

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet

Minutes

Meeting date: 21 October 2025

Meeting time: 6.00 pm - 7.10 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Victoria Atherstone, Paul Baker, Flo Clucas, Rowena Hay, Peter Jeffries, Alisha Lewis, Izaac Tailford and Richard Pineger

Also in attendance:

Gareth Edmundson (Chief Executive), Tracey Birkinshaw (Director of Planning and Building Control), Abi Marshall (Development Manager, Major Developments and Regeneration) and Helen Mole (Head of Economic Development, Comms and Marketing)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Collins.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 September were approved as a true record and signed accordingly.

4 Public and Member Questions and Petitions

No Member questions and no petitions had been received. There was one public question:

Question from Gary Clarke to Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services, Councillor Flo Clucas

Can the Cabinet Member confirm, with reference to any existing records or policies from 01 January 2020 to the present, whether there are any plans or intentions to package, transfer, or sell any part of the council's housing stock, including the approximately 4,800 properties managed by Cheltenham Borough Homes, to pension funds, private equity firms, or other third parties? If no such plans exist, will the Cabinet commit to issuing a formal, public declaration within 30 days, confirming that this housing stock will remain under the council's direct ownership, control and management, with no such proposals under consideration? If such plans do exist, what are the specific details of these proposals, including when they were last discussed, and how do they align with the council's duties under the Housing Act 1985 to manage its housing stock for public benefit?

Cabinet Member response:

Thank you for your question. The council has no plans to package, transfer, or sell the council's housing stock. As part of our ongoing approach to strategic asset management there may be occasions when individual properties or types of properties are considered for disposal, for example those where it would not be financially viable to carry out work to meet the decent homes standards. In such cases disposal may be used with any proceeds being re-investment through the Housing Revenue Account.

The questioner was not present to ask a supplementary question.

5 Award of rent support grant to voluntary sector

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets introduced the report, saying that these grants help the council to support community and charity groups which play an important role in making Cheltenham a better place to live. They encourage groups to become more independent and less reliant on council funding, and in order the qualify for a grant they must show that they are working in line with council's corporate priorities.

He said the report details an application from Leckhampton Rovers Football Club, a registered charity, which maintains the fields, sports pitches, pavilion and café, and makes a strong case of evidence for their contribution to all the corporate priorities, in particular enhancing the environment and building a safe and strong community. They have over 600 members, 49 youth teams, and strong community links, and the council is happy to work collaboratively to support them.

There were no Member questions.

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities was really pleased to note that even in these difficult financial times, when balancing the budget and making sure there is enough money to go round is so challenging, the council is still able to support the important voluntary and community sector, helping them to continue doing such great work in communities they serve.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Wellbeing and Public Realm was also very supportive of this award, saying that his experience in helping to plant trees round the borders of Burrows Field, together with the county council and CBC's greenspace team, had shown him how Leckhampton Rovers are working with the council on our corporate priorities and the environment, as well as providing an incredible amount of sporting opportunity for many teams of all ages. He congratulated everyone involved for the great job they are doing.

The Leader said the 2016 decision to make grants like this available is one we should be very proud of – these organisations look after our buildings as well as delivering services the council cannot, and they wouldn't be able to do this if they were charged market rents. Our communities would be poorer and weaker without the facilities and services they provide.

The Cabinet Member for Waste and Recycling, Parks, Gardens and Green Open Space also recognised the massive input to the town from Friends Groups, and from local football clubs who provide so much opportunity for children of all ages and abilities. Leckhampton Rovers has taken on a huge project at Burrows Field, with grants from the Football Association and others to improve their pitches and facilities. It is good that we can support them, and that we continue to support all voluntary organisations as much as possible.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets welcomed and agreed with all Members' comments, saying this is one of those policies which is more about the outcomes than the money.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT:

- 1. the following rent support grant is agreed:**
Applicant: Leckhampton Rovers Football Club, Burrows Fields and Pavilion
Recommended rent support grant: A rent support grant of 62% of current market rent, applied to the portion of rent which is not recouped through subletting to the café on site.
- 2. authority is delegated to the Participation and Engagement Team Leader, in consultation with One Legal to agree the terms of a rent support grant agreement with the applicant.**

6 Nature Recovery Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The Leader read an introduction to the report on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control:

It is my pleasure to present this consultation document. If cabinet agree to its publication tonight, it will signal the beginning of a four-week public consultation exercise, which will go live as soon as possible.

This is a new draft nature recovery supplementary planning document (SPD) and it will give the public the opportunity to play a part in this vitally important process. The guidance sets out how future development in Cheltenham can support and improve the natural environment.

Cheltenham already has a wide range of green spaces, including nature reserves, parks, and important wildlife areas. This SPD offers guidance on how new buildings and developments can help connect and improve local green spaces, wildlife habitats, and the overall health of nature in Cheltenham.

Residents, developers, and community groups can now share their views on the draft SPD, which launches on 7 November 2025 and runs until 7 December. The consultation will be available on the council's website.

This draft guidance sets out how we can build in a way that supports wildlife, protects green spaces, and help nature thrive across Cheltenham. We're keen to hear from residents, developers and community groups so we can shape a final document that works for everyone and makes a real difference. Hopefully, it really will be a win-win opportunity for us all.

This work supports the policies in our development plan and links to the emerging Gloucestershire local nature recovery strategy which identifies the best places to restore nature and the most important actions to take.

Hopefully, cabinet colleagues will be able to support both the recommendations contained in this consultation document.

I am sure that you have all been able to read it in full. However, I just wanted to say that it is fully in line with our corporate plan priorities, and aligns with the following actions:

- *We will drive increased biodiversity in our borough and fully utilise our planning system to encourage developers to enhance our natural environment, mitigating the impact of new buildings.*
- *We will fulfil our biodiversity net gain (BNG) obligations within the planning system.*

In addition, I think that it is important to draw out these important points which are contained within the document.

Nature recovery refers to the process of restoring and revitalising ecosystems that have been degraded or lost due to human activity, climate change, or other factors. It involves regenerating natural habitats, creating new ones as well as protecting them (and the species they support) from degradation. The goal is to create healthier, more resilient environments that can support a wider variety of species on a large scale. Nature recovery is important for a number of reasons, as set out in the SPD, including:

1. *Biodiversity Conservation*

2. *Climate Change Mitigation*
3. *Ecosystem Services*
4. *Resilience to Natural Disasters*
5. *Human Well-Being*
6. *Sustainability*

As I said at the beginning, I hope that you will all be able to support the introduction of this important public consultation document

The Leader said she hoped that Members would be supportive, and stressed that the recommendation concerns the consultation process, not the definitive document.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency said he had read the whole document and echoed the sentiments of the introduction. He noted that the climate impact assessment includes the sentence that '*research suggests that 10% biodiversity net gain is a minimum to prevent further decrease*' and felt that this should be included and highlighted as part of the introduction when going out to consultation, to ensure that developers fully understand their obligations.

The Director of Community and Economic Development could see no problem with adding some more positive wording around this, and was happy to discuss the suggestion with the report author.

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities wondered if there is potential scope to identify areas for habitat banks within the borough boundary, where developers can be directed should they need to choose that as their option for biodiversity net gain. The Director of Community and Economic Development welcomed this interesting question, saying the council has previously investigated whether Cheltenham landholdings could be utilised as potential habitat banks, but the challenge with this is that responsibilities are very long term, and the implications around administration and monitoring are significant. She said the council will always consider local first, and is already looking at potential habitat banks with Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership. The government allows credits to be allocated at a more national level, which would transport any benefit elsewhere, still local if possible but not necessarily within the borough itself.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency added to his previous comment, which he was concerned may have appeared overly negative. He said the proposals are very positive compared with what has gone before, and with the Parks and Public Realm team and Ubico are doing all they can to encourage biodiversity and nature, this is a good step forward. He was just concerned that developers need to understand that adding 10% is a minimum to ensure neutrality.

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling, Parks, Gardens and Public Greenspace said he is really proud of the work the council does, and that the Climate Emergency SPD a few years ago was a very positive document, well received across the whole sector, helping to concentrate and focus the minds of planners, applicants and developers, as well as helping members of Planning Committee with their decisions. He said huge credit is due to the Director of Community and Economic Development

and her team – this document is not a legal requirement, but will help ensure more applications are positively received. He hoped the consultation would go as wide as possible, and was pleased to see CBC leading the way once more.

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities agreed, and was looking forward to the consultation responses and future benefits of this SPD. She said it was worrying to read about endangered and already extinct species, and welcomed the move towards implementing biodiversity net gain and improving nature and natural habitat.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the draft Nature Recovery Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 4) is approved for consultation for a period of 4 weeks under Regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).**
- 2. authority is delegated to the Director of Community and Economic Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control to make any necessary minor amendments, corrections and additions to the document prior to publication for consultation.**

7 Budget Strategy, Process and Timetable 2026-27

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets was pleased to present the report which outlines the strategic approach and key milestones for the development of the council's budget and council tax proposals, reaffirming its commitment to financial sustainability and giving corporate priorities meaningful public engagement. The report notes the current forecast overspend of £295k for 2025-26, underlining the need to continue identifying savings and efficiencies while protecting frontline services. It also sets out the risks of relying too heavily on reserves to balance the budget.

He said that the report reflects the provisional local government financial settlement expected in late December, with final confirmation likely in January next year. This will influence the shaping of the final budget proposals. Sadly the government always leaves decisions and announcements far too late, but have to indicate three-year settlement which will hopefully be followed through.

In conclusion, he said that the success of the budget depends on strong collaboration of Cabinet colleagues and officers across the council, and encouraged all colleagues to engage early with the timetable and contribute ideas and feedback within their individual portfolios, as we all work together to present a balanced and resilient budget for Cheltenham.

There were no questions or comments.

The Leader reminded Members that this report is legally required and presented at the same time every year.

RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT:

- 3. the budget setting timetable at Appendix 2 and outlined in section 3 of this report is approved;**
- 4. the outline budget strategy outlined in section 4 is approved;**
- 5. the £295k overspend reported to Cabinet in September 2025 and the large amount of work which will be required to close this gap and deliver the required savings and efficiencies in 2025/26 is noted;**
- 6. the intention for this council to remain working together with the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool in 2026-27 as outlined in section 7 if applicable is noted;**
- 7. the Section 151 Officer, Deputy Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets are requested to consider suggestions from the Budget Scrutiny Working Group in preparing the interim budget proposals for 2026-27.**

8 Briefing from Cabinet Members

The Leader invited Members to share their briefings on events and progress since the last meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Major Developments and Housing Delivery:

- thanked CyNam for their generous invitation to a networking event before Nick Clegg's talk at the recent Literature Festival. It was good to speak with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), start-ups, and people in the tech industry who are already established locally or thinking of moving to Cheltenham. People are excited by the Golden Valley proposals, and really see opportunities to build in Cheltenham. She is grateful to CyNam for making this happen;
- it is fantastic that ten new homes are fully finished at Regents Village, and will be ready to be moved into by Christmas. She praised the speed and quality of the homes, with solar panels, EV charging, ground source heat pumps, and important accessibility features such as level access and wider corridors and doors. This is a great investment and she looked forward to welcoming the new residents;
- the Swindon Road development is also progressing, with residents getting a second newsletter soon to keep them updated, and she looked forward to attending the ground-breaking at that site soon.

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities said that she had also attended an inspiring event at the Literature Festival, at which the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Team, together with their partners (the Children's Society, The Rock, and Springbank Community Resource Centre) talked about the work they have done this year as part

of a Youth Voice activity, giving young people a voice. She was proud of the young people who were brave enough to stand up and speak about some tough subjects, including online bullying and harm in schools, and thanked NCLB for inviting her to their workshop where she made a bracelet.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Wellbeing and Public Realm had had a busy month:

- he attended the launch of the Everyman's Grove Street Appeal, which hopes to raise £1m for a creative arts and educational community centre, to open in Spring 2026. This will offer outreach activities in an excellent location, and provide an accessible way into the arts;
- he spoke at the launch of The Wilson's new free exhibition, *Material Worlds*, which together with the Hayward Gallery is displaying art created from everyday articles. The exhibition is proof that Cheltenham punches above its weight in the world of culture and arts, and is a real testament to the work of Lisa Edgar and her team;
- the Lions At Large trail has now ended; it increased footfall in Cheltenham and Gloucester, thus supporting local businesses, and sale of the lions raised £370k for the Big Space Cancer Appeal. Thanks to Cheltenham BID and Visit Cheltenham for supporting the project, and helping Cheltenham and Gloucester Hospitals;
- he attended a Marketing Cheltenham meeting at Whaddon Road, where local businesses got together to share insight, and included a showcase of the new Visit Cheltenham website, which is now the top search result when looking for events in Cheltenham;
- the Literature Festival was a great success, with over 400 events; festivals are essential to our town, and the continued success of the literature festival is to be celebrated;
- outside culture, he attended a meeting with Gloucestershire County Council last week, to discuss the High Street and the Promenade. It is important to work together to ensure a better future and vision for Cheltenham, to bring in different organisations to consult and improve the town centre and public realm and get things back on track;
- he encouraged businesses to support the BID ballot – BID does a lot of good work in the town, and will hopefully continue to do so in the future;
- and finally, with Christmas fast approaching, the Everyman and Playhouse theatres will both be presenting pantomimes, and the ice rink in Imperial Gardens will return on 21 November.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services reported on the following:

- Cheltenham's Citizen of Honour David Bath is in the process of collecting selection boxes and funding for deprived children in Cheltenham. Last year, he collected just under 900 and is already well on the way to that this year. She thanked Dave for all his hard work;
- work on the St Peters and Moors Hub starts with ground analysis on 02 November, and it is anticipated that the new premises will be complete by April 2026;
- she has been talking about housing for veterans and how the council can help, with a meeting to take place tomorrow; thanks to Councillor Harvey for his interest and involvement in this;
- she attended an interesting meeting 10 days ago, where representatives from European cities met to discuss housing across Europe; all are facing similar problems - not enough, too expensive, insufficient funding to build, compliance with green agendas. She has been asked to join a task group to consider these issues, which could be extremely useful, particularly as it has been suggested that investment and other international banks will be asked what they can do to help;
- she has also attended a conference in Leeds with the Housing Ombudsman, who is responsible for local authority and social housing complaints. One question concerned private sector tenants' complaints which the Ombudsman said would continue to come to local authorities

until secondary legislation goes through – until then we are working in the dark. The Ombudsman also went through the complaints process, providing those present with the opportunity to see how it works, hear what they think is good and on what we need to concentrate. When reports come in, they want us to challenge, to make sure everything is being done properly, and it was great to be able to say that is the norm in Cheltenham where tenants, leaseholders and Members have the right and the opportunity to ask questions and receive responses.

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling, Parks, Gardens and Public Greenspace shared the following:

- he and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control attended a briefing with officers about the new Cheltenham Trees Strategy, which will be out for consultation soon. This is a brilliant piece of work, setting out how the council will manage and protect its thousands of trees, including many TPO'd and veteran trees, as well as a strategy for new planting. Cheltenham is regarded as a 'town within a park' but some parts of the borough are devoid of trees and canopy, particularly on the west side. This document really looks to how this imbalance can be addressed. Trees are a valuable commodity for many reasons: improving people's mental health, providing shade, increasing biodiversity and much more;
- another evolving policy concerns Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs), which will require planning applicants to make a contribution, in an attempt to generate alternative areas the Cotswold Beechwoods. Money from planning applications will be used to make areas of Cheltenham more attractive, and this is a good opportunity to invest in our parks;
- regarding recycling, the council continues to work towards expanding kerbside recycling, to include flexi-plastic and tetra packs, hopefully to be rolled out in the new year, once one or two issues have been finalised;
- conversations continue in positive way with Gloucestershire County Council about the future of the Household Recycling Centre – this is not altogether straightforward but there are some common goals .

The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency reported on the following items:

- he recently attended a Climate Leadership Gloucestershire meeting, which take place six times a year, to review the climate risk and vulnerability assessment. Comments raised provide evidence for further action on the climate. This should be ready in the next few months, and made quite scary reading. Also discussed was the Local Area Energy Plan, which plans how the electricity grid is going to be managed now that we have the new organisation, Great British Energy, and how electricity will get to businesses and houses up until 2040-50. Documents on this will be shared soon, and today a business summit is being held – the first collaboration with all our business partners - and it will be interesting to hear how this went;
- we are recruiting a new resident engagement officer, but until then he is still attending events to discuss low carbon technologies. He spoke at an Energy Smart event on 04 October, set up by our partner Furbnow, for home-owners who can pay for their own retrofitting. It was very positive and attended by 70 people;
- we are just finishing the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1, for insulating Council housing, and have signed grant funding for Wave 3, which will provide £3.1m towards bringing all housing stock to EPC C or better;
- he recently toured Prestbury and Warden Hill, looking at SuDs and other flood prevention schemes, and considering where these could be placed to help with localised flooding in his own ward, St Mark's. He added that the council is always looking for volunteer flood wardens, and

said the Emergency Planning Team has received some funding for flood protection equipment, which will allow it to make better preparation to help residents during flood events;

- finally, he reported that volunteers have cleared 4km of Himalayan Balsam from the River Chelt, and as a result their hard work we are beginning to see lasting results and can think that the river might eventually be free of it altogether.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets said his was a difficult portfolio to brief on, as most of it concerned confidential matters. He therefore had nothing to add.

The Leader shared the following:

- earlier today she met with the treasurer of Whaddon United Football Club, who has taken on the lease at the resource centre in Clyde Crescent. The club has existed since the 1970s but never had its own clubhouse, so is very excited to have the opportunity now and will be applying for a rent support grant to help finance it. Some of the club's pitches are not brilliant, but now they have a club house and three teams, they can apply to the Football Association for funding and help to improve the pitch quality. She is delighted that the council is helping to make this happen;
- on Saturday she attended a concert at the Pittville Pump Room, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Oriel Singers. This group raises a lot of money for local communities, and inspires composers to write music especially for it, including a jubilee piece composed for the occasion;
- she was asked to give a closing speech at Tech Cyber Week, and was pleased to note the growth of CyNam over the last two years, from a relatively small, Cheltenham-focussed organisation to one of 7,000 members and a reach and network far beyond Cheltenham. Huge congratulations to Holly Wakefield and the team for making this happen – it was great to see such a well-attended event, and to hear what opportunities are coming forward in the cyber tech and security world;
- the Cheltenham BID renewal ballot is coming to an end, and she encouraged any businesses who have not yet voted to do so. She said the council couldn't do much of what it does without BID, and offered massive thanks to the entire BID board – all of whom are volunteers and most of whom run a local business and care passionately the town and its business. A networking event at The Bottle of Sauce was well attended, and BID has decided to extend its area, bringing in new people and small businesses.

9 Cabinet Member Decisions taken since the last meeting

Members reported on the following decisions:

1. **23 September 2025:** Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services, Councillor Flo Clucas
[To award a contract to Afghanistan and Central Asian Association \(A&CAA\)](#)
WITHDRAWN
2. **18 September 2025:** Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Victoria Atherstone
[To note the legislative update and approve the proposed fee for primate licence applications](#)

3. **03 October 2025:** Leader, Councillor Rowena Hay
[Nominations to Outside Bodies](#)
4. **24 September 2025:** Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins
[To agree to enter into a contract with recruitment consultancy Carrington West for the supply of services of a shared planning policy manager \(covering Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury\) for up to a period of 12 months](#)
5. **13 October 2025:** Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Victoria Atherstone
[To adopt the Gloucestershire Tackling Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-28](#)

10 Local Government Act 1972 - Exempt Business

RESOLVED THAT:

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

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

11 To dispose of the Municipal Offices

RESOLVED THAT:

1. the sale of the Municipal Offices to the preferred bidder be approved
2. the Leader or Deputy Leader, in conjunction with the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 officer), is authorised to:
 - conclude negotiations regarding the Heads of Terms;

- **enter into an Exclusivity Period which allows for investment in the due diligence process by the preferred bidders;**
- **instruct solicitors to prepare the sales contract on terms set out in the Heads of Terms;**
- **subject to successfully passing gate reviews, enter into a formal sales agreement for the disposal (drafted by solicitors in accordance with Heads of Terms)**