

Cabinet

**Tuesday, 15th September, 2020
6.00 - 6.45 pm**

Attendees	
Councillors:	Steve Jordan (Leader of the Council), Victoria Atherstone (Cabinet Member Economy and Development), Flo Clucas (Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles), Chris Coleman (Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment), Rowena Hay (Cabinet Member Finance), Alex Hegenbarth (Cabinet Member Corporate Services), Andrew McKinlay (Cabinet Member Cyber and Safety) and Max Wilkinson (Cabinet Member Climate and Communities)
Also in attendance:	

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Jeffries was unable to join the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meetings held on 7th July 2020 and 28th July 2020 were approved and signed as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

1.	Question from Councillor Klara Sudbury to the Cabinet Member Housing, Councillor Peter Jeffries
	How many homeless people from Cheltenham have been moved out of the Borough to temporary accommodation elsewhere in the Country?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Since the 1st April 2017 (and up until the 24.08.20) there have been 170 recorded emergency homeless placements out of the Borough, which is equivalent to less than 1 emergency placement/week. Such placements are generally short term in nature (for instance, as at 1st September 2020, there are 4 placements currently out of the Borough). Please also note that these are placements as opposed to clients – as some clients may be placed more than once. It should also be noted these figures do not include placements into hotel accommodation during the response to Covid-19 (though again, as at 1st September, there are 3 clients placed by Cheltenham remaining in these

	hotels).
2.	Question from Councillor Klara Sudbury to the Cabinet Member Housing, Councillor Peter Jeffries
	How many homeless people have been moved into temporary accommodation in Cheltenham Borough by other councils?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	We are not normally notified of emergency homelessness placements into our Borough. Should a local authority make such a placement, it will generally be on a short-term, emergency basis while alternative solutions are sourced locally.
3.	Question from Councillor Klara Sudbury to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman
	As lockdown was eased, there were increased incidence of litter and anti-social behaviour in the parks and gardens in Cheltenham, which included reports of drug paraphernalia being left by young people. Following this there was joint working by Cheltenham Borough Council and the Police to deal with these issues. How many additional bins were provided as a result of the increase in litter? What youth outreach work has taken place during the summer in our parks and gardens, to engage with young people to prevent the use of harmful drugs through education?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>During the lockdown period all our available stock of 10 bins were installed to provide additional capacity and the majority of these were put into Montpellier Gardens. During this period Ubico reported that the bins already provided were often empty or only half full and that litter was just being left on the floor. Whilst the additional bins have provided extra bin capacity, the most significant difference has been made by Ubico changing the litter picking and bin emptying schedule. Additional resource has been diverted to litter picking and bin emptying to keep Cheltenham tidy. The 'Don't be a Tossler' campaign supports the need for us all to be responsible for our litter and put it in a bin. More recently a Recycle and Go bin set has been installed in Montpellier Gardens on a trial basis and we are starting to see the recycling bins being used.</p> <p>There was increased ASB in the parks that was a response to many factors and the borough council worked through the Town Centre Enforcement Team with the Police to put in place an action plan. We experienced a period of very warm weather and amendments in lockdown guidance that allowed more personal interpretation of the rules.</p> <p>We worked with the Police and continue to work with the Police, not just following the reports of ASB and drug paraphernalia, to understand where demand was and took the necessary steps together (meetings, bins, patrols and regular communication) to pre-empt and address areas of note.</p> <p>The Police have been supported by members of Young Glos, to complete outreach work with young people at locations where we had identified that they were congregating. This allowed a positive engagement with</p>

	them and provided reassurance for local residents.
4.	Question from Councillor Klara Sudbury to Cabinet Member Cyber and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	Now that the trial of traffic changes at Boots Corner has ended, when will the fake grass, which was introduced as a temporary 'improvement' be removed? When it is removed will it be replaced with something environmentally and ecologically friendly (as well as more pleasing on the eye)?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>We fully acknowledge that the fake grass is not the ideal solution and does not meet our long term environmental aspirations at present.</p> <p>Whilst I would like to reassure you that this will not be a permanent fixture, the temporary solution has been well utilised by the public as an area to convene, rest and play due to all the additional seating the scheme has provided, so whilst there is a need to plan for a permanent solution, what exists continues to form part of the place making of this part of the High Street.</p> <p>Unfortunately, with the proposed changes to Boots Corner not going ahead, new decisions and plans will need to be made by the County Council (in its role as the Highways Authority) to determine the future of the road network in the area. These decisions will inform this Council's approach to future design work in the area.</p> <p>Boots Corner improvements will be delivered as part of the overall proposals for the High Street regeneration – the next phase of which is due to be Cambray and the Strand. All of which is subject to our Covid recovery strategy going forward.</p>
5.	Question from Councillor Klara Sudbury to Cabinet Member Cyber and Safety, Councillor Andrew McKinlay
	The Urban Gulls Scrutiny Task Group Report from November 2018 concluded that "If nothing is done by CBC to control the urban gull population, it could grow exponentially. This is because of the long life span of gulls, the relative safety of nesting in Cheltenham, plentiful food sources, the social nature of gulls, and the fact that each breeding pair can rear up to three chicks a year. This would be detrimental to the quality of life of local residents and could impact negatively on the visitor experience during the breeding season." In light of this, please can the Cabinet member outline the progress made to date on recommendations from the Urban Gull Task Group report?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>A decision was made by senior management not to undertake the egg oiling programme this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>In January this year an update was given to O&S detailing progress made on recommendations from the Urban Gull Task Group report and officers have reported that no further work has been undertaken to date since this</p>

	<p>progress report.</p> <p>Subject to budget availability, many of the intended proposals outlined in the January O&S paper will be picked up in readiness for the next gull season.</p>
6.	Question from Councillor Klara Sudbury to Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman
	<p>As there are a number of takeaways near Sandford Park, a lot of the litter put in the bins in the park originates from the takeaways. However, as the bins in the park have a large top opening, gulls can easily take all the litter out and scatter it around to sort through. Please can the current bins be taken out of use and be replaced with gull proof bins?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Gulls certainly make a mess when they empty bins for the waste food that they contain and this isn't just limited to Sandford Park. Less people about does seem to have made the gulls braver but hopefully when normality resumes the situation will improve again.</p> <p>In line with the government's Resources and Waste Strategy published in December 2018 which encourages waste reduction and re-use, officers are working with Ubico to seek to retrofit gull proof lids to the existing bins so they can be re-used rather than thrown away. Unfortunately supply chain issues as a direct result of Covid-19 are slowing down responses from suppliers.</p> <p>I am sure we wait with interest to see what the government will do on the Extended Producer Responsibility issue on packaging and whether this will extend to take away food packaging.</p>
	Supplementary question from Councillor Sudbury
	<p>Thank you. I understand the point about this issue not being limited to Sandford Park but this park is really close to a number of late night takeaways in a way that places like many other of the towns parks aren't. Having picked up the litter scattered around the bins in Sandford Park by gulls it is clear that it is litter from nearby takeaways that is their meal of choice. I understand that it may be difficult to retrospectively fit with a lid the bins that are there and that they would be difficult and costly to remove, but I am really keen to see a solution to this issue. Could sponsorship be looked into to see if local businesses would sponsor the removal of the existing bins and replacement with gull proof ones?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>I agree that it is an unsightly problem, and we working with Ubico to put it right. My understanding is that it is mostly a supply chain issue caused by Covid rather than a financial issue, and I would be happy to look at sponsorship possibilities to take things forward.</p>
7.	Question from Councillor Klara Sudbury to Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor Rowena Hay

	<p>Please could the cabinet member give an update on the progress of the joint working between CBC and GCC to bring the footpath over Pilley Bridge Nature Reserve back into use footpath back into use or to replace it?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>Councillor Sudbury will hopefully recall that the bridge she refers to in her question formed part of the 2020/21 budget proposals that were debated and agreed by Full Council in February 2020. I recall that Councillor Sudbury felt the wording at paragraph 6.5 was ambiguous, and asked whether the wording could be changed to 'originally allocated to the restoration of the unsafe bridge in Pilley Nature Reserve which has led to the closure of the public footpath behind old pats'.</p> <p>The budget proposals were formulated on the grounds that the Council needed to prioritise its diminishing resources to the delivery of its corporate plan priorities. This is even more so the case given the financial uncertainty and fallout from Covid-19. The budget proposals agreed, included re-allocating £75k to climate change from the planned maintenance reserve which was originally set aside to part-fund the restoration of the bridge. The bridge had a number of footpaths to enable crossing, however it was agreed by Full Council that the budget would be better off allocated to delivering more benefit for the whole town by being in the climate emergency budget. Ultimately Full Council agreed the benefit for the whole town must be considered.</p> <p>It is my understanding that the bridge footpath surface is the responsibility of the County Council and the closure of access at both ends was undertaken by them perhaps as the county councillor you could ask the county for an update.</p>
	<p>Supplementary question from Councillor Sudbury</p>
	<p><i>The county council have most recently told me the following – ‘The county council would like to work in partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council to progress a project at Greatfield Road/Pilley Footbridge, in recognition that, while the borough council has a responsibility as owner of the bridge, and the land it crosses, the county is responsible for the footpath running across it. While we can’t dedicate a specific sum to it at this stage, we do need to work with the Borough Council and to find a satisfactory solution to the community severance caused by the bridge closure. Ideally a project could start by clearing vegetation from around the immediate bridge so an assessment can be done as to possible repairs or replacement options, though it is unlikely to be repairable. However no detailed survey has yet been carried out.’</i></p> <p>The county tell me they have been pursuing this issue with CBC but had no substantive reply yet. This may be because of changes in personnel or understandably issues relating to Covid?</p> <p>Can I request that CBC agrees to work in partnership with GCC to enable</p>

	the initial ground works to be done so that the scope and costs of the project can be better understood. This would be with a view to a larger partnership solution to funding replacing the bridge, which could include the involvement of CK Parish Council, FOPBNR and the local community – through crowdfunding or grant funding? I am optimistic that such a partnership approach could be successful but it needs the ground work to prepare this approach to even be considered.
	Response from Cabinet Member
	We have spent a great deal of time working with GCC to find a resolution. I refer back to my original answer: the tender process resulted in a minimum cost of £350k to rebuild the bridge, which was not justifiable. We put forward £75k as a justifiable contribution. The bridge was shut by the county council, and since then both authorities have been working towards a resolution. We would be happy to meet with the county council, parish council and wider community to see how the money could be raised.

5. REVIEW OF SHOPMOBILITY

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles presented the report, which outlined the reasons for ceasing Shopmobility operations.

She noted that there had been both an options appraisal and community impact statement. The report outlined the significant cost of the scheme in detail, which had been made even worse with no income coming in – the service having been closed since 18th March. Even before Covid, it cost up to £97k per year to operate, and never brought in more than £6k. She asked that Cabinet Members endorse the recommendations to decommission the service.

The Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment drew attention to the executive summary, which referred to mobility scooters costing as little as £450 to buy. He stressed that this was not a small amount of money, but acknowledged that there was charitable support available to those who could not afford it. He stressed that the closure of Shopmobility was clearly not a decision that was taken lightly.

The Cabinet Member Finance agreed that it was one of many difficult decisions needed due to Covid. She emphasised that the council did not intend to disenfranchise anyone who needed the service, but rather to reconsider value for money in a difficult financial situation. The service was used by a small group of people who could be supported in other ways

The Cabinet Member Cyber and Safety echoed his colleagues' points, stressing that it was a refocusing of funds rather than a cancellation. He noted that usage of the service had halved anyway, even pre-Covid.

The Leader added that it had been a valuable service, but noted that there were now genuine alternatives towards which people could be directed. He moved to the vote, which was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED THAT

1. **The Council's Shopmobility service be decommissioned and not reopened;**
2. **A comprehensive communications plan be implemented to make affected customers aware of the change and where they can find alternative support;**
3. **A comprehensive communications plan be implemented to ensure savings realised from the change are used to support the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.**

6. LOCAL DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RATES RELIEF SCHEMES

The Cabinet Member Finance presented the report, noting that it was an updated version of a policy that had been considered by Council several times. The situation developed very quickly, and the council's priority was to get funding out to local businesses as soon as possible. She praised the finance team for their work in distributing the money quickly, noting that a delay of just a week or two could have had serious ramifications for businesses. The report did not contain any major policy changes, only a revision to the 2020-21 budget.

The Cabinet Member Economy and Development praised efforts to support the local economy, which was echoed by several members. The Leader added particular thanks to the wider finance team for putting the report together, and moved to the vote, which was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED THAT:

1. **The changes to the business rates retail discount scheme for 2020/21 as detailed in appendix 2 and the detailed guidance in appendix 3 be approved;**
2. **The nursery discount scheme for 2020/21 in line with appendix 2 and the detailed guidance in appendix 4 be approved;**
3. **The Head of Revenues and Benefits be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance, to implement any further changes in 2020/21 made by the Government to the reliefs detailed in appendix 2;**
4. **The Head of Revenues and Benefits be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance, to implement any new business rate relief schemes introduced by the Government in 2020/21 in accordance with any guidance provided and subject to them being fully funded;**
5. **Authority be delegated to the Head of Revenues and Benefits to take decisions relating to the reliefs outlined in this report; and authority be delegated to the Executive Director Finance and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance, to consider and determine any reviews requested in respect of such decisions.**

7. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Member Economy and Development explained that as a new Cabinet Member, she would wait until the next meeting to give a full briefing.

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles thanked officers and members of many organisations across the town for their work in ensuring families did not go hungry over the summer. She praised the level of support from all those involved, and stressed that it must be built on in order to form a cross-Cheltenham network which could offer help to everyone who needs it. She added that the council's work combatting hunger tied into its No Child Left Behind project and wider goals, and reported that 40 organisations, including schools, had signed up to No Community Left Behind. She reported that the council continued to develop its Culture Strategy, which would head to Cabinet and Council relatively soon.

The Cabinet Member Finance did not have a briefing at this time, but noted an exciting opportunity to join the CBC finance team, with a vacancy having opened up for a Deputy Section 151 officer. She added that the council retained its ambitious financial agenda despite Covid, and expected a strong group of applicants.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services reported that the Municipal Offices were being made increasingly Covid-secure, and praised the hard work of cleaning staff for making that possible. He clarified that although working from home was still the default where possible, Covid-secure offices would enable more staff to physically come to work and make more appointments available to the public. He added that the council had now launched its Institute of Leadership and Management Development programme, giving opportunities to staff and helping residents to build leadership and management skills.

The Cabinet Member Climate and Communities added that he was grateful for his new portfolio, and was pleased to see positive work developing. He stressed that he was working with the council's Communications team to publicise the good climate work done within the organisation, and hoped to bring all the important information into one place so residents could more easily understand what exactly the council was doing on climate issues.

The Leader of the Council noted that Cabinet would now have greater capacity due to the two new members and their respective portfolios, covering climate & communities (Cllr. Wilkinson) and economy & development (Cllr. Atherstone). This had been planned a while ago but was delayed, first by the 2019 general election and then by Covid. He emphasised the importance of the tasks the council was doing, and wished both new members all the best in their roles. He added that the next Cabinet meeting would be an extraordinary one, scheduled for 28th September 2020.

Several Members outlined the decisions they had made since the last meeting.

The Cabinet Member Finance reported that she had taken the decision to sell a small strip of land between Chapel Spa and Portland Place. The land was purchased many years ago in order to facilitate a bus node, but was never big enough for that. Two interested parties submitted sealed bids, and one was accepted. Although she could not disclose the amount at the moment, it would be made public once everything was finalised.

She added that the Section 151 officer had made a waiver relating to the new tenants moving into the Municipal Offices, as painting and furniture work was urgently needed in order to meet the moving in deadline. Although this was not a formal decision, it needed to be reported to Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member Cyber and Safety reported that he had taken the decision to note amendments made to the existing Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Licensing Policy, and approved the amended policy for consultation. He explained that Covid restrictions had required licensing functions to be amended, and added that the results of consultation would come back to Cabinet for approval.

The Leader of the Council outlined the two decisions he had made. One related to the addition of the two new Cabinet Members (Climate & Communities and Economy & Development) and the change of Councillor McKinlay's portfolio from Development & Safety to Cyber & Safety. The other related to the appointment of a new Managing Director of Ubico, of which CBC was a shareholder.

Chairman