

Budget Consultation 2022/23 questions from members of the public

1.	Received 25 January 2022
1.	<p>Many thanks for the opportunity to comment on the 2022-2023 budget. We recognise that whilst the majority of highways opportunities lie with Gloucestershire County Council, Cheltenham Borough Council does have an important part to play in creating a positive environment for cycling within the town through its strategic and spending priorities.</p> <p>We have as a committee reviewed the budget proposals and the detail of the capital spending plan to inform our response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We commend the council for revising down the income it assumes it will receive from car parking so that it is less dependent on private motor vehicle trips. This will give the council more freedom to develop and deliver plans that change how people travel into the town centre, improving accessibility, congestion and the environment. We are encouraged to see this recognised in specific detail within the council strategy. • We look forward to the publication of the council's £10 million climate change strategy, and hope that the council recognises the opportunities that it has to enable cycling within this significant investment. • We are encouraged to see leadership from the council in decreasing the allowances it offers to its own staff who use private motor cars rather than greener modes of transport. We hope there will be opportunities for the campaign to support council staff wanting to discover the benefits of cycling in Cheltenham. • The budget still contains a significant amount of money allocated to car parking. Reflecting the council's ambition to change how people access retail and commercial centres, we would suggest now is the time to create a separate budget line for enhancing and increasing the amount of cycle parking in Cheltenham, particularly around local economic centres, to meet the rising demand. • With no parallel routes in development, the Honeybourne line looks set to remain a crucial link for active travel in the short to medium term for a large proportion of Cheltenham residents and workers. It is already over capacity, and there are growing maintenance challenges. Unlike the highway network, this off road link is the responsibility of Cheltenham Borough Council, and we believe that a separate budget line is now needed to ensure there is long term planning for its expansion and maintenance. • We also identify a number of other barriers for cycling access within land owned by Cheltenham Borough Council, maintenance challenges on a number of cycle routes through these areas, and gaps in the network that could be addressed through off-road routes on Cheltenham Borough Council land. We believe these merit prioritisation within the budget to ensure that Cheltenham takes the opportunities it does have to increase cycling locally, in parallel to highways improvements. • We note the Parks and Gardens service have £40,800 for new vehicles. We'd like to challenge you to consider investing in one less motor vehicle, and instead purchasing two cargo bikes with that money. They would have less environmental impact, particularly in embodied carbon, and would cause less damage to green spaces whilst giving flexible access to a wider range of areas.

	<p>The Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Cycling Campaign is eager to work with Cheltenham Borough Council, and hope that there will be opportunities for our expertise and range of community voices to help you progress towards your greener transport ambitions in the coming year.</p>
<p>1.</p>	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p> <p>Thank you very much for your response on the consultation and are encouraged by your comments on the approach we have taken to reduce our reliance on car parking income in the 2022/23 budget proposal.</p> <p>The Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Cycling Campaign is a fantastic local organisation and we look forward to working together with you to support our goal of Cheltenham becoming a carbon net zero Council and town by 2030.</p> <p>Our Climate Change Mitigation Pathway and Strategy will be presented for approval at Full Council on 21 February 2022 and this includes interventions which we propose to invest in between now and 2030 to deliver our climate goals. This includes a £10m Climate Investment Fund which will be put towards schemes that benefit the environment whilst generating a financial return for the Council. We are keen to engage with you as part of the development of these investment appraisals.</p> <p>A specific budget allocation was introduced into our base budget in 2021/22 to fund carbon reduction projects and a shift to active travel is included in this. In August 2021, the Council introduced a Cycle to Work scheme for staff. This is a salary sacrifice scheme to encourage staff to travel in a greener way whilst promoting fantastic health benefits. We will also be exploring engagement opportunities, such as bike repair workshops and cycling lessons for staff, to increase the uptake of the scheme and encourage more active commuting. We will then look to leverage the Cheltenham Zero partnership to encourage other businesses to follow suit, supporting where we can. Additionally, we are planning to undertake informal consultation with the cycle community in the Spring as we look to install cycle storage in and around the town.</p> <p>We are also pursuing the southern extension of the Honeybourne Line with GWR, National Rail and Gloucestershire County Council and hope that work will start in 2022/23.</p> <p>The financial pressures we are facing require a fresh approach to how we use our assets in the more effective way to deliver our key priorities, including our climate goals. Although the responsibility for Highways sits with Gloucestershire County Council we will be reviewing the carbon footprint of our assets as part of the revised Asset Management Strategy. The asset plans we will produce from this will consider how this can be reduced and whether an asset can make a more positive contribution to our climate priorities.</p> <p>We appreciate your alternative suggestion to replace one of the parks and gardens vehicles with cargo bikes. This is an interesting proposal and will be explored with Officers.</p>