

## COUNTY COUNCIL – 4 September 2013

### Members' Questions

1. Questioner's name: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	Respondent's name: Cllr Mark Hawthorne
<p>To: Cllr Mark Hawthorne</p> <p>Rural parts of Gloucestershire suffer from slow broadband connections and often poor mobile phone coverage. Whilst the promised roll out of faster broadband is to be welcomed to build a stronger economy, people in the villages of the Cotswolds and in the forgotten urban areas are still asking when they will benefit from this. What are the specific criteria for deciding which villages and urban areas get hooked up before others?</p>	<p>I totally agree with Cllr Hodgkinson about how important broadband is for all of Gloucestershire as a way to protect existing jobs and attract new businesses into our county. That's why I've made it a priority of this administration, and why we've consistently invested in it. It's also why Gloucestershire is well ahead of most of the country in its roll out so far.</p> <p>The timing of the roll out in specific areas is based on engineering criteria, which includes factors like local demographics and geography, planning requirements, the availability of suitable technologies to provide a service and the existing engineering infrastructure.</p> <p>Rollout is done on an exchange by exchange area, not by parish or ward area. Some exchange areas are main exchanges and in turn feed smaller exchanges. These main exchange areas need to be upgraded first to allow fibre then to continue on to feed smaller exchanges. Once an exchange has been upgraded work then starts to install new cabinets one by one, and connect them to the new fibre network. This may also result in staggered deployment timescales even within a very localised area.</p> <p>Information about timescales within each exchange area can be found on <a href="http://www.fastershire.com">www.fastershire.com</a>. There is a postcode checker on the website which provides a 12 month rolling programme of information.</p> <p>Of course, it's just not possible with a project of this size to deliver faster broadband to every area at the same time. The whole process of building the new network in Gloucestershire is expected to be complete by the end of 2015.</p>

<p><b>2. Questioner's name: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson</b></p>	<p><b>Respondent's name: Cllr Vernon Smith</b></p>
<p>To: Cllr Vernon Smith</p> <p>Cycling has known health and environmental benefits yet between 2001 and 2011 the proportion of commuting journeys made in Gloucestershire by bicycle has not changed (it is static, at 4%).</p> <p>How much does GCC spend, as a proportion of its overall transport budget, on infrastructure and education in order to facilitate cycle commuting so that the number of journeys undertaken locally by bicycle might increase from its current level to that of Bristol (7.5%) Oxford (17%) and Cambridge (28.9%)?</p>	<p>The County Council does not allocate specific funds to any particular form of transport and spends virtually all of the capital funds available to transport on essential maintenance and safety improvements. These improve road conditions for all road users, including cyclists. I would be interested to hear any proposals Cllr Hodgkinson would like to make about allocating a specific proportion of funding to cycling, and where he believes those resources ought to be found from.</p> <p>We were successful in bidding for around £5m in funding from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, which is being invested in measures aimed at encouraging Sustainable Travel in the Gloucester and Cheltenham area over a three year period. Much of this will be used to specifically promote cycling including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cycle route signing (£55K 2013/14)</li> <li>Cycle parking stands (£22K 2013/14)</li> <li>Sustrans Bike It Officer (£100K 2012/13 &amp; 2013/14)</li> </ul> <p>Of course Cllr Hodgkinson realises that, as Bristol, Oxford and Cambridge are all urban cities, comparisons with Gloucestershire as a whole aren't necessarily particularly useful.</p>
<p><b>3. Questioner's name: Cllr Iain Dobie</b></p>	<p><b>Respondent's name: Cllr Vernon Smith</b></p>
<p>To: Cllr Vernon Smith</p> <p>In August the Coalition Government announced an additional £77m in funding to make cycling easier and safer in urban areas across the country. This is greatly welcomed on ecological, economic and health grounds. Could the relevant Cabinet member please tell us</p> <p>a) what is currently being done by this county to make cycling easier and safer and</p>	<p>Like a lot of people, I was very disappointed to find that the criteria that Norman Baker chose for this particular funding excluded areas like Gloucestershire. Despite this, I know that Gloucester MP Richard Graham has already met with council officers to see what funds he can draw down to support cycling. Whilst funds are very limited, I believe we are well positioned to attract further funding, when we are eligible.</p> <p>Despite this, we have made significant investments in cycling. Through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provided training for County and District Council officers on the</li> </ul>

<p>b) what is Gloucestershire's longer-term cycling vision, strategy and plan - is the county already well positioned to bid for likely future central Government (and developer's) funding to make cycling easier and safer in Cheltenham, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Cirencester, Stroud and other urban areas?</p>	<p>provision of cycling infrastructure and cycle-friendly public spaces;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering 'Personalised Travel Planning' in Cheltenham and Gloucester, whereby households are identified where there is a propensity for mode shift. This shows a 10% mode transfer where it has been used in other parts of Gloucestershire and other parts of the country. Cycling is an important element of this.</li> <li>• The Sustrans 'Bike It' Officer works with schools in the LSTF area to enable more cycling to school and in the local community.</li> <li>• The LSTF Programme Manager is also developing a Strategy for Development to act as legacy of the Programme and to be used as a tool to ensure developers meet the needs of cyclists.</li> </ul> <p>Government – usually via the DfT – makes funding available to cycling based on specific criteria. We are identifying and developing (to design and feasibility) cycling schemes which will offer economic benefits to the County in conjunction with local employers ready to bid (e.g. A435 proposed cycle route/s between Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve in partnership with local businesses).</p> <p>In the meantime, Members can, of course, choose to allocate all or part of their £20k roads funding to cycle schemes in their divisions.</p>
<p><b>4. Questioner's name: Cllr Jeremy Hilton</b></p>	<p><b>Respondent's name: Cllr Will Windsor-Clive</b></p>
<p>To: Cllr Will Windsor-Clive</p> <p>Have there been any applications to Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) for a Petroleum Exploration and Development Licence (PEDL) for Hydraulic Fracturing exploration within Gloucestershire.</p>	<p>None that we've been told of.</p>

<b>5. Questioner's name: Cllr Jeremy Hilton</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Will Windsor-Clive</b>
<p>To: Cllr Will Windsor-Clive</p> <p>Could you please provide members with a map of shale deposits in Gloucestershire?</p>	<p>There is no specific map of shale deposits in Gloucestershire that the council is aware of. Information about mineral deposits can be found from the British Geological Survey – their website is <a href="http://www.bgs.ac.uk">http://www.bgs.ac.uk</a></p>
<b>6. Questioner's name: Cllr Jeremy Hilton</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Will Windsor-Clive</b>
<p>To: Cllr Will Windsor-Clive</p> <p>What is the county council's current mineral policy in regard to a planning application to carry out Hydraulic Fracturing in Gloucestershire?</p>	<p>If we receive a planning application, we would have to determine according to our usual procedures. The relevant local plan is the Gloucestershire Minerals Local Plan (adopted 2003). In addition the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) and Communities and Local Government planning practice guidance for onshore oil and gas (July 2013) would also be important considerations.</p>
<b>7. Questioner's name: Cllr Jeremy Hilton</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Will Windsor-Clive</b>
<p>To: Cllr Will Windsor-Clive</p> <p>Could the cabinet member please provide council with an update on the work by Network Rail to the dual tracking of the railway line between Kemble and Swindon? Would he also provide members with details of how the rail companies plan to improve services from Swindon to Kemble, Stroud, Stonehouse, Gloucester &amp; Cheltenham once the dual tracking is completed?</p>	<p>The work appears to have been completed successfully as of this week, although we're still awaiting more detailed information from Network Rail.</p> <p>Once the scheme has been completed, the extra capacity created will initially be used to accommodate diverted London to South Wales (and vice versa) trains travelling via Swindon and Gloucester when the Great Western electrification works commence in the Bristol area and through the Severn Tunnel.</p> <p>We're still waiting to see what proposed new services will be suggested after that date, although it's worth noting that, the new fleet of Intercity Express Programme trains are due to operate between London and Gloucester/Cheltenham from 2018 onwards.</p> <p>The County Council will continue to work with the train companies to improve train services between Gloucestershire and London when works have been completed.</p>

<p><b>8. Questioner's name: Cllr Jeremy Hilton</b></p>	<p><b>Respondent's name: Cllr Ray Theodoulou</b></p>
<p>To: Cllr Ray Theodoulou</p> <p>How much does the county council still have "on deposit" in Icelandic banks? What is the cabinet member's best estimate on the cash sum that will be recovered by the county council in this financial year?</p>	<p>Currently the Council has £2.30 million deposited with Icelandic banks. This figure is expected to reduce by £0.13 million during the remainder of this financial year per the latest repayment schedules.</p>
<p><b>9. Questioner's name: Cllr Jeremy Hilton</b></p>	<p><b>Respondent's name: Cllr Kathy Williams</b></p>
<p>To: Cllr Paul McLain</p> <p>Could you please provide an update of the new Supporting People contracts currently being awarded to providers in Gloucestershire? Please include a list of those awarded, the value of the contacts and level of service to be provided.</p>	<p>I have responded on the assumption that the question is in relation to Older People Housing Related Support Service contracts. I can confirm that the tender process approved by Cabinet (12<sup>th</sup> Dec 2012) is almost concluded. Values and levels of services can be reported once contracts are awarded.</p>
<p><b>10. Questioner's name: Cllr Jeremy Hilton</b></p>	<p><b>Respondent's name: Cllr Vernon Smith</b></p>
<p>To: Cllr Vernon Smith</p> <p>The Local Transport Board recently met and approved a list of projects for further consideration. A new £4.7m bus station for Gloucester, as part of the proposed Kings Quarter development, was listed by the board as a project to support. As chairman of the LTB how confident are you that the promoters will get the funding to deliver a new bus station for Gloucester?</p>	<p>The Local Transport Board ranked all the projects that were proposed to it, using transparent, transport based, grounds. The Board will reconsider the schemes when it next meets in September, following further analysis.</p> <p>The projects that go forward are then decided by the amount of government funding available. For 2015-2019, that is £9.8m. Extra funding for projects may be available for the LEP, although it is a matter for them which to pursue.</p> <p>Gloucester City Council has an excellent track record of delivering regeneration projects, using a range of funding streams – I'm confident that, one way or another, they'll find the funds for this project in due course.</p>

11. Questioner's name: Cllr Stephen Lydon	Respondent's name: Cllr Paul McLain
<p>When a school becomes an academy, it loses many of the benefits of staying with the authority, such as making financial savings when procuring services. The authority can only carry on supplying services that are cost effective if there are a critical mass of schools who choose to stay with the authority. Can the cabinet member tell me what steps are currently being taken to inform schools of the advantages of staying with the authority; and will the cabinet undertake a campaign to persuade schools who are not academies to stay with the authority?</p>	<p>The Academy programme has not actually made a lot of difference to schools' ability to choose where they procure their services from. As Foundation Schools the vast majority of our secondary schools have always been able to decide whether to procure key services such as HR, legal support and payroll from the council or from other providers. Many Academies are continuing to buy these services back. The council's priority needs to be on ensuring that all pupils reach their full potential irrespective of which type of school they attend.</p> <p>The last Labour Government created academies as a way of giving more control to teachers and governors. There is a wealth of information available (see links below) for governing bodies of individual schools when taking the decision to convert (or not). This allows them to take an informed decision based on their assessment of what is best for the children at their school.</p> <p><a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/b00205692/whatisanacademy">http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/b00205692/whatisanacademy</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/primary/faqs">http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/primary/faqs</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.nga.org.uk/About-Us/NGA-s-Views/Policies/Academies.aspx">http://www.nga.org.uk/About-Us/NGA-s-Views/Policies/Academies.aspx</a></p> <p>I certainly wouldn't support diverting any council resources from supporting young people into a political campaign to persuade schools, one way or another, about what form of governance they should use. That is a decision for headteachers and governors. It is one I trust them to make themselves in the best interests of their children and local communities.</p>

<b>12. Questioner's name: Cllr Stephen Lydon</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Will Windsor-Clive</b>
<p>Can the cabinet member please advise me what the current GCC policy is on Shale Gas extraction, how the council will determine applications in the future , how will members be engaged on application extract shale gas in the county, and has the council received any representations from the Office of unconventional Gas?</p>	<p>Please see my answers to questions 4 and 6. Members will be engaged as with all planning applications.</p>
<b>13. Questioner's name: Cllr Lesley Williams</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Ray Theodoulou</b>
<p>a) Does Gloucestershire County Council use 'zero hour' contracts?</p> <p>b) How many County Council employees have 'zero hour' contracts?</p> <p>c) What roles do employees with 'zero contract hours' undertake for the county council?</p> <p>d) What is the average demographic of a County Council employee with zero contract hours?</p> <p>e) Has the County Council made any assessment of use of zero contract hours by its contractors?</p>	<p>a) Yes. The Council does not make any use of any Zero Hours Contracts that include compulsory but unpaid standby periods or the use of 'exclusivity' clauses, which prevent or restrict the worker from undertaking other work during periods when they are not working for us.</p> <p>b) As at 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013, 180 individuals were only actively engaged on a Zero-Hour Contract.</p> <p>c) The roles undertaken by these workers are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrant / Registration Officers</li> <li>• Library Assistants</li> <li>• Relief Workers in Social Care</li> <li>• Cycling Instructors</li> <li>• Various other roles</li> </ul> <p>d) The demographics of those staff employed on zero hours based contracts mirrors that of the general employee population.</p> <p>e) GCC does not have access to the databases of employees used by its contractors.</p>

<b>14. Questioner's name: Cllr Richard Leppington</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Ray Theodoulou</b>
What percentage of goods and services purchased by Gloucestershire County Council are bought from companies based in Gloucestershire?	46% of supplier related expenditure (excluding schools spend) was spent with suppliers based in Gloucestershire in 2012/13.
<b>15. Questioner's name: Cllr Brian Oosthuysen</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Mark Hawthorne</b>
<p>To: Cllr Mark Hawthorne</p> <p>The previous administration has incurred enormous expenditure by agreeing to pay the costs of an appeal by UBB. The argument that is standard procedure does not stand. Could not the council have argued against this clause and can the leader please explain why they did not?</p>	Cllr Oosthuysen might not wish it to be the case, but this was a standard DEFRA contract, produced by the last Labour government.
<b>16. Questioner's name: Cllr Brian Oosthuysen</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Ray Theodoulou</b>
<p>I was invited to attend a consultation by UBB to the Stroud Rotary some time ago and when I asked the person representing the company why they had agreed to build an incinerator in Gloucestershire, whereas in East Anglia they had agreed to construct a MBT and claimed in their literature that it was the best means to deal with waste, the official replied, "We were told by Gloucestershire County Council that they wanted an incinerator and were not interested in anything else". If this statement is accurate, why did we not investigate with this company all possible options and is the refusal to contemplate any other option than an incinerator not a very expensive mistake?</p>	<p>The statement as reported is not accurate – and demonstrably so. Two of the last four proposals considered by the council were MBT plants. The proposals were considered against a transparent, pre-determined and publicly consulted upon criteria. That decision has not been challenged, despite the potential financial benefit to the unsuccessful bidders were they able to do so. The council specifically and publicly considered a range of technologies to dispose of Gloucestershire's waste.</p>

<b>17. Questioner's name: Cllr Brian Oosthuysen</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Ray Theodoulou</b>
<p>I have been informed by officers in the CC that, once the planning committee had turned down the incinerator, we had to go back to square one if the appeal was lost, and start the tendering exercise again. However, I have been reliably informed by an officer in another authority, a person who has studied the contract that after the planning committee vote, UBB and the county could have got together and changed the contract to include an alternative to the incinerator. Is he right and if he is, why have we not followed that approach and avoided paying a penalty of some millions of pounds? Did the council approach UBB after the vote? If not, why not?</p>	<p>The council took specific external legal advice looking at this issue, which was shared with Group Leaders. This was very clear that GCC could not amend the contract.</p>
<b>18. Questioner's name: Cllr Joe Harris</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Vernon Smith</b>
<p>To: Cllr Vernon-Smith:</p> <p>I'm sure the cabinet member is aware of the high court ruling against Barnet Council with respect to the cost of residents parking permits. What lessons have Gloucestershire County Council learnt from this ruling?</p>	<p>The County Council makes no surplus from residents parking permits. They help to cover the cost of the service those residents receive. As such, the Barnet decision underlines that our charging policy for residents parking permits is fair and appropriate.</p>
<b>19. Questioner's name: Cllr Joe Harris</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Mark Hawthorne</b>
<p>To: Cllr Mark Hawthorne:</p> <p>Cllr Hawthorne, at the previous council meeting I asked about the Keynes Country Park transfer to a private developer. I asked you to confirm when you knew that GCC officers had full knowledge of the Keynes Country Park transfer and you said you couldn't answer at the meeting, despite emailing you in the</p>	<p>I apologised to Cllr Harris for email difficulties at my end that delayed him receiving this.</p>

mean time I still haven't had an answer. Will you please answer my question?	
<b>20. Questioner's name: Cllr Sarah Lunnon</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Ray Theodoulou</b>
Is the Cabinet Member aware of the latest information from Wrap on Gate fees comparing the cost of alternative waste treatment options	Yes, we are aware of the latest update of the WRAP Gate Fee report 2013 which compares the cost of alternative waste treatment options.
<b>21. Questioner's name: Cllr Sarah Lunnon</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Ray Theodoulou</b>
Does GCC's current contract for disposal of its residual waste prohibit the contractor pre-treating or choosing to undertake recycling of the waste stream prior to it being dumped in landfill?	The current contract covers landfill of residual waste. We are taking legal advice to clarify the position regarding pre-treatment.
<b>22. Questioner's name: Cllr Sarah Lunnon</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Ray Theodoulou</b>
What action has the Pension Committee taken to ensure that the investment strategy it has adopted is one that Pension Contributors and Beneficiaries will endorse?	Staff are represented on the pension committee by the trade union representative. However, all members of the pension committee are required by law to ensure that the pension fund is invested to maximise the return on investment, making sure that there is enough money in the fund to pay for people's pensions in retirement.
<b>23. Questioner's name: Cllr Suzanne Williams</b>	<b>Respondent's name: Cllr Mark Hawthorne</b>
To: Cllr Mark Hawthorne  In order to protect residents from the irresponsible lending, sky high interest rates and possible harassment of pay day lenders, please will the Leader of the Council consider preventing access to pay day lender's websites from all Gloucestershire County Council networks, including those in public libraries?	I think it would set a very worrying precedent if we were to begin to censor the internet available in our libraries. That is a road I would be very wary of going down. There is also the real risk that this approach would drive people towards illegal loan sharks.  This is a concerning issue, where we do need to help if we can. I've asked

	<p>Cllr Binns to look into whether we can do more to promote Gloucestershire's credit unions and money advice services such as the CAB via our libraries.</p>
<p><b>24. Questioner's name: Cllr Barry Kirby</b></p>	<p><b>Respondent's name: Cllr Paul McLain</b></p>
<p>To: Cllr Paul McLain</p> <p>a) Does GCC currently have a strategy to encourage more children to walk to school?</p> <p>b) What assessment has the GCC made of primary School Children walking to school in Gloucestershire</p>	<p>a) Yes – as part of the Third Local Transport Plan. Most existing schools have in place travel plans to promote sustainable travel to school – and all new schools will be required to do so.</p> <p>LTP3 is currently being refreshed and consideration is being given to an enhanced walking strategy within its wider policies.</p> <p>b) We test this by asking children in our biennial survey about how they get to school. In 2012, 7,842 primary school children from years 4 and 6 replied. Of these 44.4% walked to school (walk + walking bus).</p>
<p><b>25. Questioner's name: Cllr Barry Kirby</b></p>	<p><b>Respondent's name: Cllr Dorcas Binns</b></p>
<p>To: Cllr Dorcas Binns</p> <p>a) What assessment has GCC made of the growing number of travellers taking up residence on public and private land?</p> <p>b) How much money has been spent in Gloucestershire on evicting travellers from publicly owned land in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013?</p> <p>c) What strategy is being pursued by GCC to develop for more traveller sites for the growing number of groups of travellers?</p>	<p>a) This is a district council responsibility. The County Council's responsibilities for travellers are more to do with education and safeguarding responsibilities.</p> <p>b) We don't hold information about the cost to other parties, but GCC has spent £23,000 on external legal advice during that period.</p> <p>c) Again, this is the responsibility of the district councils, not the county. I understand that the six districts are currently carrying out a Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Needs Assessment.</p>