....	3
2. Managing External Funding	3
3. Emergency Funding Streams.....	4
4. Conflicts of Interest.....	5
5. Roles and Responsibilities	6
6. Developing a Community Grant Scheme	7
7. Funding Agreements.....	8
8. Performance Outcomes	9
9. Grant Scheme Monitoring	9
10. Due Diligence Checks and Verification	10
11. Data Protection and Transparency.....	10

1. Introduction and purpose of the policy

- 1.1 Cheltenham Borough Council is proud to be able to support the voluntary and community sector and businesses in Cheltenham through the operation of our community grants scheme and via the distribution of CIL (community infrastructure levy) funding and grants that we receive from third parties such as the NHS. We acknowledge that as a Local Authority we are entrusted with public funds and that we have a duty to ensure that funding is distributed properly and spent lawfully and that processes used to determine grants are fair and transparent.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the processes to be followed when managing all grants, whether capital or revenue, including applying for external funding, developing and launching a new grant scheme and the distribution of funds. It lays out our aims and principles in awarding grants and sets out the specific checks that we need to undertake, whilst at the same time ensuring that we are maximising outcomes, minimising risk and delivering the greatest benefit to our communities.
- 1.3 The Council may also be tasked by Central Government with providing emergency funding or grants on an ad hoc basis at short notice following national emergencies such as flooding, pandemics, welfare issues and humanitarian crises etc.
- 1.4 Different types of grant funding schemes will have very different eligibility criteria, but all require an application process, due diligence, verification checks, monitoring and decisions regarding eligibility that should be transparent, consistent, fair and auditable. The Council may also have to agree to a mandated Government application, verification or audit process before commencing payments, so it is important the scheme is legally and meticulously implemented.
- 1.5 Information on the conditions that will apply to a grant will be made available to applicants before they apply together with key dates for submission and future spending of funds.

2. Managing External Funding

- 2.1 External funding can be an important source of income to the Council, but funding conditions need to be carefully considered to ensure that they are compatible with the aims and objectives of the Council.
- 2.2 The Council shall seek to maximise its resources by attracting external funding where appropriate. However, in some instances, available funding may be linked to tight specifications and may not be sufficiently flexible to link to the council's strategies therefore due consideration must be given to applying for or accepting any external funding.
- 2.3 All applications for, or acceptance of funding must be in line with the rules sets out in the constitution and the financial rules. For the avoidance of doubt:

- Bids for external funding or accepting grant funding where the amount of funding exceeds £2 million and to accept the terms and conditions of that funding, if awarded must be approved by Cabinet;
- Bids for external funding or accepting grant funding where the amount of funding exceeds £500,000 but does not exceed £2 million and to accept the terms and conditions of that funding, if awarded must be approved by the relevant Cabinet Member
- Bids for external funding or accepting grant funding where the amount of funding is less than £500,000 and to accept the terms and conditions of that funding, if awarded must be approved by the relevant Director.

2.4 Where the funding has match funding requirements then in accordance with the financial rules the Section 151 Officer is responsible for:

- Ensuring that any match funding requirements are considered prior to entering into an external agreement and that adequate future revenue budgets are in place to meet these requirements.
- Ensuring that all funding notified by external bodies is received and properly recorded in the council's accounts.
- Ensuring that all audit requirements are met.

2.5 Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that:

- Funds are acquired only to meet the priorities approved in the policy framework by the council.
- Any match funding requirements are considered prior to entering into an external agreement and consulting with the Section 151 Officer to ensure that adequate future revenue budgets are in place to meet these requirements.
- Key conditions of funding and any statutory requirements are complied with and that the responsibilities of the Accountable body are clearly understood.
- All claims for funds are made by the due date and income received in accordance with the agreement.
- The project progresses in accordance with the agreed project outline and that all expenditure is properly incurred and recorded in the council's accounts
- Advice is sought from One Legal on the terms of the funding agreement and subsidy control implications as early as possible, particularly where there is an intention to pass the funds onto third parties.

2.6 Where external funding is received by the council for onward distribution that distribution must be carried out in accordance with this policy, including via the development of an appropriate grant scheme.

3. Emergency Funding Streams

- 3.1 National and local emergencies such as pandemics, floods, the cost-of-living crisis, international conflicts etc may result in Central Government asking Councils to administer grants and funding schemes to businesses and individuals.
- 3.2 These schemes are implemented quickly and with little prior warning to the Council and often with guidance provided after the funding has been announced. The Council should be prepared for the possibility of being tasked with this and have guidance and checklists available to assist.
- 3.3 The nature of the emergency will determine the application information required and criteria will be mandated by Central Government. The Council must ensure it follows this guidance to enable recovery of payments from Central Government
- 3.4 A core emergency funding group should be set up to include a representative from Finance to ensure management of delivery of payments, a representative from One Legal to ensure compliance with legal requirements and terms and conditions of funding, Revenues and Benefits Officer to provide customer/business data, a representative from Internal Audit and the CFEU to advise on risk and mitigation, and a representative from the relevant service area(s) (e.g Public Protection for floods/health emergencies, or Housing etc).
- 3.5 Businesses and individuals will have to complete an application form (online or paper) and sign a declaration which will include agreeing to any clauses required by Central Government and the following statement:-

Please be advised that the Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud and any applicant caught falsifying their statements or evidence to gain grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to claw back, as may any grants paid in error.
- 3.6 Businesses and individuals will be required to provide proof of identity and eligibility, and proof of the bank account they wish payment to be made to. See the grants toolkit for examples of the type of documentation/proof that may be required.
- 3.7 Returns will be made to Central Government and minimum audit requirements will be detailed on all documentation. Decision-making documents must be kept in line with the scheme guidance and data retention policies.

4. Conflicts of Interest

- 4.1 A conflict of interest is any activity that is inconsistent with the Council's best interests or that which could give the appearance of impropriety or corruption. Officers must not place themselves in a position within which a personal benefit could be derived or be perceived to be derived from actions or decisions made in their official capacity as an employee.
- 4.2 Conflicts of interest should be declared at the start of the process so that they may be recorded and considered at the first opportunity. Where a conflict of interest is present, the officer will not form part of any assessment panel or take part in any decision making for that grant scheme.



5. Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 All grant schemes require a named lead officer with defined responsibilities for the lifetime of the grant. They will be responsible for the key stages of the grant scheme outlined below ensuring consultation and approval as appropriate.

Stage	Who should be involved	Notes
Development of grant scheme – including priorities, criteria, assessment, risk assessment and decision making Drafting of grant scheme Development of application form and process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead officer • Leadership Team • Lead cabinet member • Representative of funding body where applicable (e.g. NHS for Health & Wellbeing Grants) • One Legal • SWAP (internal audit) • Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit (CFEU) 	<p>Proposals must be discussed with the appropriate colleagues to ensure authority to bid for funding and any match funding is available.</p> <p>Any legal considerations must be sought.</p> <p>Timescales should be agreed in relation to availability and the time frame within which they should be spent.</p> <p>Consider risk and mitigations accordingly.</p> <p>Refer to supporting CFEU recommendations grants toolkit to cover application supporting information required, declarations, and verification checks.</p>
Launch of grant scheme and promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead officer • Communications team 	Details of all current grant schemes should be available on the CBC website
Due diligence checks on the application / applicant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead officer • Finance (if required) • SWAP (if required) • CFEU (if required) 	As per Grants toolkit recommendations
Assessment Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead cabinet member • Member of Leadership Team • Representative of funding body (e.g. NHS for Health & Wellbeing Grants) • Representative of impartial voluntary sector organisation with knowledge of the subject area 	<p>Lead officer is there to facilitate the panel, providing information, liaising with applicants if more information is needed and recording decisions.</p> <p>For the avoidance of doubt the Lead officer is not part of the decision making.</p>

Stage	Who should be involved	Notes
Decision making – as per scope of scheme, policy requirements or level of funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal decision by either the Lead Cabinet Member (via a delegated member decision), or Cabinet or Delegated Officer decision 	Decisions must be recorded on appropriate decision making forms and sent to democratic services to ensure publication on the decision making register
Communication with applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead officer 	
Issue of grant agreements for signature to recipient and return to overseeing body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead officer One Legal (unless using a template prepared by One Legal for use for grants under £10,000) 	<p>No grants should be paid without a signed grant agreement being in place.</p> <p>Grant agreements should be signed by the recipient in accordance with the stipulated timescales to ensure funding is not withdrawn</p> <p>One Legal advice should be sought to ensure all contractual arrangements are met</p>
Processing of grant payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant budget holder Finance 	This part of the process should include a clear segregation of duties to ensure transparency and probity. The Lead officer should not be responsible for approving payments.
Collation of monitoring information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead officer 	Where appropriate, assurance checks need to be conducted to ensure funding has been spent in accordance with the funding terms and conditions or within any requisite time period.
End of grant scheme summary report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead officer 	Details of all grants made should be published to the CBC website or reported

6. Developing a Community Grant Scheme

- 6.1 In developing a community grant scheme, the Council will have greater flexibility in the design and aims of the scheme. Consideration should be given to which organisations are eligible to apply (for example not for profit organisations, voluntary sector organisations, charities) as well as bodies which are not eligible to apply (for example individuals or groups that are not constituted). This information must be clearly detailed in the application guidance.

- 6.2 Grants should only be made to constituted groups or organisations with a designated business bank account. Community grants will not be made to individuals.
- 6.3 The criteria that applicants should meet must be pre-determined, considering the purpose of the grant scheme. These should be clearly defined and detail outcome priorities.
- 6.4 When developing a grant scheme, approval must be sought from the Leadership Team, and the appropriate people must be consulted to ensure any legal and financial implications are considered.
- 6.5 Applicants must be allowed a reasonable window in which to apply following notification of the grant scheme that is clearly publicised. The application process should also advise how long the verification and decision period will take before they are notified of any successful application.
- 6.6 Standard application form templates are available and should be used and adapted using online tools such as MS Forms.
- 6.7 The grant scheme should be promoted widely, using the Council's website and social media channels as well as via elected members, stakeholders and the Council's partners.
- 6.8 Details of the funded projects should be publicised and should also be considered when allocating grants to ensure that funding is spread across as many organisations as possible.
- 6.9 The grant agreement with successful applicants should include the requirement to acknowledge the support of the Council in all publicity material associated with the project as well as to follow the publicity guidelines from other funders who have contributed to the fund. The agreement should also stipulate that the Council reserves the right to use such material and any photographs of the project in its own publicity material.
- 6.10 Adequate time must be allowed for the assessment and awarding process to ensure applications can be sufficiently considered before payments deadlines are set.
- 6.11 An assessment panel should be formed to assess applications and the recommendations from the panel, once finalised, will need to be approved through the relevant decision-making process.

7. Funding Agreements

- 7.1 One the formal decision about which projects will be funded has been made, the lead officer issues a grant funding agreement to successful applicants. Standard templates must be used and must be approved by One Legal and must be signed by an appropriate member of Leadership Team, or if agreed, Senior Officer within the Council.
- 7.2 The grant recipient should be advised of a clear deadline for returning the signed copy, otherwise the grant agreement could be deemed invalid.
- 7.3 Where the grant is administered on behalf of Central Government then the recipient must agree to the terms and conditions stipulated in the scheme guidance.

- 7.4 All funding agreements include as a minimum:
- 7.4.1 Agreed aims of the project and any conditions
 - 7.4.2 The level of funding
 - 7.4.3 Funding term
 - 7.4.4 Terms and conditions including:
 - Arrangements and conditions for the payment of grant
 - Reporting and monitoring arrangements
 - Health and safety
 - Indemnity and insurance
 - Child protection and safeguarding
 - Publicity and promotion expectations
 - Subsidy control rules

8. Performance Outcomes

- 8.1 Outcomes are taken from the grant application and are included in the project funding agreement.
- 8.2 The monitoring arrangements should be stipulated in the application process and where money is provided at the commencement of the project or in stages then regular reporting is required (minimum quarterly).
- 8.3 These should demonstrate how the project is achieving aims and objectives and how the organisation is ensuring the money is distributed fairly and correctly.
- 8.4 Final monitoring reports should be received within one year of the grant being awarded (unless by prior agreement), but any grant claim request during the grant period must be accompanied by a progress report to date.
- 8.5 Detail must be provided at the outset on how long the Council expects documentation and project delivery paperwork to be kept for monitoring and audit purposes.
- 8.6 The council reserves the right to withhold payment of funding where the monitoring requirements are not met.

9. Grant Scheme Monitoring

- 9.1 Payments may be made in arrears upon completion of the project and submission of a grant claim and monitoring report.
- 9.2 Where staged payments are made on delivery of outcomes timescales should be agreed at the outset and be dependent on receipt of interim reports. A small amount may need to be withheld pending receipt of the final monitoring report.
- 9.3 The standard grant monitoring template should be used, and must include as a minimum:
 - A description of how the grant was used and how it met the aims of the grant scheme.

- A breakdown of spend
- A breakdown of other support that the project was able to use
- What checks and monitoring of spend were completed
- How the project impacted its beneficiaries
- How many people were involved
- Volunteer effort given to the project
- Feedback received by the project
- Future plans

9.4 All grant monitoring templates should be sent to communitiesteam@cheltenham.gov.uk so that they can be centrally collated for periodic review by the Leadership Team.

9.5 Payment must not be made until a signed grant agreement has been received.

9.6 If an organisation is not set up on the Council's payment system they will be required to complete the appropriate documentation to enable the Council to make payment.

9.7 To ensure appropriate segregation of duties, payments of grants must be authorised by someone other than the Lead Officer.

10. Due Diligence Checks and Verification

10.1 The required due diligence and verification checks should be determined at the start of the grant process. These should be built into the application form and communicated so that all applicants are aware of the documentation they will be required to provide when making the application.

10.2 This documentation should be provided with every new grant application request for all organisations, regardless of whether they have received funding before. Applications which do not include the required documentation must not be accepted.

10.3 The grants toolkit provides guidance on the minimum verification and due diligence checks which must be undertaken but further advice and guidance can be provided by the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit or Internal Audit.

11. Data Protection and Transparency

11.1 Data must be handled in line with the Council's Data Privacy Policy.

11.2 Due regard should be given to the internal processes and systems required to administer a grant scheme. It is likely that the lead officer will receive a significant amount of organisational data that contains sensitive information such as bank account details, names and addresses etc. This data must be handled appropriately and in line with regulations around data protection principles.

11.3 Data must not be kept longer than necessary, and the lead officer must consider timeframes for deleting information related to applications that were unsuccessful in their funding application.

11.4 It is advised that files for successful applications should be kept for 7 years.

11.5 Appropriate systems should be set up to record necessary information, ensuring that only authorised staff have access to any sensitive information. Records should be kept in relation to:

- A spreadsheet to record details of all applications received such as date received, details of supporting documents submitted, when the application was acknowledged etc.
- Applications should be given unique ID numbers that will help to easily identify them.
- A separate folder should be created for each applicant to hold all relevant information about each organisation in one place such as application, constitution and accounts.
- If an applicant is successful then the grant funding agreement, details of payments and monitoring submissions with copies of any correspondence.
- Details of recommendations for all applications and scoring matrixes for an appropriate amount of time after the assessment, for example if an applicant requests feedback on why their application was not successful.
- Decisions relating to grant funding should be kept.
- A copy of all the grant paperwork such as guidance notes, regulations, legal agreements and Policies.

11.6 Details of all current grant schemes are available on the Council's website.

11.7 Decisions relating to grant funding should be made accessible to the public.

11.8 All grants made to voluntary and community sector organisations should be published on the council's website at the end of each financial year.

This page is intentionally left blank

Information/Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 21 October 2024

Scrutiny Task Group - Tackling Multiple Deprivation

Progress report

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

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 [In June 2023](#), Overview and Scrutiny Committee met to consider and approve the final report of the Scrutiny Task Group that had considered the issue of multiple deprivation. The report included 21 recommendations under 5 themed areas. The Committee agreed that a report on progress will be brought back to O&S in a year's time.
- 1.2 This report summarises the progress to date made against the 21 recommendations.

2. Summary of the Issue

- 2.1 While Cheltenham is predominantly an affluent town, the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for England show that there are several areas that have high levels of multiple deprivation. Two areas (St Mark's 1 and St Paul's 2) have consistently been in the 10% most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the 2010, 2015 and 2019 IMDs.
- 2.2 In the scrutiny request for the subject of tackling multiple deprivation, agreed by the committee in February 2022, it was noted that Cheltenham Borough Council cannot on its own tackle the issue of multiple deprivation, but it should look to ensure that its policies and service delivery is targeted at working with communities to help them address the causal factors of multiple deprivation that it can influence and it should be working with other stakeholders to ensure that their efforts are similarly targeted.
- 2.3 The request set out what the review would hope to achieve:
 - Identify the areas that Cheltenham Borough Council can directly influence to help tackle multiple deprivation.
 - Identify the other stakeholders that have the ability to help tackle multiple deprivation.

- Identify the outcomes that we would like to achieve, and what indicators show whether our work is having the desired effect.
- Hold scrutiny sessions with those stakeholders to ensure that we understand their aspirations and what they are able to contribute.
- Perform a needs assessment for the each of the areas looking at any LSOA that is in the most deprived quintile (20%) for any of the IMD domains.
- Make recommendations to Council, Cabinet, CBC representatives on outside bodies, to the LGA, the MHCLG, etc. on the resources, policies, powers and funding that are needed to help tackle multiple deprivation.
- Provide an over-arching co-ordination role with the various other stakeholders to ensure that organisations' local delivery in Cheltenham are all directed towards the same outcomes and objectives.

2.4 The Scrutiny Task Group was duly set up and met several times to consider various topics relating to deprivation. At each of the meetings, relevant partners were invited to provide context.

2.5 The final report was presented to the Committee in [June 2023](#) that included 21 recommendations under 5 themed areas:

- Cost of living
- Housing
- Health
- Education
- Cross-cutting

3. Summary of progress

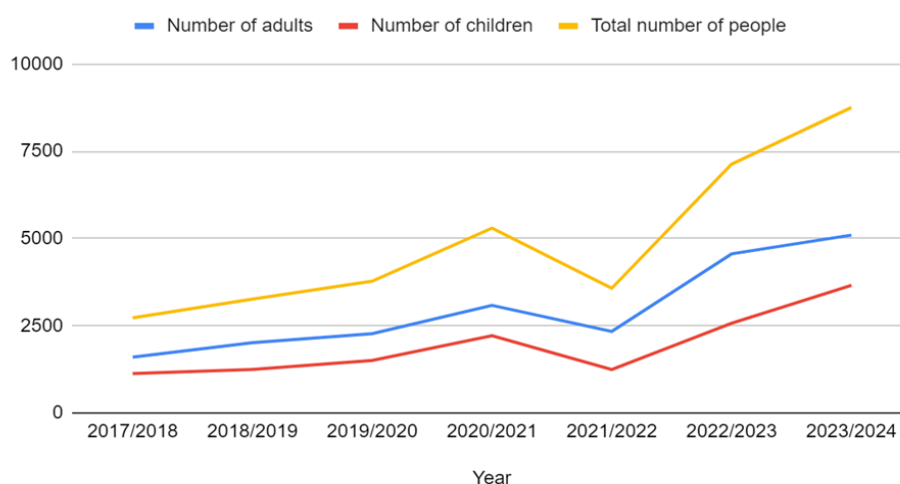
3.1 The recommendations were put into an action plan that has been updated to show progress. This is attached as appendix A.

3.2 In addition, some additional contextual information under three of the themed areas is included below for the committee's information.

3.3 Cost of living

3.4 The cost of living crisis remains a real issue for many of our local families. We know that Cheltenham's food banks and food pantries are still supporting around 550 households per week that are experiencing food poverty. 47% of people accessing the Cheltenham Food Bank's services are doing so due to the rising cost of essentials and 1,068 households were referred to the Food Bank for the first time in 2023/2024. The table below illustrates how the numbers accessing the food bank have increased since 2021/22.

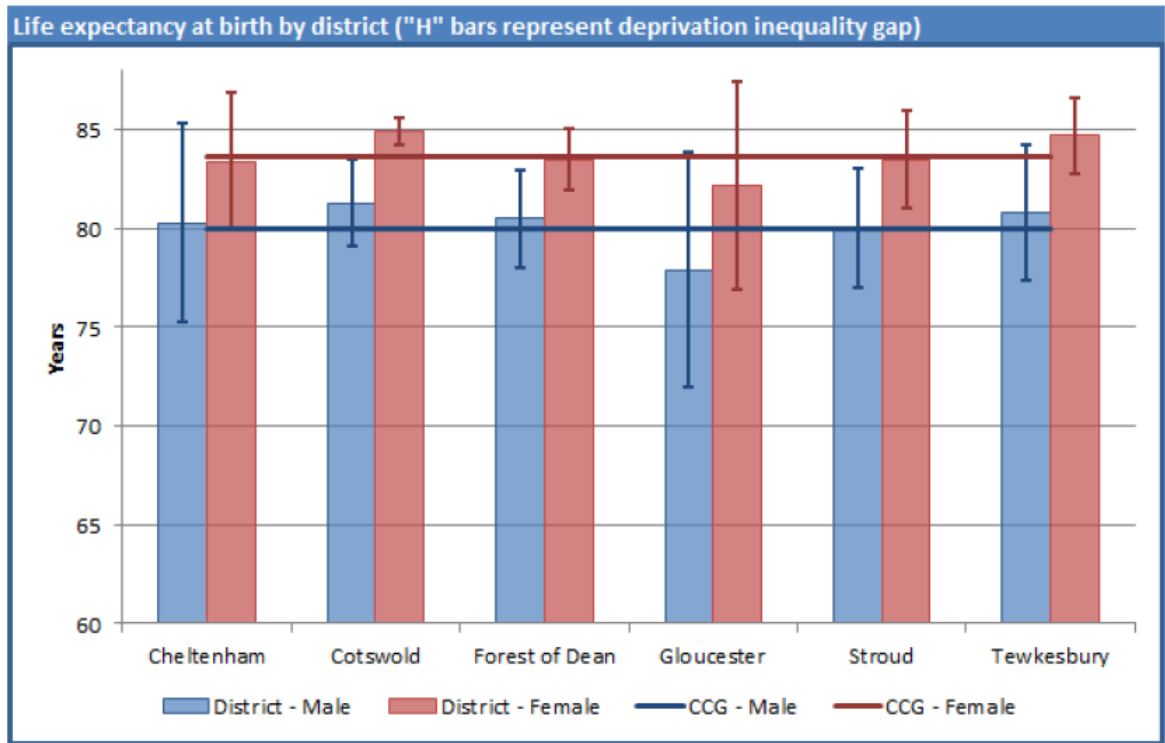
Number of people receiving food parcels in Cheltenham



source: Cheltenham Food Bank

- 3.5** National Citizens Advice data suggests 5 million people, including 1.5 million children, are in a household with a negative budget. The problem is deepening with the average monthly deficit for a negative budget household going from minus £270 in 2019/20 to minus £365 in 2023/24. (source Citizens Advice - The National Red Index – Feb 2024)
- 3.6** Locally, Citizens Advice are dealing with up to 400 calls per week, with highest areas of concern relating to debt, welfare benefits and housing (source: North and West Gloucestershire Citizens Advice)
- 3.7** Last year Cheltenham Housing Aid Centre provided advice to 140 clients which represented an increase of 22% on the previous year. 38% of their clients are in receipt of disability benefits which represents an increase of 8.5% on the previous year. (source: Cheltenham Housing Aid Centre)
- 3.8** In addition, the Council has continued to work with the Gloucestershire County Council to allocate the household support fund grants. The Household Support Fund (HSF), first introduced in 2021/22, is funding that is made available via Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need to help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living.
- 3.9** The Council's approach is to channel grants to a number of community-based organisations that are working closely with those made vulnerable due to the cost of living crisis. These delivery partners include Citizens Advice, Cheltenham Housing Aid Centre, our community food network, Aspire Trust (running Cheltenham's family hubs), CCP and Cheltenham Household Essentials Project.
- 3.10** On 23 July, [Cabinet agreed](#) how to allocate £147k to cover the period from 1 April to 30 Sept 2024.
- 3.11** **Health Inequalities**
- 3.12** Health inequalities continue to be a concern for health partners in Cheltenham. The

diagram below shows that whilst Cheltenham has a close to county average life expectancy for males and females, there is significant inequality in life expectancy between most and least deprived residents (shown by the H bars). Whilst Cheltenham has a close to county average life expectancy there are significant inequality in life expectancy between the most and least deprived residents.



(source: One Gloucestershire data pack – February 2022)

- 3.13 Further data from One Gloucestershire shows that health inequalities are most acutely seen in West Cheltenham, in the wards of Hesters Way, St Marks and St Peters. These areas have a higher prevalence of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, obesity, smoking and depression. In addition, there is a higher proportion of individuals using accident and emergency services as their default health service choice, instead of primary care or other elective services.
- 3.14 The Cheltenham Integrated Locality Partnership (ILP), which has representation from community, social care, health, voluntary sector, housing and the council, agreed to develop a project to support West Cheltenham community build on its strengths and make a measurable difference to health equality and the wider determinants of health and wellbeing.
- 3.15 The West Cheltenham health equity project has been running for over 12 months now, and as part of the project, Springbank Community Group employ a Health and Wellbeing Coordinator. The coordinator has been active within the community, and provides one to one support, information mornings, training and educational opportunities, plus help for individuals to access activities and social opportunities either being delivered from Springbank or from elsewhere.
- 3.16 To support our understanding of health inequalities, GCC Public Health have recently

shared a Cheltenham Health Profile with up-to-date data. Key issues emerging from the data include:

- 10.4% of the population of Cheltenham (across 8 lower super output areas) live in the most deprived 20% nationally
- There has been a significant increase since 2021/22 of children in relative low-income families
- Whilst the proportion of physically inactive people (16.3%) is comparable to the county average it is significantly lower than the national average of 22.6%.
- Cheltenham has the highest rate of alcohol specific conditions hospital admissions in the county and is the only district higher than the national rate.
- In 2022/23 the average rate of obesity among Year 6 children in Cheltenham is 17.9%, better than the national average. But there are parts of Cheltenham where the rate is over 30% - inc LSOAs in St. Peters, St. Pauls, Hesters Way and Oakley – which has the highest prevalence of obesity at 36.7%.
- Cheltenham has the highest rate of year 6 children with tooth decay (16%) in the county, which is much higher than the county average of 11.6% though comparable to the national average of 16.2%.
- Rates of pupils reporting low mental wellbeing are comparable to the county average, although this has significantly increased since 2018.

3.17 The Public Health data will help shape the criteria for the next round of health and wellbeing grants.

3.18 No Child Left Behind

3.19 Through No Child Left Behind, there has been a continued focus on highlighting the issue of children growing up in poverty and taking steps to address the inequality gap. Recent work has included:

- Delivering the holiday activity and food programme scheme over the Easter and Summer school holidays with 2,100 children attended events and accessed free food;
- Hosted Party in the Park event on 2 August to which over 2,200 children attend with over 400 free meals given out to children on free school meals;
- Led a campaign in June 2024 to raise awareness of the impact of air pollution on children in our town, to coincide with clean air day.

3.20 In terms of up to date data, NCLB recently commissioned an up to date needs analysis. Key findings include:

3.21 In Cheltenham 15.1% of children under 16 live in relative low-income families, but this increases to over 30% of children in Oakley and Hesters Way. Over the last five years the percentage of primary school pupils eligible for free school meals has increased year on year in Cheltenham to 18.7% of pupils. Hester's Way Primary

school had the highest percentage of eligible children, 56.8%, and Leckhampton C of E Primary School had the lowest percentage of eligible children, 2.6%.

- 3.22** In terms of suspensions from school, since 2020/21 the rate of suspensions has increased and is now above pre-covid levels in all areas. The rate of total suspensions in Cheltenham has generally been in line with or higher than the county average. It is noted that some of the schools with the highest rates of suspensions also have high proportions of pupils eligible for Free School Meals.
- 3.23** In January 2023, 864 people aged 0-25 living in Cheltenham had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or statement, this has increased in the last 5 years. Children in Cheltenham with an EHCP are much more likely to live in a deprived area than the general population aged 0-24. There is also a strong correlation between the proportion of children receiving SEN support in primary schools (but who don't have an EHCP) and the proportion of children eligible for Free School Meals in Cheltenham primary schools.
- 3.24** More recently, No Child Left Behind has worked with the St. Giles Trust to undertake a programme of engagement with local young people as part of a project to reduce the risks to children vulnerable to criminal exploitation.
- 3.25** The survey had 578 responses, with respondents representing a wide range of Cheltenham neighbourhoods, including Hesters Way, St. Pauls, Whaddon/Oakley, Prestbury, Town Centre, Pittville, and Springbank. Key take-aways include:
- 3.26** Only 18% of young people felt their opinions were valued by adults and professionals. Many expressed a desire for more direct communication platforms and greater action taken on their feedback.
- 3.27** Many young people (42%) are worried about their future, 39% are worried about their education and 39% worried about not fitting in.
- 3.28** Many young people reported feeling unsafe in specific areas of Cheltenham, particularly at night. The town centre, Hesters Way, St. Paul's, and Whaddon were frequently cited as unsafe. Dark alleyways and parks, such as Pittville Park and Spring bank Park, were also areas of concern.
- 3.29** Online, 47% of respondents had seen disturbing content, but only 18% felt comfortable reporting this to adults.
- 3.30** Hanging out with friends in parks (32%) and the town centre (23%) were the most popular free-time activities. However, a significant number of young people cited a lack of affordable and accessible recreational spaces. Sports, music, and creative arts were important to young people, but many felt there were not enough safe, well-maintained facilities for these activities.
- 3.31** The results of the survey were presented to the No Child Left Behind Board on 23 September and the board has recommending undertaking a year of youth action that will amplify young peoples' voices, encourage young people-led social action and capacity building within partners so that we get better at hearing young people's voices.

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



4.1 The committee is invited to review the progress being made against the action plan as agreed by this committee in June 2023 and to consider the additional information supplied in section 3.

Background Papers	Overview & Scrutiny – 5th June 2023. Report of the Scrutiny Task Group Tackling Multiple Deprivation
Contact Officer	Richard Gibson Head of communities, wellbeing & partnerships
Accountability	Cllr Victoria Atherstone, Cabinet Member Safety & Communities

DRAFT


This page is intentionally left blank

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
Cost of living					
1	Distribute accessible key information to households to ensure residents are fully aware of the support funds and benefits available to them and how to apply.	Richard Gibson	No	4	<p>The Council has been actively promoting information to local residents throughout the cost of living crisis.</p> <p>We have compiled a central repository of information on its website: https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support and have used videos and social media posts to get information out to local residents: https://tinyurl.com/2vn82etj</p> <p>In addition, we have used CBH news, a quarterly newsletter sent to around 4600 tenants, to provide specific information to our tenants – see sample article below.</p>

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
					<div data-bbox="1406 295 1601 359"> <p>22CBHnews AUTUMN 2023</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1406 386 2072 574"> <h2>WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU WITH BENEFITS AND MONEY ADVICE</h2> </div> <div data-bbox="1406 595 1720 633"> <p>Are you concerned about your benefits and money? We are here to help.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1406 641 1727 702"> <p>Our friendly team is on hand to give you free and confidential advice on all benefits and day-to-day money management.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1406 710 1720 788"> <p>If you are struggling to afford your rent or manage your bills, we can suggest simple budgeting tips, energy advice and can carry out a benefit check-up.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1406 798 1550 817"> <p>We can help with:</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1406 826 1720 995"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Claiming all the benefits you may be entitled to - Help with DWP or HM Revenues & Customs reconsiderations and appeals - Support requesting back dating benefit claims, if you have good cause - Budgeting tips </div> <div data-bbox="1765 598 2094 794">  </div> <div data-bbox="1765 810 2094 948"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Better Off in Work Calculations" – to show you how a change of job can affect your benefit entitlement and income - Explain benefit changes, such as Universal Credit - Sign-post to support organisations. </div> <div data-bbox="1765 957 2094 995"> <p>Get in touch with us today. Email bma@cbh.org or call on Freephone 0800 408 0000.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1429 1034 1727 1072"> <h3>Cost of living support</h3> </div> <div data-bbox="1429 1082 1727 1232"> <p>We know that the cost of living crisis continues to be a real challenge. We're here to support you with advice around money and benefits, training, employment and we offer a helping hand in our communities with cooking, youth sessions, coffee mornings, voucher schemes and volunteering.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1429 1248 1727 1343"> <p>We work with a number of partners and community organisations who offer a range of advice, help and information. Visit cheltenham.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support for more details.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1765 1034 2094 1343">  </div>

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
2	Take advantage of online and social media communication opportunities, but also ensure that support is not only advertised online.	Richard Gibson	No	4, 5	<p>As above, the council has used a mix of flyers and social media to communicate information to local residents.</p> <p>In addition, the Council has circulated benefits and money advice leaflets to our food banks and pantries to handed out to customers as well as using social media https://tinyurl.com/45sderwt https://tinyurl.com/2ff5knxd</p>
3	Ensure borough councillors are fully briefed on signposting, referral and support routes throughout the cost of living crisis, through member seminars and ongoing support.	Richard Gibson	No	4	<p>An update on the work of the facing hardship group was provided to members as part of the induction session on 23 May.</p> <p>The presentations from this session are also available the members hub</p>
4	Consider a financial inclusion partnership (like that between Tewkesbury Borough Council and Citizens Advice) to increase strategic working.	Richard Gibson	No	4	<p>The Council has worked with other partners to establish the Facing Financial Hardship Group with the aim of reducing the impacts of poverty and stigma through a collective partnership to better support communities in response to cost of living impacts.</p> <p>Members include; the Council, Citizens Advice, Feed Cheltenham, Cheltenham Housing Aid Centre, DWP, GCC adult skills and CCP.</p> <p>The group held a cost of living seminar on 6 June 2024, that 33 partners attended representing 22 organisations. Some of the data from this session was used to inform the allocation of the Household Support Fund</p>

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
5	Continue to provide signposting and advice to residents regarding debt management support, raise awareness of predatory lending and report any concerns to the appropriate regulatory body.	Martin Stacy / Matt Ward	No	4	<p>The Council works with council tenants in our communities to help maximise their income and promote financial capability and independence through the delivery of our Financial Support Teams (Benefits and Money Advice & Training and Employment Services). The team has already exceeded their target for the current financial year as the demands for the service continue to grow. The target for the year based on previous year’s performances was £1m. At the end of September ‘24 actual performance was £1,152,514.</p> <p>The team has been making themselves even more accessible and are seeing a higher volume of customers and assisting them with claiming benefits and backdate awards (Universal Credit and Housing Benefit etc) and grants and other sources of funding.</p> <p>The Council also pro-actively promotes awareness of debt management issues and welfare benefit availability and encourage customers to engage with all appropriate support. In addition to this the Council works closely with the Illegal Money Lending team and promoted this as recently as September 2024</p> <p>In addition, the Council funds Citizens Advice to provide comprehensive debt and benefits advice, including support around financial exclusion to help equip individuals with the skills to manage their finances better.</p>
Housing					

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
6	Provide specific advice to CBH residents about how to get support with the causes and risks of mould and damp, and ensure that reports of respiratory diseases are followed up in the council’s housing stock.	Mark Way	No	3	<p>Bespoke policy and procedures are in place for Damp Mould and Condensation (DMC).</p> <p>Information leaflets and communications re DMC are available. Tenants are made aware of how to report issues, and we have a dedicated team in place to respond.</p> <p>The article below was published in the Autumn 2023 version of CBH News.</p> <div data-bbox="1391 627 2145 1342" data-label="Complex-Block">  <p>DAMP AND MOULD MEET THE NEW TEAM</p> <p>Image shows: L to R Ian, Mike, Bekki, Dave, Ange, Ben, Nick, Ash</p> <p>We are proud to have formed a brand new team, specialising in all issues relating to damp, mould and condensation. The team comprises of Mike, our DMC repairs manager, Ben, our supervisor, our two logistics administrators, Ange and Bekki, two multi-skilled operatives, Ash and Nick and two specialist cleaners, Ian and Dave, who all have a passion for what they do and really care about making a difference.</p> <p>The team's aim is to ensure you receive the best level of service and support, as well as information to help prevent mould occurring in your home. Our work includes home inspections, cleaning and repairs where necessary, as well as education and advice for customers, all colleagues and contractors, so that together, we can make sure your home is a safe, secure and healthy place to live.</p> <p>If you are experiencing damp, mould or condensation please contact the team through your MyCBH account or call 0800 408 0000</p> </div>

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
					Our risk-based approach takes account of the age and vulnerability (where we are informed) of the resident.
7	Use Housing Act powers to pursue issues like mould and damp to the highest possible standard through enforcement in the private rented sector.	Louis Krog	No	3	<p>Under The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), dealing with mould and damp is business as usual for the Private Sector Housing Team. This is part of their statutory duties and responsibilities.</p> <p>Damp and mould growth is classed as a Category 1 hazard – the most serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety.</p>
8	Tackle fuel poverty in CBH dwellings by investing in the retrofit of existing homes, continuing a fabric-first approach and delivering net zero carbon homes on council-owned land-led sites.	Vicky Day/Frances Crick	No	3	<p>Council dwellings are being targeted based on lowest energy performance ratings and non-traditional properties first to reach those most likely to be in fuel poverty. Work is on-going with grant funding received from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund supporting the improvement works.</p> <p>Under SHDF Demonstrator and Wave 1: 61 properties were improved: 35 fabric only improvements and 26 fabric improvements and heat pumps fitted.</p> <p>Under SHDF Wave 2.1 there is a target to improve around 200 properties with approx. 50 completed or close to works completion (September 2024) and the rest in progress (some on-site with energy efficiency measures being installed, some at the design stage and some at the assessment stage).</p>
Health					

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
9	Engage with the NHS to encourage use of outreach vehicles in areas with particular difficulties in accessing healthcare, and lobby the county council and Integrated Locality Partnership to expand outreach clinics in deprived areas.	Richard Gibson	No		<p>We have worked with local health partners to use outreach vehicles to support community events. These include having the vehicle in attendance at Springbank and Coronation Square, plus at the Party in the Park event held this summer.</p> <p>In addition health partners have run drop-in health clinics including one at Springbank over the summer as part of the West Cheltenham Healthy equity project.</p> <p>There is a willingness from health partners to find more ways of engaging with local residents – the Council has been recently contacted about helping to arrange a winter ready event for those residents with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).</p>
10	Strengthen partnerships and encourage data sharing between health services and housing providers, acknowledging the physical health risks of poor-quality housing.	Martin Stacy, Richard Gibson	No	3	<p>Via the Cheltenham Integrated Locality Partnership (ILP) the Council has developed effective working relationships with health partners. For the past four years, the Council has received an NHS grant so that it can work in conjunction with the Cheltenham Integrated Locality Partnership, health commissioners and the Gloucestershire Strengthening Local Communities steering group to deliver community focussed work based around local priorities with a focus on reducing health inequalities.</p> <p>There is regular data sharing at ILP meetings - particularly on the subject of health inequalities. This is then used to inform the priority setting for the ILP. The current priorities for the ILP are:</p>

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people with mental health challenges • Older people who are at risk of becoming frail • West Cheltenham health equity project <p>Whilst poor housing is not a priority for the ILP, health partners are aware of national research (led by the Institute of Health Equity) that demonstrates the impact of housing on health outcomes, highlighting the disproportionate burden borne by deprived and low-income communities.</p> <p>The Institute recommends that addressing housing-related health inequalities requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses not only improving housing quality, security and affordability, and improving the neighbourhoods where individuals and families live.</p>
11	Ensure that pollution and its impact on public health continue to inform decisions, especially within the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), and continue to work closely with the county council on the issue of air quality.	Louis Krog	No	2	<p>A full update on air quality is due to be considered by O+S in November.</p> <p>The Council recently received feedback from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on our Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) for 2024. The report notes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no breaches of air quality objectives in 2023 • There has been a significant reduction in nitrogen dioxide • The Council’s work is indicative of good practice.

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
					<p>It is worth noting that No Child Left Behind recently led a campaign in June 2024 to raise awareness of the impact of air pollution on children in our town, to coincide with clean air day.</p> <p>https://tinyurl.com/2wvtbvxh</p>
Education					
12	Ensure that as many schools as possible are involved with No Child Left Behind, and use these links to encourage uniform share banks and clothes recycling programs.	Richard Gibson	No	4	<p>To date, there are 24 schools signed up to No Child Left behind – with these schools covering c11,500 pupils. Plus there are three schools, Gardners Lane, Shurdington and Pitville that have representatives on the No Child Left Behind Board.</p> <p>Council colleagues also held two events to help with the cost of school uniform during the cost of living crisis. The events enabled parents to collect free, pre-loved school uniform and receive money-saving advice. Across both events, 134 items were re-homed which helped 29 families and supplied more than 43 children with school uniform.</p> <p>https://tinyurl.com/24rzupuh</p>
13	Support work building digital literacy and getting young people interested in future careers in cyber and digital technology, and continue working with the Large Enterprise Action Group to link	Tracey Birkinshaw / Bekka Mann	No	1	<p>The Community Investment Team identified geographic areas most at risk of digital exclusion and looked to bring digital/cyber activities into those communities.</p> <p>The team were successful in securing an initial £800 from the build back better fund to run a coding club in partnership with Code Ninjas in Oakley. This then led to securing £19,200 in sponsorship from Spirax Sarco so</p>

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
	schools with businesses and digital creative pathways.				<p>that 10 children can join the Code Ninjas club at Gloucestershire College for 2 years.</p> <p>The team are continuing to work with businesses such as BAE systems, CGI, Amiosec to offer outreach activities into areas of deprivation to inspire children into future cyber career pathways. Activities are promoted to local schools and those in underrepresented groups.</p> <p>Officers also work closely with the GCC Skills Team who offer all Gloucestershire residents free advice and support on training and skills development, including higher / further education and apprenticeships as well as work placements in all sectors.</p> <p>This includes links to the Gloucestershire Careers and Skills Portal which has a dedicated section focusing on cyber and digital skills, acknowledging the importance of this growing sector in Cheltenham’s economy (Digital Skills Development Gloucestershire Skills Portal (skillsportalglos.com))</p> <p>In addition, the Golden Valley team have a dedicated skills workstream, particularly focusing on the development of cyber and digital skills at all ages and stages of career development. This includes partnerships with local and national education providers as well as businesses.</p>
14	Work with the Communities Partnership to provide tailored support for young people in	Richard Gibson, Tracy Brown	No	4	Supporting vulnerable children and young people continues to be a high priority for the Communities Partnership. In response to the risk to our young people

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
	<p>school who are at risk of being excluded, as well as those with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and other contributors to cycles of deprivation.</p>				<p>from criminal exploitation, the partnership has worked with the police and other partners to establish the Endeavour programme, which is based on the Clear-Hold-Build methodology.</p> <p>The programme was launched over the summer: https://tinyurl.com/4v3fyeau</p> <p>NCLB have commissioned the Rock to provide detached youth work in St Pauls, the Moors and the town centre (until March 2025). Detached youth work allows young people to socialise, gain advice and develop positive relationship with their peers and adults in time and place that meets their needs. So far since the beginning of the contract in August the Rock have engaged with over 200 young people.</p> <p>Through a partnership with the St Giles, a young people worker has been employed to support young people in the Moors and St Pauls who are at risk of or being criminally exploited. This post has been developed in partnership with GCC Social care and funded through the serious violence duty funding. (The post is funded for a year as a pilot when it will be reviewed)</p> <p>St Giles have also developed a bespoke training programme to upskill local professional, decision makers and the community itself to understand and tackle criminal exploitation. So far around 40 professionals have received training with further training planned for November.</p>

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
General					
15	Continue to recognise the physical and mental health benefits of access to good quality open spaces, and ensure that parks and green spaces are safe and accessible for all residents to enjoy a diverse set of outdoor activities and the natural environment.	Adam Reynolds	No – current resourcing levels sufficient to maintain existing standards, though extending these further would have a knock-on effect on maintenance budgets.	2, 4	<p>The Green Space Team continues to undertake regular safety inspections of all green space and play areas, programming all necessary repairs and maintenance as required.</p> <p>An annual capital replacement programme allows for replacement of larger items and safer surfacing supplemented by site specific S106 contributions, and external grants and fund raising undertaken by volunteer friends groups. This might typically fund outdoor exercise equipment and informal recreational facilities.</p> <p>The Community Ranger continues to facilitate and organise environmental volunteer activities for local people and businesses on a regular or one off basis. The past year has seen an increase in the number of people and groups taking part in such projects, in the natural environment. Activities often include vegetation/habitat management, tree planting, and improvements to parks infrastructure.</p>
16	Continue to take a whole system approach to dealing with drug and alcohol addiction through Change, Grow, Live, and maintain strong links between supported housing associations, specialist support agencies and other commissioned services across the county.	Martin Stacy, Ewan Wright, Nigel Potter	No	3	<p>Our approach focuses on continuing Housing First, providing people with histories of repeat homelessness or entrenched rough sleeping, with secure independent housing prioritised whilst offering tailored, open-ended, wraparound support.</p> <p>This work is supported by collaboration with (and between) Via (supporting drug and alcohol addiction and treatment), Complex Homelessness Partnership Support</p>

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
					Services (CHPSS) and a range of NHS services addressing emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties amongst young people.
17	Support green skills and jobs, particularly for young people, amongst the council’s partners on the pathway towards Net Zero.	Helen Mole, Laura Tapping	No	2	<p>The council has used £70,000 of its shared prosperity fund towards the delivery of the Gloucestershire College Sustainable Construction Centre to support high quality skills training with a particular focus on zero carbon. Now open, the bespoke centre will be a thriving hub of activity, equipping students with key green skills needed to futureproof their careers. The centre will feature 10 plumbing bays, 12 electrical bays, and 20 bays for carpentry, as well as four classrooms.</p> <p>The Council has also committed £10k each to both Business West and to People Powered Retrofit (PPR) to map local skills development provision around retrofit. This will feed into Business West’s local skills plan. The BW research will then be passed along to PPR who (for the second phase of the project) will offer training and support to encourage existing contractors to move across to retrofit.</p>
18	Continue supporting Solace’s work on antisocial behaviour and the Community Safety Partnership’s sub-group on ASB hotspots.	Katie Mellon (GCC), Louis Krog, Kelly Patterson	No	3	<p>Via the Multi-Agency Problem Solving forum (MAPS) which is a collective of partners including police, fire, housing, business presentation, youth and VCS sector, priorities and task groups are developed to tackle issues of ASB.</p> <p>The ASB Town Centre task group identified graffiti as a high priority for the town, and via funding secured through</p>

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
					<p>the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has enabled a 3-month graffiti response pilot led by Cheltenham BID.</p> <p>The council has also successfully obtained funding from the PCC to pilot the employment of a further neighbourhood warden, with a specific focus on ASB in the town centre.</p> <p>Endeavour has been launched in Moors and St Pauls, facilitating a multi-agency approach to working to tackle serious organised crime and ASB and to support communities to empower and challenge culture change in their areas.</p> <p>As part of the clear phase of the programme a number civil injunctions were obtained by Solace.</p>
19	Use the council's networks and partnerships to promote continued support for food banks, including lobbying supermarkets where appropriate for consistency in their donations, focusing on non-perishable items.	Richard Gibson	No	4	<p>The council continues to be active in its support for our community food partners which comprises six food pantries, plus the Elim food bank and Open Door.</p> <p>Via the council's allocation of the household support fund, the council has been able to provide financial support to our food partners in the sums of circa £100k in 23/24 and a further £50k allocated for the period of April to September 2024.</p> <p>In addition, the council helps coordinate the Cheltenham Food Network where food banks and pantries meet to coordinate their plans.</p>

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
					<p>The council will also be involved in the emerging Cheltenham Food Board which will bring together all those who have an impact on food within Cheltenham with the aim of creating a long-lasting, strategic difference to the food scene in Cheltenham.</p>
20	<p>Look to ensure that the dividends of major developments like Golden Valley are leveraged to deliver community benefits and social value to deprived areas around them.</p>	<p>Martin Chastney, Paul Minnis</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>1, 4</p>	<p>Within the Golden Valley Development (GVD) the delivery of Social Value (SV) plays a pivotal role throughout its lifecycle. The GVD project team understands the importance and the vast opportunities available to positivity impact the surrounding communities and wider Cheltenham through many avenues of the GVD.</p> <p>Currently the GVD team are going through a revision of the wider SV strategy. This revised strategy will include recent community engagement feedback we have received which includes suggestions of short- and long-term activities that could be implemented to help local community groups. The strategy will include the overarching SV principles that have been re-designed by specialist SV experts at HBD who worked closely with the GVD team to develop them. These principles will be guiding the SV workstream to ensure the GVD team and our Developers, HBD, deliver the aspirations we have for the local people and communities.</p> <p>In the next few months, we will be undertaking a detailed exercise with HBD to agree the SV targets which the preferred contractor will be expected to deliver during stage one construction of the Innovation Centre and Mobility Hub.</p>

Number	Recommendation	Officer/s responsible	Additional funding required?	Linked to Corporate Plan priority?	Update – October 2024
					<p>The GVD team have an SV lead who is managing the SV strategy and driving the workstream ensuring close collaboration with HBD and our local community.</p> <p>A detailed GVD SV report is due to be submitted and reviewed at the 13th January 2025 meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</p>
21	Facilitate ongoing conversations between partners across the issues raised by the Scrutiny Task Group, and use the Council website to ensure there is clear signposting regarding these topics.	Richard Gibson	No		<p>Via its many partnership arrangements, such as the facing hardship group, No Child Left Behind and Cheltenham Integrated Locality Partnership, the council continues to have a good working relationship with a wide range of partners that are actively supporting people living with the issues identified in the Scrutiny report.</p> <p>The Council continues to use its website – particularly the cost of living pages, to provide information to residents alongside social media and printed newsletters.</p>

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC STRATEGY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee held on Friday 20 September 2024 commencing at 10.00 am at the Committee Room - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT

Cllr Matt Babbage (Chair)	Cllr Chris McFarling
Cllr Paul Baker	Cllr Ben Orme
Cllr John Bloxsom	Cllr Terry Pullen
Cllr Matt Dimond-Brown	Cllr Trevor Roach
Cllr Bernard Fisher	Cllr Chloe Turner
Cllr Angus Jenkinson	Cllr Robert Vines

Apologies: Cllr Vernon Smith

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

3.1 The Chair welcomed members to the first Gloucestershire Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee (GESSC). He reminded the committee that they were scrutinising the newly established City Region Board, and the work included in Gloucestershire County Council's Economic Strategy.

4. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 The Chair invited Rob Ayliffe, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC)'s Director of Policy, Performance and Governance/Monitoring Officer, to confirm the committee's governance arrangements and terms of reference.

4.2 The Officer emphasised that whilst GESSC was a Gloucestershire County Council scrutiny committee, it also included a member from each of Gloucestershire's six district councils and encouraged partnership working.

4.3 The call-in procedure for GESSC would be referred to each individual council's call-in procedure. However, if there was more than one call-in, there would be a discussion on the next steps.

4.4 A Member raised that GCC's Economic Strategy was not listed in the GESSC Terms of Reference as an item that could be scrutinised. The Officer confirmed that the Economic Strategy was included in the committee's remit, but he would review the terms of reference to make sure this was clear.

Action – Rob Ayliffe

4.5A Member queried about whether it was a conflict of interest that one of the GCC members was also a Cabinet Member at the Forest of Dean District Council. Officers agreed to take this away and would report back.

4.6 Responding to a Member's question, the Officer confirmed that GESSC could only scrutinise the activity and decisions made in the joint Economic Strategy and the City Region Board. Neither the City Region Board nor GESSC could scrutinise decisions made by any of the seven individual councils.

4.7 It was clarified that any items discussed at the City Region Board would be able to be scrutinised by GESSC.

5. UPDATE FROM THE CITY REGION BOARD CHAIR

5.1 Cllr David Gray, GCC Cabinet Member for Economy, Environment and Planning and Chair of the City Region Board was invited to give an update on the City Region Board's first two meetings. He was supported by David Owen, GCC Director of Economy and Environment, and Ben Watts, GCC Team Manager for Economy and Spatial Planning. He explained that the City Region Board was made up of a member from each of Gloucestershire's seven council's Executives and their Directors. The Board was created to provide a more streamlined governance structure, to reduce duplication and to provide a platform where potential devolution deals could be considered. The Board was also responsible for discharging the Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF).

5.2 It was explained that in September's City Region Board meeting, the Board had agreed to endorse the expression of interest in a devolution deal from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG). They had also agreed to note the GCC Economic Strategy and approved its use to inform the priorities of the City Region Board.

5.3 A Member questioned whether the target to achieve an 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 still held, the Cabinet Member confirmed that the target was still in place.

5.4 Answering a Member's question, the City Region Board Chair emphasised that the term 'city region' was used in central government to identify areas larger than individual cities or towns. Whilst there had been no specific legislation for the use of the term, there had been a stream of funding announcements over the last decade where identified city regions benefitted over and above other parts of the country. Gloucestershire's largest urban areas were in the geographic centre of the county with important market towns in the outer area of the county, therefore 'city region' fitted well with the landscape of Gloucestershire.

5.5 Responding to a question about how SEDF bids were decided, it was explained that the City Region Board's Senior Officer Group would receive the SEDF bids, and they would decide which bids to bring to the City Region Board. The City Region Board would decide which bids they agreed to fund.

5.6 There was a suggestion that it might be more beneficial for GESSC to have quarterly meetings rather than the six annual meetings. This was agreed by some members, but one member voiced that he did not agree with the reduction in meetings. It was decided that the meeting schedule would be agreed as the work plan became more populated.

Action – Democratic Services to review the meeting schedule and make changes as necessary

5.7A Member requested if a chart could be put together to explain how the City Region Board and GESSC related to each other and other committees.

Action – Officers/Democratic Services

5.8A Member requested that the City Region Board work plan was shared with GESSC.

Action – Democratic Services

5.9A Member raised a recommendation for the City Region Board to review GCC's Economic Strategy to identify key priorities. It was explained that the Economic Strategy had just been discussed by the City Region Board and would need time to be actioned before it could be reviewed. Furthermore, the officers were waiting for more information about what would be required in the Local Growth Plan which could supersede GCC's countywide economic strategy. The recommendation was not agreed.

5.10 It was clarified that the City Region Board was the executive authority for decisions and actions relating to joint economic development in Gloucestershire. GESSC would only be able to scrutinise actions and decisions that had already been made by the City Region Board.

6. GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC EVIDENCE BASE

6.1 The Chair invited Katherine Martin, GCC Data and Insights Manager for Communities and Place, to give an overview of the Economic Evidence Base.

6.2 The presentation gave members an insight into Gloucestershire's data and had been collated from a much more extensive Economic Strategy Evidence Base document. The presentation included information about:

- Population
 - Employment and Skills
 - Business and Enterprise
 - Personal wellbeing
 - Productivity
- 6.3 Responding to a member's question about 'Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing' being a declining sector, it was explained that Gloucestershire employed more people than the national average in these sectors. However, projections suggested that there would be a decline in employment in these sectors in the future. Although it was projected that there would be an increase in economic output due to a greater use of technology.
- 6.4 When asked about Gloucestershire's imports, the Officer confirmed that they did not have the data to be able to properly analyse imports.
- 6.5 Responding to a question about the cause of net internal migration, the Officer stated that the data did not explain people's motivation for moving to Gloucestershire but anecdotally from surveys, it was believed Gloucestershire's residents were seen as having a high quality of life.
- 6.6 Answering a question about business deaths, the Officer confirmed that the data team were undertaking a deeper analysis of this to find out whether it was just a temporary reduction or whether more recent data continued the trend.
- 6.7 The Officer explained that they were unsure why the Forest of Dean's anxiety level was higher than the other districts. The Officer explained that she was going to bring outputs from the school age children's wellbeing survey to the City Region Board, so she would include this in GESSC's next data presentation.

Action – Katherine Martin

- 6.8 Responding to a Member's question, the Officer confirmed that the Economic Evidence Base did not include carbon emissions statistics as the data was not robust enough to draw insightful information from. However, she explained that the team were looking at other ways to include this data including whether they could buy additional data.
- 6.9 A Member questioned how the City Region Board were using the Economic Evidence Database, it was explained that the City Region Board had not set firm targets for the data, but the Chair confirmed that he would take this away.

Action – Cllr David Gray/ David Owen

- 6.10 Responding about the well-being data's sample size, it was stated that the Office of National Statistics (ONS) carried out the survey and therefore they set the sample size at 1800 people across the county. The Officer emphasised that GCC were constantly asking ONS to expand their sample size.
- 6.11 A Member asked whether the county was on track to meet the target to reduce 80% of carbon emissions by 2030. The Officer explained that this wasn't in the remit of her team but that they worked closely with the Climate Change Officer who was responsible for tracking this data. It was clarified that Climate Leadership Gloucestershire would be a better committee to direct the question to.
- 6.12 Responding to a Member's question, it was explained that the data team were seeing a change in the nature of the education sector due to the increase in apprenticeships and levels of qualifications.

7. GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S ECONOMIC STRATEGY OVERVIEW

- 7.1 The Chair invited Ben Watts to give an update on GCC's Economic Strategy. It was explained that the Strategy had been adopted by GCC on the 15th May 2024. The strategic priorities outlined in the document were sustainable growth, inward investment, employment and skills and business innovation and support. The two cross-cutting themes for these strategic priorities were creating a greener Gloucestershire and an inclusive Gloucestershire.
- 7.2 In addition, the Officer explained that emerging Government advice was for the need to produce a Local Growth Plan. It was believed that GCC's Economic Strategy could be used as a basis for the Local Growth Plan. Consultation events with each of the districts would be held over the coming months to outline 3-5 economic priorities. Once identified, a draft set of local priorities would be shared with the districts for review and then the City Region Board for a broader discussion and agreement on countywide priorities. However, it was confirmed that they were still waiting for more government guidance on Local Growth Plans which was expected in the autumn.
- 7.3 Responding to a question about biodiversity, the Officer confirmed that GCC had invested in the Gloucestershire Nature and Climate Fund which guaranteed development based net gain credits for Gloucestershire, so that if the fund was used for any development in Gloucestershire, it would allow for biodiversity net gain.
- 7.4 When questioned about measuring outcomes, the Officers stated that there were a set of metrics in the Economic Strategy's Action Plan to monitor outcomes. However, these metrics would be reviewed to check that they

were the correct metrics to monitor activity. GESSC would receive an annual performance report as well as updates as appropriate.

- 7.5 It was suggested that an aspect of the annual performance report could focus on the importance of agricultural technique as well as agricultural technology in supporting food yields and environmental improvements using the work being undertaken in the Cotswolds as a case study.

Action – Katherine Martin/ Ben Watts

- 7.6 Responding to a Member, the Officer explained that he defined a green economy as helping as many businesses as possible reach carbon net zero. Although he felt that the definition of a green economy shouldn't become too rigid as to not discourage businesses.

8. UPDATE ON DEVOLUTION

- 8.1 The Chair invited David Owen to give an update on devolution. It was explained that MHCLG had asked all counties to fill out a devolution expression of interest form, this was endorsed at September's City Region Board. It was expected that the devolution options would be released by the government in the next few weeks.
- 8.2 Responding to members' questions, the Officer confirmed that no information had yet been shared on the levels of funding or on the types of devolution available.

9. WORK PLAN

- 9.1 A Member agreed to share a list of suggested work plan items with Democratic Services.

Action – Democratic Services

- 9.2 A Member suggested items on garden towns, cyber developments and tourism.

Action – Democratic Services

- 9.3 A Member requested a governance arrangement update and an item on GCC's Economic Strategy's outcome metrics.

Action – Democratic Services

- 9.4 A Member requested an item about the process of stakeholder engagement in the creation of GCC's Economic Strategy.

Action – Democratic Services

CHAIR

Meeting concluded at 13:05pm.

For a full overview of this meeting, please use the following link to access the recording <https://gloucestershire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>

This page is intentionally left blank

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2024-2025

Title	Objective	Format	Officer/Interested Party/Partner
25 November 2024 – (Deadline 15th November)			
Air Quality Action Plan	Exploration of air quality in Cheltenham, including national context, measurements, actions to address them, and future actions. Impact of role of Air Quality Education Post and feedback from DEFRA on annual report.	Information/Discussion Paper	Senior Environmental Health Officer/ Air Quality Education Projects Officer
Affordable homes	Understanding performance, current trajectory, challenges to housing enabling including through the planning process and opportunities to delivery. Reflecting on ‘best practice’.	Information/Discussion Paper	Director of Communities and Economic Development/Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager
Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report	To consider the draft Annual Scrutiny report 2023-2024	Draft report	Chair of Overview and Scrutiny
13 January 2025 – (Deadline 3rd January)			
Cheltenham Trust	Assessing priorities and income targets including the impact of the collection development policy on user attraction.	Information/Discussion Paper	Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships
Social Value	Understanding the delivery of social value in the Golden Valley development	Information/Discussion Paper	Head of Development
3 February 2025 - (Deadline 24th January)			
Walking and Cycling and Highways	Assessing impact of cycle spine and process for consultation on such developments Understanding plans for low traffic neighbourhoods Identifying solutions for safer e-scooter usage	Information/Discussion Paper	Director of Communities and Economic Development Gloucestershire County Council Highways

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2024-2025

Title	Objective	Format	Officer/Interested Party/Partner
24 February 2025 – (Deadline 14th February)			
Reconciling the challenges of heritage protection with sustainability measures	Identifying factors to develop a workable balance between protecting heritage and implementing environmental solutions (retrofit); Receiving feedback from the community retrofit project and other initiatives to meet our climate net zero targets.	Information/Discussion Paper	Head of Development Management, Enforcement and Compliance Climate Emergency Team
31 March 2025 – (Deadline 21st March)			
Climate Impact of Waste Disposal	Javelin Park and emissions	Briefing Note	Environmental Partnerships Manager/GCC
Culture Board	Assessing outcomes of the activities and measuring success against original objectives	Information/Discussion Paper	Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships
28th April 2025 – (Deadline 18th April)			
Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)	Present impact of new EDI policy Identifying good practice and reviewing targets	Report	Director of Governance and Customer Services (Monitoring Officer)
7 July 2025 onwards – (Deadline 27th June)			
Minster Exchange	Update on first year of operation. Assessing the impact against original objectives	Report	Chief Executive
Housing Transition	An update on progress following the integration of housing services into CBC one year ago	Information/Discussion Paper	Chief Executive
Devolution	Assessing the opportunities and threats of devolution and how officers are prioritising/responding to these.	Information/Discussion Paper	Chief Executive
Draft Procurement Strategy	To consider the emerging CBC procurement strategy	Information/Discussion Paper	Strategic Procurement Manager

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2024-2025

Title	Objective	Format	Officer/Interested Party/Partner
Empty Homes	Evaluating data and measures to encourage putting back in use and respective barriers	Information/Discussion Paper	Private Sector Housing

This page is intentionally left blank