

Council

15 June 2020

Member Questions (6 total) includes those originally submitted for Council on 23rd March but not dealt with as agenda reduced to emergency items only.

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1. | Question from Councillor Tim Harman to Cabinet Member Housing, Councillor Peter Jeffries |
| | <p>Since the Coronavirus crisis occurred there has been excellent cross working between Government and Local Authorities on the important issue of finding and both interim and long term housing for Homeless people who have been rough sleeping. Dame Louise Casey is leading the National Effort.</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member update the Council on his plans to ensure that everything is done to prevent those currently in temporary accommodation from returning to the Streets and Doorways?</p> |
| | Response from Cabinet Member |
| | <p>Cheltenham has a history of strong collaborative working across Gloucestershire to tackle rough sleeping. Collectively, we have been hugely successful in securing funding for this region and our town. In recent years we have secured nearly £1.3m to support the delivery of a Housing First-type model for our most entrenched rough sleepers – providing them with independent accommodation combined with wrap-around support. More recently we have secured nearly £1m to create Somewhere Safe to Stay hubs in Cheltenham and Gloucester, again coupled with provision of specialist support for those with complex needs. In addition we continue to jointly commission our county-wide Assertive Outreach service that seeks to identify rough sleepers and then work with them so that they can access appropriate accommodation and support-based services.</p> <p>Since the pandemic, extensive work has been carried out to ensure that accommodation has been offered to everyone who is homeless and who has been rough sleeping, this has been a concentrated all district county wide effort. Our Housing Options team, managed by Cheltenham Borough Homes, are working with households placed in emergency hotel accommodation to understand their needs, with a view to finding suitable and sustainable accommodation move-on options.</p> <p>At the height of this crisis Cheltenham had approximately 40 households accommodated in hotels. Since then we have been working hard to find move-on solutions, with the result that from the beginning of May, Cheltenham have found homes for 23 rough sleepers (or would be rough sleepers).</p> <p>As of the 8th June Cheltenham has 18 households accommodated in hotels. Most placements are now within the Cheltenham district with only five clients residing in hotel accommodation outside of the borough. (Please do note, however, that these figures present just a snapshot in time, given that there is inevitably an ongoing movement of households both into and out of the hotel provision.)</p> <p>We are continuing to explore move-on options. Those with very complex needs,</p> |

| | |
|----|---|
| | <p>where accommodation options are more limited, are referred into a multi-agency 'Complex Cases partnership meeting' where an outcome based, partnership approach is being taken to develop bespoke solutions to meet the individuals' needs and support them to access and maintain accommodation. In addition, we are exploring new housing supply options via our county-wide 'new supply partnership'. Alongside this, we are currently working with colleagues across the county to realign current funding streams from MHCLG (referred to above) to better fit pathways in view of the current pandemic.</p> <p>At this present time, we have 2 rough sleepers in Cheltenham. They are both known to agencies and we continue to work with them to find housing and support solutions.</p> <p>At the start of this pandemic there was a clear message, "everyone in" , I would like to put on record my thanks to all the Cheltenham Borough Council officers and the Housing Options team from Cheltenham Borough Homes who worked tirelessly as part of the all district and county collaboration in making this happen.</p> <p>The hard work continues as we support those residents that have been existing on our streets, continue to exist on our streets or have found themselves homeless in recent times.</p> |
| 2. | <p>Question from Councillor Tim Harman to the Mayor, Councillor Roger Whyborn</p> |
| | <p>The Coronavirus crisis has shown the people of Cheltenham at their best. The volunteers that have come forward to help those in need of support have shown an outstanding level of commitment and compassion.</p> <p>Will the Mayor consider making a special award to Community groups and possibly individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to supporting those in need across the Town?</p> |
| | <p>Response from the Mayor</p> |
| | <p>I recognise that there has certainly been an outstanding level of commitment and compassion shown by Community groups and individuals towards those in need during this present Coronavirus crisis. I therefore think it entirely appropriate that the Borough should recognise this through the vehicle of Mayoral award(s). I will consult widely over the coming months as to how best to do this.</p> |
| 3. | <p>Question from Councillor Diggory Seacome to the Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles, Councillor Flo Clucas</p> |
| | <p>The draft plan for the West Cheltenham Development and Cyber Park has recently been published, but with no mention of Public Art.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member tell us if this will be rectified, and if so whether any Public Art will be considered from the start, as an integral part of the plan, or whether it will be tacked on as a late addendum, as so often happens.</p> |
| | <p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> |
| | <p>The Golden Valley SPD currently being finalised, which will be presented to Council for adoption in July, includes references to public art.</p> <p>Specifically it includes principle C9 which states; Proposals will be devised with partners to develop and deliver an innovative public art programme</p> |

| | |
|----|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role and identity of any new public art will help to celebrate the natural setting and assets within the site. • Opportunities for use in wayfinding and in helping to shape the identity of neighbourhoods within the overall area will be explored. • This strategy will be considered in conjunction with informal playful spaces and the CBC Public Art strategy. • Public art projects must also play a role in encouraging community participation and integration during the early build out phases together with helping to tie in cyber tech with everyday engagement of business users, residents and businesses. <p>In thanking the member for his question, I am mindful of the commitment he has to public art and I am happy invite him to meet with relevant officers and members to discuss this further.</p> |
| 4. | <p>Question from Councillor Baker to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman</p> |
| | <p>I am disappointed at the filthy condition of the litter bins around the town; I doubt they have ever been cleaned since being installed. Can I ask that this is reviewed urgently and a programme of cleaning rolled out across the town, including our parks and gardens?</p> |
| | <p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> |
| | <p>The litter bins across the borough, including in parks and gardens, have been installed over a number of years and some are much older than others. As part of the trial of the recycling bins in the high street which have been well received, we are reviewing litter bin replacement across the borough, subject to need and budget availability in the current financial climate.</p> <p>The bins in the town centre are regularly jet washed as part of the normal cleansing process and if bins in the rest of the borough are reported as looking in a poor state ad hoc cleansing takes place. A programme of cleaning/jet washing all the town centre bins took place last year and the year before.</p> |
| 5. | <p>Question from Councillor Baker to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman</p> |
| | <p>Plastic Free Cheltenham have been carrying some investigations into the installation of water refilling stations to reduce the use of plastic water bottles and encourage people to top up existing water bottles. This aim accords with our own commitment to reduce the use of single use plastic. These stations can be installed internally, wall mounted for around £1k whilst free standing outside stations are around £3k. Can I ask that we investigate the installation of such stations in The Promenade, High Street and Montpellier and work with the Regent Arcade and The Brewery to encourage them to install similar installations?</p> |
| | <p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> |
| | <p>I'm aware of the good work being done by Plastic Free Cheltenham to look at options for the provision of water filling stations. Regrettably, these are likely to present an unacceptable risk to public health whilst there is still a significant risk of Covid-19 transmission from such installations, so it is unlikely that the authority would prioritise this work in the short term.</p> <p>However, I recognise the obvious benefits in terms of providing an alternative to</p> |

| | |
|------------------|--|
| | <p>purchasing water in plastic bottles, which aligns with our commitment to reduce single use plastic and therefore undertake to revisit this issue when it becomes practical to implement.</p> <p>There will need for careful consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public health or hygiene risks associated with the use of water refilling stations and how the control measures would be managed and funded - for example, regular sanitisation of hand contact points; - The carbon impact of new water refilling stations compared with encouraging businesses and community premises to join the national 'Refill' scheme; - Any funding or sponsorship opportunities available to help progress this, or any similar initiative, at this time of unprecedented financial pressure on local authority resources. |
| <p>6.</p> | <p>Question from Councillor Brownsteen to Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</p> |
| | <p>In the March budget, the chancellor announced that £500m per year will now be allocated to fixing potholes. This was welcome news in Cheltenham where many roads remain in appalling condition, none worse than in St Paul's. Is the council expecting that funding commitment to remain in place, and if so, what representations will it be making to Gloucestershire County Council to ensure that Cheltenham receives its fair share? On what basis will funding be allocated across the districts, and what is the process for individual members to advise on which roads should be prioritised in their wards?</p> |
| | <p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> |
| | <p>Potholes and any associated bids for grant funding made available by central government are the responsibility of Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) in its role as Highways Authority.</p> <p>The Director of Environment has contacted GCC in relation to the national pothole funding and we are expecting the relevant GCC lead commissioner to advise on the prioritisation process and what this might mean for Cheltenham.</p> <p>When a reply is received I will provide a briefing to members, but in the meantime would encourage ward members to route any specific enquiries through their local county councillor.</p> |