

# Cheltenham Borough Council

## Council

## Minutes

**Meeting date:** 15 December 2025

**Meeting time:** 2.30 pm - 5.30 pm

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### **In attendance:**

#### **Councillors:**

Dr David Willingham (Chair), Martin Horwood (Vice-Chair), Frank Allen, Glenn Andrews, Victoria Atherstone, Paul Baker, Adrian Bamford, Garth Barnes, Dilys Barrell, Angie Boyes, Jackie Chelin, Barbara Clark, Flo Clucas, Mike Collins, Ashleigh Davies, Chris Day, Iain Dobie, Jan Foster, Steve Harvey, Rowena Hay, Hannah Healy, Sandra Holliday, Peter Jeffries, Tabi Joy, Alisha Lewis, Dr Cathal Lynch, Tony Oliver, Ben Orme, Dr Helen Pemberton, Richard Pineger, Dr Steve Steinhardt, Izaac Tailford, Simon Wheeler and Suzanne Williams

#### **Also in attendance:**

Claire Hughes (Director of Governance, Housing and Communities), Michelle Bignell (Licensing and Public Protection Manager), Tracey Birkinshaw (Director of Planning and Building Control), Jacob Doleman (Licensing Officer), Helen Mole (Head of Economic Development, Comms and Marketing) and Ann Wolstencroft (Director of Corporate Services)

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### **1 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Beale, Chandler, Garcia Clamp, Sankey, Smith and Tooke. Councillor Pemberton advised that she would arrive during the meeting.

### **2 Declarations of interest**

There were none.

### **3 Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 17 November were approved as a true record and signed accordingly.

### **4 Communications by the Mayor**

The Mayor began by thanking the council and officers who supported the Christmas appeal for selection boxes for underprivileged children, organised by Dave Bath, Cheltenham's Citizen of Honour. The donations make a huge difference to residents in St Peter's, The Moors and St Paul's.

He said the tragic events at Bondi Beach are in everyone's minds, and sympathy is extended to Jewish communities across Gloucestershire and the globe, who are suffering, particularly at the precious time of Hanukah. There is no place in the world for anti-Semitism or indeed any hate crime based on religion, creed, colour or any other protected characteristic.

Another very sad event is the recent loss of CBC's Deputy Chief Executive, Paul Jones. The Mayor invited Members to pay tribute, and several spoke with warmth and sincere gratitude for his many years of dedicated service to CBC, describing him as a kind, trusted, professional and exceptionally talented officer with a unique ability to inspire and support people without them realising he was doing it. He was devoted to Cheltenham, always ready to listen, think outside the box, and take risks. His legacy is enormous, and he will be much missed by everyone.

The Mayor encouraged those present to stand for a minute's silence.

### **5 Communications by the Leader of the Council**

The Leader said that CBC has now put forward its submission for local government reorganisation, and the government's decision is expected by the middle of next year. Further work will be needed before then to ensure we are ready for one or two unitary authorities, and in the meantime, it is business as usual, with work continuing on the CBC Corporate Plan.

She took the opportunity to talk about CBC's communications team, an often silent but crucial partner, central to delivery of priorities and services and critical to the future success of local government. This year the team has focussed on delivering comms to directly support the Corporate Plan priorities, investing time in digital platforms, with a rich and varied content, increasing the number of Facebook followers by 1.5k, to a total of 10k. The team is committed to the ever-changing communications landscape, with new accounts on Next Door and a dedicated Golden Valley Facebook page, as well as an award-winning LinkedIn account which enables us to network and engage with businesses, partners, other sectors and individuals, and plays an important part in the recruitment process, with 11k followers now connected.

Aware that not everyone can access online platforms, the communications team now delivers a rebranded magazine to 4k tenants, to ensure they are informed and engaged in the redesigned housing service, as well as building a strong relationship with the local press through openness and transparency.

She said a full report on the communications team's year can be found on the intranet, demonstrating the extent of its innovation, commitment and creativity, and that the council is always ready to listen and act.

She went on to welcome Councillor Joy back to the Council, and ended by thanking all officers for their hard work over 2025 and wishing them a very happy Christmas.

## **6 To receive petitions**

No petitions had been received.

## **7 Public Questions**

Nine public questions had been received from five questioners, four of whom were present to ask supplementary questions. The Mayor asked that the original questions and Cabinet Member responses be taken as read.

The first questioner, as a former borough councillor, added his own brief tribute to Paul Jones, with whom he had worked for many years, and always found to be an outstanding and highly-professional officer, and great asset to the council, as well as a good cricketer. He sent sympathy to his family.

### **1. Question from Tim Harman to the Leader, Councillor Rowena Hay**

Cheltenham Borough Council is proposing a consultation on the establishment of a Town Council. Can the Cabinet Member confirm if the Town Council would fund itself by setting an additional precept above and beyond that which Households would pay to a new unitary Council. If so, can the cabinet member give an estimate of likely amount that each household would pay on an annual basis?

### **Member response**

Thank you for the question. The community governance review is not at the point when any decisions could be made about future precepts. Currently, it is premature to predict what the shape of town and parish councils would be in Cheltenham going forward so estimates cannot be provided.

### **Supplementary question**

Whilst understanding the state of flux, would you agree that in any consultation about a potential town council, it is important to say openly to members of the public that this could involve an additional precept - another tax level above and beyond what they pay now?

## **Cabinet Member response**

I cannot confirm that one way or the other at the moment. Information from the first tranche of consultation is being assimilated into a second full consultation based on what has been proposed going out in the New Year. I cannot say whether this will result in more parishes or a town council or what the precept might be at present - it is too early to tell.

## **2. Question from Tim Harman to the Cabinet Member Waste and Recycling and Parks, Gardens and Green Open Space, Councillor Paul Baker**

Residents and users of Hatherley Park have raised with me concerns about the condition of the lake where the water level seems lower than normal. My understanding is that Friends of Hatherley Park have been involved with a restoration plan but there is no progress at this time. Can the Cabinet Member clarify the situation and assure residents and users that the Council will commit to restoring the lake in this popular and well used Park.

## **Member response**

The water level in the lake dropped very low during what was one of the driest summer and autumns on record exposing large areas of mud and silt which have built up over many years. The lake is not fed from an existing river or brook and is reliant upon surrounding ground water to maintain its level. With the water table so very low it was unable to replenish itself as it would do normally. Hatherley lake is one of three lakes in the area all of which suffered the same effects, a picture which repeated itself nationally as other municipal parks reported similar issues.

When the water level was so very low it was noticeable how much silt was present in the lake, so a decision was made to remove the silt at the earliest opportunity. A planning application has just been made for this to take place, which if successful could see the lake desilted in February 2026. Whilst this will not fix any issues brought about by drought it will create more water capacity in the lake and make it more resilient to dry conditions in the future. When the work is underway, the clay lining and sides of the pond will be checked for leaks.

Further to this I can also report that the underground feeder pipe that channels the adjacent ground drainage water into the lake has been checked and cleared to ensure there are no blockages.

I can also report that throughout the summer, and autumn, the Council's Green Space Team liaised closely with the Friends of Hatherley Park and placed a series of posters up in the park to keep the public informed of the issue. The Friends are kindly donating £5000 of their funds to the desilting project which will see improvements to marginal planting to improve the aquatic habitat and biodiversity of this much valued local amenity. It goes without saying that we are very grateful to the Friends of Hatherley Park for all their hard work and support all year round.

*No supplementary question.*

### **3. Question from Elliot Craddock to the Cabinet Member Climate Emergency, Councillor Richard Pineger**

A month or two ago now I had a leaflet from the Liberal Democrats through my letter box and on it, it talked about the state of Balancing Pond just outside Cox's Meadow. I'm sure the Charlton Park councillors are fully aware of the state the pond is in and has been in for a very long time now. In the leaflet it said: "Paul is pleased to report that there should be some positive news very soon." Could you please inform me of this good news now?

#### **Member response**

Thank you, Mr Craddock, for your question, in response to this I have discussed with my colleague Cllr Paul Baker who has been engaging directly with you as part of his case work for the Ward of Charlton Park and to which you have received a detailed response.

The balancing pond you are referring to is managed by the developer Vistry Group and this relates to the development of Charlton Park (King Arthur, King Henry, and King George Close, and King William Drive) which was built circa 1980's. The pond collects surface water runoff from the estate and during heavy rainfall stores and releases surface water at a controlled rate to the Lilley Brook. This is to balance any potential flood impacts downstream of the estate that could arise due to the introduction of the impermeable surfaces (roofs and roads) on what was previously greenspace.

Working with the Charlton Park Residents Association, Cllr Baker has been supporting local residents, this has included:

- Supporting a meeting between Vistry and residents 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024
- Engagement with Vistry Group, this resulted in the developer carrying out some minor vegetation work to enable remedial works to facilitate pricing of future works, the commissioning of an ecology survey to identify if great crested newts were present – this concluded none were present.
- The latest update received from the Vistry Group was in November advising that the ecology report needs to be reviewed and that due to work commitments this will take place in January following which a site meeting will be rearranged to take the matter forward. Further to the receipt of your question to Council, officers have reached out to the Vistry Group who have confirmed that a meeting with residents will be reviewed in the new year and that they will carry out such works as deemed necessary to maintain the balancing pond's primary function. The details of this work haven't yet been finalised but will be confirmed in the new year.

Councillor Baker is your active point of contact; further communication will be via the ward member route.

### **Supplementary question**

Thanks for your response. It states that the initial meeting between Vistry and residents was in 2024. Is that correct – should it be 2025? – and if not, why is it taking so long?

### **Cabinet Member response**

It is correct, and the response explains that the matter is outside the council's control – it is between Vistry group and residents, although Councillor Baker as ward councillor is doing what he can to keep the matter moving forward.

#### **4. Question from Elliot Craddock to the Cabinet Member Climate Emergency, Councillor Richard Pineger**

What are the council's current plans for the building and expansion of energy infrastructure, including renewables, which I know is a policy that the Liberal Democrats take extremely seriously? And how can we ensure these changes are kept when moving to the new local government model?

### **Member response**

Cheltenham Borough Council is pursuing an ambitious programme to decarbonise its energy systems and embed renewable infrastructure into the town's future, in line with our 2030 net-zero commitment. At the heart of this work is a commitment to expand solar generation and low-carbon heating across the council estate and new development.

We have installed photovoltaic (PV) panels on the new MX building and are planning PV arrays on the first two new buildings at Golden Valley. All new homes being procured for CBC include PV systems as standard. Across our housing portfolio, including new-build properties already handed over, we now have approximately 830 PV installations, with some larger systems powering communal areas in blocks.

Alongside solar, we are investing in low-carbon heating. At major sites such as Leisure@ Cheltenham, we secured Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding to develop a heat-pump solution to replace end-of-life gas boilers—cutting emissions and reducing reliance on fossil fuels for the future. We have also installed Low Carbon Heating (LCH) systems on some of our properties - including a shared loop ground-source heat pump at one of our sheltered blocks.

We are some ways down the road of developing the first heat network in Gloucestershire with the backing of Climate Leadership Gloucestershire and working with national partners. A heat-network focused on the town centre has been selected building on the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's (DESNZ) pilot zoning

outputs and successive Heat Network Delivery Unit grants to progress detailed project development.

Transport electrification is another priority. Through our partnership with The EV Network, Cheltenham is rolling out rapid and ultra-rapid (50kW to 300 kW) charging hubs in key car parks, St James Street, Bath Terrace and Church Piece, providing residents and visitors with fast, reliable charging capable of a full charge in ~20-40 minutes. Delivery is already underway, with Bath Terrace now in operation, and further sites planned.

To underpin these practical steps, the council commissioned a Renewable Energy Study (with CSE/LUC) to map local potential for technologies such as solar, wind and storage. Its findings are informing the Cheltenham–Gloucester–Tewkesbury Strategic & Local Plan (SLP) now being engaged on, so that upon adoption, policies can give statutory weight to renewable energy requirements in new development.

Continuity through any transition to a new local government model will depend on embedding these priorities in formal planning policy and delivery agreements. By enshrining renewable energy standards in the SLP, securing long-term contracts for infrastructure projects, and aligning with county-wide governance through the Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) led by Climate Leadership Gloucestershire (CLG), Cheltenham can safeguard progress. The LAEP provides a blueprint for integrated energy planning across the county—covering heat zoning, community energy networks and collaboration with distribution network operators - consistent with national guidance on place-based energy planning. These measures create resilience by rooting energy transformation in statutory plans, shared governance and community ownership, ensuring momentum for renewables and low-carbon infrastructure continues regardless of structural change.

### **Supplementary question**

Whilst broadly supporting most of what is outlined in the response, I worry about the transition to the new model of local government and that some smaller projects outlined could get lost along the way. What reassurances can you give that those smaller projects won't be lost, and what large-scale environmental projects can we look forward to on a large county scale?

### **Cabinet Member response**

I cannot say what will happen with the new administration, and there will be a shadow authority between now and then, but I can assure you that everyone involved is doing all they can to put things in place that persist. Climate Leadership Gloucestershire is working hard and will hopefully go forward with the new authority, but that will be the decision of the new authority, and local energy plans will hopefully hold. In addition, the community energy scheme, which is supported by the current government, will hopefully be supported as well.

## **5. Question from Gill Hewlett to the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries**

I notice that there are companies that are not UK owned in line to buy the municipal buildings and I want to know whether priority is being given to UK owned companies and, if not, why not? And also, how much due diligence has been done on the prospective buyers and can they be sure that any contenders do not have links to either Russian or Chinese states?

**Member response**

Thank you for your question, Ms Hewlett. The preferred bidder for the sale of the Municipal Offices is mostly Cheltenham based. Almiranta Capital, a Spanish firm with UK offices, is a specialist part of that bidding team, operating in the hotel investment sector. The sale itself has been carried out by informal tender process which included a full UK and international marketing process. Throughout the sale process, due diligence is thorough and continuous, supported by independent UK-based property advisors Avison Young and solicitors Anthony Collins.

*No supplementary question*

**6. Question from Rich Newman to the Cabinet Member Planning & Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins**

Regarding planning proposals, under which circumstances are planning proposals called into committee instead of being decided upon by a planning officer?

**Member response:**

The Planning scheme of delegation, which is part of the council's constitution, and which can be found on our website, details the circumstances in which planning applications are referred to the Planning Committee. It is a lengthy document that cannot be repeated verbatim here, but in summary it states that an application is called to committee when:

1. It is contrary to the provisions of the development plan and is being recommended for approval; or
2. It is a proposal which the officer supports but the parish council objects and does so prior to the end of the statutory consultation period giving public interest and planning reasons for that objection - *unless* the Chair and Vice Chair consider that committee is not warranted; or
3. It is an application which any CBC Member has requested be called to committee provided that they do so within 21-days of publication of the relevant 'weekly list' of newly registered planning applications and provided that public interest and planning reasons for that request are given; or
4. It is an application submitted 'by or on behalf of' CBC or GCC; or

5. It is an application submitted by a member of the council, a director or a member of staff within the communities and economic development division; or

6. It is an application which the Planning Committee has formally resolved should come to committee; or

7. It is an application which the Director or Head of Planning themselves consider should be determined by committee.

### **Supplementary question**

Thanks for your response. Point 3 states that CBC councillors can call any planning proposal in for a committee decision and given this, in view of the public support, petition and news coverage for the Bell Inn, why did no councillor call it in, especially the College ward councillors who were contacted by myself and others in the campaign?

### **Cabinet Member response**

It is difficult to respond in general planning terms, but I have to say that all planning applications are considered on their own merits, and any decision whether by officer or committee must comply with current planning legislation. I cannot say why a local member decided not to call an application in to planning committee.

### **7. Question from Rich Newman to the Cabinet Member Planning & Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins**

Does CBC have any precedent for overturning a planning proposal decision made by a planning officer? Can this even be done, is it possible?

### **Member response**

It is assumed that this question refers to the revocation of planning decisions after they have been formally issued, as opposed to the planning committee making decisions contrary to the officer's recommendation (which happens often).

Yes, it is possible to revoke a planning permission; Section 97 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 gives local planning authorities the power to do this. In practice however, this power is very rarely exercised as an authority will often be liable for paying substantial compensation to any party disadvantaged by the revocation i.e. the developer and/or recipient of the permission.

*No supplementary question*

### **8. Question from Emma Nelson to the Cabinet Member Major Developments & Housing Delivery, Councillor Alisha Lewis**

The Strategic and Local Plan, currently out for consultation, includes reference (p15) that "Cheltenham will become the new cyber capital for the UK". What impact will the winding up of the NCSC for Startups Program (formerly known as the GCHQ Cyber Accelerator Scheme), have on the future of the Cyber Park?

### **Member response**

Thank you for your question, Emma. The NCSC for Start-ups programme ran from 2017 until it closed in March 2025. Its purpose was to act as an 'accelerator' for cyber start-up firms, enabling them to access technical guidance, expertise and contacts whilst helping to address national cyber security challenges through collaboration with other start-ups and Government agencies.

Whilst the programme was based in Cheltenham, Start-ups came from around the country to be involved. Upon concluding their time on the programme, the start-ups would then return to their hometowns and cities.

Golden Valley's vision is, in part, to replicate the success of this programme but on a larger scale and in a less formalised fashion. The facilities at Golden Valley (particularly at IDEA – the National Cyber Innovation Centre) are being designed and curated to deliver an ecosystem with collaboration and innovation built into its DNA. Industry, government, academia and start-ups will be brought together into the same space, with tailored programmes and events aimed to foster collaborative working and knowledge spill overs.

The role of GCHQ and NCSC in this ecosystem will be critical. However, the specific NCSC for Start-ups programme has never been a central requirement. Indeed, with the right blend of facilities, people and businesses, Golden Valley will replicate and amplify the benefits seen in accelerator programmes by providing an ongoing accessible ecosystem that attracts and drives growth.

### **Supplementary Question**

Thank you for your response. Our previous MP launched the cyber vision for Cheltenham and secured millions of pounds of funding from central government, enabling the Strategic and Local Plan to include Cheltenham as the new cyber capital of the UK. What is the timeline for the fulfilment of that objective, and how confident are you of achieving this accreditation before the introduction of unitary authorities?

### **Cabinet Member response**

Although I do not necessarily agree with the factual validity of your question, we have great plans for Golden Valley, and hope to be able to share fantastic news in the new year about how we are supporting our own home-grown cyber eco-system, which is better than the previous scheme and testament to the incredible work of the

LibDem council from buying a field to delivering the most important scheme for cyber security.

**Question from Emma Nelson to the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries**

The Echo recently reported (October 23rd) that CBC had paid a total £782,468 over just three years on 25 Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDA's). Whilst I appreciate the need to protect potentially commercially sensitive information around recent disposal of high value assets, why is this figure so large?

**Member response**

NDA's ensure that organisations can share investment proposals with us in confidence. Working in this way not only enables us to explore opportunities, test proposals and negotiate terms without risking the release of sensitive commercial information, it also ensures that partners have confidence knowing that their intellectual property and business models are safeguarded.

While there are many ways in which NDA's can be used, part of our success story is how we've built confidence with partners by protecting commercially sensitive information.

There are occasions when negotiations break down or contracts are terminated and as a result a financial settlement may be reached. Whilst the figure quote may sound high it must be balanced against potential investment opportunities as well as future potential for growth.

**Supplementary question**

With reference to negotiations breaking down, the termination of contracts, and the financial settlements reached mentioned in the response, how much has been spent on such financial settlements in the last three years and is this included in the £782k NDA referred to in the original question or in addition to it?

**Cabinet Member response**

You are referring to an October 2023 article so I would firstly have to validate that number, then validate the period you're looking for, then try to find the information for you. I will look back at the minutes and get you some information in due course.

**8 Member Questions**

Seven Member questions had been submitted by two Members. The questions and responses were taken as read; supplementary questions are shown below.

**9. Question from Councillor Martin Horwood to the Cabinet Member Planning & Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins**

How many Section 106 agreements have been concluded in the Leckhampton ward since May 2023 and for which developments?

**Member response**

1. **21/02750/FUL** – Unilateral Undertaking dated 18 August 2023, land adjoining Leckhampton Farm Court (Redrow Homes Ltd - 30 dwellings).
2. **21/02750/FUL** – s106 Agreement dated 05 July 2023, land adjoining Leckhampton Farm Court (Redrow Homes Ltd - 30 dwellings).
3. **22/02205/FUL** – s106 Agreement dated 12 February 2024, land off Kidnappers Lane (Newland Homes – 13 dwellings)
4. **22/02205/FUL** – s106 Agreement (variation to the above) dated 09 May 2025, land off Kidnappers Lane (Newland Homes – 13 dwellings)
5. **23/00813/FUL** – Unilateral Undertaking dated 19 April 2024 at 170-172 Leckhampton Road (Boo Homes – retail unit + 14 dwellings)
6. **23/01856/FUL** – Unilateral Undertaking dated 23 January 2024 at Leckhampton Lodge, 23 Moorend Park Road (single dwelling)

**10. Question from Councillor Martin Horwood to the Cabinet Member Planning & Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins**

How many Section 106 agreements are currently being negotiated in the Leckhampton ward and for which developments?

**Member response**

1. **25/01073/FUL:** Residential development of 21 no. zero carbon dwellings with associated access and internal roads, parking, landscaping, and other associated works and infrastructure. Newland Homes Ltd
2. **25/01031/CONDIT:** Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) of planning permission 21/02750/FUL to allow for change in house types/design and associated site layout changes. New Dawn Homes Ltd

**11. Question from Councillor Martin Horwood to the Cabinet Member Planning & Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins**

How are councillors currently consulted on section 106 agreements as per policy agreed by cabinet on 5 April 2022 and by council on 20 June 2022 (Cabinet & council paper recommendation 6 and para 6.4) which obliged officers to:

- Notify ward members of any application of interest and identify any known demands for local infrastructure
- Notify ward members when an application is likely to result in section 106 negotiation
- Update planning report templates to include details of section 106 agreements agreed
- Provide section 106 training for members

### **Member response**

Ward members are notified of all planning applications within their ward via a weekly email sent to all members on a Friday. The weekly list is subdivided on a ward-by-ward basis, so that ward members can easily refer to their own areas. Paragraph 6.4 of the 2022 Cabinet report sets this out as follows:

1. Following review of the weekly list Ward members to notify the case officer of any application of interest and identify any known demands for infrastructure in the area.
2. Where an application is expected to result in the need for S106 negotiation, the case officer to notify the relevant ward members to enable engagement early in the application process

The onus is on the member to review that list and comment accordingly within the deadline set out in that email. It is open to members to comment on the need or otherwise for a s106 Agreement at this early stage as well as what that agreement ought to include. This will then be taken into account in the case officer's consideration of the scheme.

In addition, the planning case officer emails the relevant ward member(s) when a planning application (which is likely to be recommended for approval) is to be subject to a s106 Agreement; again, the onus is on the member to respond to that notification email as they see fit.

The Planning case officer does not notify the ward member when a s106 Agreement takes the form of a standardised unilateral undertaking (for example to make a financial contribution towards mitigating any impact on the Cotswolds Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation) as these non-negotiable. Similarly, the Planning case officer does not notify the ward member where a s106 Agreement simply serves an administrative function such as tying a new permission to a previous agreement for example.

All planning reports include a section on the requisite s106 Agreement heads of terms, in as much detail as is possible at that stage. This section was updated post

the 2022 Cabinet/Council reports to add the additional clarity and transparency sought by members.

Annual members' training includes training on Planning obligations and the mechanisms for securing them (s106 Agreements for example). The 2026 members training programme will include a bespoke session on s106 Agreements. The Head of Planning works alongside Planning Committee Members and myself to agree the priorities for training. All members, whether a member of Planning Committee, a substitute or otherwise are invited to attend. I attend as many training sessions on planning as possible and actively encourage my member colleagues to do the same. The latest training took place in November on urban design.

### **Supplementary question to Questions 1, 2 and 3**

Thank you for your very comprehensive and detailed responses to Questions 1, 2 and 3, setting out how the system should work, and all the S106 agreements currently underway in Leckhampton. This supplementary question relates to those three responses.

Under the policy adopted in 2022, ward members should be actively consulted on S106 agreements, and the Head of Planning has since confirmed that this should mean the heads of terms and draft agreements being shared with councillors before the agreement is concluded - but as far as I am aware, this has not happened in any of the eight examples listed in the answers to Questions 1, 2 and 3. This is obviously an operational issue but could the Cabinet Member take this up with the Head of Planning, to check whether the planning team is correctly implementing the policy adopted in 2022, and how it is now working?

### **Cabinet Member response**

Thanks for the original questions and supplementary. I believe that the processes we have are robust enough to support local ward members with planning applications that may involve an S106 agreement, and would remind all members that it is their responsibility to get involved with planning process in their own wards – asking questions, finding out details, and working with case officers at the earliest opportunity.

In addition, I would encourage all Members to attend as many training sessions as they possibly can, particularly those which concern planning. Members should support training of any description – it is vital and provides important information to help them do the best job.

### **12. Question from Councillor Martin Horwood to the Cabinet Member Planning & Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins**

Will the cabinet member refer the policy in Q [3] above to the constitution working group to ensure that planning procedure unambiguously mandates this policy in practice?

### **Member response**

I appreciate the commitment made by Cllr Horwood to ongoing service improvement and this is something I too promote across my portfolio. However, I do not consider this is a matter for the constitution working group. The planning team, further to the reports of 2022 responded to the principles as set out in those reports in respect of enhanced transparency and engagement with ward members on S106.

Engagement in planning applications is a two-way engagement. The planning team facilitate notification to ward members as appropriate and should any ward members wish to discuss any matter, including any potential elements that may form a S106 then it is their responsibility to do so by making contact via email, telephone, our Teams environment or organise a face to face meeting. As regularly expressed to members via planning training, this engagement is actively encouraged.

It should be remembered that S106 can only be negotiated where it is:

1. necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
2. directly related to the development; and
3. fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development

Building best practice and checking and challenging our processes is a live service improvement piece and our commitment to this was documented in the Planning Advisory Service/Local Government Association Planning Service Peer Challenge that took place between 27<sup>th</sup> February, and 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023.

I meet with the Head of Planning regularly and the Planning and Liaison Member Working Group has a standing agenda item which provides an open platform to discuss opportunities for service improvement, lessons learnt and building on best practice. Cllr Horwood is a member of that group, and I encourage him to engage either with myself or the Head of Planning on future agenda items as appropriate.

### **Supplementary question**

The Cabinet Member is right that it is the responsibility of ward members to make contact with planning officers, but the exact wording of the 2022 Cabinet recommendation states that where an application is expected to result in the need for an S106 negotiation, the case officer should notify relevant ward members to enable engagement with them at the earliest opportunity, so there is also an onus on officers to get in touch with ward members. The original reply says the constitution working group is not necessarily the right route for this to be looked at, but can I ask that you consult with officers to come up with a process to examine how the protocol could be amended to reinforce the policy as adopted in 2022 and make sure it is being implemented.

### **Cabinet Member response**

I would say any process, procedure or protocol is only valid if followed, so I will take away question and speak with senior planning team to see if it is being followed and if anything is needed to strengthen it.

### 13. Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Councillor Flo Clucas

Following the recent publication of the English Indices of Deprivation 2025, several areas of Cheltenham are shown as being in the statistically most deprived quintile when assessed using the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Could the Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services please confirm whether the council will be looking in more detail at the underlying data, and advise how the council will invest in those communities identified as statistically deprived to help improve people's well-being?

#### Member response:

The English Indices of Deprivation 2025 were published on 30 October 2025 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The indices rank 33,755 neighbourhoods (LSOAs) based on seven domains of deprivation. The domains were combined using the following weights to produce the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation:

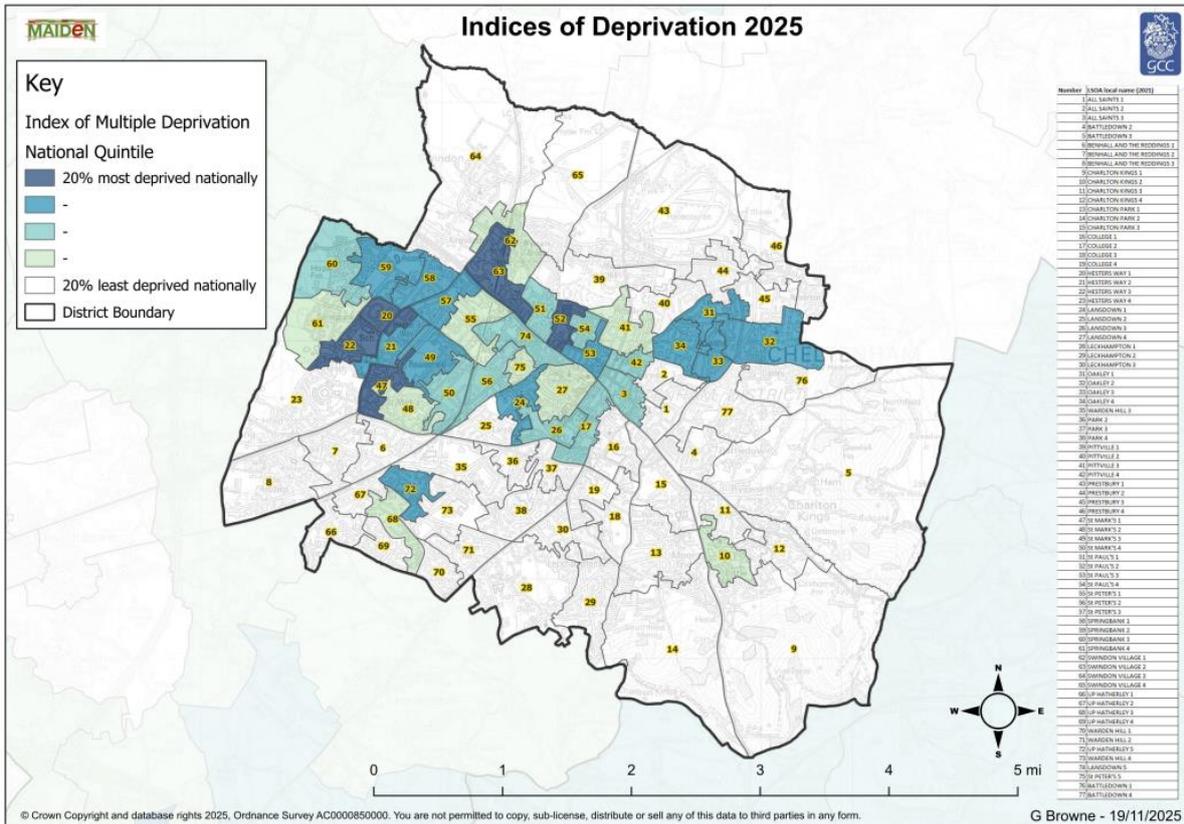
- Income Deprivation (22.5%)
- Employment Deprivation (22.5%)
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation (13.5%)
- Health Deprivation and Disability (13.5%)
- Crime (9.3%)
- Barriers to Housing and Services (9.3%)
- Living Environment Deprivation (9.3%)

In addition to the Index of Multiple Deprivation and the seven domain indices, there are two supplementary indices: the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index and the Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index.

The borough contains two Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that fall into the most deprived 10% nationally (parts of Hesters Way and St. Pauls) and three further areas that are in the 20% most deprived nationally.

St MARK'S 1	1,561
St PAUL'S 2	2,298
HESTERS WAY 3	3,715
HESTERS WAY 1	4,983
SWINDON VILLAGE 2	6,141

A map of the Indices of Deprivation is shown below:



The framework for our work on addressing the issues flagged up by the Indices of Deprivation is set out in the Council's corporate plan 2025-2028 which makes a firm commitment to tackling inequalities via Key priority 4 - "Reducing inequalities, supporting better outcomes". Within this priority, there are four aims:

- *Opportunities to be healthy and active should be available to everyone, whether that's through simply spending time in our green spaces or through participation in sport, leisure or culture.*
- *Our leisure and culture assets and services are our key vehicle for providing accessible opportunities for everyone and we need to safeguard these for the future.*
- *To effect meaningful change more broadly on the inequalities agenda, and to ensure we support work on prevention of crime and disorder, we know that we must continue to work with both our public sector partners, and with other organisations through No Child Left Behind.*
- *We also have a role to play in supporting groups and organisations working to make a practical difference within their local communities.*

Within this priority, some of the themes that are currently being delivered on include:

- Healthy and active – the launch of the feel-good pass that enables users of food banks and pantries to access 12 free sessions at Leisure at Cheltenham and three other community activity providers.
- Leisure and Culture assets – undertaking a study of how best to secure the future for Leisure at and the Prince of Wales Stadium
- Working with partners – the Council continues to convene a wide range of groups including the community safety partnership, the facing financial hardship group and No Child Left Behind
- Supporting community organisations – the Council has enabled financial support for community food banks and pantries via the Council's allocation of Household Support Fund, community-based health equity projects via its health and wellbeing grants and has also supported Petersfield Partnership with the Petersfield sports and community hub with works now started on-site.

In terms of housing, CBC housing services teams (Community Investment, Money and benefit Advice, training and employment teams) have a strong track record of working with the St Marks, St Pauls and Hesters Way communities to engage tenants and deliver projects to provide opportunities to increase income, improve life chances and alleviate deprivation.

An example of this was the delivery of a skills hub at Hesters Way resource centre (supported by Councillor Willingham) The teams are currently working on service plans for the coming year which will include projects to further alleviate deprivation. It would be helpful to discuss these plans with Councillor Willingham as they are currently in development.

### **Supplementary question**

The amount of data shows that the council is aware of deprivation, and I'm glad to see we've looked at the new stats and at what the council can do.

### **Cabinet Member response**

Looking at the five areas at top of deprivation list in Cheltenham, may I suggest that it would be useful to meet with the Mayor, ward councillors and officers to see how we can change the potential for those areas, for the future of the children, young people, older people, those without work - not just talking about things but doing them as well. I look forward to arranging to take that forward.

### **14. Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing, Culture and Public Realm, Councillor Izaak Tailford**

Does the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Wellbeing and Public Realm agree with me that the Lansdown Art Studios (<https://lansdownartstudios.com/>) are an important cultural asset to our town, and could he please reaffirm this council's desire to ensure they able to retain suitable premises in town?

### **Member response:**

Thank you, Cllr Willingham, for highlighting the value of Lansdown Art Studios as part of the wider cultural contribution to Cheltenham and supporting local artists. I visited them myself recently and can see how fantastic they are, particularly in providing a space for growing artists to establish themselves.

The Council has been in active and ongoing engagement with the artist studio related to their current location. The current site occupied by the Art Studios forms part of a live Section 106 negotiation which is ongoing. I cannot comment on the detail of this due to this being a live negotiation.

The council remains committed to fostering a vibrant cultural sector. We cannot comment on specific premises elsewhere in town, but we share the ambition to see organisations like Lansdown Art Studios thrive and promote creative endeavours through the Visit Cheltenham website.

*No supplementary question*

### **15. Question from Councillor David Willingham to the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries**

Could the cabinet member please confirm this council will pursue full costs recovery against the drivers and insurers of all and any overweight vehicles that collide with

and damage overbridges on the Honeybourne Line?

### **Member response**

The council will review each case individually. Following each strike CBC will arrange for our consultant engineers to inspect the bridge and provide advice regarding the damage caused. If any damage is caused and it warrants repair then a claim will be pursued against the third party's insurance policy.

In respect of the recent bridge strike on 4<sup>th</sup> December our consultant engineers have inspected the bridge and advised that the damage caused was not detrimental to the structural integrity of the bridge with its current use as a footpath and cycleway. We are awaiting their advice whether repairs are required and therefore whether a claim will be made against the third party.

### **Supplementary question**

If the bridge road needs to be closed for investigation works, can we use the opportunity to install anti-bird netting there, as evidence suggests walking under bridge is a high-risk activity, giving rise to a lot of case work about that?

### **Cabinet Member response**

I take the request on board and will pass it on to relevant officers, but cannot say whether the highways authority will act upon it.

## **9 Review of Statement of Licensing Policy (Licensing Act 2003)**

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities introduced the report, explaining that our Licensing Policy Statement was last updated in 2020, and must be reviewed every five years. This time it requires just a little bit of tidying up with no notable changes, due to there being no significant changes to primary legislation or case law. There are a few minor changes, including:

- additional information with regard to personal licenses and annual fees;
- a new section on women's safety and wider vulnerabilities in the town centre and various premises;
- further addressing of safeguarding concerns;
- a note in Appendix E about premises requiring ID and their retention policy on that.

New policy recommendations include the work of evening and night-time economy working group and its aspiration for a charter for local businesses, committing to provide safe spaces for all. This work will support the continuation of the Purple Flag accreditation, which Cheltenham has held for ten years, in recognition of its status as a thriving and safe town.

There were no Member questions.

In debate, a Member commented that she liked the report, in particular the improvements to women's safety, adding that the track changes were very helpful, making it easy to see what has been updated,

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities agreed, and thanked officers for all their work on this.

**RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT:**

- **the revised licensing policy statement is adopted, to take effect from 7 January 2026.**

## **10 Review of Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy (Emissions Policy)**

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities said that when the revised taxi and private hire licensing policy was adopted in July, the section about the 2040 emissions policy was held back, pending further consultation which has now concluded. CBC is proposing to adopt same policy as that of Stroud District and Tewkesbury Borough Councils, maintaining the highest possible standards with our neighbours and minimising fears about licence shopping. We are committed to keep this approach under review, working alongside the licensed trade, CBC's climate team, Climate Leadership Gloucestershire, and other district Cabinet leads.

She said that on our journey to carbon neutrality by 2030, the emissions policy will be reviewed to consider whether a move to electric vehicles (with no tailpipe emissions) or ULEV (with less than 75g of CO2 per kilometre emitted) is appropriate by 01 April 2028, always mindful that people's livelihoods are linked to taxis and private hire trade, which creates employment and provides vital services to residents and visitors, while supporting safety, accessibility, and overall economic activity.

With electric car technology continually improving, especially battery capacity and management – a main historic reason for non-adoption, due to concerns over range anxiety – she confirmed that ownership is increasing, pushing up demand and driving down price. The age and mileage of current vehicles must be considered, however, and whether there are sufficient fast charging options in town, and work is ongoing towards our 2030 goal, in line with the Climate Emergency Action Plan. Currently, 48% of the fleet is either electric or hybrid, and further policy review will be undertaken if needed in April 2030. In the meantime, we will work to engage with all partners across Gloucestershire, neighbouring districts and the trade.

In response to a Member's questions, the Licensing and Public Protection Manager confirmed that there is a typo under Point D on page 138 of the agenda - which should state that 'all vehicles must emit zero emissions on their 2033 renewal date', not 2030 as shown, and undertook to correct the error.

In response to a Member's question about what is being done, in conjunction with the county and rail services, to provide affordable public charging points for taxis at places where they need to be, in particular at railway stations, the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities confirmed that a review of infrastructure in Cheltenham showed provision to be currently quite sparse, with the majority of chargers at the Arle Court Transport Hub being slow – 7KW or 13KW per hour, which would take up to seven hours for a full charge, not sufficient for the taxi trade. There are a number of fast-charge bays in Bath Road car park, and the county is working to put more in other car parks, but clearly more high-capacity charging options will be needed to support the taxi trade.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control added that there are four rapid chargers in the outside car park at Arle Court Transport Hub.

In debate, Members made the following points:

- the Cabinet Member is to be commended on this impressive report – this is a tricky brief, balancing the political demands of our commitment to Net Zero with the taxi trade's need to earn a good living, and managing expectations is difficult;
- the revisions to the policy take a pragmatic view of ULEV, now a more sensible compromise in accepting a wider range of vehicles including plug-in, hybrid, hydrogen and electric with range extenders. This will provide reassurance for the trade and passengers on longer journeys, although ultimately, electric vehicles are massively cheaper to run than petrol and most consistent with our Net Zero ambition. It is brilliant that we are taking so much care to make it work for taxi trade while sticking to that commitment;
- it is good to hear that the taxi fleet is already 48% hybrid or electric (ie not diesel or petrol) and that our neighbouring councils have the same policy, giving it a much better chance of continuing as we move towards local government reorganisation;
- the way the market is moving means that a new electric vehicle will soon be cheaper than a new petrol vehicle, which will drive change without any negative effect on the ability to make money for the taxi trade;
- it is good that this policy has come through without a huge amount of push-back from the trade, but imperative on us as council to put pressure on private railway operators and county council to ensure charging facilities are available near taxi ranks at stations.

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Community thanked Members for their comments, and confirmed that she and officers would look at the infrastructure around areas where taxi drivers wait for passengers to assess the opportunities for more charging points.

**RESOLVED THAT:**

- **the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy attached at Appendix 2 is adopted.**

## 11 Hackney Carriage Byelaws

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities introduced her report, explaining that in November 2023, the Department of Transport updated the published byelaws for hackney carriages, which act as best practice for local authorities to adopt. The previous byelaws date back to 2012 and need updating.

She said that the Local Government Act 1976 doesn't permit local authorities to attach conditions to a hackney carriage licence, other than by way of byelaws, under Section 68 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and Section 171 of Police Public Health Act 1875, to enable local licensing authorities to regulate hackney carriage drivers and proprietors. There is scope for the council to deviate from this model but officers do not consider it necessary, and the recently-adopted comprehensive taxi and private hire policy, together with the updated byelaws, are considered sufficient to ensure applicants are fit and proper and maintain appropriate passenger safety.

If adopted, the resolution will need to be published, and the revised byelaws will need to be approved by the Secretary of State.

The Leader pointed out that the recommendation as published doesn't make sense, and it was agreed that it should read: *The Council resolves that the Hackney Carriage byelaws, dated 26 June 2012, be repealed and the revised model byelaws attached at Appendix 2 be adopted.*

In response to a Member's question as to how much time and effort was required by the council to get this process implemented, from publication by the government to the byelaws being adopted by CBC today, the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities said that there was no indication that this had taken any more time than is normally expected for a policy update, but if there is anything unusual regarding the workload, she will let the Member know.

There was no debate.

### **RESOLVED (unanimously) THAT:**

- **the Hackney Carriage byelaws, dated 26 June 2012, are repealed and the revised model byelaws attached at Appendix 2 is adopted.**

## 12 Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2026-27

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets said that the council is required to set its local council tax support scheme for working-age residents every year, and that as we no longer receive the revenue support grant which funded the scheme, we must fund that share of the scheme's cost ourselves. In 2019-20 a new scheme was introduced to ensure that our most vulnerable residents, particularly those on low incomes, would continue to receive 100% support at the highest income band tier.

For 2026-27, the scheme set out in the report will again be based on five income bands, with some changes being made to increase the income disregarded in respect of disabled children and to extend the income levels in line with increased welfare benefits.

He said that all Members will be aware that many residents continue to struggle with ongoing cost of living pressures, with many low-income households spending a large percentage of their income on essentials. This scheme will provide vital support to approximately 4,300 of our most financially-challenged working-age residents, the cost of which, based on data at October 2025, amounts to just over £4.3m.

Inviting Members to support the recommendations, he drew their attention to the recommendation to delegate authority to adjust the scheme when changes to national welfare benefit scheme occur, vital to ensure our most vulnerable residents are not disadvantaged.

He ended by thanking the revenues and benefits team for their hard work.

There were no questions.

In debate, a Member commented that this proposal has his 100% support, with so many vulnerable residents needing support, and said CBC would not be in a position to help them as much as it can without the work of the former Director of Finance, Paul Jones.

Another Member noted that some Reform councils in the north of England were completely withdrawing help of this kind, which will not only lead to additional hardship for their poorest residents, but will ultimately cost those councils more as they try to recover council tax that people are not able to pay. She said it is incredible that we can provide 100% support, also crediting Paul Jones's skills in balancing the books, and reminds us how important it is to elect the right people and to stand up for those who need help.

Another Member agreed, saying he was proud of the council for looking after our most deprived and vulnerable residents, ensuring they are not forced to pay council tax they cannot afford.

Summing up, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets confirmed that it would ultimately cost the council more to try and recover money from people who cannot afford to pay council tax, and praised Paul Jones and the current Leader who started this fantastic policy which has held throughout the years of austerity and which he is proud to support.

#### **RESOLVED THAT:**

- 1. the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for working age customers in Appendix 5 and summarised in Appendix 6, for 2026/27 is approved and adopted;**
- 2. authority is delegated to the Chief Executive, or Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets, to make**

**any necessary adjustments to the income bands to reflect changes to and uprating of welfare benefits, by 27 February 2026.**

### **13 Half-yearly Treasury Management Report**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets introduced his report, saying the council is required to review and scrutinise treasury management activity every year, including investments and borrowing; this mid-term report sets out the position for first six months of the financial year and confirms that all treasury activity has been carried out in compliance with that approved by Members in March 2025. He said Members will note that General Fund borrowing costs are on target to the forecast in the 2025-26 budget, taking into account the HRA debt, reimbursement for this year, and steady investment returns; hopefully borrowing costs will be reduced in the coming months as interest rates fall further. He said that the majority of council borrowing is at fixed rates, therefore insulated from recent increases and volatility, and capital commitments are currently being met through short-term borrowing. He said work continues to review borrowing strategy and minimise future financial pressures, and officers monitor interest rates daily to secure fixed-rate borrowing at the most advantageous opportunity. Alongside this, we continue to maximise opportunities to generate capital receipts to repay debts.

He confirmed that the report has been considered by the treasury management panel, and thanked them and treasury management officers in the finance team.

In response to a Member's question about information on the ethical choices of investment, which is of concern to some residents, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets confirmed that relevant advice about investments and holdings is regularly sought, with Schroder's Maximiser Fund being raised most frequently. Although Members are not keen on this holding, to get rid of it would be expensive, so officers have been instructed to reduce it over time – it now stands at £59,200 of the original £2m invested, down from £120k in September 2024.

There was no debate on this item.

#### **RESOLVED THAT:**

- **contents of this summary report of the treasury management activity during the first six months of 2025/26 are noted.**

### **14 Cheltenham Borough Council's Greenhouse Gas Emission Report: 2024-25**

The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency introduced the report, which he said was evidence of the action promised when the climate emergency was declared in 2019. He said climate change is not an abstract concept but real, impacting every aspect of our world; while some forces are beyond our control, others are not and are driven by everyday choices, and it is in the council's power to choose its actions.

The report is a mirror, showing where we are succeeding and where we can do better. It highlights:

- Scope 1 emissions (direct emissions from fossil fuels) own 55% from the baseline – a huge achievement;
- Scope 2 emissions (electricity use at the council) up by 23%, reflecting the deliberate shift away from gas towards electrification;
- Scope 3 emissions (the supply chain) remain the biggest challenge, but also provide the greatest opportunity to innovate and embed sustainability into every contract and procurement decision.

He said the picture is similar for housing services where, despite some reductions, the sheer scale of emissions from our housing stock shows why investing in programmes like the Warm Homes Fund, heat pumps and insulation matter so much—not just for carbon reduction, but for people’s lives. Warmer homes mean lower bills, better health, and greater comfort for thousands of residents, but this work requires investment, innovation, courage, and sometimes making decisions that feel uncomfortable. However, everything we do strengthens our resilience against spiralling energy costs brings us closer to a safer, healthier future, and reinforces our commitment to achieving Net Zero and to the worldwide movement for climate justice.

He said the report demonstrates CBC’s accountability and transparency, is the foundation for everything that comes next, and moving forward, we will continue to empower residents to make greener choices. Approval and publication of the reports reaffirms our commitment to working together across parties, communities and Gloucestershire to make Cheltenham a beacon of climate leadership.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency for his report, and made the following comments and observations:

Regarding the challenges of collecting Scope 3 emissions data and improvements to reduce emissions, a Member noted that the 2024 update of the Climate Emergency Action Plan listed improvements to infrastructure for cycling and walking, which will impact commuting and business travel but needs collaboration with the county council. She wondered what progress there is with the county, not only connecting the Arle Court Business Hub to Bishop’s Cleeve, but also helping Cheltenham residents to get into the town centre from various neighbourhoods? The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency said he is keen to see this improved, and it appears that these actions now form part of the Strategic and Local Plan. He will talk with the team and provide a written response later.

A Member noted that we can only manage what we can measure, and the report is honest about where we are, where we aim to be, where we are falling short, and where we are trying to make things up. In response to her three questions, the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency confirmed that:

- he did not know why emissions from the ground fleet at Gloucestershire Airport have been rolled over and there are no new figures – he will find out and share the information;

- regarding housing emissions and the fact that the council no longer has access to landlord electricity supplies information for CBH properties, we have changed supplier and lost access to the relevant portal, but will have new supplier portals in future with readings for subsequent years, and the current figures will be carried over as a baseline;
- on the subject of the existing U-values of properties (the amount of heat being lost from the fabric of the building per metre squared), a full audit of all 4,900 council properties was provided when they were transferred from CBH to CBC – this information should provide the EPC rating of all the properties;
- regarding the fitting of air source or ground source heat pumps to council properties over the next year, the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Phases 1 and 2 provided heat pumps to several properties, although at that point householders had the option of refusing and many did. In Phase 3.1, this becomes a requirement, and all 383 properties will be fitted with heat pumps, as well as insulation.

A Member asked if this is going to be communicated to residents, and if so, when? The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency said that Housing Services issue a newsletter to all council tenants, and the communications and climate team regularly put information on websites and in news articles about what is happening. He said we also have a vacancy for a household engagement officer – the previous post-holder was very impressive, and demonstrated what can be done by professionals applying their specialist knowledge. He hopes a replacement will soon be appointed.

In response to a Member's question as to whether this information can be included in the annual council tax letter distributed to all residents in the new year, the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency said this is outside his portfolio, but noted the suggestion and agreed to take it off line with Cabinet colleagues.

A Member welcomed this fascinating and informative report, and the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency's illuminating speech. He recalled the original social housing decarbonisation fund, and how difficult it was to get tenants to engage and understand what was being offered. He agreed that tenant engagement is essential, saying this is easier with new-builds; dealing with existing properties and persuading tenants to do the right thing remains a challenge and there is still work to be done here. A Member suggested that an article could be included in the next edition of Tenants' Voice and to spread the word to private sector rented properties, and undertook to look into how this can be done.

In debate, a Member commented that HBO and Ubico have made a huge improvement to Scope 1 emissions, and that CBC is leading way with other districts adopting similar methods. He thanked Ubico and the teams for making this happen.

#### **RESOLVED THAT:**

- **Council's commitment to carbon reduction across operations is reaffirmed;**
- **the publication of Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report 2024-5 is approved.**

## **15 Member Development Panel Annual Report April 2024- May 2025**

As Chair of the Member Development Panel, Councillor Chelin was pleased to present the report, and to thank her fellow Panel Members, Councillors Pemberton and Davies, and Democratic Services officers for their hard work.

She highlighted the following:

- CBC achieved its Councillor Development Charter from Southwest Councils in May. Thanks to Councillors Hay, Tailford, Collins and Davies, and to officers for their input. We are currently working on the recommendations of the assessment panel, including clarifying the role of champions, including:
  - clarifying the role of champions, with draft role descriptions to be submitted to the constitution working group in due course. We currently have champions for cycling and walking, safeguarding, and refugees, but can give consideration to others in future, including youth;
- Councillor Chelin has acted as an assessor for another local authority reviewing its charter and applying for Charter Plus accreditation, which provides a useful model for CBC to observe and possibly adopt;
- as good practice, Democratic Services have organised IT drop-in sessions in advance of major committees to help colleagues, and will be doing more, including help for Members to use Microsoft Teams more fully;
- the buddying scheme for new Members and senior officers is helpful, but other authorities have a more formal and ongoing arrangement; we can look to encourage more engagement in our scheme;
- a new approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training is currently being sourced for roll-out in February or March;
- a skills audit has been circulated to all Members, to share information about the general skills they bring from their working and professional lives, which may be useful in their councillor roles;
- Members are invited to feed back any concerns about training and development not only at meetings but also through formal requests for consideration of any ideas and questions;
- Planning training is important and to ensure access for all Members, we are looking to make it available at different times of the day and on line.

There were no questions. Members thanked Councillor Chelin for her excellent chairing of the Member Development Panel, and made the following comments:

- we have come a long way in way with the training delivered to Members, and they are encouraged to complete the skills audit, particularly if they have something to offer or contribute which might encourage others to come forward to be councillors;
- in other parts of the world, women are stepping away from politics out of fear and the fear of intimidation, and this is having an enormous effect on democracies.

Here, we are giving all Members the feeling they belong, are supported, and can get help if needed. This is really important, and demonstrated by the range of councillors we have at CBC, making a real difference for the town;

- Members' skills and interests are very wide ranging and useful. Members should also keep an eye on Local Government Authority training, especially if stepping up into leadership roles.

No vote was required on this item.

## **16 Delegation to Gloucestershire County Council to act as designated county planning authority responsible for deciding on the Requirements contained in Parts 1 and 2 of Schedule 2 of the M5 Junction 10 Development Consent Order**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control apologised for this late addition to the agenda, saying it is largely a procedural and technical issue but Council approval is required today. He explained that to avoid any risk of confusion or ambiguity around management of the M5 Junction 10 works, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough Councils are delegating planning authority to Gloucestershire County Council, the most logical way forward as GCC is the highways authority.

A Member recalled that the JCS Planning Inspector had specifically stated that no large construction vehicles should use local roads in Swindon Village, St Peter's and St Paul's during development, and asked who will be responsible for monitoring and enforcing this for J10 and associated works. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control said any planning application will include conditions covering construction vehicles and transport plans, and although enforcement will be the responsibility of the county council, CBC will need to work in partnership with them and the highways authority to make sure it is happening.

In response to another Member's question, the Director of Planning confirmed that the Secretary of State had referred to the 'relevant planning authority' taking responsibility for the DCO, but for J10, three different councils are involved. The county council, as the local highways authority, has the skills and expertise to manage the project, and the recommendations being voted on today ensure absolute clarity on that point.

Further to the earlier Member's question, she added that although the county will be the designated planning authority, CBC will be a statutory consultee and retain the opportunity to engage in the planning process. There will be an agreement outside the decision today which can be quite specific and explicit about what responsibilities and engagement looks like – this can be taken off line with the county. With regard to the Planning Inspector's comments about the JCS, she said any applications outside the M5 Junction 10 development, such as Elms Park, still sit with the district council. As today's decision is only concerned with removing ambiguity about the designated planning authority for the Junction 10 DCO, it was agreed to take further discussion of this issue off line.

In response to a Member's question about whether the county has sufficient resources and ability to enforce the conditions of the DCO, and whether this will

transition to a future unitary authority without further work, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control was unable to give a definitive response, saying the county council would be responsible.

In debate, a Member welcomed the recommendation, and was keen for work to start. Another Member agreed, and suggested that had the UK still been part of the EU, the regional development fund would have been used to finance this, and more affordable and social housing would have been built in the process.

A Member commented that we need to make sure that if there are any infractions or perceived infractions, GCC will take enforcement action commensurate to the allegations, investigate and take action as needed.

#### **RESOLVED THAT:**

- 1. the updates in this report relating to the Development Consent Order for the M5 Junction 10 Improvements Scheme are noted.**
- 2. the delegation of planning powers to Gloucestershire County Council under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 9D of the Local Government Act 2000 to act as designated county planning authority responsible for deciding on the Requirements contained in Parts 1 and 2 of Schedule 2 of the Development Consent Order (see appendix 3 - Schedule of Requirements Register) is approved.**
- 3. The Director of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, is authorised to finalise and enter into a formal delegation agreement with Gloucestershire County Council, setting out the arrangements and coordination between the Joint Councils (Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough Councils) regarding the discharge of the Requirements contained in Parts 1 and 2 of Schedule 2 of the Development Consent Order.**
- 4. The arrangement will be reviewed annually by the Director Planning and Building Control (Cheltenham Borough Council) and Director of Growth (Tewkesbury Borough Council) and Assistant Director: Planning and Economic Development (Gloucestershire County Council) to ensure effectiveness and continued alignment with strategic planning and land management objectives. Should any necessary adjustments be necessary these will be agreed with the Councils' Monitoring Officer and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control.**

#### **17 Appointment of Interim Section 151 Officer**

The Leader introduced the report, explaining that the council is required by statute to appoint an S151 officer, and that following the sad loss of Paul Jones, it was necessary to make an interim appointment as soon as possible. She said we have been lucky to appoint an interim S151 officer with a huge amount of local government experience, who will start at CBC in January.

There were no questions. A Member thanked the Leader and officers for moving quickly to fill this critical post for the council.

The Leader took the opportunity to say that the council has a fantastic finance team, which has done such a great job under such difficult circumstances. In particular she wanted to thank Jon Whitlock for stepping up.

**RESOLVED THAT:**

- **Council formally appoints Adele Taylor as Interim Section 151 Officer with effect from January 2026**

**18 Notice of Motions**

There were none.

**19 Any other item the Mayor determines as urgent and which requires a decision**

There were none.

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