

Cheltenham Borough Council

Council

Minutes

Meeting date: 16 December 2024

Meeting time: 2.30 pm - 4.35 pm

Councillors:

Paul Baker (Chair), Dr David Willingham (Vice-Chair), Frank Allen, Glenn Andrews, Adrian Bamford, Garth Barnes, Dilys Barrell, Graham Beale, Angie Boyes, Jackie Chelin, Flo Clucas, Mike Collins, Ashleigh Davies, Chris Day, Iain Dobie, Jan Foster, Juan Carlos Garcia Clamp, Rowena Hay, Martin Horwood, Peter Jeffries, Tabi Joy, Alisha Lewis, Tony Oliver, Richard Pineger, Izaac Tailford, Julian Tooke, Simon Wheeler and Suzanne Williams

Also in attendance:

Paul Jones (Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer)), Claire Hughes (Director of Governance and Customer Services and Monitoring Officer), Gareth Edmundson (Chief Executive), Kim Smith (Elections Manager) and Graham Russell (Chair of Independent Remuneration Panel)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Atherstone, Chandler, Clarke, Harvey, Holliday, Lynch, Mutton, Orme, Pemberton, Sankey, Smith and Steinhardt.

2 Declarations of interest

Councillors Baker, Williams and Willingham declared an interest in the motion as county councillors.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

Councillor Andrews wished to clarify that he had seconded the Public Realm motion at the last meeting, not Councillor Pineger.

Further to this amendment, it was

RESOLVED THAT

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October were approved and signed as a correct record.

4 Communications by the Mayor

The Mayor had been to many lovely carol services and Christmas light switch-ons, visited care homes, and attended an event at The Wilson, funded through Cheltenham Pride, where children from under-privileged areas created artwork which was then put on display. He also attended an enlightening session chaired by Councillor Atherstone in the Council Chamber, *In Our Own Words*, with female students from Pittville School. They talked about their concerns as young women in Cheltenham, and was a good experience, demonstrating the importance of engaging with all our communities. He hoped some of the issues they raised will be carried forward.

One of the Mayor's charities, Caring for Communities and People, did their annual Hamper Scamper, collecting food and gifts from local businesses and donors for people who would not otherwise receive any. He said it was sad that the demand for this has gone up by 34% from last year, with so many more families struggling financially, adding that without our charities in the town we wouldn't be able to help as many people as we do. On that note, he gave special thanks to David Bath, who raises large amounts of money for charity in the town, and has organised a selection box appeal which has had many hundreds of donations, including many from CBC staff. The Mayor helped to deliver some of these to Riding for the Disabled and saw first-hand how appreciated they are.

The Mayor also visited the Royal Naval Parade of Cheltenham Sea Cadets, and having never been in the building before, he was impressed to see the great opportunities organisations such as this provide for young people to learn new skills – including rowing, sailing, and knot-tying - and to make new friends.

5 Communications by the Leader of the Council

Like the Mayor, the Leader said she had also had the privilege to represent Cheltenham locally, nationally and internationally throughout the year, meeting many different people, and was taking this opportunity to reflect on all the council has achieved in 2024:

- housing colleagues were welcomed back to the CBC fold on 1st July; thanks to tenants and leaseholders involved in our housing committee and tenant and leaseholder panels for their time and their voice, vital in driving and improving the service going forward;
- CBC self-referred itself to the housing regulator, who provided no formal judgement but was pleased with the actions being taken thus far; huge thanks to all involved in that process and the work that will continue into 2025;

- all-out elections in May, swiftly followed by the general election in July, involved a massive all-round team effort led by the elections team. Thanks to them for the phenomenal amount of work entailed;
- the Minster Exchange was formally opened, Golden Valley planning applications were submitted, and we delivered over £2m in savings;
- the council won accolades for keeping people safe during race week, for Cheltenham's night-time economy, and for our amazing parks and gardens;
- officers were involved in dealing with the fire at the Regent Arcade car park;
- after 30 years of talking about it, the Municipal Offices are finally up for sale with applications now closed. The airport is also on the market, to remain as an airport with much-needed investment. Both have required a huge amount of effort from officers; the responses have been good, and many compliments have been received on the management of the process;
- £20 million pounds has been received from the government to support another step on our journey to delivering the innovation centre.

She went on to consider some of the challenges ahead:

- the change in the National Planning Policy Framework announced last week will see increased numbers for CBC, and make working with our Strategic and Local partners even more important; there are many other changes which will need to be digested;
- with the white paper inviting all remaining two-tier council areas to submit reorganisation proposals, at the same time requiring unitary councils to look at themselves again in terms of their size, she hoped that, once the contents of the paper have been fully digested, the county and the districts will be able to reach a consensus that is best for our county, noting that the government is anticipating that the changes will happen within this parliamentary term.

Returning to CBC's achievements, she said the festive ice rink has been a huge hit again, now offering special relaxed glide sessions and working with the Holiday Activities Fund to offer free skating to local residents who meet the eligibility criteria. Sales are up on last year, thanks to excellent marketing and reputation, and also to our primary sponsor, Lidl. Last year the rink welcomed 30,000 skaters who spent an estimated £1.6 million in local businesses, £860,000 of which wouldn't have been spent without the ice rink, and the same analysis this year will see how this has improved.

She congratulated Cheltenham Town Women's team who have reached the fourth round of the FA Cup for the first time in their history, and will play Wolverhampton Wanderers on Sunday 12 January for a place in the last 16.

Finally, she asked everyone to support her in thanking all CBC's operational teams, including the housing team, environmental health officers, cleansing teams and emergency planning, who will be on call across the festive period to support local residents and businesses.

She ended by wishing everyone the very best for the holiday season.

6 To receive petitions

There were none.

7 Public Questions

1. Question from Mr Craig Storey to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

Could you tell what the tonnage (or similar) is per recycled type that is recycled on a weekly or monthly basis. That I presume tells us what the top three items are by weight, and also what will need to be found another home for recycling. I imagine the figures will be fairly high so what is the expected impact on other sites that will have to take this extra recycling. And if those figures are high surely its your duty to keep the site open.

Member response:

I am pleased to respond to your question which raises some helpful points about our decision to implement a prolonged closure of the site.

We know from figures reported for the last full financial year which was 2023/24 that a lot more residual waste (rubbish) than recycling is taken to the HRC – approximately 3,983 tonnes of residual waste per year compared to 834 tonnes of recycling. 910 tonnes of garden waste is also being taken to the HRC.

I am proud of our excellent kerbside waste and recycling services in Cheltenham and we are confident that the additional refuse (rubbish) can be absorbed within our kerbside service – we already pick up about 18,500 tonnes of rubbish each year. We all need to do our bit with this and try to reduce the amount of waste we are generating for the sake of the planet and our pockets. We are all part of a throw-away society these days and this has to change.

It would be great if we all recycled everything we could, not just some of it, and this would help improve our recycling rate as we only recycle just under half of what we throw away at present and our government target is to reach 65% by 2035. I have just signed off on the purchase of a new fleet of recycling vehicles which will be able to cope with future demands for recycling other materials like cartons and flexibles. These new vehicles have a larger capacity and again we are confident the kerbside service can accommodate extra recycling capacity from residents recycling more even when the HRC at Swindon Road is closed. Putting recycling in a kerbside box at home is much easier than driving it to Swindon Road or anywhere else for that matter although we do have our bring banks around the town if residents do want to get rid of extra recycling. Again, the bring banks will be serviced more regularly including the introduction of a Saturday collection to ensure they are able to deal with any additional recycling.

2. Question from Mr Craig Storey to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

What analysis has been done on the reported 1 million pounds required for redevelopment in an attempt to mitigate or reduce those potential costs? A major concern identified is that particular waste may leach into the ground. What type of waste is it. Can the identified troublesome waste not be simply transferred to wig moor?

Member response:

Thank you for your question. One of the reasons for the prolonged closure is the need to further understand all of the costs that would be involved in the re-opening of the site and how cost effectively this could be achieved. We have already sought initial quotes for the works involved including a new permit, the grounds works to remove the existing concrete surface, replace it with appropriate grade reinforced concrete with kerbing to contain fire water, drainage, as well as reconfigure the site layout to fit within the new slightly smaller boundary including electrical works. In addition to this we will need to have covered storage areas for some materials going forward and all of this comes to around £1million at present.

I am pleased to confirm that the site currently operates in compliance with all current legislation and regulations however any waste on the site could cause issues with run off water in the event of a fire or day to day activities if adequate measures are not in place. One of the considerations around the future of the site is its much smaller size in comparison to the ones Gloucestershire County Council have to provide. You will notice that the GCC operated sites collect a much wider range of materials than we are able to due to our space constraints and residents may prefer to load up their cars with this much wider range of materials and drive straight to Wingmoor with it all? The prolonged closure will help us and GCC assess this as part of the prolonged closure.

3. Question from Mr Matt Box to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

The Review of Waste and Recycling report to Cabinet on 26 November recommending the prolonged closure of the Swindon Road recycling centre provided in its justification "CBC's focus has to remain on delivering a high quality and expanded waste and recycling collection service". Does the Cabinet Member therefore share my disappointment that those properties in the borough due to have their residual waste collected on 25th, 26th and 27th December have had the collection cancelled altogether and face a full four week wait from the last collections on 11th-13th December until the next scheduled for 8th-10th January?

Member response:

Thank you for the opportunity of explaining the Christmas waste and recycling collection changes, I have another similar question to answer so sorry if I am repeating myself but the question is an important one, as is the answer.

We are doing things a bit differently this year and trialling a different approach to allow our waste and recycling teams to enjoy some proper time off and celebrate Christmas with their families. They work hard for our town all year round, including catch up collections after bank holidays, so I am glad we could offer them a real break.

These changes will also allow all collections to get back to normal much more quickly than in previous years, with collections starting again immediately after Christmas week when the volumes of waste and recycling are at their highest.

We appreciate some residents will have to wait for a collection, however any extra waste and recycling can be presented on the next scheduled collection as we will take extra waste and recycling as part of a 'bumper' collection. You can also take any additional recycling to bring banks and household recycling centres, and I would encourage all residents to use food waste caddies at home as much as possible.

Flats who would normally have a collection on 25, 26 and 27 December will have an extra collection which will take place the following week on 30 and 31 December and we will be monitoring black bag waste in the affected areas the week after collection.

We all need to look to reduce the amount of waste we generate and I appreciate it isn't always easy for everyone but trialling this alternative method for collections this year for the reasons I have already set out will also test out this different approach to collection frequency at this time of year. If it doesn't work I am happy to hold my hands up and say that we tried it and it didn't work. We won't know this until the New Year and I know Cheltenham residents want to be responsible with their waste.

Question from Mr Matt Box to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

Will the Cabinet Member commit to reintroducing additional weekend and/or bank holiday collections over the Christmas period in future to ensure residents experience a high quality waste collection service and to ensure the Council adheres to the DEFRA guidance that states residual waste collections should be "prioritised and maintained to prevent waste from building up and to protect public health and the local area"?

Member response:

Thank you for the opportunity of explaining the Christmas waste and recycling collection changes. We are doing things a bit differently this year and trialling a different approach to allow our waste and recycling teams to enjoy some proper time off to celebrate Christmas with their families. They work hard for our town all year round, including catch up collections after bank holidays, so I am glad we could offer them a real break.

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Flats who would normally have a collection on 25, 26 and 27 December will have an extra collection which will take place the following week on 30 and 31 December and we will be monitoring black bag waste in the affected areas the week after collection.

I would encourage everyone to recycle as much as they can over Christmas, as the more we recycle, the more our service provider Plan-B gives us in donations to support Cheltenham's Foodbanks, which is really needed, particularly at this time of year.

Regarding your comments around DEFRA's guidance, I am pleased to confirm that in their most recent policy update on 29 November 2024, DEFRA have said that they "recognise that as recycling services are expanded and improved, local authorities may want to review residual waste services to ensure they are providing best value for money in line with local need. The government's priority is ensuring that households' needs are met, and we expect local authorities to continue to provide services to a reasonable standard. Councils and other waste collectors will retain the flexibility to make the best choices to suit local need."

I want to assure you that I don't expect to be changing our residual waste collection frequency away from fortnightly but the changes over Christmas are a bit different and will help us understand whether our new trialled approach for Christmas should continue next year or not. We need to trial new things to see if they work or not and be honest with the public if they don't work.

Christmas and new year revised waste and recycling collection dates are set out here as a reminder but they are also in the Local Answer which has gone to every household and also on the Liberal Democrat Christmas card.

Normal collection day	Revised collection day
Monday 23 December 2024	Monday 23 December 2024
Tuesday 24 December 2024	Tuesday 24 December 2024
Wednesday 25 December 2024	Wednesday 8 January 2025
Thursday 26 December 2024	Thursday 9 January 2025
Friday 27 December 2024	Friday 10 January 2025
Monday 30 December 2024	Monday 30 December 2024
Tuesday 31 December 2024	Tuesday 31 December 2024
Wednesday 1 January 2025	Thursday 2 January 2025
Thursday 2 January 2025	Friday 3 January 2025
Friday 3 January 2025	Saturday 4 January 2025

4. Question from Mr Tim Harman to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

In the light of the decision by Cheltenham Borough Council to close the Swindon Road Recycling Centre, has the Council assessed the impact on the well-used bring sites such as Bath Terrace?

Member response:

Thank you for your question and I am pleased to be able to share our plans for bring sites including Bath Terrace.

As I have previously said, the prolonged closure of the HRC will allow us and GCC to test out in the real world what the impacts are and we won't know this until after the site closes on 10 January 2025.

I do hope that residents use the excellent kerbside recycling collection service and the recycling bring banks for their recycling rather than driving it to the GCC HRC at Bishops Cleeve.

We have arranged for extra collections from the bring banks, including Saturday collections for some busier bring banks, to ensure that they can cope with the extra recycling.

I hope to be able to find another bring bank site in Cheltenham to replace the Swindon Road bring banks as soon as possible and would be pleased to have any suggestions we can take away and explore.

Supplementary question:

Does the Cabinet Member agree that closure of Swindon Road HRC will put the bring sites under greater pressure? As part of the review, will he agree to look at this carefully, and also to consider expanding the facilities, with the possible addition of further skips and/or kerbside recycling of additional items which can't currently be taken to bring sites?

Member response:

The Cabinet Member for Waste and Recycling agreed that the bring sites would be under additional pressure, and that this is one of the reasons for the prolonged closure of HRC, as a trial to see how much more resource needs to be diverted to emptying them. This is already being done, and he is also looking at getting another site to alleviate the pressure across the town. Also, if there is suitable space to offer recycling of more items, he is open to doing this, particularly as the bins currently used at the HRC will be available during the prolonged closure to be situated elsewhere.

5. Question from Mr Tim Harman to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

Can the Cabinet member say if the Council has plans to close any or all of the bring sites as well as the Swindon Road centre?

Member response:

I am grateful for the opportunity to clarify my position in relation to bring banks and the HRC.

I have committed to extra collections at the bring banks to ensure they can cope with any extra demand during the prolonged closure of the Swindon Road HRC and this includes trying to identify an additional bring bank site and again, if anyone has any suggestions we can explore do let me know.

Regarding the future of the HRC at Swindon Road, I think the cabinet report fully sets out our position regarding this site. We need to properly assess its future, looking at the cost of the works required as well as giving us and GCC a proper opportunity to look at the capacity of HRC provision in this part of the County and what their plans are. Once the site closes we will be able to test out the impacts on the existing GCC HRC provision as well as our bring banks and the kerbside services.

I am sure you will understand that I cannot prejudge the outcome of all of this which is why we have a prolonged closure and not a definite decision to close at this time.

Supplementary question:

Whatever comes out of the review, would you agree to have a public consultation exercise about the future of bring sites if they are in jeopardy, given that so far there has been no consultation about the closure of the Swindon Road site?

Member response:

In relation to the future of the HRC, any member of the public can express their opinions via the budget consultation, and there will be a resident survey next year as well as consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. There are no plans to close any of the bring sites – with the prolonged closure of the HRC, they will be under increased pressure and we need to make sure that they are maintained and retained for as long as possible - but if this ever becomes an option, there will be open discussion about the matter.

6. Question from Mr Chris Mason to Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Alisha Lewis

In previous years, CBC have allowed some free parking on Thursdays in selected town centre car parks to boost the town's Christmas economy. As at the date of submitting this question (4th December) I have not seen anything advertised. What plans, if any, are there to do something similar this year?

Member response:

Free parking to coincide with pre-Christmas late night shopping has been offered at Town Centre East car park in previous years. Due to on-going maintenance requirements this car park is close to being full most days so has limited capacity. The closure of North Place car park, which is run by a private provider, is expected imminently and will significantly reduce car parking capacity in the town. This will place an even greater demand on the Council's car parks and limit availability.

Supplementary question:

Would the Cabinet Member not agree that with our town centres and retailers are struggling, the small gesture of allowing free parking after 3.00pm would be seen as a reasonable step?

Member response:

This is something that can be looked into as a review but it is not in the pipeline at the moment.

7. Question from Mr Chris Mason to Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Alisha Lewis

How much longer will the installation of the 10 EV's in the Bath Terrace Car Park take? These EV's were scheduled to be in place by the end of November. There are currently 28 bays closed for the installation, on top of the 12 bays lost to the relocated bring banks. During the Literature Festival, and now with increased shopping activity leading up to Christmas, I have regularly witnessed potential users being understandably frustrated at the reduction in spaces.

Member response:

I would like to thank Mr Mason for his question. We were expecting the EV charging points to be operating by November however we have experienced delays with the Distribution Network Operator who in this case is National Grid. As you can appreciate the implementation of this type of infrastructure involves a large number of stakeholders and this can create complexities. The Council is still committed to delivering EV charging facilities across the town and it is expected that this pilot will be open in the new year.

Supplementary question:

As the installation of charging points at Bath Road Car Park are overdue and given the constant change in the process, are Bath Road traders being kept up to date with the situation?

Member response:

Yes, traders are being kept up to date and it is simply and regrettably a matter of National Grid holding things up, something with which many councillors will be familiar. Things will be progressed as soon as possible, and once complete, the EV chargers will be an asset for the small traders in the area, who will hopefully visit the shops within easy walking distance while their cars are charging.

8. Question from Mrs Emma Nelson to Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins

I am concerned at the lack of enforcement action on the Miller site in Leckhampton where 350 homes are now under construction plus of course the ongoing 131 Promenade fiasco.

Can you please advise how many post-holders there have been, with their length of tenure, over the past five years, for the following:

- Head of Planning
- Enforcement Officers
- Conservation Officers
- Planning Officers

Member response:

Thank you for your question. I can provide the following information; please note that this relates to permanent post holders only and does not include temporary contractor/agency staff.

Head of Planning

- 1 x 1 year 7 month
- 1 x 1 year 3 months

Enforcement Officers

- 1 x 2 years 3 months
- 1 x 2 years 9 months

Conservation Officers

- 1 x 3 years 10 months
- 1 x 2 months (current Conservation Officer)
- 1 x 1 month (current Senior Conservation Officer)

Planning Officers

- 1 x 2 yrs 3 months
- 1 x 2 yrs 11 months
- 1 x 3 yrs 4 months
- 6 x 5 yrs 8 months (six current Planning and Senior Planning Officers)
- 1 x 3 yrs 8 months
- 1 x 2 yrs 8 months
- 1 x 1 yr 9 months (current Principal Planning Officer)
- 1 x 7 months

Supplementary question:

These staff turnovers are concerning, particularly given the significant increase in development we are now seeing, for both new sites in the town and private extensions, to be increased further following the government's recent announcement. The planning department will be under incredible pressure, and enforcement is a particular concern with just one officer at present. What actions are the Cabinet taking to ensure longer-term stability in this vital department?

Member response:

The good news is that there are now two enforcement officers in situ. With a lot of development underway, the council is doing everything it can to maintain a team to deal with applications in a timely manner. Cheltenham is not alone with the challenges it faces in recruiting and retaining planning staff – there just aren't enough planners, but it is hoped that the new government will put some schemes in place to change that.

9. Question from Mrs Emma Nelson to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Alisha Lewis

Can the Cabinet Member confirm if the refurbishment of the public toilets in Montpellier Gardens is overdue on its completion date and if it is likely to overspend its budget?

Member response:

I would like to thank Mrs Nelson for her question. The refurbishment of the public toilets in Montpellier Gardens was set out in our Corporate Plan for 2023-2027 which received cross party support when it was approved by Full Council in February 2023. I am pleased to report that although delays have been experienced with the contractor procured to undertake the work, the project is not expected to be overspent on completion. This is a credit to the hard work of officers in the Major Developments team who have managed the work, kept key stakeholders informed of progress and used their knowledge and experience to hold this contractor to account. The project is expected to be complete in the new year when we will re-open to the public refurbished toilets which will include the latest Changing Places facilities in the town centre. Not only has the project safeguarded and repaired a listed building in one of our iconic parks but with refurbished disabled facilities, gender neutral family facilities and parity of male and female toilets demonstrates our council's commitment to inclusivity.

Supplementary question:

Local businesses have advised that the refurbishment of the public toilets in Montpellier was due to be complete in time for the literature festival in October, but this is another overdue CBC-managed project, like The Wilson, the MX, and EV chargers in Bath Road. Please be more specific about when they will be finished. Will it be by the end of January?

Member response:

This is a regrettable case of bad weather and contractor-related issues outside the control of CBC. This is regrettable, but the council has always been clear that the tax payer will not be footing the bill for the delays, the costs of which will quite reasonably be taken on by the developer. When it comes to managing public expectation, it is difficult to commit to specific dates for the launch of projects, although it is hoped that the project will be complete as early as possible in the new year.

10. Question from Ms Julie Harris to Cabinet Member for Major Developments and Housing Regeneration, Councillor Peter Jeffries

This question is really for the Liberal Democrats. Would like to ask is there in the future any plans to rejuvenate Coronation Square shopping area. Looks run down but is definitely a much-needed area for the neighbourhood. Shops very much needed and pharmacy, dentist, supermarkets etc, I'm sure Coronation Square brings in much needed revenue for the area, but it looks run down. Maybe rethink the area? specially the front pavement area which is so vast and could be made for short stopping time parking 20mins. Around the back of the shops half of the car park for long term parking and build some more houses? Library could also do with new lease of life. I have lived in this neighbourhood for nearly 50 years and have very fond memories of Coronation Square and how vibrant this community was.

Member response:

Thank you, Ms Harris, for a very good question and one that is close to my own heart. Like yourself, I too have lived in the area for many years and know how

important Coronation Square is to the local community. And, as you rightly observe, it is indeed looking tired and in need of a refresh.

Unfortunately, the shopping parade, is not controlled by the Borough Council but rather, by a third-party property investor, who, along with the Highways Authority, also control the frontage and pavement areas. Likewise, the library is controlled by the County Council. The Borough Council does, however, control the car park to the rear.

There have been various discussions over the years with the investors of the shopping parade as to how we could work together to secure investment into the area and give it the facelift it richly deserves. However, whilst the size of the car park is relatively large, the layout makes development of this area in its own right difficult in isolation without major redevelopment of the shopping parade itself. This would, unfortunately, not be currently viable for the owners of the shopping parade at this point in time. Regardless, we continue to speak with them and as recently as October this year (2024), invited them to put forward proposals for any new ideas that they may have, in the absence of major targeted grant funding for local development schemes.

With the excellent progress that the Borough Council is making with the Golden Valley development, right on the doorstep of Coronation Square, this will generate hundreds of millions of pounds of investment within this part of Cheltenham, in turn creating thousands of jobs and new homes. It is therefore expected that the area will benefit hugely from increased custom and expenditure and encourage further investment into the area, including investment into this vital neighbourhood centre.

The Borough Council will therefore continue to work collaboratively with all parties involved to ensure that opportunities for future investment are explored, in order that Coronation Square remains the vibrant part of the community that we both know it has been for many years.

11. Question from Mr Rich Newman to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Public Realm, Councillor Izaac Tailford

I believe the "New Environment Laws" referred to as necessitating the £1m spend on the Cheltenham Household Recycling Centre (HRC), are covered by the Environment Act of 2021. I understand that the rules around HRC Health and Safety etc were due to come into force in November 2024, but following the change in Government in July this is now deferred. If this is the case, then why the last-minute decision to close the HRC? Surely there should have already been plans and budgetary allowances made to ensure compliance by the November 2024 deadline? Why was the council unable to ensure compliance?

Member response:

Thank you for your question and I am pleased to clarify the timing of the decision.

You are correct we did originally expect the new permitting regulations to come into force in November 2024 and we were working with a specialist consultant well in advance of this to understand what would be required, including engaging with the Environment Agency. A lot of the legislation around the Environment Act 2021 has

been delayed for varying reasons and it wasn't unexpected that this would also be delayed further however at some point during the next financial year we expect it to come into force and we must make appropriate budgetary provision for this.

We did not however know until more recently how significant and expensive the required works to the site would be.

Draft council budgets need to be set by this time each year to go out to public consultation before being agreed early in February every year requiring a decision at this time about whether we had the £1million funding available for the works. In the coming year, without slashing other public services, there is not available budget to fund the required £1million investment however as you rightly point out we don't want a rushed decision over its future hence the prolonged closure to be able to make this decision in the fullness of time over the next year or so.

Supplementary question:

Given the uncertainty of the timescale referred to in the final sentence of the reply, would the Cabinet Member agree to make a statement in the new year outlining a clear timeframe?

Member response:

We have to go through the process, and it depends on a lot of factors, including discussions with the county council, consideration by Overview and Scrutiny, budget consultation and the resident survey. We will have a decision about the HRC by June or July 2025, and the public will be kept up to date throughout the process.

13. Question from Mr Rich Newman to the Leader, Councillor Rowena Hay

What will happen to the staff currently working at the HRC? Will they be assured jobs elsewhere? How much notice were they given prior to the public announcement on 18th November? How well were they forewarned?

Member response:

Thank you for asking a question about the well-being of the staff involved in the prolonged closure of the HRC.

The staff concerned are all employed by Ubico Ltd, not Cheltenham Borough Council, however I am assured that they have all been offered suitable alternative employment. Staff were briefed on Monday 18 November before the cabinet papers were published and a media release was issued.

Supplementary question:

Was it not inconsiderate to have failed to inform the staff of the site closure before the day of the public announcement?

Member response:

Staff were told in the morning, before the matter was made public, with unions involved. It was important that the news wasn't leaked ahead of any decision, which would have been a challenge for Ubico employees, the council and the public.

14. Question from Mr Crispian Webb to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing and Culture, Councillor Martin Horwood

The Prince of Wales Stadium is used extensively by local clubs and groups, in particular Cheltenham and County Harriers. The Harriers pay nearly £4,000 per month to use the facility, and yet cannot host licensed matches there as the track failed testing and needs to be replaced. What funding has been allocated and in what timescale in order to complete this essential work?

Member response:

I would like to thank Mr Webb for his question and for the efforts of Harriers members to highlight this issue and the importance of future planning for the restoration and future maintenance of a high-quality track at the Prince of Wales Stadium, capable of hosting licensed athletic matches.

I understand the latest estimate (Oct 2024) to resurface the track to reach licensed meeting standard was £489,000. This represents a substantial capital investment. This represents a substantial capital investment.

In 2023 the council agreed to make a £1m provision over two years for more substantial capital investments to be identified by the Cheltenham Trust who operate the stadium and other landmark properties in Cheltenham on the council's behalf, particularly investments which would sustain and grow the Trust's income. The most recent agreed expenditure against this budget was £244,390 on refurbished and replacement gym equipment at Leisure@ which is expected to start raising extra revenue in the new year. The majority of this budget has now been committed and does not include a specific item for track renewal or replacement which would now significantly exceed the available budgeted funds.

The council's risk register has already identified that if the council does not have a long term vision and investment plan in place for its leisure and culture venues then significant unplanned maintenance, repairs & investment may be required to keep the venues running and it may undermine the ability of the Trust (or any future provider) to run leisure and culture services. In mitigation of this risk, in April this year, the cabinet agreed to move towards an options appraisal of future provision of both the stadium and the Leisure@ centre, including indicative capital costs. This is a potential major project for the council and I am currently finalising the brief for this options appraisal with officers. I have asked them to make sure it includes consultation with key stakeholders including Cheltenham & County Harriers and that it aims to build a business case for investment that will take both facilities up to a level that can attract bigger competitions. I hope to present the result of this options appraisal in the new year.

15. Question from Mr Crispian Webb to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing and Culture, Councillor Martin Horwood

Cheltenham and County Harriers pay approximately £48,000 per annum in hire fees for the Prince of Wales Stadium. The last time the track was resurfaced was some 20 years ago; tracks last around 10 to 15 years. Can you advise how much money has been set aside year on year to cover this known replacement cost?

Member response:

Maintenance and replacement costs are budgeted for year by year. The council's planned maintenance programme for 2024-2025 totals £598,950, and included £65,000 at Leisure@ to investigate water ingress to swimming pool drainage channels, replace heat pumps, carry out anti-corrosion work and install drainage to overcome flooding, £15,000 to restore stonework and install a kitchen fan at the art gallery & museum, £35,000 for various remedial works at the Town Hall and £65,000 for various replacements and repairs to plasterwork, stonework, the dome and skylights at the Pittville Pump Room but nothing for the Prince of Wales Stadium.

The proposed planned maintenance programme for 2025/26 includes an investment of £5,000 into the jumps area of the track.

In the light of the Harriers campaign, and other similar issues that have arisen this year, I have arranged to meet with senior council officers shortly to review this maintenance budget and how it is created, monitored and reviewed.

16. Question from Mr Richard Lawler to Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Victoria Atherstone

What is the Cabinet Member's view on using a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) to remove the 10-minute leeway that parking enforcement officers currently have to give to anti-social and illegal parking around schools in Cheltenham? This leniency undermines enforcement efforts, especially during peak school drop-off and pick-up times when even brief illegal parking can lead to significant congestion, obstructed visibility, and increased risks for pedestrians, particularly young students. A PSPO offers more robust control by allowing immediate enforcement without any obligatory grace period, and the legislative flexibility would enable enforcement officers to take swift, direct action to address hazardous parking practices, thereby reinforcing compliance and creating a stronger deterrent against anti-social behaviour. well-justified and highly effective measure in protecting the safety and welfare of students, school staff, and residents, enhancing traffic flow and promoting community well-being.

Cabinet Member response:

Thank you for your question. Gloucestershire County Council has responsibility for highways management and the enforcement of on-street parking. Depending on signage, the 10-minute leeway you refer to does not apply on zigzag lines or double yellow lines close to schools so the county council enforcement officers are already able to enforce illegal parking without a PSPO being in place.

Supplementary question:

Given the persistent challenges of anti-social and illegal parking around schools, would the council consider appointing Councillor Graham Beale to lead a dedicated working group to address this issue?

Member response (Leader, in the absence of Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities):

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, it would not be right to commit Cabinet to something without a collective Cabinet decision. In addition, most of what is being requested sits with the county council rather than the borough council, and it would be more appropriate to ask the relevant county councillor to take this matter up with the county council. Inconsiderate parking outside schools has been talked about out over the years and many people have tried to do something about it, with limited success. The Cabinet will discuss his suggestion and come back to him about it.

The Mayor explained that the county council offers the same opportunity to ask questions direct to Cabinet Members as the borough council, and also to attend meetings to ask supplementary questions, so there is no need to go through a county councillor.

8 Member Questions

There were none.

9 Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel

The Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) introduced the report as circulated.

At the request of the council, the IRP has considered a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee, and looking at this in more detail, found that there is indeed a significant responsibility on the Chair and Vice-Chair which they felt is very much aligned to the Chair and Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny. The report therefore recommends an SRA of £4463 for the Chair and £1517 for the Vice-Chair, recognising that this is a new governance structure and therefore requesting the opportunity to review the situation in 12 months' time.

The Leader wished to put on record her thanks to the IRP.

In response to a question, the Chair of the IRP confirmed that member representations had been received as part of the review of the basic allowance, and emphasised that evidence from Councillors was invaluable.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT

- 1. the following recommendations of the IRP be accepted:**
 - a) That a 3% increase be applied to Member's Allowances basic and Special Responsibility Allowances from 1 April 2025 following the National Joint Council for Local Government Services pay award and equal to an equivalent percentage increase of the £1,290 flat rate increase on a Grade I employee role.**
 - b) That the Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee be awarded a Special Responsibility Allowance of £4,463 to be backdated to the 1 September 2024.**

- c) That the Vice Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee be awarded a Special Responsibility Allowance of £1,517 to be backdated to the 1 September 2024.
- d) That the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee be reviewed by the Independent Remuneration Panel in October 2025.

2. the role profile of the Chair of Cabinet Housing Committee at Appendix 3 of the report be approved for inclusion within the Constitution.

10 Annual Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) introduced the report and took the opportunity to reflect on the successes of the committee. She highlighted that there had been a call-in on the decision to bring Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) back in house at her first meeting as Chair, which resulted in the setting up of a scrutiny task group on the transition project. She was proud of its achievements and thanked those involved, including councillors, CBH officers, and a tenant representative. The Chair also referenced the attendance of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the scrutiny of the Minster Exchange project.

She welcomed the involvement of Members of O&S in drafting its work programme and invited feedback to ensure that scrutiny was focused on the right issues for councillors and members of the public.

In response to Member questions, the Chair of O&S made the following points :

- the state of local NHS dentistry and GP waiting lists is something that had been examined under the previous Chair of O&S but she would be happy to raise the issue with local MPs if required;
- the Annual Report does not include a summary of feedback from councillor representatives on joint committees, such as the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), but those Members would be invited to submit a summary report for subsequent Annual Reports. Members were also invited to contact representatives if there were any matters they wished to raise at these meetings;
- it was encouraging that the Local Government Association Peer Review had recognised the work scrutiny had undertaken on deprivation in the town, and this will be kept on the work plan in the coming year. The Chair would be happy to write to the MP with regard to the fact that the indices of multiple deprivation had not been reviewed since 2019 and more up-to-date data was requested;
- joint scrutiny of licensing policy would be considered.

In debate, the Leader commented that, as an elected Member, she visits other councils as part of a peer review team, acting as a critical friend. She is proud to say

that Cheltenham has a good scrutiny committee when compared to some of those other councils she has visited.

The Chair of O&S was praised for her significant contributions to scrutiny.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT

The Annual report of Overview and Scrutiny be noted.

11 Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets introduced the report as published, saying the council has an annual obligation to consult on this. Cheltenham has one of the most generous council tax support schemes in the country and she is proud that the council is able to support residents in new ways despite the pressures on local government finances. The new category of beneficiary for council tax support is those in receipt of the Armed Forces Compensation.

Members welcomed the report, highlighted the good work the council does in supporting residents, particularly those in the most deprived areas of the town. This includes the No Child Left Behind initiative and work with food banks. It was right that those in receipt of Armed Forces compensation should be supported. It was noted that the consultation response was relatively low and Members asked that efforts be made to increase that next year.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT

- 1. the Local Council Tax Support Scheme be approved and adopted for working age customers in Appendix 4 and summarised in Appendix 5, for 2025/26.**
- 2. Authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets to uprate any premiums, allowances and determine the income levels in line with any increase in Welfare Benefits by 21 February 2025.**

12 Half-yearly Treasury Management Report

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets introduced the report and explained that the council safeguards funds on behalf of Cheltenham residents and in the best interests of the town. Treasury funds are used to deliver council services which are increasing in cost, whilst central government funding is reducing. Due to its careful management, treasury is also used to support discretionary initiatives, such as No Child Left Behind. The Cabinet Member wished to put on record her thanks to the officer team.

A Member commented that the No Child Left Behind initiative had helped over 7000 children in the borough and sound treasury management had facilitated this. Officers were commended on their work. In response, the Cabinet Member for Finance and

Assets stated that she was pleased that the council can support those children and families facing financial restraint.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT

- **the contents of this summary report of the treasury management activity during the first six months of 2024/25 be noted.**

13 Review of Polling District, Polling Places and Polling Stations

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the report and explained that, in accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the council is required to complete a full review of all polling districts, polling places and polling stations every five years and this is subject to consultation.

In response to Member questions, officers gave the following responses:

- a full equality impact assessment had been carried out on the function room at the back of The Umbrella public house in St Mark's ward;
- the council is committed to constantly reviewing polling stations. There has been significant disruption to schools over recent years and head teachers have approached the council to request that it looks for alternative locations;
- councillors know their wards very well and therefore as part of the consultation can suggest suitable alternatives to officers for consideration;
- the polling review relates to constituencies and as Swindon Village is in Tewkesbury constituency, it was not included in Appendix 3 of the report but included in Appendix 4.
- officers will take on board the detailed comments on specific polling stations

A Member urged Councillors to feed in detailed comments at the consultation stage so that officers have time to consider them prior to decisions being put forward to Members for decision.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT the following be approved :

- **All Saints Ward – to merge polling district AC with polling district AA and to change the polling place / station for electors within the new polling district to All Saints Church, All Saints Road**
- **Benhall, the Reddings & Fiddler's Green Ward – to change the polling place / station for polling district CA and for electors to vote at Auditorium, The Pavilion, Hatherley Lane**
- **Benhall, the Reddings & Fiddler's Green Ward – to change the polling place / station for polling district CB and for electors to vote at Overflow Room, The Pavilion, Hatherley Lane**
- **Charlton Park Ward – to merge polling district ED with polling district EA and for electors in the new polling district to vote at Cheltenham East Fire & Rescue Station, Keynsham Road**

- **Charlton Park Ward – Create new polling district ED (current polling district EE) and for electors to vote at Old Patesians Sports and Social Club, Everest Road**
- **College Ward – to merge polling district FD with polling district FC and for electors in the new polling district to vote at Portakabin, Town Hall, Imperial Square**
- **College Ward – create new polling district FD (current polling district FE) and for electors to vote at Emmanuel Church, Fairfield Parade**
- **Hesters Way Ward – for electors in polling district GB to continue to vote at St Marks and HW Community Centre, but in the event that the building is not available for electors to vote at Sports Hall, Oasis Centre, Cassin Drive**
- **Lansdown Ward – to merge polling district HD with polling district HC and for electors in the new polling district to vote at St Gregorys Old Priory, 70 Clarence Street**
- **Park Ward – to merge polling district KC with polling district KB and for electors to vote at Bethesda Methodist Church Hall, Great Norwood Street**
- **Pittville Ward – to merge polling district LC with polling district LA and for electors in the new polling district to vote at Pittville Pump Room, East / West Approach Drive**
- **Pittville Ward – to create new polling district LC (current polling district LD) and for electors to vote at Pittville Pump Room, East / West Approach Drive for all elections except for Parliamentary elections when electors will vote at Prestbury Hall, Bouncers Lane**
- **Springbank Ward – for electors in polling district NC to vote at Hesters Way Childrens Centre, Dill Avenue at all elections**
- **St Mark’s Ward - to change the polling station for electors in polling district OA to vote at The Umbrella, Orchard Way**
- **St Mark’s Ward – for electors in polling district OB to continue to vote at St Marks & HW Community Centre, Brooklyn Road, but if the building is unavailable to vote at Hesters Way Library, Goldsmith Road**
- **Swindon Village Ward – change current polling district RC – transfer the following streets/properties from RC to new polling district RD**
 - **Addis Road**
 - **Bridge Street**
 - **Cobham Road**
 - **Compton Road**
 - **Elm Close**
 - **Elm Street**
 - **Gardners Lane**
 - **Hope Street**
 - **Malvern Street**
 - **Queen Street**
 - **Richards Road**
 - **Sun Street**
 - **Swindon Road**
 - **Tewkesbury Road**
 - **Cobham Court, Tewkesbury Road**

- Waterloo Street
- Cypress Court, Waterloo Street
- Worcester Street

The electors remaining in the new polling district RC to vote at St Nicolas Church Hall, Swindon Lane

- Swindon Village Ward – create new polling district RD to include the streets/properties being transferred from polling district RC and for electors to vote at Sports Hall, Gas Green Youth Centre, Baker Street
- Up Hatherley Ward – for electors in polling district SD to vote at St Margarets Hall, Coniston Road at all elections
- Warden Hill Ward – for electors in polling district TD to vote at The Annexe, St Margarets Hall, Coniston Road at all elections

14 Member Development Strategy

The Chair of the Member Development Panel (MDP) introduced the report, explaining that she is a keen advocate of development and training, and recognising the need for an innovative approach. New Members join the council every two years and policies to which the council must adhere evolve over time, meaning Members, including existing ones, require being kept up to date via training. The effectiveness of councillors is important to residents and officers, and she emphasised that participation in training develops working relationships with officers. Members were reminded that Democratic Services maintain the Member Hub with access to training videos and other information. Acknowledging that some Members may have other responsibilities, the Panel is constantly looking for feedback on how training can be delivered to ensure it is accessible to all.

She reminded Members that training records are now publicly available under each Members' profile and, looking forward, informed Members that the Member Development Strategy can be used and developed and will encourage others to consider becoming a Councillor. Finally, she explained that the council was looking to obtain South West Councils Member Development Charter status and the Panel would be working hard to achieve this in the new year.

The Leader thanked the Chair of the Member Development Panel for her significant contribution to this work.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT

The Member Development Strategy be approved and adopted.

15 Notice of Motions

Motion A

Proposed by: Councillor Frank Allen

Seconded by: Councillor Flo Clucas

Road Chaos in Swindon Village

Swindon Village, and northwest Cheltenham, is one of the biggest business hubs in West Cheltenham, and is home to a diverse community of people. Businesses and residents rely on well-managed, safe, and usable roads to live and prosper.

Northwest Cheltenham is also a gateway to Cheltenham and its growth. We need well-maintained roads that continue to make this possible. What happens to the roads in Swindon Village indelibly affects the town.

In recent months, however, road closures, congestion, and chaos has blighted the area.

May 2024 saw a significant number of local residents and businesses impacted by the road closures in Swindon Village. A series of prolonged works, most notably on Manor Road, have meant significant delays, missed appointments, and a sizeable drop in local business sales. The road congestion has not abated.

Moreover, people feel unsafe using, crossing, and living next to these roads. The narrowness of Swindon Road bridge has resulted in pedestrian paths being blocked, and the bridge being impassable. People have been struck and badly hurt on this bridge and on Swindon Road due to poor road management. Properties have been hit by vehicles failing to pass narrow roads. Action needs to be taken to improve the safety of our roads, to properly coordinate road closures, and to manage traffic.

A petition garnering 100 signatures ran from early August to 30 September, and was formally presented to Gloucestershire County Council at Shire Hall on 6 November. However, while we are partially assured by the response, further action needs to be taken over the course of the new year to resolutely fix the problem.

With well-managed, safe, and usable roads in Swindon Village, we can increase the quality of life for residents while delivering on the Council's commitment to boosting Cheltenham's prosperity and economic growth.

Council is requested to approve the following resolution:

That the Leader of CBC will write to the Cabinet Member for Highways at Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and request an end to the general road mismanagement in Swindon Village and northwest Cheltenham, with the following specific recommendations:

1. That a review into traffic regulation orders in the ward be undertaken, with a particular focus on delivering a TRO for a one-way network on Elm Street and Waterloo Street.
2. That a 20mph speed limit for streets in the ward be consulted on.
3. That Network Rail and the Major Projects team be asked to review the need to upgrade the Swindon Road bridge on the grounds of safety, with consideration for expanding the bridge and/or implementing a separated pedestrian/cycle crossing.
4. That GCC reviews the coordination of public utilities works with Borough and County councillors, local representatives and developers on a quarterly basis.
5. That GCC has recourse to their powers to implement fines and Fixed Penalty Notices in instances of non-conformity.

6. That safer pedestrian crossings on Tewkesbury Road and Swindon Road be implemented.
 7. That the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Chair of Planning Committee calls on the Highways Authority to give proper consideration to conditions that could help to minimise traffic disruption for future planning applications and works to enforce these.
-

In proposing the motion, Councillor Allen said that the poor state of the roads in Swindon Village is the issue most frequently brought up by local residents, who feel let down by Gloucestershire County Council's management of highway matters, with atrocious traffic, worsened by the prolonged Manor Road closure, and the lack of speeding and parking controls making roads treacherous, particularly around schools. Road closures between May 2020 and 2024 have caused delays to motorists of up to an hour, with residents missing crucial appointments and local businesses losing sources of income, only to be followed by intolerable volumes of traffic. In addition, there are reports of serious accidents, including a woman knocked off her bike by a large vehicle near Swindon Road bridge, and the wall of a house off Swindon Road struck by a speeding taxi, causing bricks to fly up and strike the roof and a gas main to be left leaking.

He said councillors have been calling for traffic management in and around Swindon Road for some time but have received no response. Councillors Clucas and Allen also presented a widely-shared and signed petition, highlighting residents' concerns, to the county council; this has been acknowledged, but no action appears to have been taken to date to act upon the issues and recommendations raised; today's motion is an attempt to address these.

Councillors across the borough will be aware of the issues and share similar concerns, with residents throughout Cheltenham appalled by the state of the roads. Despite the county's 74% share of our Cheltenham's council tax revenue, it has consistently failed in its commitment to manage our roads to ensure they are safe and usable. Swindon Village is a gateway to the town and to future development; without well-managed roads, delivery on future development goals to make Cheltenham the cyber capital of the UK seems incomprehensible to residents. For a modern, efficient, net-zero Cheltenham, we need to fix the foundations, starting with proper road management.

The motion calls on the Leader, Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control, and Chair of Planning Committee to ensure that we do not have to suffer this mismanagement any longer. It asks that they write to the county council to support the recommendations put forward by residents of Swindon Village, which will contribute hugely to making Cheltenham a forward-looking and modern town.

The seconder of the motion, Councillor Clucas, reserved her right to speak.

Members thanked Councillors Allen and Clucas for raising this important issue, and made the following comments in debate:

- the county council has finally decided to use an experimental traffic regulation order (TRO) to address the issues around permit parking in All Saints ward, which allows time to see if proposals work and the opportunity to make further changes. An experimental TRO could be used in Swindon Village;
- the motion should be seen as a broad rallying cry to keep up the pressure on the county council to raise its game after successive failures to respond to requests for help. Residents feel let down by the lack of response to a 1000-signature petition following an incident in Pittville where an 11-year-old boy was hit by a car, by the length of time it has taken for the county to address the broken paving and tarmac issues in the High Street, and by the lack of evidence to suggest that the county will put forward a properly integrated highways transport policy to support residents in Pittville, St Paul's and Swindon Village in the face of further pressure from the proposed house-building at North Place, The Folly and Hardwick Campus;
- residents regularly speak to councillors about the state of the roads, which is getting worse. A simple trip to the supermarket from Springfield can be horrendous, and it is worse for residents of Swindon Village. It is hard to believe that there is no government quango for roads, which are literally falling apart and receiving no investment. The district tries to support the county, including the Connecting Cheltenham report which would benefit our communities, but the county council doesn't seem to care. This motion will be an extra push, to move the failing conservatives at the county;
- the issues highlighted in the motion are a symptom of problems with the county council. Road safety around schools should be a priority, but 3.75 years into its term of office, the school safety scheme is still awaiting funding, and the county does not recognise the need for a 20mph limit around Rowanfield School, despite a petition from parents and residents. A 20mph limit on all residential streets would be welcome, particularly as there is evidence of 30mph limits regularly being exceeded, with cars tracked by county council speed monitors travelling at 55-60mph on narrow residential roads;
- it is good to note that issues with Network Rail are also included in the motion, as there is no evidence that their infrastructure is being upgraded to address changes, with barrier down-time at the level crossing on Brockhampton Road on the edge of St Peter's ward measured in tens of minutes and not properly managed, and nothing being done to prevent bridge strikes on Hyde Lane. Pressure needs to be put on Network Rail to deliver better infrastructure for Cheltenham. None of this should be beyond the ability of county councillors and strategic partners to deliver.

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny welcomed the motion, and said that testimonies about the town-wide lack of safety measures highlighted the need for a meaningful process whereby issues such as this can be referred to the responsible authority.

She was interested in the scope of the motion and the intersecting issues in relation to it, and pleased to support it.

She also said that the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, who was not present today, has been working in association with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner on safety issues, following two accidents in a week in St Peter's ward, close to Rowanfield School. She welcomed engagement with Swindon Village residents, as cars clearly travel across multiple wards, and said the Green Party is keen to work cross-party on road safety for the entire town focussing on schools, and medical and supported living centres, as well as on other road-based crime and poor-quality road management. She thanked Councillors Allen and Clucas for the work put in so far, and looked forward to expanding it further.

In the absence of the Chair of Planning, the Mayor, as Deputy Chair, said the Planning Committee will support the motion and work with the county where possible, although it is in a difficult position as all highway matters are considered by the county council and going against their recommendations could result in an appeal and huge costs.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control noted Members' agreement that this is an important issue, not just for Swindon Village but for the whole town. He pointed out that although sorting out Junction 10 of the M5 would relieve a lot of pressure, this is an incredibly slow process, requiring a development consent order, based on traffic flow and modelling. Unfortunately, the Golden Valley consultants, the county council, and Highways England have all come up with hugely different numbers, which need to be resolved before matters can proceed.

He added that working with Network Rail was also extremely challenging, saying that a railway bridge in his own ward had been shut for nine months, causing major disruption. The county is responsible for the road and Network Rail is responsible for the bridge, but no-one appears to know who is responsible for the embankments on either side of the bridge which were collapsing. This is now being resolved but the county needs to do better. He will do his best to help in his role as Cabinet Member, and aim to work in partnership with the county rather than blame them for everything that goes wrong, to benefit the whole borough.

In seconding the motion, Cllr Clucas thanked Members for their valuable comments and gave three examples why she considered the motion to be so important:

- the wall of a house on the corner of Swindon Road and a side road has been hit six times in the last 18 months, by cars, a bus, a coach and a lorry trying to turn down the side road;
- there have been several incidents in recent months, including a woman being knocked off her bike by the railway bridge, resulting in serious injury, cars frequently losing their wing mirrors, a child knocked off his bike in a hit and run

incident, and someone monitoring the traffic for the school also being hit by a car;

- traffic waiting at crossroads and traffic lights near the school in Swindon Village produce fumes which are breathed in by children and young people, particularly harmful for those with asthma or bronchitis.

She said she and the previous ward councillor had asked the county about a traffic regulation order some time ago and been told there was one awaiting consideration; she has subsequently been told that it is not considered a priority here, but a few simple measures, such as synchronising traffic lights to avoid huge queues, would make a huge difference. Residents need action and the opportunity to have their say, but there seems no option for this at present, other than through the motion proposed today, which shows people of Cheltenham standing up to be counted, requiring the county council to make the best decisions for them.

In summing up, Councillor Allen echoed Councillor Clucas's words, and thanked everyone who had spoken for making excellent points and suggestions. He said the aim of the motion is to bring attention to the deficiency of road management in Swindon Village and to call for action to facilitate Cheltenham's growth while ensuring that residents are able to use safe, well-managed and well-cared-for roads. He was happy to have inspired other Members to bring forward the concerns of their own wards, and welcomed the suggestion of cross-cooperation between parties, thanking Councillor Davies for her suggested amendment. He hoped the motion would be a stepping stone to future calls to action and encourage all Members to work on raising concerns about road safety across Cheltenham. He thanked them for considering the motion and for their general expressions of support.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT:

- **the motion as proposed is approved.**

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

The Director of Governance and Customer Services introduced an urgent report seeking a Dispensation of Absence under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972. This would apply to Councillor Chandler with effect from 16th December for a further period of up to six months, on the grounds of ill health.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT

- **Councillor Julia Chandler be authorised to be absent from all meetings of the Authority for a period of six months with effect from 16 December 2024.**