

(6) MEMBER QUESTIONS

Council Procedure Rule 11 - Not more than fifteen minutes allowed for written questions to be put by Members on any matter in relation to which the Council has any power or duties or which affects the District.

Questions have been submitted, and responses provided, as follows:-

(1) From Councillor PR Hodgkinson to Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council

'In July 2011 this Council voted by 41 to 2 votes to move to one member wards across the whole district as part of a cut in councillor numbers. You proposed a motion calling for all wards to have one member and voted for this proposal.

Why have you ignored the Council's decision by recommending a two-member ward for Chipping Campden as part of the Conservative group's proposal to the Boundary Commission?'

Response from Councillor Stowe

'The proposals put forward by the Conservative Group did not represent an ignorance of the Council's decision or a disregard of it - but a pragmatic approach in seeking a solution that met insofar as possible the agreed Council aim whilst balanced against the statutory criteria to be applied by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in terms of (i) elector equality; (ii) reflecting community identities; and (iii) providing for effective and convenient government.

Our starting point was, indeed, to devise a scheme which satisfied all of those criteria and provided for a uniform pattern of single-member wards. We were also mindful of the tolerances that could be applied with regard to elector equality figures across any proposed new wards, i.e. that these should, ideally, not exceed 10%. However, as I am sure that you and your own group will have found, this was not an easy task, particularly in respect of our major towns and, also, in those areas which abut our District boundary where options are more limited. Indeed, due to the difficulties faced, our final proposals even provided for a pattern of wards which would have 34 members, rather than the Commission's consultation figure of 35 - a conclusion which was also reached by your group.

We explored a number of options for this part of the District.

While Chipping Campden could have stood as a single-member ward in its own right, the combined electorate of the remaining parishes would exceed the single-member ward 10% threshold figure quite significantly, by 275 or some 13 % (i.e. 23% over the average). Whilst our proposals did contain wards with electorates outside the threshold figures, none were to the extent as would have been the case here.

Similarly, whilst a combination of Mickleton and adjoining Ebrington would 'work', there was no natural solution for the remaining Vale parishes other than by way of a forced combination with part of

Chipping Campden which, in itself, would have led to an artificial parish warding and consequent negative effects on neighbouring parishes, and the scheme as a whole.

The more rural parishes have natural synergies and strong community links and, together, form the southern limit of the Vale which lies between the Cotswolds and Evesham. All parishes are accessed by the B4362, which runs through the proposed ward. In addition, they all have close, strong and long-standing ties with Chipping Campden.

As such, we asked the Commission to accept this proposed ward as a one-off exception to the single-member ward principle. We believed that such a solution would be supported locally, and was the most appropriate manner in which to meet all of the review criteria in this part of the District.

However, if the introduction of a two-member ward is not acceptable to the Commission, we put forward a single-member ward alternative, which mirrored the proposal from your group.

In so doing, we were also mindful that the Commission had proposed a similar arrangement in another of its reviews, with one two-member ward in an otherwise single-member ward scheme.

Whilst we would have preferred to achieve uniformity across the District, this was not considered possible. It is also clear that the Commission would not have accepted such a high level of elector inequality - indeed, it was not even supportive of an agreed approach in respect of Lechlade which provided for an electorate figure of 15% above the average, preferring instead to sub-divide Lechlade Parish.'

(2) From Councillor PR Hodgkinson to Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council

'At the last Council meeting you stated that 'Cirencester needs to get its confidence back'. Given that a third of Cotswolds residents live, work and shop in the town, what justification can you make for this statement?'

Response from Councillor Stowe

'You have taken the phrase out of context. The context is properly reported in Minute CL.64 on page 88 of today's agenda papers.'

(3) From Councillor JA Harris to Councillor BD Gibbs, Cabinet Member for Customer Services

'Can you please tell me the total income received from car parking charges and the total spent on car parking related services and costs in each financial year from 2003 to the present day?'

Response from Councillor Gibbs

'Time doesn't permit officers to retrieve figures from the archives back to 2003, but we are able to give you figures from 2006, a span long enough to give a comprehensive picture of this activity.'

Period	Income £000's	Expenditure £000s
2006/7	1805	660
2007/8	1809	687
2008/9	1990	744
2009/10	2140	759
2010/11	2263	758
2011/12	2338	820
2012/13	2289	817

We do not yet have the ratified end of year figures for 2013/14.

You will see that the ratio of surplus to income has remained constant throughout that period.

Figures do not include capital items amounting to some £85,000 and we have planned expenditure for replacing and re-signing all Pay & Display with solar and card enabled system as at the Brewery, re-designing the Forum car park, followed by similar re-designs on all other Cirencester car parks.'

(4) From Councillor JA Harris to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

'Cllr Parsons, many residents in Cirencester have said to me that they have heard nothing from Cotswold District Council about the plans for over 2000 homes on the land south of Chesterton. What is the Council doing to raise awareness and engage with local residents about this issue?'

Response from Councillor Parsons

'The Chesterton site was included in the Core Strategy Second Issues and Options consultation that ran for 3 months Dec 2010 to March 2011. This consultation was accompanied by 10 public exhibitions and 10 evening meetings and workshops held across the District. The consultation and events were advertised in local newspapers and posters were distributed to all Town and Parish Councils.

The Local Plan has featured heavily in the Council's Cotswold News, distributed to every household in the District, with instructions on how to get involved.

The Council published the Cotswold District Preferred Development Strategy for public consultation last year and it attracted well over 2,000 comments. The site south of Chesterton was identified as a key component in helping to deliver the objectively assessed housing needs for the District to the year 2031. A number of engagement events accompanied the launch of the Strategy, a couple of which were held in Chesterton.

Comments and responses to those comments are available on-line at:

http://consult.cotswold.gov.uk/portal/fp/local_plan_2011-2031/development_strategy

A leaflet and map relating to Chesterton was published and circulated and remains available here:

<http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/346512/future-growth-in-cirencester-leaflet.pdf>

The Timetable for the emerging Local Plan is available here:

<http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/residents/planning-building/planning-policy/emerging-local-plan/#>

A Briefing Note was circulated to all Members on 2nd April 2014, and I hope that Members, as community leaders, have forwarded the Note within their communities as they deemed appropriate.

The next stage of the process will be the publication of the full draft Local Plan, which will have taken into account representations received on the Preferred Strategy. The draft Local Plan is expected to be available for consultation in the autumn of 2014.

A community planning event is taking place on 9th and 10th May 2014, which has been organised and advertised by JTP on behalf of the Chesterton site's owners. Also Notices for this event were circulated to all Members and, again, I hope that Members have forwarded the Notices within their communities.'

(5) From Councillor GM Selwyn to Councillor BD Gibbs, Cabinet Member for Customer Services

'In the car parks in Cirencester which are free on Sundays, the pay machines will still accept money even if paid in error. How much money, for each car park, is paid into these machines unnecessarily on a Sunday?'

Response from Councillor Gibbs

'Parking Machines are programmed to allow payments to be made in the evenings to cover the following day - for example buying 2 hours at 7pm will produce a ticket for the next day up to 10am (charges start at 8am). This facility is used by residents who live in town and those on a night out who want to get a taxi home and return the following morning. As the charges start at 8am many people want the flexibility to choose what time the following morning they need to return to the car. In order to allow for the above, the machines are programmed for the clock to go straight from 6pm to 8 am. Any payments made after 6pm show as being paid at 8am. Paying after 6pm on a Saturday will show as 8am the following Monday morning.

It is therefore not possible to distinguish between a person who has parked and paid Saturday after 6pm, Sunday or parked and paid on Monday at 8am.

Above every machine, the times for which parking fees apply are clearly marked.'

(6) From Councillor PR Hodgkinson to Councillor BD Gibbs, Cabinet Member for Customer Services

'The latest visitor numbers for the excellent Corinium Museum show that since it has been run by a private company the number of people visiting it has fallen for 2 successive quarters. What are you doing to reverse this very worrying trend?'

Response from Councillor Gibbs

'As with most museums, footfall is affected by weather. The comparison between the two quarters you refer to, is that, in 2012 we were in the middle of a particularly wet summer, which pushed up visitor numbers, whereas, conversely, last year, we enjoyed a good summer and autumn which reduced footfall.

The 4th quarter of this last financial year showed an increase of 9% over the third quarter. For the full year, the museum achieved a footfall of 40,096, down some 5,000 against the previous year for the reasons I have outlined, but still ahead of the 40,000 target that SLM had identified in the first year of their operation.

We have regular meetings with SLM over performance and I have been impressed by their immediate attention to any area, which fails to meet their footfall targets.'

(7) From Councillor Ms JM Layton to Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council

'Since I was elected to this Council 3 years ago a regular gripe amongst residents is how breaches in planning applications are enforced. People see these breaches as wrong and it leaves them and me very frustrated at the lack of willingness to deal robustly with these situations. Does the Leader share their view and what is he going to do to address the real concerns people have?'

Response from Councillor Stowe

'The issue of planning enforcement has been the subject of various debates in recent years. Indeed, following a review of the service in 2012, a temporary Planning and Enforcement Officer was appointed, and this post has now been made permanent.

Regulatory authorities are required to produce Enforcement Policies to inform the public and businesses about the principles which underpin their approach to enforcement and, in late 2012, the Cabinet approved a framework and over-arching policy for the following service areas:

- Public Protection;
- Development Control;
- Environmental Services;
- Benefits and Fraud.

The Enforcement Policy, which took effect on 1st January 2013 and is subject to review every three years, sets out the enforcement principles that the Council will apply to its enforcement activities. A separate, but complementary, Enforcement Plan has been produced for Development Control, setting out more detailed relevant service-specific procedures and a prioritisation methodology. These documents are available on the Council's website.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing is of the view that the Council does take a robust approach to planning enforcement. Although the Council largely relies on information received from Ward Members, Town and Parish Councils and the public in respect of enforcement issues, it is felt that this system works well and provides a realistic approach, particularly as evidence suggests that no breaches are identified in approximately 60% of enforcement cases. However, I would encourage people to notify officers of any suspected enforcement breaches.'

Notes:

- (i) If any Member who has submitted a question is present at the Meeting, he/she will be entitled to ask one supplementary question arising directly out of either the answer given or his/her original question.
- (ii) The Member to whom any supplementary question is addressed will try and answer any supplementary question at the Meeting; but if this is not possible, then the Member will answer as much as possible at the Meeting and then provide a full response within five working days. If, for any reason, a full response cannot be provided within those five days, then a holding response will be sent to the questioner, along with the reason for delay and a likely timescale for the full response.

(END)