

Council

20 July 2020

Member Questions (24)

1.	Question from Councillor David Willingham to Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles, Councillor Flo Clucas
	Data published by the ONS shows that from 1st March 2020 to 31st May 2020, the Alstone and St Mark's MSOA had the highest Covid-19 mortality rate of any MSOA in the Southwest region, and fourth highest in the whole of England and Wales. On behalf of the communities that I represent and the bereaved families of the deceased, could I ask the Cabinet Member if she would support my calls for an open and transparent public investigation by the County Council into the causes of this tragically high local death rate?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Following an update from the Director of Public Health, I can confirm that the County Council will be undertaking a piece of work to look at deaths in care homes to identify any learning that can be taken forward. Cheltenham Borough Council will provide whatever support it can to assist with this review. Recently, a detailed report was taken to the County Council's Adult & Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee looking at the support provided to care homes and I can arrange for this to be circulated to all members. As members are aware there is an Outbreak Management Plan developed by Public Health, which I can confirm that Cheltenham Borough Council Officers are already integrated into, as part of our ongoing commitment to supporting our residents and communities. The Outbreak Management Plan has a strong focus on the prevention of cases and outbreaks in high risk settings such as care homes. Therefore work is on-going to learn from cases and prevent future occurrences in care homes.
2.	Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	Tower Hamlets Council recently successfully challenged a planning decision made by Conservative Minister Robert Jenrick MP, and based upon media reporting, I understand that this decision was quashed because it was " <i>unlawful by reason of apparent bias</i> ". Could the Cabinet Member please confirm whether any CBC planning decisions have been determined by that Minister, and if so, whether this council is satisfied that they have not also been the subject of " <i>apparent bias</i> "?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP has held the post of Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government since 24 July 2019. Since that time no CBC planning decisions have been determined by him.</p> <p>Gloucestershire County Council have referred their decision on the new Secondary School at Land Between Farm Lane/ Kidnappers Lane, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government as it is a departure from Cheltenham Borough Council's adopted Local Plan. At the time of writing the outcome of that referral is unknown. Whilst this is not a Cheltenham Borough Council planning decision, it is within this council's administrative area.</p>

3.	Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>If evidence comes to light that this Council, acting as Planning Authority, has been seriously misled during the determination of a planning application at committee, and that the errors made by those who misled the Planning Authority are so egregious that they render the Planning Committee's decision unsound, could the Cabinet Member please advise what options are open to affected residents and to this council to correct such a clear injustice?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>There are no third party appeal rights in respect of the determination of a planning application and a planning permission cannot be unilaterally withdrawn, even in such a case, and will stand unless quashed through the courts via a judicial review action (permission for this would need to be sought from the Courts within 6 weeks of the decision) or revoked via processes available under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (which may be initiated by the local planning authority or the Secretary of State if believed to be expedient). Where a proposed revocation or modification is opposed, the power to revoke or modify lies solely with the Secretary of State.</p> <p>Alternatively, a complaint may be made to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman. The Ombudsman investigates complaints of injustice caused by maladministration and service failure. The Ombudsman cannot question whether a council's decision is right or wrong simply because the complainant disagrees with it, but must consider whether there was fault in the way the decision was reached and if fault is found suggest a resolution which may include the payment of compensation to affected residents.</p>
4.	Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>Currently part of the Regent Street pavement is obstructed by building works. On 12th July 2020, despite the pavement being completely blocked, no ramp was present to ensure access for wheelchair users. While the closure permission was granted by Gloucestershire County Council, and their failure to consider wheelchair users seems to be the primary cause of accessibility issues, it is important to try to avoid this occurring at other developments in the future. Does the Borough Council have any way of using enforceable planning conditions to ensure that our highways remain equally accessible by all during construction works?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The responsibility for the permission of these works sits with Gloucestershire County Council. However, to assist CBC officers have made direct contact with the contractor via Regent Arcade who are investigating whether there are any options to improve access. It should be stressed that ramps can only be provided where it is safe to do so.</p> <p>In terms of Planning Conditions, the erection of structures and plant required temporarily (for construction etc) is Permitted Development and does not require planning permission. Further, in many instances temporary structures etc on the highway (for example scaffolding) is the result of works that do not require planning permission in themselves from Cheltenham Borough Council (for example repair and restoration, repainting and so on).</p>

5.	Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Supporting businesses to recover from Covid-19 must be a primary objective of this authority, but the current "café culture" layout on Regent Street presents an inconvenient, if not impossible, obstacle course for wheelchair users, mobility scooter users and parents with baby buggies, does the Cabinet Member agree with me that the Covid-19 recovery should be equally accessible by all, and will he put pressure on Gloucestershire County Council to ensure that what is delivered both supports local businesses while also being safe and equally accessible by all?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Supporting businesses is very much the objective of this scheme, but there has been some misunderstanding by businesses on the use of this space. Officers have engaged directly with all relevant ones to provide clarity on the positioning of tables and chairs to support economic recovery. Officers are in active engagement with Gloucestershire County Council.
6.	Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	What equality training has been given to Borough Council staff working on design and planning for works in the public realm to ensure that those works deliver facilities that full comply with the Council's public sector equality duty and are equally accessible by all?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>As a Council we have a legal obligation to the Equality Act 2010. This flows through across our regulatory services and wider activities of the council. The Townscape Team in particular lead on our public realm works and include qualified Landscape Architects who utilise suitable guidance and tools to ensure our responsibilities are being met in the public realm. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBC Community impact assessments • Various national guidance including “Design for Access 2” and ‘Guidance on the use of tactile paving surfaces’ • General public engagement – in particular, engagement with the Accessibility Forum <p>Of these examples, the most robust guidance and best practice followed by the Townscape Team is to consult widely. In this respect, our engagement with the Cheltenham Accessibility Forum is of great importance – a very active local volunteer-led group that represents the accessibility needs of the town. This engagement has been underway since 2015 and includes people with sight, hearing and mobility loss, and those who suffer from cognitive impairment and of course sometimes people with multiple impairments. Through the group we engage with; DeafBlind UK, Insight Gloucestershire, National Star College, the Phoenix Centre and a number of local individuals who have challenges accessing the town.</p> <p>Townscape Team have facilitated engagement beyond our public realm works with this forum by also engaging them with/in:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloucestershire County Council on cycling and walking infrastructure for West Cheltenham • GWR for audits of Cheltenham Spa Station • Stagecoach for bus travel • Taxi licencing consultation • Developers of the Brewery and Regent Arcade • Public toilets and ShopMobility changes • The Cheltenham Transport Plan <p>The Townscape Team are closely engaged with the Planning and Licensing teams.</p> <p>More recently, engagement has occurred for temporary widening of the footpaths to enable better/safer social distancing. Review of other schemes taking place nationally, indicates interventions put in place in Cheltenham to date are more accessible than others carried out by many other Highway Authorities around the country.</p>
7.	Question from Councillor Tim Harman to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>The Cabinet Member is aware of my previous question with regard to the Councils decision to discontinue the concessionary parking arrangements for residents adjoining the Bath Terrace Car Park. There is no viable off street solution for the two premises. Will he agree to meet the residents and myself and my ward colleague to see if a solution can be found which would be acceptable to the Borough Council and the residents”</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>One of the residents to whom Councillor Harman refers has made a formal complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) concerning this matter and a second resident has indicated an intention to go down the same route. I do not think it would be appropriate to meet with residents whilst this matter is under investigation by the LGO.</p> <p>The authority is not obliged to provide off-street car parking, nor is it required to make concessionary arrangements for particular residents. We have recently been through a statutory consultation process, prior to adopting a new parking order. Whilst I am not aware that the residents concerned made any formal representations in relation to the consultation process, parking permits are available for Bath Terrace car park at a cost which is published on the Council’s website. The formula which has been used to set parking permit prices has been consistently applied across all Council-owned car parks.</p>
8.	Question from Councillor Jonny Brownsteen to the Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor Rowena Hay
	<p>In June, the council swiftly distributed discretionary business grants to businesses across the borough. Staff worked extremely hard to deliver critical support and should be commended for their efforts. Of the eligible businesses who applied for funding, how many were we able to support? And what response have we had from central government to requests for further funding, to help the local businesses which are still in need?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member

	<p>May I start by endorsing the hard work acknowledged by Councillor Brownsteen to deliver the critical support required by our much valued businesses. Whilst the government provided guidance for the discretionary scheme, I am really proud of the fact that we were able to target those businesses most affected by COVID-19 such as boutique hotels, bars, restaurants and indoor play-areas whose rateable value was above £51k and were unable to qualify for the original scheme.</p> <p>191 applications were received for the discretionary business grant scheme. £1,150,000 has been paid to 103 successful businesses. The other 88 applications were not successful due to the businesses not meeting the eligibility conditions set by the Government and this Council.</p> <p>In addition to the discretionary scheme £22.8m has been paid to 1,817 businesses qualifying for the original Government grant schemes.</p> <p>The Government has so far not responded to requests for further funding.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Jonny Brownsteen to the Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor Rowena Hay</p>
	<p>On July 2 the government announced a 'comprehensive package of support' to local authorities. At the time of submitting this question, July 13, we are yet to receive any details much less any of the funds. If the picture is still unclear by the July meeting of full council (Monday 20), can the cabinet member for finance please update members on whatever pertinent information she has: have we been given an indication of how much support Cheltenham can expect to receive; have we been told when that will happen; is that sufficient for our needs; is it proportionate to funding for other councils; and what impact is the delay having on our ability to work our way out of this crisis?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>On 16th July 2020 we were informed by Central Government that we would receive £172,147 from the 3rd tranche of government funding. In total, to date, this council has received £1,382,257. Based on our best estimates this will cover the additional costs directly incurred as a result of this pandemic.</p> <p>Of more concern to this council is the loss of income from sources such as car parking. The government has announced a co-payment scheme that will compensate councils for irrecoverable income losses from sales, fees and charges. They expect Council's to absorb the initial 5% of losses compared to planned income from these sources. Thereafter, there will be a cost splitting arrangement where 75p in every pound of relevant losses will be compensated for by the government. There are still no details available about how the Government will operate the income support scheme, or how the 5% threshold will be calculated at the time of writing this response.</p> <p>There is also no further explanation of how local authorities will be able "to spread their tax deficits over three years rather than the usual one" – by tax deficits, I mean those arrears related to council tax and business rates.</p> <p>Our Executive Director Finance and Assets has written a comprehensive report on his assessment of the Council remaining a going concern. This report will be</p>

	presented to the Audit, Compliance and Governance Committee on 22 nd July 2020 and I would recommend that all members read this report which has already been published in the public domain. Furthermore, I will be presenting the 2019/20 financial outturn report alongside the first quarter budget monitoring report to Full Council on 29 th July 2020. I anticipate this will answer any further questions Members may have on the councils financial resilience
10.	Question from Councillor Jonny Brownsteen to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	The reopening of pubs and bars is a much needed lifeline for them in a highly challenging time. Members will no doubt have been as pleased as I was to see the reopening go smoothly here, but may also share my concern that the overcrowding and disorder we have seen elsewhere in the country could lead to a reimposition of restrictions. A second wave or a second lockdown would be devastating for the many businesses in Cheltenham that have just begun to reopen. What steps can we take to protect the businesses here, that give Cheltenham's night time economy its Purple Flag, from being closed down because of the poor behaviour of people in different parts of the country?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Our focus will be a local one and whilst welcoming the reopening of pubs and bars and the wider Cheltenham shopping experience, I share Councillor Brownsteen's concerns that the behaviour of a minority of people could provide the opportunity for a resurgence in cases of coronavirus and the imposition of new lockdown measures at either a local or national level. Striking the right balance between supporting businesses whilst at the same time restricting opportunities for viral transmission is a major challenge. Officers are working hard to provide professional advice to businesses about how they can operate safely, whilst also monitoring how this is working in practice. In support of this, the Gloucestershire local authorities have made a resourcing request through the county Health Protection Board to help boost our staffing arrangements as part of the £2.2 million allocated by government to Gloucestershire for implementing the Local Outbreak Management Plan.
11.	Question from Councillor Jonny Brownsteen to the Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Alex Hegenbarth
	The Standards Committee conducted its recent meeting with the sensitivity and professionalism that the circumstances demanded. I place on record my thanks to the committee members and its chair for the excellent example of this authority's credibility, at a time when that had been brought into disrepute. The Committee adjudicated that all members should receive diversity training. I concur with and support this decision, and ask the council what is the plan and the timescale, how will it be enforced, and how will its completion be reported back to the people we represent?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The training brief is currently being developed and will be issued to prospective training providers by the end of July. During August we will evaluate the training proposals in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee with the aim of commencing training from mid-September. Group Leaders have the responsibility of ensuring members attend the training. Completion of the training will be reported back at a future Council meeting.
12.	Question from Councillor Chris Mason to the Cabinet Member Development

	and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Residents living close to a many of the town's parks and gardens have had to endure unacceptable anti-social behaviour including playing loud music, general noise disturbance, littering, urinating in the parks' bushes and people's private property, drug dealing and taking, etc. All of which runs late into the night on a number of occasions. With regard to the recent reissuing of the Public Spaces Protection Order would the Cabinet Member agree that letting the previous one lapse was a serious error? Furthermore given the Police's limited resources, could they confirm the number of occasions where the council's officers have patrolled the parks and gardens between 8:00 pm and midnight, and how many fines have been issued?"
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The new Public Spaces Protection Order, which has a three year lifespan, was subject to statutory consultation before coming into force before the easing of lockdown measures relating to pubs and bars on Saturday 4th July. It mirrors the previous one in covering issues of dog control and drinking in public where this is happening antisocially. There was no publicity relating to the lapsing of the previous PSPO and signage has remained in place throughout. Given these circumstances, I do not believe that the PSPO lapsing was a contributory factor to the antisocial activities which took place in parks and gardens prior to the 4th July.</p> <p>The Council has now agreed an action plan in conjunction with the Police, which has increased Police oversight of parks and gardens experiencing the issues you have set out. Council staff have not been routinely patrolling the gardens between 8pm and midnight.</p>
13.	Question from Councillor Louis Savage to the Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman
	The Cabinet Member is aware of the issue of missed bin collections on Upper Park Street, often due to inconsiderate/illegal parking preventing UBICO crews from being able to gain access. Could he update me on any recent progress, and whether GCC Enforcement Officers are able to work collaboratively with UBICO crews to address this recurrent issue
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>I am aware of the issues inconsiderate parking is causing our waste and recycling collections and we are doing what we can to find solutions to these issues.</p> <p>The Council has posted various social media messages encouraging more considerate parking. This is a national problem worsened by lockdown and Recycle Now has included this issue in their guidance: https://www.recyclenow.com/news/2020-03-27-waste-recycling-collections-covid-19 and the government is sign posting people to this same message from their own COVID-19 advice around waste disposal: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-disposing-of-waste</p> <p>Our records show that there were 6 occasions where recycling could not be completed in Upper Park Street this year so far: twice in February, once in April, once in May and twice in June.</p> <p>Ubico normally put notices on car windscreens where a persistent problem with inconsiderate parking causes access issues however this has not proved effective in all cases, for example Gladstone Road.</p>

	<p>We have contacted GCC Highways regarding this issue, as have some of the residents, and we have all been advised that nothing can be done about bad or illegal parking unless it becomes a police matter and in most cases the type of inconsiderate parking does not constitute a matter for the police.</p> <p>GCC Highways have provided us with the following:</p> <p><i>The advice in the Highway Code (sections 242 & 243) places the responsibility with the individual driver to ensure that their vehicle is parked on the carriageway in such a position or location so as not to represent a hazard to other users of the network. If indiscriminate or inconsiderate parking is causing an obstruction or significant highway safety issues then in the first instance this would be a matter for the Police to deal with, who have powers under The Road Traffic Act.</i></p> <p>Another alternative which is often requested by members of the public and in fact Ubico crews themselves is double yellow lines however the following information from GCC Highways explains why this isn't an easy fix to this problem:</p> <p><i>Double yellow lines (or any waiting restriction) restrict the use of public highway they require a public consultation and an accompanying legal order to make them enforceable. A traffic regulation order requires the scheme to be subject to a public formal consultation which involves engagement with local residents and businesses as well as statutory consultees such as Police, Fire and Ambulance services as well as other key groups. As part of the consultation we are required by law to consider all feedback received and resolve any substantive objects which may come to light. If objections cannot be resolved we have to make a decision to abandon the order, approve using delegated authority or refer to a TRO panel which is made up of trained members who hear the case for and against and make a recommendation whether the order should be progressed. The process is extremely resource intensive in terms of officer hours, input, and processing from our legal team. The cost for a typical order is in the region of £10000 - £15000, however in some cases can be significantly higher. We have to consider the level of impact and benefit in terms of safety against such an outlay.</i></p> <p>The Council, working closely with Ubico, will continue to work with residents to find solutions to this issue which is worsened by lockdown and more people working from home but I would urge all residents to park considerately to avoid inconvenience.</p>
<p>14.</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Louis Savage to the Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Alex Hegenbarth</p>
	<p>Given the large size of the Council chamber and recently installed webcasting equipment, when does he envisage resuming meetings, either in whole or in part, within the Municipal Offices? Does the Cabinet Member believe that doing so would help create confidence that it is safe to return to Cheltenham town centre, and act as a sign of much needed support for our high street?"</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>We are currently following government guidance in terms of social distancing with the restrictions on the numbers of persons that can meet indoors preventing us</p>

	<p>from holding in person committee meetings. We are also following the specific legislation relating to virtual committee meetings.</p> <p>Whilst resuming public meetings in the Municipal Offices is our aspiration, and we are looking at how this could work in practice, our primary focus is on the efficient discharge of the democratic function. In the absence of legislation in relation to hybrid meetings, and the technological requirements to facilitate them, particularly in the Council Chamber, virtual meetings in their current form meet our democratic requirements.</p>
15.	Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>The long-awaited extension of the Honeybourne Line to Lansdown Rd represents a key sustainable transport project for the town. It has been proposed for almost as long as I have been alive. The latest update received was that funding was short by around £300,000 as a result of an overspend on the car park works and the uncertainty over GWR's franchise. Since then, the franchise has been extended and reassurances have been given that money may be found from various sources. What update can the leader of the council give on discussions with GWR, the county council, the LEP and others?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The GWR franchise extension was a most welcome step given the complexities of this scheme; the land in question, south of the Trimnasium remains in the control of Network Rail as it is outside of the franchise area, but the pedestrian-cycle extension will be delivered by GWR. I am pleased to advise that since the franchise renewal, GWR have been much more positive about delivery and I understand GWR have had an opportunity to bid to DfT to address the funding shortfall. We await formal confirmation of the additional funding but as GWR are progressing delivery steps we take that as a positive indication. Additionally Network Rail have begun the process for the delivery of the Access for All improvements, notably the platform lifts.</p>
16.	Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	<p>The consultation on the West Cheltenham transport improvements was launched by Gloucestershire County Council with social media postings promoting investments in cycling and walking infrastructure. However, the consultation gives almost no indication of what interventions are being made. Questions have been raised with the county council, but no reply has been received. What can we do to find out more about the cycling and walking infrastructure? The LEP is promoting this scheme. Therefore, will the leader raise this issue with the LEP in his role as a member of the LEP board and report back in his verbal report to the next overview and scrutiny meeting?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>On 9 June GFirst LEP approved the business case and hence funding for phases 3 & 4 of West Cheltenham Transport Improvement Scheme. This is the phase from Arle Court to Lansdown Bridge (and the connection with the GWR pedestrian-cycle improvement) with a focus upon walking, cycling and public transport connectivity. These phases are being accelerated from the original timetable and consequently the details are sketchy as further feasibility work for the final design is yet to be undertaken.</p>

	<p>At the same GFirst LEP meeting approval was also given to spend £1.6m (freed up from a scheme that didn't proceed) on the West Cheltenham Walking and Cycling Improvements Scheme. This is to proceed in parallel with the WCTIS phases 3 & 4 mentioned above.</p> <p>CBC are represented on the GCC led WCTIS stakeholder group and have made strenuous efforts to circulate information when it is available to both the business and wider community via Councillors. I believe that liaising with the GCC stakeholder group (to which the LEP also is invited) is the best route to inform the design.</p> <p>I am happy to update the O&S Committee as requested and keep all members apprised of developments as GCC progress through the various design stages. I will encourage further engagement with key groups such as the cycling forum.</p>
17.	Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>Gloucestershire County Council has been allocated money for sustainable transport projects that enable social distancing. The county's bid was improved by an ambitious list of projects drawn up by Cheltenham Borough Council. Can the cabinet member for development give an update on the likely schedule for the implementation of these projects?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Guidance was provided to GCC on 10th July on Tranche 2 funding with a deadline to submit applications to DfT by 7th August. We have been advised that the guidance provided is very prescriptive and currently GCC are reviewing proposals across the county in the context of that guidance. We have made regular requests for feedback on the proposals submitted for Cheltenham.</p>
18.	Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>The county council's statements on the receipt of tranche one Covid social distancing funding do not make it clear whether tranche one monies are paying for schemes already implemented, or schemes yet to be implemented. Does the cabinet member for development know which it is?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The tranche 1 funding paid for the schemes already implemented by GCC, for Cheltenham this was the Bath Road scheme.</p>
19.	Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	<p>The county council has been awarded government funding 'in excess of its indicative amount' for Covid social distancing measures. However, most of the implemented schemes so far look like temporary roadworks. One such example is Regent Street. It is a key town centre area of café culture, but some tables and chairs appear to be arranged in the gutter alongside roadworks. Could the cabinet member for development confirm when a better quality of street furniture will be installed?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The Regents Street intervention has been funded not by GCC but from the CBC</p>

	<p>allocation of Reopening the High Street Safely (RHSS) fund. The criterion around this funding was very explicit in that interventions must be temporary and could not take the form of planters etc. hence why the water filled barriers were installed which provide a temporary, but robust barrier to support the activities on Regents Street. However, as of this week the MHCLG guidance has been reviewed and we have been advised that the RHSS funding can be used on planters, but only if they are temporary and part of a transport intervention.</p>
20.	<p>Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</p>
	<p>The social distancing measures in Regent Street lack ramps to enable wheelchair users and buggies to pass the area on that side of the road. Can the cabinet member for development advise us on how we can ensure the county council takes seriously its responsibilities to allow access for disabled people and parents with young children?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>The dropped kerbs on Regents Street that fall with the Regents Street intervention have been maintained wherever possible and gaps provided within the water filled barriers to maintain access. In addition, no interventions have been placed on the opposite footpath or carriageway which provides a suitable alternative for users. Now the intervention is in place the Townscape Team are reviewing the scheme together with the Licensing Team providing clear guidance to the businesses operating with the space.</p> <p>It is accepted that by the very temporary nature of the intervention and the need to accommodate vehicles, pedestrians and businesses that the solutions will not be perfect, but we are trying to be pragmatic as we respond to COVID-19 recovery.</p>
21.	<p>Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member Development and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay</p>
	<p>The chief executive of the Cheltenham Development Task Force has stepped down and I'm sure we would like to thank Jem Williamson for his hard work for our town over many years. We hear that the organisation will now deal with the Covid-19 recovery. Given that the council has declared a climate emergency, will the cabinet member for development confirm that the Task Force will be placing that matter at the heart of its work? Will the Development Task Force commit to appointing at least one member with expertise in climate change and the environment?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>The Cheltenham Development Taskforce has played an important role in the regeneration activities of the town centre and we thank both Jeremy Williamson and the chair of the Task Force Graham Garbutt for providing leadership together with the wider Task Force membership. The task Force formally closed at its July meeting.</p> <p>A new Economic Recovery Task Force is being established as an 18 month task-finish group to focus on the challenges arising from COVID-19. I am pleased to announce that Diane Savory OBE has agreed to chair the new Task Force and its membership is currently being reviewed. Green Growth will certainly be a priority outcome for our economic recovery and we will be identifying the skill sets that</p>

	will support that.
22.	Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan
	Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, the leader and the BID were working closely to encourage landlords of empty retail properties to take a more realistic view of rents. It was reported that the response to a letter to retail landlords was disappointing, with most not bothering to reply. Given the importance of the high street to our local economic recovery, can the leader give an update on communications with retail property landlords?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The Planning team are supporting the activities of the BID Landlord group and certainly the impacts on retailing will be a key priority of the Economic Recovery Task Force. The Planning White Paper is expected imminently and we are anticipating changes to be identified within this that will be focussed on the High Street and the future of retailing. Generally there has been positive support from local landlords but engagement has been more difficult where that is not the case.
23.	Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Alex Hegenbarth
	The Standards Committee has recommended that mandatory training in matters relating to diversity be given to all members. Can the appropriate cabinet member give an update on when this will be delivered?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The training brief is currently being developed and will be issued to prospective training providers by the end of July. During August we will evaluate the training proposals in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee with the aim of commencing training from mid-September. Group Leaders have the responsibility of ensuring members attend the training. Completion of the training will be reported back at a future Council meeting
24.	Question from Councillor Max Wilkinson to the Cabinet Member Housing, Councillor Peter Jeffries
	Will the cabinet member for housing give an update on our £100million housing investment plans?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Our plans to invest £100m to provide quality homes and promote sustainable communities are progressing well. The delivery of new homes remains a key priority for CBC and CBH and forms part of our economic recovery plan to invest in the town and provide much needed, high quality homes. The emerging 'New Homes and Regeneration Strategy' is really taking shape and outlines our broader strategy for increasing housing across a variety of tenures (affordable and private rented) in Cheltenham in addition to a continued focus on our existing stock and significant regeneration plans. The strategy will ensure we are focused on delivering a 'step change' in the provision of new homes up to 2025. This strategy will be supported by a comprehensive Communications Plan which we will use as an opportunity to showcase our achievements along the way. Despite the recent challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, we have made significant progress over the last few months including the following:

- The sites at Monkscroft Villas and Holy Name Hall are now back up and running following a short closure due to COVID-19. These two sites will be completed within the next year to provide 35 new affordable homes for shared ownership and for rent.
- We have fostered new relationships with a variety of agents and developer partners which has led to us securing 33 new homes across three S106 sites.
- We completed 27 individual property acquisitions last year and are working to deliver a further 25 this financial year, demonstrating our ability to break the mould and bring about the delivery of new affordable housing in innovative ways.
- We have agreed Heads of Terms to acquire two sites which collectively will provide a further circa 90 new homes.
- The activity above equates to over £35m of investment to provide in excess of 200 homes.
- We are now in the position to reinvigorate our private rented venture. Much work has already been done to prepare ourselves for implementation, including the development of vibrant new branding to ensure that our enterprise has a great look and feel ahead of delivery. We are currently assessing the impact of Covid-19 on the market with a view to acquiring our first private rented home in the coming months.
- We continue to pursue other new opportunities and now have an active pipeline of opportunities that we are continuing to assess and progress.

We are building #qualityhomes & #thrivingcommunities as part of Cheltenham Borough Council 's £100m housing investment plan. #HomesForCheltenham

As part of the Golden Valley Development, CBC is currently undertaking the process to select a development partner. We are seeking a dialogue with bidders to explore options for the large scale delivery of private and affordable homes. Based on the projections set out in the draft Supplementary Planning Document we could see the delivery of higher densities potentially exceeding 600 homes on the council's land interests. . The use of Housing Investment Strategy and HRA funds could be used to assist in delivery the vision.