

# Cheltenham Borough Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes

**Meeting date:** 12 January 2026

**Meeting time:** 18:00 – 19:45

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**In attendance:**

**Councillors:**

Tabi Joy (Chair), Jackie Chelin (Vice-Chair), Chris Day, Juan Carlos Garcia Clamp, Martin Horwood and Stan Smith

**Also in attendance:**

Rowena Hay (Leader of the Council), Peter Jeffries (Deputy Leader), Cllr Bamford and Michelle Bignell (Licensing and Public Protection Manager)

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## **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Healy and Holliday.

## **2 Declarations of interest**

There were none.

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

The minutes were signed as a true record after some minor amendments that were made by Councillor Chelin.

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

There were none.

## **5 Cabinet Briefing**

The Leader and the Deputy Leader were both present at the meeting.

The Leader addressed the committee with regard to the letter that she had sent to Central Government with regard to the postponement of the elections that are due in May. She stated that Cheltenham is in a unique position in that at the last election Members stood for the potential of a 4 year term, however half of the Members who were up for election would only serve a term of 2 years. Had the Council know that Local Government Reorganisation was imminent, this would have not been the case and everyone would have been looking at a 4 year term. The request to postpone the election is not based on cost savings. The point was made that each authority that is involved in the transition to a unitary authority will not be provided with funding from the government, each authority will have to find between £1 and £2 million. In response to a question from the Chair, the Leader explained that the government would have to provide a response to the request by the end of February to reach the 6 week notice period for the May election.

A further question was asked with regard to the progress of the sale of the Municipal Offices. The Leader confirmed that the sale was still on track.

The Deputy Leader addressed the committee with regard to the budget proposals, highlighting that these had been delayed due to a late settlement from central government.

The Chair thanked the Leader and Deputy Leader for attending.

## **6 Enforcement of Sexual Entertainment Venue Policy**

The Chair introduced the item and thanked the officer for all the teams hard work, the committee was also reminded that the purpose of the item was to scrutinise the enforcement of the policy not the policy itself.

The Licensing and Public Protection Manager introduced the briefing paper as published.

Members of the committee had submitted questions prior to the committee and these answers were published as a supplement midday on 12<sup>th</sup> January.

In response to Member questions, the following responses were provided :

- The licensing team have no power of entry for unlicensed premises, they can go to the venues with the police but cannot make a proper inspection. They can make recommendations but this does not have to be implemented by the unlicensed venues.
- There are only 2 venues that operate under the exemption.
- It was agreed that the details of the government's paper on proposed legislative changes affecting venues operating under the exemption would be circulated to Members. In respect of performers giving their feedback to any policy changes, the policy is open to public consultation, and anyone can submit their comments.

- With regard to the lack of a licensing police officer it was confirmed that the licensing team undertook their inspection in November without a police officer. Due to the experience of the Licensing department, the lack of police presence was not felt to be a problem.
- The new Licensing Police officer will be trained by the National College of Policing.
- There is a national framework that is applied to Sexual Entertainment Venues, however conditions can be set locally as well as at national level.
- There are standard conditions as to how leaflets are distributed and promotional literature is covered separately.
- It was clarified that there are usually 2 Sexual Entertainment Venues that operate within the exemption and 2 that are licensed.

The Licensing and Public Protection Manager took the opportunity to inform the committee that the Evening and Nighttime Economy (ENTE) strategy with regard to the Purple Flag accreditation was being reviewed. She reported that a recent test of local businesses on the Ask Angela initiative resulted in a 100% pass rate.

The Chair thanked the officer for attending.

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

The report from the Member on the Police and Crime Panel was noted for information.

Councillor Bamford attended the meeting and presented the report regarding HOSC as published. He then took the opportunity to respond to Member questions.

The Chair concluded the item by advising Members that any further questions for HOSC should be directed to Democratic Services, who would arrange for them to be facilitated.

Councillor Bamford was then asked to address the committee in his capacity as Chair of Budget Scrutiny Working Group, which had considered the budget proposals as part of the consultation. He highlighted that this represented only initial feedback as key savings are fundamental to the budget. It had not been possible for the Working Group to review these fully as only a draft had been provided. This meant it had not been possible for members to fully scrutinise the budget proposals.

Councillor Bamford also emphasised that the timing of the government settlement makes it very difficult for full scrutiny activities to take place and for the Budget Scrutiny Working Group to fulfil their duty. He added however, that the timeframe of the final budget report is being reviewed to see if it is possible for the Working Group to meet again prior to the Council meeting on 27 February. If that is not possible Members will be able to share their feedback directly to that Council meeting.

He reported however, that there had been a very productive and positive discussion with the Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets which highlighted areas of concern to ensure decisions will be considered with these in mind. The importance of assessing deliverability of plans was also stressed.

The group was confident that leadership are committed to delivering the corporate priorities for residents and continuing to deliver excellent services as we move into Local Government Review. General balances, savings, borrowing and capital receipts will all need to fall in line to deliver these corporate priorities.

BSWG did have areas of concern around the detail and assessment of deliverability of the savings targets and how savings gaps will be filled. The assessment of the commerciality of assets will be key. Clarity around savings was also highlighted in the recent peer review.

The group noted that over the last two years there have been targets to increase the levels of general balances which have not been achieved. They emphasised the importance of having clear plans to ensure general balances reach the levels set out in the statement of the Section 151 Officer.

During the meeting, the following questions were asked of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets who was in attendance.

- **Appendix 2 of the Budget Proposal** shows an **increase of nearly 80%** in the budget for the **Chief Executive Directorate**. Clarification was sought as to the factors driving this significant interest, whether this was primarily attributable to staffing costs or whether it related to other specific areas of expenditure.
- Several apparent omissions were noted within Appendix 7 specifically relating to Street Trading Consent Fees and Charges 2026/27, specifically from reference 16.28 onwards there was no proposed charge listed for seasonal Ice Cream Vehicles and for hot food units, only the full-year charge is shown; half-year, quarterly, and monthly rates are not included. It was asked as to whether these omissions are intentional and if not, whether the shorter-term charging options had been inadvertently excluded. If so, concern was expressed that the absence of these options may discourage participation in street trading.

The Cabinet Member Finance was not in a position to respond in detail to the questions and undertook to provide an answer in due course.

In response to Member questions the following replies were provided :

- The government has provided a very late settlement to local authorities
- The authority must determine how to address the budget gap, as central government is not adequately funding the services that residents expect.
- Questions about the extent to which Members are expected to respond to the budget consultation fall within the remit of the finance team rather than BSWG.
- Responses to the budget consultation have historically come mainly from other political parties; when members of the public do respond, their feedback tends to be more directly aligned with their concerns.

## **8 Updates from scrutiny task groups**

There are currently no scrutiny task groups.

## **9 Review of scrutiny workplan**

The work plan was noted for information.

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

There were none.

## **11 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is the 2<sup>nd</sup> March, it was also brought to Members attention that the April meeting has been moved to the 30<sup>th</sup> March.