

Council

16 October 2017

Member Questions (22)

1.	Question from Councillor Wilkinson to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>A recent survey for 'Guide dogs for the blind' found that 42% of assistance dog owners were refused by a taxi or PHV driver over a one year period, despite this being a criminal offence under the Equality act 2010.</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member ensure that all taxi and PHV drivers are aware of the law, and can the council look to introduce a provision for all drivers to undertake disability and equality training when obtaining or renewing their licence?</p> <p>Can these measures be taken as feedback in the current taxi licensing consultation?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proposed “three strikes” policy will introduce additional sanctions for CBC licensed drivers who refuse to carry guide dogs and/or make additional charge for it.• The policy consultation is also proposing the introduction of a driver training procedure that will include, among other things, equality training and a follow up assessment.• The consultation includes proposals to make this training mandatory for all new applicants but also for all current drivers of disabled access licensed vehicles.• <i>The consultation does not however propose the imposition of mandatory disability awareness training all licensed drivers – only those where such training is relevant.</i>• The current mandatory knowledge test that has been taken by all current licensed drivers includes awareness on equality duties relevant to taxi & private hire drivers.• This is supplemented by awareness of equality duties relevant to taxi & private hire drivers through the council’s trade newsletter.• The council is also consulting on making changes to the grandfather rights that may see the implementation of a 100% Equalities Act compliant fleet of public hire vehicles.
2.	Question from Councillor Wilkinson to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>The recent introduction by Gloucestershire County Council of new parking restrictions around Cheltenham Spa station and Lansdown has predictably caused issues with increased commuter parking in nearby areas, including Park ward. Residents report dangerous parking close to corners and on pavements, as well as difficulty finding space for their vehicles and obstructions to buses in an area stretching from Hatherley Court Road to Gratton Road. What representations will this council make to ensure residents in Park ward are consulted by Gloucestershire County Council on future parking arrangements, including the option of a consultation in the affected areas?</p>

	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>The changes to on-street parking restrictions in the vicinity of Cheltenham Spa station and within Lansdown have now been implemented by GCC following public consultation. Clearly, not everyone is happy with the resulting impacts of the scheme, which did not respond fully to the representations submitted by CBC through the Leader.</p> <p>The influence which the Borough Council can bring to bear is limited and whilst I have been lobbying for greater devolvement of powers to CBC in respect of highway maintenance and on-street parking arrangements, these are currently issues for GCC to reconcile and to scrutinise through its own internal processes.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Question from Councillor John Payne to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</p>
	<p>Now that Phase 1 of the Cheltenham Transportation Scheme has bedded in, could the Cabinet Member please update the Council on pollution levels in the area around Imperial Square, given that there are no recording devices in Imperial Square.</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>Phase 2 of the Cheltenham Transport Plan was completed in spring 2017, and involved allowing 2 way traffic in Imperial Square, outside the Town Hall. Traffic originating in Montpellier was not able to turn right into Imperial Square until Phase 2 was completed, so there wouldn't have been any impact on Imperial Square at all from the Phase 1 works in Albion Street. This two-way scheme wasn't designed specifically to improve air quality. Any such improvements in air quality are incidental, as I understand the scheme was designed to reduce congestion and make easier access to parking for visitors to the town centre, from the direction of Montpellier, in particular, to allow access to the car parks at Rodney Road and Regent Street.</p> <p>If the Council had decided to monitor air quality in Imperial Square this would not have commenced at the opening up of the two-way scheme, as there is a period of "bedding in" (until such time that regular users of the previous one-way system had time to assess whether the two-way scheme had an effect on their regular journeys or whether alternative routes would have been felt necessary).</p> <p>Traffic flows on this stretch of Imperial Square are also likely to be affected by further changes to traffic management in the area, particularly at the junction of St.George's Road and the Promenade. These works are expected to commence in 2018.</p> <p>Officers have assessed there to be very little relevant exposure in Imperial Square, as most of the properties are commercial buildings, and any residential properties are set well back from the road. The Environmental Protection team discussed the layout changes to this road at the beginning of this year when monitoring points were reviewed, knowing that the two-way scheme might have air quality implications. They propose to install a diffusion tube, or other monitoring device, for a 12 month period commencing January 2018 at a place of relevant exposure in Imperial Square.</p>

4.	Question from Councillor Chris Ryder to the Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor Rowena Hay
	You have decided to use 'Blanchere Illuminations' to provide new Christmas lighting in some areas within our town, which no doubt many families, shoppers and visitors to Cheltenham will thoroughly enjoy. Could you please inform me if these Illuminations have been purchased outright, hired in on a fixed price, or on a lease hire scheme.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Following a tender exercise, a 3 year lease arrangement with Blanchere Illuminations has been agreed which will provide a new illuminated display for Christmas 2017. The tender exercise has been led by the Cheltenham BID who have also contributed their own funding.
5.	Question from Councillor Chris Ryder to the Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor Rowena Hay
	If Cheltenham Borough Council Arle Nursery land were to be removed from Green Belt status to a Brown Field site and sold for future development, would this administration consider ring fencing a proportion of the sale monies to go back into providing a decent sized 'holding/working' area for our Gardening team to be able to continue maintaining our Parks & Gardens to the Horticultural Excellence that we have grown accustomed to whether that be working with sustainable plants in the future and/or our vibrant bedding planting that once again has just recently achieved a 'Gold' accolade for Imperial Gardens in the 'Heart of England in Bloom Campaign'.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The project team are currently looking at alternative council owned sites that would be suitable for this purpose. The business case is looking into a number of options and will factor in the cost of any potential solutions identified.
6.	Question from Councillor Bickerton to the Leader, Councillor Jordan
	Having received information from the GCC Head of Education Tim Browne and the Deputy Head at Balcarras School we are told there is a need for a sizeable new through school (years 4 to 16), two forms of primary and six of secondary, totalling 1260 to 1320 pupils. Southern Cheltenham is the search area for the location of this new school. It is of great concern that GCC seem to be deciding the location of the school in isolation given their track record in planning matters, the incompetence demonstrated over the County Incinerator comes to mind. Our concern is the logic of placing another large school close to Bournside School and avoiding putting parents and children into the traffic congestion. Could we have some assurance than CBC Councillors and Planning Officers will be able to have some influence at an early stage in this important decision?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The Planning Policy team are currently working with the education and property teams of GCC to properly understand the analysis of need for a new secondary and primary school at South Cheltenham and where this could be delivered. We are seeking to ensure that any such development will be fully consulted on and considered within the Cheltenham Plan and a suitable allocation made if required. The policies around the delivery of new schools are complicated. It is likely that any new school would not be delivered by GCC and as such CBC would be the determining authority on any future planning application.

7.	Question from Councillor Bickerton to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor McKinlay
	There have been reports of difficulty using the Arle Court Park and Ride due to inability to park. Parking capacity seems to be at the limit. A few questions have indicated possible reasons for the change with the use of free parking by GCHQ staff and the huge BMW regional HQ, plus the changes to the 99 bus service for NHS staff. Is the council aware of the problem and are there any solutions?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>I was not aware of the extent of the issues identified at the Arle Court Park and Ride and the Council does not appear to have received any complaints from the public about this issue.</p> <p>I'm sure that Cllr Bickerton is aware that the Park and Ride facility is operated by GCC and it is likely that any concerns would have been directed to them.</p> <p>I am happy to relay any specifically evidenced complaints to colleagues at the county council.</p>
8.	Question from Councillor Bickerton to the Leader, Councillor Jordan
	<p>The Leckhampton Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan is moving forward at a pace with public consultation anticipated this autumn, compliant and in step with the JCS and the Cheltenham Local Plan. One outstanding issue is the highly valued Cheltenham gateway views from the A46 Shurdington Road of Leckhampton Hill, the Cotswold Escarpment and AONB. This was one of the refusal reasons for the Bovis Miller 650 application by the CBC Planning Committee and picked up again at the JCS Examination in Public by Inspector Ord in her Interim Report, ' <i>Additionally, there are important views from the A46 Shurdington Road across the site onto the Cotswolds Hills, the most spectacular being from the junction with Kidnappers Lane</i> ^[115]. We are aware of Tewkesbury Council promoting their town as a walking centre, opening up new footpaths and routes around the town to attract visitors, we have the same objectives with a Cheltenham Country Park theme working closely with Miller Homes and CBC Planning Officers. Inspector Ord is currently recommending 200 homes onto the northern fields at Leckhampton with sympathetic development and regard to the high landscape value and sensitivity, but of course there is always pressure on housing numbers and we are considering sacrificing these views to attain increased housing density. The unobstructed views up to Leckhampton Hill and Cleeve Hill have been described as an invitation to visitors but what value do the Council place on this intangible?</p> <p>Could the Leader of the Council please give some guidance on how much importance we as a neighbourhood planning team should attach to these views in our planning policy?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The preservation of views into and out of the site will be an important part of masterplanning of the location, both at pre-application and as part of the conditions for allocation in the Cheltenham Plan. The appeal inspector's comments on views in regard to the refusal of the 650 scheme, as well as those

	of JCS inspector will be material considerations when determining any planning proposal or allocation in this area.
9.	Question from Councillor Willingham to Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles, Councillor Clucas
	Does the Cabinet Member for Healthy Lifestyles share my concerns that the swingeing Conservative cuts to our beloved NHS are leading to treatment choices being made on cost, with cheaper options that may not lead to the best clinical outcomes being preferred over more expensive treatments that can lead to better clinical outcomes?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Yes
10.	Question from Councillor Nelson to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Coleman
	Why is it that we have a bag to recycle cardboard and not another box with a lid? The box would keep the cardboard dry, whereas the bag, with its partial covering, leads to wet cardboard; does that not affect its recycling value?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	As a result of seeing the way in which cardboard is successfully collected in neighbouring and other local authorities, this bag is considered to be an excellent option. A similar type of bag used by the Forest of Dean was displayed at the full briefing to Council as part of the official launch of the new service on 24th July, so opportunities for questions were given to Members there. It's important to keep cardboard separate for the new recycling collections and the bag has a weighted bottom and Velcro flap to keep the worst of the rain out. The bags can be easily stored in one of the recycling boxes when not in use meaning that households with space restrictions can also take part in the collection service. In addition, the value of cardboard isn't dramatically affected by it being wet and the moisture actually helps the compaction equipment on the vehicle meaning that a greater amount of cardboard can be carried compared to when it is dry.
11.	Question from Councillor Nelson to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Coleman
	I have not received any revised calendar (unlike 23,000 other homes across the town) yet my new collection date means it will be 3 weeks before my recycling is collected, encouraging residents to simply put any excess recycling into their rubbish bin. Is that correct or is it another mistake that has yet to be corrected? This problem was never highlighted within the Member's seminar or media stories.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Not all households have received a revised calendar, only the ones which have been identified as needing to receive the updated version. For all other households the original calendar is accurate and shows the scheduled dates when refuse, recycling and food waste will be collected. Residents like you who are experiencing longer than 2 weeks before their first

	<p>refuse or recycling collection are being asked to present any side waste in black sacks alongside their refuse bin and additional recycling in cardboard boxes alongside their recycling receptacles and everything will be collected. Households may also choose to take additional refuse or recycling to the Swindon Road Household Recycling Centre if they don't want to wait for the first new collection.</p> <p>In addition, the Council has taken the decision to instruct Ubico to make collections of refuse and recycling in certain areas on Saturday 21st October for the households which are most affected by the change and are having to wait between 22 and 26 days for their first new refuse or recycling collection, which means that the longest any resident will have to wait for their collection will be 3 weeks.</p> <p>The change to the new collection rounds will result in a more efficient service, providing long terms benefits to the council and to our residents. After 27th October, normal collection rounds will resume, with all waste and recycling being collected fortnightly.</p>
12.	Question from Councillor Nelson to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Coleman
	<p>You have been keen to lead the introduction of the new recycling scheme, with its seminars, Council debates and multiple media stories. Why then did you not take responsibility for the mistakes in the glossy recycling calendar? As you signed a letter introducing the scheme, why did you not sign the letter explaining the 23,000 errors?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>A whole-scale system re-design of this scale is not the responsibility of or organised by a single individual but is run as a project. The calendar sent out to residents was subject to a number of checks by the project team however regrettably an error in some of the calendar dates was not picked up. Clearly it is regrettable that an error occurred and in the circumstances it was felt important that the letter of apology came from the Chief Executive.</p>
13.	Question from Councillor Nelson to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Coleman
	<p>Will he promise that no decision will be made about the future of our popular seasonal flowers in the centre of town without carrying out a proper public consultation?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>As you are well aware, this Administration is always keen to ensure that the views of all Cheltenham residents are heard.</p> <p>In respect of this project, there have already been a number of consultation events with stakeholders, including a visit to a town where sustainable planting is working very well, as well as two petitions being published on the Council website. We remain absolutely committed to listening to what people say.</p> <p>This issue is a sensitive one and there are residents on both sides of the argument. It is therefore particularly important that everyone contributing to the debate do so with a full understanding of the issue. We as Members have an important role to play in ensuring our constituents have access to all of the</p>

	<p>information and I am sure that as a result of the Members Briefing last week you will now feel able to explain the arguments for and against moving to sustainable planting, particularly the widely acknowledged environmental benefits, to your constituents.</p> <p>You may also agree with me that it would be beneficial for you to signpost constituents who approach you about this issue to the Council's website where further information, together with photographs, can be found.</p>
14.	Question from Councillor Nelson to the Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor Rowena Hay
	<p>I understand that Bloor Homes sponsored the recent Tour of Britain cycling event in Cheltenham. What form did that sponsorship take and how much money was provided as part of the sponsorship deal?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>All sponsorship opportunities were set out in a brochure published on the Cheltenham Festival of Cycling website:</p> <p>https://cheltenhamcyclingfestival.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/TourOfBritain_Cheltenham_Sponsorship_FINAL.pdf</p> <p>Consultants APT Marketing & PR were appointed by CBC to negotiate and contract all sponsorships. The Bloor sponsorship was a value of £45,000 + VAT and provided the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local naming rights, (The Bloor Homes Cheltenham Festival of Cycling; incorporating OVO Energy Tour of Britain) • Painted bike adverts • Soft banners • Lamppost pennants • Imperial gardens stand • Goody bag insert • Digital package • Press pack insert • £5,000 allocated to hospitality.
	Question from Councillor Nelson to the Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor Rowena Hay
	<p>Have any discussions taken place with developers, agents or any other third party outside the Council about the sale of Arle Nursery?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The Council has not been in any discussion with any developer, agent or third party regarding a potential sale of Arle Nursery. However, following the comments of the planning inspector and the suggestion that the local plan re-designates the planning classification for Arle Nursery site and two adjoining sites, one in the ownership of the County Council and the other in a private ownership, discussions between the three land owners have taken place so as to best serve the local plan process.</p> <p>Valuation advice has been obtained assuming the planning re-designation of the site is approved in order to support the development of the business case options for planting and the nursery.</p>

	Initial discussions with Cheltenham Borough Homes as a vehicle for potential housing development have also taken place.
16.	Question from Councillor Harman to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Coleman
	Can the Cabinet Member outline the Council's plans for electric or hybrid vehicles in the council's fleet? Will he also consider a strategy to install electric charging points in for example Borough Council owned Car Parks or other locations in Cheltenham?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>CBC has very few fleet vehicles, as most of these are now operated by our partners at Ubico and Cheltenham Borough Homes.</p> <p>Considering the efficiency of new vehicles is already something which is taken account of during the procurement process, which also needs to be flexible to ensure that the chosen option is the best fit for the required business need.</p> <p>Cllr Harman will be aware that CBC has already installed four electric vehicle charging points within CBC car parks, two at Town Centre East and two in Regent Arcade.</p> <p>In addition, we have worked with GCC to secure the installation of a further two charging points which are located at the top end of Montpellier street.</p> <p>We will consider the option of installing further charging points as the Cheltenham Parking Strategy is rolled out, but these are not cheap to provide and with improved battery technology, we have been advised by our consultants that it is likely that most vehicle charging will increasingly take place at people's homes.</p>
17.	Question from Councillor Harman to Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles, Councillor Flo Clucas
	In December last year I asked the Cabinet Member if she would consider providing or promoting with partners, a seasonal ice rink which are popular attractions elsewhere. Can she please update the Council on any progress?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>CBC would be keen to help facilitate the installation of a seasonal ice rink as we recognise the value that this would bring to Cheltenham, particularly at Christmas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBC would need to work with a commercial partner who was prepared to accept the financial risk; CBC alone would not be prepared to accept the financial risks. • The council did begin discussions with a commercial partner last year but this did not come to fruition. • Gloucester is fortunate to have Peel Group that are able to support the popular ice rink at Gloucester Quays. • We will continue to search for a commercial partner and I would be happy to update Cllr. Harman as necessary.

	In the meantime, we are continuing to make plans for our Christmas Lights switch on 25th November, with new lights and exciting programme of events being delivered in a collaboration between the Council and Cheltenham BID.
18.	Question from Councillor Nelson to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Changes to Oriel Road junctions/lights appear to be causing significant delays of up to 40 minutes for cars leaving Regents Arcade car park. I thought that one of the aims of the Cheltenham Transport Plan (CTP) was to improve access to Regents Car Park? These delays do not bode well for Christmas shoppers or the introduction of the later CTP phases and do not inspire confidence in our council's plans.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	We have been advised by GCC as highways authority that generally phase 2 of the Cheltenham Transport Plan has resulted in no discernible change in traffic flows around the town. As you point out there has been intermittent queuing of traffic egressing from Regent Arcade. This may be a result of the success of this phase in getting vehicles off the network and into the car park, but equally part of the problem of a delayed full implementation. Either way, we and GCC are fully aware of the frustration that this situation is causing and highways colleagues have been undertaking measures to mitigate the impact of this unwanted outcome. GCC are exploring other actions with anticipated implementation before the Christmas period.
19.	Question from Councillor Nelson to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Why has the Cheltenham Transport Plan and the Boots Corner phase been delayed from this Autumn to June 2018? Many residents might fear that this delay, to just after the Borough elections next May, is firm proof that the proposals will be unpopular, controversial and have an adverse impact on many wards with Lib Dem councillors (such as St Paul's).
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The timing decision rests entirely with GCC as the highways authority, with whom discussions did take place. GCC had concerns over implementation impacting upon race week so determined that June would be more opportune for the Boots Corner trial as it also coincides with lower traffic flows. It also allows the implementation of phase 3 in Royal Well and time for monitoring before any Boots Corner trial in line with both TRO and GCC cabinet decisions. If, however, it is a party political rather than practical point being made perhaps you should address your question to GCC and its Conservative administration.
20.	Question from Councillor Nelson to Cabinet Member Housing, Councillor Peter Jeffries
	Please could he provide an update on Project SOLACE and its multi-agency approach to reduce rough sleeping on our streets.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The Solace 'go live' date is dependent upon the team leader receiving vetting clearance through the police and CBC's agile teams' moving to the new ground floor delivery hub, where they will be located alongside police colleagues.

	<p>The council's lead officer for Solace, is presenting an update to O&S on 27th November which will summarise how the implementation is progressing.</p> <p>The council's ASB caseworker continues to work with partners engaging with rough sleepers and people existing on our streets.</p>
21.	Question from Councillor Nelson to Cabinet Member Development, Councillor McKinlay
	What cycle lane road improvements have been introduced in Cheltenham over the last 4 years?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Cycle lanes are the responsibility of GCC as highway authority and they have been asked for an answer to this question. As yet nothing has been received but will be forwarded when it arrives.
22	Question from Councillor Nelson to Leader, Councillor Jordan
	When will the future of North Place and Portland Street car parks be resolved? How much car parking income has the Council lost since these sites were sold? How much New Homes Bonus and Council Tax has been lost due to the failure to build homes on these sites?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The car parking revenue for the site prior to sale was £350,000 net per annum. Whilst the Council is no longer in receipt of the income from the car park, it has benefited from a significant capital receipt of £7.8m in December 2014.</p> <p>The permitted scheme for North Place was for a 65,000 sq. ft. super market plus 605 car parking spaces, 300 of which as a public car park but no homes.</p> <p>The permitted development on Portland street was for a housing scheme of 143 homes. It is difficult to estimate the level of new homes bonus and council tax since the planned timing of delivery of the housing element and the council tax banding of the units was not determined.</p> <p>The council no longer has a controlling interest in the either site. However, we acknowledge the importance of this site to Cheltenham and officers have actively been engaging with the developers in working towards the regeneration of both sites. The council understands that complex negotiations between the developers and potential 'end users' are taking place and we are anticipating that the developers will be coming forward with an alternative deliverable proposal shortly. CBC has recently submitted a bid to the Housing Infrastructure Fund to assist with unlocking the housing development on Portland Street.</p>