

Cabinet

11 June 2024

Public Questions (3 total)

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Well toilets used by passengers at the bus and coach station and in bus and coach station café, including removing all out-of-date emergency phone number and radar key information for the Borough Council, improving waiting shelters and real-time information systems, and improving disabled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 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.

To give you some examples that this Council is proactive these are some recent outcomes

Date range: 01.04–31.03 [financial year]

2021–2022: 164 cases

Removal request letters: 25

Community Protection Warning Notice (CPWNs) issued: 4

Community Protection Notices (CPNs) issued: 0

2022–2023: 225 cases

Removal request letters: 32

CPWS issued: 6

CPNS issued: 0

2023–2024: 258 cases

Removal request letters: 45

CPWS issued: 10

CPNS issued: 2

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.

Condition of Pavements response

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 \(highway-iams.uk\)](http://www.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_ATwFwAnW4CXJZMqcSVaQJ6VIZFUqbpRJ71TqaUeb19hJpOMLksCpoAM372KMNNYmuR8Kzw8XPLqLmYVcuoC-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.