

MEMBER QUESTIONS

CABINET MEETING –March 2024

Question 1: Cllr Paul Baker	Respondent: Cllr David Gray
<p>Agenda Item 8: M5 Junction 10 Improvements Scheme - Funding Update</p> <p>Given that costed requests for CIL funding have already been submitted by Cheltenham Borough Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council and Gloucester City Council, for both individual and shared schemes totalling £44m, can the Cabinet Member confirm how realistic it will be to raise the £80m junction 10 funding gap from CIL contributions and what likely impact that may have on the schemes submitted by the districts?</p>	<p>The grant funding for the M5 Junction 10 improvements scheme has been conditional on pursuing a recovery strategy (being an approach to recover funding from the developments which it seeks to support) since negotiating and agreeing the grant agreement during the period March 2020 to October 2020.</p> <p>Conversations and negotiations have been ongoing with developers (and relevant highway and planning authorities) in the North-West and West Cheltenham area since September 2023 to secure the additional funding required through S106 agreements.</p>
Question 2: Cllr Paul Baker	Respondent: Cllr David Gray
<p>Agenda Item 8: M5 Junction 10 Improvements Scheme - Funding Update</p> <p>For a nationally important scheme such as this is there not an opportunity to seeking additional funding from alternative funding sources such as National Highways, Homes England or the various pots that spring up from time to time from central government?</p>	<p>Homes England have confirmed that there is no further grant funding available for the scheme at this time, it is a condition of the current grant agreement that GCC seek to recover funding from dependent developments – a number of which are anticipated to progress to planning committee (requiring agreement on s106) during Summer/Autumn this year.</p> <p>The project team will continue to explore additional funding opportunities to support the delivery of the scheme.</p>

<p>Question 3: Cllr Roger Whyborn</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Philip Robinson</p>
<p>Agenda Item 6: Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) Funding Application</p> <p>I note agreeably that GCC will work with bus operators to seek to introduce bus priority measures on ZEB routes – but only apparently if the bid is successful.</p> <p>Given that GCC is the Highways authority, with bus priority measures in its gift, and that these junction measures are urgently needed on many junctions on the affected routes anyway, shouldn't this be something GCC should be proactively moving forward now with the aim to re-launch slicker - i.e. accelerated timetable - services with electric buses in short order?"</p>	<p>Bus priority is an ambition we have regardless of the Zebra bid, with existing capital funding being used to target key junctions across the network to speed up bus services. Zebra funded electric buses simply strengthen the already strong case for bus priority measures.</p>
<p>Question 4: Cllr Colin Hay</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Stephen Davies</p>
<p>Agenda Item 5: Performance and Risk Monitoring Report 2023/24</p> <p>Can we add High needs placements in Childrens social services at unregistered settings be a corporate risk?</p>	<p>Children's Services will review their entries in the corporate risk register and provide an update to Cllr Hay once completed.</p>
<p>Question 5: Cllr Colin Hay</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10: Schedule of Proposed Disposals</p> <p>How many County residential properties declared surplus are left empty pending the sale or disposal of the land, and how long are they left empty.</p>	<p>This varies depending on the circumstances. A property declared surplus and pending sale is subject to the same requirements and time constraints as any other residential sale; for example, time to advertise and secure a buyer.</p>

	Residential properties that form part of larger infrastructure projects such as road building may take longer due to the complexities of purchasing the property via either a negotiated settlement or as part of a Compulsory Purchase Order, for example.
Question 6: Cllr Roger Whyborn	Respondent: Cllr Philip Robinson
<p>Agenda Item 9: Arle Court Transport Hub Bus Service and Cafe Concessionary Contracts</p> <p>The intention to increase the Transport hub frequency to 15 minutes from November 2024 – with a future aim of 10-12 minutes - is much to be welcomed as a means of ‘kick-starting’ the bus service to the new hub. Is it reasonable to expect that over time this 15 minute service would run reasonably well-loaded, even at off-peak times and therefore become (near to?) a commercial service?</p>	<p>It's fair to assume that, given current and historical use of the Arle Court Park and Ride service, it will be very well used at the traditional working day rush hour times. We also believe a large market for leisure and tourism exists and this can be built upon to increase the revenue taken on the service and justify further improvements to the frequency.</p> <p>The more we invest in and promote this particular service, the greater the chance of commercial viability.</p>
Question 7: Cllr Roger Whyborn	Respondent: Cllr Philip Robinson
<p>Agenda Item 9: Arle Court Transport Hub Bus Service and Cafe Concessionary Contracts</p> <p>Readers need to understand the overall financial risks and consequences, and the effect of the ‘Revenue Guarantee basis’ in the scenarios of: If the fare revenues achieved are better than forecast, who benefits from this? Conversely if revenues do not improve within the initial two-year period quoted, what then happens then, given that the full £650K p.a. is not built into base budget, and could leave considerable unfunded revenue commitments for a future administration?</p>	<p>‘Revenue Guarantee’ means that GCC keeps the fare revenue, which means we hold the risk/reward. If the service is successful the financial benefit is ours and any surplus income will help cover the costs of operating the Transport Hub.</p> <p>The Park and Ride budget has been built using existing fare revenue information, we are not projecting an increase to justify the service frequency increase. The reality is that additional services will almost certainly lead to at least some level of revenue increase. This risk has been mitigated and the service is securely funded.</p>

<p>Question 8: Cllr Roger Whyborn</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Philip Robinson</p>
<p>Agenda Item 9: Arle Court Transport Hub Bus Service and Cafe Concessionary Contracts</p> <p>The principle of a café on site is a welcome one, and as with the nearly Costa/Aldi site, could attract some ‘destination’ business if it is properly conceived. Apart from a set-up cost of £100K, which sounds rather high, to be offset by unknown revenue returns, (the structure of which is not given in the report), what other commitments fall to this council in setting up or maintaining a café on the site? In particular what steps have been taken to de-risk this project?</p>	<p>The council are seeking a concessionaire to fit out, manage and operate the café at Arle Court Transport Hub.</p> <p>The estimated c£100k set up costs are to be funded by the concessionaire, not the council.</p> <p>By requesting a concessionaire to operate the café the council is reducing its exposure to financial risk from the venture.</p> <p>Over the course of the long term concession contract the council anticipates receiving income from the concessionaire.</p>
<p>Question 9: Cllr John Bloxsom</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10: Schedule of Proposed Disposals</p> <p>Why is the identity of the land and buildings included in the exempt schedules not disclosed in the publicly available reports?</p>	<p>There are a number of reasons why the list of disposals remains confidential at the stage when they are added to the schedule including, but not limited to; commercial sensitivities around land and property values, future planning issues, sensitivities associated with current occupiers/staff and adjoining owners. Promotion of land for various schemes or developments can take months or years to develop prior to them being put into the public domain.</p>
<p>Question 10: Cllr John Bloxsom</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10: Schedule of Proposed Disposals</p> <p>What opportunity is there for members of the public to comment upon proposals to dispose of land and buildings before Cabinet approves such proposals?</p>	<p>There is no opportunity at this stage given the commercial, planning and occupation points raised under the Question 9.</p>

<p>Question 11: Cllr John Bloxsom</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10: Schedule of Proposed Disposals</p> <p>As Cabinet is considering the recommendations of the Rural Estates Tak Group and has confirmed that "the rural estate does deliver a multitude of diverse aims and does form part of the councils plans to meet its sustainability goals", why is there a proposal to dispose of such land?</p>	<p>The current Strategic Rural Estate Plan identifies that the estate will be progressively rationalised during the term of the plan. It also recognises that the Rural Estate delivers a multitude of diverse aims and forms part of the council's plans to meet its sustainability goals.</p>
<p>Question 12: Cllr John Bloxsom</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10: Schedule of Proposed Disposals</p> <p>In considering sales to special categories of purchasers referred to the GCC Policy for Disposal of Property: parish and town councils, voluntary/community groups, registered charities , housing associations; what weighting is given to social, economic and environmental benefits of bids rather than simply price to be paid?</p>	<p>Each case is considered on its own merits having made 'One Public Estate' partners aware of the intention to dispose. Assets listed as 'Assets of Community Value' are treated differently, see below (Q 13) for the process applied in these cases.</p>
<p>Question 13: Cllr John Bloxsom</p>	<p>Respondent: Cllr Lynden Stowe</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10: Schedule of Proposed Disposals</p> <p>Where a property to be disposed of is listed as an Asset of Community Value under the Localism Act, how are members of the public consulted by the County Council upon the future use of those assets as opposed to GCC simply engaging parties interested in their acquisition?</p>	<p>A statutory process is followed when disposing of these assets. The disposal is advertised in accordance with this process and a moratorium of six months applied prior to any sale. When the property is advertised and bids requested, a process that considers social and community benefit is provided to all bidders. Bids are assessed in accordance with this process. Any organisation or individual has the opportunity to submit a bid.</p>

