

MEMBER QUESTIONS

CABINET MEETING – 29 January 2020

Question 1: Cllr Rachel Smith	Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe
Agenda Item 5: Medium Term Financial Strategy Given no paper responses were received to the budget survey, does the Cabinet feel there are any learning points about how to ensure that residents without access to technology can be heard within consultation processes?	We promote the consultation via a range of channels both on and off line, via mass engagement channels but also direct with various groups. We make hard copies of consultation materials available in various public buildings across the county so people not on line can respond. We also provide a phone number if people want to ring us. We obviously can't force people to respond in a particular way but we do make various methods available. The comms team continue to review the channels used to promote consultations, balancing our climate change commitments, so not producing lots of printed materials, with the requirement to make engagement possible for all, in effective and proportionate ways. We look forward to the recommendations coming forward from the public participation task group, of which you are a member, to see what workable recommendations you identify.
Question 2: Cllr Rachel Smith	Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe
Agenda Item 5: Medium Term Financial Strategy Based on the Budget Consultation, in which residents indicated a clear desire for increased investment in climate change action, will the Cabinet commit to substantially increase the current allocation of £1m to climate action for 2020/21?	The £1m Action Fund is designed to fund carbon reduction initiatives in 2020/21 and to devise long term plans for tackling climate change. As these plans are developed the Council will assess the need to make further investments.

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<p>Question 3: Cllr Rachel Smith</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe</p>
<p>Agenda Item 5: Medium Term Financial Strategy</p> <p>Also, noting that the Budget Consultation comments show twice as many residents calling for investment in foot paths, cycle routes and public transport, than focussing on highways improvement (page 8) - and noting that investments in active transport bring long-term savings in terms of reduced health and social care spending - will the Cabinet commit to allocating a substantial proportion of the £2m earmarked for Strategic Infrastructure Business Case development to business case development for greenways, segregated cycle routes, public transport infrastructure and other low-carbon transport schemes?</p>	<p>This funding is initially allocated to undertake detailed business cases for M5 junction improvements – if successful, they will attract significant amounts of additional government funding designed to drive economic growth within Gloucestershire. If successful, much of this initial investment will be reclaimed from the government so these resources will be available to develop further business cases – many of which are likely to incorporate cycle routes, public transport infrastructure and low carbon transport options.</p>
<p>Question 4: Cllr Rachel Smith</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor</p>
<p>Agenda Item 5: Medium Term Financial Strategy</p> <p>Approximately how many miles of segregated cycle way will be created by highways investments in 2020/21?</p>	<p>We are looking at a wide range of cycling improvements across the county, including elements of both segregated and shared cycleway. That includes 8 miles of route linking Cheltenham and Gloucester, (although programme dates are yet to be agreed with Highways England), as well as two miles of canal towpath in Gloucester, 2 miles of improvements to existing cycle provision as part of the West Cheltenham transport improvement scheme, and 400m of new shared use cycle/footway facilities between Telstar Way and Benhall roundabout.</p> <p>The A38 canal project at Whitminster will also provide 150 metres of new cycleway – contributing to 10 miles of new cycle infrastructure between Saul and Stroud over coming year.</p> <p>This comes alongside work to deliver cycle links between Bishops Cleeve and Cheltenham, and the £1m cycle route scheme.</p>

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Question 5: Cllr Rachel Smith	Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor
<p>Agenda Item 5: Medium Term Financial Strategy</p> <p>Point 101 of the MTFs document suggests that the waste financing liability is £576.70m. Can the Cabinet confirm that this means the total cost of the Javelin Park incinerator is now budgeted at £576.7m over the next 25 years? This is over £6m above the forecast “Nominal Unitary Charge net electricity” reported in the Value for Money table in the explanatory notes provided when the large cost increases of the incinerator project were revealed in late 2018.</p> <p>What explains this further forecast cost increase over the 25 year life of the Incinerator?</p>	<p>Cllr Smith isn’t comparing apples with apples. The figure she should look for in the EY report she refers to is “Nominal UC net Electricity Auth. Contribution”, which shows a cost of £585.9m. This has been updated following the conclusion of commissioning, to give the current estimate of £576.7m – a reduction of £9.2m. None of these figures are the cost of the incinerator – they are the cost of disposing of all of Gloucestershire’s waste that can’t readily be recycled for 25 years.</p>
Question 6: Cllr Rachel Smith	Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor
<p>Agenda Item 5: Medium Term Financial Strategy</p> <p>In Annex 1.3, points about climate change and waste reduction appear like they are ‘tacked on’ to the end of the first bullet list - but climate action must be integrated across all priorities.</p> <p>Would the Cabinet member consider reviewing each bullet to identify how it can contribute to a climate resilient future, including by noting our responsibility to encourage a shift in transport towards active and public transport, and our responsibility to promote skill development in environmentally sustainable industries?</p>	<p>These bullet points summarise key points to provide overall context and should be read in the context of what follows. Under “Strategic Direction” we recognise the threat posed by Climate Change and explain the actions we have already taken to agree a Climate Change Strategy and take a leadership role in the county. This spans a range of areas from planning development in sustainable locations to low carbon transport and modal shift. We have proposed a £1million Action Fund in the 2020/21 budget to deliver this and a key piece of work in the first year will be to develop a sound evidence base so that we focus on those areas where the largest carbon savings can be delivered.</p>

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Question 7: Cllr Rachel Smith	Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe
<p>Agenda Item 5: Medium Term Financial Strategy</p> <p>Point 103 of the MTFs document notes that the council will consider borrowing from other sources including banks, pensions and other local authorities.</p> <p>Debt Resistance UK (http://lada.debtresistance.uk/) have raised concerns about use of Lender Option, Borrower Option (LOBO) loans by local authorities.</p> <p>Their research suggests Gloucestershire County Council already has at least £40m of these loans, which can expose the council to a risk of large interest rate rises with short-notice. Does the council have any policy in place on the future use of LOBO loans, and the management of existing Lender Option Borrower Options?</p>	<p>The majority of the Council's long term external debt is with the PWLB. However, the recent increase in the PWLB rate means that this is no longer always the cheapest option. The Council currently has no plans to increase its external borrowing but if this becomes necessary it will take professional advice to ensure any money is borrowed in the most economic way.</p> <p>The Council does have £33 million of historic LOBO loans – given the long term projection of low and stable interest rates there are no plans to use these types of loans in future.</p> <p>The existing LOBO loans are kept under regular review and where appropriate they are repaid or converted to fixed rate loans - as in the case for £8 million of loans with Barclays.</p>
Question 8: Cllr Rachel Smith	Respondent: Cllr Vernon Smith
<p>Agenda Item 5: Medium Term Financial Strategy</p> <p>What evaluation, if any, has taken place of the Value for Money being obtained from the £150m investment in highways?</p>	<p>Road condition figures produced on an annual basis will provide the best indication of the impact of the structural maintenance programme of works.</p>

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Question 9: Cllr Rachel Smith	Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe
Agenda Item 5: Medium Term Financial Strategy Point 5.3 of Appendix 3 to item 5 MTFS (Corporate Overview and Scrutiny committee budget meeting) notes that “A breakdown of income from assets” was to be provided to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee members. Has or can this also be published for public scrutiny?	All the answers to the questions raised at the Budget Scrutiny meeting on 9 th January have been published on the Council website as an appendix to the minutes of that meeting.
Question 10: Cllr Rachel Smith	Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor
Agenda Item 6: Minerals Local Plan What is the basis for the ‘Carbon Emissions Implications? Neutral’ rating for the recommendation on the Minerals Local Plan?	<p>The plan will facilitate mineral working in the future that will undoubtedly generate carbon emissions, but it also includes numerous provisions to reduce the amount, impact and scale of these emissions from current levels. In addition, it champions a step change in the efficient use of primary won minerals, the use of alternative, lower-emission secondary and recycled aggregates and will also make a positive contribute towards reducing our wider carbon footprint by requiring such measures as facilitating increased vegetation and its variety as part of mineral restoration and aftercare. As a consequence, on balance it is considered that the plan will have a ‘neutral’ carbon emissions implications rating over its lifetime.</p> <p>Cllr Smith will appreciate that, if the building materials and aggregate our county needs aren’t provided in county, they will have to come from elsewhere, with the associated additional carbon costs that will entail.</p>

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Question 11: Cllr Rachel Smith	Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor
Agenda Item 6: Minerals Local Plan How does the Draft Local Minerals Plan contribute to Carbon reduction?	<p>The plan provides a local policy framework for regulating future mineral activities throughout the county. It includes within it numerous measures to reduce the amount, impact and scale of carbon emissions anticipated with conventional mineral working practices.</p> <p>The plan also champions a step change in the efficient use of primary won minerals, the use of alternative, lower-emission secondary and recycled aggregates and will facilitate increased vegetation and its variety through mineral restoration requirements.</p>
Question 12: Cllr Rachel Smith	Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor
Agenda Item 6: Minerals Local Plan Has the Local Minerals Plan been reviewed in light of the Climate Emergency resolution, which called for us to consider the contribution of all major plans to a county wide carbon reduction target of 80% by 2030?	<p>The plan was drafted prior to Climate Emergency resolution. The preparation of a statutory plan takes a number of years to complete. Nevertheless, local plans are legally required to contain policies that contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.</p> <p>The plan's provisions on these matters have been subject to numerous rounds of public consultation and have recently been scrutinised by a government appointed Inspector under an examination in public.</p> <p>Indeed there are recommended modifications contained in the Inspector's report to this end. The publication of the Inspector's Report therefore demonstrates that climate change has been carefully considered and that the Minerals Local Plan is in line with Government Policy.</p> <p>Consequently, as a result of successfully arriving at this stage, the plan's provisions will make a positive contribution to the countywide carbon reduction target up to 2030.</p>

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Question 13 : Cllr Rachel Smith	Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor
Agenda Item 6: Minerals Local Plan Will the Cabinet support a proposal to ask the Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure to include specific reference to our 80% Carbon reduction 2030 target within the final MLP?	<p>The plan was written prior to the Council's Climate change commitments in May 2019. With statutory plans, the council is required to follow a defined legal process. Changes at this stage would require a new round of consultation, and a new examination in public, and would substantially delay the environmental benefits the new plan will offer.</p> <p>The plan's provisions will make a positive contribution to the countywide carbon reduction target up to 2030 and could in the future be monitored to this effect through the evolving Climate Change Strategy monitoring regime.</p>
Question 14 Cllr Rachel Smith	Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor
Agenda Item 6: Minerals Local Plan What specific actions will the Council are taking to respond to Major Modification 4, which adds to the strategy (page 28 of MLP) commitments to decarbonising mineral operations through both decreased journey frequency in mineral operations, and use of non-road transport?	<p>Policy DM03 sets out the plan's requirements for transporting minerals. In part a. of the policy it specifically requires applicants to provide evidence of how road-based transport will be minimised including through the measure of potential miles travelled. The policy also enable the minerals planning authority to scrutinise proposals by way of the possible use of alternative and more sustainable modes of non-road transport and to what extent they are tackling the challenge of greenhouse gas emissions directly from road haulage.</p> <p>The policy's provisions are progressive as they seek to go beyond simply looking at fuel efficiency measures. Consideration will be given to the merits of adopting low, ultra-low or zero greenhouse gas emitting haulage vehicles as they are brought to market and become increasingly available over the coming years.</p>

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<p>Question 15: Cllr Rachel Smith</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor</p>
<p>Agenda Item 6: Minerals Local Plan</p> <p>Noting that Gloucestershire has three coal deposits and oil and gas reserves, and that to address the climate crisis we must leave all such fossil fuels in the ground, does the local minerals plan rule out any and all extraction of fossil fuels in Gloucestershire?</p>	<p>There is no evidence of any viable oil or gas resources in Gloucestershire, and, particularly with the government’s decision to prohibit fracking, there no realistic prospect of any being found.</p> <p>The policy on coal contained within the plan follows national policy, and restricts any future coal working to very limited circumstances – and mandates an assessment of the climate change before any notional application could be agreed.</p> <p>Giving this and the massive reduction in UK coal usage, I would be very surprised to see any proposals coming forward, let alone being agreed.</p>
<p>Question 16: Cllr Rachel Smith</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10: Ashchurch Bridge over Rail</p> <p>What is the basis for the Carbon Emissions Implications ‘Neutral’ rating of a proposal that will involve new road capacity and likely vehicle movements?</p>	<p>This cabinet paper considers whether the county council can enter into consultancy agreements to help Tewkesbury Borough Council to build a bridge, it is not a decision on whether or not it is build. Any bridge would support all road users, not just fossil fuel powered ones.</p>
<p>Question 17: Cllr Rachel Smith</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Carole Allaway Martin</p>
<p>Agenda Item 11: Bed Based Care Contract</p> <p>What is the basis for the Carbon Emission Implications ‘Positive’ rating of the proposed changes to bed based care contract arrangements?</p>	<p>The current contract is from 2006, and makes no reference to carbon emissions. The new contract will enable us to track and review carbon emissions in this key part of our business.</p>

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Question 18: Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor
<p>Agenda item 5 - Medium Term Financial Strategy (page 59 of the MTFS/page 89 of the agenda)</p> <p>You have allocated £500,000 to an ash die back study within the county. Can you explain how you have arrived at that figure?</p>	<p>We estimate that the county council is responsible for in the region of 36,000 ash trees. At the moment, we estimate that 41% of these are already infected – and this is expected to rise to as high as 95% in time.</p> <p>Many of these trees will need to be removed for safety. This funding will allow us to identify where urgent action is needed, and deal with the worst affected trees, as well as appropriate replanting.</p>
Question 19: Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor
<p>Agenda item 5 - Medium Term Financial Strategy (page 59 of the MTFS/page 89 of the agenda)</p> <p>Can the cabinet member explain what the ramifications would be to the study if the funding was cut to £250,000?</p>	<p>We would put the safety of local residents at risk by not properly assessing this risk, and by not dealing with urgent problems.</p>
Question 20: Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor
<p>Agenda item 5 - Medium Term Financial Strategy (page 59 of the MTFS/page 89 of the agenda)</p> <p>Can the cabinet member detail how many ash trees are managed by Gloucestershire's highways team?</p>	<p>See the response to question 18.</p>

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<p>Question 21: Cllr Jeremy Hilton</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Nigel Moor</p>
<p>Agenda item 5 - Medium Term Financial Strategy (page 59 of the MTFS/page 89 of the agenda)</p> <p>What is the cabinet member's understanding regarding the proportion of the county's trees that are currently affected by ash die back?</p>	<p>See the response to question 18.</p>
<p>Question 22: Cllr Jeremy Hilton</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Vernon Smith</p>
<p>Agenda item 5 - Medium Term Financial Strategy (pages 91/92 of the MTFS/pages 121/122 of the agenda)</p> <p>Of the total new highways capital-spend – can the cabinet member please advise how much of this is coming from external contributions with conditions, such as S106 money, and how much are contributions directly from GCC?</p>	<p>The Highways 'New Start 2020/21 onwards' projects, listed on page 177 (in appendix 8a of the MTFS document), are funded from the GCC grant allocation from the DfT and other GCC internal resources.</p> <p>These are all laid out on page 117 in the columns to the right. The Internal Borrowing column is part of the council's commitment to add £150m into Highways Schemes.</p>
<p>Question 23: Cllr Jeremy Hilton</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Vernon Smith</p>
<p>Agenda item 5 - Medium Term Financial Strategy (page 66 of the MTFS/page 96 of the agenda)</p> <p>Of the £20,050,000 in the highways revenue budget, can the cabinet member provide a comprehensive breakdown of how this funding is being currently allocated?</p>	<p>The budget is broken down into the following areas and proportions and whilst the exact allocations for 20/21 are not yet known, there are unlikely to be any major changes: highways operations 60%, winter maintenance 11%, street lighting 25%, bridges and infrastructure 4%.</p>

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Question 24: Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Respondent: Cllr Tim Harman
<p>Agenda item 5 - Medium Term Financial Strategy (page 66 of the MTFS/page 97 of the agenda)</p> <p>The Public Health Budget is set to rise by £1.939m, an increase of 8.2%. How much of this new money is being allocated to mental health services</p>	<p>The £2m increase in the public health budget is great news and very welcome. It will be focused on existing services - for example extra investment in drug treatment that reflects an increase in the cost of opiate withdrawal medication and sexual health to reflect the costs associated with increased demand. The increase also includes new investment to maintain a successful pilot to provide contraception to vulnerable women in maternity services. There is no planned increase in investment in public mental health services as we are working with partners to bid for additional funding from NHS England (£125,000 a year for three years).</p> <p>Additionally, Gloucestershire has benefited from the £5m trailblazer investment into children's mental health, which continues to be rolled out across the county.</p>
Question 25: Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Respondent: Cllr Tim Harman
<p>Agenda item 5 - Medium Term Financial Strategy (page 66 of the MTFS/page 97 of the agenda)</p> <p>Can the cabinet member please explain why he is cutting the Public Mental Health Services budget by £20,000 in 2020/21?</p>	<p>Nothing is being cut – the funding for suicide bereavement services is expected to be funded by NHS England in future, rather than the council, as well as some savings delivered by the recommissioning of the self-harm helpline.</p> <p>Again, I trust Cllr Hilton will recognise the very significant increase in funding that the £5m mental health trailblazer scheme provides to our county.</p>

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<p>Question 26: Cllr Jeremy Hilton</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Tim Harman</p>
<p>Agenda item 5 - Medium Term Financial Strategy (page 66 of the MTFS/page 97 of the agenda)</p> <p>Can the cabinet member please provide a short report on the use of the additional sum of money provided by an £50K amendment accepted in February 2019 for suicide prevention, and confirm how you plan to continue to resource a continuation of this work in 2020/21?</p>	<p>An update on the use of the £50,000 agreed at full Council last year can be found within the Director of Public Health's report to the most recent Adult and Communities Scrutiny. This was discussed at the scrutiny committee meeting on 28 January 2020.</p>
<p>Question 27: Cllr Iain Dobie</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Carole Allaway Martin</p>
<p>Agenda item 11 - Bed Based Care Contract (page 2 of the report/page 564 of the agenda)</p> <p>Can the cabinet member please explain how a thorough and extensive consultation will be undertaken with the up-to-6,000 care-home residents, their families and providers for just £500-£1,000?</p>	<p>Officers believe that a suitable consultation can be delivered in that budget. Of course, any significant changes would prompt further discussion with any affected residents and their families.</p>
<p>Question 28: Cllr Iain Dobie</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Carole Allaway Martin</p>
<p>Agenda item 11 - Bed Based Care Contract (page 8 of the report/page 570 of the agenda)</p> <p>Can the cabinet member please elaborate on why the development of a new contract for bed based care is considered to have positive carbon emissions implications?</p>	<p>Please see the response to Question 17.</p>