

Council

11 December 2017

Public Questions (10)

1.	Question from Jonny Brownsteen to the Cabinet Member Housing, Councillor Peter Jeffries
	Does the council agree that it should install contactless donation points around the town centre, which enable residents to donate money to charities and services that support homeless people in Cheltenham?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The amount of empathy, kindness and generosity which the residents of Cheltenham show in supporting the charities & voluntary sector, as well as directly for those who are existing on the streets of our town never fails to amaze me. The general advice about giving money to those on our streets is that it should be discouraged, personally I would not wish to dissuade anybody from giving.</p> <p>Enabling financial donations through contactless points could be extremely beneficial and I believe this should be supported. Having had an initial conversation with representatives from the business improvement district (BID) who are interested in the concept I will be making arrangements to progress this further.</p>
2.	Question from Jonny Brownsteen to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	One of the attractions which brings people to Cheltenham from around the region is the high standard of the shops here. We have a vacancy factor at the Brewery Quarter, yet are losing Whole Foods from the Gallagher Retail Park. What efforts have the council made to encourage Whole Foods to relocate to this prime site in the town centre? This would bring further business into the town centre, while saving the jobs of the staff at the current store who are now facing unemployment.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>CBC has been in touch with Wholefoods concerning the store closure, albeit from the perspective of implications for existing staff.</p> <p>The information provided to us is that both stores outside London (Cheltenham and Glasgow) were being closed for economic reasons and the decision is in no way related to the Amazon acquisition. We understand that all Wholefoods staff have been offered the opportunity to apply for open positions within the Wholefoods business; however, this would require relocation, so consequently, many are exploring alternative employment opportunities locally with support from the job centre.</p> <p>CBC has also arranged to meet with representatives from the Gallagher retail park in early December (although from recollection this particular unit is in alternative ownership).</p> <p>The idea of relocating to the Brewery is interesting, but does not appear to fit with</p>

	Wholefoods commercial strategy.
3.	Question from Stewart Rood to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman
	<p>Why weren't the residents in Whaddon Drive informed in writing of the new collection dates and why was there conflicting answers given when each resident telephoned separately to enquire what exactly was going on. e.g. I was told that both collection and recycling would take place on alternate Wednesdays and my neighbour informed it would take place on a Wednesday for refuse and recycling on a Friday.</p> <p>We were both informed that our addresses did not appear on the system and that only the flats were listed. I have ceased recycling until I know where we are with this and as for the blue bag for cardboard I think it is a step too far.</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Ubico advises that supervisor visits have taken place in the area, to advise residents of the correct collection days and to highlight the changes to the new service.</p> <p>The online search tool will be updated shortly to reflect the same information.</p>
4.	Question from Gary Fulford to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>Paragraph 4.6.21 of the JCS states that: "A small change has been made to the Green Belt boundary in the area of the Reddings to provide a more appropriate boundary after an implemented permission at Grovefield Way". The JCS team say that the request was valid because during the JCS review, other sites in the Greenbelt that had been "built out" were removed from the Greenbelt. However, the Grovefield Way site has not been built out, so please can you clearly set out the exceptional circumstances that set a precedent to permit its removal from Greenbelt before it has been built out, especially as the developer is seeking to introduce A class retail & other classes of development onto the site which have never been placed before the Planning Inspectorate, run contrary to current retained retail policy, and have not yet even been placed before the planning committee?</p>
	Response from
	<p>Through the JCS examination the Inspector considered whether to remove the Green Belt designation from a triangle of land at Grovefield Way, drawing the Green Belt back to a more defensible and permanent boundary, given the part already being built out under an implemented permission (the BMW/ Mini dealership and related services) and extant permissions. The JCS Inspector considered representations during the main modifications consultation and in the hearings as to whether exceptional circumstances existed to remove the land from the Green Belt and concluded at paragraph 176 of her Final Report, that exceptional circumstances exist for the removal, and MM054 inserted paragraph 4.6.21 accordingly.</p> <p>In respect of the current planning application, we have a statutory duty as a local planning authority to consider all applications on their merits. The current scheme has been fully consulted upon and all relevant policy considerations, including the context within the JCS, as examined by the Inspector, have been considered in full. The application will be considered by Planning Committee on 14 December 2017.</p>
5.	Question from Gary Fulford to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan

	Can a MINOR modification be made to paragraph 4.6.21 in respect of this non-strategic, currently undeveloped Greenbelt site at Grovefield Way to specify that any adjustments to the existing Greenbelt boundaries are only made after the Cheltenham local plan and retail policies are agreed, by which time, CBC will have defined a “shopping centre” boundary in relation to the site, and that, the Grovefield Way site must remain within the Green Belt boundary until at least after it is built out and occupied in its entirety?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>This would not be a minor change, but one of substance. It is not possible to adopt a plan that an Inspector has only found to be sound with main modifications, without all the main modifications recommended in the Inspector’s Final Report. Save for any additional amendments, which (taken together) do not materially affect the policies set out in the plan with the main modifications; the wording must be as the main modifications set out within the Final Report.</p> <p>The answer to Q4 sets out the JCS examination’s consideration of the site. The Cheltenham Plan being brought today as item 10 on the Council agenda, will if agreed, introduce new planning policy (EM3) to allocate the remainder of the site for B class uses and new Cheltenham Plan policy (EM1) will protect the site from changes of use to non employment uses on completion of development.</p>
6.	Question from Alice Ross to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>Issue 10, Transport, paragraphs 216 - 230</p> <p>With so many aspects of strategic transport planning and mitigation left demonstrably unresolved, is the Borough fully satisfied that it is sound, as stated in Paragraph 223, that “more focussed modelling and mitigation design to deal with allocated development issues can be left to application stage.”?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The JCS transport work has demonstrated that effective solutions to mitigate transport impacts of the plan can reasonably be achieved within the plan period. As schemes for major development are submitted across the area, these solutions will refine and build on the model which the JCS, County and Highways England have developed. Similarly, a number of bids for government funding of infrastructure related to these developments are ongoing.</p> <p>Paragraphs 215 to 230 in the Inspector’s report set out her consideration of transport evidence through the JCS process. Paragraph 223 is the Inspector’s view after careful consideration and much additional evidence being prepared and reviewed. She has concluded that the plan is sound with her recommended main modifications.</p> <p>Both Gloucester City Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council have resolved to adopt the JCS and it is now for this Council to consider whether it too supports the Inspector’s conclusions on soundness and the adoption of the JCS.</p>
7.	Question from James Russell to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>The JCS reference to “Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP)” at paragraph 5.7.2, is assumed to be related to the “Do Something 7” scenario set out in the traffic evidence. This scenario is critically dependent upon junction 10 of the M5 becoming 4 way. Highways England next funding allocation, which could support the scheme (if approved) will be in 2021 and construction would take at least 24 months. The grants to support the proposed West Cheltenham Cyber Park and infra-structure expire in 2021. This suggests that development will have to be well</p>

	<p>ahead of any alterations to Junction 10. This would be equivalent to the “Do Minimum 7”, or, “Do Nothing 7” scenarios in the traffic evidence, both of which calculated that the major Arle Court roundabout at junction 11 of the M5 would be operating at 187% of its capacity. How will Gloucestershire Highways and Cheltenham Borough Council ensure that this potential problem is avoided?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>The observation concerning the Growth Fund 3 (GD3) monies is correct in that it has a time limit of 2021. This funding is for enabling infrastructure for opening up the cyber park and it is expected, as presented at the JCS examination, that delivery of the site will be phased - it would not be reasonable to expect delivery of 45 hectares of development by 2021. The traffic modelling scenarios assume full build out by the end of the plan 2031, so essentially, there is a mismatch of timescales. The GD3 funding will enable the cyber park and its employment opportunities to come forward whilst longer term plans such as ‘J10 all-ways junction’ will impact further into the future, after the initial 2021 delivery target.</p>
8.	<p>Question from Simon Willis to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</p>
	<p>The JCS allows Council’s considerable discretion to build housing in the Green Belt if less than 450 houses are proposed, particularly if the annual building allocations are not being achieved. There are similar discretions afforded for hybrid housing and employment proposals from developers. The proposed urban extensions in the local plan cross into the “defensible” Green Belt and connect the remaining portions of the Green Belt to the Urban area, thereby making sites that are presently considered to be unsustainable to potentially become sustainable. If the precedent to move the Green Belt boundaries every time is built out following a developer request continues to be followed (paragraph 4.6.21), how can the Green Belt boundaries be considered to be defensible?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>The strategic Green Belt boundaries for the area have been identified through the JCS, with Strategic Allocations and safeguarded areas having been removed from the existing Green Belt. The safeguarded areas are not allocated for development at this time, but will only be released for development if a future review of the JCS deems the release of this land necessary and appropriate. The JCS’s Green Belt policies do allow for a limited review of the Green Belt in other locations as necessary through the Borough Plans, where this is justified by exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>Whilst we have considered the potential for local Green Belt review in the Cheltenham Plan, if items 9 and 10 on the Council agenda are agreed today, we will be in a position to meet the plan’s requirements to 2031 in full without further changes to the Green Belt, other than those identified in the JCS.</p> <p>Any application for development which is not part of the narrowly defined national list of compatible development in the Green Belt (e.g. buildings for agriculture or forestry) will need to demonstrate ‘very special circumstances’ to be permitted.</p> <p>The answer to Q4 sets out the JCS examination’s consideration of the site referred to at paragraph 4.6.21.</p>
9.	<p>Question from Simon Willis to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</p>
	<p>If an application is received for off-plan development in the Green Belt and the</p>

	<p>site has been assessed as being unsustainable by the authority, presumably the planning officers would be required to recommend rejection in all instances, because the allocations to 2031 have been made. If not, why not?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>See Question 8. It is true that development in the Green Belt which would harm its openness, or the reasons for its designation, would normally be refused. In order to gain approval it would need to demonstrate 'very special circumstances' which would outweigh the great importance to be attached to the Green Belt, which is reflected both in the JCS, in national policy and in decision taking. Substantial weight is to be given to any harm to the Green Belt when considering any planning application and decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan, unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise.</p>
10.	<p>Question from Michael Evans to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</p>
	<p>I, and other business-experienced people in Cheltenham, were surprised to see that the two shareholding councils of Gloucestershire Airport – Gloucester City and Cheltenham Borough – had sanctioned advertising for three non-executive directors to join the airport company's Board at remuneration levels of £4000 per annum for a two-day/month involvement.</p> <p>I should like to know where did this council seek advice concerning the level of remuneration offered to the non-execs being hired to protect its investment and did they compare it with the remuneration of non-executive directors working in other non-FTSE 250 businesses.</p> <p>When I last recruited a non-executive director, albeit ten years' ago, the Institute of Directors quoted annual remunerations of between £15,000 and £20,000 for such positions in companies of comparable size and stature.</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>The remuneration levels were decided after benchmarking against those recently for Publica, the company owned by 4 councils (including Cheltenham) and the previous success in recruiting directors to Gloucestershire Airport. We have had 48 applicants from some very capable and experienced people who have indicated their enthusiasm for the role at the advertised remuneration levels. I am confident that we will successfully fill the roles after the interview process next week and see no reason to change the amount offered.</p>