

Council

25 March 2019

Member Questions (12 total)

1.	Question from Councillor Jonny Brownsteen to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Coleman
	<p>The litter tally from a recent litter pick in St Paul's shows 4,522 items of litter collected, of which 2,655 were cigarette butts. Many of the cigarette butts were in the surrounds of the various shops and takeaways along St Paul's Road. Is the council able to make wall-mounted ash trays a requirement for businesses in residential areas? And what can we do to make businesses responsible for keeping the area outside their premises free of litter?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>As Cabinet member for Clean and Green Environment, I would take this opportunity to place on record my appreciation for the community effort in St Paul's and other people engaged in litter picking, which sets a great example to others and in particular, those that show a disregard for our precious environment.</p> <p>I am really pleased community groups are helping keep our neighbourhoods clean. The Council is supporting Keep Britain Tidy's Spring Clean which runs from 22 March to 23 April this year and details of the litter picks arranged by community groups can be found on our website.</p> <p>Cigarette butts contain plastic and are adding to the toll on wildlife caused by unnecessary pollution, as they wash into drains, streams, rivers and ultimately the sea.</p> <p>The Council is currently reviewing its street cleansing service and we are actively engaging with the Cheltenham Business Improvement District (BID) and other organisations like Ubico, The Cheltenham Trust, Cheltenham Borough Homes and @plasticfreecheltenham, to help tackle the issue of plastic and other littering.</p> <p>Keep Britain Tidy are promoting a High Street Clean Up day and the Council will be supporting this initiative not only for our main High Street but also 'high street' areas around town. Additional government funding just announced will help support the provision of equipment for the Council and community groups.</p> <p>The feedback from all the community groups will be valuable in understanding what we need to do to improve the cleanliness of our streets and clearly the work in St Paul's demonstrates the need to look at how cigarette butts are disposed of. Our review of litter bins on streets and in parks and gardens will incorporate this issue as most of our bins already allow for the safe disposal of cigarette butts.</p> <p>Decisions about wall-mounted ash trays are ultimately a matter for individual businesses and the Council does not have the power to enforce this, but we would encourage shops and takeaways to consider what measures they can reasonably take to help tackle the issue. We would also welcome proactive co-operation from businesses in helping to keep their own frontages clear of litter, ensuring that this is disposed of responsibly.</p>

2.	Question from Councillor Tim Harman to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman
	<p>Reflecting on the Motion on Climate change at the last Council meeting and my previous question, will the Cabinet Member update the Council on plans to install Electric vehicle charging points in Council owned Car Parks. Can he also outline any plans that the Council may have to convert any vehicles in its fleet to low emission energy sources.</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>You can see the current locations of charging points in Cheltenham via this link:- https://www.zap-map.com/live/</p> <p>CBC already has a total of 4 EV charging points (provided via a government grant funded scheme), in its Regent Arcade and Town Centre East car parks which are in use approximately 50% of the time. The authority does not currently charge users for the electricity consumed, which can cost up to £6 per charge for some vehicles. This is not considered to be a scalable situation and is effectively a subsidy for personal car use, which is inherently unsustainable.</p> <p>GCC also has some on-street charging points (e.g. in Montpellier) and is looking at rolling out a wider programme.</p> <p>The carbon footprint of a new car: 6 tonnes CO2e: <u>Citroen C1</u>, basic spec. 17 tonnes CO2e: <u>Ford Mondeo</u>, medium spec. 35 tonnes CO2e: <u>Land Rover Discovery</u>, top of the range. The carbon footprint of making a car is immensely complex. Ores have to be dug out of the ground and the metals extracted.</p> <p>Note: Carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e) “Carbon dioxide equivalent” or “CO2e” is a term for describing different greenhouse gases in a common unit. For any quantity and type of greenhouse gas, CO2e signifies the amount of CO2 which would have the equivalent global warming impact.</p> <p>See interesting Guardian article here: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/green-living-blog/2010/sep/23/carbon-footprint-new-car</p> <p>Providing support for car clubs or providing dedicated on-street spaces for communal vehicles may be the way to go in the shorter term, alongside more support for walking and cycling for shorter journeys – our consultant Systra estimates that 70% of journeys within Cheltenham are less than 2km.</p> <p>In 2017, our parking strategy consultants advised against installing more EV charging points, on the basis that battery technology and home charging arrangements would cater for much of the potential future market. The Council will actively consider the purchase of low emission or electric vehicles when replacing its own small fleet and will encourage staff, members, key partners and those in the Council’s supply chain to do the same. Whilst there may be cost and other practical considerations relating to some of these decisions, the Council recognises that it has a community leadership role in</p>

	<p>setting a best practice example to other organisations.</p> <p>Officers from GCC and CBC met recently to discuss the potential for the authorities to co-operate in the provision of electric pool cars for use by CBC and GCC staff and members on Council business. The preferable location for the vehicles and associated charging points, would be the rear of the Municipal Offices, which would involve the displacement of some existing member parking spaces, as well as the installation of associated charging points. This investment would need to take account of future accommodation options for CBC as a whole.</p>
3.	Question from Councillor Chris Mason to Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Alex Hegenbarth
	With regard to gas and electricity consumption. Does the Borough Council calculate the CO2 emission from its use of these energy sources? If so please confirm last year's figures for gas and electricity?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	While the Borough Council does not currently calculate CO2 emissions from its use of gas and electricity, this is something the Council will do as part of the action plan that will be developed towards making the Council carbon neutral.
4.	Question from Councillor Chris Mason to Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Alex Hegenbarth
	With regard to the climate emergency motion passed at February's Council Meeting. Could the Cabinet Member please confirm the amount of "Officer hours" and money spent on work relating to the 6 points under "Full Council calls on the Cabinet to:"?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	I have recently met with Officers and have asked them to draw up an outline plan for delivering the work brought forward as a result of the Motion, so until that is in place the officer time and money that had currently been spent on the work referenced by the Member has and will be minimal.
5.	Question from Councillor Chris Mason to Cabinet Member Corporate, Councillor Alex Hegenbarth
	What resources in terms of money and Officer hours have been allocated to achieving the target to make Cheltenham carbon neutral by 2030?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>A report will be brought to Council within the next six months setting out the actions the Council will take to address the climate emergency. This will include identifying the resources required to work towards achieving the target of making Cheltenham carbon neutral by 2030.</p> <p>As a first step towards helping us achieve that target, I would urge all Members to sign up for paperless council tax billing if they haven't done so already.</p>
6.	Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor McKinlay
	The latest independent footfall figures published by the BID indicate a marked increase in footfall in the town centre. How can this be explained?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Following access to a new footfall camera installed by national data analysts, Springboard, the BID was able to look afresh at footfall figures for the town centre.

	<p>This showed that in 2018 Nov and Dec saw an increase compared to 2017 – Nov up 2% and Dec 1.8%. During the same period decreases of 5% and 5.7% respectively were recorded nationally. The Boots Corner trial with longer visitor dwell times and the new openings in the town centre were undoubtedly factors.</p> <p>Whilst Jan 2019 saw a decrease of 3% year on year, Feb 2019 saw an unprecedented 15% increase. Clearly a complex situation but the promotion work undertaken by the BID with its 'lighting up Cheltenham' programme which achieved 10,000 fare paying passengers on the observation wheel over 3 weeks was a major factor.</p>
7.	Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>The council's stated ambition is to create a new public square at Boots Corner, but the majority of local people I speak to think that the long-term vision for Boots Corner is fake grass, benches and a few bike racks. When will the council publish its ambitious proposals for the area? Will people be consulted on the favoured options and, if so, what consultation activities are planned?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>I share your frustration which has been impacted by the phased approach to the wider Cheltenham Transport Plan and extension to the trial. This has been a delicate balance as releasing any long term aspirations has the risk of accusations of pre-determination so we have been keen to establish greater use of the area by the public before promoting any proposed concepts. The current works at Boots Corner are temporary, and whilst I concur that 'astroturf' may not be to everyone's taste, the temporary works have demonstrated that by removing through traffic and creating more public space more people are using the space and staying longer. This has been validated by independent data releases that support our efforts to "reclaim" highway for the benefit of people as dwell times have increased.</p> <p>We aim to commence engagement with the public in more detail about aspirations and options for Boots Corner in April as part of a communications exercise. Any proposed changes are, of course entirely dependent upon the approval of the GCC traffic regulation order committee to the outcome of the trial and GCC highways colleagues to the design proposals themselves, including standard road safety audits.</p>
8.	Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>The long-awaited ambition to extend the Honeybourne Line to Lansdown Road was cut out of the railway station upgrade plans due to national level budgetary difficulties, we are told. However, I understand that the council has been working hard behind the scenes to secure the completion of this project. Can the Leader provide an update to inform the cycling and walking group's discussion in early April?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>I am pleased to report that a "solution" has been found to ensure that this crucial project is delivered. This is thanks to the tenacity of the Task Force and other stakeholders, including GCC. The first stage of the extension of the Honeybourne line sits within the area under the GWR franchise and will be constructed as part of the forecourt improvement which includes 300 extra cycle racks and 70 additional car park spaces. It will extend the route south from its current terminus</p>

	<p>to the Trimnasium building.</p> <p>The second stage which will be on land under the direct control of Network Rail has been agreed in principle and is now the subject of detailed discussion and negotiation. This will take the route from the Trimnasium building up to the Lansdown bridge. There are technical complexities, such as securing access without damaging the structural integrity of the bridge traffic barrier but colleagues at GWR, NR and GCC (highways) are committed to finding a solution.</p> <p>The prize is definitely worth the effort as this connection will not only provide safe access for cyclists from the south but also enable pedestrians to access the station via a short walk from the 94 bus service. All of which will help support our longer term aim to encourage effective sustainable transport options.</p>
9.	Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>Would the Leader of the council join with me in thanking the council staff and contractors who worked tirelessly during race week to keep people safe and to keep our town clean?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Gold Cup Week involves year round preparation as well as many unsociable hours during the week itself to make sure everything runs smoothly. The event is very important to the town and I would certainly like to thank all those involved in making it a success. That covers not only CBC staff and contractors but also our partners from the racecourse, Police, Gloucestershire Highways, Solace, the BID and neighbouring district councils who help provide cover for the CBC Enforcement Team.</p>
10.	Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Chair of Planning Committee, Councillor Garth Barnes
	<p>Does the Chairman of the Planning Committee share my concerns that following the adoption of the JCS there is now an almost unfathomable quantity of documents that the public need to read to try to understand this council's planning policies, including, but not limited to the JCS, the Local Plan 2nd Review, - June 2006, the list of policies in the Local Plan superseded by the JCS, the NPPF, as well as various supplementary planning documents and supplementary planning guidance?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The nature of town planning means that several individual documents are required to make up a complete development framework. The new Cheltenham Plan will form a major part of the framework once it is adopted. Officers will work on clarifying the planning policy position in due course. Members of the public are welcome to ask the council questions about specific planning issues to get the most up to date information.</p>
11.	Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Chair of Planning Committee, Councillor Garth Barnes
	<p>In light of the significant and potential confusion that is caused by having a partially superseded Local Plan available online, would he ask officers to urgently produce a single document detailing the Local Plan policies that are currently valid and ensure that this is available on the website so that the public can clearly see what policies are valid, and ensure that any documents that are no longer current are moved away from the Planning Policy section of the website and clearly identified as not current archive material?</p>

	Response from Cabinet Member
	Once the new Cheltenham Plan is adopted officers intend to produce a document which combines all extant local policies. This will also include links to relevant national level policy. This will provide a more user friendly gateway to the development framework.
12.	Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Chair of Planning Committee, Councillor Garth Barnes
	In light of the deletion of policy HS 8 (Houses of Multiple Occupation), seemingly without any adequate replacement in the JCS, and the clear harm to communities that can be caused by excessive concentrations of HMOs, would he ask officers to look at applying planning controls on HMO conversions in a much larger part of the borough?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Policy HS8 was deleted because its function was replaced by JCS Policy SD4 which protects local amenity. Conversion of dwellings to HMOs of less than 6 beds now benefit from permitted development rights and so do not require planning permission. These rights can be removed through an Article 4 Direction. The NPPF says that “There should be a particularly strong justification for the withdrawal of permitted development rights relating to a wide area (eg those covering the entire area of a local planning authority, National Park or Area of Outstanding National Beauty).”</p> <p>There is a high bar for evidence which must be passed otherwise the Secretary of State has the power to reverse the direction. The evidence which underpins the Article 4 in St Paul’s was prepared at significant cost in officer time and resource. Similar evidence will be required for each additional ward which is covered by an Article 4 Direction.</p> <p>The Council does not currently have the evidence to prove that other wards should be subject to these restrictions.</p>