

# Council

23 March 2026

## Public Questions (8 total)

### 1. Question from Elliot Craddock to Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling, Parks, Gardens, and Public Green Space, Councillor Paul Baker

What progress has been made in reopening the Swindon Road tip, since it was closed on January the 10th 2025, well over a year ago?

#### Cabinet Member response

Thank you for your question.

As you rightly point out Cheltenham Borough Council closed the Household Recycling Centre (HRC) in January 2025 because to comply with the new licensing regime of the Environment Agency we would have had to spend around £1m on improvements. Given the significant constraints of Local Government financing following 14 years of cuts imposed by the previous Conservative government and now extended for the next 3 years by the Labour government, this money was simply unavailable.

Notwithstanding the above you will appreciate that the HRC function falls under the remit of Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and not Cheltenham Borough Council. When the HRC was closed the then-conservative administration at GCC refused point blank to offer any support whatsoever to re-opening it, pointing out the 'nearby' facility they operate at Wingmoor Farm.

The good news, to a point, is that the new Liberal Democrat administration at GCC have been far more engaging with us about the future of the HRC. Numerous meetings and an exploratory site visit have been held, and we are now awaiting to hear back from them following their review of options at the Swindon Road depot.

Needless to say, whatever the outcome, the site still requires significant investment which will need to be funded by GCC but in our view there is no question that Cheltenham, as the largest urban centre in the county, must have its own HRC for the convenience of its residents and the expanding population.

In the meantime, Cheltenham Borough Council continues to expand the range of its kerbside recycling options which are soon to include tetra paks. In addition,

the trial scheme for the collection of flexible plastic bags and packaging collection is ready to be rolled out across the town.

## **2. Question from Elliot Craddock to the Leader, Councillor Rowena Hay**

Before Christmas, Ed Davey wrote to the Equality and Human Rights Commission to complain that cancelling elections was against human rights. In January Rowena Hay confirmed the council was asking to postpone the local elections. Now that we know elections are going ahead anyway, who was wrong?

### **Cabinet Member response**

The Government was wrong. It was their decision to postpone elections and also their decision to u-turn on that decision. Cheltenham Borough Council had all-out elections for the whole chamber in 2024. Our mandate is less than two years old and is a stronger mandate than almost all our district neighbours. While we maintain that holding elections is not the best use of taxpayers' money, and despite the mess the government has made of its decisions, we now look forward to holding elections in May.

## **3. Question from Gill Hewlett to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing, Culture and Public Realm, Councillor Izaak Tailford**

What are Canada Life's plans for the former Cavendish House site, when will they begin, how long do they anticipate taking to completion, and what measures have the council taken to accelerate the process ? - the area is becoming increasingly derelict and without significant, and effective council intervention I cannot see how this will not deteriorate further.

### **Cabinet Member response**

Thank you for your question Gill. Unfortunately, these questions are mostly a matter for Canada Life to answer. It is their building, and timelines on getting definitive plans for the future of the building are outside of the council's control.

However, we all know how important Cav House is to our town centre and local economy, particularly for the businesses in the immediate area on and around The Prom. So please rest assured we are doing all we can to encourage Canada Life to take action as swiftly as possible. You may have seen Cheltenham Borough Council has publicly called for Canada Life to progress its plans and to put forward positive plans for the building. As a company they promote their values of investing in and making a positive difference to communities, and this council will continue to hold them to account on this commitment and encourage Canada Life to deliver a successful future for this critical town centre site.

I am pleased to advise that Canada Life has recently engaged with the council in its role as local planning authority on pre application of a revised scheme. I cannot advise any further at this point but actively encourage Canada Life to bring forward a positive planning application for the site at the earliest opportunity.

**4. Question from Gill Hewlett to Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Wellbeing, Culture and Public Realm, Councillor Izaak Tailford**

There are significant amounts of unwanted graffiti around the town, a notable example being the end of the lower high street, by the railway bridge and the Honeybourne Gate complex. Knowing the highly possible links of graffiti to gang culture, how much have the council allocated in the budget to clear up graffiti in the town, and what are the timescales for tackling it?

**Cabinet Member response**

Thank you for your question, it is something that I, and my cabinet colleagues, feel strongly about. Following years of budget cuts from central government, local authorities across the country, including Cheltenham, are doing their best to fund the cost of removing increasing amounts of graffiti in our borough. We rely on support from the police to catch the perpetrators, but police resources are also stretched, and they have to prioritise their resources on more serious crimes.

The council is responsible for removing graffiti on public buildings. However, on non-public buildings, our policy states that offensive graffiti should be removed by the property owner within 14 days of receiving formal notice from the authority requesting its removal; failure to do so may result in a Community Protection Notice (CPN) being issued to the property or Premises/Business owner. Other non-offensive graffiti should be removed within 28 days.

The council's environmental services partner, Ubico, seeks to remove graffiti from public buildings within 10 days of receiving a request to do so. Generally, offensive graffiti is removed within one working day where possible.

In parts of Cheltenham town centre, there has also been a very successful pilot scheme with the Cheltenham BID, collaborating with the Council and the Police, for graffiti removal on business premises within the BID area. This has recently entered its second phase, though I note it does not cover the area of lower high street mentioned in your question.

Also, on the Honeybourne Line, we currently have an active project brief live for targeted public art works there – which could include covering up of graffiti. I look forward to updating you more as this progresses.

Annually the council spends around £1.7 million on street cleansing and it is within this budget that graffiti removal is funded, along with litter picking, litter bin emptying, fly tip removal, mechanical sweeping of pavements and roads, and jet washing pavements. The council does not currently separate out the cost of graffiti removal.

If you spot any graffiti in Cheltenham, please do report it to us so it can be logged and action can be requested from the responsible party.

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

Can you please update me on the position with regard to the possible sale of Gloucestershire Airport?

**Cabinet Member response**

Thank you for the question. Cheltenham Borough Council, alongside joint shareholder Gloucester City Council, have been unable to reach agreement with Horizon Aero Group (HAG). The councils are disappointed that we were unable to accept the terms put forward by HAG.

It is important that the shareholding councils will now maintain close contact with operators, tenants and stakeholders to explore alternative options.

As Leader, I understand that and appreciate that this will be a cause for concern for all those working at the airport and for business owners who operate from there.

I want to assure you that we are committed to engaging with all parties so that we can reach a positive outcome for the future of the airport.

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

Can you please update me on the possible sale of the Municipal Offices?

**Cabinet Member response**

The council has entered into an exclusivity agreement for the sale of the Municipal Offices. The preferred bid proposes to re-develop the building into a hotel, spa and banqueting/conferencing destination.

The exclusivity agreement continues to progress and we will provide further updates when a more definitive timetable for the sale is known.

**7. Question from Rich Newman to Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins**

Why did no borough councillor call in to committee The Bell Inn's planning proposal? That could have saved it.

**Cabinet Member response**

Thank you for your question, I assume that you are referring to planning application ref. 25/01196/FUL which was granted in October 2025. The approved scheme involves the conversion of the upper floors of the Bell Inn and part of the ground floor to three flats, with the remainder of the ground floor used for commercial purposes.

The application was determined under delegated powers; it was not called to the Planning Committee. Members themselves are best placed to set out why they did not call the application to committee. It is not appropriate for me to put words in members' mouths, but it is the case that planning applications may only be called to committee if there are legitimate material planning reasons for doing so and when it is in the public interest (this is set out in our adopted Scheme of Delegation); in this case it can only be assumed that members felt that no material planning reasons were present and that there was no necessity, in public interest terms, for the application to be debated and determined by the committee.

**8. Question from Rich Newman to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Peter Jeffries**

How much of the council's budget goes towards paying pensions of previous employees?

**Cabinet Member response**

The Council is a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme with the Gloucestershire Pension Fund that is administered by Gloucestershire County Council on behalf of member bodies.

The Fund collects employer and employee pension contributions in relation to active employees of relevant organisations and meets the cost of pension benefits due to current and former employees including those within Cheltenham Borough Council. The pension scheme is a defined benefit scheme and has to demonstrate it can be fully funded through triennial reviews, the latest of which was completed during 2025.

Following this actuarial review, the council has set a budget for the financial year 2026/27 to pay £2,319,870 for primary pension contributions and £290,000 for secondary contributions. These secondary contributions cover off the liabilities for past service. In total, £2,609,870 of the council's 2026/27 budget is allocated to pension-related costs.

The contribution rate is equivalent to a 17.1% which is a significant reduction on the prior period due to the improved overall financial position of the pension fund mainly due to stronger future investment returns.