

Cheltenham Borough Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes

Meeting date: 19 May 2025

Meeting time: 18:00 – 18:55

In attendance:

Councillors:

Jackie Chelin (Vice-Chair), Graham Beale, Julia Chandler, Chris Day, Sandra Holliday, Richard Pineger, Jan Foster and Hannah Healy

Also in attendance:

Claire Hughes, Richard Gibson and Victoria Bishop

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Joy, Garcia Clamp and Smith.

Cllr Foster attended as a substitute for Cllr Joy.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the 31st March meeting were approved.

4 Public and Member questions, calls for actions and petitions

There were none.

5 Cabinet Briefing

Cllr Hay as Leader attended the meeting but as Council had occurred so recently there was nothing to report.

She invited Members to ask any questions of which there were none.

6 Matters referred to committee

There were none.

7 Feedback from other scrutiny meetings attended

There had been no recent scrutiny meetings due to the County Council Elections.

8 Updates from scrutiny task groups

There are currently no scrutiny task groups.

9 Physical activity and sport strategy for Cheltenham - Draft Action Plan

The Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships introduced the report as published. He explained that the action plan was being taken to Cabinet for approval on the 20th May.

He then gave some background to the report stating that there are a number of reasons for the Council to have an up-to-date sports and physical activity strategy including the need to secure investment into the Council's leisure facilities, supporting the ambitions of local sporting clubs, and addressing health inequalities. In addition, the strategy was identified as a corporate priority in the corporate plan 2023-2027.

The report sets out the journey of work that has been done since 2023. There have been two studies carried out – one with regard to leisure facilities and the other with regard to playing pitches. These provide a robust evidence base for the future. There was also a survey of young people the results of which were taken to Cabinet in February.

The action plan was drafted with support from the previous Cabinet Member and will be taken to Cabinet on 20th May.

The engagement of stakeholders and how they are engaged with is important. For instance, schools are important stakeholders as they have assets like swimming pools and sports fields. The Council will work to unlock investment into sport and physical activity with creative means.

The matter then went to Member questions, the responses were as follows:

- There are many more opportunities with football and much more investment. However, this does mean that certain sports get side-lined e.g. hockey is one as their pitches get taken over by football. The Football Foundation invest, and they are keen that the pitches they invest in are used for multisport. This might create opportunities for other sports such as netball – which members felt was incredibly important for women and girls.

- In the context of local parks, the council needs to balance their use by sporting teams with making sure that they remain open to use by all.
- There is now less risk of schools selling off sports fields as Sport England can now raise a statutory objection. The case of Pittville School was slightly different as they were the only school that didn't have a sports hall they sold some of their unused playing fields to build the sports hall.
- The Council will use its business-as-usual budget to deliver the action plan and then look at seek funding from elsewhere to deliver wider ambitions. It was suggested that leveraging existing facilities in the private sector might help.
- The Feel-Good Pass has been launched and involves four community providers. With the No Child Left Behind activity pass there is an opportunity to bring on commercial providers
- The national bodies for sports are addressing toxic masculinity ensuring that investment is made and that they address the balance.
- As regard to the implementation schedule this is something that has to be discussed with the Cabinet Member as they will need to reflect on what takes priority.
- An advertising campaign would be a good thing, however that may have a cost implication, the Cabinet Member stated that he would take that idea away, there may be the opportunity to implement a small level comms campaign.
- Cycling was not mentioned in the report as it is a complex matter due to infrastructure requirements. There is an Active Age open day in June which we will make Members aware of.
- Significant investment is needed in the track at the Prince of Wales stadium. English Athletics and UK Athletics do not currently have funding. It would be advantageous to have a meeting with Cheltenham Harriers and Smiths Rugby Club as the main users of the site to try and find a way forward. It was acknowledged that this is a countywide resource and not just an issue for Cheltenham to solve.

10 Accessibility and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) briefing note

The Director of Governance, Housing and Communities introduced the report. She stated that the report was instigated by Councillor Tooke some time ago. It has taken some time to put together what is done by the individual teams within the Council. The report illustrates what each team is doing and what is being done with buildings and assets and the housing improvement plan to address and improve accessibility. The new ED&I policy will go to Council in September. There will be more opportunity to do things differently as the Council moves forward. The chamber is not really accessible and there is not much that can be done at the moment. The action plan captures what we can do with the current environment. The Council are currently working with the Star College with regard to access to buildings, also will be working with shops in the town to see which are accessible and this information will then be made available to the public via the Marketing Cheltenham website.

The Chair raised the issue of the problem for people with dementia is that they sometimes cannot see a way out of a strange building so it would be good to map that information as well. The Cheltenham Dementia Action Alliance are working with the BID to raise awareness of businesses about how to improve services to accommodate people living with dementia.

The responses to Member questions were as follows:

- The Council are working with the BID around shops and what can be done.
- Currently at the Everyman two wheelchair users cannot sit together as the lay out of the accessible seats does not allow for this. It has been requested that as part of the grant funding that the Council awards the Everyman they try and improve this.
- There are ongoing discussions with Gloucestershire Highways to improve pavements and the roads.
- It would be a political decision for improvements regarding accessibility to be made to the Municipal Offices before the Council moves out.
- It was agreed that the completed EDI policy would come to the committee in October. It was also agreed that there would be a review in a years' time to see the progress that has been made.

The Chair thanked the officer for attending the meeting.

11 Review of scrutiny workplan

Due to Cabinet changes it was requested that the Culture Board item be moved to a future meeting, this will be discussed more fully at the Chairs briefing in June.

There was also the reiteration of the request that the Accessibility and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion briefing note is brought to the committee when the policy is finalised.

12 Any other item that the Chair determines to be urgent

There were none.

13 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be on 7th July 2025.