

# Cheltenham Borough Council

## Cabinet – 11 March 2025

### Cheltenham Ice Rink – Review and Future Plans

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**Accountable member:**

Councillor Martin Horwood, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Wellbeing

**Accountable officer:**

Helen Mole, Head of Place Marketing and Inward Investment

**Ward(s) affected:**

N/A

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**Key Decision:** No

**Executive summary:**

The council ran the Cheltenham Christmas Ice Rink from Friday 29 November 2024 to Saturday 04 January 2025. This report sets out the key results and impacts of the event, with reference to:

- Economic impact
- Community and social value
- Environmental impact
- Financial costs to the council

The ice rink was a popular destination for visitors and residents looking to get into the Christmas spirit. Located in the spectacular surroundings of Imperial Gardens, surrounded by Christmas trees and sparkling lights, it provided the perfect opportunity for families and friends to get together for a fun and exciting Christmas activity. This is highlighted by comments received including:

*“We absolutely loved our experience and will 100% be back. Such a fun vibe!”*

*“The atmosphere and music made it nice and relaxing with plenty of staff to assist.”*

*“It’s great ice to skate on, the indoor café addition is brilliant – highly recommend booking a session...”*

Many ice rink visitors then went on to spend money in local businesses, using the ice rink as the catalyst for time spent in Cheltenham town centre. An independent economic impact assessment found that an estimated £1.6m was spent in Cheltenham by all those visiting the ice rink with an estimated £530,000 of this classified as ‘additional’, i.e. it would not have occurred without the presence of the ice rink.

The ice rink cost the council approximately £64,000 to deliver, with £40,000 one-off funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation reducing the overall contribution by the council to £24,000. This means that the return on investment to the economy for the council’s spend was approximately £22.00 per £1.00 invested.

In addition to the economic impact, every effort was made to add social and environmental value at all stages of the operation to ensure that the ice rink benefited Cheltenham’s residents and local businesses, including:

- Over 500 free tickets to local residents.
- 100% accessibility of the ice rink to all wheelchair users
- Dedicated sessions including Relaxed Glides (for people requiring a more sensory-friendly environment) and Little Gliders for toddlers.
- An increased spend with local suppliers (£128,000 in 2024 compared to £73,000 in 2023).
- 22 local people employed as ice rink staff.
- Active partnership with local residents throughout the development and delivery of the event.
- In line with the council’s corporate plan priority of making Cheltenham net zero by 2030, the rink was powered via the innovative approach of combining onsite grid power, a high-capacity battery system and an efficient and silenced generator which was fuelled by sustainably sourced hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) instead of diesel. This led to CO2e emissions being significantly lower than traditional temporary ice rinks or other events where a generator is the main source of power, with significant reductions in all factors when compared to the 2021 ice rink.

#### **Recommendations: That Cabinet:**

- 1. Notes the information about the outputs of the 2024/25 ice rink;**
- 2. Notes the decision by Councillor Martin Horwood, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture and Wellbeing, for Cheltenham Borough Council to apply for planning permission to run a Christmas**

### **Ice Rink for the 2025, 2026 and 2027 Christmas periods;**

- 3. Notes the decision by Councillor Martin Horwood, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture and Wellbeing, to approve an extension to the contract with S3K Limited for 12 months (to 02 July 2026), if planning permission is awarded, to enable delivery and management of the 2025-26 Christmas Ice Rink;**
- 4. Approves a total potential financial commitment for 2025/26 as set out in section 4 of this report;**
- 5. Notes that officers are progressing new procurement activities and, subject to planning permission, delegates authority for appointments of contractors to the Director of Communities and Economic Development, as per section 5 of this report.**

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## **1. Implications**

### **1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications**

The ice rink was delivered by the Council in 2024 at a direct cost of £64k, reduced to £24k thanks to the one-off funding. However, this does not take into account the wider economic benefits for businesses operating in the town centre and in particular our own car parks. For the period over which the ice rink was operating, which was 8 days less than previous year, the income generated from car parking income performed significantly above budget, generating the Council itself around £28k of direct financial benefit in December. Had the ice rink operated for a longer period, this would have been even higher. It is this additional income which Council will look to use to offset any gap in the financials for the direct delivery of the event in 2025/26, in light of the wider investment benefits for our visitors, residents and businesses.

**Signed off by:** Ela Jankowska - Finance Business Partner,  
[ela.jankowska@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:ela.jankowska@cheltenham.gov.uk)

### **1.2 Legal implications**

The Council contracted with S3K Limited following a procurement exercise in 2023, for the delivery and management of a Christmas Ice Rink at Imperial Gardens, Cheltenham. This contract commenced on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023 and has been currently extended until 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025. The contract permits the Council to extend the Term by a further period not exceeding 12 months. In order to effect this extension, the Council must give S3K Limited no less than one months' notice (no later than 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2025) of its intention to extend the Contract.

One Legal will be able to advise and assist on the new procurement process and any necessary contract documents to engage a contractor for periods after the term of

the current contract with S3K Limited. It should be noted that from 24<sup>th</sup> February 2025, the Procurement Act 2023 will apply to any new procurements – One Legal will be able to advise on the implications of the new Act on this proposed procurement exercise.

**Signed off by:** One Legal, [legalservices@onelegal.org.uk](mailto:legalservices@onelegal.org.uk)

### **1.3 Environmental and climate change implications**

The Climate Impact Assessment Tool (CIAT) details the environmental and climate change implication in full (see appendix 2). There has been significant work to reduce the carbon emissions and associated wider impacts of the Ice Rink, when approving future plans, considerations need to be made of how to continually optimise the efficiency of the energy use and low carbon energy sources. Evident with the proposed feasibility study exploring alternative local connections. A request for an annual Ice Rink CIAT to be completed to demonstrate how environmental implications alter and evolve.

**Signed off by:** Maizy McCann, climate officer, Climate Team, [maizy.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:maizy.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk)

### **1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities**

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Key Priority 2 - Working with residents, communities and businesses to help make Cheltenham net zero by 2030.
- Key Priority 4 - Ensuring residents, communities and businesses benefit from Cheltenham's future growth and prosperity.

### **1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications**

An equality impact assessment is attached at Appendix 3.

### **1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review**

If planning permission is granted, the event will be recorded as a project with the corporate projects team. Outputs and financial information will be reviewed on an ongoing basis with the finance team. An economic impact assessment will also be carried out for each future event so that officers can continue to monitor the wider impact of the event on the economy.

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## **2. Background**

2.1 Cheltenham Ice Rink was managed by the Marketing Cheltenham team with the provision of the ice rink and day to day rink management outsourced to

established ice rink operator, S3K Limited. Separate suppliers were procured for other elements, including power, security, toilet hire, etc. All costs were met by the council with income to the council from ticket sales (less card fees), sponsorship, advertising, and commission from the onsite café concession.

- 2.2 The rink was open in Imperial Gardens from Friday 29 November 2024 to Saturday 4 January 2025 (closed Christmas day) with an installation period of 12 days prior and a deinstallation period of 5 days post event. This location was chosen because of its history of hosting events including the ice rink in 2021 and 2023, the onsite event infrastructure, and due to its proximity to the town centre and the positive impacts for local businesses. Alternatives were assessed which re-confirmed this location as the preferred location for this activity to support the wider economy of the town centre.
- 2.3 The ice rink was undercover and provided a memorable and exciting festive experience in all weathers, for over 30,000 people, including more than 500 free tickets to residents coordinated by the No Child Left Behind team with support from the Holidays Activities and Food programme. The fully wheelchair-accessible ice rink offered relaxed skating sessions for people with sensory issues or additional needs, and discounts for families, schools, home educators, and group bookings, as well as dedicated student sessions and themed skates.
- 2.4 It is evident from the results of the independent visitor survey conducted, that the ice rink was successful in influencing visits and bringing new money into the town during the Christmas period, an important time for businesses, particularly those in retail and hospitality.

### **3. 2024/25 Ice Rink Performance**

#### **Economic Impact**

- 3.1 A visitor survey was commissioned by the council with an independent agency, The South West Research Company. The survey sought to understand the economic impact of the event, visitor profile, length of stay, motivation for visit, and satisfaction levels. The survey was analysed using the Cambridge Model, a standardised and industry accepted methodology.
- 3.2 An email containing the online survey link was sent out to the database of ice rink ticket purchasers and promoted via social media. A total of 328 useable online survey responses were submitted by the closing date. This is a much lower response rate than in 2023 and this is partly accounted for by the fact that many visitors were repeat visitors from previous year, though further analysis will be carried out on this to improve the number of survey responses for future years.
- 3.3 Against a total of approximately 30,000 skaters, a response rate of just under

1% therefore means that the data must be treated with appropriate caution. However, they serve as a broad indication of the outcomes of the ice rink and an indication of the economic impact of the event. Due to this, as well as the shorter operating period of the 2024 rink compared to the 2023 rink, it is not advisable to make direct comparisons between the events and, as a result, few comparisons have been made in this report. This data should therefore be regarded as a standalone analysis to assess key results from this year's event only.

3.4 Not included within the economic impact report is the fact that car parking revenue figures for December show that the council over-performed on parking revenues by over £28,000 highlighting significant numbers of additional visitors to the town during the ice rink period.

3.5 Key results are as follows (all estimated):

- A total of £1.6m was spent in Cheltenham by all those visiting the ice rink, £530,000 of which was additional and only occurred as a result of the ice rink taking place.
- A total of £900,000 additional business turnover occurred in Cheltenham as a result of the presence of the ice rink (indirect and induced). This is new money that would not have occurred without the ice rink being in place. This additional money supports 12 FTE jobs or 15 estimated actual jobs in the town.
- 37% of all visitors to the ice rink went on to undertake other activities in Cheltenham.
- All visitors spent an average of £30.68 per person during their visit to Cheltenham including spend at the ice rink and elsewhere in the town. Staying visitors spent a further £81.46 per person per night.
- 76% of all visitors spent money eating or drinking in Cheltenham and 63% went shopping in local retailers.
- 62% of respondents were local residents of Cheltenham or worked in the town, 29% were visitors for the day from their own homes and 6% were staying overnight in Cheltenham.

3.6 Businesses consulted by the team shared positive feedback about the impact of the ice rink. This demonstrates the value of retaining a town centre location for future events. All businesses were encouraged to create joint ticket offers with the ice rink with some of the more proactive businesses opting in for this. The positive examples of these would be used to encourage more partnerships with businesses in future years. This could further increase the spend in the town.

3.7 It is evident from the analysis of the survey findings that the ice rink was a success in influencing visits and bringing new money into the town centre during the Christmas period with approximately 30,000 visitors to the ice rink (including free HAF funded tickets, groups) and 81% of survey respondents citing the ice rink as the main reason for their visit to Cheltenham.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

3.8 The innovative power supply solution created for the event, now in its second year, has led to a clear reduction in the environmental impact of the rink when compared with the 2021 rink and the industry standard for events utilising only generators. It is common, where fixed power infrastructure does not already exist, to utilise generators for temporary events. The hybrid system proved so successful and reliable over an eight-week period of constant use in 2023 that the same set-up and plant was utilised for 2024.

3.9 As in 2023, a reliable power source was required 24/7 for chillers to protect the integrity of the ice, and power was also required for other operational aspects of the rink, including lighting, payment systems and CCTV. The ice rink was powered by onsite grid power, a high-capacity battery system and an efficient and silenced generator. The generator was fuelled by sustainably sourced HVO instead of traditional diesel.

3.10 Although many event organisers, cognisant of the environmental impacts of diesel generators, are considering hybrid options, including solar or alternative sources of fuel such as HVO, there are no published examples of the same model of hybrid battery use in events of the scale of the Cheltenham Ice Rink. This highlights the council's commitment to ensuring that economic and social development activities can take place while still having a reduced impact on climate change.

3.11 It is important to note that the ice rink operated for one week less in 2024 than in 2023 which makes comparisons difficult. In addition, the government have made significant changes in the way that greenhouse gas conversion factors are reported and therefore the data is not strictly comparable in like-for like terms. It is, however, a useful guide to compare the 2024 event to the 2021 (traditional generator only) ice rink to demonstrate the advances made in environmental sustainability at this event.

3.12 Key results are:

- The 2024 ice rink used 12.2% of the fuel used by the 2021 ice rink.
- The fuel used in 2024 was sustainably sourced HVO only, compared to diesel for 2021.

- The 2024 ice rink generated approximately 3.235 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e compared to approximately 139.07 tonnes generated in 2021.

NB - 1.778 tonnes was declared in 2023, but as referenced above, the changes in the calculation of greenhouse gas emissions has impacted this figure. Less fuel was used in 2024 than in 2023 so a like-for-like comparison would have shown a reduction.

3.13 Further lessons learned are being reviewed in respect of resilience, as there is a current reliance on the battery and ongoing work to mitigate this should failures occur.

3.14 The existing grid supply onsite has again been a benefit to the event this year, contributing to the environmental efficiencies achieved, but it is not adequate for total operation of the event. A review is currently underway to identify alternative sources of power near to the venue. More information will be available in due course, but this remains a priority to ensure future sustainability of the event as, with more power available onsite in the future, it would be possible to operate the event without any generator. An appraisal of options is underway and will be used to inform the submission of the planning application.

## **Social Impact**

3.15 Every effort was made to add social value at all stages of the operation to ensure that the ice rink benefited Cheltenham's residents and local businesses. To this end, the ice rink operator procurement included a scored question which asked potential suppliers to explain what their social value offer would be in relation to this project.

3.16 Some examples of social value from the ice rink:

- Approximately £128,000 direct spend with Cheltenham based suppliers as a result of the project, including local contractors, accommodation for the ice rink team, and supplies purchased locally. This is an increase of c.£55,000 on 2023 spend, highlighting the increased efforts to ensure that the ice rink benefits local businesses.
- Local businesses were invited to respond to an invitation for an onsite catering concession and this was awarded to local caterer, StrEatery, staffed by two people.
- The No Child Left Behind project, via the government's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, provided free tickets for over 500 local people to ensure accessibility for families across Cheltenham where cost may be a barrier. Exclusive hire sessions included food and drink as well as an opportunity for members of council staff to engage

with local residents.

3.17 Twenty-two local people were recruited and trained as ice stewards and rink staff. This is an increase on previous years as S3K Limited deliberately chose local staff to increase resilience and support the local economy.

- The ice rink was again fully accessible to all, with full access for wheelchair users and specific Relaxed Glide (SEND friendly) sessions. This not only provides an opportunity for everyone to participate but also sends a strong social message about inclusion and equal access to recreational activities.
- Local businesses were invited to develop offers and joint promotions for ice rink visitors to encourage combined visits as well as advertising with the rink, encouraging visitors and residents to support local businesses.

### **Accessibility**

3.18 The ice rink team has again been praised for its efforts to ensure the rink was accessible to all. This went above and beyond the legal requirements for an event of this nature in reflection of the council's commitment to ensuring accessibility and equity of access to all.

3.19 Accessibility measures included:

- The ice rink was fully open to wheelchair users (motorised and manual) at all times. A free carer's ticket was provided alongside this, and staff onsite were trained in supporting wheelchair users.
- Relaxed Glide sessions were included throughout the opening period for people with sensory issues. These sessions had fewer tickets sold and lower volume music.
- Staff were specially trained to respond appropriately to anyone with additional needs.
- As per legal requirements, all entrances were ramped. The team also ensured that there was ample room for manoeuvre within the building and at the rink access points.
- Sessions for families with pre-schoolers (Little Gliders) were included in the schedule.
- The team received positive feedback from wheelchair users, blind skaters, people with autism, people with hearing impairments, and

people with young children.

3.20 Positive feedback was received by visitors to the rink with accessibility needs, including one respondent who said:

*“The students had the most amazing time. I’ve been working with these students a very long time and I’ve never seen some of them smile like they did today.”*

### **Financial Results**

3.21 The total cost spent on delivering the ice rink was £371,000, with income of £307,000, resulting in an overall cost to the Council of £64,000. However, this year’s event was subsidised by a one-off contribution of £40,000 UKSPF funding, reducing Council base budget contribution to around £24,000.

3.22 A reserve of £22,000 was set aside in 2024 to cover potential overspend for the 2024 event, as agreed by Cabinet in April 2024.

3.23 Based on the results of the economic impact analysis of additional spend at the event, this represents an estimated return on investment to the local economy of approximately £22.00 per £1.00 invested by the council.

### **3.24 Income**

- £307,000 was generated through ticket sales, sponsorship, and commission from the onsite catering concession. This was against a budgeted income of £353,000.
- The two main reasons for the lower income were:
  - Lower than forecast ticket sales, which is partly accounted for by the reduced number of days the ice rink was open.
  - Challenges in achieving the forecast sponsorship income, although members should note that sponsorship income increased compared to 2023. Work is already underway to secure sponsorship and partnerships for future events and many of the sponsors have already informally committed to repeating the arrangement in future years.
- The team now have two years of data to enable more accurate forecasting in future years and have reviewed areas for improvement in sales for future events.
- Slightly more income was generated from the onsite café concession in

2024 than in 2023. The team will publish a concessionary opportunity for future years if planning permission is granted and will work with the successful supplier to look at opportunities for increasing this further in future years.

- Although this year the ice rink was open for the entire period of the school holidays which was the right decision based on sales achieved, the team decided to open a week later and therefore were open for fewer days (45 in 2023 and 36 in 2024). The original intention was that this would save more money than it cost in income, but this was not the case. This would be changed for future years and the ice rink would open for the entire period to maximise income potential.
- An issue with power to the rink in the last week of trading led to the closure of the rink a day early and this had a negative impact on income.
- The team implemented improvements based on lessons from the 2023 rink, with most having a positive impact. However, lowering the price for schools didn't increase bookings. After speaking with local schools, the team understands this reflects the current challenges schools face in offering extracurricular activities, particularly due to high transport costs. In planning for 2024, engagement was undertaken with other events and attractions, to look into the option of linked trips where transport is a barrier. Further work on this is needed.

### **3.25 Expenditure**

- £371,000 was spent to deliver the rink, excluding council staff time which is accounted for from within existing budgets.
- This was higher than forecast largely due to additional costs with power supply, facilities, and ground reinstatement works.
- £40,000 of UKSPF funding has been allocated to cover some of the costs associated with power at this event. This option will not be available in future years.
- If the council is able to source alternative power provision near to Imperial Gardens, it would be possible to deliver the ice rink for approximately £30,000 less cost each year. This is currently being investigated as a high priority.

## **4 Delivery of future events**

4.1 This is the second year of the event in its current format and, each year, lessons

learned have been acknowledged and improvements have been made. There is ongoing engagement with stakeholders, suppliers and businesses which will potentially lead to partnership and sponsorship arrangements for future events. If planning permission is given for three years, this will enable multi-year arrangements for suppliers and sponsors to be secured which will support the longer-term sustainability of the event.

- 4.2 The nature of temporary ice rinks, or any event installations of this nature, are that they are inherently high-cost, yet equally offer the potential for high return through the revenue generated by ticket sales. Inevitably however, the costs are almost entirely fixed, whilst the income from ticket sales cannot be guaranteed. This will always present a risk for any event of this nature and is particularly the case during a time where visitors are making purposeful choices as a response to the ongoing challenge of cost of living.
- 4.3 It is important to acknowledge the social and economic impacts generated by events such as the ice rink. In this case, there have been many successes, including additional visitor spend, community engagement and spend in local suppliers, and members can be assured of these kinds of impacts being repeated in future years.
- 4.4 There are numerous examples of other authorities funding the delivery of cultural events in acknowledgement of their positive economic and social impacts, including Bristol (Harbour Festival, International Balloon Festival), Worcester (Light Night, Victorian Christmas Fayre), Gloucester (Tall Ships) and more.
- 4.5 The following factors will inform the council's approach to future delivery of ice rink events:
  - Continue with the hybrid power solution which has delivered as environmentally sustainable a solution as currently possible, but review all costs associated with this, and continue to pursue the option for alternative power supplies locally.
  - Open the ice rink from Friday 21 November 2025 to Sunday 4 January 2026 (and the equivalent weekends in future years) to maximise potential income.
  - Identify additional income generating opportunities.
  - Seek to develop packages which make ice rink attendance feasible for schools, including partnerships with coach operators, or other attractions and links to other infrastructure, for example park and ride locations.

- Develop relationships with new potential sponsors, highlighting the many opportunities to raise their profile and engage with the public. Review pricing for sponsorship packages to ensure this is in line with industry standards.
- Increase the number of themed sessions based on feedback from this year.
- Capacity on the rink was reduced in 2024 compared to 2023 in direct response to customer feedback. In future years, the team would slightly reduce the number of skate aids available which would enable more skaters to be on the ice in any one session without negatively impacting the experience but generating additional income.

4.6 Ice rink expenditure exceeded income, requiring an investment by the council of £24,000 after taking into consideration the one-off UKSPF funding. Therefore, the forecast for 2025/26 shows an investment of around £60,000 may be required by the council, though members should note that all efforts will focus on reducing this, as set out throughout this report. This is highlighted as a risk in the risk assessment at Appendix 1.

4.7 Planning permission to run an ice rink in Imperial Gardens has now expired so a new planning application will be submitted as soon as possible after the Cabinet meeting (expected Thursday 22 May). If approved for three years, this will enable longer-term planning which will potentially support cost reductions from suppliers and allow improved lead in times with potential sponsors and positive conversations around the potential of multi-year sponsorship.

## **5 Procurement with contractors**

5.1 The ice rink operator, S3K Limited was selected via a competitive procurement process for the 2023 event. The contract permits the council to extend the term of the contract by up to 24 months (or two further events) meaning that from commencement in July 2023, the contract may run for a total term of three years. One extension has already occurred and, following the Cabinet member decision, this option will be utilised for 2025 to ensure continuity of service from the operator, subject to planning permission. The current contract with S3K Limited has been subject to close scrutiny by the council in respect of delivery and performance. A positive working relationship has developed, with S3K Limited being timely and responsive in respect of delivery.

5.2 All other contractors will be subject to new procurement exercises and early work on this process is underway, with agreements to be put in place only if planning permission is awarded by Planning Committee.

## **6 Reasons for recommendations**

- 6.1 Economic Impact:** The independent economic impact evaluation has clearly demonstrated a positive impact for the town and its businesses with £900,000 additional business turnover supported and £530,000 additional spend because of the event. This is directly aligned with Key Priority 4 of the [Corporate Plan](#), ensuring that residents, communities and businesses benefit from Cheltenham's future growth and prosperity.
- 6.2 Improvements in environmental impacts:** Concerns raised about the energy usage and environmental impact following the 2021 ice rink have been addressed with significant improvements achieved in both 2023 and 2024, highlighting the importance that the council places on achieving net zero targets as a borough and serving as an inspiration for other event organisers who are considering battery power at their own events. Further work is underway to seek to reduce or remove the necessity for a generator for this event and an update will be available on this as soon as available. The existing hybrid solution of ground power, battery, and limited use of a generator will be utilised if no other options are available but, if this is the case, it can be anticipated that the event will still generate vastly reduced emissions compared to other generator-led events and the 2021 ice rink.
- 6.3 Positive Feedback:** Feedback for the rink was overall positive from residents, businesses, and visitors to the rink. The Marketing Cheltenham team worked particularly closely with Imperial Square residents to ensure that they were impacted as little as possible and that their needs were considered at all stages of the planning and delivery of the event. This included a 24/7 contact number to the ice rink operations team, and direct contact details provided for council officers. Where needed other council officers were utilised to support conversations and the issues raised.
- 6.4 Social Impact:** The social value impact was significant, with c.£128,000 direct spend with local suppliers, local staff trained and employed, and engagement with community projects and charities. Free tickets for local families ensured accessibility for families across Cheltenham where cost may have been a barrier. These sessions included food and drink while at the ice rink, and the opportunity for members of CBC staff to engage with local residents.
- 6.5 Cultural Impact:** The Cheltenham Cultural Strategy recognises the importance of building on the quality and scale of Cheltenham's already renowned festivals and events programme. There are numerous academic reports evidencing that events like these raise the profile of a destination as well as providing economic and social positive impacts.
- 6.6** Despite the challenges highlighted in this report, the ice rink has generated significant positive impact for the town. The strategic rationale for a return of an ice rink in 2025 and beyond is therefore based on the following objectives:

- To support the town's economy, in particular the retail and hospitality businesses.
- To drive incremental footfall and spending in the town over the Christmas period and to ensure that Cheltenham remains competitive at this critical time of year.
- To help position Cheltenham regionally and nationally as a destination of choice and drive continued investment.

## **7 Alternative options considered**

7.1 As demonstrated by the economic impact report, the ice rink has been effective in attracting new and repeat visitors into the town and generating positive feedback. The alternative is not to deliver this event which is not recommended as then the town would lose the opportunity to generate the additional spend, economic impact, and community engagement opportunities.

## **8 Consultation and feedback**

8.1 Visitors to the ice rink were consulted for the economic impact assessment.

8.2 Engagement meetings have taken place with local residents throughout.

8.3 The following consultation and feedback activities will take place for future events:

- Resident engagement programme for future events, following the same process as this year.
- Planning Committee Thursday 22 May
- Conversations with potential sponsors and advertisers.
- Conversations with local partners who may contribute to the delivery of the rink or to look at potential collaborations to increase mutual ticket sales and economic impact.
- Commissioning of an economic impact assessment for future events.

## **9 Key risks**

9.1 **Financial:** Costs outweighing income. As highlighted throughout the report, there are always inherent risks that the cost of this activity will outweigh the income generated. There are several plans in place not only to forecast more accurately but also to increase income generation opportunities. The increased

number of repeat visits to the 2024 ice rink by previous skaters supports the forecast that they will visit again. In addition, the economic impact of the event and the benefit to the town, its businesses and residents should be considered alongside this.

9.2 **Reputational:** Negative impact on residents. This has been highlighted as a risk but acknowledges the improvement in event management processes and the ongoing positive and proactive engagement with Imperial Square residents and local businesses in 2023 and 2024, as well as the positive feedback provided by residents who visited the rink.

9.3 **Environmental:** The developments in battery technology and the innovative use of this, alongside HVO fuel and existing grid power have reduced emissions compared to industry standards. With investigation into alternative supplies locally, this would hopefully decrease further.

9.4 **Planning:** There is a risk that Planning Committee will not permit the delivery of this event in future years. The planning application will focus on the reduced emissions and improvements in event management processes achieved in the last two years as well as highlighting the positive economic and social impacts.

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#### **Appendices:**

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Climate Change Impact Assessment (attachment)
- iii. Equality Impact Assessment (attachment)

#### **Background information:**

[Cheltenham Ice Rink – Review and Future Plans, 2 April 2024 Cabinet Meeting](#)

[Cabinet Member Decision 20.02.25 – Delivery of Cheltenham Christmas Ice Rink 2025-26](#)

## Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
1	Financial – potential exposure to financial pressures should costs exceed income from ticket sales and sponsorship.	Director of finance and assets	2	3	6	Reduce	<p>Ensure sufficient lead-time to secure sponsorship and to maximise commercial opportunities.</p> <p>Review opening hours and dates for the rink to maximise ticket income.</p> <p>Review and simplify the pricing structure.</p> <p>Review ways to reduce costs for schools to attend.</p> <p>Review and refresh the marketing and sales strategy, with sufficient lead-time to maximise ticket sales.</p> <p>Rink will be an all-weather structure with a roof and will therefore continue to operate during spells of poor weather.</p> <p>Ongoing financial monitoring and early escalation on issues arising by Head of place marketing and inward investment to Director of</p>	Head of place marketing and inward investment	June 2025 followed by ongoing monitoring

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
							finance and assets and Director Community and Economic Development.  Review resilience of power supply to ensure that no days are lost due to lack of power.		
2	Reputational – negative impact on local residents and businesses.	Head of place marketing and inward investment	2	3	6	Reduce	Continued engagement with local residents and businesses.  Build on the good practices introduced and developed for the 2023 and 2024 events.  Early engagement with Planning and Environmental Health teams to ensure that the event causes minimal impact to local residents in terms of noise.	Events Manager	Ongoing
3	Environmental	Head of place marketing and inward investment	2	2	4	Reduce	Review the availability of sufficient ground power locally to try to remove or reduce the need for a generator.  Ensure timely procurement to secure the same measures as used in the 2023 and 2024 events	Events Manager	June 2025

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
							to ensure reduced emissions and fuel usage		
4	Planning – risk of Planning Committee refusing permission for the event.	Head of place marketing and inward investment	4	3	12	Reduce	<p>Seek to identify an alternate source of power locally.</p> <p>Utilise the knowledge, experience and information gained from the operation of the 2023 and 2024 events to highlight the developments in fuel and power technology and the positive impact this has had on emissions.</p> <p>Provide expert testimony on the use of HVO fuel, in particular the fact that this is sustainably sourced.</p> <p>Highlight the fact that the generators were in use for comparatively low hours in 2023 compared to the previous ice rink and other events, thanks to the battery technology.</p>	Events Manager	<p>March 2025 submission of permission to vary conditions.</p> <p>May 2024 Planning Committee.</p>