

## Cabinet

9 July 2019

### Public Questions (3)

<b>1.</b>	<b>Question from Lorraine Du Feu to the Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Alex Hegenbarth</b>
	<p>The extremely small window between the agenda of meetings being published and the submission date for public questions ensures that very few questions actually make it. Furthermore, there appears to be no link for submitting questions on the agenda, so that a search or phone call is needed, which further reduces the time available. Please could the council consider extending the window of availability for questioners and making the process more user friendly.</p>
	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	<p>Under the Local Government Act 1972 the authority is required to publish the agenda of meetings within five clear days of the meeting taking place. The deadline for submitting public and member questions is currently the fourth working day before the meeting, as stipulated in the council's constitution. The original timescales were set to try get a fair balance between allowing for topical questions while still having time to get complete answers to them. I would, however, be more than happy to take this to our constitution working group for consideration.</p> <p>Furthermore, the council is looking at ways to make the democratic process more engaging to the public, including introducing web-casting, and this will include considering ways in which members of the public can submit questions online.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Question from Lorraine Du Feu to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</b>
	<p>The manner in which the public are answered and spoken to at council meetings is often dismissive and occasionally insulting. Councillors are elected representatives of the public. Should they not be encouraging public participation in every way they can rather making people feel that they are a nuisance?'</p>
	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	<p>The objective at all council meetings is to allow members of the public to submit questions and have them answered in full. It is one of the many ways the council encourages public participation. Without knowing what the question refers to it is difficult to be specific but I am happy to get better understanding of the concern from the questioner. In any case I don't feel it is fair to say responses are "often dismissive and occasionally insulting". When it comes to cabinet meetings which I chair I would hope the opposite is true. I am aware of at least one occasion at a full council meeting where the behaviour of some members of the public in the gallery made managing the 'questions and answer' session particularly difficult.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Question from Jessica West to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan</b>
	<p>Regarding the climate emergency motion:</p> <p>Communication of the Cheltenham Transport Plan and engagement with the public on this issue has left a lot to be desired. The climate emergency is the biggest challenge facing us, and any approach to tackling it must be fair and participatory if we are to stand a chance of tackling it at all. With these two factors in mind, I therefore have concerns about how people living and working in Cheltenham are going to be included in this process. What steps will the council</p>

	be taking?"
	<b>Response from</b>
	<p>I would agree that the climate emergency is the biggest challenge facing us.</p> <p>Later this week we intend to launch the updated vision to assist consultation on how the High Street could look if the County Council decide to go ahead with the proposals in the Cheltenham Transport Plan following the current trial period.</p> <p>Cheltenham Borough Council officers are already working with consultants to prepare a report for presentation to Full Council in October, which will explain what needs to be done to realise the pledge for Cheltenham to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Council recognises our residents, communities and businesses are integral to tackling an issue that affects everyone and the report will include a plan for fostering long term engagement across all sectors of civic society.</p> <p>A Climate Emergency Assembly is being held in the Council Chamber at 7.15pm on Tuesday 6th August for members of the public to participate and share their views.</p>