

# Council

**Meeting date: 16 October**

## **Member Questions (8 total)**

### **1.Question from Councillor Diggory Seacome to Cabinet Member Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing, Councillor Max Wilkinson**

We were promised last year, before the installation of the ice rink, that mains electricity, or at least work starting on providing it, was to be installed. This has not happened. When is that likely to happen?

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

Thank you to Councillor Seacome for the question. He raises an important issue. Cllr Seacome is a close follower of matters in Imperial Square and of discussions at this Council. Therefore, he will know that it is correct to say that this authority is seeking to install electrical power sources for events. However, the position stated on the ice rink for this year, and until electrical infrastructure is installed, was to not use traditional diesel generators and instead pursue alternative energy supplies. That is exactly what we are aiming to do this winter, by using an HVO fuel and battery method. This innovative solution is being provided by a locally based company at the leading edge of its field. This technology will make a substantial cut in event emissions compared to a traditional diesel generator. The emissions will, of course, be measured and reported on after the event, but the amount of HVO fuel used will be reliant on the weather. Crucially for local residents of Imperial Square, the hyperlocal air quality impacts of a diesel generator will be vastly reduced too.

We are extremely pleased to have moved away from the traditional diesel fuel option which most outdoor events regularly rely upon. It is a huge step forward for the Council's climate goals and one which we will look to build on. Work is underway to understand how we may be able to increase the fixed power supply to Imperial Gardens using the funding secured through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Hydrock, an engineering design company, have been appointed to work with the Council and National Grid to develop a design and specification for any required infrastructure. A proposal for any required infrastructure to deliver the power required to support events in the gardens is expected to be provided to the Council early in 2024 when Members will be able to take a decision on the wider risks and benefits of proceeding.

### **2. Question from Councillor Tabi Joy to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie**

In terms of brown bag garden waste collection, why are some streets are qualified for and why some aren't qualified for, and is it an iterative process where more streets may become qualified?

**Response from Cabinet Member**

The Council's main garden waste service is a borough wide brown bin collection service from the kerbside. However, in some roads residents have little or no space for a wheelie bin and the garden bag service is offered only to these residents and serviced using a different vehicle. I am keen to see this service reviewed to ensure we are minimising our carbon emissions. Details of our garden waste service are available on the website [Brown bin garden waste collection | Garden waste | Cheltenham Borough Council](#)

**3. Question from Councillor Tabi Joy to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie**

Could garden waste bags be collected from CBC and CBH sites in addition to the Municipal Offices?

**Response from Cabinet Member**

I am committed to working with residents to ensure our services meet their needs within the available resources we have. Any specific requirements should be discussed with officers who I am sure will be more than willing to help. Regulations around how and where waste is stored need to be adhered to.

CBH sites such as the St Paul's Community Hub can subscribe to the garden bin subscription service and officers have been in discussion with the Hub about this.

**4. Question from Councillor Tabi Joy to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie**

Previously Ubico have collected fly-tipped items from unadopted alleyways, but that seems have recently changed. Has the contract for fly-tipping with Ubico changed, and if so, might this be subject to further adjustment in the near future?

**Response from Cabinet Member**

I am keen to ensure we tackle fly tipping across the borough and I am not aware that anything has changed recently, nor are officers. The neighbourhood team seek the removal of fly tipping on private land, which includes unadopted lanes, by the land owners or culprits. There will be particular issues with each individual alleyway I am sure and no doubt these are not new issues but the same ones that keep cropping up every now and again. If Councillor Joy has any specific examples could she please let me know and I can investigate for her.

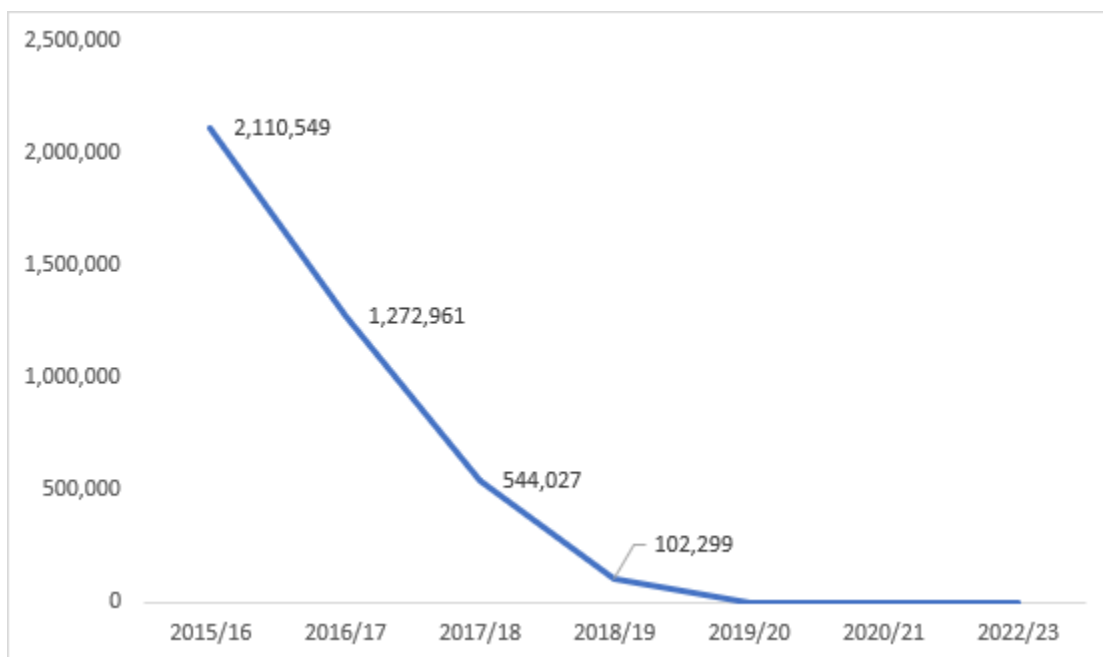
## 5. Question from Councillor Julian Tooke to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries

Since May 2015, please can you quantify how much the revenue support grant (direct guaranteed funding from central government) has been reduced per annum and also, if it had increased by inflation every year, how much we would have expected to have received from central government between May 2010 and now (so we can quantify the funding gap).

Please can you also quantify much of this funding gap, CBC has been able to make up via increases in council tax and business rates.

### Response from Cabinet Member

I would like to thank Councillor Tooke for his question. In the 2015/16 final budget, this Council received £2.110m of revenue support grant from the Government which in the years since has reduced to nil. The profile of the reduction is demonstrated in the graph below:



Since 2010, the Council has received £13.919m in revenue support grant from the Government. In the 2010/11 financial year alone we received £1.689m. Had this level of funding been maintained and increased with inflation, this amount would have been £25.285m, a gap of £11.366m.

This gap has been made up through Council Tax growth (£1.9m), business rates growth (approx. £2m) and the remaining £7.3m has been delivered through increasing commercial activities, savings and efficiencies in the base budget.

#### **6. Question from Councillor Tim Harman to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Street Services, Councillor Iain Dobie**

The Government has increased the maximum on the spot fine people who litter graffiti from £150 to £500 and for fly tipping from £400 to £1000.

According to Gloucestershire Live Gloucester City Council in 2021/22 issued 1,514 fines compared with 18 by Cheltenham Borough Council .

Can he cabinet member explain this difference or does he feel that Cheltenham has no problems with Litter, Graffiti and Fly tipping ?”

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

The Cabinet Member for Customer and Regulatory Services recently agreed to increase the level of Financial Penalty Notices in line with new legislation recognising the need to take a robust approach to ASB and environmental-crime.

CBC cannot comment on the accuracy of the number of FPNs reported by Gloucestershire Live. Gloucester City Council outsource their litter enforcement to a commercial company who will, no doubt, set income targets for their officers. This will drive and influence the approach taken by the city council to maximise the number of FPNs issued and income generated from it.

In Cheltenham, the number of litter FPNs issued by officers are:

2021 – 51    2022 – 26    2023 – To date – 5

Other FPNs

Graffiti - 2021 – 15    2022 – 0    2023 – To date – 0

Fly tipping - 2021 – 62    2022 – 56    2023 – To date – 19

A large part of the decrease in litter FPNs is attributable to officers undertaking a lot of education in accordance with the Corporate Enforcement Policy that encourages engagement before enforcement in most cases. For example, historically a lot of FPNs were issued to food delivery drivers who dropped a lot of litter and cigarette butts when waiting for work to come in. Neighbourhood officers working with them has resulted in substantial improvements that means officers did not need to issue FPNs.

We take action in accordance with our Corporate Enforcement Policy. Where there is credible evidence of offences, Neighbourhood Officers will take appropriate enforcement action. Issuing FPNs are not always the most appropriate. For example, particularly in cases of fly tipping and graffiti, the council might pursue a prosecution as the most appropriate course of action instead of issuing a FPN.

There are also certain limitations in the legislation where, for example, issuing FPNs is complicated where an alleged offender refuses to provide council officers with name and details. However, officers will take action in all cases where they have credible evidence and the information they need. Where necessary, officers will call on support from the police to assist but this is dependent on available resources.

## **7. Question from Councillor Emma Nelson to the Leader, Councillor Rowena Hay**

We have recently lost at least three key senior and experienced CBC Officers in the Director for Climate Change, Executive Director Place & Communities and the Planning Enforcement Officer.

- What steps are CBC taking to recruit to fill these positions?
- What is the CBC Succession Planning Policy and how confident are they that it is working?
- What was the annual cost of each of their positions? And what is the forecast annual cost of Interim Management to cover these positions?
- Are there any other expected / known departures of senior Officers coming anytime soon, and if so, who and when?

Thank you to Councillor Nelson for the question. Matters of staffing are ultimately a matter for the Head of Paid Service who is ultimately responsible for making recommendations on the organisational structure for approval to members. As highlighted at the recent A&R committee, following the LGA peer review the Chief Executive highlighted to the committee that he was proposing to review the senior positions in the organisations in light of the report to ensure they were fit for purpose. In addition, I understand that if the Cabinet Report relating to Cheltenham Borough Homes is approved by Cabinet on the 17 October this will require a further review of senior positions. Therefore, it is expected that like for like replacements for posts of Executive Director for Place & Communities and the Director for Climate Change will be recruited to. The combined full year cost of these two posts is £250k (£140k and £110k respectively). A cross-party A&R sub committee recently appointed to an interim position to oversee the Climate agenda, the cost of this interim cover is forecast to cost £85k.

With regard to planning enforcement, I understand we are actively seeking to recruit a Planning Enforcement Officer on a contract basis. Employing a contractor gives an opportunity to review the organisation and resources for this function

CBC does not have a succession planning policy but the organisation actively looks to invest in and develop staff. The Council's record on apprentices and the recruitment of graduates via the national LGA scheme is evidence of the Council's commitment to develop talent.

While there are national and acute shortages of qualified staff across different disciplines in local government – planning being particularly challenging, CBC continues to look at ways we can promote the Council as a great place to work and

explore how we advertise jobs and attract talent. The Council has also expressed an interest in joining a national LGA initiative to look at how we can improve local government recruitment.

With regard to further staffing departures, I am not aware of further departures but as with any organisation normal churn of staffing is expected. National staffing shortages have made the recruitment market more competitive so this does create a risk of creating a higher churn if staff are successful in being promoted to roles outside the Council. However, as confirmed by the LGA peer review, Cheltenham has been highlighted as having a positive organisational culture and remains an attractive and welcoming place to work.

#### **8. Question from Councillor Emma Nelson to the Leader, Councillor Rowena Hay**

Glos Live recently reported that Gloucester City Council effectively lost out on £220k S106 funding due to expiry of time limit to spend.

How much is currently held by CBC under S106 and what are the expiry dates against each lump sum? I tried to find this on the CBC website but couldn't.

#### **Response from the Leader**

Thank you Cllr Nelson for your question, officers regularly monitor our situation with regards to our position on s106 contributions held, including expenditure. Indeed the Council publishes an annual report setting out the position as part of Cheltenham Borough Council's annual infrastructure funding statement for community infrastructure levy and section 106 [IFS22 App 2 Infrastructure Funding Statement.pdf \(cheltenham.gov.uk\)](#). The next Cabinet report on this is scheduled for the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

Currently £2,325,402.72 is held following the completion of s.106 agreements but all of this has been committed to schemes within timescales set out in those agreements. Therefore, there is no danger of the Council being required to repay any money back.

