

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet

Minutes

Meeting date: 11 June 2024

Meeting time: 6.00 pm - 6.30 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Victoria Atherstone, Mike Collins, Iain Dobie, Rowena Hay, Martin Horwood, Peter Jeffries, Alisha Lewis and Izaak Tailford

Also in attendance:

Claire Hughes (Director of Governance and Customer Services and Monitoring Officer) and Gareth Edmundson (Chief Executive)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Clucas.

2 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 May will be approved at the next meeting.

3 Declarations of interest

There were none.

4 Public and Member Questions and Petitions

There were no Member questions or petitions.

Three public questions had been received:

1. Question from Mr David Redgewell to Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins

Royal Well Bus and Coach Station is owned by Cheltenham Borough Council, with bus and coach station shelter maintenance by Gloucestershire County Council, the transport authority. A range of local and national bus services operate out of Royal Well.

What discussions are going on with Gloucestershire County Council as part of the Bus Services Improvement Plan to:

- have more bus and coach services use the Royal Well bus and coach station and reduce overcrowding bus stands in Cheltenham town centre;
- improve passenger experience in the bus and coach station - an economic gateway to Cheltenham Spa, the Cotswolds and south west England - by improvements to Royal Well toilets used by passengers at the bus and coach station and in bus and coach station café, including removing all out-of-date emergency phone number and radar key information for the Borough Council, improving waiting shelters and real-time information systems, and improving disabled access and terminal facilities on council-owned Royal Crescent private car park?

Cabinet Member response:

I would like to thank Mr Redgewell for his question. Decisions in respect of bus routing were significantly impacted by deregulation in the 1980's. This resulted in the loss of Cheltenham Borough Council control of routes, frequencies, bus shelter facilities and general quality of the network. Gloucestershire County Council is the Highways Authority and works with the bus providers to seek to bring forward improvements in public transport. A refresh of this engagement is currently ongoing through the review of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), due to be submitted to Government this month. We support the vision and objectives of this plan (summarised below), but also acknowledge the challenges in delivery due to the limitations around control which does impact on joining up networks to meet the needs of local communities. With this in mind, we are in an open conversation with the county council on the opportunities and challenges in respect of town centre routing and accessibility, including the role Royal Well bus station plays.

Increase bus patronage by providing a high-quality bus network, accessible from the whole county, and fully integrated with other transport modes, that people choose to use for all journey types because it's convenient, attractive, easy to use, and value for money.

Faster and more reliable bus services	Improved information, marketing and innovation
An enhanced bus network	Better vehicles
More attractive fares and ticketing	Improved interchange and bus stop infrastructure

In respect of the information available at the Royal Well public toilets which are directly in the control of the borough Council, I thank Mr Redgewell for bringing this to our attention. The property services team were aware of the updates needed and any remedial actions have already been initiated.

2. Question from Mr David Redgewell to Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Victoria Atherstone and Cabinet Member for Major Developments and Housing Delivery Councillor Peter Jeffries

As a wheelchair user, the need to improve the public realm in the town centre and the rest of the town is very important, including the resurfacing of pavements and paving stones in the town centre. The broken public realm paved area creates a poor environment in Cheltenham town centre and the Borough Council area. We have a lot of fly tipping on pavements and Gardens, along with graffiti tagging on buildings and at the bus and coach shelter.

What action is the Borough taking with Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner and Gloucestershire police, the British Transport police, and environment enforcement officers to deal with this environment crime within the Borough?

Cabinet Member response:

With regards to fly tipping on pavements and gardens and, graffiti tagging on buildings and at the bus and coach shelters, enviro-crime officers always seek to punish those responsible where there is accessible evidence to do so.

You will be aware from your previous question to Cabinet in December 2023 that this authority has adopted a new graffiti policy and increased the fines for graffiti offences from £150 up to £500.

Unfortunately catching people responsible for graffiti and tags is a difficult and complex task because they purposely operate under the cover of darkness and in areas not covered by adequate street lighting and surveillance. However, council officers are proactive in both pursuing all lines of enquiries and evidence that they can obtain.

This includes, for example, proactive operations with the police, scrutinising CCTV footage where this is available and gathering information on serial taggers to build up intelligence around their activities (including online).

Similarly with fly tipping, council officers proactively target fly tipping hotspots through regular patrols and deployment of CCTV. Fly tipping on pavements, also referred to as “side waste” – where businesses and residents do not present their waste in the correct way – is something council officers continuously enforce. For example, in recent weeks and months action has been taken on various streets in St. Pauls, the town centre, the Moors and Charlton Kings in response to complaints by residents and businesses.

It is important that people report enviro-crimes because it helps officers build an intelligence and an evidence base that helps with catching people who blight the town. Reports of enviro-crimes can be made on our website <https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/report-it>, by email to envhealth@cheltenham.gov.uk or by calling 01242 264135.

Regarding the condition of the pavements, the maintenance and resurfacing of pavements and paving stones in the town centre is largely the responsibility of Gloucestershire County Council Highways. GCC Highways monitor the town centre as part of their regular highway safety inspections. Larger scale planned works can be found on their website which includes the Strand pedestrian area between Cambray Place and Bath Road.
Map (highway-iams.uk)

Cheltenham Borough Council is responsible for public furniture and planters in the town centre, and I am pleased to say we recently undertook replanting of containers on Cambray Place and The Strand with perennials and other plants beneficial to pollinating insects.

3. Question from Mr Steven Thomas for Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Councillor Iain Dobie

The Met Office have confirmed that geo-engineering is taking place in our skies (see link below):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=CX6pzzoACwc&si=oHxtCKaZPn9BGGDh&fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR3hgoF69CWRn2mtOUILtgdSE_M_-ESqdrWI5NZSkEMLdb4HrsTwp6NbzIk_aem_ATwFwAnW4CXJZMqcSVaQJ6VIZFUqbpRJ71TqaUeb19hJpOMLksCpoAM372KMNnYmuR8Kzw8XPLgLmYVcuoC-ptl6

Furthermore, the UK cloud seeding market is big business:

<https://markwideresearch.com/uk-cloud-seeding-market/>

Can you please advise why this is not being factored into your clean air policy which you are pursuing?

Cabinet Member response:

Many thanks for getting in touch. If the 'clean air policy' in question refers to Cheltenham Borough Council's Air Quality Action Plan, this addresses specific issues of high NOx & PM pollutants in accordance with specific statutory duties where exceedances are identified. Therefore, subjects such as "geo-engineering" and "UK cloud seeding" still at government-controlled research only levels, would not be featured in this plan and are not currently being considered by the council in any other policies.

Geo-engineering and UK Cloud Seeding are national government matters and not within the scope, powers, and resources of this local authority. The government published a position statement on "greenhouse gas removal technologies and solar radiation management" that may be of interest.

Supplementary question:

With proof that at least ten companies are engaged in cloud-seeding activities across the UK, spraying dangerous chemicals to manipulate the weather and cause excessive rainfall, as well as independent laboratory analysis samples showing high levels of aluminium, barium and strontium are being sprayed and causing pollution and ill-health, why is this not being taken into account in Cheltenham's Clean Air Policy, and why is the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency not addressing it as the real cause of climate change?

Cabinet Member response:

Thank you for your question. I reiterate that these matters do not fall within the scope of CBC's clean air policy, which is concerned with NOx and PM pollutants. This is not a question for the council and needs to be directed elsewhere.

5 Food Safety Service Plan - update

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities introduced her report, and thanked all officers responsible for creating a detailed Food Safety Service Plan to ensure the wellbeing of residents and visitors with food fit for human consumption, while supporting the success of local businesses, 41% of which are restaurants or cafes.

She said all new businesses involved in food handling must register at least 28 days before they begin to operate. 158 new food business inspections were carried out between April 2023 and March 2024, 158 new food business inspections were carried out, and on 01 April 2024, CBC was responsible for regulating 1102 registered food businesses. A huge amount of work has gone into compiling the plan, which shows how buoyant these businesses are when it comes to food production, processing and distribution. The council has a statutory duty to monitor, verify and enforce the requirements of food law, and ensure that we have sufficient resources to do so with suitably trained, authorised officers.

She hoped Members would approve the plan.

The Leader commented that it is vital to have these policies in place, and critically important to the safety of Cheltenham residents. She thanked officers for all the work they do.

RESOLVED that:

- **the Food Safety Service Plan 2024-25 is approved**

6 Energy efficiency proposals for Leisure@Cheltenham

The Cabinet Member introduced the report, saying it is absolutely in line with our Net Zero Action Plan, and funded by the council-approved Green Investment Fund. The detailed business case has already been approved by the Green Investment Board, and both investments will reduce energy use and hence costs – notably the purchase of pool covers will generate a return on investment of 16.4%

He said that at a time of rapidly increasing energy costs – and noting that almost half of CBC's energy bill is spent on Leisure@ - this decision not only makes sense financially but also delivers significant carbon savings and hence is on track towards our declared Net Zero ambitions.

He trusted that the Cabinet would endorse the recommendations.

Having been part of the Green Investment Board which approved these proposals, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets was excited to see these proposals coming to fruition and was excited to see how much this not-massive amount of spending would save. She thanked the team and officers for their great work.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. a capital investment of £264,500 to replace the existing lighting system in the leisure centre with LED technology is approved;**
- 2. a capital investment of £83,750 from the Green Investment Fund to install pool covers across the building is approved;**
- 3. authority is delegated to the Director of Finance and Assets (Deputy s151 Officer) to procure and award the contract for the installation of the equipment and monitor the implementation.**

7 Housing and Tenancy Fraud Policy

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services, the Leader introduced the report, saying that the policy needed to be updated following

the decision to bring CBH back in-house. The reasons and recommendations are clearly set out in the report.

There were no Member comments on this issue.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. the Housing and Tenancy Fraud Policy is adopted;**
- 2. authority is delegated to the Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer to approve future minor amendments to the Policy in consultation with the Head of Service Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit and One Legal.**

8 To accept £306,065 capital grant funding from the English Sports Council

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets said she was excited to be bringing forward this fantastic funding for the Lido, a spectacular heritage site in the heart of the town, currently facing significant budgetary pressures largely due to the cost of energy. This retrofit funding will help keep the doors open and the building running, and will also set a precedent for other heritage buildings in town, working towards our net zero goal. She urged Members to support it.

The Leader commented on the importance of the Lido as both a heritage building and leisure facility, and said anything to support its continued use, success and sustainability was to be welcomed.

RESOLVED that:

In respect of an offer of £306,065 capital grant funding from the English Sports Council:

- 1. the Director of Finance and Assets is authorised to agree and sign a capital grant agreement with the English Sports Council whereby a capital grant payment of £306,065 will be paid to the Council.**
- 2. the Director of Finance and Assets is authorised to agree and sign a grant adherence agreement between the English Sports Council, Sandford Lido Limited (as the facility owner) and Cheltenham Borough Council (as applicant) to enable the whole capital grant to be passed to Sandford Lido Limited to enable them to install Photo Voltaic panels and Pool Covers.**
- 3. the Director of Finance and Assets is authorised to agree and sign a grant agreement between Sandford Lido Limited (as the facility owner) and Cheltenham Borough Council (as applicant) in order to pass a number of Sport England obligations onto the Lido.**

9 Housing Transition Governance Arrangements

The Leader introduced the report, on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services, and began by reminding Members of the pledge to place the voice of tenants and leaseholders at the heart of housing services, following the winding-up of CBH, both meeting the requirements of the regulator and giving them oversight of and influence over the services they receive. The paper sets out proposals for effective and robust governance arrangements, to take effect from 01 July, allowing residents to play an essential part in shaping CBC's housing service.

She said the structure seeks to ensure effective engagement with tenants, leaseholders and shared ownership owners, as well as providing Members with the required level of oversight. The detail is set out in the report, but in summary includes the establishment of a new Housing Cabinet Committee, comprising five elected Members (including the Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services), two tenant representatives, one leaseholder representative and one shared ownership representative. The Committee will monitor performance, delivery, and the impacts of investment, receive and consider complaints, have oversight of the risk register, and provide strong and effective connectivity between the council and the Tenant Panel.

To reflect the need of the council to hear tenants' voices, through tenant involvement and engagement, a Tenant Panel and a separate Leaseholder/Shared Ownership Panel will be established, to create space where tenants and leaseholders can act as scrutineers and critical friends, working with the council as it develops its plans, priorities and principles.

She said CBH currently operates a successful Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSIP) which the council will build on and develop further to ensure strong links are forged between tenants and the Housing Cabinet Committee. She is pleased to note that the current TSIP members are keen to continue their work under the newly-named Tenant Panel, and the newly-created Leaseholder/Shared Ownership Panel will facilitate high-level engagement and enable the council to address some of the issues raised by leaseholders in the recent consultation.

She ended by saying that this is a major step forward in the transition journey which she hoped Members would support.

The Cabinet Member for Major Development and Housing said that good governance is needed to protect and improve services for our residents. Listening to tenants' views via TSIP is essential; he is very pleased we have reached this point and thanked all involved for the hours of work involved in getting us here.

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities said that the consultation undertaken when she was Cabinet Member for Housing had a great response rate, and hoped that all those who took the trouble to respond will be pleased to note that the council has listened and is introducing a new governance formant to give them a greater voice. She understands that the challenges are requirements of tenants are

quite different from those of leaseholders and shared ownership residents, and it is good that they all have a platform. This is a positive move and a great step forward.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. the governance arrangements, including tenant panel and leaseholder/shared ownership panel are approved;**
- 2. the Housing Cabinet Committee as set out in the terms of reference at Appendix 4 is established;**
- 3. arrangements for tenant representatives on the Housing Cabinet Committee as set out in Paragraph 5.4 of this report are agreed;**
- 4. the appointment of leaseholders and shared ownership owners to the Housing Cabinet Committee and Leaseholder/Shared Ownership Panel is delegated to Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services in consultation with the Leader;**
- 5. the appointments set out in Part 10 of the report are noted;**
- 6. Council is recommended to delegate the appointment of members to the Housing Cabinet Committee to Group Leaders**
- 7. Council is recommended to approve the consequential amendments to the constitution to reflect the new governance arrangements**

10 Property Compliance Policies

On behalf of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services, the Leader said with the transition of housing services on 01 July, the Cabinet is asked to approve the adoption of six property compliance policies relating to major areas of health and safety regulations, namely Asbestos, Electrical Safety, Fire Safety, Gas Safety, Lifts and Water Hygiene, plus Damp, Mould and Condensation. She said the policies form part of the council's wider organisation commitment to drive a health and safety culture amongst staff and contractors. A summary of each policy is set out, including detail of the council's responsibilities as landlord.

Members did not have any questions or comments.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. the following policies are approved:**
 - a) Housing Asbestos Policy**
 - b) Housing Electrical Safety, Alarms and Automated Equipment Policy**

- c) Housing Fire Safety Policy**
- d) Housing Gas Safety Policy**
- e) Housing Water Safety Policy**
- f) Housing Damp Mould and Condensation Policy**

- 2. authority is delegated to the Director of Governance and Customer Services and the Deputy Chief Executive to make minor amendments to the policies to reflect changes in legislation and/organisational structure.**

11 Briefing from Cabinet Members

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities had two items to share:

- the Party in the Park will take place on Friday 02 August at Pittville Park, offering a day of exciting and fun activities for families, children and visitors;
- she recently enjoyed chairing her first No Child Left Behind board meeting, saying it was great to meet the committee members and see the fantastic work they do for children and young people. She looked forward to supporting the group's ambitions in the coming year.

The Leader congratulated Cheltenham Festivals on the success of the recent Science Festival, saying it was good to see groups of excited schoolchildren on their way to attend events. She said the interactive zone was amazing.

Other Cabinet Members had no briefings to share on this occasion.

12 Cabinet Member decisions since last meeting

There were none to report.