

Council

18 October 2021

Public Questions (3 total)

1.	Question from Tess Beck to the Cabinet Member Culture, Wellbeing and Business, Councillor Victoria Atherstone
	<p>It has been good to see an increase in the numbers of people coming into Cheltenham since lockdown restrictions have relaxed. Unfortunately, with The Wilson still closed until March 2022, there is no Tourist Information Centre.</p> <p>Do the terms of the service level agreement/ contract/ arrangement between Cheltenham Borough Council and The Trust require The Trust to provide Tourist Information Centre services?</p> <p>Is there a commitment by Cheltenham Borough Council/ The Cheltenham Trust to re-instate in-person Tourist Information Centre services when The Wilson re-opens in March 2022?</p>
	Response from the Cabinet Member
	<p>First of all can I thank you for taking the time to submit this question as this is an important issue.</p> <p>The current specification, which forms part of the management agreement, specifies the council's requirements for the Trust's contribution to the town's leisure and culture offer. The requirement to run a tourist information centre is identified within the specification.</p> <p>The council has the right to keep the specification under review in accordance with the terms of the management agreement (and in so far as permitted under procurement law) to ensure that it continues to reflect the council's requirements.</p> <p>As such, a review of the specification is underway with recommendations for its revision being brought to cabinet at its December meeting. The revisions will include a review of the requirement for the trust to continue to provide the tourist information centre.</p> <p>The revision will take into account a number of factors that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Wilson closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic and will reopen in April 2022 following major refurbishment, that the council has supported. The investment will transform the ground, mezzanine and third floors to improve the venue as a major visitor destination in the town, and to ensure its future financial sustainability.• During the period of closure visitors have accessed information via digital channels. The main portal visited is visitcheltenham.com. In

	<p>2017, there were 290,000 visitors to the site. In 2021 this more than doubled with more than 600,000 visiting the site and more than 40,000 followers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing Cheltenham is currently working on a new pilot that tests an innovative and more agile approach to the provision of visitor information. It is planned to have the pilot in place by Christmas this year. The pilot is funded using the Welcome Back grant funding. <p>I hope that answers your question</p>
2.	Question from Andrew Cater to the Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie
	Council car parks - a few of them have no wheelchair access to the machines - on plinths / too high etc. Would you consider allowing disabled drivers to remain there with Blue badges but without tickets?
	Response from the Cabinet Member
	<p>All Council-owned public car parks (other than the Regent Arcade which does have mobility accessible parking payment machines) are free of charge to blue badge holders for up to 3 hours. Unlike many other local authorities, Cheltenham allows blue badge holders to park for free in any space, in addition to those wider spaces which are specifically designated for mobility parking.</p> <p>Of our 45 parking payment machines, 30 (67%) are either on level ground, or have a dropped kerb to enable access. We are working towards making all of our machines fully accessible, as and when upgrading works are undertaken.</p> <p>All car parks except the Pittville Pump Room and Regent Arcade offer a 'Pay by Phone' app facility, which is available for all users to "top-up" their parking session remotely, if a stay beyond 3 hours is needed.</p>
3.	Question from Andrew Cater to the Cabinet Member Customer and Regulatory Services, Councillor Martin Horwood
	Wheelchair taxi situation is a little crazy. I'd need a private hire car to get my wheelchair into town - usually Dial-a Cab - to find some wheelchair taxis in the middle of town. Can we have some liberalisation for other Private Hire wheelchair accessible vehicles ? Dial a Cab are run off their wheels trying to meet the needs of wheelchair users who can't always use the Cabs on taxi ranks.
	Response from the Cabinet Member
	<p>The authority is aware of the issues disabled users are experiencing trying to access licenced accessible vehicles. We have had conversations with the licenced trade and we know, from this, that the number and availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles have diminished as a consequence of people leaving the trade due to the pandemic and Brexit.</p> <p>The authority is however working on solutions including the potential use of a smartphone app that will connect wheelchair accessible vehicles with users. We are in discussion with a potential supplier and the licenced trade.</p> <p>The recent announcement setting out the authority's ambition to move its hackney carriage (taxi) fleet to electric vehicles, has created the need to develop a new</p>

policy and an important feature of this will be ensuring the authority continues to meet its equality obligations. The authority will extensively consult on any future policies with the public, especially disabled users, the trade and with councillors, including the Licensing Committee.

In the meantime, the Licensing Section maintains a contact list wheelchair accessible vehicles. Please contact them on licensing@cheltenham.gov.uk or 01242 264135.