

Council

21 June 2021

Member Questions (9 total)

1.	Question from Councillor Bernie Fisher to the Cabinet Member Customer and Regulatory Services, Councillor Martin Horwood
	Would the Cabinet Member please explore the possibility of putting the Local Green Space designated in the current Local Plan around Swindon Village, and agreed with the Secretary of State, to be created a local community asset of value?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Assets of Community Value (ACVs) can only be nominated if they are of interest socially (such as for sport, culture or recreational uses) or increase the wellbeing of the community now and into the future. A community group (such as a society, the parish council, neighbourhood forum, not for profit organisation or a group of at least 21 individuals) that is locally connected to the area can nominate an asset to the local authority for judgement by the Council. We can open discussions with the Parish Council in order to achieve this aim but the Council would need to ensure that it is making a balanced judgement in assessing the proposal.
2.	Question from Councillor John Payne to the Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing and Business, Councillor Victoria Atherstone
	On the 20 th April the council contracted the Nash Partnership to deliver a master planning exploration of a cyber, digital and creative quarter as part of the Town Central Vision. Would the Cabinet member consider sharing with members the scope, terms of reference for this masterplanning exercise together with the metric that will be used to judge the effectiveness of the consultation so that members can appreciate the synergy between the master planning, place making and Marketing Cheltenham?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>Thank you Cllr Payne for your interest in this work. As you know it's a high priority for CBC and myself as cabinet member for Culture, Wellbeing and Business to consider town centre vision projects that are swift, bold and brave as part of our economic recovery strategy.</p> <p>Work on the commission by Nash Partnerships is ongoing and I am happy to share with you and any other interested councillors the brief for this work. This work forms part of our assessment to inform the longer term vision for the High Street which will be critical in supporting our economic recovery. In due course we plan to use our recently procured public engagement platform 'Citizen Space' to engage with our businesses and wider community on the wider town centre regeneration agenda.</p>
3.	Question from Councillor Stephan Fifield to the Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie
	There is noticeable concern from residents about Cheltenham's current level of weed growth. I am aware that the Council's weed killing strategy is currently being reviewed. Could the Cabinet Member please update the Council on the current

	<p>status of the strategy review with a timeline for completion, and could a report also be returned to Council so that progress on this issue can be monitored?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>As a result of no weed spraying last year during COVID and the perfect growing conditions experienced this year, combined with the lower footfall due to lockdown restrictions not being fully lifted allowing more weed germination, I would accept that weed growth is more noticeable in some parts of the borough. Whilst we may not like the look of it, the bees and insects love it.</p> <p>To support biodiversity, the council has created diverse grassland habitat on many of its green spaces. Pittville Park, Benhall Open Space, and Springfields Park are just a few examples where extensive natural grassland is supporting bird species, where previously they had not existed. Sometimes it is as simple as allowing grass to grow longer, which allows valuable pollinating insect populations a chance to thrive.</p> <p>Members may recall last year during COVID we trialled alternatives to weed spraying. However, our conclusion at the end of the year, when we published an update as part of the Environmental Services Strategy approved by Cabinet in October 2020, was that, in addition to other manual and mechanical weed removal, one weed spray would be necessary this year and this will take place over the next few weeks, starting at the end of this week.</p> <p>The targeted weed spraying will start in the town centre, moving on to Lansdown, the Park, St Pauls, Springbank, Swindon Village and the rest of the borough over the next 6 weeks. Residents will notice the weeds dying off after a week or so.</p> <p>I am committed to reducing weed spraying to support biodiversity and our response to the climate emergency. I'm pleased to say that the council is starting discussions with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to look at how we can reduce weed spraying further moving forward, as well as implementing other measures to support biodiversity. I am pleased to say that we have achieved a 50% reduction in weed spraying, which is line with the commitment we publicised last year.</p> <p>Since January this year, Ubico, the Council's environmental services provider, has been tidying up the worst of the weeds across the town by using our new weed ripper, which avoids the amount of weed spraying we have to do. Most recently the weed ripper has been in the Warden Hill and Hatherley area. The weed ripper is a very effective tool we can now use to control weeds and there are other things we are doing to reduce the amount of weed spraying needed. We put a lot of effort into a trial of various methods of weed control last year during COVID to avoid weed spraying and we are still trying to find the most environmentally friendly method.</p> <p>Since Christmas, Ubico have also used a small mechanical sweeper with a special weed ripper arm attached to it to remove weeds in roads and on pavements in some areas – you may have seen it in parts of Priors Park, Whaddon, All Saints, Hatherley, Warden Hill and the Town Centre.</p> <p>To reduce weed growth in gullies on roads, Ubico has continued to sweep the</p>

	<p>roads with the mechanical road sweepers which not only gets rid of dirt and debris on the edge of roads but also stops germination of more weeds.</p> <p>From the end of June you will notice the Ubico strimming crew out and about tidying up the weeds and long grass around street furniture – roads signs etc. They will be starting in the town centre and moving out of town down the Lansdown Road, up London Road and into Charlton Kings, Leckhampton, Shurdington and Warden Hill, before moving on to the rest of the borough. The crew has already been out strimming in Priors Park and Windyridge.</p> <p>Areas of long grass on highway verges will be cut down by the end of June, but any areas of wildflower planting may be left longer, as this is part of its management plan. Those areas of grass where you see daffodils growing in the spring are left until the end of June before the grass is cut down, to help ensure a good display of flowers the following spring.</p> <p>Ground flailing of the large stretches of grass verges on semi-rural roads will be starting at the end of June too and this will be repeated in October. Hedge cutting across the town will start, after the bird nesting season, at the end of July.</p> <p>An update is available on the website and a press release has been issued to the media. I would be pleased to update all members on progress with this new approach to weed control during the summer and again in the Autumn.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Question from Councillor Tim Harman to the Cabinet Member Climate Emergency, Councillor Max Wilkinson</p>
	<p>Can I remind the Cabinet Member of my question and his reply at the Council meeting on 7th December concerning the need to reduce the council's Carbon emissions? Can he update the Council on progress and confirm if and when low or zero emission vehicles will be introduced?</p> <p>Will he also indicate if he has given any consideration to my suggestion to develop a performance indicator for the council's carbon emissions?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>Thank you Councillor Harman for your question and persistence on this important issue. There has been significant interest in the monitoring and reporting of the Council's carbon footprint, and rightly so. We have set an ambitious target of becoming a carbon neutral Council and Borough by 2030 and it is imperative that we communicate our pathway clearly.</p> <p>The Council is committed to making better use of annual reporting. This includes the collection and publication of our Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions, which goes above and beyond the approach of many other councils.</p> <p>As a reflection of this, an expansive dataset is still being gathered following the year end. The updated carbon footprint will be confirmed next month and will subsequently be published using a template which will be utilised in future years. The intention is to publish our footprint on the climate change pages of the CBC website, to improve transparency and encourage other organisations to follow suit. A key theme for CBC is 'leading by example'.</p>

	<p>The publication of the council’s carbon emissions will be followed up with the publication of a Climate Pathway. This will set out annual emission reduction targets and will act as a roadmap to guide the Council towards the 2030 target.</p> <p>Cheltenham Borough Council and Ubico are working closely together to plan our future fleet replacement, with carbon reduction at the heart of our decision making. This week, the first 4 electric charging points will be operational at the Swindon Road depot and are just waiting for our first 2 electric vehicles to be delivered in July/August this year. These will be our first electric vehicles. We are also in the middle of a procurement exercise to install a further 4 electric charging points for CBC vehicles to use at the Swindon Road depot site, starting with the Mayor’s vehicle.</p> <p>Going forward, where available on the market, all 3.5T and smaller vehicles that are purchased will be electric, although currently, 4x4 pick-ups aren’t available on the market and we will therefore need to replace two of these in parks and gardens with the newest diesel versions. Our heavy goods fleet is not due for replacement until 2024-25, but in the meantime, we are looking at alternative fuels which could be delivered across most of the Ubico fleet within the next 12/18 months, reducing carbon emissions by up to 85%. In the longer term, subject to where our strategic waste site is located, we could invest in electric or hydrogen infrastructure to help the move away from diesel altogether.</p> <p>We are also looking at the fairly small number of CBC-owned vehicles and these will be replaced going forward using the same criteria I have already set out.</p> <p>In terms of our wider EV strategy for the borough as a whole, we are keen to ensure that this dovetails with the county council’s approach to the provision of on-street charging points. GCC has advised that it will be imminently tendering the contract for on–street EV provision and there will be an option for CBC to use a call-off option to procure charging points in off-street car parks.</p> <p>One note of caution is that electric vehicles are unlikely to be a long term sustainable solution to the nation’s transport needs (or indeed, that of the rest of the world), so we will be looking with interest at any proposals from the government and the Highways authority to help address this conundrum. The government has already made known its ambition to see 50% of shorter journeys currently being made by car, being undertaken by walking and cycling by 2030.</p> <p>Note: Research by C40 (a network of the world’s megacities committed to addressing climate change) indicates between 40 and 80 per cent of trips in cities need to be walking, cycling, or public transport by 2030 if global heating is to be constrained below 1.5 degrees Celsius. Put simply, you can’t have a sustainable city or town without radical changes to our mode of transport.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Cabinet Member Customer and Regulatory Services, Councillor Martin Horwood</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member please advise how to get a road naming error corrected in the Council’s databases, and if possible assist with getting a specific issue in St Peter’s ward resolved?</p>

	<p>The specific issue is that Yarnold Terrace (GL51 9EQ and GL51 9EH) is currently incorrectly named as “Yarnolds Terrace” (with an extra “s”) on various databases. The council minutes from Cheltenham’s Housing Committee, held on Thursday 12th March 1936, agenda item 7(b) state the following: <i>Read, letter from Mrs. Yarnold that residents in the former North Ward had asked whether the late Alderman Yarnold's name could not be perpetuated by naming one of the roads on the Moors Estate after him. RESOLVED That the General Purposes and Watch Committee be recommended to name the houses fronting Tewkesbury Road, at present known as Tewkesbury Road West, "Yarnold Terrace."</i> The street nameplate with this name “Yarnold Terrace”, without the erroneous “s” is in-situ and is visible on Google Streetview.</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>Thank you Councillor Willingham for raising this issue. A mistake has obviously been made at some point in the past. However, the street name Yarlands Terrace is now recorded on the NLPG (National Land and Property Gazetteer), and with Gloucestershire Highways, Royal Mail and the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). Whilst it does appear to be a simple correction, the name as recorded with an ‘s’ cannot legally be changed without consulting all the residents. I will ask officers to review the most appropriate and time effective way to do that.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Cabinet Member Customer and Regulatory Services, Councillor Martin Horwood</p>
	<p>Could I please be advised of the number of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) and convictions in the municipal year 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Fly tipping b) Dog fouling c) Littering
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>The number of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) in the municipal year 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Fly tipping (45 issued) b) Dog fouling (2 issued) c) Littering (35 issued) <p>It is also worth noting that we issued 12 FPNs for graffiti during this same time period.</p> <p>Regarding convictions where we have pursued legal action, there are 3 pending cases that should have been heard last year, but we’re adjourned and rescheduled for June/July this year. Covid has had a significant impact on the courts system.</p> <p>We had one case heard in December 2020 for three offences of fly tipping, where the person was convicted and received a community order; the Council did not receive its full costs back, but the individual was required to pay £150.</p> <p>Total find income from antisocial behaviour related offences was approximately £19,000.</p>

7.	<p>Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Cabinet Member Customer and Regulatory Services, Councillor Martin Horwood</p>
	<p>While protecting our listed heritage buildings and our conservation areas is essential to our regency town, in the town centre, the inability of some listed and heritage buildings to be able to install double glazing seems to present issues around climate change as well as exacerbating the issue of noise in the ENTE. Concerns about late-night noise are often brought up by residents in licensing hearings. While recognising that in order to protect the heritage assets it may not be possible to change the Council's policy on this, could I please ask the Cabinet Member whether Planning would be able to investigate whether there are any solutions or products that would allow the installation of improved fenestration while also protecting those heritage assets?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>This is a very relevant and difficult question as Cheltenham benefits from its heritage in terms of listed buildings and conservation areas. The Council is required to give great weight to these matters in sustaining and enhancing the historic environment. A high proportion of Officers time is spent advising residents on dealing with fenestration issues, and they are always willing to discuss different approaches that may be taken.</p> <p>Although the Council is important in its decision making we must recognise the role of Historic England as a consultee and guardian of the historic environment. Guidance is available from Historic England ((Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings (June 2018). This sets out how the issues can be addressed in some details, including some less obvious solutions such as draught proofing and the use of heavy curtains. It occurs to me that it would be helpful if the Council was to place a link on the relevant page of the Council's website to this document.</p>
8.	<p>Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Cabinet Member Customer and Regulatory Services, Councillor Martin Horwood</p>
	<p>During the summer months, the lack of effective odour control on the Severn Trent Combined Sewer and Overflow facility in St Peter's Park often leads to the stench of raw, untreated sewage in parts of the park. Dealing with these types of environmental odour nuisances normally seems to be predicated on a particular individual resident or business being affected and complaining. Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that it is unacceptable for our parks to suffer this type of odour pollution, and will they look at what can be done to get Severn Trent to address this issue?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>The issue which Cllr Willingham helpfully raises is clearly of concern in relation to local amenity and could dissuade residents from making beneficial use of St Peter's Park, which I know is a valued local community green space.</p> <p>Unfortunately, there appear to be far too many examples nationally of combined sewers discharging to watercourses in the event of heavy rainfall and this situation is predicted to get worse as a result of climate change. This has a detrimental effect on water quality and the wildlife and biodiversity supported by streams and rivers.</p>

	<p>In the absence of documented complaints from members of the public concerning odour nuisance at this location, there does not appear to have been any consideration of this matter by the authority, so I would welcome receiving any further details from Cllr Willingham that might assist officers in taking the issue up directly with Severn Trent.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Chair of Planning and Cabinet Member Customer and Regulatory Services, Councillor Martin Horwood</p>
	<p>A recent Prior Approval notification application for a telecoms mast in St Peter's ward has highlighted that the ability of members to call-in planning applications to Planning Committee does not apply to this type of application. In this, case the visually intrusive, poorly sited and inappropriate application was refused by officers under delegated powers, but it does raise concerns that as a member-led authority, there is no way for members to require the Planning Committee to determine this type of application if a ward member believes there are sufficient grounds. While I understand that due to the statutory timescales and presumption of approval if a refusal does not occur within that that time limit, this does seem to limit members' ability to represent their communities on such issues. Would the Chair of Planning and the Cabinet Member be willing to review this process to see if there are alternative solutions that would ensure that there can be some type of public hearing to determine these cases if the ward member believes it to be necessary?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>The proposal referred to by Cllr. Willingham was rejected by the Council. Proposals for telecommunications mast equipment are generally not planning applications in the traditional sense and do not fall within the remit of planning committee. It is not that the Council wishes to circumvent the involvement of members, simply that this type of development is generally granted planning permission by national legislation without the need to submit a planning application i.e. permitted development, subject to certain limitations and conditions. It is these limitations and conditions which require the Local Planning Authority's 'Prior Approval'.</p> <p>Work must not commence on the development until the Local Planning Authority has issued its determination. However, it is important that Prior Approvals are actioned promptly by the Local Planning Authority as many will receive 'deemed consent' if the time period for a determination to be issued expires. Due to the strict requirements of the legislation and timescales associated with these notifications, it would unfortunately be unmanageable to consistently coincide determination dates for Prior Approval with the committee dates timetable. I will however work with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Planning Committee to examine the issue on an ongoing basis."</p>