

Cheltenham Borough Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes

Meeting date: 6 July 2026

Meeting time: 6.00 pm - 7.15 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Tabi Joy (Chair), Jackie Chelin (Vice-Chair), Victoria Atherstone, Julia Chandler, Chris Day, Cathy Dearden, Sandra Holliday, Martin Horwood and Stan Smith

Also in attendance:

Claire Morris (Democratic Services Officer)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Beale and one of the independent co-optees Margaret Cheung. Apologies were also received from Cllr Hay as she was attending the Local Government Conference.

2 Declarations of interest

Cllr Atherstone was Cabinet Lead on one of the reports that was being introduced at the committee, it was confirmed that it was acceptable for her to comment in the item as she is no longer on the Cabinet.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting were approved by the members of the committee that were in attendance.

4 Public and Member questions, calls for actions and petitions

There were none.

5 Cabinet Briefing

As the Leader and the Deputy Leader were both unable to attend the meeting there was not a Cabinet briefing, however Members of the committee were asked if they had questions to contact the Leader directly.

6 Safety of Women and Young Girls in the Borough

The Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships introduced the briefing note along with Councillor Jamieson (Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities) and the Safeguarding and Partnerships Manager. He stated that he was only bringing a briefing note to the committee at this stage as there was still a work to be done to complete an action plan

The Chair highlighted the presentation that was made in 2024 when the St. Giles Trust were commissioned to assist with understanding the exploitation of children and young people in the borough, particularly young women and girls. She stated that when she attended the presentation hearing directly from young people and the issues they are faced with on a daily basis was very impactful.

The Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships explained that the report illustrates that children and young people feel unsafe after dark, and feel that there are multiple barriers to seeking help. Another big issue for the young people was that there was nothing to do or safe places to be. Though he did mention that there is now a youth café at Smokey Joes every Thursday with an average of 40 young people attending every session.

The online survey that was carried out had 177 responses, it is not known what the response rate was unknown, but it does give a rich picture of the issues facing women and young girls in the town, that will be able to be shared in more detail due course. 50% of young women who responded had felt harassed and only 16% felt heard. NCLB are committed to working with the community safety partnership to develop a robust action plan in response. The Cabinet Member is also working with safeguarding domestic abuse champions.

Members had submitted questions ahead of the meeting, these were published ahead of the meeting and there were no further questions based on the answers already provided.

The committee were then invited to ask any questions, the responses of which were as follows:

- The full report and action plan will come back to the committee as an update.
- With regards to women and young girls voices continuing to be heard, the NCLB team are constantly checking and monitoring any feedback via Youth Voice and that will ensure what is being done will make a difference.
- There is work being done through the Police to ensure that young people feel safer during race week for example the porta-loos have been moved away

from Pittville School. The Council has engaged with the local police, met with girls who attend the school and the headteacher, which ensures that girls are feeling heard.

- The council are working with the St Giles Trust with regards to boys and young men, there is work being done on a safeguarding review around exploitation and harassment for all children.

A Member commented with regard to a recent case that had been in the press, a lady was abused in Winchcombe Street by 8-10 teenage males. She reported it to the police, who closed the case after 3 days after taking no further action. She then posted on TikTok and the police admitted their mistake and reopened the case and appealed for more information, this case demonstrates that there is still a long way to go in dealing with these cases.

- The information that has been gathered by the survey so far has been shared with the police and this will be filtered down into the constabulary.
- There is a teacher representative on the NCLB board who feeds back to all the schools.

The Head of Communities, Partnerships and Wellbeing explained to the committee that there is no reason why they can't ask questions and hold the police to account. He did note that the Council enjoys a good working relationship with the police but acknowledged that their resources can be stretched at times

The Safeguarding and Partnerships Manager explained that there has been some bystander training for professionals, particularly those involved in the night time economy. She also confirmed that there is a link with the Purple Flag plus NCLB is connected to national organisations such as St Giles and also the Children's Society, through this there could be an opportunity to get funding for work in Cheltenham.

The Chair thanked the officers and the cabinet member for attending and hoped that the matter would come back to the committee in due course.

7 Cheltenham Zero

The Chair introduced the item and welcomed Isobel Filipova (Business Initiative Manager Cheltenham Zero) and Mark Lawson (Climate and Decarbonisation Manager) to the meeting.

It was explained that the team are working tirelessly to support local businesses, groups and charities to achieve Net Zero. This was bought in house 2 years ago, they are working on redefining how to support people in the best way, looking at strategy and future proofing. The Members had seen the report and had asked questions in advance, the responses were published as a supplement prior to the

meeting. It was confirmed that there were no follow up questions to the answers that were provided.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions, the responses of which were as follows:

- There has been an increase in people applying for grants due to more advertisement of their availability on social media and due to a street pounding exercise.
- Talking face to face to businesses has been an extremely helpful exercise. Businesses seem to show a bigger interest when they are told that there is financial savings to take advantage of.
- Accreditation is a new initiative and it's complicated, it is a marketing opportunity and platform. There are currently no examples of this.
- They are working with Together Glos on their online pages to try and promote accreditation for smaller businesses.
- Cannot say which businesses are the biggest polluters in Cheltenham, lots of the larger organisations are doing things in line with corporate standards to improve their effect on the climate.
- GCHQ are probably the greatest emitters, but they don't report the numbers. They might be able to do something internally, they are working in their building, they have a certain tenancy length on the building, things will change for heating/carbon reduction etc in the coming years.
- The new software (CeroEarth) that has been implemented at the Council will also be implemented here.
- There is a promotions budget and there is also UKSPF funding available. There is a budget of £2000 for events and marketing, some of this money will be used to promote the accreditation system.
- New government funding is allocated every 2 years and there is currently no new information when new funding will be available, this is being monitored internally so it will be applied for as soon as it is announced.
- With regards to the launch of accreditation, they have recently gone through funding with the CLG, they are building a new digital platform to manage the accreditation system which will hopefully be up and running in the autumn.
- Looking at tackling landlords is a bit difficult, how to influence them is a difficult task. There are plans ongoing to look at dealing with this. There is no impetus on landlords of either residential or commercial dwellings to make changes.
- Another area that needs to be looked into with Gloucestershire Highways is cross pavement charging and why this isn't happening.
- The limitation of charging points is that people like to have them outside their houses, some councils have already got charging points linked to lampposts as there is already electricity there, there is no plan to do this in Cheltenham at the moment.

The Chair thanked the officers for their input and hoped that they would come to the meeting with their next report.

8 Gloucestershire LGR Scrutiny Panel

The democratic services officer read the following statement:

Members who served on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to the elections will recall that, in March, this Committee was consulted on proposals for establishing a mechanism for the joint scrutiny of Gloucestershire's Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme.

The preferred approach, supported by both council leaders and scrutiny representatives across the participating authorities, was the creation of a Joint Scrutiny Panel for LGR. The Panel was formally established under Cheltenham Borough Council's Constitution in June, and two Members from each participating council are to be appointed in accordance with the draft Terms of Reference. The Panel is scheduled to hold its first meeting on 22 July.

I would therefore like to invite nominations for this Council's two representatives on the Joint Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Chelin nominated Councillor Joy and Councillor Joy nominated Councillor Chelin.

The nominations were seconded by Councillor Atherstone and Councillor Chandler.

The matter then went to the vote, the vote was unanimous, Councillors Joy and Chelin were appointed.

Councillor Joy stated that they will report back to the committee as this will be a permanent item on the agenda.

9 Feedback from other scrutiny meetings attended

The Members noted the summary of the recent HOSC meeting provided by Councillor Bamford.

Councillor Atherstone was not able to attend the PCC meeting due to ill health.

Members were encouraged to contact the representatives with any questions they might have.

10 Updates from scrutiny task groups

There are currently no scrutiny task groups.

11 Review of scrutiny workplan

There was no review of the work plan as there was a separate meeting after the committee to discuss this.

12 Any other item that the Chair determines to be urgent

There were none.

13 Date of next meeting

The next meeting is to be held on the 7th September.