

Council
18 February 2019

Member Questions (12 total)

1.	Question from Councillor Chris Mason to the Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Alex Hegenbarth										
	Please could the Cabinet Member confirm the cost to the new audio system recently installed in the Council Chamber and Pittville Room?										
	Response from Cabinet Member										
	Council agreed a budget of £75,000 for the new audio system recently installed in the Council Chamber and Pittville Room and the spend to date is £66,608.16.										
2.	Question from Councillor Chris Mason to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay										
	Income from the Council's off-street car parks is an important revenue stream, which may be affected by a reduction in cars entering the town. Could the Cabinet Member please update the Council on the results of any modelling that has been conducted to assess the impact resulting from a reduction in the number of people using the car parks?										
	Response from Cabinet Member										
	<p>I would willingly consider any evidence in support of Cllr Mason's view that there has been a reduction in the number of people using CBC car parks, but this has not been provided.</p> <p>I can also confirm that there has been no reduction in income from the Council's off-street car parks, indeed, quite the reverse (see table below). This suggests that visitor numbers to the town have increased, in addition to which Stagecoach has recently advised that Cheltenham bus journeys have increased by 4%, compared to a national decline of 2%.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <th>Year</th><th>Gross Off-Street Parking Income</th></tr> <tr> <td>2017</td><td>£3,798,072</td></tr> <tr> <td>2018</td><td>£4,224,852</td></tr> <tr> <td>Increase</td><td>£426,780</td></tr> <tr> <td>%Variance</td><td>+11.24%</td></tr> </table> <p>For context, it is worth noting that the Council's strategic approach to car parking provision, adopted in 2017 with support from a cross-party working group, does not seek to prioritise car parking income generation, or access to the town by car over other more sustainable transport modes. The approved objectives of our Car Parking and Access strategy are as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure the provision of adequate parking up to 2031, that is delivered effectively, logically and at a competitive cost; • To encourage access by more sustainable transport alternatives, including walking, cycling and public transport; • To assist traffic management, minimising congestion and its associated 	Year	Gross Off-Street Parking Income	2017	£3,798,072	2018	£4,224,852	Increase	£426,780	%Variance	+11.24%
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	<p>environmental impacts;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance the visitor experience and thereby help to optimise the economic growth of the town. • To maintain, or increase current parking revenue, to help fund other environmental services which benefit the well-being of Cheltenham and its economy.
3.	<p>Question from Councillor Stephen Cooke to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</p> <p>It was previously agreed that the funds accrued by CBC as a result of fines levied on unauthorised vehicles driving through Boots Corner would be put to good use, for example to improve walking and cycling infrastructure in Cheltenham. Could the cabinet member responsible please tell members:</p> <p>a) how much money has now been taken in fines by GCC and how much of this has been passed on to CBC</p> <p>b) what projects the money has been spent on and</p> <p>c) how much money has been spent on each?</p>
	<p>Response from</p> <p>Unfortunately I must correct the assumption. No funds were ever expected to accrue to CBC; the funds are collected by GCC as the highways authority. GCC has previously stated that once the high costs associated with running the enforcement scheme have been recouped, any surplus will be made available for highways works. These schemes are not designed to make a surplus, but rather to help ensure compliance; so generally, the enforcement is aimed at covering costs. Members wishing to put forward works for consideration should do so through their Local Highways Manager, as they currently do, for schemes funded from the capital programme.</p> <p>a) I have requested this information from GCC, but to date do not have an answer. No monies will be passed over to CBC.</p> <p>b) I am not aware that any monies have been allocated to projects to date.</p> <p>c) Not applicable.</p>
4.	<p>Question from Councillor Stephen Cooke to the Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman</p> <p>The public will welcome the response of CBC to the Consultation on Rubbish and Recycling conducted over the festive holiday period implying that the Swindon Road recycling centre will stay open (press release of 5th February 2019). Can the Cabinet member responsible confirm:</p> <p>a) that the press release is accurate and the Swindon Road recycling centre will now remain open for the general public to use</p> <p>b) if there is a move to weekly recycling collections that the practicalities of this will be re-examined, particularly with regard to household vs kerbside vs depot sorting of material for recycling?</p>
	<p>Response from</p> <p>a) Yes and I am not aware of any inaccurate Cheltenham Borough Council press releases being published. Cheltenham's household recycling centre will remain open and we will be looking to improve the recycling and re-use opportunities available to the public in the coming months.</p> <p>b) Cheltenham's kerbside sort recycling service is proving popular with residents so much so that the recent consultation exercise showed strong support for the introduction of a more frequent recycling service at kerbside.</p>

	<p>The government's waste and resources strategy published in October 2018 promotes kerbside separation of recycling materials to ensure that the recycling opportunities for precious resources are maximised. Cheltenham has already improved its kerbside recycling service back in October 2017 and we will be aiming to further improve both the kerbside recycling service and other recycling and re-use opportunities in Cheltenham going forward. Our success to date is thanks to the support of the residents of Cheltenham who separate out recycling materials and present them at kerbside to be recycled rather than throw recyclable materials into the refuse bin. I would like to thank residents for their support and encourage members to help promote the recycling message.</p>
5.	<p>Question from Councillor Stephen Cooke to the Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman</p>
	<p>The opening of the new crematorium in Cheltenham is welcome. It will end the regrettable situation whereby families had to arrange for their loved ones to be cremated elsewhere causing additional stress and inconvenience at a time of mourning. Now this episode is thankfully over can the cabinet member responsible tell members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) how many deceased Cheltonians were sent elsewhere for cremation during the time that cremation facilities were not available b) what was the additional cost c) whether this cost was borne by CBC or the families of the deceased and d) if there is a resultant financial shortfall to CBC how is this to be made up?
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>I am pleased to be able to report that the Council's new £8.5 million Crematorium is scheduled to open on time and within budget on 27th February, 2019, with booked cremation services recommencing on 4th March.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Our excellent Bereavement Services team provides funeral services on behalf of bereaved families from a wide catchment area, primarily through bookings placed by local funeral directors, with whom we have liaised closely on the design and facilities offered by the new Crematorium. The Council does not keep records relating specifically to Cheltonians, as our service covers a wide catchment area. <p>From 2nd October, 2018 until 12th February, 2019, we have provided for 237 funeral services, with funeral directors and their clients having booked services with us whilst fully aware that the cremations will need to happen at another crematorium, with our chapel facilities acting as a 'funeral service venue' only. We believe that the choice of crematorium should rightly be left to the families to decide, rather than our bereavement service and the process is easier for all concerned where funeral directors arrange this directly with their clients. Families have never been obliged to have a service at Cheltenham with the cremation happening elsewhere, it has been their choice to make this arrangement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) The additional costs to the authority relating to our cremation process shutdown, involved both direct and indirect costs, including income foregone as a result of cremations not taking place at our own facility. In total, it is estimated that the authority will have an anticipated service deficit in the

	<p>financial year 2018-19 of £447.1k, as reported to Cabinet in October 2018.</p> <p>c) Where services were disrupted in an unplanned way as a direct result of the failure of the Council's old crematorium plant, this provided only limited opportunity for bereaved families to make alternative arrangements. As a result, the Council offered to convey the deceased to alternative sites for cremation and paid for the additional transportation costs, as well as providing our chapel service free of charge. This has previously been reported to both the Crematorium member working group, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.</p> <p>Where families booked chapel services understanding that the cremation would need to take place elsewhere, our normal fees have applied.</p> <p>In these cases, CBC has not incurred additional costs, as we have not had to facilitate any coffin transportation. Funeral directors have taken responsibility for organizing and transporting 'post service' for cremations, as we have made it clear from the outset that we are only acting as a venue until the new facility is operational.</p> <p>d) The cost of the new crematorium is being funded in part through capital from the sale of car parking land at North Pace/Portland Street (£1 million), with the remainder being taken out as a loan over 25 years from the Public Works Loan Board. This has been secured at a rate below that originally allowed for in the business plan, helping to offset some of the income shortfall arising as a result of the partial close down of the cremation service this year</p> <p>In addition, increased service fee charges were introduced prior to the borrowing being drawn down, temporarily increasing the surplus which is normally generated each year (this was before the safety-related decision to close down the cremation process completely).</p> <p>Unfortunately, there will be a significant revenue shortfall in 2018-19 as a result of the safety issues with the cremation plant, but officers are confident that this will be recovered over the next few years, as confidence in the service is rebuilt.</p> <p>Prior to the problems with the facility, Bereavement Services typically ran at a revenue surplus in the order of £700k per annum.</p>
6.	<p>Question from Councillor Stephen Cooke to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</p> <p>The closure of Boots corner has had the effect of displacing traffic on to other roads some of which have become new 'rat runs'. One of those affected is Rodney Road which has become a new 'Boots Corner' close to the entrance of the flagship John Lewis store in the High Street. As well as being unpleasant for shoppers this area has become a poorly-demarcated 'shared space' and is perceived by many as dangerous.</p> <p>How does the cabinet member responsible plan to rectify this situation and by when?</p>

	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>This was covered in the GCC lead cabinet member report brought to full Council on 21st January 2019 and I cite from page 11 of that report:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigation into options for traffic calming on Rodney Road. <p>GCC are clearly intent on taking action and I have requested details, but understand that currently, designs are being assessed by the highways team.</p>
7.	Question from Councillor Stephen Cooke to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>The public have questioned some of the figures quoted to justify the closing of Boots Corner. Please can the cabinet member responsible:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) share the methodology of data collection including where and when figures for walking and cycling were collected b) indicate the time periods during which 'before and after' measurements were taken c) clarify what adjustments were taken to correct for confounding factors that could have affected the data obtained including the opening of new department stores, school and other holidays, sporting events and festivals?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Boots Corner footfall data and methodology is publicly available at: https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/47/cheltenham_development_task_force/1452/boots_corner_trial_closure_data</p> <p>The dates for which data has been collected are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Week 1 commencing 11th June; - Week 2 commencing 2nd July; - Week 3 commencing 8th October; and - Week 4 commencing 14th November (not yet analysed or published) <p>Unsurprisingly, there were events taking place during all of these weeks, but that's the nature of life in Cheltenham:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Week 1: food and drink festival 15-17th June; - Week 2: Music festival, Midsummer fiesta on 7th July; - Week 3: Literature festival, Promenade Market on 12th October; and - Week 4: November Races 16-18th November. <p>In all cases, it's difficult to know the impact of the events on Boots' Corner at the times sampled (the hours beginning 8 a.m., 12.30 p.m. and 5 p.m.). For example, with the Literature Festival focussed on Montpellier Gardens, would that lead to a positive or negative impact on the footfall at and around Boots' Corner?</p> <p>There are many other 'external' factors which impact the counts, e.g. the World Cup was taking place during the second week and there is evidence of a drop in footfall coinciding with England games; the weather, whilst generally good, deteriorated markedly during the last days of the third week.</p> <p>So, in order to try to provide a balanced view, we commissioned surveys covering a number of weeks and averaged out post-closure data across all the weeks sampled. And that's also why we have sampled three periods during the day and</p>

	<p>looked at individual periods separately to look for inconsistencies in the data.</p> <p>We are currently analysing data for the week commencing 14th November and expect to be able to release it soon. Again, there will be differences in the underlying conditions – for example, John Lewis had opened by this date, other major shops had opened / re-opened and, of course Christmas was approaching. On the other hand, days were colder and darker.</p> <p>These weeks were chosen to fall outside of school holiday periods. We also did our best to avoid major town events, but this just wasn't possible. However, this shows the nature of our thriving town; events were taking place across all four weeks where data was collected.</p> <p>We're using these figures to give us an early indication of how the closure and changes to the public space may be affecting movement in the area. Of course, we're also aware that other factors, such as events and the weather may have an impact too.</p>
8.	Question from Councillor Louis Savage to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	How many FOBT operators are currently licensed within the Borough? Can the Cabinet Member provide an estimate as to the number of FOB terminals currently operational?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Cheltenham Borough Council does not licence Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs) per se. We are responsible for licensing betting shops and licensed betting shops are permitted in law to make available up to a maximum of 4 FOBTs.</p> <p>There are 16 licensed betting shops in Cheltenham. Each of these betting shops is allowed up to a maximum of 4 FOBTs. There are therefore estimated to be 64 FOBTs currently operational in Cheltenham.</p>
9.	Question from Councillor Louis Savage to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Can the Cabinet Member assure members that the council will be ready for the change in the law from April, initiated by central Government, reducing the maximum stake placed at FOBTs from £100 to £2?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The regulation of stakes and prizes relating to FOBTs does not fall within the Council's remit; it is the responsibility of the Gambling Commission and Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.</p> <p>The reduction in FOBT stakes has been brought about due to a change in the law that will place a duty on the manufacturers and operators of FOBTs to make the necessary arrangements, in order to comply with the reduced stakes.</p> <p>In this respect, there is nothing for the Council to do to prepare for the change. The Council's licensing section does proactively inspect all licensed betting shops in Cheltenham and through this process, will help to ensure that the new stakes requirements are complied with.</p>
10.	Question from Councillor Paul Baker to the Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman
	In response to my question at the 10th December Council meeting in regard to the

	use of single use plastic I was advised that 'other partner organisations have been asked to report back to Members in the New Year on actions planned for 2019/2020. Have we had those responses yet ?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Further responses have not been received from partner organisations yet however it was concluded that to better progress this issue in a meaningful way a meeting would be organised with representatives from all the partner organisations to seek agreement on the best way forward. Officers are currently trying to identify suitable diary dates to enable this to take place as soon as possible.
11.	Question from Councillor Paul Baker to the Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman
	I would like to congratulate Plastic Free Cheltenham (PFC) on their efforts to raise awareness of the problems associated with single use plastic and on their forthcoming litter pick in Pittville Park. Would the Council be willing to display leaflets from PFC in its buildings and various partner outlets to help raise awareness of this issue?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>I have always welcomed initiatives that help improve the environment and the Council is very willing to have leaflets left in reception areas to promote local events and initiatives.</p> <p>At my request, officers have already met with Plastic Free Cheltenham to determine how we can best work together to optimise the reduction in single use plastics across the town. A meeting is already being arranged with partner organisations and a representative from Plastic Free Cheltenham to ensure the Council is doing all it can to help reduce the use of single use plastic.</p>
12.	Question from Councillor Paul Baker to the Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman
	Following the recent publication by Government on the issue of recycling can I ask what opportunities were presented to Local Authorities to deal with this issue and what new initiatives we are looking to introduce in the coming year ?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Whilst the government's waste and resources strategy was published in October 2018, we are waiting for the government consultation promised on these issues and we will have a much clearer idea of the direction of travel once these consultation exercises have taken place.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Council is looking to further improve its already successful kerbside recycling service by working to introduce weekly recycling collections. In addition to this, following the response from the public to our own consultation exercise, we will be seeking to improve the recycling and re-use opportunities available at the household recycling centre.</p> <p>I believe we need to introduce better recycling opportunities in our parks and the town centre and also encourage local businesses to recycle more of their waste. These initiatives will be taken forward in consultation with members and the public.</p>