

MEMBER QUESTIONS

CABINET MEETING –23 November 2022

Question 1: Cllr John Bloxsom	Respondent: Cllr Dave Norman
<p>Agenda Item 9: Gloucestershire Road Safety Policy</p> <p>Will the forthcoming Road Safety Policy result in proposals for speed limit reductions, which meet the stated criteria and are supported by local communities, being approved?</p>	<p>We have updated our policy to help clarify the council's requirements to communities and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Where a request for a reduction in speed limit meets these criteria, it will be considered for resourcing together with other scheme proposals as part of the council's normal budget and highways scheme approval processes.</p> <p>It is not unusual for councils to receive more demand for such schemes than they have the capacity and resources to deliver. In such cases prioritisation is used to deliver those which best support the council's strategic objectives and operational factors such as deliverability.</p> <p>The Road Safety Policy will also help us to consider the need for (and specific requests for) speed limit reductions across the wider highway network. Similarly these would need to be appropriate for the location and its environment, supported by casualty data and considered alongside feedback from the Police.</p>
Question 2: Cllr John Bloxsom	Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe
<p>Agenda item 11: Financial Monitoring Report 2022/23</p> <p>What is the forecast AMPS expenditure on the repair and security on the former Stonehouse Library building and can it be confirmed that, now Stonehouse Market CIC has withdrawn from the proposed lease of the</p>	<p>AMPS have carried out no repair and security works on this building.</p>

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<p>building, the £14,000 in Build Back Better funding reportedly allocated to it for pre-occupation works, has either been withheld or, if paid, returned to GCC?</p>	<p>A £10,000 Build Back Better Councillor grant was made to the group to help with refurbishment costs. As they have informed us they no longer wish to occupy the building, we have requested the return of the grant.</p>
<p>Question 3: Cllr John Bloxsom</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe</p>
<p>Agenda item 11: Financial Monitoring Report 2022/23</p> <p>Why has the overspend and use of agency staff in children services been increasing and will this not impede the continuing steps needed in the service which Ofsted reported needed “improvement to be good” in April 2022?</p>	<p>The increase in agency costs reflects the challenges in recruiting social work practitioners which is a national issue and not confined to Gloucestershire. We are taking proactive steps to grow our own workforce using a wide range of supply lines. By the end of September 35 newly qualified social workers had started in Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (AYSE) posts and we have agreed to increase the number of student placements to around 90 per year acknowledging our good rate of recruitment from student placements previously. We will also be expanding our apprenticeship programme and are tendering for a further cohort of overseas social workers. These will attenuate our agency rate over time which is showing a marginal reduction in Quarter 2 along with vacancies and turnover.</p>
<p>Question 4: Cllr John Bloxsom</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe</p>
<p>Agenda item 11: Financial Monitoring Report 2022/23</p> <p>Is Cabinet satisfied that the £747k in overspend in Corporate Resources which “relates to additional external cost for Children’s cases within the Legal Services budgets” has been incurred purely in the best of interests</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>These costs relate solely to supporting children’s care proceedings through the courts.</p>

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of the children concerned rather than the Council's reputation management?	
Question 5: Cllr David Willingham	Respondent: Cllr Kathy Williams
Agenda item 8: Support to Refugees on the Homes for Ukraine (HFU) Scheme Are children here under the HFU scheme and attending UK schools, generally entitled to free school meals and to access the HAF, and if so what is being done to encourage uptake?	<p>Children who are living in Gloucestershire under the HFU scheme are eligible to apply for free school meals when attending school. All infant children across the country attending reception class, year 1 and year 2 (up to age 7) are given free school meals as standard, and children under the HFU scheme are included in this. From Year 3 onwards, children from families who are claiming universal credit will be entitled to free school meals. All Ukrainians on the HFU scheme are able to apply for universal credit and therefore claim free school meals.</p> <p>Similarly, the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) is also available to these families. The programme provides free, fun activities for all families in Gloucestershire who are eligible for benefits related free school meals. Ukrainian children from families claiming free school meals will therefore also be able to access the HAF as well as holiday school meal vouchers.</p> <p>Full details about applying for universal credit, claiming free school meals and accessing the HAF are included in the welcome pack that is shared with all Ukrainians and their sponsors following their arrival in the country. These are all discussed as part of the welcome visit that is carried out by the Homes for Ukraine team within the first few days after</p>

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	arriving in Gloucestershire. In addition, the series of welfare revisits that are being carried out at the four to six month point in the sponsorship arrangement provide an opportunity for the HFU team to check that the Ukrainian families have applied for all benefits that they are entitled to as well as accessing any relevant support and activities.
Question 6: Cllr Roger Whyborn	Respondent: Cllr Dave Norman
Agenda item 9: Gloucestershire Road Safety Policy The new Road Safety policy will doubtless require significant TROs to deliver it, if it is to be effective, and currently there are major delays in processing TROs, and reports of serious staff shortages. What is the present staff level in the TRO section, and what establishment is required for effective operation including that of the new policy, and what steps are being taken and when to reach the staffing level needed?	Our TRO team is currently staffed by both internal employees and external agency staff. There are currently 5 vacancies for internal posts that are being recruited.-Positive resourcing improvements continue and we have recently appointed three experienced agency engineers to a new Traffic Team and are developing a team structure which brings TRO and Road Safety work together within the role of this team to help provide wider capacity.
Question 7: Cllr Roger Whyborn	Respondent: Cllr Dave Norman
Agenda item 9: Gloucestershire Road Safety Policy Looking at table 2 it shows shows some reduction in fatalities over the previous 10 years on average, but clearly there is an increasing trend on serious injuries. What are the latest KSI figures available for the current year 2022?	Our road safety data is reported quarterly and by calendar year. In the first 6 months of 2022 there were 158 serious injuries and 16 fatalities. This included some multi-vehicle and multi-casualty collisions.

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Question 8: Cllr Roger Whyborn	Respondent: Cllr Dave Norman
<p data-bbox="125 288 904 320">Agenda item 9: Gloucestershire Road Safety Policy</p> <p data-bbox="125 363 1171 579">The report rightly points out that there is a very clear problem of high KSIs for pedestrians and cyclists in urban areas, as in para 13, table 4. In themes 4 & 5, the road safety policy talks about delivering widespread 20mph restrictions in both Gloucester and Cheltenham, also centres of market towns and villages, and more besides. When will we know the proposed locations/scope of these schemes?</p>	<p data-bbox="1200 323 2047 427">As explained in the report, much of the background work required to reduce KSI's involves analysing the hot spot list, which identifies clusters of collisions at roads and junctions.</p> <p data-bbox="1200 472 2078 762">In 2019, 2020 and 2021 most (53%) of all KSI casualties were at locations on this list. This key piece of work is currently underway to identify any low cost measures as well as more significant interventions that would require larger capital sums. However we are aware that some interventions may require significant investment or a new approach, so we have raised this in the cabinet report and are working closely with the police to explore any scope for doing things differently.</p> <p data-bbox="1200 807 2011 946">Our aim is to develop a rolling multi-year programme that identifies both engineering measures and supporting interventions such as road user education and publicity, reaching out to higher risk groups.</p> <p data-bbox="1200 991 2069 1209">Schemes are normally identified in the draft Highways Capital Programme as part of the budget process so further information will become available in the draft budget papers taken to Cabinet in December. As development of a rolling programme is a significant resource investment it will be an ongoing piece of work.</p>

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Question 9: Cllr David Willingham	Respondent: Cllr Dave Norman
<p>Agenda item 9: Gloucestershire Road Safety Policy</p> <p>Given the powers to implement both derive from the same legislation, could the Cabinet Member explain why the road safety policy includes pilot studies and a guidance note for “Quiet Lanes” but does not also include similar pilots and guidance for “Home Zones”?</p>	<p>As you will already be aware, the council has secured DfT funding this year to explore the feasibility of a mini-Holland scheme in, along and near the Honeybourne Line in Cheltenham.</p> <p>This work supports delivery of our Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), helping to create better conditions for walking and cycling.</p> <p>Whilst Home Zones are not explicitly mentioned in the draft Road Safety Policy the delivery of LCWIPs, most of the components of Home Zones are captured by the actions in Strategic Themes 4 and 5 of the draft Policy, to increase levels of walking and cycling. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Support delivery of LCWIPs- Deliver lower speed limits (20mph) <p>application of the road user hierarchy to give priority to pedestrians and cyclists.</p>
Question 10: Cllr David Willingham	Respondent: Cllr Dave Norman
<p>Agenda item 9: Gloucestershire Road Safety Policy</p> <p>There has been considerable increase in urban e-scooter use (both legally via the GCC-approved Z-wings scheme, and outside of this), and this micro-mobility trend seems set to grow. Given that this policy is supposed to be future looking for vision zero by 2050, why is road safety for e-scooters / micro-mobility not a more explicitly mentioned strategic goal of the road safety policy, backed by specific policy actions?</p>	<p>Whilst there has been much media coverage about road safety of e-scooters the casualty data shows that drivers, passengers, motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians are at greater risk of death and serious injury in our county. We need to focus on these first in order to reduce KSI's on Gloucestershire's roads.</p> <p>In addition the longer-term legal status and use of e-scooters on the highway remains to be determined by DfT as all of the</p>

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	legalised use nationally remains under trial status. The outcome of the trials will inform any future reviews of the Road Safety Policy, which we have committed will be a ‘live’ document.
Question 11: Cllr Lisa Spivey	Respondent: Cllr Dave Norman
Agenda item 10: Library Strategy 2023-2028 Does the Cabinet Member agree that 273 people represents a disappointing response rate for a County-wide consultation about an important Service? What proactive steps were taken to seek the views of Gloucestershire’s communities?	<p>Whilst the response to the consultation survey in respect of the new Library Strategy was lower than anticipated, the formulation of the draft strategy was prepared through prior engagement internally and externally having listened to what customers had to say prior to going out to consultation. Experts within our communications team were also involved in designing the engagement and consultation process.</p> <p>The survey was promoted in all libraries through hard copy survey and online and highlighted to groups using the library particularly younger and older people. The survey was promoted through our community run libraries and partners. Additionally, it was publicised through both GCC and libraries social media and also via the library website. The survey was also sent directly to the database of library members as part of the service’s regular email newsletter.</p>
Question 12: Cllr Lisa Spivey	Respondent: Cllr Dave Norman
Agenda item 10: Library Strategy 2023-2028	The library service has been successful in attracting funding through Arts Council England as one of their National Portfolio Organisations. This will bring 3 years of ringfenced revenue

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<p>The strategy does not appear to come with any new funding streams. How will the elements of the strategy which increase the scope of library activity be deliverable within the current budget envelope?</p>	<p>funding to deliver the ambitions in respect of the creative and cultural elements of the strategy. In addition to this the service will be exploring other sources of grant funding for specific elements of the strategy and partnering with other areas of the County Council and external organisations.</p> <p>The adoption of the strategy and the ambitions within it, in itself will also help to strengthen the Council’s position when it comes to securing future funding or any associated bids through Central Government.</p>
<p>Question 13: Cllr Lisa Spivey</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Dave Norman</p>
<p>Agenda item 10: Library Strategy 2023-2028</p> <p>The library usage and engagement figures quoted in the report aren’t listed against any specific targets. What are the current figures for library visits, virtual visits, school visits and adult learning events per year, and what targets are set for these indicators during the life of the strategy?</p>	<p>The figures for both the full year of 2021/22 and year to date are shown in the table below.</p> <p>In using these figures, the following should be noted: School visits - in 2021-2022 visits restarted in September and the figures include both mainstream and special schools. Adult activities – in 2021-22, events restarted in July 2021.</p> <p>Physical Library visits – County libraries only: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st April 2021-31st March 2022 = 794,217 • 1st April 2022-31st October 2022 = 727,163 <p>Virtual visits – Virtual Reference Library: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st April 2021-31st March 2022 = 86,385 • 1st April 2022-31st October 2022 = 48,318 <p>Virtual visits – GCC Library website: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st April 2021-31st March 2022 = 215,340 sessions, 850,576 page views

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- 1st April 2022-31st October 2022 = 88,877 sessions, 339,567 page views

E-stock downloads: -

- 1st April 2021-31st March 2022 = 295,390
- 1st April 2022-31st October 2022 = 187,551

School visits: -

- 1st April 2021-31st March 2022 = 3,208 pupils visited on 200 different occasions
- 1st April 2022-31st October 2022 = 3,343 pupils visited on 195 different occasions

Preschool visits: -

- 1st April 2021-31st March 2022 = 348 children visited on 53 different occasions
- 1st April 2022-31st October 2022 = 668 children visited on 52 different occasions

Adult learning: -

- 1st April 2021-31st March 2022 = 383 events with attendance of 2,384
- 1st April 2022-31st October 2022 = 552 events with attendance of 3,832

Since the pandemic there has been a change in the way libraries are used, although school and physical visits are set to exceed those in 2021-22. The way cultural and creative activities and events are delivered will also change from April 2023, since the announcement that libraries will be a National Portfolio Organisation, with targets and reporting to Arts Council England. It was felt therefore that to include clear indicators within the Strategy would not be helpful at this point, however, an annual report will be produced so that the

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	public are able to see how the service is performing against their ambitions.
Question 14: Cllr Ben Evans	Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe
<p>Agenda item 11: Financial Monitoring Report 2022/23</p> <p>On page 223 we are informed that the Children and Families budget is showing an overspend of over £11m. At budget setting we were assured by the cabinet member for C&F that this year we would finally have a C&F budget that balanced. He was wrong by £11m. Can he assure us that this annual overspend will finally be taken into account and a realistic children’s service budget set for the coming financial year?</p>	<p>Each year the budget is produced using the most up to date estimates of the numbers of children in care and unit costs. These numbers are volatile and difficult to predict so the base budget is set at a realistic but stretching level. In order to fund any in year overspend the risk is assessed at the time the budget is approved. A General Reserve was created to cover these risks should they materialise. This ensures that the Council has funding to cover higher than anticipated costs whilst at the same time avoiding service reductions in other areas that may not be needed.</p>
Question 15: Cllr Ben Evans	Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe
<p>Agenda item 11: Financial Monitoring Report 2022/23</p> <p>On page 225 we read: “The over-spend continues to be primarily against the external placements budget” – What practical steps is the Cabinet taking to get the external placements budget under control?</p>	<p>The provider market for accommodation continues to be challenging driving costs and availability. We have a range of workstreams underway to address this.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhancing our edge of care offer to enable children to remain at home and/or stabilise their current placement - Progressing reunification, return home, special guardianship and adoption to ensure children achieve permanence and remain in our care only as long as necessary.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviewing all placements commencing with the highest cost packages to ensure these provide value for money while continuing to meet the needs of the child. - Increasing our recruitment of in-house foster care capacity as our first and best option for most children entering our care.
<p>Question 16: Cllr Ben Evans</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe</p>
<p>Agenda item 11: Financial Monitoring Report 2022/23</p> <p>Is commissioning more and more external services, as recommended in Agenda item 5, not just creating an upward spiral of costs, rather than tackling the systemic problems of supply and demand of providers in the County?</p>	<p>The services proposed under item 5 meet very particular statutory requirements placed on the local authority. It may be necessary on occasion to admit a child into the care system at short notice with relatively little information about their broader circumstances and needs.</p> <p>Emergency foster care providers certainty about costs and the care offer avoiding providers taking a precautionary and often costly approach to meeting the needs of children in these circumstances. It also allows a period of assessment to inform the next stages in meeting the child’s needs on a planned and assessed basis.</p> <p>The remand and PACE elements are necessary to meet the duties placed on the local authority to accept a child charged by police but denied bail - thereby avoiding their unnecessary detention in police cells and meeting the needs of a child remanded by the courts into the care of the local authority. Both provisions are low volume but potentially challenging and costly if provision is not put in place appropriately. Recent</p>

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	changes to statutory guidance has increased the likelihood of demand for such placements.
Question 17: Cllr Ben Evans	Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe
<p>Agenda item 11: Financial Monitoring Report 2022/23</p> <p>On page 226 we read: “Against safeguarding staffing budgets, there is a forecast over-spend of £2.6 million (12.3% above budget). Turnover of staff continues to rise and has been between 24% and 28.7% over the last six months. At the end of August there were 126 agency workers in post, and this compares to 85 agency workers in August 2021.” – Approximately 25% of people leaving Children’s Services quoted poor IT as at least part of the reason for their departure. Will the cabinet consider investing to save to help stop this turnover, which merely creates a false economy by adding further ongoing costs?</p>	<p>The recruitment and retention of permanent social workers is a critical part of our continuous improvement journey in children’s social care. Social workers tell us that they want to work in stable teams where they are well supported by their manager and have proactive, positive supervision and clear development and career progression. We are significantly investing in a wholistic programme of work to develop this culture including our workforce academy, our grow our programme and development for managers to ensure they are able to manage well. This is supported by a proactive recruitment campaign to promote these benefits of working direct with GCC. It is the case that a significant proportion of social workers mention ICT as a frustration in exit interviews. There is already a programme of significant investment in our ICT infrastructure built into exist budgets including replacing our networks, refreshing laptops and upgrading software and that programme continues into the next financial year.</p>
Question 18: Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe
<p>Agenda item 11: Financial Monitoring Report 2022/23</p> <p>There are £2.470 million of unrealised savings in adult social care being brought forward from 2021/22. Can the Cabinet Member break down why each of the proposed savings haven’t been achievable, whether they are</p>	<p>The total brought forward unrealised savings from 2021/22 is £2.896 million (£2.470 million relates to 2022/23 savings).</p> <p>The two main areas of savings are £1.822 million from the Enhanced Independence Offer (EIO)/Reablement and £0.688</p>

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<p>still planned for the future and what impact this will have on setting the 2023/4 budget in this area?</p>	<p>million from strength/outcome-based focus in commissioned services. The other saving programmes are £0.100 million out of county electronic call monitoring, £0.199 million through the implementation of the Adults Technology Strategy and £ 0.087 million through Shared Lives. All of these savings programmes have been impacted by the pandemic. The new EIO service had delays caused by the pandemic and issues with recruiting sufficient numbers of staff to deliver the service. It is now anticipated to be up to capacity by the end of this year and is already beginning to achieve savings. Outcome-based focus is expected to achieve the savings but has been impacted by COVID19 and the cost-of-living crisis. Out of county electronic call monitoring is now being reviewed to consider whether the savings target remains correctly stated and achievable. The others are now expected to achieve savings though are still being delayed due to the cost-of-living crisis. These savings schemes are not expected to adversely impact the 2023/24 budget directly though full achievement of the savings, especially with the EIO, is not expected this year.</p>
<p>Question 19: Cllr Jeremy Hilton</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe</p>
<p>Agenda item 11: Financial Monitoring Report 2022/23</p> <p>It is concerning to see that we have an underspend of £695,000 in our work on prevention within public health at the same time as other budgets in adult social care are overspent. What plans will be put in place to ensure we are maximising our impact on prevention to avoid the need for more major and costly interventions later?</p>	<p>The main reason for the public health underspend is lower activity among our demand led services (including Sexual Health, NHS Health Checks and face to face healthy lifestyle services) as they recover from Covid19 pandemic, and some existing contract costs being lower than anticipated in year. As the public health grant is ring-fenced, the underspend is held in a reserve and is being used to support ongoing in-year recovery from in prevention and community-based services.</p>

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	<p>Any remaining funding will be carried forward to offset inflationary pressures in the forthcoming financial year in the public health budget.</p>
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