

Council

18 July 2022

Member Questions (4 total)

1.	Question from Councillor Tim Harman to Cabinet Member Climate Emergency, Councillor Alisha Lewis
	Will the cabinet member work with officers to develop a performance indicator to monitor the Councils progress on delivering on its pledges and targets on its Climate Change agenda which could be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>I can confirm that we are developing our performance indicators for the climate priority to supplement the annual reporting of carbon emissions which is already happening. These indicators, as well as details of the key projects being delivered, are being recorded on our performance management system Clearview, which it is planned will be made available to members for 'view only' access. There is also extensive information on the council's web pages www.cheltenham.gov.uk via the A to Z under the heading 'Climate change'.</p> <p>We are being as transparent as we can be regarding reporting our climate pathway challenges and actions; the climate team recently updated the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress to date, as well as projects in the delivery pipeline.</p> <p>One of the key challenges we have, is reinforcing the fact that the borough target to reach carbon zero by 2030 will not be met without the necessary tools and financing from central government and the co-operation of other agencies, businesses and households. Regrettably, the cost of living crisis is going to make this task even harder, as in the short term for example, many households will not be able to invest in energy efficiency measures and moving away from fossil fuel use for heating.</p> <p>On a more positive note, we are participating in a range of innovative partnerships to deliver a step change in carbon reduction over the coming years, including leading on the planning theme for Climate Leadership Gloucestershire and supporting work to promote biodiversity net gain.</p>
2.	Question from Councillor Tim Harman to Cabinet Member Waste, Recycling and Street Services
	Will the cabinet member meet me with the appropriate officers to view the Rowena Cade play area to discuss how it can be upgraded
	Response from Cabinet Member
	Yes. I understand Cllr Tim Harman met with the Green Space Development Officer in December 2021 to discuss improvements to the play area, and funding opportunities. I would be happy to take part in any meetings at a future date to further support this process.
3.	Question from Councillor Diggory Seacome to Cabinet Member Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, Councillor Max Wilkinson
	Yet again the ruling administration has demonstrated its Philistine attributes by relegating the annual art exhibition, traditionally held in Imperial Square in front of the Quadrangle building, to a series of small tents. This does not showcase the artworks to their best advantage, and restricts viewing to a few people at a time. Can the Cabinet

member assure me that next year greater thought will be given to the siting of this exhibition?

Response from

Thank you to Cllr Seacome for celebrating the work of the art exhibition.

Cllr Seacome will be aware that before the redevelopment of the Quadrangle, the art exhibition was presented on scaffolding and metal sheeting. This served a purpose for a number of years; it had a rather brutal appearance and did not stand up well to poorer weather.

When the Quadrangle was redeveloped, this council negotiated the small but attractive plaza on the gardens side of the building. This links the Gardens, the Garden Bar and The Quadrangle to the wider area and has been well received.

In developing the plaza, there were long negotiations with the developer of the Quadrangle. This included numerous engagements with the organisers of Art in the Park to find the appropriate solution for maintaining their event in this location, given the changes to The Quadrangle and the introduction of the plaza. The tents now being used were the agreed solution and are used not only by Art in the Park for their annual event, but also by other groups and organisations in a 'pop up' environment.

The tents, whilst providing a different offer, have the advantage of providing shelter from rain and wind. I am aware that there were some issues with the tents last year regarding the tent seals, but this was rectified by the developer at their cost.

Finally, I would like to address Cllr Seacome's wider point: working with Cheltenham Culture Board, we are currently running Cheltenham's broadest ever consultation on the arts to inform this borough's culture strategy. This is happening at the same time as we prepare for the reopening of The Wilson art gallery and museum, which will include new community art spaces for local artists as part of a wider effort to support the arts in Cheltenham. Therefore, while I cannot claim to match Cllr Seacome's wealth of knowledge, experience of and expertise in the arts, I feel confident in contesting his broader accusation of philistinism.





4.	Question from Councillor Tabi Joy to Cabinet Member Customer and Regulatory Services, Councillor Martin Horwood
	<p>The council (and the public) should be aware that Cheltenham's Air Quality Action Plan expired in 2019. Questions chasing the preparation of the new AQAP have been asked at the January 2020 Cabinet; the February 2021 Council; the April 2021 Cabinet; and most recently at Cabinet in February 2022.</p> <p>At the Cabinet meeting on 15 February 2022, Cllr Max Wilkinson said that the long-delayed new Air Quality Action Plan would be published before the end of March 2022. I can't see any reference to it on the council website: When will the AQAP be published?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>I thank Cllr Joy for her question again as she highlights the issue of air quality in Cheltenham, which is a priority for me as it was for the previous cabinet portfolio holder, Cllr Wilkinson.</p> <p>In 2020 the council had examined data from 21 sites across Cheltenham, consulted with Defra and agreed to change the statutory Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) to rightly focus on the relatively small area where the Air Quality Objective of 40µg/m³ for NO₂ was being exceeded. Therefore, the earlier Cheltenham Air Quality Action Plan was made obsolete by changes to the Air Quality Management Area. The focus on smaller AQMAs follows common practice by other boroughs such as Sutton and Brighton.</p> <p>However, it did then require a new statutory Air Quality Action Plan focussed on that most polluted area in the vicinity of Swindon Road, Poole Way and the Lower High Street but at a time when all staff were under pressure during the pandemic.</p> <p>Clean Air Cheltenham have nevertheless lobbied for a town wide plan and we agree with them. Air quality affects us all and WHO have recently recommended much lower threshold levels not only for nitrous oxides but for particulate matter as well.</p> <p>So we are maintaining air quality monitoring beyond the statutory AQMA and Cllr Wilkinson told Clean Air Cheltenham in June last year that we would go beyond the statutory minimum, produce a town wide plan, engage with the county council highways authority to tackle the major cause of air pollution which is traffic, and also with other partners like the NHS and local business. But, he rightly pointed out that this path “would take a little longer” and this has indeed proved to be the case.</p> <p>Cllr Wilkinson did say in February 2022, that he anticipated both the statutory AQMA action plan and the wider strategy would be published together and that this might happen in March but this has not proved possible. A lot of work has been done for us by consultants but given portfolio changes at both officer and cabinet level, new WHO guidelines and possible changes in levels of pollution as we recover from the pandemic, I would now like to take the time to review this area and make sure that the town-wide plan is right rather than produce an earlier but more limited document. I'm sure I will have all colleagues' support in doing it right rather than too quickly.</p> <p>But in the meantime, Cllr Joy can be reassured that we continue to monitor air pollution levels across Cheltenham which are overwhelmingly within the Air Quality Objective</p>

level, that we continue to engage with Gloucestershire County Council to pursue strategies such as the cleaner transport plans set out in the Connecting Cheltenham report and that we will do everything in our power and resources to make the air that we all breathe cleaner and safer.