

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet

Minutes

Meeting date: 24 February 2026

Meeting time: 6.00 pm - 6.50 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

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

Also in attendance:

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

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Tailford.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meetings held on 16 December and 23 December 2025 were approved as true records and signed accordingly.

4 Public and Member Questions and Petitions

There were none.

5 Domestic Abuse Policy

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities introduced her report, saying that since the reintegration of housing services, it is important to have a separate

domestic abuse policy to safeguard and support tenants, staff and elected members. The policy provides clear guidance on reporting domestic violence in any form, and encourages working with local businesses to ensure their policies are also in place. Tenants will be able to report domestic abuse through safe and confidential channels, all reports will be treated as high priority, and training of different levels and types will be available to all staff and members.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services welcomed the report and thanked officers and the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, saying it is becoming increasingly clear that we need to target our properties to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are better protected. The Leader welcomed the alignment of the whole county on this important issue, which she said would strengthen what we already have and do.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the Domestic Abuse Policy is adopted;**
- 2. Cabinet agrees that the Council will seek Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation;**
- 3. authority is delegated to the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services in consultation with the Director for Governance, Housing and Communities to amend the housing and homelessness policy as relates to Domestic Abuse as appropriate in light of developing best practice;**
- 4. the proposal in Appendix 3 for the creation of a partnership plan to support local implementation of the Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 is noted.**

6 Cheltenham Tree Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control said it is his great pleasure to present CBC's first-ever Tree Strategy. It includes tree management policies for trees under council ownership, as well as a 'Trees in Planning Action Plan' which outlines how we can engage with the planning process and improve stakeholder engagement to protect existing trees and promote new planting through development. He said CBC manages and is responsible for a huge stock of trees in the town, and the need for such a strategy has become increasingly relevant in the face of climate change, resource constraints, community pressures and concerns, and the need to balance development with environmental stewardship. The strategy will strengthen the impact that our beautiful trees have on us all.

Members welcomed the report and strategy, and made the following comments:

- we should be very grateful to previous generations who had the insight to plant trees in the Promenade and Royal Well, but it is a misconception to say we have a lot of trees in Cheltenham when there are clearly huge parts of town with very

- few. The strategy will address the imbalance in green canopy cover from east to west, promoting the huge benefit of trees for health and wellbeing and shade;
- the audit of tree coverage across the town is most insightful and it is great that areas where trees are sparse will have special focus;
 - thanks to all officers, especially the two excellent trees officers who know and care so well for all the town's trees.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control agreed, and confirmed that CBC and Cheltenham residents really value our trees, but with the canopy cover at just 9%, we can surely do better.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the Cheltenham Tree Strategy is approved and the Director of Planning and Building Control is delegated in consultation with Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control to make any minor amendments prior to publication;**
- 2. the Director of Planning and Building Control in consultation with Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control is delegated to make any amendments arising from future reviews of the Tree Strategy to ensure it remains relevant and up to date as a management tool.**

7 Leckhampton with Warden Hill Neighbourhood Plan Examiner's Report

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control introduced his report, which sets out that, with some minor modifications, the independent examiner has found that the proposed Leckhampton with Warden Hill Neighbourhood Plan meets the necessary conditions and recommends it to go forward to referendum. In accordance with its neighbourhood planning protocol, and as the local planning authority, CBC can consider what action to take in response, and he is happy to support the officers' agreement to accept the examiner's recommendations in full.

He said the journey to this stage has been long and sometimes difficult, taking up a large amount of officer time and resource, and close work with the parish council. He thanked the officer team for their hard work.

Members supported the recommendations, and made the following comments:

- it is exciting to see this great leap forward – neighbourhood plans are important in giving local communities the chance to say what happens in their area;
- Liberal Democrats are always keen to devolve decision-making to the lowest level, and this is a good example. The parish council is to be congratulated on this huge piece of work, with much credit due to the officers who supported them. It is great that we can now move ahead to the referendum and engage with the community;

- once adopted, the percentage of CIL receipts for Leckhampton with Warden Hill will rise from 15% to 25% - a significant benefit, which shows that all the hard work is a good investment;
- it is good to see the inclusion of Policy LWH7, which will protect dwellings against future flooding and climate change. The Parish Council has worked extremely hard on this and it will be good to get it into operation.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the Examiner's recommended modifications on the Leckhampton with Warden Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan are accepted;**
- 2. a 'referendum version' of the Plan is produced (incorporating the Examiner's modifications, together with consequential and other minor corrections for accuracy), and can proceed to a referendum;**
- 3. 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 decision statement for publication.**

8 E-Bike and Battery Safety Policy

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services said this policy is the result of concerns about the number of fires in council properties, caused because tenants did not use the proper charging equipment for their e-bikes and charged them overnight. The policy requires them to have the correct equipment and not to charge their bikes when they are asleep. Tenants will be advised how to make their homes safer when charging for the protection of everyone, and the council will take action if they do not comply. This course of action has been agreed by Cabinet Housing Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency said that rechargeable vehicles are important, especially to young people getting across town, and was pleased that the policy will be well communicated to keep everyone safe. He also commended the excellent safety work carried out by the fire service.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services agreed and thanked officers for working with the fire service in this important area.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the E-Bike and Battery Policy is approved.**

9 Final General Fund Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets said it was his privilege to present the budget proposals for 2026-27, which will be debated in full at Council in three days' time.

A Member said it was good to hear the thorough examination of the council's finances at Audit, Compliance and Governance Committee on Monday night, and the responses from the external auditors and officers confirm that this is a good budget.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets also thanked Budget Scrutiny Working Group for their valuable input.

RESOLVED THAT: Cabinet recommends that Council:

- 1. approves the revised budget for 2025/26 which is reported as part of the budget monitoring process in Section 6 and Appendix 15.**
- 2. considers the budget assessment by the Section 151 Officer at Appendix 2 when agreeing the following recommendations.**
- 3. approves the final budget proposals including a proposed council tax for the services provided by Cheltenham Borough Council of £252.11 for the year 2026/27 based on a Band D property (an increase of 2.99%).**
- 4. approves the budget strategy for the delivery of savings / additional income totalling £582,852 at Appendix 4.**
- 5. approves the revenue growth items totalling £159,334 at Appendix 5.**
- 6. approves the capital programme at Appendix 6.**
- 7. approves that the minimum level of General Fund Balances is set at £1.5m.**
- 8. approves the use of reserves and general balances and note the projected level of reserves, as detailed at Appendix 7.**
- 9. approves the programmed maintenance programme at Appendix 8.**
- 10. approves the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for working age customers in Appendix 9.**
- 11. approves the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) detailed in Appendix 10.**
- 12. approves the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26, including the continued payment of a living wage supplement at Appendix 11.**
- 13. approves the proposed fees and charges schedule for 2026/27 at Appendix 12, subject to appropriate consultation where required.**

14. approves the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2025/26 at Appendix 13.

10 Final Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - Revised Budget

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets was pleased to present the Housing Revenue Account Budget; housing services have been on a journey, and this reinforces the need to secure the HRA. Like the General Fund Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals, it will also be debated at Full Council on Friday, but he wanted to put on record his thanks to Cabinet Housing Committee and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services for all their hard work and tenant engagement.

RESOLVED THAT: Cabinet recommends that Council:

- 1. approves the final HRA budget proposals for 2026/27 shown at Appendix 2.**
- 2. notes that a rent increase of 4.80% for social rent homes, affordable homes and shared ownership homes and changes to other rents and charges as detailed within this report has already been approved.**
- 3. approves the HRA capital programme as shown at Appendix 3 and the detailed capital programme in Appendix 4**
- 4. notes the revised HRA forecast for 2025/26 and impact on the HRA balance.**

11 Briefing from Cabinet Members

The Leader invited Members to share items of interest since the last meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities said that:

- the youth café has been successfully launched at Smokey Joe's in Bennington Street, with the first session attended by about 20 young people; it will continue to open weekly until April;
- she was thrilled to attend the Cheltenham Educational Partnership with Lives of Colour and all 10 senior schools in Cheltenham. The focus was on race equity, and it was good to listen to some incredibly insightful ideas;
- the No Child Left Behind awards took place recently, with 250 guests, celebrating all the amazing work carried out in the community, and featuring great performances from Belmont School Choir and the Everyman Youth Theatre. Thanks to all the organisations who work so hard for NCLB all year round;
- there has been a great response to the air quality consultation, with comments from hundreds of people. Thanks to everyone – the consultation feedback will provide the basis for the new air quality strategy later in the year;
- the recent acts of remembrance to mark Holocaust Memorial Day were thought-provoking and sombre, and a reminder of how important it is to love and respect each other.

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling, Parks, Gardens and Green Open Space reported that:

- two good recycling initiatives are about to start: kerbside collection of tetrapacks across the whole borough will start in April, and kerbside collection of flexi-plastics will be rolled out ward by ward around the town, with uptake monitored and the process managed. Households will be notified, and provided with a roll of bags;
- following the closure of the bring bank site at Sainsbury's, the council is struggling to find alternative sites in that part of town; unfortunately there is not much opportunity, not least because of the inconsiderate way in which many people treat them. It would be helpful to encourage residents to use them properly, but in the meantime, the search goes on for new sites;
- the household recycling centre is the county council's responsibility, and we await with interest an options report about providing new facilities and hope for good news from. The county will have to provide the funding; it has a budget of £3.5m allocated for household recycling;
- Ubico crews continue to work on gulleys and in parks to clear them of leaves;
- the greenspace team continues to work with volunteers, including the new Roamers group, planting a hedge at St Peter's last week and working at Springfield Park tomorrow;
- the council is continuing to address the long waiting list for allotments, by investing in sites at Midwinters and Hayden Lane, increasing the number of plots available, and improving security;
- a new SUDs scheme at Elmfield will be launched on Thursday – a great scheme involving the local community in St Pauls, to make the recreation area more usable all year round, having drained off excess water.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services said colleagues will know about her involvement in ensuring that tenants and residents – particularly women - are safe, and it is always a great pleasure to share with other areas what we do in Cheltenham to support women and girls. She will bring a report to the next meeting of Cabinet to showcase this work.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency shared the following:

- he has been elected to chair the Climate Leadership Gloucestershire group for the next 12 months. This is an administrative role, not a strategic one;
- the group has set up bi-monthly meetings of Cabinet Members and officers to discuss how to carry out action plans and ways to work with other districts to accelerate reduction in carbon emissions. The action plans will be reviewed with the new Climate and Decarbonisation Manager as soon as he is established;
- we have accepted funding for the next stage of the heat network project, to produce more detailed designs, the next stage before the actual project is launched;
- he attended a lovely event at Leckhampton High School, where six schools took part in a Dragons Den-style challenge, pitching for funding for environmental schemes at their own schools. All six schools were awarded money;
- through Climate Leadership Gloucestershire fund, our climate team has secured money to develop a software package to help small to medium-sized enterprises

to decarbonise; these are currently given no clear direction and this will help them put in a pathway which can be shared with procurement partners if successful;

- another heat pump demonstration in Lidl car park has been organised, to continue engagement with residents as well as businesses.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets was pleased to report that planning permission has been granted for 70 new homes on the former Monkscroft School site – affordable homes of mixed sizes and tenures, based on existing shortages on the waiting list. The development also includes new greenspace including a green promenade, growing area and recreation space, which will provide essential wildlife habitats.

The Leader shared that the second stage of the local government review consultation has gone live, and asked Members to encourage residents to respond – we need their feedback to know what they want to see happen next.

12 Cabinet Member Decisions since the last meeting

Members reported on the decisions they have taken since the last meeting:

Cabinet Member for Waste and Recycling

- [To award contract to Nissan Motors GB Ltd for the supply of cage-tipping vehicle](#)
- [To award contract to B&B Machinery Ltd for the supply of two forklifts](#)
- [To award contract to Stock Sweepers for the supply of two road sweepers](#)
- [To award a contract to Smith's \(Gloucester\) Ltd](#)
- [Cheltenham Escarpment National Nature Reserve – Naming Protocol](#)

Leader

- [To enter into a contract with Tile Hill Interim and Executive Ltd for the purposes of engaging agency staff](#)

Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets

- [Renewal of Lease St James Car Park](#)

Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities

- [Revision of the template partnership agreement with green space volunteer groups](#)
- [To approve taxi fare increases](#)
- [Community Pride Fund 2025 grant allocations](#)
- [Approval to consult on variation to Public Spaces \(Cheltenham\) Order 2023](#)

Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services

- Target Hardening and Sanctuary Scheme Measure
- To award a range of grants to partners