

# Council

Meeting date: 19 June 2023

Deadline for questions: 08 June 2023

## Public Questions (3 total)

### 1. Question from Mr Jay-Jay Potter-Peachey to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, Councillor Max Wilkinson

Having passed a [motion](#) to agree to a Rainbow Crossing installation here in Cheltenham. Can I ask for an update and whether or not this is going to be happening soon. The motion passed agreed that Cheltenham should have one and as per the motion from GCC it also identified a location.

#### Response from Cabinet Member

Thank you to Jay-Jay for his question. I am a supporter of Pride in Gloucestershire and an ally of the LGBTQ+ community and I know that he has been an effective campaigner on this subject for many years. I welcome and applaud his ongoing commitment to the cause. As Jay-Jay will be aware from his involvement in the rainbow crossing scheme in Gloucester, these projects must be overseen by the Highways Authority, Gloucestershire County Council. The County Council's response to Cheltenham Borough Council is several hundred words and not appropriate for inclusion in an answer, but I am happy to share it separately. While the County Council expressed support for the aims of Pride, the view expressed was that rainbow crossings are costly when compared with other potential support that might be given to the cause. The County Council also referenced the very many other considerations it takes into account, including safety and site selection. The County Council concluded that it would not support or be funding a rainbow crossing in Cheltenham and, even if Cheltenham Borough Council had sufficient budget to fund a scheme, Highways Officers would recommend other ways to spend the money. Jay-Jay may wish to consider further engagement with the County Council on the subject of the rainbow crossing and other options for infrastructure and street furniture. In terms of potential funding from the Borough Council, there are various annual grants available that could support public engagement activities for Pride, as well as the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund. I am of course happy to meet Jay-Jay and discuss this at his convenience. I would recommend that if and when a meeting is convened, a member of the County Council Highways team is in attendance.

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## **2. Question from Hon. Alderman Anne Regan to the Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie**

People's homes in Hatherley were recently photographed by recycling staff using an iPad.

- a. Does the council have legal permission to invade residents' privacy?
- b. If the front door bearing the house number is on the side of the house will this photography contribute to trespassing?
- c. Many people have justifiable reasons for not leaving their recycling boxes outside their premises, Age constraints, holidays, business travel etc are reasons for not having their boxes out. Why is the council taking this heavy-handed approach?
- d. How many telephone calls in the last 6 months, per week, has the council received from residents asking for a second collection?
- e. What is the legality of this action and what financial toll does the council propose to fine residents?

### **Response from Cabinet Member**

The Council has a statutory responsibility to collect waste and recycling for residents in Cheltenham just like all other waste collection authorities across the country. Collection crews collect from the kerbside, in other words, the pavement, unless residents give their permission for collections to be made from an agreed location on their land as part of an assisted collection.

Collection crews now have access to 'in cab technology' allowing them to take photographs of any operational issues which are relevant to delivering that service for residents. These photographs are stored securely in the system for 30 days, then deleted, and only shared with the resident at that property if there is an issue raised by the resident regarding their collection, for example, a missed bin report. The photographs are intended to evidence that a collection has or hasn't been made, or other operational issues, and I am assured does not constitute any invasion of privacy or trespassing. The same image may well be available on Google Maps Street View.

Unfortunately we are unable to provide any telephone statistics on 'second collections' as they are not identified as such.

The Council has no powers to fine any resident for failing to present waste or recycling, nor do we have any plans to seek to do so.

We are actively encouraging the reduction in waste across the borough and we applaud residents who do not present refuse bins because they do not have any waste. We are however keen to ensure that tax payers money is not wasted in

funding crews having to return to collect refuse bins from properties who had failed to present in time for their scheduled collection.

Equally we are keen for residents to present sorted recycling for collection but not all do. Photographing unsorted recycling boxes will help us support residents to sort their recycling.

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### **3. Question from Hon Alderman Anne Regan to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries**

The council-owned site in Hayden Lane was used as a gardening centre for the council. I understood the land was to be sold for housing development many years ago.

Why has nothing been achieved on this site when we are so desperate for social housing in this town?

#### **Response from Cabinet Member**

Thank you Mrs Anne Regan for your question, as an ex Cheltenham borough councillor you will undoubtedly be aware of the pressures we face in Cheltenham because of the national housing crisis. This crisis has been going on for decades, and differing governments have over this time not really grasped the depth of the crisis and provided any meaningful impact in bring about positive change. I am sure you will be supportive of this administrations housing investment plan being a key priority. Investing £180 million pounds in providing more affordable housing will make a meaningful difference in providing more much needed homes in our town.

I'm sure you will agree that one of the key challenges we face in reducing the housing pressures across Cheltenham is where are homes going to be provided and what site are appropriate.

Following the decision to close operations at Arle Nursery, the site was allocated and adjoining land within the Cheltenham Plan for housing development. The council have been exploring the various issues involved in securing redevelopment, with the objectives of maximising housing delivery, maximising housing options (including provision of affordable to rent housing and shared ownership housing) and maximising the latent value of the site to generate a capital receipt for reinvestment into the council's corporate priorities and capital programme.

The site and adjoining land is constrained by various matters, including highways and access, flooding along the line of the nearby River Chelt, ecology and wildlife and most pertinently, two high-pressure gas pipes running north to south between the Nursery and the adjoining allocated land. This has two implications: firstly, the

need maintain a protection zone along the line of these pipes; and secondly, the requirement for substantial engineering works in order to provide an access road over the line of them, which is both challenging and expensive.

Having undertaken various surveys, including ecological, legal, ground and utilities, the site was originally appraised for development by the councils housing arm, Cheltenham Borough Homes. However, they were unable to deliver a scheme that would meet all of the objectives for this site. The council therefore re-evaluated the delivery options and determined a partnership approach with a third party was most likely to deliver on the core objectives.

Subsequently, the council has been working with another housing provider who has been able to overcome the constraints within the site area and are now completing the necessary site investigations as part of the preparation and submission of a planning application. The council and its partners are working together to deliver a consented scheme by March 2024, with construction starting shortly thereafter, and the first new dwellings being ready for occupation towards the end of 2024.

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