

Council

18 July 2022

Public Questions (1 total)

1.	Question from Roger Whyborn to the Cabinet Member Cyber, Commercial Income and Regeneration, Councillor Mike Collins
	<p>I note from the motion unanimously passed by this Council on 25th March 2019 that it was recommended that CBC officers and the Cabinet Member work with all the relevant agencies to study and determine the appropriate size, scope, and location of a properly equipped transport hub for Cheltenham, and how good connectivity can be delivered, and that they also work with the LEP and others to explore (other) funding streams to provide financing where appropriate.</p> <p>In the light of that motion, and now that a measure of normality has returned to the transport scene post-pandemic, can the cabinet member please advise us what steps are being taken towards achieving the goal of a having a functioning effective transport hub which:</p> <p>A) addresses the increased need for even more focus on the subject due to climate emergency,</p> <p>B) contributes to a public transport network with much better interchanges</p> <p>and C) hence increases the proportion of local journeys made by public transport, and reduces congestion and pollution on town centre roads?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>I would like to thank Mr Whyborn for his question and good to see he retains his keen interest in transport and the well-being of Cheltenham. Whilst he is correct in that the pandemic has led to disruption, this has not limited our engagement with key partners.</p> <p>In regards to a central transport hub, as recognised in the council motion of 2019, CBC is neither a transport operator nor a transport authority; our role therefore is within the wider place shaping of the town. Below I have outlined the strategic schemes we have been supporting. Collectively these will have an impact on modal shift and understanding this will be key to investigating future options for a transport hub.</p> <p>Mr Whyborn was very much a part of the work of the Connecting Cheltenham Strategy https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/61/climate_and_sustainability/1649/connecting_cheltenham . This strategy informed the council's response to the review of the Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan and includes recommendations around interchange facilities. We will continue to work with partners on identifying the right solutions for this. However, understanding the evidence is key and we will need the wider context of modal shift from the strategic schemes to help better understand the whole town picture of movement.</p> <p>Mr Whyborn is right to recognise the continuing importance of the work between CBC and GCC on managing strategic projects across the Central Severn Vale and crucially the planned developments in west and north-west Cheltenham. These projects include all elements of the Housing Infrastructure Fund which is funding the M5J10 Scheme, incorporating the proposals for the Arle Court Transport Hub.</p>

Considerable progress has been achieved on this project element since the contract with Homes England was signed in October 2020. Since then, and with the backdrop of extraordinarily challenging times, the development of the outline design has taken place with input from key stakeholders, including CBC. The focus of which was a series of workshops held with a range of stakeholders in attendance including bus operators, GCC and CBC officers, local employers, Cheltenham BID and GFirst LEP. The purpose of the workshops was to present outline plans and provide opportunity for comments and suggestions. Successful outcomes include the decision to incorporate coach parking within the facility to provide greater flexibility of use and help attract additional tourist coaches to the town. Conversations have also taken place to investigate possible additional funding streams for this element of the works. A key theme from the discussions was a focus on the quality of the hub and the services on offer, to ensure the best opportunity for increased number of users transferring to more sustainable modes of transport. For example, understanding from operators the requirements for long distance coaches as well as local services to future proof the facility and provide improved access and interchange from one service to another. Elements such as the importance of changing places standing of toilet facilities has also been captured

In addition to the workshops, written engagement in the form of email briefings took place with the MP, elected members, business, environment and disability groups. Liaison also took place with the CBC planning team through a series of meetings and who provided input and comment to the communications strategy. This included the suggestion to increase the number of residents engaged with locally and submission of the scheme to the Cheltenham architects panel to provide feedback, both of which were completed prior to planning submission. A more detailed summary of the stakeholder input on the scheme can be found in the planning document 'statement of community involvement' available on the planning portal GCC Planning Application Associated Documents (gloucestershire.gov.uk)

One of the key objectives of the scheme is to promote sustainable modes of transport and remove unnecessary car journeys from the network. The aim is to appeal to the maximum number of users as possible and provide a range of options to switch to bus, coach, e scooter or active travel modes. The project also includes allocated electric vehicle charging points and photo-voltaic cells to generate energy on site. We will continue to develop the detail of these proposals through detailed design.

Highway works have now begun on site at Arle Court, and detailed design - a product of the above engagement process - is being finalised for the main works. The aim remains to deliver high quality, sustainable infrastructure, to support the transition and acceleration of modal shift to public and active transport.

Mr Whyborn may have recently seen local media where I recently joined GCC in recognising the completion of the West Cheltenham Transport Improvement Scheme - a £26.3M investment designed to accelerate the initial phases of development of the 45 hectares of employment land allocated within the West Cheltenham area. For the present, the funding has delivered a comprehensive suite of improvements to the transport network along the A40 corridor between M5 Junction 11 and the Benhall

Roundabout, with cycling and walking infrastructure improvements linking all the way to Lansdown Rail Bridge.

Mr Whyborn may also be aware that the Mass Transit project has recently completed pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, which have concluded that there is benefit in progressing the scheme to the next stage of development. This means a move into the Options Appraisal phase, whereby the location of a mass interchange such as Arle Court, will be a key consideration in making a routing decision. The Mass Transit project will be a key action for supporting Gloucestershire's drive to decarbonisation.