

Council

19 February 2018

Member Questions (12)

1.	Question from Councillor Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	What assessment is being made of the impact on the housing market and on communities due to the increase in Airbnb rentals?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>It is unclear at present what impact, if any, Airbnb rentals are having specifically on the local housing market and on our communities.</p> <p>Airbnb is in effect a lodgings agency that specialises in facilitating access to short term B and B accommodation. As such it is likely to have more impact on the Hospitality sector than the Housing sector. As a result the activities of Airbnb fall outside of the Housing Licensing regime.</p> <p>What is clear is that private rents have increased significantly in Cheltenham in recent years, with the result that many low income households are being priced out of the private rented market.</p> <p>The upward pressure on private rents suggests that demand for private rented accommodation is exceeding supply. This is likely to be attributable to a number of factors, such as high house prices, which is resulting in many more households remaining within the private rented sector for longer.</p> <p>The council will be looking to jointly commission with other districts across the county a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), once the government have provided further clarity about the methodology that needs to be followed by local authorities when commissioning this type of work. Included within the SHMA will be an assessment of the need for private rented accommodation.</p> <p>It is envisaged that specific issues and pressure points, such as any potential impact Airbnb rentals are having on the local housing market, could well be identified then.</p>
2.	Question from Councillor Mason to the Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor Rowena Hay
	When is the Borough Council scheduled to move into Delta House?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Work is ongoing to develop the relocation strategy which is responding to a changing landscape.</p> <p>The council is undergoing significant transformation in the way in which staff work and has created agile workspace and promoting flexible working which is reducing the space needs and is informing the strategy for the relocation from the</p>

	<p>Municipal Offices.</p> <p>The council has been activity working with other public sector agencies on the potential of a public sector hub to serve residents.</p> <p>Options for relocation into alternative accommodation either temporarily or permanently are kept under continuous. As yet, due to the shortage of suitable offices, no viable option has been identified. As such, should this position not change, the council will relocate to Delta Place in 2024.</p>
3.	<p>Question from Councillor Harman to the Cabinet Member Housing, Councillor Peter Jeffries</p> <p>Gloucester City Council has recently announced a 35 per cent reduction in the number of rough sleepers. Understanding fully that this is only one part of a complex and very human issue, can the Cabinet Member confirm what progress is being made in Cheltenham on this issue</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <p>Nationally rough sleeping has increased by 15%, figures for the South West show an overall increase of 8%, For Gloucestershire numbers in the Forest of Dean and Stroud areas stayed the same, Tewkesbury figures increased, and Cotswold, Gloucester and Cheltenham areas went down.</p> <p>There has been a 28.5% reduction in rough sleeping across the county (the numbers across the county were 42 in 2016 and 30 in 2017). This is based on the rough sleeper count undertaken on 1st Nov last year, which noted a reduction in those people existing on our streets by 12 over a 12-month period.</p> <p>Cheltenham also noted a reduction, from 11 to 9 – 19% over the same period. These estimates were based on a street count by P3 of known hotspots for rough sleepers and were combined with other rough sleepers known or believed by agencies to be sleeping rough on that night.</p> <p>These local outcomes suggest that the county-wide commissioning of assertive outreach services to reduce rough sleeping is beginning to have positive effects. It should be noted however that these rough sleeper counts are based on a snapshot in time, so the actual number of rough sleepers will vary throughout the year. It should also be noted that rough sleepers can move from one local authority area to another, so a better understanding of the overall picture would be provided by looking at the combined outcomes of local authorities, rather than looking at the outcomes of each local authority in isolation.</p> <p>This year I volunteered and accompanied the P3 outreach team when they undertook the count in Cheltenham, it was enlightening to witness first-hand the process by which these estimates are produced and interaction with rough sleepers. Meeting people who were existing on our streets was extremely humbling, especially given the range and complexities of some of the individual needs and circumstances. Our continued commitment to help and support rough sleepers in Cheltenham with our partners is paramount, as you rightly point out this is a “very human issue”.</p>

4.	Question from Councillor Walklett to the Chair of the Licensing Committee, Councillor David Willingham
	<p>Woody's Henrietta St car park</p> <p>On 12th January 2017 Licensing Committee members agreed the following: RESOLVED THAT, no further action be taken in relation to Mr Adrian Wood t/a Woody's Fruit & Veg street trading consent and that he continue to work with officers to reduce risk.</p> <p>However one of the outstanding issues (or risks) was the sighting of bicycle racks which restricted access and caused difficulty in erecting stalls. Unfortunately the bicycle racks are still in place and apart from a visit by Licensing Dept during Summer 2017 little appears to have been done to either remove or re-site them. I would ask that Licensing confirm their commitment to fulfilling the Committee members resolution with a published timeline for necessary action.</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>I would like to thank Cllr Walklett for raising this matter. Having a vibrant economy in the Lower High Street area and promoting independent retailers are aspirations that I am sure both he and I share. The Licensing Committee of 12th January 2017 was also of that opinion when it decided not to follow the officer recommendation, which was to revoke the licence, but agreed to continue the licence while requiring the applicant worked with the council to reduce the risk.</p> <p>There are clearly a number of complex competing issues, including the provision of a safe, long-term street trading location for Woody's, the provision of adequate cycle parking in that part of town, as well as the safety of pedestrians accessing the car park and those shopping at Woody's.</p> <p>Whilst there may be some risk, the primary entrance to the car park should be from the A4019 Swindon Road, and if someone is not able to drive slowly across a pavement and past a very visible fruit and veg stall without hitting a pedestrian, people might question whether they ought to be driving at all.</p> <p>The primary role of the Licensing Committee in this matter was to determine whether they felt this was an acceptable location for street trading, which it was deemed to be. The prioritisation and delivery of the requested changes is not within the direct remit of either licensing officers or the Licensing Committee. I understand that within the Borough Council, the responsibility for delivering the changes requested by the Licensing Committee falls between Townscape, Property Services, Car Parks and Legal Services, and that the changes may require planning permission as well as some level of approval from Gloucestershire County Council in its role as Highways Authority.</p> <p>Although, this matter is now not primarily one for the Licensing Committee, I am more than happy to work with the St Paul's councillors, the applicant and the council to try to find a safe, mutually agreeable and long-term solution.</p>

5.	Question from Councillor Lillywhite to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Please share what was learnt from the traffic experienced through the CTP works in Cheltenham over the Xmas period and outline how this information was captured and informed the decision to implement further phases?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>My understanding is that traffic is monitored by Gloucestershire County Council as the Highways Authority over 26 monitoring points across the town not simply through areas that have been subject to change through the phased implementation of the Cheltenham Transport Plan.</p> <p>Modifications were made to the signal crossing at the Rodney Road / Oriel Road / Imperial Square junction in November 2017, following reports and an investigation into intermittent queueing. No further issues or concerns have been raised to the Highway Authority since the introduction of the modifications.</p>
6.	Question from Councillor Question from Councillor Lillywhite to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	The fundamentals principle of the CTP is that visitors and residents travelling by car have such a poor experience that the next time they visit, they will opt for a different mode of transport. How is data being collected to determine the ones that would rather stay in their car and visit somewhere else?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>I don't agree with the premise so it is difficult to respond.</p> <p>Census data shows that around 50% of trips to work are less than 3 miles. This category represents around 30% of trips undertaken on the network, showing there are huge opportunities for modal shift.</p> <p>The Cheltenham Transport Plan is simply encouraging alternatives other than car into the very heart of the town (for those who have a choice), given that more people travel by bus than private vehicle for this journey and that the changes to date have also encouraged cycling.</p> <p>If a car borne visitor arrives and can access a car park without entering the previous labyrinthine one way system and can then leave I am perplexed as to why they would drive to a different destination, unless of course they were looking for a very different offer to that available in Cheltenham.</p>
7.	Question from Councillor Lillywhite to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Please explain why the contraflow on Clarence Street and Parade has been dropped from phase 3 of the CTP and will it be attempted (on a reversible "trial" basis) in Phase 4?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Given the commitment to phase the introduction of the Cheltenham Transport Plan I believe that the highways authority has taken every opportunity to review each stage and have adjusted their delivery accordingly.</p> <p>The initial extent / concept for Phase 3 included returning two-way traffic to Clarence Street and Clarence Parade. Detailed consideration and analysis of the</p>

	<p>extent of the changes for Phase 3 was undertaken during the second half of 2017. However, further investigation of various infrastructure configurations demonstrated that changes on Clarence Street and Clarence Parade were unlikely to be successful without the closure of Boots Corner.</p> <p>Subsequently, phase 3 of the Cheltenham Transport Plan was revised to pause the changes to Clarence Street and Clarence Parade. Clarence Street and Clarence Parade will remain one-way during the trial, as they would require significant construction works which may need to be reversed if the trial is not successful.</p> <p>Clarence Street and Clarence Parade are planned to be returned to two-way operation if the Boots Corner closure is made permanent following the experimental traffic regulation order.</p>
8.	Question from Councillor Lillywhite to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>It is now being claimed by a number of studies that the 'stop/start' nature of congested and queuing traffic emits up to four times more pollutants than when passing through at a steady speed. Can you please explain why traffic is intentionally being 'dispersed' into residential areas on longer, more congested stop/start journeys, increasing pollution where the residents are captive, as opposed to allowing it to flow more cleanly and freely past a transient, visiting, voluntary population on the present, far shorter journey through the town centre.</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Again I am not sure to which studies, or the funding / bias of their authors, the question refers to. My understanding is that car manufacturers have introduced stop-start technology as an aid to reducing pollution not increasing it. Councillor Lillywhite should stop trying to scare residents with predictions of congestion and air quality issues in residential streets.</p> <p>The principles of the CTP were agreed by the GCC Traffic Regulation Order committee in 2015 and endorsed by GCC cabinet and this council.</p> <p>The modelling work undertaken for the scheme shows traffic dispersing across the whole network with no significant increases in congestion on residential streets or increased air pollution issues. Removing the traffic from the town centre also removes air pollution issues on the High Street.</p> <p>My understanding is that the results of the modelling have been borne out by the GCC traffic monitoring, which to date has identified no dispersal of traffic from the phased implementation of the Cheltenham Transport Plan. Equally that is why phase 4 is an experimental order, to allow monitoring across the town to understand if any impacts occur.</p>
9.	Question from Councillor Lillywhite to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>In the CBC Air Quality Annual Status Report dated June 2017, it states the following: "the Council is now considering revoking the current borough-wide AQMA in favour of a much smaller linear route across the north of the town centre, which has consistently given poor air quality results". There must be no doubt over the impact of the conscious decision made by the Liberal Democrat</p>

	majority on this Council to increase the pollution from each vehicle and move it into more vulnerable residential areas on longer journeys. What is the status of this consideration and why are we decreasing instead of increasing the area of our monitoring to understand this fundamental change?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Please identify in the minutes of Council where a conscious decision to increase the pollution from each vehicle was passed.</p> <p>I do not believe that the proposal to change the AQMA area has any impact upon the extent of air quality monitoring, simply that the challenges remain in a focussed area and thereby it is disingenuous to suggest that it is a borough wide problem as it is clearly not the case.</p> <p>The County Council and the Borough Council are working together throughout the trial period and will be monitoring air quality and traffic flows on both town centre and residential streets to be able access the impact of the scheme. Assessment with real data is key and not un-evidenced guess work.</p>
10.	Question from Councillor Lillywhite to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	What steps are being taken to ensure up to date accident statistics are available without a six month delay in registering them so that decisions made on the CTP are better informed?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Recording and reporting data from personal injury collisions on the highway network is undertaken by the police. The County Council, Police and Borough Council will monitor the accident statistics during the trial.</p> <p>Each phase of the CTP has undergone independent road safety audits during design and after construction, to review the scheme and identify any opportunities for improvement.</p>
11.	Question from Councillor Lillywhite to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Why is it now necessary to signpost Evesham and Winchcombe from the town centre along a route that you are determined to close, yet when an explanation of signposting was previously requested it was claimed that traffic will 'disperse' or 'find its own way'?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Simply because on a phased implementation plan, that currently is the route; Boots Corner remains open to through traffic. When the phase 4 experimental traffic order is implemented I believe that there will be a parallel exercise to amend signing as required
12.	Question from Councillor Ryder to the Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman
	Given the sensitive matter of the cremators being down at this present time (13/2/18) at the Crematorium, do you envisage that the two cremators will be repairable to a sufficient standard that will support our clients, the Funeral Homes over the next 15 month or so, until the New Crematorium is in use?

	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Cllr Ryder will be aware of the longstanding issues with our cremators at the Bouncers Lane site, which were installed by a company which went into liquidation before the contract was completed. In common with 11 other local authorities that had equipment provided by the same company, we have experienced recurring problems with the unreliability of the plant and higher than expected maintenance costs. The issues with the current plant are one of the primary reasons for the construction of the new crematorium, which is due to be completed in Spring 2019.</p> <p>Our maintenance contractor ATI, who are a major player in the cremation industry, is currently undertaking works to the existing cremators which we anticipate will allow our ability to cremate at the site to be reinstated.</p> <p>I will be providing a verbal update on the current situation to Council</p>