

Council
17 October 2022

Member Questions (5 total)

1.	Question from Cllr Tim Harman to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries
	Will the Cabinet Member confirm the cost of the recent refurbishment to the Reception area in the Municipal Offices
	Response from Cabinet Member
	The cost of the building works, refurbishment of the new reception and provision of new office space on the ground floor is £121k. This includes all design, build and finish costs for the space which now provides a number of different ways in which customers can access support and advice from the Council. An additional £7k has been spent to furnish the offices, meeting rooms, customer phone terminals and breakout space which can be used by customers and officers.
2.	Question from Cllr Tim Harman to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries
	Will the cabinet member indicate how many staff normally based at the Municipal Offices work remotely , how many regular attend in person and how often staff working remotely attend the offices
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>This answer includes only Council employees and not staff working for other organisations who are based at or lease space in the Municipal Office building.</p> <p>There are approximately 250 Council officers whose base office is the Municipal Office building. This also includes officers who are customer facing and may undertake most of their work outside of the office.</p> <p>The recent changes to the office building, including the re-opening of the Reception to the public and rationalisation of office space and move to agile working arrangements has supported a more hybrid working environment.</p> <p>Staff are now able to work between the office and home more flexibly and there is more fit for purpose space for staff such as the Neighbourhood team or Parking Enforcement officers to drop into the office between the time they are moving around the town.</p> <p>The office accommodation project was set up before COVID-19 and occupancy numbers at that stage were around 56% which equates to around 140 staff. The new layouts on the ground and first floor allow for</p>

	<p>122 working spaces for Council officers, Publica staff, SWAP and One Legal.</p> <p>A full survey on occupancy post COVID-19 has not yet been completed but an indicative survey undertaken on four days following the receipt of this question showed an average of 63 Council officers were based in the office for at least some of the day.</p> <p>The occupancy of the office will continue to be monitored to ensure that the space continues to meet their needs and be fit for purpose for hybrid working.</p>
3.	<p>Question from Cllr John Payne to the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Councillor Alisha Lewis</p>
	<p>The decision by the Planning Committee to approve the Ice Rink for one year, was described by the Chair as a balanced decision, taking into account the economic benefit to the town and its businesses against the 100 tons of NO2 that would be produced from the generators. 100 tons is a relatively small amount when compared to the total pollution burden in Cheltenham, but the 100 ton burden is being delivered over a relatively short period of time in a very restricted area. On the theme of balance what plans do CBC have to offset this burden, and restore the Council's reputation as a Council committed to climate change?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p><i>Background: Last Christmas, the ice rink in Imperial Gardens used a total of 44,530 litres of standard diesel equating to 117.51 tonnes CO2e (Please note: Not NO2 as per question). Based on our declared emissions in 2020-21 of 5,070 tonnes CO2e, the ice rink generators therefore increased the council's total organisational emissions by 2.32% in 2021-22. This figure related to diesel use only.</i></p> <p>Officers are currently working on plans for the ice rink this Christmas and the current tendering exercise reflects the need to adhere to planning conditions relating to fuel type, emissions and noise. Both Cabinet and the Planning Committee have made clear that the rink must have a lower carbon footprint and cannot rely on standard diesel. Final details about the ice rink are expected to be confirmed during October.</p> <p>Officers are requesting information about the sustainability of all potential suppliers through the procurement process and will score responses against this. Suppliers are required to include in their Tender submission what procedures they have in place to reduce or eliminate single use products (such as plastic), supply chain miles, arrangements for recycling, and other sustainability methods and measures. In particular the suppliers of power to the site will be expected to provide information about procedures in place to reduce the carbon impact of fuel sources and supply chain miles, as well as demonstrating they have an effective and comprehensive sustainability policy and other sustainability methods and measures.</p>

	<p>As reported at scrutiny committee earlier this year, the Council is involved in a wide range of projects aligned to the Carbon Emergency Action Plan adopted in February this year and is targeting a reduction in its own energy use of 20% over the next 12 months. In addition, the property team is looking at the feasibility of installing an upgraded mains electricity supply to Imperial and Montpellier Gardens, to help reduce the carbon impact of future event-related activities. This is the subject of a funding bid at present and more information will be available in due course.</p>
4.	<p>Question from Cllr Wendy Flynn to Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Victoria Atherstone</p>
	<p>Gloucestershire County Council is moving forward with plans to install 1,000 on-street electric vehicle charging points over the next 3 years.</p> <p>Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) owns approximately 5000 homes, managed by Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH).</p> <p>What plans do CBC and CBH have to install, or facilitate the installation of, charging points at the homes of tenants wishing to use an electric vehicle and will efforts be made to secure some of the County's 1000 points for tenants living in council housing and, in particular, council owned flats?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet member</p>
	<p>Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) is planning to install 1,000 electric vehicle charging points across the county. The main focus of this project will be residential locations without off street parking; their aim is to create a wide geographical spread of charging points. GCC will soon be consulting CBC officers on a list of potential proposed locations for charging points. This will give CBC the opportunity to advise on the potential for some of these to be secured for the benefit of council tenants (in collaboration with Cheltenham Borough Homes). Any final decisions regarding the actual location of these charging points will be subject to further detailed feasibility checks etc. (e.g. network capacity) by GCC.</p> <p>Please note that council tenants who wish to install their own electric vehicle charging points can do so with our permission, via Cheltenham Borough Homes. At present, only a very small number of tenants have made such requests, but we do anticipate that demand will rise, so Cheltenham Borough Homes will lead on developing a policy which will help provide clarity to tenants on the processes that have to be followed before any permissions can be granted.</p>
5.	<p>Question from Cllr Emma Nelson to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, Cllr Max Wilkinson</p>
	<p>Anyone visiting Cheltenham seeking Tourist Information might do one of two things...</p> <p>Those who have a smart phone (apparently 84% of the adult population)</p>

might look on Google Maps, and those without, (the remaining 16%!) will likely head for the town centre (in Cheltenham's case probably Montpellier or the Promenade) and seek out prominent notice boards or similar. So, what is Google Maps response? A search for "Tourist Information Centre Cheltenham" only gives results showing Bourton on the Water and Winchcombe.... plus a reference to 77 Promenade, Cheltenham – "Permanently Closed", but thankfully also listing the website link for visitcheltenham.com.

How will the 16% (est 320,000 people / year) get on?

Well, depending on where they find themselves and assuming they are somewhere near the town centre, they may come across one of two types of information maps / notice boards currently displayed around town.

There are the traditional distinctive black Cheltenham Spa **Information notice boards** – all containing "VISIT CHELTENHAM The Festival Town" maps with the familiar "i" clearly shown on the map and including a large yellow highlighted block specifically advertising the Cheltenham Tourist Information Centre located at the Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum. These classic display boards are sited at various prime locations around the town. Two of the most prominent are sited, one by Neptune's Fountain and another adjacent to the Long Gardens (Gloucestershire Constabulary). There are similar displays around the town including one by Imperial Gardens, another further along the Prom opposite Martin & Co and another on the High Street (by The Entertainer).

Bearing in mind that those without smart phones may possibly be less mobile, they will then make their way to The Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum only to find no TIC there!

There are also several, more modern look, notice boards at strategic sites around the town including in Montpellier (by entrance to Montpellier Gardens), Imperial Square (outside 131), Imperial Gardens (outside the Quadrangle), at Neptune's Fountain, on the Promenade (by the Minotaur) and on the High Street (opposite TSB), again all containing maps showing where the "i" (TIC)... is.... At the Wilson!

Some of these boards are in a sorry state, damaged and with graffiti. Bath Parade Car Park also has a **Cheltenham Spa Information board**, this time with an attached black metal box - "Cheltenham Town Centre Map Available Here for £1"!

Whose job is it to keep these up to date? Given the high footfall of tourists into the Town, particularly during key festivals such as the current Literature Festival, **surely these strategic sites should be checked, updated and maintained?**

This does not reflect well on the town's ambitions to attract more tourists.

Please explain why it has taken so so long to update this crucial town centre tourist information on these noticeboards at a time when we are trying to encourage visitors to our town?

This administration are now covering Tourist Information in a small POD on the High Street, displaying the "VISIT CHELTENHAM the Festival Town" logo. The pod is often locked and unmanned - **how do visitors to Cheltenham find this pod?**

	<p>We were told that the pod in the High Street is a trial, now extended, that there were plans to change the set-up at the pod, or ‘information exchange’, and we could expect more developments at the pod in September.... What developments?</p> <p>How long will this trial be? How will you judge whether the trial is a success or not? What criteria will you use? How can the High Street be seen as a “more central” tourist location than The Promenade, home to Neptune’s Fountain, the Minotaur, The Long Gardens and the War Memorial??</p> <p>Would you consider siting a TIC in the newly refurbished and splendid Municipal Office Reception Area where it could be manned – surely this would be an excellent location for a fully functional TIC?</p>
	<p>Response from Cabinet Member</p>
	<p>Thank you to Councillor Nelson for submitting such a lengthy and detailed comment. For clarity of response I have attempted to extract the direct questions posed:</p> <p>1. A) Whose job is it to keep these up to date? And 1. B) Surely these strategic sites should be checked, updated and maintained?</p> <p>My assumption is that you are referring to various information and wayfinding boards around the town. These are the responsibility of the Borough Council townscape team. Officers are investigating a solution and the removal of erroneous signs for tourist information is a priority.</p> <p>2. We were told that the pod in the High Street is a trial, now extended, that there were plans to change the set-up at the pod, or ‘information exchange’, and we could expect more developments at the pod in September.... What developments?</p> <p>Councillor Nelson may have noted updates to event signs in the Pod. Councillor Nelson may also have noted posters advertising the Pod for use by community groups. In recent days, she may have noted that University students used the Pod. A defibrillator has also been installed there, courtesy of the Public Hearts Cheltenham Defibrillator Campaign.</p> <p>3. How long will this trial be? How will you judge whether the trial is a success or not? What criteria will you use?</p> <p>The initial trial period has been extended for an indefinite period. Success will be judged by the number of community groups that take up an offer to use the Pod space, as well as revenue generated by hires from businesses. In due course, when the possible use as a tourism information base from next spring is realised, that will also feature in the success criteria.</p>

4. Would you consider siting a TIC in the newly refurbished and splendid Municipal Office Reception Area where it could be manned – surely this would be an excellent location for a fully functional TIC?

Yes. That is exactly what is happening. For more information, Councillor Nelson can refer to the answers to public questions put to today's meeting.