

# Cheltenham Borough Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Meeting date:** 24 February 2025

**Meeting time:** 6.00 pm

**Meeting venue:** Council Chamber - Municipal Offices

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## **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 and Councillor Frank Allen

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**Contact:** [democraticservices@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto: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 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

## **4 Public and Member questions, calls for actions and petitions**

## **5 Cabinet Briefing**

**18:05 10 mins**

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 Feedback from other scrutiny meetings attended (Pages 13 - 18) 18:15 15 mins**

[Gloucestershire Health O&S Committee](#) – Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> January update from Councillor Bamford.

[Gloucestershire Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee](#) – Meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January update from Councillor Orme

[Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel](#)– Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> February update from Councillor Atherstone – to follow.

## **7 Matters referred to committee**

## **8 Reconciling the challenges of heritage protection with sustainability measures (Pages 19 - 32)**

**18:30 45 mins**

**Objective:** 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.

Frances Crick - Climate, Flooding & Decarbonisation Manager

Chris Gomm - Head of Development Management, Enforcement & Compliance

## **9 Scrutiny Topic Request Form (Pages 33 - 36)**

**19:15 15 mins**

Scrutiny Topic request form received from Councillor Chris Day

## **10 Review of scrutiny workplan (Pages 37 - 38)**

**19:30 15 mins**

## **11 Any other item that the Chair determines to be urgent**

## **12 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

The meeting due to be held on the 28<sup>th</sup> April will be moved due its proximity to the County Council Election it will now be held on the 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025.

## **13 Briefing Notes**

Physical activity and sports action plan briefing note – TO FOLLOW

(Briefing notes provide information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Cabinet or a committee).

### **Informal de-brief**

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

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# Cheltenham Borough Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes

**Meeting date:** 13 January 2025

**Meeting time:** 6.00 pm - 7.55 pm

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## **In attendance:**

### **Councillors:**

Tabi Joy (Chair), Jackie Chelin (Vice-Chair), Frank Allen, Graham Beale, Chris Day, Richard Pineger and Stan Smith

### **Also in attendance:**

Councillor Adrian Bamford (Chair of Audit, Compliance and Governance), Councillor Rowena Hay (Leader of the Council), Claire Hughes (Director of Governance and Customer Services and Monitoring Officer), Councillor Peter Jeffries (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Major Developments and Housing Delivery), Amy Keates (Construction Project Manager), Richard King (Construction Manager, Major Developments & Regeneration) and Paul Minnis (Director of Major Development and Regeneration)

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## **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Chandler, Garcia Clamp and Holliday.

## **2 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **3 Minutes of the last meeting**

### **RESOLVED THAT**

**The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2024 were approved as a true record.**

### **4 Public and Member questions, calls for actions and petitions**

There were none on this occasion, but the Chair said that she looked forward to receiving input from the public and Members at future meetings.

### **5 Cabinet Briefing**

The Leader said it had been a busy few weeks with publication of the government's white paper on devolution and its major changes to planning regulations. She highlighted the following issues:

- the government is clear that the reorganisation of local government must involve the districts in a meaningful way, with various ideas around Gloucestershire reorganising with one or two unitary councils or one wider and more strategic combined authority. This is very much work in progress at the moment;
- we will not know the outcome of the county's request to the Secretary of State for the May elections to be delayed until early February. None of Gloucestershire's district councils apart from Tewkesbury Borough support this proposal, and they have written a joint letter to the Secretary of State to that effect;

It is clear that, with devolution, parishes will have a bigger voice, but much of Cheltenham is unparished. The Leader will set up a Cabinet working group of 4-5 people, including herself, to look at the options of what a town council might look like; it will be a new council with different powers, and we need to consider what services and income we might want to retain to ensure that we are ready for the future in a local way.

In response to Members' questions, the Leader confirmed that:

- she cannot say why Tewkesbury Borough Council is supporting the county's move to delay the elections in May, but believes it has good reasons;
- discussions between Gloucestershire councils are underway and ongoing, including the option of having two unitaries and one strategic authority in Gloucestershire. Some people prefer this option, believing it will keep things local, but others believe a single unitary is the right way to go. She has been keen to start the conversation for some time, but said it is clear that Gloucestershire County Council is not on the priority list, not yet having started on the journey, but given Cheltenham's drive around cyber security, we are likely to favour the West of England Combined Authority or Bath and North East Somerset model.

The Chair thanked the Leader for all she has done so far and for providing context about where the council is heading, noting that nothing is likely to change until 2027 at the earliest. She said she would welcome Overview and Scrutiny inclusion, particularly in terms of what should be prioritised for preserving in the face of any unitary shifts.

The Leader wanted to give a very clear steer that it is very much 'business as usual' for the present – CBC has a huge agenda and some really important projects to drive through. She also acknowledged that the reorganisation won't come without

significant cost, both financial and capacity-wise, for example additional resource will be needed to consider the options of setting up a town council.

In response to a further Member question about the Strategic Local Partnership, the Leader confirmed that this is very much going ahead, though there is clearly some significant work to be done around CBC's five-year housing supply, affordable housing provision, and the introduction of the grey belt.

The Chair thanked the Leader again, and looked forward to further updates in February.

### **6 Matters referred to committee**

There were no issues referred to Overview and Scrutiny.

### **7 Feedback from other scrutiny meetings attended**

Councillor Bamford, CBC representative on Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny, outlined the main elements of his report circulated and Members had the opportunity to ask questions of him. These included how districts can support the NHS via councillor activities in the community since health services are a significant issue for residents; whether there had been any changes to the survival cancer rates in the county and whether there was any move to reopen midwifery at Cheltenham General Hospital. Members were informed that CBC were already active in the community regarding health issues and would welcome a briefing on these so not to duplicate work.

### **8 Golden Valley Social Value Strategy**

The Chair welcomed Paul Minnis, Director of Major Development and Regeneration, Richard King, Head of Construction and Amy Keates, Construction Project Manager, from the Golden Valley Development (GVD) team, thanking them for their report and their work so far. Responses to Members' written questions had been provided and there were no follow-ups. She said the objective is to increase understanding of the delivery of social value with GVD, and invited Members to ask further questions.

Members welcomed the excellent report, and in response to their questions, GVD officers confirmed that:

- safety and reducing crime is crucial and is being highlighted and considered as part of the Social Value Strategy. This is currently a working draft, and a lot of detail will be drawn out over the next 12 months;
- the team will be working closely with the chosen construction company to ensure that the effects of construction traffic, including its CO2 emissions, are taken into account. Phase 1 of the construction period will include well-lit paths and on-site

patrols, with answers to other questions to be drawn out over the next 12-18 months;

- construction traffic is inevitable with any development but actions can be taken to minimise its impact, such as ensuring the contractor uses pre-defined routes, excludes larger vehicles from suburban areas, agrees a good logistics plan for getting construction vehicles in and out of the site, identifies suitable parking and offloading facilities, and provides on-site facilities for construction workers to minimise to-ing and fro-ing throughout the day;
- also being drafted into the document is the promotion of local suppliers and workers, with a key performance indicator of a 30-mile radius from the site, although some materials will need to be brought in from further afield;
- regarding the juxtaposition of a high-security cyber centre with the low-level petty crime and anti-social behaviour of the surrounding area, the vision is very much for the new development to be an extension of West Cheltenham and at the same time to enhance local communities through different initiatives. These include contractors visiting local schools to talk about opportunities in the construction industry, giving talks to the community and holding drop-in sessions with the opportunity to meet the site and project managers and discuss how the development is progressing. It will also elevate the area with walkways, sports provision and green space, all available to local communities, and involve initiatives which potentially give local people priority for employment. Officers are thinking about the bigger picture, and the long-lasting impact and legacy of the development, and has received good feedback so far from the Plexall community engagement project, which is looking at how we can improve and support people in Springbank and Hesters Way;
- apprenticeships and work experience are a big part of the tender, and officers are already building a relationship and links with the construction college in Cheltenham, and aiming to involve people of all ages and abilities in the development.
- regarding communications and marketing, and the some residents' perception that the GVD is a 'vanity project' in West Cheltenham with no benefits for the rest of the town, the team is very much working on changing perceptions and ensuring that people understand that there will be benefits for the whole of Cheltenham. The communications and marketing team are involved in the social value strategy to help get the message across;
- with reference to the minimum lease period for future tenants and the positive impact of a stable, long-term tenant base, lease negotiations are driven by equity market forces. Average lease lengths have come down over recent years from 25 years to five or less, and the team have to get the balance right between tenants who want to commit to the scheme through a relatively long lease, and those who are starting up or scaling up, in the cyber security field, for example, and require more flexibility. They are aiming for a broad range of tenants.

The Chair thanked the team for their report, saying she appreciated the KPIs which will act as a measure of success and can be used to change the strategy as it progresses. The Cabinet Member for Major Development and Housing Delivery thanked Members for their questions and observations before the report is taken to Cabinet, and concurred that it was important that residents understand that the



Golden Valley Development will not only bring jobs and economic benefits to Cheltenham, but through social value will transform lives across the town. He thanked the team, and also everyone at HBD for their hard work.

The Chair said she is keen to keep the Golden Valley Development high on the agenda, making sure that councillors are able to share beneficial communications and keep residents as informed as possible.

### **9 2025/26 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Budget proposals**

As Chair of Budget Scrutiny Working Group (BSWG), Councillor Bamford said he and other working group Members had been considering the specific role of the group, and deduced that this is not to comment on how the reports have been prepared – there are good processes already in place to check for any technical errors - but to consider strategically how the finance team had arrived at certain decisions. He said it was unfortunate that the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets was unable to attend the recent BSWG meeting, but thanked the Deputy Chief Executive for standing in to answer questions, which focussed on budget savings and additional income, considering the green, amber and red categories and what the impact on the budget would be if they didn't come to fruition as planned.

BSWG also considered interest rates, noting that these can change at any time, and Councillor Day subsequently met with the Director of Finance and Assets to discuss some outstanding concerns which will be reflected in the final report to Council. Looking at the savings plan and additional income plan, Members noted that there were some uncertainties, but that provision for this was built into the budget. Councillor Bamford said that in these difficult times, the council's sound budget and relatively healthy financial position was a great reflection on the Deputy Chief Executive, finance team, and council as a whole.

There were no formal notes from the previous week's BSWG meeting, but Councillor Bamford read the following summary:

*The Budget Scrutiny Working Group met with Paul Jones and Gemma Bell to review the draft HRA and General Fund Budgets on Thursday 9 January. We discussed the proposals in detail.*

*That review and the feedback provided to this Committee forms part of the consultation on the draft budgets. Cabinet will use this feedback to prepare a final budget that will be presented to the Council in February.*

*Councillor Day will be having a further meeting with Gemma Bell to discuss a number of areas in more detail and will provide feedback to the Working Group and Cabinet.*

*The Working Group's discussion identified the following:*

- *The difficulty of achieving the savings targets for 2025/26 was highlighted, with shortfalls in achieving targeted savings over the prior two financial years*

*noted. The need was stressed for specifics on how the money will be saved identified and agreed, with detailed implementation plans in place. In particular the £150k listed under a review of discretionary services needs greater clarity from the Cabinet. (it was noted that savings from the decision on the HRC is not included within this total amount);*

- *The Working Group discussed whether it was better to set a more realistic target for savings and payment into reserves, from a financial and political perspective;*
- *Concern was raised that the proposed contribution to the general reserves may be optimistic due to the external challenges discussed. It was recommended that the draft budget proposals be reviewed before the final report to recognise that circumstances outside of the council's control have moved since the report was originally written.*

The Leader apologised for the fact that no Cabinet Member was able to fill in for the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets at the BSWG meeting at such short notice.

A Member commented that what Councillor Bamford had said changed the focus of the report presented today, as it appears that the role of Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) is to scrutinise budget scrutiny rather than scrutinising the budget. As he understood, the role of BSWG role was to recognise the story and the numbers, and for O&S to promote to the Cabinet and Leadership Team anything that needs guidance or further examination.

In response to Members' questions, the Deputy Chief Executive said:

- the recent press story concerning CBC's pension contributions was poor and irresponsible journalism; it was ludicrous to suggest that Basingstoke Council could spend 106% of its council tax income on pension contributions, and to suggest that CBC's only income is from council tax, which in fact represents just 10% of the council's £100m turnover. The council has a specific pension strategy, and what is reported in The Times as Cheltenham's annual contribution is in fact three years' worth of contributions, an up-front payment made as a conscious budgetary decision which from 2026 will result in a £2m reduction in the council's annual pension contributions. This strategy has been in place since 2016, and was explained to the Times reporter who deliberately chose to ignore it to give the true context. It would be impossible for CBC to fund all the services it provides from bin collection to upkeep of parks, if it was spending 75% of its council tax on pension contributions;
- to explain the green, amber and red assessments on the savings page: green means the money is banked and the project will be delivered; amber means that there are plans in place (such as EV charging) but there may be timing issues due to contractual arrangements and practical issues; and red means that there are no clear plans in place or decisions made, but these will always be included in the budget assessment because of the statutory duty under the Section 25 report for an assessment of the adequacy of reserves and balances.

To clarify the role of BSWG and O&S, the Monitoring Officer explained that O&S's input is required as part of the budget consultation, and that BSWG's responsibility is

to look at the finance reports on behalf of O&S and report back. Ideally, a summary of its findings will be shared.

A Member echoed the comments of the Deputy Chief Executive about the substandard and misleading Times journalism, saying that any business operating a defined budget pension scheme would give its eye teeth for a pension scheme in the funding position that CBC is in today. He said residents can be assured that we have a very strong pension scheme that will greatly assist future cash flow and costs for the council. The Chair agreed that it was very frustrating that the council was receiving a lot of negative backlash as a result of the incorrect news item.

She said it is valuable to have BSWG reporting in to O&S, keeping an external eye on the council's finances and holding ourselves to account. Keen to meet the needs of O&S, the working group will welcome any suggestions or ideas of what should be included in its remit. She thanked the Deputy Chief Executive and the Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group for their input, saying that it might be worth considering more regular check-ins and updates to keep everyone well informed.

### **10 Updates from scrutiny task groups**

There were currently no active scrutiny task groups.

### **11 Review of scrutiny workplan**

In response to a question regarding an expected update to Overview and Scrutiny on the Household Recycling Centre (HRC), the Leader informed that the HRC had closed on Friday and the Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling and Public Realm would be updating all Members on next steps shortly. The Chair added that she acknowledged that time had been taken up with the devolution white paper and the planning reform proposal but had requested an update to the committee at each meeting. The Leader then advised that she had written to GCC to support the CBC decision but was awaiting a response.

A Member commented that the pitches strategy and sports and activity plan had many interlinkages which improved the provision of facilities to the local community. However, as these were being treated as separate pieces of work it was proving challenging for some community groups.

### **12 Any other item that the Chair determines to be urgent**

None.

**13 Date of next meeting**

24 February 2025

**Report to February 2025 Meeting of CBC Overview and Scrutiny Committee****Summary of 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025 Meeting of GCC Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

A full recording of this meeting is available in the [“Online meetings” section of the GCC website](#). The public information pack which includes all presentations is also available on this website. The minutes are not yet available, so this paper is based solely on notes I took at the time.

**1. Scrutiny Items –****1.1 South West Ambulance Service – A Performance Update**

An extensive information pack was provided by SWAST breaking down all aspects of the services work in detail. Waiting times can be found for just about every ward in the County. Unsurprisingly these are relatively good in and around Cheltenham with waits in more rural areas of Gloucestershire being much more problematic.

More comparisons with previous years would have been helpful but it's clear that demand continues to rise and despite numerous initiatives to try to reduce the problem of waiting times for handover, especially at Gloucestershire Royal these continue to be a major problem. Whilst blockages exist in the care system as described in 1.3 and 2.1 point 3 below it's difficult to imagine that much progress will be made in reducing these waits and freeing up ambulance time.

**1.2 Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care Strategy****a) Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Update**

This year, 2025, represents the five-year point of the 10-year Gloucestershire joint local health and wellbeing strategy (JLHWS) which was issued in 2020. This report represents a mid-point review of the strategy, reflecting on progress to date and priorities over the next 5 years. This review will be published in March giving updates against each of the 7 strategic priorities:

- Best start in life
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Physical activity
- Healthy lifestyles with a focus on healthy weight
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Health and housing; and
- Loneliness and social isolation.

A summary of progress against each of the above strategic priorities across the last 5 years and a snap-short of their priorities for the next 5 years is provided in appendix 1 of the report.

Unfortunately, the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy dashboard- 2024 update (Appendix 2) provides statistics only at Gloucestershire and national level making meaningful evaluation of the impact of this strategy very difficult.

### b) Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Partnership - and the Gloucestershire Integrated Care Strategy

Gloucestershire has been operating as an Integrated Care System (ICS) since 2018, This developed into an Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) under the Health and Care Act 2022. An Integrated Care Partnership is a joint committee that brings together all organisations concerned with improving health, care and wellbeing of its population. This Committee is referred to as the One Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Partnership. It has a statutory responsibility under the Act to produce an Integrated Care Strategy encompassing the work happening across the system with the aim of aligning this with the ongoing work of the Health and Wellbeing Board. This strategy is laid out in full should you care to read it.

### 1.3 Gloucestershire Integrated Care System (GICS) Performance Report

The pressure on beds described in more detail below (2.1 point 3) was massively impacted by the No Criteria to Reside (NCTR) position, with the number of patients with NCTR rising from under 100 in December to 192 as of the 10th January 2025. This means that on 10<sup>th</sup> January there were the equivalent of 6 wards full of patients who were medically fit to be discharged but who couldn't leave hospital because there is no suitable ongoing accommodation in the community

Diagnostic performance has declined slightly in November after the improvement in waiting times seen in the summer. Gastroscopy, colonoscopy and echocardiography have failed to meet their recovery targets whilst most of the radiology modalities have been successful in doing so. Increasing demand for all diagnostic services shows no sign of abating. For example referrals for CT and MRI have doubled over the last 5 years.

483,747 appointments were delivered in general practice in Gloucestershire in October 2024 – the highest appointment activity volume delivered on record. Same day appointments made up 34.0% of these – 164,519 appointments across

the month. These impressive figures do however mask an ongoing problem for many patients in many practices who find difficulty in getting routine appointments

Elective waits of more than 52 weeks have steadily declined over the last year to around 1600 but it should be remembered that the target is for patients to be seen and treated within 18 weeks. Only 67% are achieving that standard and given the massive numbers failing I have requested information on those waiting 6 months, 9 months as well as 12 months to get an overall picture of the scale of the problem.

The impact of the winter plan presented to the previous HOSC meeting remains to be seen. None of the figures presented to this meeting gave any clues about the effectiveness of the many proposed measures which we hope have now all been implemented.

Again, the performance against the crucial cancer 62 day wait target from referral to treatment failed to improve, remaining static at 67%, failing even to reach the interim target of 70%. It is still miles away from the national target of 85%.

The urology, colorectal and skin pathways continue to be most problematic. I have previously indicated in these reports that this is a national problem which is primarily due to a lack of capacity in cancer pathways, increase in demand (i.e. the number of people with cancer that is treatable) and the wider range of treatment options now available (i.e. the number of potential treatments available to any one patient) which has not been matched by a sufficient increase in resource.

A national study revealed that over the last decade 500,000 patients had to wait longer than 62 days for their treatment. This would represent about 5000 people in Gloucestershire, about 500 a year. The report concludes that this will mean that many cancer patients will be dying, in its words, unnecessarily.

From the trend information currently available there is no evidence that significant improvement is likely in the near future which is why I have requested an investigation into the harm suffered by patients subject to these long waits. A harm report is already being produced for each urology patient waiting over 104 days but this surely doesn't appropriately represent a full analysis of harm from continuing failure to meet this target.

## 2. Information Items

### 2.1 NHS Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB) Update – this report is now divided into 3 sections

- Section 1 an update on national and local commissioning issues
- Section 2 an update on primary care issues from the commissioner perspective (see 1.2 above)
- Section 3 an update from the 3 provider Trusts; Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust (GHC), Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (GHT) and South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWAST)

Three points of particular to note:

- 1) On Christmas Eve Cheltenham General Hospital's Medical Day Unit (MDU) opened in its new home on Oakley Ward, Centre Block. It has relocated from its previous site near A&E. The MDU provides intravenous (IV) therapies for conditions such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, osteoporosis, iron deficiency anaemia, asthma and renal issues.
- 2) On 5<sup>th</sup> February the new hyper-acute stroke unit (HASU) opened at Cheltenham General in a newly refurbished ward to be known as Hatherley Ward. It provides lifesaving treatment for all Gloucestershire stroke patients 24 hours a day with new state of the art equipment and a highly specialised medical and nursing team
- 3) On 8 January 2025 health and care services across Gloucestershire experience highly abnormal operational pressures and were forced to declare a critical incident. This system decision was taken in response to sustained pressure experienced by both acute hospitals (CGH and GRH), urgent and emergency care services, community services and South West Ambulance services over the previous week. The acute hospitals also saw large numbers of ambulances waiting outside and there had been higher numbers of patients in emergency departments, with too many experiencing much longer waiting times than normal. There had also been many patients in the acute and community hospitals who are medically fit to be safely discharged but are awaiting the right care. Declaring a critical incident allowed additional, immediate steps to create capacity, help discharge patients, relieve pressure on emergency departments and also release ambulances and their crews. Like many other parts of the country, Gloucestershire has experienced significant additional pressures due to increased flu and norovirus over the festive period and into the new year. Thankfully these pressures have now eased somewhat



**Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee - Update from Councillor Orme**

Here is a summary of the points discussed at the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee from Councillor Orme.

- The group will provide monthly updates to the Economic Officers Group Forum
- As requested, updates will also be provided to Climate Change Gloucestershire, District member briefings and a joint Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
- An Annual Implementation Strategy will be produced each Spring
- There was discussion of the proposed Unitary Authority and will form a new Strategic Authority when this is created
- Aim to finalise a Local Growth Plan in Spring
- Stakeholder engagement events held in Cirencester, Cheltenham and Gloucester to support the creation of the plan

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## Information/Discussion Paper

### Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 24 February 2025

## Reconciling the challenges of heritage protection with sustainability measures

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.

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### 1. Objectives

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.

### 2. Background

Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) has set an ambitious target for the borough to become Net Zero by 2030. To achieve this, we need to consider sources of carbon emissions within Cheltenham and the unique set of challenges to decarbonise these sectors. Residential buildings account for approximately 40% of borough wide emissions<sup>1</sup>, ensuring homes are as energy efficient as possible is a vital part of our journey to Net Zero.

This report firstly considers the distinct issues relating to heritage and historic homes when environmental solutions (retrofit) are considered. It also aims to provide information on, and understanding of, some of the terms and approaches used in retrofit, to develop understanding of the issues and the complexity of all retrofit, but especially in the heritage context.

### 3. Work in-progress

In 2024, approximately 66% of homes within the borough have an SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) rating of band D, E, F and G<sup>2</sup>. There has already been significant work achieved in this area, including:

- Future Fit Homes Project: a 6-month, peer-to-peer learning program with 60 households receiving support to improve the energy efficiency of their homes & install low/zero carbon energy systems.
- £15,000 in match funding grants to support upgrades to homes, which will improve the energy efficiency of the property and reduce fuel bills.

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<sup>1</sup> [SCATTER](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Platform - CoreLogic | Parity Projects](#)

- Employment of Retrofit Engagement Officer (12-month fixed term): to engage householders, identifying barrier, helping individuals understand advice, guidance, and options available to take steps towards household decarbonisation.
- There is work on-going (supported by Government funding) to retrofit the Council's housing stock and to improve the SAP rating of all properties to at least band C.

Engagement work and support has addressed all householders, whether in heritage homes or not.

#### **4. The role of historic buildings**

Historic buildings have a significant role to play in the transition to Net Zero, they must continue to change and evolve if they are to both contribute to a greener future and be fit for purpose for the people who live in, experience and care for them. With careful consideration, these changes can achieve the two-fold benefit of protecting our heritage and adapting to a changing climate<sup>3</sup>.

There are 2602 listed buildings within Cheltenham, 5 of which are Grade I, 387 are Grade II\* and 2210 are Grade II and a significant number of homes are within a conservation area. Although listed homes and homes within a conservation area is a relatively small number when compared to approximately 57,000 residential homes in the borough (included listed), they are a significant and iconic proportion of the existing building stock. Improving the energy efficiency of historic homes is essential for their long-term survival and can provide best practice case studies of successful retrofit in hard-to-treat properties, setting an example of what can be achieved in other complex properties. However, the retrofit of these buildings is often more challenging and costly, due to the material required and specific skills, along with permissions needed. Ensuring historic buildings are adapted appropriately, with the correct design and selecting the right measures upfront can help avoid unnecessary costs. The special considerations taken when assessing the impact on historic and architectural significance, provide opportunities to ensure the right design is developed<sup>4</sup>.

Historic buildings are, generally, inherently less energy efficient due to their age, construction materials, and architectural designs made without modern energy standards in mind. This can result in issues such as increased energy consumption, higher greenhouse gas emissions, and elevated costs for occupiers<sup>5</sup>. Traditional and modern buildings often differ in how they manage moisture, air, and heat. Industrially manufactured products and building techniques changed significantly in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, with concrete, steel, and cavity construction becoming more widespread. The material of most traditional buildings has the capacity to regulate fluctuations in humidity and temperature, and if well-maintained will remain in equilibrium with its environment. Most modern buildings use construction methods and materials, such as damp-proof courses and airtightness or vapour control membranes, which create

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<sup>3</sup> [HEAG321 Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Adapting historic homes for energy efficiency: a review of the barriers - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings | EWI Store](#)

a sealed envelope to minimise exchange of moisture, air, and heat with the external environment.

Special consideration is necessary when determining the correct retrofit approach to take with historic buildings, as some energy efficiency interventions can affect the heating and ventilation balance, potentially leading to moisture accumulation, overheating, or mould growth and subsequent damage to the historic fabric. The effects of climate change are also impacting buildings performance due to increasing and more frequent intense rainfall events, maximum summer temperatures, rising external humidity levels, and shorter but more concentrated wind-driven rain spells. Consequently, it is increasingly important to enhance the ability of traditional buildings to buffer the internal environment against temperature and humidity fluctuations<sup>6</sup>.

### **5. Understanding retrofit and associated terms**

Retrofitting includes a variety of alterations to improve the energy efficiency of buildings. Historic England lists several different approaches and terminologies used to describe different retrofit interventions<sup>7</sup>. Key is the Energy Efficiency Hierarchy:

#### *5.1 Energy Efficiency Hierarchy*

The 'Energy Efficiency Hierarchy' recommended approach towards implementing retrofit measures is<sup>8</sup>:

- reduce energy consumption in real terms (sufficiency) – often including a fabric first approach along with energy saving i.e. lighting.
- minimise unavoidable energy use (efficiency).
- generate energy from 'renewables', also known as low and zero carbon technologies, where possible (generation).

This strategic approach to retrofitting ensures that the most effective and beneficial measures are implemented first, providing a clear roadmap for energy-efficient retrofitting.

#### *5.2 Whole House Retrofit*

Historic England advocates a whole building approach (which is also considered the best approach in all other buildings) when considering adapting historic buildings. This does not mean doing everything all at once, but instead taking a holistic approach in which the whole building (including context and significance, as well as performance) is considered before improvements measures are then assessed and when multiple interventions are planned these can, if required, be carried out in stages and each stage has considered the overall plan for the building, so one measure does not adversely affect another. This approach should be based on:

- An understanding of the significance of a historic building, including the contribution of its setting.

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<sup>6</sup> [Traditional Buildings and Energy Efficiency | Historic England](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Introduction to Retrofitting | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Energy Efficiency and Retrofit in Historic Buildings | Historic England](#)

- An understanding of the building and how it performs.
- Prioritising interventions that are proportionate, effective, and sustainable.
- Avoiding and minimising harm and the risk of maladaptation.

Each home is unique, and both technical considerations and significance vary greatly from building to building - there is no one-size fits all approach. Therefore, decisions and actions taken at every stage have bearing on the success of the outcome. Stages include gathering data and surveys, assessing and plans, design and specify, procure and install, evaluate and maintain. When planning energy efficiency interventions, it is essential to understand the way the building functions<sup>9</sup>.

The “Whole House” approach has been formalised through PAS (Publicly Available Specification) 2035<sup>10</sup>. PAS 2035 is a new specification that provides a framework for the application of retrofit measures to existing domestic buildings in the UK and provides best practices approaches, including addressing the issues of heritage buildings. The use of, and compliance to, PAS 2035 is a required for Government funded retrofit projects.

### 5.3 *Fabric First*

As implied by its name, this refers to the strategy of first focussing on improvements (including necessary repairs) to the fabric of the buildings which encompasses the main structural elements of a property, such as the roof, walls, windows, doors, and floors.

The principles of fabric first are:

1. **Optimising Insulation:** Retrofitting with a fabric first approach starts with enhancing insulation in walls, roofs, and floors. High-quality insulation materials and techniques are used to prevent heat loss during winters and heat gain during summers.
2. **Reducing Thermal Bridging:** Thermal bridging occurs when heat escapes at junctions between fabric elements such as around windows and doors, or junctions between walls, between the wall and roof or between the wall and floor. The fabric first approach addresses these issues to ensure a continuous and effective thermal barrier.
3. **Airtightness:** Preventing unwanted air leakage is crucial for energy efficiency. By sealing gaps, cracks, and joints, the building's airtightness is improved, reducing the need for excessive heating or cooling.
4. **Passive Design Strategies:** The principles of passive design, such as optimal solar orientation, natural ventilation, and shading, are integral to a fabric first retrofit. These strategies harness natural elements to regulate temperature and lighting, minimising reliance on active systems.
5. **Balanced Ventilation:** While ensuring airtightness, a fabric first retrofit also incorporates balanced ventilation systems that maintain indoor air quality without compromising energy efficiency.

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<sup>9</sup> [Whole Building Approach for Historic Buildings | Historic England](#)

<sup>10</sup> [PAS: About Publicly Available Specifications - Retrofit Academy | Training Courses](#)

Historic England suggest the ‘fabric first’ approach may not be practicable nor desirable in historic buildings and is often not the most technically sound, efficient, or effective approach. It may result in unintended consequences and therefore should be carefully considered.

### *5.4 Deep Retrofit*

This is categorised by implementing multiple and/or large-scale energy efficiency measures. Taking the fabric first approach and making changes to many elements of the fabric of building, improving the airtightness, etc as well as upgrading space and water heating, lighting services, and the fabric and airtightness of the building. There are several standards relating to “deep retrofit” in the market that define the level of performance against key indicators, such as EnerPHit Quality-Approved Energy Retrofit with Passive House Components<sup>11</sup>. This is the Passivhaus refurbishment standard from the Passivhaus Institute, representing a gold standard for retrofit. It is not easy to achieve, especially where there are additional factors to consider, i.e. within heritage buildings.

### *5.5 Shallow or Light Retrofit*

Considers few and or/small scale measures to improve build energy use such as installation and draught excluders<sup>12</sup>.

### *5.6 Single Measure Retrofit*

Implementing a single energy-saving improvement in a building. This has been the historic approach, and the majority of retrofit has taken place in this form. There is concern that the current practice of single-measure retrofits may lead to poor performance and a greater risk of maladaptation as the approach does not consider the interdependencies and knock-on impacts on other energy efficiency measures as per the whole-building approach. Furthermore, there may be a greater risk of harm to the heritage value of a building with this approach<sup>13</sup>.

## **6. Barriers**

In 2024, HM Government undertook a review to research and collect evidence on the practical planning barriers to installing energy efficient and low carbon heating measures focusing on listed homes and dwellings, and those in conservation areas<sup>14</sup>. Several themes were identified highlighting the breadth of issues requiring attention:

### *6.1 The Planning System*

- Owners and occupiers of listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas found that most residents of listed buildings support the requirement to obtain listed building consent, agreeing it is important to protect the special architectural and historic character of the property.
- The length of time taken to obtain planning permission or listed consent can lead to homeowner frustrations and the potential of losing out on financial

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<sup>11</sup> [Demonstration of Energy Efficiency Potential: Literature review](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Introduction to Retrofitting | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Demonstration of Energy Efficiency Potential: Literature review](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Adapting historic homes for energy efficiency: a review of the barriers - GOV.UK](#)

support. Some people are put off from pursuing retrofit measures due to the perception that the planning process is too complex and uncertain to navigate.

- Stakeholders within the government review were positive about the potential impact of Local Listed Building Consent Orders (LLBCOs) for solar panels and other measures which provide a general grant of listed building consent for these works, removing the need to submit individual applications.
- Many listed building consent applications to local planning authorities across the country focus on minor works to Grade II listed buildings.
- During 2024, CBC received 6 planning applications for listed building consent relating to energy efficiency. It could be argued that this low figure supports addressing the barriers discussed in this section to enable more uptake.

### *6.2 Local authority skills, training, and capacity*

- In Historic England's 2023 Local Authority Staffing Survey, 59% of responding local authorities said that the volume of casework involving decisions, advice, or pre-application enquiries about retrofit had increased over the last year. When asked to rate staff confidence in making decisions on energy efficiency retrofit only 16% said they felt very confident<sup>15</sup>.
- There is limited specific training available which draws heritage, sustainability, and retrofit together. With the lack of central government action in this area it is down to local authorities to pursue additional training and education. This has challenges when the planning sector is facing capacity constraints.
- There is a HM Government £29 million Planning Skills Delivery Fund to support planning authorities with upskilling staff.

### *6.3 Guidance and Information for homeowner and occupiers*

- Lack of effective, clear, non-technical guidance and information. This was highlighted as one of the first tools homeowners look for when considering energy efficiency measures for their historic homes.
- There appears to be a lack of awareness of the whole building approach. Experience of the Retrofit Engagement Officer indicates that people tend to go straight to wanting to introduce active energy technologies before considering eliminating unnecessary energy use. More guidance and information are required.
- Where free, credibly sourced guidance did exist, it was often thought to be overly technical and not designed for homeowners, or alternatively too generic and therefore not helpful for considering specific circumstances. Meanwhile, seeking independent, impartial, tailored advice was perceived to be expensive.
- Recommendations from Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) are often used by homeowners to inform retrofit activities, however, as discussed above are not effectively designed to consider the more specific physical needs of traditionally constructed buildings, and therefore may not be fit for purpose. However, a Retrofit Assessor would collect full data which will reflect occupancy, condition and heritage, which a Retrofit Coordinator can then use to advise on suitable retrofit measures.

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<sup>15</sup> [Historic England Local Authority Staffing Survey 2023 Technical Report](#)



### 6.4 Construction industry skills, training, and capacity

- The loss of skills in the heritage construction industry is a key barrier to adapting historic homes, with a need to upskill mainstream construction workers to ensure the industry understands appropriate methods to adapt historic buildings.

### 6.5 Affordability and financial incentives

- All the challenges discussed above contribute to issues around affordability and cost of retrofitting historic homes. Whilst making an application carries no fee, there are associated costs including, pre-application advice charges, statements of significance from consultants, and architectural technicians' fees for drawing up the required detailed plans.

#### Case Study

##### **LLBCO: Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea**

In 2022, Kensington and Chelsea became the first Council to implement a Local Historic Building Consent Order regarding solar panels. They have many listed buildings (over 4000) in the borough, of which around 70 per cent are in a conservation area. These listed buildings required listed building consent before solar panels can be installed which meant that owners of listed buildings were required to gain individual listed buildings consent if they wanted to install solar equipment making it difficult and expensive for homeowners to install solar panels.

Their assessment and evidence gathering, conducted by officers internally over a period of weeks, suggested that the predominantly nineteenth century character of the borough meant that they could be confident that most listed buildings will be capable of accommodating solar panels without harm to their special interest.

Working alongside Historic England, officers successfully devised their own local listed building consent order, in 2022 implementing this over a three-month period, to enable listed buildings to be retrofitted with solar panels.

Applications for listed building consent are free, although processing them still requires officer time. For the Council this has meant that for a relatively small amount of effort up front they could free their specialist heritage officers for other, more complex, applications with no loss of income. Residents will be saved the time and expense of preparing a full application for listed building consent.

Residents are now, normally, able to get sign-off of the details using the information provided by their solar equipment installers.

The public consultation had revealed strong support from those residents who responded, and from other local groups. This suggested a strong public appetite for measures such as this.

Given the success of the scheme, RBKC swiftly introduced a second Local Listed Building Consent Order, covering window works, to enable secondary glazing in specific circumstances.

## Case Study

### Green Heritage Homes: Bath & Northeast Somerset Council

This is a project to improve understanding of energy efficiency works for listed buildings, and to showcase positive examples of retrofit.

#### Aiming to:

- Enable sensitive retrofitting of listed buildings by growing knowledge and confidence among householders and professionals.
- Demystify the listed building consent process for energy improvement works.
- Offer guidance on effective retrofit solutions informed by conservation principles and technical understanding of traditional buildings and fabrics.

This project will focus on listed buildings and the unique challenge that comes with upgrading their energy performance, as well as their specific planning requirements. There is continued advice and support for homeowners of unlisted heritage buildings across the district, and further resources on practical retrofit guidance will be made available through the project.

Green Heritage Homes is a government funded Local Energy Advice Demonstrator project, run in partnership with Bath and West Community Energy (lead), B&NES Council, Bath Preservation Trust, The Centre for Sustainable Energy, People Powered Retrofit, and the Southwest Net Zero Hub. Receiving funding of approximately £344k.

Level 0 pre-application service for homeowners who are interested in improving the energy of their listed building but don't know where to start. You will have the chance to discuss retrofit options with a Conservation Officer and look at the heritage considerations of different energy efficiency measures.

Applicants for the Level 0 pre application receive:

- Conservation Officer to manage the pre-app.
- Site visit to investigate the listed building and any potential restrictions or opportunities for energy efficiency works.
- Pre-app report outlining suitability of retrofit measure and the next steps to progress energy efficiency works.

## 7. Other considerations

### 7.1 Case studies of other Planning Authorities Approaches<sup>16</sup>

Other Local Authorities (LAs) have started to address the issues relating to heritage and retrofit homes. CBC Officers have been reviewing the work and activities of other LAs in this area and below are two relevant case studies which provide important examples.

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<sup>16</sup> [Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea: Local Listed Building Consent Order | Local Government Association](#) & [Green Heritage Homes | Bath and North East Somerset Council](#)

7.2 Local and National Policy

There are a several relevant local and national policies, which indicate and support the need for retrofit.

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)<sup>17</sup>

- Chapter 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding, and coastal change.
- Chapter 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.  
Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (2017)<sup>18</sup>
- Policy SD8: Historic Environment.
- INF5: Renewable Energy/Low Carbon Energy Development.
- Cheltenham Plan (2020)<sup>19</sup>
- Policy HE1: Buildings of local importance and non-designated heritage assets.

8. Scopes of work for CBC

The two case studies above relate to two potential areas of work. CBC's climate/planning team have been in discussion with both LAs, to gain additional insight into their activities. The two CBC teams are now working together to determine potential areas of works to address the title of this report.

8.1 LLBCO:

Local Listed Building Consent Orders allow a Local Planning Authority to grant listed building consent for an extended period for works of any description for the alteration or extension of groups of listed buildings in all or part of their area, or buildings of a particular description in their area. This is a pro-active and blanket grant of consent, which means that owners of those listed buildings will not have to make individual applications, but will be able to proceed with the works, subject to any conditions that may be attached to the Order<sup>20</sup>.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstrates strong support by CBC for environmental solutions (retrofit) in heritage properties. Important in terms of reducing barriers and public perception.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Only applicable to specific properties, working on an individual single measure such as Solar PV or window improvements. This has the potential to result in a single measure retrofit approach.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potentially allow works which would otherwise require a series of applications for listed building consent to be dealt with by a single consent mechanism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time consuming to implement (including significant consultation with stakeholders such as Historic England).</li> </ul>

<sup>17</sup> [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

<sup>18</sup> [JCS+Plan+Adopted+Verison+\(PDF.+10MB\)+Formatted+\(1\).pdf](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Cheltenham Plan | Local Plan core documents | Planning policy | Cheltenham Borough Council](#)

<sup>20</sup> [historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/drawing-up-local-listed-building-consent-order-advice-note-6/heag009-listed-building-consent-order-an6/](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/drawing-up-local-listed-building-consent-order-advice-note-6/heag009-listed-building-consent-order-an6/)

**8.2 Pre-application support:**

This service is tailored to an applicant’s needs, budget, and the identified characteristics of the listed building. The aim of the pre-app is to clearly identify the next steps of a retrofit project and submitting a listed building application with the best chance of success.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Offers individual advice, specific to the property.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time intensive, reliant on the capacity of conservation officers to visit/discuss with homeowners.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assists with homeowners making intelligent decisions, through advice at the pre application stage, before committing to potentially inappropriate measures (damaging to heritage). Educating and encouraging uptake of whole building approach to retrofit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Current education gap, there is a need to allocate resource towards specific officer training needs covering retrofit in heritage homes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involving the Conservation officer at early stages of project development has the potential to reduce officer time spent later in the planning permission process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Budget requirements for project development and stakeholder engagement.</li> </ul>

**9. Feedback on existing Retrofit Initiatives**

**9.1 Future Fit Homes**

Future Fit Homes is a peer to peer learning project, showcasing the value of community networks and conversations in supporting homeowners to self-fund energy improvement work in their homes.

Through an online group, regular meet ups (Sept 24 to Feb 25) and events - including talks from experts, plus support and advice from Severn Wye Energy Agency; this project is helping us to understand what the barriers to action are, and to identify steps to overcome them. The project explores how to put power into the hands of communities when it comes to retrofitting our homes.

Fifty successful applicant homes had access to free home energy surveys (Severn Wye Energy Agency), energy saving goodies, and the opportunity to apply for a grant of up to £1,000 to support their projects.

Outside of the initial 50 sign ups the group has grown to over 60 residents who regularly discuss the best solutions for their homes.

Members have self-managed home visits to see other participant installations and have an active Facebook group where they share experience and advice.

Of the 60 in the group there are 3 listed properties and 10 within conservation areas. The breakdown of the age of properties involved in the project are as follows:

### What is the age of your property?

60 responses

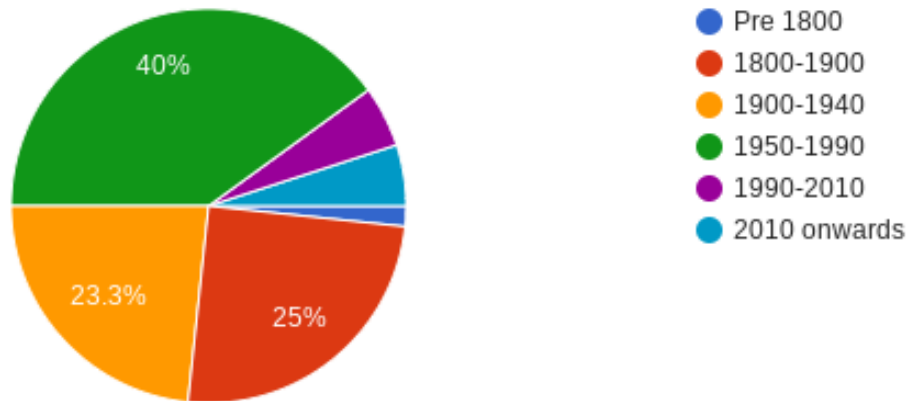


Figure 1. Pie chart showing age of homes involved in future fit home project.

### 9.2 Future Fit Homes Event

Saturday 8th of February 2025, the Future Fit Homes event had 510 attendees, with talks and stalls from local experts, trusted installers, and energy professionals to showcase a range of retrofitting solutions. The event attracted 23 stallholders, ranging from national organisations through to local installers and service providers, plus charities and community groups. All 12 talks were well attended, with discussion continuing afterwards. The Home Surgery advice hub was busy throughout, with homeowners able to access one to one support from experts.

The theme of retrofitting heritage properties was addressed at this event, with CBC's Head of Planning delivering a talk to residents and the Conservation team hosting 7 heritage advice drop-in sessions.

Out of the 52 attendees who answered the exit survey, 16 of these were occupiers of a historic (before 1919), listed or conservation area residential. This demonstrates a keen interest within the borough and a desire for heritage homeowners to learn more or uptake retrofit measure within their property.

### 9.3 Retrofit Engagement Officer (REO)

This 12-month, match funded project (Southwest Net Zero Hub / UKSPF funding in CBC), boosts existing activity to encourage householders to undertake, and where possible self-fund, retrofit measures. REO officers based in Cheltenham, Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean engage householders on home improvement options available towards household decarbonisation. The project supports both one to one

resident engagement, local community events and the promotion of the county wide retrofit platform (discussed below).

Across the three districts the project aims to engage 2,500 households EPC D and below: with a minimum of 85 progressing installations in the first 12 months.

This project has already identified the value of one-to-one trusted advice, to support homeowners in progressing with work and there is a necessity to provide assistance for homeowners in older building in general, not only those classified as heritage.

The REO is considering planning further events centred around heritage and retrofit.

### *9.4 Business West & People Power Retrofit*

CBC has contracted Business West and People Powered Retrofit (PPR) to work in partnership to better understand the existing retrofit sector and supply chain capacity in the Cheltenham area, creating a database of providers and contractors, and offering training and Continued Professional Development opportunities. The project:

- Provides relevant business development and networking opportunities for the supply chain and Cheltenham's businesses, driving engagement and market stimulation.
- Informs training provision, provided by People Powered Retrofit, to service the demand for retrofit from Cheltenham based businesses.
- Evaluate and provide a longer-term view of skills needs for the sector and region, to provide baseline information for new retrofit and skills focused roles being appointed for Cheltenham and Gloucestershire.

### *9.5 Furbnow Project*

Through Climate Leadership Gloucestershire, CBC is part of a district wide initiative to offer a one stop shop platform to homeowners looking to retrofit their properties. This service launched January 2025, and all 6 districts have committed to funding for 3 years.

Furbnow offer the self-funded market the ability to purchase home energy surveys and, if they choose whole home project management with independent, expert advice and trusted installers. The platform is linked to the Fairer Warmth app, which supports residents in creating their own home action plan, identifying local and national support options (including the SWEA Warm and Well service), grants, energy saving tips and home energy improvements. Furbnow's service (Home Energy Plan) will include a specialist service for heritage buildings, providing essential support to address some of the barriers discussed above.

## **10. Conclusion**

As discussed, there are many challenges to reconciling heritage protection with sustainability measures. Improving the energy efficiency of historic homes is essential for their long-term survival and to achieving CBC's net zero ambitions. Ensuring historic buildings are adapted appropriately, through a whole building approach and by taking special considerations when assessing the impact on

historic and architectural significance, are key to success. Although practical barriers to uptake have been identified, CBC is already progressing on works to address these issues through:

- Future Fit Homes project.
- Employment of Retrofit engagement officer.
- Furbnow Project.
- CBC Climate and Planning teams currently working together to determine and progress areas of works to specifically support heritage building retrofit issues.

When considering impact within the borough, 2602 listed buildings within Cheltenham and a significant number of homes are within a conservation area, is relatively small compared to approximately 57,000 residential homes (included listed), accounting for approximately 40% of borough wide emissions. However, it's vital to assess barriers to low carbon transitions, when progressing towards CBC's net zero ambitions.

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## SCRUTINY TOPIC REGISTRATION

<b>Date: January 2025</b>	
<b>Name of person proposing topic:</b>	Councillor Chris Day
<b>Contact:</b>	
<b>Suggested title of topic:</b>	Leisure & Culture Venues long term vision and investment plan
<b>What is the issue that scrutiny needs to address?</b>	
<p>(From the risk register) If the council does not have a long term vision &amp; investment plan in place for its leisure &amp; culture venues then significant unplanned maintenance, repairs &amp; investment may be required to keep the venues running &amp; it may undermine the ability of the Trust (or any future provider) to run leisure &amp; culture services in a profitable way.</p> <p>This risk is one of the top 4 on the risk register that all have a score of 20 – so identified as one of the biggest risks facing the Council.</p> <p>Internal Audit consider that the actions to control this risk are at too early a stage for them to be able add value at this point in time.</p> <p>Among the potential impacts are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unplanned closure of facilities at short notice leading to inconvenience for users (residents), loss of revenue, potential compensation claims (e.g. to artists &amp; producers if an event has to be cancelled), higher than necessary costs from having to make emergency as opposed to planned repairs</li> <li>- Reputational damage to Council from the above – not being seen as a ‘good steward’ of leisure and cultural venues.</li> <li>- Difficulties in finding a future operator of the venues when the Trust’s contract is due for renewal if venues are perceived as being substandard and inadequately maintained.</li> <li>- Demands for higher subsidy fee by Trust or future operator to compensate for risk of unplanned forced closures of venues or reduced forecast income due to substandard venues.</li> <li>- Deterioration of fabric of facilities may lead to damage that would otherwise have been avoided, resulting in high costs being incurred from more extensive maintenance and repair work being required.</li> </ul> <p>Over the last 12 months Leisure@ has experienced unplanned closures due to discovery of RAAC and flooding.</p> <p>Licensed athletics matches cannot be held using the Prince of Wales stadium track as it has failed testing. The last time the track was resurfaced was some 20 years ago – the expected life of a running track is between 10 and 15 years.</p>	

**What do you feel could be achieved by a scrutiny review (outcomes)**

The current control details/mitigation actions detailed in the risk register are as follows:

- Detailed maintenance plan to be develop[ed]
- Project to review and appraise venues and identify investment required
- Phase 2 sports strategy

These actions appear to be in an early stage of development. Bringing this issue to Overview & Scrutiny now will enable Members to assess whether the planned actions are adequate to address the risks and suggest improvements that would strengthen the Council's mitigation strategy.

Working alongside the development and review stage would be better than a review performed 'after the event' as it would avoid the need for completed plans and investment projects to be revisited and thereby avoiding potential delays and inefficiencies.

It could also provide added impetus that would speed up the transition from planning and reviewing stage to implementation and actions that reduce the risk.

<b>If there a strict time constraint?</b>	As detailed above, I believe the most benefit would be obtained by scrutiny during the period plans and projects are being created rather than after they have been completed.
<b>Is the topic important to the people of Cheltenham?</b>	Yes – it encompasses a wide variety of venues that are used by many residents
<b>Does the topic involve a poorly performing service or high public dissatisfaction with a service?</b>	Unplanned closures have occurred during the last 12 months resulting in public dissatisfaction. The state of the running track at PoW has led to negative publicity.
<b>Is it related to the Council's corporate objectives?</b>	Priority 4 - Ensuring residents, communities and businesses benefit from Cheltenham's future growth and prosperity Priority 5 - Being a more modern, efficient and financially-sustainable council
<b>Any other comments:</b>	

**OFFICER IMPLICATIONS (for office use only)**

<b>Date:</b>	<b>27 January 2025</b>
<b>Officer name:</b>	<b>Claire Hughes</b>
<b>Officer title:</b>	<b>Director of Governance and Customer Services</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	<b>claire.hughes@cheltenham.gov.uk</b>
<b>Please give your comments on this proposed topic, for example: is there any other similar review planned or in progress, are there any potential resource constraints?</b>	
<p>The mitigations for this risk are at the early stage of development. Specialist resource will be required to advance some of the actions, such as the options appraisal for the venues and active conversations are underway as to the sourcing of that resource.</p> <p>It is recommended that this request is shared with Cllr Horwood as the relevant cabinet member for his input.</p> <p>A briefing note to update the committee about the work to produce a physical activity and sports strategy action plan for Cheltenham will be included with the agenda for the meeting on 24 February.</p> <p>The note will make reference to the two studies that have recently been completed, the playing pitch strategy and the built facilities strategy. The latter in particular, sets out some recommendations in relation to both Leisure At Cheltenham and the Prince of Wales Stadium.</p> <p>It is then planned to have a wider discussion item about the action plan ahead of it going to Cabinet on 8 April.</p>	

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**Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2025 (updated February)**

Title	Objective	Format	Officer/Interested Party/Partner
<b>31 March 2025 – (Publication 21<sup>st</sup> March)</b>			
Climate Impact of Waste Disposal	Javelin Park and emissions	Briefing Note	Environmental Partnerships Manager/GCC
Sports and Physical Activity Action Plan	<p>For O+S to review the draft sports and physical activity strategy action plan before it goes to Cabinet for approval.</p> <p>To provide an opportunity for the committee to reflect on the proposed actions and how they support wider ambitions of the Council</p>	Draft Action Plan examination	Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships
Review of Collection Development Policy	Current <a href="#">policy</a> – For O+S to review the draft collections policy before it goes to Cabinet for approval.	Draft policy	Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships
Culture Board	Assessing outcomes of the activities and measuring success against original objectives	Information/Discussion Paper	Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships
<b>28<sup>th</sup> April 2025 – (Publication 16<sup>th</sup> April)</b>			
Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and Accessibility update	Present impact of new EDI policy Identifying good practice and reviewing targets	Report	Director of Governance and Customer Services (Monitoring Officer)
<b>7 July 2025 onwards – (Publication 27<sup>th</sup> June)</b>			

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2025 (updated February)**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Officer/Interested Party/Partner</b>
Youth Engagement	To update O&S on progress being made by No Child Left Behind to deliver a year of youth action	Information/Discussion Paper	Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships
Safeguarding – Safety for Women and Girls in the Borough	To update O&S on the work being carried out by the Cheltenham community safety partnership in response to the “Your experiences, your voice – Life in Cheltenham for young women” report and event	Information/Discussion Paper	Safeguarding and Partnerships Manager
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 ( <i>Invite Procurement Manager to Chair briefing post Feb 24<sup>th</sup></i> )	Information/Discussion Paper	Strategic Procurement Manager
Empty Homes	Evaluating data and measures to encourage putting back in use and respective barriers	Information/Discussion Paper	Private Sector Housing
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