

## **New item on the forward plan**

A new policy which relates to the use of social media / the internet / open source intelligence when investigating offences or conducting enforcement activities. The Policy seeks to ensure all online research is conducted lawfully and ethically to reduce risk. The policy takes account of RIPA and when such activities constitute surveillance. It will be presented to Audit, Compliance and Governance Committee in September and come to cabinet in November.

## **Housing**

In partnership with CBH we are delighted to have been able to deliver 27 new affordable homes in a variety of tenures on the former Monkscroft Villas site, now called Radford Court. Increasing the number of homes that were previously on the site by more than 800%. Furthermore I can report that all 27 homes will shortly be occupied, as various tenancy agreements have been signed. We look forward to delivering more units in the town as part of our £180m investment into affordable homes in the years to come.

## **Audit**

CBC's response to Covid-19 audit by SWAT gave us a very positive result of a sound system of governance, risk management and controls, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited, which has been given a Substantial assurance opinion.

## **Business Rates**

At the Government briefing on the extension to restrictions last week there was no suggestion of any further financial support in the form of grants to businesses.

The business rates holiday (100% discount to retail, hospitality & leisure businesses since 01/04/20) comes to an end on 30 June. The discount continues to 31 March 2022 but at a reduced rate of 66% leaving businesses to pay one third of the normal bill from July.

Businesses are calling for the 100% discount to be extended but there's been no response today and MHCLG say they have no plans to do this. We sent our bills out last Friday with the reduced 66% discount from 1<sup>st</sup> July.

## **Afghanistan nationals Resettlement**

The UK has been running a scheme to support locally employed staff (LES) in Afghanistan, often in dangerous and challenging situations, in recognition of their commitment and bravery shown supporting UK forces since 2013.

The scheme currently consists of two elements: The ex-gratia scheme which will close in November 2022 and;

The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy which launched in April 2021, reflecting the changing situation in Afghanistan and consequent risk to LES.

Both schemes are intended to support current and former LES who have worked for British Forces and to provide appropriate support that honours their service and properly reflects their work and the risks involved.

The schemes provide a range of in-country packages of assistance in Afghanistan and, for those who meet the criteria, relocation to the UK with their dependants.

3000 people coming to the UK – former interpreters and their families

35 for Gloucestershire I am pleased to report that this authority is intending to support these interpreters and their families who worked to support our armed forces and now face a very uncertain future if they remain in Afghanistan.

### **TACKLING COVID-19**

Cheltenham Borough Council is a finalist in the Room 151 Impact award in the Tackling Covid-19 category. This category recognises the extraordinary contribution council finance departments have made to supporting their communities through the pandemic through revs and bens, supporting frontline services and business grants. The category winners will be announced at a free virtual Awards Ceremony on 1st July.