

# Cheltenham Borough Council Cabinet Minutes

**Meeting date:** 18 November 2025

**Meeting time:** 6.00 pm - 6.55 pm

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## **In attendance:**

### **Councillors:**

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

### **Also in attendance:**

Gareth Edmundson (Chief Executive) and Tracey Birkinshaw (Director of Planning and Building Control)

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## **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Clucas.

## **2 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October were approved and signed as a correct record.

## **4 Public and Member Questions and Petitions**

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

**Question from Steven Thomas to the Leader, Councillor Rowena Hay**

I recently read your press statement regarding Staverton Airport where you had stated that Horizon Aero Group are the council's preferred bidder and that any final deal would uphold the airport's long-term aviation future and deliver clear benefits to the wider region.

It seems that Horizon Aero Group were only set up this year in January 2025 and have not yet filed any accounts, returns, or confirmation statements. Furthermore, they only have three Officers, Rajani Kishore Kumar Panja, Somasekhara Narayana Murthy Pemireddy, and Ramdev Polkampalli, all of whom were appointed on 23 January 2025:

<https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/16203305>

Please advise why you chose a company with no track record and no history of managing airports and clarify for the record whether the council's plan really is to deliver long term growth for the airport, or whether the council actually intends the area to be sold to make way for more housing?

**Leader response:**

Gloucester City Council and Cheltenham Borough Council remain firmly committed to safeguarding the future of Gloucestershire Airport as an operational and strategic asset for the region. Our aim is to ensure the airport continues to play a vital role as a dynamic aviation-based commercial hub, and we fully support the growth of existing businesses on site, alongside new enterprises.

The sale to Horizon Aero Group is continuing to progress. As often with the nature of such transactions, it is not unusual for investors to set up a special purpose vehicle. The people, their investors and the team behind them have huge experience across many fields within the aviation industry, which combined with the skills and experience that will come with Gloucestershire Airport Limited, was one of the key considerations behind the selection of Horizon. Due diligence with both councils and professional advisors, and legal processes are taking place and as such, there are strict limitations on any further information that can be publicly disclosed at this stage.

What can be confirmed, however, is that the sale will be subject to robust measures and controls, including covenants against housing development on any part of the site, ensuring that the airport is not bought for speculative land investment.

From day one, both councils have made clear their commitment to secure the future of Gloucestershire Airport as an operational airport. That is what everyone continues to work towards.

The questioner was not present to ask a supplementary question.

## **5 Local Government Reorganisation - Business Case Submission**

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and made reference to the thorough debate at the Extraordinary Council meeting the previous day, which had highlighted all the issues involved. While the Council was requested to vote on an advisory basis only to Cabinet, there was overwhelming support for the two-unitary East and West Gloucestershire model. She reiterated that Cabinet was voting for CBC's preferred business case, which would then be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, where the final decision for Gloucestershire will be made.

### **RESOLVED THAT:**

- 1. the completed final business cases and supporting documentation relating to:**
  - a. a single unitary for Gloucestershire - appendix 3**
  - b. a two-unitary East and West Gloucestershire - appendix 4**
  - c. a two-unitary Greater Gloucester/Gloucestershire - appendix 5**
  - d. stronger places, stronger Gloucestershire – the case for East and West Gloucestershire - appendix 6**

**are noted;**
- 2. the decision is made to support the following Local Government Reorganisation Business Case as part of the submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG):**
  - a two-unitary East and West Gloucestershire, as detailed in the business case in appendix 4**
- 3. responsibility is delegated to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Chief Executive, to finalise and agree the joint letter and submission, alongside other Gloucestershire Councils and submit to MHCLG on or before the November 28 2025 deadline.**

## **6 Award of rent support grant to voluntary sector organisation**

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets introduced the report, saying that community organisations play a vital role in the town and that the council always does what it can to help them survive and thrive. One way of doing this is to offer rent subsidies to organisations which operate from council-owned premises. He said Saracens makes a positive impact on wellbeing, inclusion and community spirit at the heart of St Peter's ward, providing sports, social activities, and opportunities for your people. A 50% rent subsidy will help them continue their important work, and is brought to Cabinet not only to ensure fair and transparent use of council

resources but also to celebrate local contributions to the wellbeing of our town and to support groups which make Cheltenham a better and stronger place to live.

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities welcomed the report, saying Saracens Football Club are a brilliant part of St Peter's community, not only for their sporting activity but also organising local events, litter picking, and looking out for local residents.

**RESOLVED THAT:**

- 1. the following rent support grant is agreed:**

**Applicant**

**Cheltenham Saracens FC at St Peter's Recreation Ground**

**Recommended rent support grant**

**A rent support grant of 50% of the current market rent**

- 2. authority is delegated to the Participation and Engagement Team Leader, in consultation with the Director: One Legal to agree the terms of a rent support grant agreement with the applicant.**

**7 Updated Safeguarding Policy**

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities introduced her report which presents updates to the safeguarding policy. Last revised in December 2023, she said the policy now reflects housing services being brought back in-house, incorporates national best practice, and better reflects the strategic safeguarding framework in Gloucestershire. It strengthens the council's framework for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, ensuring that the council applies the policy without prejudice and discrimination. The policy also supports the council in its Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

She said the roles and responsibility section has also been amended to include the establishment of a corporate safeguarding group which will enable discussion of concerns, the dissemination of best practice, and additional support for staff. The group will also contribute to annual safeguarding audits. There is now specific guidance on the use of images of children and young people, particularly where parental consent has not been obtained, such as in the use of CCTV for community safeguarding concerns.

**RESOLVED THAT:**

- 1. the updated safeguarding policy is adopted;**
- 2. authority is delegated to the Director of Governance, Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Safety and Communities and One Legal, to amend the commissioning and procurement section of the safeguarding policy once the relevant**

**Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership guidance and training becomes available.**

## **8 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Joint Committee Host Authority and Terms of Reference Review**

The Leader introduced the report and explained that the terms of reference of the Joint Committee have been reviewed to ensure they align with necessary policies. Cabinet was being requested to consider whether Tewkesbury Borough Council should remain the host authority. The terms of reference remain as approved by the council in January 2024.

**RESOLVED THAT:**

1. **Tewkesbury Borough Council retains its appointment as the host authority for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Joint Committee from January 2026.**
2. **the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Joint Committee Terms of reference remain as approved by Council in January 2024, other than the minor points of clarification as identified in Appendix 3.**

## **9 Notification of decisions made by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Joint Committee**

The Leader asked Cabinet to note the decisions of the CIL Joint Committee and to acknowledge the allocations it has agreed.

**RESOLVED THAT:**

3. **the decisions of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Joint Committee made on 25 September 2025 are noted.**

## **10 Review of Statement of Licensing Policy (Licensing Act 2003)**

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities introduced the report and explained that the licensing policy, last updated in 2020, has been reviewed to reflect any changes in primary legislation, case law and national guidance.

While no major changes were required, updates include references to personal licences and annual fees, and a new section on women's safety and wider vulnerabilities. The policy continues to sit alongside the evening and night-time working group and aspiration to support a charter to provide safe spaces for all. Cheltenham retains its Purple Flag accreditation, which has been held for ten consecutive years.

**RESOLVED THAT:**

1. the consultation feedback and officer comments are noted;
2. the revised licensing policy statement at Appendix 2 is approved;
3. Council is recommended to adopt the revised licensing policy statement.

## **11 Review of Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy (Emissions Policy)**

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities introduced the report on proposals to review the 2030 emissions policy for taxis, aligning Cheltenham with Stroud and Tewkesbury. The policy sets a pathway to zero-emission taxis by 2030, with interim requirements for electric or ultra-low emission vehicles from April 2028.

The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency said he and the climate team had worked hard with the licensing team, to ensure the policy will help the taxi industry through this transition, noting advances in electric vehicle technology and the need for fairness in working with the trade. He was pleased that Gloucester and Tewkesbury are in agreement, and said he would take the policy to the Climate Leadership Gloucestershire group to encourage Cotswold District Council to join them. He was also pleased to note that a review is scheduled for 2028 and was confident that the price of electric vehicles will have come down by then, make them a viable and economic option for taxis.

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities welcomed his comments and support, and agreed that with technology advancing, prices falling, and the range increasing, it is wise to continue monitoring progress on a regular basis, and to work closely with the trade to support them on this journey.

### **RESOLVED THAT:**

1. the revised wording in relation to the 2030 target date for emissions, as laid out in paragraph 4.3, is adopted;
2. the revised wording is incorporated into the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy and that the document is adopted at the December Full Council meeting.

## **12 Corporate Enforcement Policy**

The Leader introduced the report which sets out the legislative framework and principles the council will abide by when undertaking investigations to mitigate the risk of legal challenge in Court.

She explained that subsequent to the publication of the report, a couple of minor amendments are required within the policy for which authority is delegated to the Chief Executive to approve, in consultation with herself as Leader, the Head of

Service Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit, Lead Enforcement Officers and One Legal.

For completeness, the amendments are included below, with additional text highlighted in yellow:

10.5. The decision to prosecute **must be taken by Officers, independently of Councillors, subject to financial implications which may require a formal Council decision.** The decision will take into account the criteria set down in the Code for Crown Prosecutors, issued by the Crown Prosecution Service. Both stages of the 'Full Code Test' as set out in the Code for Crown prosecutors will be applied as set out below:

16.1.4 **Some development including domestic extensions**, regardless of impact on neighbours, may **either** be immune from planning enforcement action due to **elapse of time elapsed of time or because** if the works fall within permitted development rights **there will not be a breach of planning control.** Any work commenced within the standard three year life of the permission, and built as approved are beyond further control. No action is possible **Enforcement notices cannot be issued in respect of anticipated breaches, however the use of injunctions is possible where there is strong evidence that such breaches will occur and an injunction is necessary where it is considered necessary** or expedient for an apprehended breach of planning control to be restrained by injunction. For example, where **unauthorised development would cause irreparable damage to protected assets or serious harm to the public** there is a serious issue where damages are unlikely to be an adequate remedy and the balance of convenience is in favour of granting an injunction. **Otherwise, action for breaches in respect of anticipated breaches.** Action can only be taken once an unauthorised development has commenced.

#### 16.8.3

- The Bribery Act 2010 (with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Serious Fraud Office).

#### **RESOLVED THAT:**

1. **the Corporate Enforcement Policy (as amended) is approved and adopted;**
2. **authority is delegated to the Chief Executive to approve future minor amendments to the Policy in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Head of Service Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit, Lead Enforcement Officers and One Legal.**

#### **13 To adopt the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2025**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control introduced the report and explained that the Statement of Community Involvement sets out how local

communities can engage with the planning system. It is a statutory requirement to review it every five years, and although it was last updated only in 2023, with each of the three councils working together on the Strategic and Local Plan having their own SCIs, it was felt that this is an opportune time to ensure that these are all aligned. He said the authority will need to comply with this SCI when preparing other local development documents, and felt sure that everyone would agree that it is essential to involve local communities when considering important planning decisions.

**RESOLVED THAT:**

- 1. the revised Scheme of Community Involvement, attached to the report at Appendix 3, is adopted, to take effect immediately;**
- 2. authority is delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control, to prepare the Statement of Community Involvement for publication correcting any minor errors such as spelling, grammar, typographical and formatting changes that do not affect the substantive content of the Statement of Community Involvement.**

**14 Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2026-27**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets introduced the report and reaffirmed the administration's strong commitment to protecting low-income households through the Council Tax Support Scheme, with £4.3 million of support provided. He said this scheme is a clear demonstration of the administration's compassion and commitment to ensuring that those most in need receive the support they need. He expressed concern that schemes such as these may get lost in the future under local government reorganisation but hoped that Cheltenham would be able to continue to support financially vulnerable residents as we move forward.

The Leader said she was proud that CBC supports residents in this way and has introduced the scheme over a number of years, now offering 100% support to those most in need.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency welcomed the policy, noting the futility of chasing debt from households unable to pay. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets agreed, saying that offering 100% support is beneficial to the public purse in the long run.

**RESOLVED THAT:**

- 1. the outcome of the consultation on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme in Appendix 4 is noted;**
- 2. the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for working age customers in Appendix 5 and summarised in Appendix 6 is approved as the preferred option for 2026/27.**

3. the proposed scheme is adopted and Council is recommended to approve and adopt the proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme for working age customers for 2026/27.
4. the Council is asked to give authority to the Chief Executive, or Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets, to make any necessary adjustments to the income bands to reflect changes to and uprating of welfare benefits, by 27 February 2026.

## 15 Briefing from Cabinet Members

The Cabinet Member for Major Developments and Housing Delivery said she and the Leader had today attended the ground breaking at 320 Swindon Road, where a former car park is being redeveloped to provide 24 affordable, eco-friendly, sustainable homes to buy and rent. It was a pleasure to meet the workers and some of the neighbours of a scheme which will be a real uplift for the community. She said ground source heat pumps will be installed, which work better for flats.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing, Culture and Public Realm reported on several upcoming Christmas events for all the family to enjoy:

- the ice rink will return to Imperial Gardens at the weekend, and is a brilliant way to bring people to the town centre between now and January, offering a range of sessions for everyone;
- the Christmas lights switch-on is to take place at the weekend, with a temporary market on the Promenade for the event, and the German Christmas market coming soon in December;
- there are two pantomimes in Cheltenham this year – *Robin Hood and his Merry Men* at the Everyman and *Dick Whittington* at Playhouse.

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities shared two items:

- she recently attended the C5 parish council catch-up, where there was interesting dialogue about the ongoing community governance review, considering the likely challenges and consequences, with 15 unparished or partly-parished wards in Cheltenham. It was great to hear the views of parish councillors from Shurdington and Uckington;
- Cheltenham Interfaith Week took place last week, and she expressed gratitude to Cheltenham's Interfaith Network, in particular Kevin Devaney who worked so hard with Helen Down to put on a great week of activities. She thanked all the faith and belief groups who opened their doors to allow others to better understand and appreciate one another, and hoped that the event will continue for many years to come.

The Cabinet Member for Waste and Recycling, Parks, Gardens and Green Open Space shared the following:

- Cheltenham is indebted to its many friends and volunteer groups for their hard work and dedication, and he welcomed the formation of a new group called Roamers, set up by greenspace team and comprising volunteers from all parts of town who will go and work on a rota basis in places currently not served by friends groups;

- he recently attended a meeting about allotments – there are 900 allotment holders in Cheltenham, and a long waiting list – and was interested to learn about some new initiatives coming forward;
- it's the season of falling leaves, which gives rise to many comments and complaints from residents. The teams are working hard to clear them, but it can be problematic in streets where access is restricted by cars parked all day. The council is working with GCC, temporarily closing parking zones to allow street-cleaning teams to go in, but this inevitably takes longer than we would like;
- he and officers will attend a conference in Sheffield on Thursday, about cemetery and crematorium developments; this promises to be interesting and informative. CBC like other councils is facing problems with competition from direct cremations at the moment, and it will be interesting to hear what can do to reinvigorate our service.

The Cabinet Member Climate Emergency described the success of a mock COP30 conference held last week in the Council Chamber and involving 61 local school children from 12 schools. It was a child-led event, run in the format of COP, with children speaking for countries, having studied the politics, views, and climate vulnerabilities of those countries. It not only provided those young people with valuable experience in international climate negotiations but also gave them the opportunity to understand more about local, national and global democratic processes to change the world for the better. Like them, he learnt a lot, and thanked all involved for a thoroughly enjoyable event, including all officers and Cecily Etherington of the Inter Climate Network, whose mission is to inspire young people across the UK.

He added that Climate Leadership Gloucestershire hoped to publish the Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment after COP30, and this will be brought to Cabinet and Council soon.

## 16 Cabinet Member Decisions

### To award a contract to Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS)

*Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services, Councillor Flo Clucas*

On behalf of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services, the Leader reported on her decision to award the contract to the Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS). She said that support services for asylum seekers and refugees was vital, to provide advice, assistance and accredited help to those who have already endured significant loss.

The contract for delivering these services was initially awarded to the Afghanistan and Central Asian Association (A&CAA), but it later became clear that A&CAA did not hold sufficient accreditation to fulfil the terms of the contract. A second

organisation was considered but also failed to meet the necessary standards. In contrast, GARAS has demonstrated that it meets all of the required criteria and stands out as the only supplier capable of fulfilling the contract obligations. As a result, the contract has now been awarded to GARAS, ensuring that work with Gloucester City Council can continue without interruption.

The new contract will commence on 01 September and is set to run until 31 March 2028, securing long-term provision of these essential services.

[Approval of the award of grant funding for the Cheltenham Playhouse Theatre](#)

*Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Wellbeing and Public Realm,  
Councillor Izaac Tailford*

The Cabinet Member reported on his decision to award the Playhouse Theatre a second grant of £25k, making a total of £50k with the grant earlier this year. He said the theatre had been facing significant financial pressures, but the new management team is working well and is confident that they are coming out on the other side. Having taken over this non-profit charitable organisation in dire straits, they have been surviving but are now thriving, having hit their fundraising target, thus ensuring that this well-loved community remains open. He added that as the building is council-owned, and Playhouse Theatre is running it for us; if it fell into disrepair it would cost the council a great deal more to maintain, and he hoped that this arrangement will continue long into the future.

**17 Any other item that the Leader determines to be urgent and requires a decision.**

There were none.