

Public Questions

QUESTION 1a from Mrs Heaven, to the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Transformation	
Question (Oral)	Response (Oral)
<p>Mrs Haven stated that since 2019 car parking charges had been increased by 40% and yet now, 3 months before an election, you have frozen car parking charges.</p> <p>For how long are you intending to freeze car parking charges and does it include season ticket holders, or is this just a ploy?</p>	<p>The Cabinet Member for the Economy and Transformation stated that the 40% figure was not recognised by himself, the Chief Finance Officer or the Cabinet Member for Finance and indicated it was significantly less than this. The cost of living crisis had also been recognised by the Liberal Democrat Administration and the decision to freeze car parking charges was made to help with this. The period of the freeze would be determined after the next election, and the decision regarding Season Tickets was addressed in the Budget Debate.</p>
QUESTION 1b from Mrs Heaven, to the Leader of the Council	
Question (Oral)	Response (Oral)
<p>Mrs Heaven stated that following a 25% increase in members' allowances in 2019, when the Liberal Democrats took control, and seeing you get an allowance from Cotswold District Council, your role as Leader, the County Council, and the LGA.</p> <p>Would you please tell me the total amount of allowances you draw from the public purse, as these public funds are funded by taxpayers?</p>	<p>The Leader of the Council stated that all of his allowances were a matter of public record and were all available online. It was also stated that Cotswold District Council was proposing to freeze its members' allowances for the following year at a time that (for instance) Gloucestershire County Council had voted to increase theirs.</p>

QUESTION 2a from Mr Fowles to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Question (Oral)

Mr Fowles stated that, after wasting £2.8m on restructuring the management structure, pointless consultation and the like, **How can you justify allocating £300,000 to handle the Leisure Centre and Museum tenders this year (and outside of this meeting provide a breakdown)?**

Response (Oral)

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance stated that the Council had not wasted £2.8m. This figure appeared to be made up, and Mr Fowles had implied that everything that had been spent on the Local Plan had been a waste of money, the car park that Mr Fowles had voted for as a Councillor had been a waste of money and everything the current Administration had spent its money on had been a waste of money. The Deputy Leader stated he did not agree with any of these assertions and stated that the funding provision for the Leisure and Museum Tendering process was included within the Council Budget which was being debated later.

QUESTION 2b from Mr Fowles to the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Transformation

Question 2 (Oral)

Mr Fowles stated that at the March 2022 Council meeting, Conservative Councillor Julia Judd had asked why Cotswold District Council had not put forward a bid for the first and second rounds of the Government's £4.8 billion levelling up fund, which resulted in £52.8m being awarded to Gloucestershire but not to the Cotswolds. **Why didn't we apply, and how can you claim credit for the £1m recently awarded which should really go to Councillor Judd and the Conservative Government?**

Response 2 (Oral)

The Cabinet Member for the Economy and Transformation stated that rules around bidding for rounds one and two of the Government funding indicated that, at that time, there were no projects within the Cotswolds that would have qualified for the funding. The current round of bidding for funds from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund delivered £1m following the extraordinary efforts of two officers who managed to submit a bid in a very short timescale.

QUESTION 3a from Mr Corps to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

Question (Oral)	Response (Oral)												
<p>Mr Corps stated that the cost of press and PR for 2022/23 was £76,200 and had been budgeted to be £61,700</p> <p>Could you provide a full breakdown of where the money is being allocated and spent across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, Wilshire and Gloucestershire next door</p>	<p>The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services stated that a full breakdown was not available, but would be prepared and sent to Mr Corps. It was confirmed that over the past two years, the Council had raised its profile and reached out to residents across the Cotswolds following recommendation from the LGA Peer Review conducted in 2019.</p>												
	Response (Written)												
	<p>Dear Mr Corps,</p> <p>At last week's Council meeting you asked a question about the use of the budget for press/PR. The Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources has provided the following response:</p> <p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>The two figures quoted in your question include a range of spend not associated with press/ PR activities such as license fees for software and some of our staffing costs. The CDC Communications and Marketing Team has an annual budget of £8,000 to spend on comms activities which is not allocated at the start of the year and is spent based on the requirements of communications activity as it arises. This would include spend on social media platforms, with media, etc. along with design work and other costs associated with producing our communications. We have a strategic plan which sets out our areas of focus for the coming year but spend is only allocated as detailed plans are developed for each project and/or any reactive work comes in such as emergency response. For the 22/23 budget year we have so far spent money on the following platforms (please note we have not yet had all the bills through and activity has finished for this financial year):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facebook/ Instagram (both Meta and managed through the same platform) – £785.25 - Google advertising - £177.58 - LinkedIn - £100 - Local papers/media – we have not spent anything in the corporate communications team on adverts in local papers, however, some services may have done so for statutory notices. To show the breakdown of the £76k figure: <table border="1" data-bbox="699 1877 1383 2027"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">2022/23 Budget</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>Photography & Promotional Materials/Design</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>IT - Licences</td> </tr> <tr> <td>64</td> <td>Employees</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Capital charges</td> </tr> <tr> <td>76</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2022/23 Budget		8	Photography & Promotional Materials/Design	3	IT - Licences	64	Employees	1	Capital charges	76	
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	For the 23/24 budget we cannot say how this spend will be broken down at this stage. However, we do have the same £8k to spend on communications activity. I hope this answers your question With best wishes, Andrew
QUESTION 3b from Mr Corps to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance	
Question 2 (Oral)	Response 2 (Oral)
Mr Corps stated that last year Cotswold District Council had lent £7,970 to employees for cars and were budgeted to lend a further £10,000 over the coming financial year. Why is public money being spent on this and can I ask to whom in particular?	The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance stated that car loans were a common and popular benefit that were offered by employers to their staff and although personal details could not be provided, a summary of the approach taken by the Council would be provided in writing.
	Response 2 (Written)
	Dear Mr Corps I have been asked to send the follow-up response to you regarding the question you presented to Councillor Mike Every at the last meeting of Full Council on 15 th February regarding information around the car loan scheme. Please find the following response as set out below: <i>Car Loan Scheme</i> <i>Annex F: Appendix 2 of the Budget papers considered by Council on 15 February 2023</i> <i>Annual Non-Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24</i> <i>Table 1 sets out the loans the Council has made in previous years and sets out the remaining balances owed, loss allowance and an approved limit for the 2023/24 financial year.</i> <i>One of the items in this table is for Employees (car loans) and showed a balance owing at 31/03/2022 of £7,970 and an authorised limit of £10,000 (which is set at a level to limit risk). This scheme is now closed.</i> Car Loans were provided to employees who were able to meet the criteria and subject to an approval process. The loans are repaid through salary deductions. At the time of writing only 2 loans remain outstanding with salary deductions in place. The Council, through Publica, provides a car benefit scheme to enable employees to lease a new electric or hybrid vehicle. This is a salary sacrifice scheme operated by NHS Fleet Solutions for public sector employees Kind regards, Caleb Harris

QUESTION 4a from Mr Gibson to the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Recycling	
Question (Oral)	Response (Oral)

<p>Mr Gibson stated that Ubico have increased the garden waste collection cost by 16%, revenue was going to increase by 18.4%, but the public were being asked to pay 21.3% increase. My calculation is that the public are being financially penalised when the service level has been reducing in 2022 during the cold spell and other service providers have maintained their service levels with no financial rebates to bin subscribers.</p> <p>The service is meant to be run on a cost neutral basis and the increase to the public has been charged in the budget is excessive.</p>	<p>The Cabinet Member for the Environment and Recycling stated that the charging basis was changed to make it cost neutral at a cost of £45 when the administration originally took over. Since then inflation and costs have been incurred. Bearing in mind the additional charges are subsidising the much expanded Council Tax support scheme that now enable larger numbers of residents to have half priced bins. Although Ubico have put the costs up, the service is still run on a cost neutral basis.</p>
<p>QUESTION 4b from Mr Gibson to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</p>	
<p>Question 2 (Oral)</p>	<p>Response 2 (Oral)</p>
<p>Mr Gibson stated that Cotswold District Council owns 12.5% of Ubico and 25% of Publica. All contributions made by Cotswold District Council should be made in proportion to the shareholding in Ubico and Publica. CDC is allocating £1.64m to the financing of vehicles with Ubico and a total of £170,000 or 26% increase in diesel, even when the cost of diesel is dropping daily. If you scale this up, in the next financial year they will be spending £13.2m on vehicles and an additional £1.36m on diesel.</p> <p>Can you please justify these extra costs, as £13m would replace a whole fleet of vehicles and when the price of diesel is dropping it doesn't make sense to make an increase of this proportion?</p>	<p>The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance stated that Mr Gibson had erroneously stated that, because CDC owned 12.5% (1/8th) of Ubico, they carried 1/8th of the costs (£1.64m). This was NOT how the Ubico contract worked. Ubico worked for their eight partner councils and the work that they delivered (apart from Senior Management/back office costs), was all directed to each Council according to the service that has been asked for. If CDC wanted vehicles, CDC will buy and retain ownership of vehicles. It is not a case that CDC own 1/8th of Ubico vehicles. With Publica, three of the 4 councils have most of their staff within Publica, and one has much less. Therefore each Council does NOT pay 1/4 of the costs.</p>