



MINUTES OF COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

DATE: Wednesday 8 December 2021 TIME: 10.00 am

VENUE: Oxstalls Indoor Tennis Centre - Oxstalls Indoor Tennis Centre

Present

Membership:

Cllr Carole Allaway-Martin	Cllr Rebecca Halifax	Cllr David Norman MBE
Cllr Phil Awford	Cllr Tim Harman	Cllr Sajid Patel
Cllr Matt Babbage	Cllr Joe Harris	Cllr Alan Preest (Chair)
Cllr Paul Baker	Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Cllr Philip Robinson
Cllr John Bloxsom	Cllr Colin Hay	Cllr Steve Robinson
Cllr David Brown	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Cllr Vernon Smith
Cllr Alastair Chambers	Cllr Stephen Hirst (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Lisa Spivey
Cllr Cate Cody	Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	Cllr Lynden Stowe
Cllr Linda Cohen	Cllr Nick Housden	Cllr Wendy Thomas
Cllr Stephen Davies	Cllr Beki Hoyland	Cllr Brian Tipper
Cllr David Drew	Cllr Mark Mackenzie-Charrington	Cllr Pam Tracey MBE
Cllr Ben Evans	Cllr Chris McFarling	Cllr Chloe Turner
Cllr Stephan Fifield	Cllr Dr Andrew Miller	Cllr Robert Vines
Cllr Bernard Fisher	Cllr Graham Morgan	Cllr Roger Whyborn
Cllr Andrew Gravells MBE	Cllr Dominic Morris	Cllr Kathy Williams
Cllr David Gray	Cllr Gill Moseley	Cllr Susan Williams
Cllr Terry Hale	Cllr Emma Nelson	Cllr Dr David Willingham

Honorary Aldermen

Apologies: Cllrs Alex Hegenbarth and Suzanne Williams. Honorary Aldermen Bill Crowther and Gordon Shurmer.

39. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2021 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

40. ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) Forwards Employability Team

The Chair congratulated the Forwards Employability Team on becoming a finalist at this year's Employment Related Service Association (ERSA) Awards. These awards celebrated best practice in the employment support sector and recognised the hard work and dedication of those working to improve the lives of job seekers, communities and the wider workforce.

b) Social Worker of the Year Awards

The Chair congratulated three County Council social workers who had been shortlisted in the annual Social Worker of the Year Awards for extraordinary support for adults with care and support needs.

c) Fire evacuation procedure and meeting protocols

Simon Harper, Head of Democratic Services, informed members of the arrangements for the meeting.

d) Arthur Labinjo-Hughes

Members observed a minute's silence in memory of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes.

e) Steve Mawson

The Chair congratulated Steve Mawson on his appointment as Deputy Chief Executive at the Appointments Committee meeting on 6 December 2021.

f) Bren McInerney

The Chair congratulated Bren McInerney on the award of an NHS England/NHS Improvement Safeguarding Star Award in recognition of his kindness, thoughtfulness and ability to connect in the communities to keep people cared for and safe.

g) Health Service Journal (HSJ) 2021 Awards

The Chair recognised that the One Gloucestershire ICS had been shortlisted in the 'Integrated Care System of the Year' category at the HSJ awards. The Gloucestershire entry 'Integrated Working During COVID-19' set out the contribution and joint working over this period from health and care professionals on the frontline and in support services. It recognised the strength of the One Gloucestershire partnership including the role and work of Public Health, Social Care, local councils and those in the voluntary and community sector.

h) Personal safety for councillors

Members were reminded that an online session on personal safety for members would be taking place on Friday 10 December from 10am to 12pm.

i) Kickstart Programme

Max Young and Troy Irwin were thanked for the support they had provided to members during their six months with the Council. Troy would be joining Aston Martin to work at their new factory in St Athan, South Wales, and Max was looking for an opportunity to continue working for the Council.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Emma Nelson declared an interest in Motion 893.

42. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Twenty-six public questions had been received. The following supplementary questions were asked:

Question 15 – Pippa Schwartz noted that the Local Transport Plan aimed to address and minimise environmental impact and Cllr Gray had promised to work with key stakeholders. She stated that all those stakeholders in Minchinhampton and Rodborough had agreed to pursue road narrowing. This could be legally done without a TRO and street lighting. She asked Cllr Gray to help progress this and to meet stakeholders on site in January 2022.

Cllr David Gray replied that he would ask the officers to arrange a meeting with Minchinhampton and Rodborough Commons Advisory Committee where possible for January 2022.

Question 20 – Lorna Parker provided examples of Stagecoach buses that had been taken out of service. Stagecoach had informed her that Cirencester College buses had departed and picked up around Gloucestershire, dropping off students to the college. They would then show as 'not in service' as they had finished for the day and were unable to pick up. She asked if there were any plans to change the system and urged the council to improve the bus service in Gloucestershire.

Cllr Philip Robinson replied that Stagecoach shortcomings were a matter for them to resolve. The County Council could not control Stagecoach's routes and timetables. He would raise her queries with the relevant officers.

Question 26– Adrian Oldman commended the Council on its Bus Improvement Plan but asked, given importance the council placed on buses, would it commit on above inflation investment in the bus network for the next four years?

Cllr Philip Robinson replied that funding relied on the Bus Back Better project which included the improvement plan and a detailed document would be issued by 31 March 2022. Any future funding for public transport was dependent on that process. If funding was forthcoming, the Council would be keen to invest. In response to an additional question on real time notification, he could not give the number of real time displays but this was a major part of the improvement plan targets.

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Mr Oldman also asked if the Cabinet Member would commit to a Local Passenger Transport Group. In response it was explained that this would be a matter for the enhanced partnership and could be a consequence of that agreement.

In response to Mr Oldman's question on councillors' own use of public transport, Cllr Robinson outlined that he loved using public transport and that demand responsive transport was coming to the Forest of Dean.

43. PETITIONS

Cllr Chloe Turner presented Cllr Vernon Smith, Cabinet Member for Highways and Flood, with a petition for the Council to implement road safety measures and reduce the speed limit on a section of the A419 in Thrupp.

Cllr Roger Whyborn presented Cllr Vernon Smith, Cabinet Member for Highways and Flood, with a petition calling on the Council to install an electronic pedestrian crossing on Warden Hill Road to help pupils attending Bournside, Belmont and Bettridge Schools to cross safely.

A petition calling on the Council to fully fund the Bishops Cleeve to Cheltenham cycleway and to publish a timeline for its completion as soon as possible, would be passed on to Cllr David Gray, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, on behalf of Cllr Alex Hegenbarth who was not in attendance at this meeting.

44. CORPORATE PARENTING

Cllr Stephen Davies, Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Early Years, presented the Corporate Parenting report.

Members were advised that there was a concern that a date for the Ofsted inspection date had not yet been set. This was a concern as it was believed that, as a result of the improvements made, Children's Services in Gloucestershire were no longer inadequate. It was important to get this confirmed by Ofsted, as the current status was affecting recruitment. This concern had been raised with Ofsted in writing.

Additionally, in the face of a record number of children in care and high staff turnover amongst children's social workers, an additional payment was being made to front line workers for their loyalty.

Members were invited to submit their One Page Profiles if they had not already done so. However enough profiles had been completed already to be able to launch the programme.

Cllr Davies also commented on the tragic case of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and reflected on the importance of the work carried out by Children's Services and the daily decisions that they made.

One member requested a breakdown of the costs totalling £5 million involved in supporting two children. Cllr Davies responded that he would look at what information could be provided to the member.

Another member asked whether the Cabinet Member would look into introducing preventative measures, given that there were increasing numbers of children in care. In response, Cllr Davies explained that this increase in the number of children in care was a national trend, and in Gloucestershire, a request to increase spending on youth services and family hubs had recently been considered by Cabinet. Further announcements on this would be made in the new year.

There was a further query from a member as to how children requiring support from Children's Services were supported with the transition to Adults Services.

45. MOTIONS

Motion 888 - Armed Forces Community Covenant

Cllr Andrew Gravells proposed and Cllr Dom Morris seconded the motion, (as published with the agenda for the meeting). Cllr Gravells, as Armed Forces Covenant Champion for the County Council, encouraged members, regardless of political affiliation, to support the motion.

Outlining personal reflections of his associations with the armed forces, including family associations and working alongside British and American Forces personnel at Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), Cllr Gravells spoke with pride about his work as Local Government Association (LGA) representative on the Central Government Cabinet Office Committee and in the development of the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

Cllr Gravells informed members that the Covenant represented a commitment from Government (and all those who sign up to it) to ensure all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces and their families were treated with fairness and respect in the communities they serve or have served in. Representing a statement of mutual support between the civilian community and the local armed forces community of Gloucestershire, the Gloucestershire County Council Armed Forces Covenant was signed in 2012.

It was explained that the principal aims of the Covenant included:

- 1) To recognise the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by the armed forces.

- 2) To remove disadvantages arising for service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.
- 3) To consider that special provision for service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.

Cllr Gravells sought agreement to update the Gloucestershire County Council Covenant to include new organisations and to reaffirm the Council's commitment to the Gloucestershire Armed Forces community. This currently stood at around 2,400 serving personnel, increasing to a much larger number if immediate families, veterans and reservists were included.

Since taking over the role of Armed Forces Covenant Champion, Cllr Gravells, working alongside the Honourable Company of Gloucestershire, had been involved in a number of issues aimed at promoting the Gloucestershire County Council Covenant. Cllr Gravells stated that it was the support of the Honourable Company and the small covenant team based at Shire Hall that had encouraged him to continue in promoting the Covenant to every city, town, village and parish in Gloucestershire. It was for this reason that the updating and re-signing of the covenant was so important.

Commending the work of reservists who worked for the Council, the Covenant team at Shire Hall and the universal recognition attributed to the Glosters Regiment, Cllr Gravells reflected on his appreciation of the democratic freedom assigned to the council meeting, a freedom denied to so many around the world. He encouraged everyone to support the motion by placing on record their appreciation and gratitude to the Armed Forces Community of Gloucestershire.

Seconding the motion, Cllr Dom Morris, reflected on some of his own personal experiences whilst deployed with the armed forces. Speaking with visible emotion of the losses and sacrifices endured by so many during the deployment to Afghanistan and of the enormity of the repercussions on the armed forces and their families, Cllr Morris stated how fitting it was on the 10th Anniversary of its signing, to reaffirm the Council's commitment to Gloucestershire's Armed Forces Community.

Cllr Morris suggested that, whilst the public had led the way with the Help 4 Heroes Campaign, he believed there had been a moral failure by the State in its initial treatment, including responding to mental health needs, of those returning from Afghanistan. This had been addressed with the passing of legislation and a commitment by the Government at the time to introduce an Armed Forces Community Covenant, setting out the State's responsibilities to its servicemen and women and their families.

Reflecting on some of the positive aspects of his experiences, Cllr Morris referred to the humour, the stamina and the 'can do' attitude of in-service and ex-service personnel and commended that, in agreeing to the motion, the Council reaffirm its support to the Gloucestershire Armed Forces Community.

Members from all political groups spoke with sentiment and resolve in support of the Gloucestershire Armed Forces Community and agreed that the re-affirmation of the Covenant would send a strong message of commitment and respect to the community from the original signatories.

RESOLVED that on the 10-year anniversary of the original signing Gloucestershire County Council invite all original signatories, (or their replacement bodies), to re-sign the Gloucestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant, highlighting their continued commitment to honouring the Armed Forces Community, and to contact all of the Gloucestershire Town and Parish Councils to sign the Covenant.

Motion 889 – Severn Edge STEP Fusion Reactor

Cllr David Gray proposed and Cllr Philip Robinson seconded the motion included on the agenda.

Cllr Gray outlined the motion by referencing recent media coverage of the United Nations COP 26 (Conference of the Parties) Climate Change Conference held in Glasgow recently. Highlighting the challenges of global warming, climate change and the ambitious target set by Gloucestershire to achieve carbon neutral emissions for the county by 2045 (5 years ahead of the national target in 2050), Cllr Gray explained how electricity production had been the one sector of the UK economy where progress towards decarbonisation had experienced the fastest progress.

In 2010, 70% of UK electricity was generated from fossil fuels. Although, this percentage had reduced, with 40% of electricity production now generated from renewable resources and a further 20% from nuclear fission, 40% of today's energy production was still generated from hydrocarbon fuels. He emphasised the urgency in reducing the levels of carbon emissions generated by industry, and from transport and home-heating energy requirements. Furthermore, there was also a need to address the increasing dependency on electricity production generated by the use of electronic vehicles/cycles and heat pumps.

Expressing concerns about the impact of inconsistent weather conditions on energy production and efforts to create a greener, more inclusive economy, he believed the consequences of increasing consumptions of gas, oil and coal on the levels of

carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere represented a serious threat to the success of achieving the global target of limiting heat rise to 1.5 centigrade.

The benefits of producing energy from nuclear fission, which he described as a “brilliant solution to both the need to get to net zero carbon emissions as soon as possible and the need to do so in a way that allowed the flexibility to use wind, solar, hydro and other renewable sources of power to provide the base load of power supply but not compromise energy security”.

He advocated the safety and cleanliness of fusion energy production and stated that, unlike nuclear fission, the fusion fuel cycle was inherently safer due to the reaction process ending as soon as the fuel input ended, and with no long term nuclear waste. Fuel production provided an abundant supply of energy, with a tiny amount producing an amount of power equivalent to that produced from tonnes of carbon dioxide emitting coal production. At the forefront of this emerging, clean and safe technology energy production, the UK’s commitment to build a prototype Spherical Tokamak Energy Production (STEP) fusion reactor was an exciting prospect.

Fusion energy production was a ‘potential global game changer’. Encouraging members to support the motion to provide a “greener Gloucestershire, a greener UK and a greener world”, he stated that, for Gloucestershire to be included in one of the five bids out of an initial 15 bids to build the prototype in the county was both remarkable and exciting. He encouraged members to support the Council’s work with its Western Gateway Partners to deliver the project without delay.

In seconding the motion, Cllr Philip Robinson, outlined some of the technological detail relating to fusion energy production and referred to the huge potential for the economic growth of Gloucestershire in locating a fusion reactor in the county. He referred to the significant benefits to local employment, skills development and reputation of the county as a pioneer of energy production and stressed how important it was not to delay the project but to take advantage of the benefits as quickly as possible.

Speaking in support of the motion, several members referred to the limitless green energy and benefits to economic growth and local employment, (including encouraging young people to remain in the county), anticipated from the building of a fusion reactor in Gloucestershire.

Other members, whilst supporting the motion, stressed the need to combine the initiative with sufficient infrastructure for the project and highlighted the impact of large scale energy production on the local road network and transportation links across the county.

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One member suggested that discussions with other local authorities would be necessary in order to ensure successful outcomes and to consider the impact of the development on road and cycle links, and on the Sharpness Development Plan.

Another member agreed that Gloucestershire would be a suitable location for the reactor site but expressed caution on the prospect of securing the bid in comparison with the other bids and in relation to alternative technological advances in energy production.

One member expressed strong reservations about the Council investing in the development, stating there was insufficient time to progress the development and that there were still a number of issues to be addressed before some of the objectives could be realised from the proposals. The member stated that, whilst he would prefer it to be otherwise, he felt there was not enough time to meet the primary objective of reducing the required carbon emissions via this initiative.

Disappointed the motion would not receive the unanimous support it was hoped it would receive, Cllr Mark Hawthorne urged those members with reservations to reconsider their views. He stated that it would be short-sighted to say no to the investment and proposed that a recorded vote be taken. The proposal for a recorded vote was supported by 9 other members at the meeting. Prior to the vote, several members expressed their disappointment at the hesitation from some members.

Summarising, Cllr Gray acknowledged the request to consider improvements to the county's transportation network and agreed future investment would be necessary. He acknowledged that a number of issues would need to be considered before progressing the development. However, as an incentive to delivering global change in terms of energy production and in meeting local targets to reduce carbon emissions, the proposal to fully commit to working with Western Gateway partners in delivering this important project sent a strong message from the Council to Government on Gloucestershire's future commitment to green energy production.

On being put to a recorded vote, it was

RESOLVED to commit to working with Western Gateway partners to see this vital (Severn Edge STEP Fusion Reactor) project delivered in Gloucestershire.

The voting was as follows:

For (48): Cllrs Carole Allaway-Martin, Phil Awford, Matt Babbage, Paul Baker, John Bloxsom, David Brown, Alastair Chambers, Linda Cohen, Stephen Davies, David

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Drew, Ben Evans, Stephan Fifield, Bernie Fisher, Andrew Gravells, David Gray, Terry Hale, Rebecca Halifax, Tim Harman, Joe Harris, Mark Hawthorne, Colin Hay, Jeremy Hilton, Stephen Hirst, Paul Hodgkinson, Nick Housden, Mark McKenzie-Charrington, Andrew Miller, Graham Morgan, Dom Morris, Gill Moseley, Emma Nelson, Dave Norman, Sajid Patel, Alan Preest, Philip Robinson, Steve Robinson, Vernon Smith, Lisa Spivey, Lynden Stowe, Wendy Thomas, Brian Tipper, Pam Tracey, Chloe Turner, Robert Vines, Roger Whyborn, Kathy Williams, Susan Williams, David Willingham

Against (0)

Abstentions (3): Cllrs Cate Cody, Beki Hoyland and Chris McFarling

Motion 890 – Domestic Abuse

Cllr Thomas advised that she, along with the seconder, Cllr John Bloxsom, had accepted a friendly amendment proposed by the Conservative Group. The motion now read as follows:

This Council believes that all people should be able to live in a happy and safe homes, free from violence and abuse.

This Council is particularly concerned that 78% of domestic abuse victims in Gloucestershire are female and 93% of perpetrators are male. Council deplores the risks that women and girls in Gloucestershire are subject to resulting from male violence.

Council is committed to ensure that those who are suffering from domestic abuse are given support and assistance so that they are able to live their lives safe from harm.

We recognise that housing provision, delivered by partner organisations and housing authorities, is a key element of this support. Unfortunately, some victims of domestic abuse are forced to flee their homes to seek safety and support in a refuge or other form of temporary accommodation often in another area in order to put a safe distance between themselves and their abusers. We believe that support for victims to remain in their own homes, or to be resettled elsewhere (whichever they believe is most appropriate) is central to tackling domestic abuse, including making every effort to remove perpetrators and keeping victims in their own homes where they so wish.

We note findings by Women's Aid nationally that most women living with an abuser reported that abuse had worsened during the pandemic, with a fifth prevented from leaving by a lack of housing or refuge space.

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In Gloucestershire referrals to the Domestic Abuse Helpline are reported to remain high and contacts into Children Service relating to Domestic Abuse are also reported to remain high.

We are also concerned that complex barriers to seeking support, can result in lower levels of reporting and reduced access to domestic abuse services from people in some communities, including LBGT+ communities, and believe work should continue to address these gaps.

We welcome the introduction of new statutory duties upon this authority within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to support victims of domestic abuse and their children in domestic abuse safe accommodation and the inclusion of a duty to assess the need for accommodation-based support and prepare strategies to provide such support for victims.

Council notes that whilst there were 40 refuge spaces, spread across five districts, within Gloucestershire in at the time of the adoption of the Supporting People Strategy 2005-10, there are now only nine refuge spaces with all of these being delivered by an independent provider within just one district in the County. We believe that the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee should consider whether refuge provision in the county needs to be expanded.

Council acknowledges that whilst provision of dispersed accommodation, such as Places of Safety, can enable women to stay in their communities and meet particular needs, such as those with older male children, this does not remove the need for sufficient refuge accommodation as part of a mix of domestic abuse safe accommodation-based support.

Council notes that demand for accommodation is higher than the provision available and that those most likely to access refuge provision may have minimal access to the resources needed to secure their safety without the support of this type of provision.

Therefore, this Council resolves that both the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee should consider the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment for Gloucestershire and the Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy. In particular, the committees should scrutinise our partnership work to ensure that we are providing sufficient accommodation and support for victims who are forced to leave their homes, including refuge accommodation which can help meet the needs of survivors to access safe accommodation irrespective of where they may have originally resided.

In presenting the motion, Cllr Thomas stated that it was fitting at this meeting for the Council to support the view that all people should be able to live in a happy and safe home, free from violence and abuse. Expressing concern that 78% of domestic abuse victims in Gloucestershire were female and 93% of perpetrators male, she sought the support of members to acknowledge the risks to women and girls in Gloucestershire resulting from male violence.

She also sought to ensure that those suffering from domestic abuse were given the support and assistance they required to enable them to live their lives safely and free from harm. Identifying housing provision, delivered by partner organisations and housing authorities, as a key element of this support, she acknowledged that some victims of domestic abuse were forced to flee their homes to seek safety and support in a refuge or other form of temporary accommodation, often in another area or location, in order to place a safe distance between themselves and their abusers. This should make it possible for victims to remain in their own homes, or resettled elsewhere, if this was considered a better option. This was central to tackling domestic abuse, including making every effort to remove perpetrators and keeping victims in their own homes if appropriate.

It was suggested that most women living with an abuser had experienced heightened abuse during the pandemic, with a fifth of victims prevented from leaving the home where the abuse was taking place due to a lack of housing or refuge space. In Gloucestershire, referrals to the Domestic Abuse Helpline were reported as high. Contact with Children's Services in relation to Domestic Abuse was also reported as remaining high.

The impact of complex barriers on people seeking support could result in lower levels of reporting and reduced access to domestic abuse services from people in some communities, including LGBT+ Communities. It was proposed that more work should be invested in continuing to address these gaps.

The introduction of new statutory duties introduced by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed a duty for the Council to assess the need for accommodation-based support and to produce strategies to provide such support for victims.

Concern was expressed at the reduced number of domestic abuse refuge spaces across Gloucestershire, reducing from 40 at the timing of the adoption of the Supporting People Strategy 2005-10, to nine refuge spaces currently.

Cllr Thomas proposed that the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee consider the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment for Gloucestershire and the Gloucestershire

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Domestic Abuse Strategy as the foundation for scrutinising the Council's partnership work in ensuring sufficient accommodation.

Several members spoke in support of the proposal and agreed that, following the recent pandemic and the significant escalation of domestic abuse, this was a timely juncture at which to consider the issue. Noting concerns about the risks to young children and the detrimental effect on families and communities, the urgency and seriousness of the issue was acknowledged, with some members relaying personal concerns and experiences.

Voting on the motion, as amended, Council

RESOLVED that this Council believes all people should be able to live in a happy and safe homes, free from violence and abuse.

This Council is particularly concerned that 78% of domestic abuse victims in Gloucestershire are female and 93% of perpetrators are male. Council deplores the risks that women and girls in Gloucestershire are subject to resulting from male violence.

This Council is committed to ensuring that those who are suffering from domestic abuse are given support and assistance so that they are able to live their lives safe from harm.

This Council recognises that housing provision, delivered by partner organisations and housing authorities, is a key element of this support.

Unfortunately, some victims of domestic abuse are forced to flee their homes to seek safety and support in a refuge or other form of temporary accommodation often in another area in order to put a safe distance between themselves and their abusers. We believe that support for victims to remain in their own homes, or to be resettled elsewhere (whichever they believe is most appropriate) is central to tackling domestic abuse, including making every effort to remove perpetrators and keeping victims in their own homes where they so wish.

We note findings by Women's Aid nationally that most women living with an abuser reported that abuse had worsened during the pandemic, with a fifth prevented from leaving by a lack of housing or refuge space.

In Gloucestershire referrals to the Domestic Abuse Helpline are reported to remain high and contacts into Children Service relating to Domestic Abuse are also reported to remain high.

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We are also concerned that complex barriers to seeking support, can result in lower levels of reporting and reduced access to domestic abuse services from people in some communities, including LGBT+ communities, and believe work should continue to address these gaps.

We welcome the introduction of new statutory duties upon this authority within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to support victims of domestic abuse and their children in domestic abuse safe accommodation and the inclusion of a duty to assess the need for accommodation-based support and prepare strategies to provide such support for victims.

Council notes that, whilst there were 40 refuge spaces, spread across five districts, within Gloucestershire at the time of the adoption of the Supporting People Strategy 2005-10, there are now only nine refuge spaces, with all of these being delivered by an independent provider within just one district in the County.

We believe that the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee should consider whether refuge provision in the county needs to be expanded.

Council acknowledges that whilst provision of dispersed accommodation, such as Places of Safety, can enable women to stay in their communities and meet particular needs, such as those with older male children, this does not remove the need for sufficient refuge accommodation as part of a mix of domestic abuse safe accommodation-based support.

Council notes that demand for accommodation is higher than the provision available and that those most likely to access refuge provision may have minimal access to the resources needed to secure their safety without the support of this type of provision.

Therefore, this Council resolves that both the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee should consider the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment for Gloucestershire and the Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy. In particular, the committees should scrutinise our partnership work to ensure that we are providing sufficient accommodation and support for victims who are forced to leave their homes, including refuge accommodation which can help meet the needs of survivors to access safe accommodation irrespective of where they may have originally resided.

Motion 891 – Climate Leadership

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Cllr Chloe Turner proposed and Cllr Chris McFarling seconded the motion, as published with the agenda.

Cllr Turner explained she was presenting the motion from both a political and a personal perspective. Highlighting the impact and repercussions of climate change on future generations, she expressed personal disappointment at some of the missed opportunities following the United Nations COP 26 Climate Change Conference held in Glasgow in the Autumn.

Expressing the seriousness and urgency in responding to the grim realities of climate change, a significant number of members shared Cllr Turner's concerns from both a global perspective and from a local perspective, referencing the impact on flooding, land management, employment and food production. Members spoke with huge depth of feeling and agreed that it was important to take action quickly and responsively.

Some members highlighted the investment and work already underway in the county's response to climate change and noted the previous motion for the Council to commit to working with its Western Gateway partners in delivering the Severn Edge STEP Fusion Reactor project in Gloucestershire. Other members referred to the need to prioritise the impact of transportation links on climate change.

In response to the request to the Pension Committee to review the allocation of passive funds in the Council's pension scheme as part of the upcoming Medium Term Financial Strategy review, Cllr Lynden Stowe, Chair of the Pensions Committee, informed members that the committee had approved a new Strategic Asset Allocation (SAA) for the Gloucestershire Pension Fund at a meeting on Friday 3 December 2021 and confirmed that the new SAA included the use of the new Paris aligned passive portfolio.

It was confirmed that, at the previous week's meeting, the Pensions Committee had requested a review of the funds passive asset allocation to include climate change aligned benchmarks. The new Strategic Asset Allocation would utilise the Paris aligned passive portfolio for all passive investment requirements.

Cllr David Gray proposed and Cllr Mark Hawthorne seconded that the motion be referred to the Environment Scrutiny Committee for consideration. They believed that a more detailed discussion on how to take the proposals forward would be useful.

RESOLVED to refer Motion 891 (Climate Leadership), as published with the agenda for the Council meeting on 8 December 2021, to the Environment Scrutiny

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Committee for consideration, with a report back to Council on the outcomes of the review.

Motion 892 – Repairing public confidence in Gloucestershire Highways

Cllr Roger Whyborn proposed and Cllr Lisa Spivey seconded the motion included on the agenda.

Cllr Whyborn outlined perceptions of a broken infrastructure in relation to the county's highway maintenance programme. He referred to several areas of concern, including pot-hole repairs, the condition and placement of highway signage, overgrown vegetation, drainage issues, traffic management arrangements and the quality of road repairs.

Cllr Whyborn noted the frustrations of fellow councillors and from members of the public regarding dissatisfaction at the poor quality condition and maintenance of Gloucestershire highways and called on members to support the proposal for a detailed review, in consultation with districts, parishes and local communities, of the Council's highway maintenance services.

Seconding the motion, Cllr Lisa Spivey elaborated on the concerns raised at the meeting by outlining the hazards to both drivers and pedestrians from poor quality repairs, bad signage, pot-holes and poor visibility due to overgrown vegetation.

Endorsing the concerns, several members concurred with perceptions of poor quality highway maintenance. They believed that the Council's scrutiny process should consider how best the Council might devolve its highway maintenance decisions, including its spending priorities and operational arrangements, to a localised level by empowering communities with the decisions and enabling local ownership.

Included in the motion was a proposal for a scrutiny task and finish group to be established to consider how best to achieve best value for money for the taxpayer, aided by the support of local experts from higher performing councils and interest groups.

Acknowledging the concerns, Cllr Vernon Smith, Cabinet Member for Highways and Flooding, commended the work and commitment of officers from the Council's highways team and proposed the following amendment. The amendment was seconded by Cllr Dom Morris:

This Council recognises that our county's highway maintenance is failing at numerous points, with councillors from all parties inundated by appeals from

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~~residents to fix potholes, mend broken infrastructure, replace signs, cut overgrown vegetation and clear leaves from drains, as well as reports of dodgy traffic lights and poor-quality repairs has faced enormous challenges over the past two years, largely due to the Covid 19 pandemic.~~

~~This Council also notes that the number of potholes has been going up year on year, with 24,668 needing to be repaired in 2019/20, 36,447 in 2020/21 and more than 43,000 in the first half of 2021/22. Taken together with the proportion of carriageways and other assets at “end of life” this indicates progressive deterioration of our highways infrastructure.~~

~~We have invested £150 million into our resurfacing scheme which has been a success. In the last four years, over 562 miles of road have been resurfaced – with many more scheduled to be done.~~

~~This council also notes that the Conservatives were the only party to commit to an additional £100 million into this scheme at the local elections in May.~~

~~This Council believes, in short, that the system is broken. Moreover:~~

~~- Councillors and our residents are frustrated by the unresponsiveness of the system and its lack of local sensitivity to local situations, leading to a widespread sense of a lack of empowerment.~~

~~- Council is concerned that, having declared a Climate Emergency, our highways leaders are moving too slowly, in both policy and operations, to address the changes required to decarbonise our county and protect our communities from climate-change events.~~

~~This Council believes major changes must be applied to the culture of our highways leadership if the Council is to regain the confidence of the people of Gloucestershire.~~

~~However, we recognise there have been issues with routine maintenance. There is a need to ensure that the customer’s experience of our Highways service is a positive one, which is why we have invested in appointing Jason Humm as the new Director of Highways and Transport. We have also appointed Cllr Morris as the Cabinet Champion for Highways Customer Experience.~~

~~As such, it calls upon Cabinet to –~~

~~Conduct a detailed review, in consultation with districts, parishes and communities, of the way the Council delivers highways services to the county.~~

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~~– Consider, through scrutiny, how best to devolve decisions on spending priorities and operational decisions to a local level, to the maximum extent possible, to enable local ownership and to empower our communities.~~

~~– Establish a task and finish group to interrogate how we can achieve the best value for the taxpayer and superior highway results for our residents— bring in experts to look into ways to improve Customer Service and Systems to help the public to report routine maintenance issues.~~

~~from better-performing councils and interest groups to provide advice to our councillors.~~

Cllr Smith referred to the impact of the recent pandemic on structural repairs, the limitations created from the restricted supply chain and the repercussions of having to maintain socially distanced working arrangements. He assured members that the current administration would continue to invest in improving the county's highways.

Following an adjournment of the meeting to consider the amendment in more detail, a number of members spoke against the proposal and re-affirmed their concerns. They referred to the poor management and leadership of the current administration and objected strongly to the explanation that the pandemic had been an influencing factor on performance. Some members referred to a lack of confidence from other local authorities and members of the public.

Seeking an immediate and rapid response to the situation, opposition members spoke strongly against the amendment. On being put to the vote, the amendment was accepted and formed the substantive motion.

Voting on the substantive motion, it was

RESOLVED that this Council recognises that our county's highway maintenance has faced enormous challenges over the past two years, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have invested £150 million into our resurfacing scheme which has been a success. In the last four years, over 562 miles of road have been resurfaced, with many more scheduled to be done.

This Council also notes that the Conservatives were the only party to commit to an additional £100 million into this scheme at the local elections in May 2021. However, we recognise there have been issues with routine maintenance.

There is a need to ensure that the customer's experience of our Highways service is a positive one, which is why we have invested in appointing Jason Humm as the

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new Director of Highways and Transport. We have also appointed Cllr Morris as the Cabinet Champion for Highways Customer Experience.

As such, Council calls upon Cabinet to –

- *Conduct a detailed review, in consultation with districts, parishes and communities, of the way the Council delivers highways services to the county, and*
- *Establish a task and finish group to bring in experts to look into ways to improve Customer Service and Systems to help the public to report routine maintenance issues.*

Motion 893 - Policing and anti-social behaviour

Having reached the two-hour time limit for considering motions, there was no time to consider Motion 893, as proposed by Cllr Jeremy Hilton and seconded by Cllr David Brown.

46. MEMBER QUESTIONS

Sixty-six member questions had been received. The following supplementary questions were asked:

Question 1 – Cllr Paul Baker stated that in the Conservative 2017 manifesto it stated that there would be superfast broadband across Gloucestershire by 2021. He asked how many homes were still unconnected and when would they be connected?

Cllr Mark Hawthorne replied that he did not have a list of individual homes that would be shortly connected. He reflected on the success of the programme and stated that there was still a lot to be delivered in technically hard to reach areas. He felt that the scheme should be congratulated for the huge amount of broadband available.

Question 2 – Cllr Colin Hay asked what the public interest was in a winding up order?

Cllr Mark Hawthorne replied that any organisation going in to a legal process needed to be aware of the ramifications if unsuccessful. CR4C were aware that if they were unsuccessful this could happen and there was a moral duty to pursue that.

Question 3 – Cllr Colin Hay asked what the value for money was of over £6,000 spent on the winding up order.

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Cllr Mark Hawthorne replied that for any legal process if a party failed they could be liable for any costs. No tax payer in Gloucestershire would be accepting of a situation where they were 'let off'.

Question 6 – Cllr David Willingham asked how many times the Cabinet Member had written to National Highways regarding this and would he now write to make the passing under Elmbridge Court roundabout safe for young and vulnerable cyclists.

Cllr Vernon Smith replied he would be making further requests for a response on these points.

Question 7 – Cllr David Willingham asked could the Cabinet Member explain how any recommendations following a conference on deprivation could be funded from the 2022/23 budget if the budget setting period had passed?

Cllr Tim Harman replied that the levelling up fund opportunities would open in the Spring.

Question 8 – Cllr David Willingham suggested that 7 hours of officer time out of 740 hours to plan the conference showed a lack of urgency and he looked for assurance that this would be taken forward.

Cllr Tim Harman stated that this did not take into account councillor time.

Question 11 – Cllr Paul Hodgkinson asked whether the installation of charging points would all be urban focused and how would rural residents not be left behind. He detailed correspondence with officers that suggested chargers would be based in urban areas.

Cllr David Gray replied that the intention was to approach installation of chargers across the whole County and look for best value for money as well as the availability of the network and to fill in gaps. He asked the member to share any correspondence.

Question 12 – Cllr Paul Hodgkinson asked how had the email address been publicised and how would the sites be promoted.

Cllr David Gray detailed the importance of practicality, he explained promoting through parish councils and happy to invite members to come forward with proposals.

Question 15 – Cllr David Willingham asked that given vulnerability of disabled residents shouldn't the change to allow a paper based approach in libraries be brought in as soon as it had been realised that the IT had failed?

Cllr Dave Norman stated that if this was the case he would apologise and provide any further information.

Question 20 – Cllr Paul Hodgkinson asked if the Leader had a magic wand would he wave it to help his prime minister?

Cllr Mark Hawthorne replied he would use the wand on opposition members to reduce the amount of motions they raised.

Question 22 – Cllr Cate Cody asked to discuss introducing a parking levy given the need to reduce carbon admissions and support sustainable travel.

Cllr Lynden Stowe replied he would discuss with the member in more detail outside of the meeting.

Question 23 – Cllr Cate Cody asked how many children had left care, where are they were located and how their safety was monitored?

Cllr Stephen Davies replied that the County Council was still responsible when those children had moved out of county and he would provide the numbers.

Question 25 – Cllr Jeremy Hilton asked did he expect the spending on highways tree maintenance to be increased? He suggested that the current level didn't seem to be enough.

Cllr Vernon Smith replied that there was negotiation over renewing the contract with the City Council.

Question 26 – Cllr Jeremy Hilton asked to see the data on traffic speeds on London Road to see if there were excessive speeds during certain period of the day and night. He asked whether consideration would be given to putting speed cameras or islands back if there was found to be issues.

Cllr David Gray replied that he would take that away and get back to the member but that there had been a change in volume of traffic due to Covid and he felt that a longer dataset was required to see trends.

Question 30 – Cllr Paul Hodgkinson asked would the leader commit to achieving an 80% reduction in total emissions by 2030.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne replied that yes he would make that commitment, but that the target included every person and organisation in Gloucestershire and so the reality was that changes needed to be made across all those areas. The target was one that the Council was committed to but could not deliver alone.

Question 31 – Cllr Paul Hodgkinson suggested that responsible Cabinet Member had stated that he felt that the 80% target was misleading and did the Leader agree.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne explained there were personal responsibilities to respond to change and Cllr Gray had been very honest about the realities of delivering against that target.

Question 33 – Cllr Paul Hodgkinson asked whether the Cabinet Member responsible was committed to the target of 80% by 2030 given that he had detailed it as misleading in the past.

Cllr David Gray replied that this was in the strategy and clarified that he remained committed to working with partners to this target. He stated that it was an exceptionally difficult ask to hit that target and he apologised if his use of the word misleading had in itself been misleading.

Question 34 – Cllr Rebecca Halifax provided information regarding a tree that had been removed in Victoria Road, she asked if it was normal for one single resident to dictate the policy for a neighbourhood.

Cllr Vernon Smith replied that he did not have the facts in front of him on this specific example and that highways law was clear and safety was paramount. He asked the member to provide the detail to the highways manager and go back to him if there were any further issues.

Question 35 – Cllr Roger Whyborn asked the Cabinet Member regarding plans for roads in end of life condition and, while recognising the large costs involved in replacing, emphasised the concern of residents.

Cllr Vernon Smith replied that he needed to understand the context behind the Member regarding a road 'end of life'. He suggested setting up a meeting with the local highways manager and he would facilitate how to move that forward.

Question 38 – Cllr Paul Baker clarified it was Gloucestershire County Council who provided planning permission, he thanked officers for providing that confirmation. He asked if the measures proposed would be in place in time and when a plan for safe walking and cycling routes would be implemented?

Cllr David Gray replied that whatever could be provided for safe access would be done and that a lot of work had been carried out and he would ask if any more could be provided.

Question 40 – Cllr David Brown asked about whether misuse and offences in the e-scooter scheme were tracked and, if not, could they be?

Cllr David Gray replied that there was a system in place and encouraged people where they saw misuse to report it. He outlined that the scheme was being looked at by Scrutiny.

46.1 Scrutiny reports

Cllr Phil Awford, Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the report which provided a summary of recent scrutiny activities.

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The report highlighted the breadth of scrutiny activity being undertaken by non-executive members. It was noted that Gloucestershire County Council had more scrutiny committees than most local authorities, however this demonstrated how engaged and enthusiastic members were about the activities of the Council and wider community issues including health.

Cllr Awford also thanked Cabinet members for attending scrutiny committee meetings and commented that strong Cabinet governance was only as good as the scrutiny process that runs alongside it.

Members were reminded of and encouraged to attend the Budget Scrutiny session taking place on 6 January 2022.

One member commented on his disappointment at the negative approach to the recent call-in process and expressed the view that scrutiny was valuable and should be embraced more than it was.

47. CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

48. MEETING HELD ON 11 OCTOBER 2021

Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Chair of the Constitution Committee, presented the report setting out proposed changes to the Council Constitution.

It was understood that the recommendation relating to the time limit for questions by members at full Council meetings had been pulled following a meeting of Group Leaders.

RESOLVED that the recommendations in the report, excluding the recommendation relating to the time limit for member questions at full Council meetings, be approved.

49. CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

RESOLVED that the Contract Procedure Rules attached to the report be incorporated into the Council's Constitution.

49.1 Finance Procedure Rules

RESOLVED that the Finance Procedure Rules attached to the report be incorporated into the Council's Constitution.

CHAIRPERSON

Meeting concluded at 3.15 pm