

Council

30th March 2015

Member Questions (15)

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1. | Question from Councillor Duncan Smith to Cabinet Member Finance Councillor John Rawson |
| | <p>At the Council meeting on February 13, I asked how much the authority was paying in pension contributions and received the answer of £3.7million. This means that 50 pence of every pound paid by the Cheltenham tax is being spent on staff pensions. Given that the pension fund deficit being faced by Cheltenham Borough Council is in the order of £50 million, when does he think that the pension fund will be fully funded?</p> |
| | Response from Cabinet Member |
| | <p>I can confirm that the budgeted pension contributions for 2015/16 are £3.716m. However I need to put this figure into some context. As indicated in Appendix 2 of the Council Tax resolution 2015/16, agreed by Council on 26th February 2015, the gross budget in respect of the General Fund amounts to £54,432,499. Therefore our pension commitments equate to 6.8% of the gross spend – not 50% as suggested in the Member’s question.</p> <p>The state of our pension scheme depends very heavily on the state of the economy and the performance of the pension fund which is managed by Gloucestershire County Council. It is also affected by other factors such as the age profile of employees and longevity of pensioners. The Council’s net liability, according to the actuarial assessment at 31st March 2014, was £57,182,000 which was an increase of £3,458,000 over the figure for 31st March 2013. This is principally due to the financial assumptions at 31st March 2014 being less favourable than they had been at 31st March 2013 because of falling real bond yields and poor asset returns. The figure will be updated when financial services staff prepare the statement of accounts for 2014/15.</p> <p>However, it is important to understand a little more about the nature of our pension liability before jumping to conclusions about the state of the pension scheme. The Council is required to account for retirement benefits when committed, even if the payment is many years in the future, in accordance with International Accounting Standard 19 (IAS 19). This represents the Council’s commitment to increase contributions to make up any shortfall in attributable net assets, or its ability to benefit (via reduced future employer contributions) from a surplus in the pension scheme. We are therefore not so much “facing” a deficit as projecting one into the future; and a sustained revival in the state of the economy could change this situation very substantially.</p> <p>Quite obviously we cannot control or even predict the state of the UK or world economy or many of the other factors that impact on our pension scheme. For that reason it is impossible to say when the pension fund will be fully funded. However what we can do, and are doing, is to provide prudently for our future pension needs, taking into account the actuarial advice we are given.</p> |

| | <p>The actuary makes projections over a long term period (20 years) which allows councils to deal with the deficit in a measured way by increasing pension contributions gradually through a “stabilisation” process. By increasing pension contributions in the annual budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as we are doing year by year, we are ensuring that we will be in a position to meet our obligations. In fact by 2018 we will be in a position whereby the annual payments into the fund exceed the payments to pensioners.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Smith asked on that basis how long would it take for the council to repay the £8 million.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member advised that the liability is a projection into the future over the next 20 years whereas the reference to 2018 is based on the current situation. It is a comforting situation that payments into the fund currently exceed payments out in any one year but there is a long term aim to the balance the fund and it is hoped that a recovering economy would assist that aim. The council would continue to take financial advice to ensure it was taking a prudent approach.</p> | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|--|---|----------|--|--|--|--|
| 2. | <p>Question from Councillor Jacky Fletcher to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</p> | | | | | | | | |
| | <p>Since transferring the stray dogs service to Worcestershire Regulatory Services what evidence do you have regarding whether the proportion of dogs reunited with owners has gone up, down or stayed the same, same with re-homing and destroying of dogs.</p> | | | | | | | | |
| | <p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> | | | | | | | | |
| | <p>The Council receives data relating to the stray dog service as part of its contract monitoring arrangements, and this shows an overall decrease in the number of stray dogs collected against the equivalent period in 2013-14 (45.3% reduction, n = 34/75).</p> <p>The table below provides more detailed information, but to summarise:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of dogs reunited with their owners has increased (by 45.3% against the equivalent period in 2013-14). • This has resulted in less dogs requiring re-homing, so the proportion of rehomed dogs has fallen by 64.7% in the equivalent period • Dogs who are not united with their owners are presumed re-homed once ownership is transferred to the service provider. The Council is notified of any known euthanasia issues in the seven days preceding this. <p>One case of euthanasia has occurred with the new service provider as the dog was a prohibited breed. No reports received of euthanasia for any other reason.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="321 1675 1382 1864"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="321 1675 529 1864"></th> <th data-bbox="529 1675 740 1864">Cheltenham Animal Shelter (24.07.13 – 15.03.14)</th> <th data-bbox="740 1675 1003 1864">Worcestershire Regulatory Services (24.07.14 – 15.03.15)</th> <th data-bbox="1003 1675 1382 1864">% change</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="321 1864 529 1864"></td> <td data-bbox="529 1864 740 1864"></td> <td data-bbox="740 1864 1003 1864"></td> <td data-bbox="1003 1864 1382 1864"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | | Cheltenham Animal Shelter (24.07.13 – 15.03.14) | Worcestershire Regulatory Services (24.07.14 – 15.03.15) | % change | | | | |
| | Cheltenham Animal Shelter (24.07.13 – 15.03.14) | Worcestershire Regulatory Services (24.07.14 – 15.03.15) | % change | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | |
|------------------------|---------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Total no. of strays | 75 | 41 | 45.3% decrease (n=34/75) |
| Reunited with owner | 54.7 % (n=41) | 68.3% (n=28) | 31.7 % increase (n=13/41) |
| Presumed re-homed | 45.3% (n=34) | 29.3% (n=12) | 64.7% decrease (n=22/34) |
| Known to be euthanased | 0 | 2.4% (n=1) Legally required under Dangerous Dogs legislation 0 for any other reason | n/a (previous figure zero) |

In a supplementary question Councillor Fletcher asked what was meant by 'Presumed re-homed'?

The Cabinet Member responded that this was the term used by Worcestershire who had a different reporting method. Their practice was to pass on dogs to other rehoming services specialising in specific breeds. He had no reason to believe that the figures were other than correct.

3. Question from Councillor Paul Baker to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay

What consultation took place between Glos Highways and Cheltenham Borough Council regarding the timing of the resurfacing of the Promenade given that it took place at the same time as the closure of the High Street resulting in traffic chaos around the town ?

What consultation took place involving CBC to re-route buses through the Promenade pedestrianized area ?

Given the appalling re surfacing work carried out by Amey in the High Street as agent for Glos Highways what steps are CBC taking to have this work corrected and will the contractor suffer financial penalties ?

I understand that Amey, as the appointed contractor for Glos Highways are going to be underspent to the tune of £4m for the current financial year. Given the state of Cheltenham's roads and pavements this is an absolute disgrace. The choice of contractor and the management of the contract has been nothing short of shambolic and unfortunately impacts upon us here in Cheltenham as well as other parts of Gloucestershire.

Can I ask that the Leader writes to the County Councillor responsible asking for a full explanation of this underspend and the performance of the contractor and what is being done to address these issues. Further can I ask that we investigate

| | |
|-----------|--|
| | <p>the logistics of taking back control of the maintenance of Cheltenham's roads and pavements.</p> |
| | <p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <p>The Council was informed of the timing for the resurfacing of the Promenade by Amey through the Cheltenham Business Partnership Manager during w/c 9th February, when the Business Partnership Manager was requested to liaise with Montpellier and Promenade businesses regarding the planned closure.</p> <p>The rerouting of buses as a result of the Brewery works was discussed at co-ordination meetings and CBC staff understood that all rerouting would be via St Margaret's Rd/Henrietta Street - information was circulated to Councillors on that basis. Any discussion to use the Promenade may have been a later understanding between Stagecoach and GCC.</p> <p>The High Street resurfacing work was split into 2 phases, as the original works ran behind schedule. The first tranche of works is suffering from ponding, whilst the second phase (by a different contractor) is of a much better quality and no ponding was visible during heavy rainfall. CBC, through the Task Force Managing Director and Townscape Team, are lobbying GCC for relaying of the flexible buff running surface, to be replaced with a finer grained surface and an improved quality of workmanship (certainly for the first phase). It is understood that GCC is seeking relaying with improved workmanship.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Baker asked if given the shambolic service from GCC, the Cabinet Member would be taking it up with the County Councillor responsible and asking for a full account of the underspend? Would CBC investigate taking back control for Cheltenham Highways from GCC?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member accepted that the resurfacing of the High Street was not up to a high enough standard and the Leader had confirmed that he was happy to write to the GCC on this matter. Officers were actively following up any work which was not of an acceptable standard. He agreed that there were significant failings in the way highway service currently being provided in Cheltenham and a process would be initiated to ask questions and determine what was the best solution for the town in terms of service delivery.</p> |
| 4. | <p>Question from Councillor Duncan Smith to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member confirm if the free parking during race week was a success?</p> <p>What success criteria did he set prior to the event in order to make that judgement?</p> <p>How much did it cost in terms of additional cost to advertise the changes plus the cost of lost revenues?</p> <p>How many vehicles parked in our car parks were there in addition to the normal commuters and visitors that you would ordinarily expect in Race Week?</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>What was the feedback from the town centre retail community and local businesses?</p> |
| | <p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> |
| | <p>The cost of advertising the free parking changes during race week was minimal and will be contained within existing supplies and services budgets.</p> <p>In 2014, parking revenue during March was reduced by £16,000 in total across all car parks compared to 2013 (5.7%). Similar figures will be reviewed once the full parking income for March 2015 is confirmed towards the middle of April. Parking income for the full year 2013-14 was up 2.5%, notwithstanding the dip in March.</p> <p>The free parking initiative has been welcomed by the Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce and the Cheltenham Business Partnership and was repeated this year at their request, as a more beneficial alternative to supporting free parking before Christmas during Small Business Week.</p> <p>The Regent Arcade car park is the best to measure the impact of free car parking, because the equipment is in place there to physically count vehicles.</p> <p>Regent Arcade reported a 16% increase in cars (1,061) over last year, when the number of vehicles was also up 22% on the previous year, the first year that free parking was introduced during race week. This equates to a compounded 41.5% increase over the same period in 2013, equivalent to 2,150 extra cars.</p> <p>Regent Arcade also reported a 6.42% increase in footfall within the arcade during race week, as compared to the same period in 2014 (up 5,622 year on year to 93,183).</p> <p>Feedback from the leisure sector was also extremely positive. Bars, restaurants, cafes, hotels and clubs said that it was an exceptional week for them. The retail sector anticipated a slower than normal week and it still was, but the overall view was that the free parking had worked better this year than last because it had been announced earlier. Some commented that the free parking should have been better signposted on-site at each car park and this is something we will look to improve on further next year.</p> <p>Town centre footfall counter information may have been skewed by work taking place at the Brewery where the High Street has been closed and as a result of the closure of North Place car park. Caution would therefore need to be exercised in making year-on-year comparisons, however weekly comparisons in 2015 including race week and the weeks immediately before and after were as follows:-</p> <p>w/c Monday 2nd March – 115,882 w/c Monday 9th March - 113,256 w/c Monday 16th March – 113,374</p> <p>The Thursday of race week showed footfall of 22,736, which was higher than the Thursday of either the week before, or the week after.</p> <p>Due to the range of variables, it is not possible to confirm a direct link between the</p> |

| | |
|-----------|--|
| | <p>success of the free parking initiative and the number of visitors to the town centre.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Smith wanted to know when the figures for March 2015 would be available and could he be assured that they would be made available to all Members. .</p> <p>The Cabinet Member replied that the figures should be available 2 weeks after the end of the month and he would ensure that they were circulated to all Members.</p> |
| 5. | Question from Councillor Adam Lillywhite to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay |
| | <p>Can you please update us on negotiations and hopefully progress on the North Place scheme and in so doing tell us who is funding the hoarding that has been erected.</p> |
| | Response from Cabinet Member |
| | <p>The Council has been advised that the hoarding at North Place has been erected by Augur Buchler, the site owner.</p> <p>We understand that the developer Augur Buchler and Morrisons have triggered the dispute resolution process, (common to many commercial contracts) and that process is now in train. We are unable to provide any specific guidance upon the likely time-frame for final resolution.</p> <p>Meanwhile, we understand that the developer is actively looking at alternative options for the site.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Lillywhite asked how Cheltenham had fallen so far behind Gloucester as clearly there was no lack of demand but there appeared to be a lack of direction?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member did not agree that Cheltenham had fallen behind Gloucester and the number of cranes visible was evidence that development was taking place in the town. There had been a consistent direction for the last 15 years which had been supported by the previous administration.</p> |
| 6. | Question from Councillor Adam Lillywhite to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan |
| | <p>Can you please outline why it has taken so long to commission the recent economic development report when the loss of major employers has been evident for several years, it is of particular concern that several of these companies wished to remain in Cheltenham.</p> |
| | Response from Cabinet Member |
| | <p>The economic development report referred to is intended as input to policy development as part of the Cheltenham Local Plan. Since the intention is to consult on phase 1 of the Local Plan in June/July this year the report would seem well timed. Issues around loss of major employers, Kraft in particular, were looked at by the Cheltenham Inward Investment Group that I set up in 2010 and involved local representatives from both public and private sectors.</p> |
| 7. | Question from Councillor Anne Regan to Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles, Councillor Rowena Hay |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>English Tourism Week is a week long celebration of events from the 14th March till the 22nd of March, showcasing the visitors experience and raising the profile of our town.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you inform the council what efforts were made to engage our town in this event 2. What advertising and marketing was undertaken during this week 3. What results have we achieved of visitor experience. |
| | <p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> |
| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To celebrate English Tourism Week and Mothers' Day, the Press & Marketing Officer (Tourism) arranged for a 20% discount on pre-booked cream teas in the Wilson Café. In the past Cheltenham TIC have delivered a variety of English Tourism Week events such as free guided walks, Morris Dancers, Councillors serving behind the TIC desk. <p>This year involvement with ETW was quite low key – partly due to a smaller tourism team and a reduced budget for ETW, but also because the current TIC Team & Tourism Marketing Officer are focussed on various service improvements that they believe will deliver longer term benefits for Cheltenham. For example updating the style, content and functionality of the Visit Cheltenham website which will attract visitors to the town and enable online accommodation booking throughout the year. The website has been enjoying greatly increased visits in recent weeks, they are also developing a range of themed weekend accommodation packages and doing a survey of signage to and within the Wilson & TIC following visitor feedback. We are also working with Visit England on the new 'Modernising Visitor Information' Twitter project, which will link to national contacts and promotions and hopefully engage younger audiences. All of these initiatives are intended to attract more visitors to Cheltenham and improve their experience once they are here.</p> <p>The Team were disappointed to not do more for ETW this year and have already had a meeting Kevan Blackadder, Cheltenham Business Partnership Manager to discuss ideas for participating in ETW 2016, working in closer partnership with Cheltenham businesses.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The afternoon tea offer was advertised on the Visit Cheltenham website and with flyers in the Wilson Reception. Regular Tweets and Facebook updates are also completed by the team throughout the week. 3. The Wilson Café has reported that there was excellent anecdotal feedback. One report said that 'It was particularly busy on Sunday with good service and very good food.' <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Regan asked if there was a tourism strategy and how many times had the tourism partnership met?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member responded that the Tourism Forum was newly formed after the delivery of the Tourist Information Centre moved to the Cheltenham Trust in October 2014. The forum had met once since then and the council still held the strategic lead for tourism. There had been a lot of activity and this will be reviewed along with plans for the next year when the Forum next meet. As CBC is no longer responsible for the delivery of the TIC, if Councillor Regan was not happy</p> |

| | |
|-----------|--|
| | with the service provided, she should inform officers and the Cabinet Member of her concerns. |
| 8. | Question from Councillor Anne Regan to Cabinet Member Housing, Councillor Peter Jeffries |
| | Will the Cabinet Member Confirm or otherwise whether the 40 per cent target for affordable housing will be met as part of the development of the Odeon Site. If not can he indicate what steps he is taking to promote the vital need to secure sufficient affordable housing with developers across the town? |
| | Response from Cabinet Member |
| | <p>The former Baylis, Haines and Strange and Odeon sites were subject to viability assessment by the District Valuer Service and as a result were assessed not to be able to make an affordable housing contribution. This was a matter of public record when the applications were determined by the Planning Committee and supporting information is available on the Public Access portal, which is accessible via the Council's website.</p> <p>The delivery of affordable housing takes place through a variety of routes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development on publically owned land (e.g. St Paul's regeneration and the redevelopment of underused garage sites) • through the planning system on sites of 15 or more dwellings - which depends on the allocation and delivery of sites which can viably support affordable housing delivery in addition to other Section 106/infrastructure requirements • via Registered Providers (usually housing associations) delivering new dwellings, sometimes with grant subsidy from the Homes & Communities Agency <p>During the last complete financial year (2013/14) there was a net gain of 428 new homes in Cheltenham. Of these 152 were affordable homes. This means that 36% of all new homes built in Cheltenham were affordable.</p> <p>In terms of next steps, the Council is leading on an affordable housing partnership arrangement which will seek to maximise the provision of affordable housing across the Strategic Allocations as detailed within the Joint Core Strategy.</p> <p>The Partnership will work on a number of priorities, such as standardising 106 affordable housing provisions across neighbouring local authority boundaries and agreeing cross-boundary lettings arrangements. In particular, the Partnership is working closely with Registered Providers with a view to selecting Preferred Registered Providers.</p> <p>These Preferred Providers will be best placed to help developers deliver the affordable homes which the town and local people so desperately need. Not only will these Preferred Providers have to demonstrate that they have the capacity to delivery new affordable homes, they will also have to show they can manage these homes well and can engage with communities in a way that will</p> |

| | |
|------------------|---|
| | <p>ensure they will remain cohesive and sustainable.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Regan asked if, with 3,500 people on the waiting list, could the Cabinet Member give her the assurance that he will ensure that as many affordable homes are made available as possible.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member replied that he was applying a balanced approach. As delivering Affordable housing was difficult he was also aiming to reduce demand. This work needed to be done in partnership across the area of the JCS. Thus within the constraints of policy he was doing what he could to ensure their delivery.</p> |
| <p>9.</p> | <p>Question from Councillor Tim Harman to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</p> |
| | <p>Cheltenham is a fantastic town with so much going for it but the report from Athey Consulting on the future economic prospects came as something of a shocker for those members who did manage to turn up for the recent seminar.</p> <p>Would the Leader of the Council inform the Chamber of any urgent steps that he proposes to address the disturbing aspects of the Consultants finding.</p> <p>Specifically</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can he outline what strategy and timescale is he pursuing to bring forward measures to address these issues. 2. In the interests of securing a successful and prosperous future for Cheltenham would he accept my offer on the behalf of the Conservative Group to work together to progress a strategy so that we can avoid the current feeling that our Town is not open for business which was an expression that came from the Consultants at the Seminar. |
| | <p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> |
| | <p>It is a bit difficult to answer Cllr Harman's question without knowing what he found disturbing. The report identified many positive aspects of the economy in Cheltenham along with some issues that can be improved.</p> <p>As the report says the reality is that "Cheltenham has a strong and growing business base. Long-term growth in the business base is higher than the County and national average. In particular, Cheltenham has strong business survival rates." However as the report also says, "There is a business perception that Cheltenham is full". This would imply the issue is one of perception. However, since Cheltenham is surrounded by Green Belt and AONB, difficulty in finding employment sites in and around the town is hardly a surprise and is one of the reasons we are working with Gloucester and Tewkesbury on a Joint Core Strategy. Clearly this isn't an issue the council can solve by itself but is something I'm keen to tackle.</p> <p>A report to progress phase 1 of the Local Plan to consultation stage will go to cabinet on 14th April 2015. In addition I have asked Mike Redman to draw up an options paper to help prioritise the issues raised in the Athey report alongside other economic issues such as progressing a Business Improvement District with</p> |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| | <p>the Cheltenham Business Partnership and supporting the Cheltenham Tourism Forum.</p> <p>I would be delighted to accept Cllr Harman's offer of support. However, given his recent track record of supporting both the JCS and Cheltenham Transport Plan before doing a U-turn and opposing them for party political reasons forgive me if I treat it with scepticism.</p> <p>Councillor Harman stated that he was bitterly disappointed with the response. He did not specify which aspects of the seminar he found disturbing.</p> <p>The Leader advised that unless the Member could be more specific about what aspects he found disturbing he could not respond further and he emphasised that the report had been very positive in many areas.</p> |
| <p>10.</p> | <p>Question from Councillor John Payne to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman</p> |
| | <p>The Project Initiation Document (PID) for the Crematorium Appraisal Options project was reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee noted the budget for this very important project was set at £30,812, a figure agreed by the Cabinet. Subsequent upon the appointment of the Consultant who will undertake this work, there has been a request to increase the budget.</p> <p>In recent times we have seen projects managed under Prince2 go over budget during their lifetime, but it is of concern that this particular project has gone over budget before it has started.</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member please update members as to the extent of the increase, and the justification for it.</p> |
| | <p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> |
| | <p>The budget originally allocated was £30,812 and was the amount retained by CBC from our original contract with Crawford's (suppliers of our replacement cremators) when they went into liquidation.</p> <p>It was not an accurate estimate for the Option Appraisal project, as the scope for that had yet to be finalised.</p> <p>Since that time, we have been through a competitive tendering process to select the best experts to perform the study, based on a detailed tender brief. Some bidders' quotes were less than the available sum detailed above whilst others were greater. Each of the bidders were evaluated against criteria weighted 70:30 towards quality as opposed to cost. This reflected the recommendation of the Scrutiny Task Group that quality should be given more weighting than cost.</p> <p>During the tendering process, the Project Team and several of the bidders advised that we should consider commissioning additional surveys. Undertaking these surveys at a time when they can inform the feasibility study is likely to increase the quality of the final recommendations and reduce the risk of unexpected issues arising during implementation.</p> <p>Once we had established a preferred candidate for the study and completed</p> |

| | |
|-----|---|
| | <p>provisional costings for the additional surveys, it was clear that the original budget allocation was going to be insufficient.</p> <p>In accordance with the process explained to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, this was reported to Project Board. Subsequently, and in agreement with the Director Resources and the Cabinet Member for Finance, £22,000 was made available for this project. The total budget for the options appraisal is therefore now £52,812.</p> <p>Based on our current understanding of costs, this should be sufficient. However, the extent of surveys required is still under discussion based on the wish to mitigate significant risks.</p> <p>The Project Board has taken the view that it is vital to devote the right amount of resource to the project at an early stage in order that the recommendations emerging from the feasibility study are as robust and well informed as they can be. As the Scrutiny Task Group pointed out, the cost of a consultant is relatively small in comparison to the likely costs of the full investment needed but is vital to its overall success.</p> <p>In a supplementary question, Councillor Payne asked, having seen 2 major projects which had not gone according to plan in the last year – the Wilson and St Paul’s, whether officers delivering these projects were qualified in Prince 2?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member responded that he had every confidence in those involved and thanked officers, members of the working group and Cllr Payne as a member of that group, for their contribution. He undertook to respond to Cllr Payne’s precise question in writing.</p> |
| 11. | <p>Question from Councillor Matt Babbage to Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles, Councillor Rowena Hay</p> |
| | <p>Can we have details of the grant behind the 1,700 CD-ROMs recently written off at a loss of £8,600 by The Wilson museum shop?</p> |
| | <p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> |
| | <p>A grant of £61,200 was secured from the Council for Museum Archives and Libraries “Designation Challenge Fund” in June 2001 towards a project which looked to celebrate a series of designs and drawing in the Art & Craft Movement Collection held at the Wilson. Part of the project included the production of CD Roms for schools and community groups to use for educational purposes and for visitors to purchase and enjoy at home. The CMAL was disbanded in 2012, and responsibilities transferred over to the Arts Council England.</p> <p>A large number of CD were produced and purchased in 2003 and whilst some were distributed and sold, 1,700 remained unsold. Technological advances over the past decade mean the images are of a very poor quality compared to modern images, and the CD Roms no longer work on most modern computers. As such there is no further likelihood of the CDs being purchased by the public.</p> <p>The CD Rom’s content and the intellectual property rights attached to the photos, are however still important to The Wilson, as it records the important collections held. We will therefore retain some of the CD Roms for our continued use, and</p> |

| | |
|------------|---|
| | <p>options will be explored in the coming weeks to identify ways and potential costs of transferring the images onto more appropriate electronic storage media, or seeking external funding to replicate the 2003 project and saving new images onto more appropriate modern storage.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Babbage asked whether the Cabinet Member considered that grant funding was less important than tax payers' money and did she see any difference?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member said she was unable to respond to the question.</p> |
| 12. | Question from Councillor Matt Babbage to Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles, Councillor Rowena Hay |
| | What is the council's policy is on stock management, following the need for The Wilson to write off £12,000 of stock from the museum shop? |
| | Response from Cabinet Member |
| | <p>The council's policy and procedures for stock management are set out in the council's financial rules (section F10 to F11) which cover the responsibilities for the care and custody of the stock; arrangements for stock takes and the requirement for information for the accounting, costing and financial records at the financial year end. The rules also cover the policy on stock write off, an extract of which is below.</p> <p>F11 Write-offs</p> <p>F11.1 Limit of the council to write off and/or dispose of obsolete stock, per individual item:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated residual value up to £250 - Directors or Heads of Service. • Estimated residual value over £250 - Section 151 Officer. <p>F11.2 At any one time up to £5,000 may be written out of stock records with the Section 151 Officer approval. If the accumulated amount to be written out exceeds £10,000 during the financial year, a report must be made to Cabinet. Individual amounts in excess of £5,000 shall be approved by Cabinet.</p> <p>Following its launch in October 2014, The Cheltenham Trust have updated its own year end stock take process, which covers the Wilson, & other venues operated by the Trust also any off site storage facilities.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Babbage asked how often stock was reviewed and when was museum stock last reviewed?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member responded that the last stock take was before the museum closed for redevelopment. A stock take should have taken place when the Wilson re-opened but didn't. Since the formation of the Cheltenham Trust in October 2014, stock control had been their responsibility so she could ask them how often they intended to do a stock take.</p> |
| 13. | Question from Councillor Matt Babbage to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay |
| | What progress has been made on this council's recent commitment to improving broadband services for new housing developments? |
| | Response from Cabinet Member |
| | The provision of Broadband and telecommunications infrastructure is discussed in |

| | |
|------------|---|
| | <p>the paper entitled 'Issues and Options Cheltenham Plan (part one)'. This will be considered by Cabinet on 14th April. The paper sets out that it will be vitally important to ensure Cheltenham's economy benefits from the continued enhancement of telecommunications and broadband infrastructure in the town, particularly roll-out of 3G and 4G mobile broadband, and enhancement of broadband accessibility, particularly in the more rural areas of Gloucestershire.</p> <p>Whilst part one justifiably recognises the importance of this infrastructure, it will be part two of the Cheltenham Plan that will provide the opportunity to assess and examine policy approaches and options available to the Council to help support and support the delivery of this infrastructure. This work is being led by the Planning Liaison Member Working Group – a cross party working group which is supporting officers in the preparation of the Cheltenham Plan.</p> |
| 14. | Question from Councillor Matt Babbage to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay |
| | What progress has been made on this council's recent commitment to improving broadband services for existing homes and businesses in Cheltenham who suffer from poor internet speeds? |
| | Response from |
| | <p>Members are aware of the County Council's Fastshire broadband initiative. Council officers are in discussion with their County Council counterparts to see how this initiative can benefit Cheltenham residents. It must be noted however that this initiative is primarily focused on providing improved Broadband services in rural areas.</p> <p>The resolve passed by the full Council meeting on the 26 February 2015 has now been incorporated as part of the work plan in the development of the Cheltenham Plan part two. This will give the Council the opportunity to assess and examine the options available to the Council to help support the development of this infrastructure.</p> <p>In a supplementary question Councillor Babbage asked when the first broadband cabinet would be upgraded – this year or next and the likely completion date?</p> <p>The Cabinet Member responded that he did not know as this is primarily a GCC function. Whilst CBC can influence new developments, it has very little influence on existing developments and broadband providers. However CBC will create a map of blackspots with help from BT and Virgin and once this was available the council would be in a better position to lobby. There is the possibility of government funding after the election.</p> |
| 15. | Question from Councillor Matt Babbage to Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor John Rawson |
| | What funding has been set aside to meet this council's recent commitment to improving broadband services for both new and existing homes and businesses? |
| | Response from Cabinet Member |
| | The Council made it clear in its resolution of February 26 th that it sees its contribution to providing high-speed broadband as being mainly through the Cheltenham Plan. It resolved that the Plan should include a policy regarding broadband in new developments, taking into account EU broadband directive 2014/61/EU. Ensuring that the Plan is adequately resourced was a major theme |

of the 2015 council budget and an additional £100,000 was provided for this purpose. The broadband policy is clearly one of a number of policies that will be worked on by officers and it would be difficult at this stage to isolate the specific cost of drawing up the broadband policy or to estimate what it might be.

The Council also committed itself to working with the County Council, its Fastershire project (“Faster broadband for Herefordshire and Gloucestershire”) and commercial providers to ensure that existing homes have an improved service. What is involved in this was not set out in any detail in the addendum which Cllrs Harman and Chard proposed, but the implication of the resolution is that this Council would act as an advocate and enabler rather than as a direct investor in infrastructure.

In a supplementary question Councillor Babbage asked how the council would ensure improved broadband was rolled out across town if they were not making additional funds available.

The Cabinet Member reiterated that the council had a limited role as enabler and advocate. He reminded members that the budget was approved by Council and endorsed by Cabinet. Although he was not sure that he agreed with putting in capital for infrastructure that was not borough council responsibility, other Members may feel it is appropriate to propose this at the Council meeting on 14th April.