

## Council

19 July 2021

### Member Questions (3 total)

<b>1.</b>	<b>Question from Councillor Paul Baker to the Cabinet Member Climate Emergency, Councillor Max Wilkinson</b>
	<p>The issue of poor air quality is a very important one particularly for older residents and children who are more vulnerable to its effects.</p> <p>I appreciate Government sets the criteria for air quality, which many consider to be too low, and the County Council is responsible for our highways, however I am concerned that the Borough Council should be doing everything it can to improve air quality especially around schools like Naunton Park, on routes to schools and on heavily trafficked routes through shopping areas like the Bath Road.</p> <p>Gathering data is particularly important both to support initiatives to reduce traffic and to reassure the public that the air quality in their area is safe. Can the Cabinet Member tell me what actions we are taking to address this issue?</p>
	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	<p>Thank you to Councillor Baker for raising this important issue. Air Quality in Cheltenham is actively monitored throughout the borough and has been for many years in line with Government Guidelines.</p> <p>Monitoring data on Nitrogen Dioxide levels can be found on our website here <a href="#">Nitrogen dioxide (NO2) monitoring data   Cheltenham Borough Council</a> and our associated reports on air quality are available here <a href="https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/downloads/download/693/air_quality_reports">https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/downloads/download/693/air_quality_reports</a></p> <p>Progress is being made, however, improving air quality around schools can only happen quickly if people ditch their cars for the school run and fewer car trips are made generally and in particular, in the vicinity of schools. The Borough Council has for some time supported the School Streets initiatives being trialled by the County Council. We hope this approach will be built upon in due course.</p> <p>The Borough Council is responsible for air quality monitoring and producing an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). The latest AQAP is under production and must as a minimum cover our Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), which is around the lower high street. However, we are going further and will be producing a strategy document that covers the wider borough. This will advocate a more dynamic approach to air quality monitoring, including around schools, building on the significant network of monitoring points the Council already operates. This will include a more dynamic approach to air quality monitoring, including around schools. The monitoring work for this has already begun and we hope to report back soon, but you are absolutely right to say that we cannot tackle poor air quality alone. That's why we intend expanding our approach far beyond the statutory minimum set out in legislation and are working with organisations that can help us, including the county council, the NHS and others. We are also in</p>

	discussion with Royal Mail, which has a delivery depot at the centre of our AQMA.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Question from Councillor Alisha Lewis to the Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie</b>
	<p>Clarification on the shower cap bin lid trial plans:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can you confirm plans to trial shower cap style lids on recycling bins in Cheltenham – with a timescale?</li> <li>2. Can you confirm whether St Paul’s will be included in any pilot/test scheme?</li> </ol>
	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	<p>As Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Street Services I am keen to support initiatives which encourage wasting less and recycling more. Our recycling rate in Cheltenham currently stands at 52.05% and we need to do better but it will take all of us working together, trying different things to achieve this.</p> <p>I am pleased to confirm that there are plans to trial the shower cap style recycling BOX lids in parts of the town and officers are planning how this can be implemented and what the timescale will be, hopefully later this summer but officers are rightly being cautious due to Covid-19 and the impact this is still having on the community and Ubico.</p> <p>St Pauls is definitely one area where I would be keen to trial these type of recycling box lids. For those that don’t know what these type of lids are, they are the same as the ones issued in parts of Gloucester. The benefit of these different type of lids is that they are tied onto the recycling boxes so don’t blow. In some areas when lids blow away they end up in the road, get run over and then broken meaning boxes end up with no lids and recycling blowing around creating a mess. In some areas, for some residents they may be helpful and we are keen to trial them to see if they make a difference.</p> <p>Ward members will be updated when more details are available.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Question from Councillor Tim Harman to the Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie</b>
	<p>Residents have raised with myself and other Councillors their concerns about the use of some prays used by Ubico for weed control. Particular concern has been expressed due to the use of glyphosate herbicide. I understand that the Council are working with Ubico on alternatives.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member advise Council of the actions being taken in this direction and indicate a timescales for introducing more acceptable alternatives?</p>
	<b>Response from Cabinet Member</b>
	<p>Supporting climate emergency initiatives including biodiversity is very important to me as cabinet member and I am committed to reducing the use of any herbicides in Cheltenham which is why we are talking with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to help us do this-the recent press release outlined this.</p> <p>I am sure all councillors will remember my answer to a very similar question raised at the last council meeting on 21 June 2021 fully explaining what</p>

Cheltenham's agreed approach to weed control and weed spraying is but if not I can reiterate part of it.

"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.

The targeted weed spray will start in the town centre then moving on to Lansdown, the Park, St Pauls, Springbank, Swindon Village and the rest of the borough over the next 6 weeks or so. Residents will notice the weeds dying off after a week or so.

I am committed to reducing weed spraying to support the climate emergency and am pleased to say that the council is starting discussions with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to look at how we can reduce this further moving forward. I am pleased to say that we have achieved a 50% reduction in weed spraying which is in line with the commitment publicised last year.

The most up to date information is available in the briefing note that I asked Karen Watson to email to all members on 7 July or on the council's website <https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/weed-control>

Members will also find the weed control policy on the council's website setting out all the information available to date but I have included a link here to help you find it. This document sets out in more detail this brief summary which I will read out: [Weed control policy | Street cleaning and weed control | Cheltenham Borough Council](#)

To clarify, currently glyphosate is licenced by the European Chemical Agency until 2022, with the European Food Agency stating that it is unlikely to pose a public health risk. National agencies across the world have declared glyphosate to be safe to use however some countries have now decided to ban glyphosate or severely curtail its use but the UK continues to say glyphosate based products are safe to use.

The Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) recently provided a briefing to its members on glyphosate. Some notable points:

There is no right or wrong answer to the question "is it safe to use glyphosate products"

There are few alternatives to glyphosate and those which are seen as alternatives are often still in a pilot phase and much more expensive to use

There may be a need for the public to accept higher levels of weeds if the use of glyphosate is banned

Ending the use of pesticides on hard surfaces will likely mean that there will be more visible weeds for longer periods of time. However weeds do contribute to biodiversity by providing a habitat and source of food for bees and other insects.

Of particular note, APSE says "it may be prudent for all local authorities to carefully consider the scale of glyphosate use, the likely risks arising, the potential

to limit the reliance on glyphosate-based products and the ability to find a suitable alternative product to prepare for the future”.

In Cheltenham, during 2019/20 and 2020/21 some trials of alternative methods of vegetation control have been undertaken in order to assess their effectiveness and suitability in Cheltenham although less than planned due to COVID-19. Similarly where reliable test data is available from other local authorities and professional bodies this will also be reviewed.

Early signs indicate there is no direct chemical replacement for glyphosate and alternative treatments such as hot foams, acids, electricity and flame throwers are far less efficient in terms of material cost and labour involved applying them.

While we keep our approach to weed control under regular review, we hope that the growing demand for alternatives to glyphosate based weed sprays will encourage manufacturers to develop cost effective alternatives before too long but in the meantime here in Cheltenham we will continue working hard to reduce weed spraying and increase manual weed removal within available budgets to protect our environment.