

COUNTY COUNCIL – 17 February 2021
Members' Questions

<p>1. Questioner's name: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Mark Hawthorne</p>
<p>Does the council leader agree with me that voters have a right to hear from those seeking their vote – door by door, street by street – and that elections should be pushed back until we are free of the constraints of lockdown and Covid?</p> <p>If so, what is he personally doing, in his capacity as leader of this council and as the Chairman of the Conservative Councillors' Association, to encourage Government Ministers not to rush through an election at a time that could be dangerous and undemocratic?</p>	<p>As Cllr Hodgkinson will be aware, the Conservative Party suspended all campaigning during the current lockdown in order to do all we can to support our NHS and reduce any risk of infection. That's been very frustrating for councillors of all parties who are following the rules, and that's something I have been at pains to point out to the government. The government is confident that safe elections can go ahead in May – and that will no doubt include legal, covid safe leafleting in due course.</p>
<p>2. Questioner's name: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Mark Hawthorne</p>
<p>For the elections that will be taking place this Spring or Summer, what is the County Council planning to do to actively encourage postal vote registrations? This will ensure that no residents are disenfranchised because they are afraid of mixing with others in a polling station or, as is likely to be the case in my division, because local polling stations cannot open due to lockdown measures.</p>	<p>This is primarily a role for our six District Councils who have the responsibility for delivering the elections on 6 May. However, as always, we are working with them to make sure they have the support and resources they need to deliver a COVID-safe election, and to that end we welcome the Government's announcement of an additional £31m of funding nationally on 5 February 2021. Districts will be making use of Electoral Commission materials to make sure that voters are aware of the full range of ways in which they can vote safely, including information on how to register for a postal vote and what to expect at polling stations if they choose to vote in person.</p> <p>In addition, we are making a financial contribution to the costs that will be incurred by each District Council in writing to each household to provide information on the elections taking place and the ways that people can vote. The District Councils organise polling stations but we work with them to identify alternative venues, including our</p>

	own properties, where a particular venue becomes unavailable. We will also work with colleagues to understand any collective issues that we can resolve together such as PPE and screens.
3. Questioner's name: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	Respondent's name: Cllr Nigel Moor
Can the Cabinet Member please confirm how many trees have been planted in Gloucestershire since the Cabinet Meeting on 27 January?	By the end of March 2021, 7780 trees and 2410 hedging plants will be planted on highway verge or on third party land.
4. Questioner's name: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	Respondent's name: Cllr Nigel Moor
Can the Cabinet Member please confirm the total number of trees GCC has chopped down throughout 2020 and Q1 of 2021 – either through Ash Dieback programmes or in GCC's capacity as the highways authority – and what proportion have been replaced?	3,057 trees which posed a safety risk to the public highway. By the end of March 2021 we will have planted 7780 trees and 2410 hedging plants (a rate of almost 3 to 1).
5. Questioner's name: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	Respondent's name: Cllr Richard Boyles
<p>On the 26th of June, 2019, this council unanimously supported a motion with the following resolution:</p> <p>“This Council therefore resolves to work with Leadership Gloucestershire to establish a Youth Council to give young people a voice on the issues that affect them across Gloucestershire, irrespective of which body is responsible for those services.”</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member please explain why this resolution, which every single councillor here voted in favour of, was quietly binned without any explanation being provided in this chamber?</p>	<p>Leadership Gloucestershire were consulted about the best way forward for the engagement of young people in order to ascertain their views on the quality of services provided to them and to seek their advice about the future configuration of services for young people. Leadership Gloucestershire felt strongly that the establishment of a county wide Youth Council would not deliver the necessary reach for a cross section of young people's views and that there were more creative and effective means of engaging with young people. This was a view supported by Dame Janet Trotter, Chair of Child Friendly Gloucestershire.</p>
6. Questioner's name: Cllr Kate Haigh	Respondent's name: Cllr Tim Harman
It is now possible to end HIV transmission through regular testing, condom use, access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and	The HIV diagnosis rate for Gloucestershire is 3.4 per 100,000 people. This is significantly better than the England rate (8.1 per

advice. Treatment now means that people living with HIV cannot pass it on. What are the rates of HIV diagnosis in Gloucestershire and what proportion are classed as late diagnosis? What steps is the County taking to meet the Government target of zero HIV transmission in England by 2030 and are you confident that it can be achieved here?

100,000) and the rate of new HIV diagnosis has been decreasing in the county since 2015. In 2019, 18 individuals were diagnosed with HIV in the county.

The earlier HIV is diagnosed, the better the health outcomes for the individual. Over the three year period (2017-2019) 54.5% of HIV cases diagnosed in the county were classified as 'late diagnoses'; above the percentage for England (43.1%). While we have relatively few cases of HIV in Gloucestershire, it is important to understand the causes of late diagnosis and identify interventions to reduce the risk.

A number of actions have been taken forward by Public Health and key partners to address the issue. This includes an audit to identify any missed opportunities in the care of patients diagnosed late to inform service improvement; and a pilot of Point of Care HIV testing for a group of higher risk individuals who may not access mainstream services. The audit has been paused through the pandemic, but it is hoped that work will resume as a priority in the coming months.

A key part of HIV prevention is pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, a medication to help prevent HIV. Following the three year national PrEP IMPACT trial, PrEP is now available free of charge in Gloucestershire via the specialist sexual health service for people at highest risk of contracting HIV. The service was only introduced as part of routine commissioning in December 2020, and commissioners will be working with the specialist sexual health service to monitor uptake, and help ensure that PrEP is reaching those with the most opportunity to benefit.

Gloucestershire is also working towards the national goal of zero HIV transmissions by 2030 using a combination of preventative interventions, including the C-Card condom distribution scheme which makes condoms available free of charge to young people; and opportunistic condom outreach, provided by the Eddystone Trust (as part of the sexual health prevention service), which

	<p>focuses on individuals likely to be at most risk of poor sexual health and HIV. During 2020, despite the impacts of the pandemic, over 16,000 condoms were distributed free of charge in Gloucestershire with a specific focus on higher risk groups.</p> <p>HIV testing is integral to the treatment and management of HIV infection; and the prevention of onward transmission. In Gloucestershire HIV testing is available free from the specialist sexual health service, either in clinic, or via home testing ordered online. The council also commission community based HIV testing to provide testing in the community for higher risk groups outside of traditional clinical settings. While community testing has been paused through the pandemic, testing has remained available via the specialist service; and Eddystone Trust has continued reaching out to higher risk groups via alternative channels.</p> <p>Targeted health education and health promotion work is also key to HIV prevention and awareness. The Eddystone Trust provide training sessions on HIV awareness to relevant services and organisations and also provide information on testing, condom use and PrEP as part of their outreach with clients.</p> <p>We hope that through this combination of prevention measures, Gloucestershire will support the Government’s national ambition to achieve zero HIV transmissions by 2030; and commissioners will continue to work towards this with the specialist sexual health service and key partners across the system.</p>
<p>7. Questioner’s name: Cllr Rob Bird</p>	<p>Respondent’s name: Cllr Patrick Molyneux</p>
<p>Can I congratulate Cllr Molyneux on the site for the new Bishops Cleeve primary school. It’s excellent news that this site will be near homes, as requested. Can he confirm when the design will be available for local residents to comment on?</p>	<p>As we’ve only just secured the site, we won’t have that information for a while – but I will ensure that you are kept updated, as well as the council’s website to ensure local residents can get the latest updates.</p>

<p>8. Questioner's name: Cllr Rob Bird</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Patrick Molyneux</p>
<p>Is there are timescale available for the likely progress of the Bishops Cleeve primary school project?</p>	<p>The proposed new primary school will open for children in Reception from September 2023 and will continue to grow year on year in Reception. The school will not open for all year groups from September 2023.</p> <p>FAQs are now available on the Councils website for all to review.</p>
<p>9. Questioner's name: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Tim Harman</p>
<p>Supermarket and food shop workers have been the unsung heroes of this pandemic. They have worked tirelessly throughout the entire lockdown periods and are often on low wages. Yet they are at high risk due to exposure to many people visiting the stores. Given this, will the Cabinet Member agree with me that these key workers must have access to regular and easily available covid tests - ideally in their workplace? These could be offered by this Council quickly and without delay if it is really serious about protecting those on the front line, helping to feed us all at this time of crisis.</p>	<p>I think we all record our thanks for the remarkable workers in the supermarket and food sectors who've worked so hard on behalf of us all.</p> <p>Any business with over 50 staff who can't work from home can access the Workplace Testing Scheme directly – see https://www.gov.uk/get-workplace-coronavirus-tests</p> <p>For smaller companies, as Cllr Hodgkinson is aware, we've made available a rapid testing site in Gloucester City, with further sites opening soon in Cirencester and in the Forest of Dean. More information is here; https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/covid-19-information-and-advice/community-testing/</p>
<p>10. Questioner's name: Cllr Colin Hay</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Patrick Molyneux</p>
<p>Can the Cabinet Member confirm what proportion of children in receipt of free school meals have received a laptop and 4G router from the Government or GCC?"</p>	<p>Not all children on free school meals will need a laptop (many, for example, have been working in school throughout the lockdown) and many children who don't qualify for free school meals really will. That's why we've been working with schools and teachers who know the needs of their students best to target distribution. So far, the council has distributed over 1,500 laptops.</p>

11. Questioner's name: Cllr Colin Hay	Respondent's name: Cllr Patrick Molyneux
How many requests for laptops and 4G routers have you received from schools and parents?	The government reports 4,084 laptops have been distributed across Gloucestershire, with 1,500 coordinated by GCC in the first wave, and the rest directly via schools. Additionally, Cabinet allocated £200k last money to provide further support.
12. Questioner's name: Cllr Colin Hay	Respondent's name: Cllr Patrick Molyneux
Are you confident that every child who needs a laptop or 4G router in order to continue their education during lockdown has one? If not can you confirm how many children are still without the necessary hardware?	Schools are prioritising equipment to ensure that all children and young people are able to access remote learning. The council has just agreed to provide a further £200,000 funding to provide more technology capacity into the system. This will support the purchase of laptops, tablets and the associated peripherals that are required for remote learning (4G, webcams, microphones etc).
13. Questioner's name: Cllr Iain Dobie	Respondent's name: Cllr Nigel Moor
<p>Given the prioritisation of the cycle route linking Cheltenham to Gloucester, it is essential that we make this a scheme that Gloucestershire can be proud of and futureproofed for a generation.</p> <p>With certain elements still to be finalised – for example, junctions that intersect the cycle route – will you commit to following established best practice and give priority access to cyclists and pedestrians over motorists along the entire stretch of the cycle route?</p>	I entirely appreciate Cllr Dobie's views on this project. As he is aware, the county council is conducting a consultation on this scheme, which I would strongly encourage him to take part in.
14. Questioner's name: Cllr Iain Dobie	Respondent's name: Cllr Nigel Moor
Any cycling route is only as strong as its weakest part – as such, what work is being done at either end of the B4063 cycle improvements scheme to ensure that it is safe and accessible from the centre of Cheltenham and Gloucester for all users, including young children.	The cycle route provides full continuity between Gloucester and Cheltenham, and is aided by other investment along the route including the West Cheltenham Transport Improvement Scheme with the £1.6million investment currently being delivered between Arle Court and Lansdown Rail Bridge between January and December 2021. This provision will also include cycle

	<p>enhancements to local roads in the St Marks area linking with Cheltenham Spa Station and a new crossing between the station and the Honeybourne Cycle Link. These works will be supported fully by the GWR cycle link between Lansdown Rail Bridge and Cheltenham Rail Station providing full access to the existing network of cycle routes in Cheltenham Town Centre. At the Gloucester end the scheme will tie in with the £417k cycle investment on London Road Gloucester. The Cheltenham to Gloucester Cycle route will also extend the facility to Gloucester Station via Great Western Road and extend the London Road cycle link to the end of Northgate Street in Gloucester City Centre ensuring uninterrupted and safe access between Gloucester City Centre and Cheltenham Town Centre. The route, subject to further funding commitments, will contribute to 26 miles of continuous cycle facility investment from Stroud to Saul, Gloucester, Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve.</p>
<p>15. Questioner's name: Cllr Brian Robinson</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Vernon Smith</p>
<p>The A417 north of Gloucester has recently been closed because of flooding causing disruption to traffic on this major route and consequential congestion on minor local roads. The frequency of closure due to flooding is increasing. Can the Cabinet member confirm when steps to improve this road to avoid closure from flood will be implemented?</p>	<p>As Cllr Robinson will be aware, GCC applied for £25m to address this in 2015, and continues to seek funding to solve the problem. Most recently we are looking into Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant in Aid funding as one potential route.</p> <p>I recognise just what a challenge this poses for people in this area – resulting in very significant detours and traffic congestion. The issue has been recognised by the county council. In 2015, we applied for a grant towards a £25M scheme to address the issue.</p> <p>The £25M cost in 2015 will have increased significantly today and this is not a project we will be able to fund ourselves.</p> <p>More recently, we have identified fixing this problem as a key issue in our latest Local Transport Plan, approved by Cabinet last month – and we are continuing to seek funding to do so. At present, we are looking into Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant in Aid funding as one potential route. We know climate change is only going to make this problem worse in time.</p>

<p>16. Questioner's name: Cllr Brian Robinson</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Patrick Molyneux</p>
<p>At the Budget Scrutiny meeting when asked about plans to bring super fast broadband to Churcham the Cabinet member said “Cost is not the problem.” Will he therefore confirm that the Churcham residents will soon be able to benefit from full fibre broadband like the communities that surround Churcham.</p>	<p>Cost has never been a problem – EU state aid rules have been. Before we commit public funding to an area, we have to carry out an “Open Market Review”. If a commercial provider says they are going to roll out broadband in an area, as they did with Churcham, we can't invest there. I share the frustration of local residents – and I hope this sort of bureaucracy can be minimised following our departure from the EU.</p> <p>Fastershire are trying to find a way around this problem – allowing local residents to sign up to register interest in superfast fibre. A virtual briefing session has been arranged for the 3rd March and Fastershire has written to all of the affected local premises to invite them to attend.</p>
<p>17. Questioner's name: Cllr Brian Robinson</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Lynden Stowe</p>
<p>The Social Care Levy is being applied at 2.76% in this years budget. Can the Cabinet member confirm the cumulative amount of Social Care Levy applied in the past 4 years both in amount collected and percentage of overall council tax.</p>	<p>In the period 2017/18 to 2020/21the Adult Social Care Levy has generated £74.1m for GCC all of which has been invested in social care for vulnerable adults. This represents 6% of the total Council Tax income generated in this period.</p>
<p>18. Questioner's name: Cllr Brian Robinson</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Vernon Smith</p>
<p>Just before Christmas heavy rain caused flash flooding to many communities in Gloucestershire. What will the Council be doing to learn from this event and help communities reduce the impact of future high rainfall events.</p>	<p>The County Council has a central role in flood events such as that in December 2020 which had such terrible impacts on communities across Gloucestershire. We work hard to build resilience before events happen, we respond directly when they do, and carry out extensive investigations in their aftermath. In early January 2021, we coordinated a series of district-based multi-agency debrief sessions to bring reports from the 23rd/24th December 2020 together and discuss initial lessons learnt. We are currently in the process of compiling the various datasets into a single summary, including meteorological comparisons and flooding reports, which will be presented to GCC's Environment Scrutiny on 3rd March 2021. Following on from this, we will be carrying out detailed flood risk</p>

	assessments of the worst-hit communities to build up an accurate picture of the causes at each location and to look into possible future solutions. In the meantime, officers continue to liaise closely with a wide range of community representatives, officers and external agencies to learn all we can from the event.
19. Questioner's name: Cllr Colin Hay	Respondent's name: Cllr Patrick Molyneux
What is the teaching provision in Gloucestershire for children who have been excluded while schools are largely closed during lockdown?"	Children who have been excluded in Gloucestershire will have access to Alternative Provision Education from day 6 of being out of education. If the children aren't part of the current vulnerable cohort the alternative provision schools are providing a remote education.
20. Questioner's name: Cllr Colin Hay	Respondent's name: Cllr Patrick Molyneux
Being classed as vulnerable, what percentage of excluded pupils are being taught in a school setting?	<p>Alternative Provision, like all schools, are open for vulnerable children and those of key workers and provide remote education for all children that are not able to attend on site. So all children at alternative provision continue to receive education provision.</p> <p>Attendance on site fluctuates based on parental choice, but is broadly operating at around 30-35%. Attendance for more vulnerable groups is slightly higher:</p> <p>40% of children with EHCP's and 35.8 % of children open to a SW are attending</p>
21. Questioner's name: Cllr Lesley Williams	Respondent's name: Cllr Richard Boyles
In March 2019 Council supported a motion to undertake a study which would provide an analysis of attainment and achievement of students in the county. When will this study be available?	The study was planned and due to be undertaken by a former HMI. The work included a series of interviews with LA officers and secondary headteachers scheduled for the spring/ summer 2020. During Lockdown 1, several alternative options were considered. The former Director of Education agreed that the study should be postponed until schools were open and operating normally.

<p>22. Questioner's name: Cllr Lesley Williams</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Mark Hawthorne</p>
<p>Council agreed that there would be a display of notable Women in the County to celebrate their achievements. What has happened to this?</p>	<p>The work on this display is underway and some fantastic images have been collated by our Archives team. The display was due to be aligned with the wider redesign of our reception and public spaces in Shire Hall. Unfortunately it has been delayed by the Covid 19 pandemic but we look forward to when we can promote the display after the reopening of Shire Hall. In the meantime some of the amazing stories of our notable women can be read on the Great Gloucestershire Achievers page on our website. These stories were collated and published in 2018 to commemorate 100 years of women getting the vote.</p>
<p>23. Questioner's name: Cllr Lesley Williams</p>	<p>Respondent's name: Cllr Mark Hawthorne</p>
<p>Council has signed Charters to support the Unison Ethical Charter for Care Workers and Co-operative Modern Slavery Charter. What progress has been made to support these Charters.</p>	<p>The Unison Ethical Charter for Care Workers was debated at Council in September 2018 but the motion was lost.</p> <p>The council is working together across several areas to implement the recommendations in the Modern Slavery charter and we are now making reference to the requirements of charter in newly awarded large contracts. We will be publishing a statement in accordance with the Modern Slavery act.</p>