

## Member Questions for Council – 24 January 2024

Question	Response
<p data-bbox="91 352 1041 427"><b>Question 1 from Councillor Len Wilkins to Councillor Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability</b></p> <p data-bbox="91 459 1041 643">How many of the planned EV charging points have Cotswold District Council now installed across the district? What impact have inflationary pressures, energy costs and other economic factors had on the business case, first put to Cabinet in March 2022, for the installation of these EV chargers?</p>	<p data-bbox="1099 352 1973 387">As an EV driver myself this is a subject near and dear to my heart!</p> <p data-bbox="1099 419 2145 906">The first phase of planned EV installations included replacement of old EVCP units at Beeches car park, Cirencester and Old Market Way car park, Moreton in Marsh. These were completed in 2022. New units were also planned for Rissington Road car park, Bourton on the Water and Trinity Road, Cirencester. Each site will have 4 charging units giving the ability to charge 8 vehicles at one time. The below ground civil engineering works to install cabling for the EVCPs at Rissington Road was undertaken last year as part of the wider car park improvement works. The below ground cabling was installed at Trinity Road in December. For both these projects we are now waiting on a connection date from SSEN. Overall, we are disappointed in the delays due to the contractor, Connected Kerb. They are also the contractor for Gloucestershire County Council’s EVCP program and there are ongoing discussions about their performance.</p> <p data-bbox="1099 938 2145 1050">We are also progressing grant applications to seek funding for additional car park sites to support our plans to provide a wider charging infrastructure across the Cotswolds and encourage electric vehicle ownership.</p> <p data-bbox="1099 1082 2145 1225">The replacement units were installed as per quoted prices in 2022. The new units at Rissington Road and Trinity Road have actually reduced in cost since the original Cabinet report was considered as a new supplier was appointed who provided a better price.</p> <p data-bbox="1099 1257 2145 1417">Energy costs have an impact on the price charged to the customer, as the Council needs to pass on rising electricity costs. A model for the fee calculation was agreed by Cabinet which means the price to the customer can be changed to reflect changes in the costs of providing the service.</p>

<p><b>Supplementary from Councillor Len Wilkins to Councillor Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability</b></p> <p>Councillor Wilkins raised the delays to the installation of the EVCPs in some of the car parks in the District and the concerns of some residents regarding cones blocking the bays from being used. It was asked whether there was any cost from the bays being out of use from the delays, and if these could be recovered from the installer?</p>	<p>Councillor McKeown stated that a written response would be needed from officers regarding specifics on costs.</p> <p><b>Written response:</b></p> <p>The bays were coned off just before Christmas as works were planned to the Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs) however there have been some delays. This has not been through a period of high demand for this car park, so it is very unlikely any income has been lost. The cones have now been removed and will be reinstated when a new connection date is confirmed by the installer.</p>
<p><b>Question 2 from Councillor Tom Stowe to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council</b></p> <p>Please could you confirm the current expected lead time for the repair or replacement of street signs?</p>	<p>Pride in Place is really important to this administration and therefore we have been replacing street signs that are in a poor condition. We are planning a further tranche of replacements but need to ensure we balance the benefits these street sign improvements provide with the costs, when we are faced with managing a challenging budget position. We are in the process of agreeing which street signs will be prioritised in the next round of replacements and I will then provide an update on timescales for this work.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary from Councillor Tom Stowe to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</b></p> <p>As Councillor Joe Harris had given apologies, Councillor Stowe asked a supplementary response to Councillor Mike Evemy as Deputy Leader regarding issues with replacement street signs. It was raised that there had been delays to the installation of a new 'Sheep Street' sign and the addition of no through road signs to The Leasows in Chipping Campden</p>	<p>Councillor Evemy stated that the work done to replace street signs is done when there were resources to do that. However, it was recognised that the delay example given by Councillor Stowe was not acceptable, and that this would be followed up with officers.</p> <p><b>Written response:</b></p> <p>Following your supplementary question, we have raised the issue with Ubico. We have been assured that the Sheep Street sign for Chipping Campden was ordered and will be installed no later than Friday 02 February 2024. 'No through road signs' are managed by Highways at Gloucestershire County Council.</p>
<p><b>Question 3 from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Mike Evemy,</b></p>	<p>A project to review holiday homes which are registered for non-domestic</p>

## Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

There is a great deal of concern across the Cotswold District about the ever-increasing number of second homes and properties which are let out as holiday homes both of which decrease the supply of housing available for would be residents. The ONS states that 8% of properties in the Cotswolds are vacant.

An additional issue is holiday homes which are registered as businesses which do not have to pay council tax and fall below the threshold for paying business rates and yet their domestic bins are collected along with everyone else's.

The popularity of the Cotswolds as a place to have a weekend retreat or its attraction as a tourist destination is mirrored in places such as the Lake District and whilst it brings prosperity, which is valuable to the local economy, it would be good to have greater control of these type of tenures and also capture more financial benefit for the District Council.

As a start, what avenues has this Council explored to advise property owners who rent out properties as holiday homes registered as a business that they should pay a commercial waste charge as happens in Salcombe; doubling council tax on second homes as is proposed in Whitby and Swanage and also a doubling of council tax on properties which have been vacant over a year?

rates and receive a domestic waste collection service has been commissioned as part of the Environmental Services Innovation Programme (ESIP). A discovery to assess the number of business premises and scale will start in April and is scheduled to be completed in June. Options will then be presented to Members for consideration.

The Government reviewed the eligibility criteria for second homes that have been subject to Business Rates rather than Council Tax. From April 2023, second homeowners have to prove holiday lets are being rented out for a minimum of 70 days a year to access small business rates relief, where they meet the criteria. Holiday let owners will have to provide evidence such as the website or brochure used to advertise the property, letting details and receipts. Properties will also have to be available to be rented out for 140 days a year to qualify for this relief.

As far as Council Tax is concerned, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, passed into law in October 2023, would allow Councils to charge a council tax premium on second homes of up to an additional 100%, and also allows a premium to be charged on homes that remain empty after one year (rather than the current minimum two-year period).

The Council would need to provide 12 month's notice of its intention to charge a premium on second homes. A report will come forward to Cabinet and Council in March 2024 outlining the administration's proposals on Council Tax premiums, although we are still waiting for detailed guidance from the Government on exactly which properties would be eligible.

I understand that a number of the Gloucestershire Districts have indicated they intend to charge a premium on second homes from April 2025.

<p><b>*Question 4 from Councillor Chris Twells to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</b></p> <p>It is reported that fraud and the misuse of public money cost taxpayers in the Cotswold District tens of thousands of pounds every year.</p> <p>Will the Deputy Leader confirm the number of investigations begun by the Counter Fraud &amp; Enforcement Unit since 31 December 2022, broken down in terms of investigations into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Members of the District Council</li> <li>b) Members of Town or Parish Councils</li> <li>c) Council employees, including contractors and agency staff</li> <li>d) All other investigations.</li> </ul> <p><i>*Question received after publication of the agenda and for the deadline for a guaranteed written response under Rule 11.10 of the Council Procedure Rules</i></p>	<p>This information is all available in the public domain.</p> <p>The reports to Audit and Governance Committee give a clear breakdown in relation to the number of cases, referrals and outcomes.</p> <p>For the period in question please refer to reports presented on <a href="#">27 April 2023</a> and <a href="#">30 November 2023</a>.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary from Councillor Chris Twells to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</b></p> <p>Councillor Twells stated that the answer he was seeking was not within the papers given in the written response. It was stated that the specific issue was raised at an Audit and Governance Committee meeting and no response was provided in the meeting. However it was confirmed by the Monitoring Officer privately that the issue did not relate to a Tetbury Town Councillor. Councillor Twells asked whether the specific fraud investigation was relating to an employee of the council or a Town/Parish</p>	<p>Councillor Evemy stated he would give a written response.</p> <p><b>Written response:</b></p> <p>Cllr Twells, thank you for your supplementary question, my apologies for the delay in responding.</p> <p>Following a discussion with the Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer), I understand that the investigation related to the conduct of an employee and has concluded.</p>

<p>Councillor.</p>	<p>As a reminder, Members do not get involved in employment issues relating to individual Officers other than in relation to the statutory officers.</p>
<p><b>*Question 5 from Councillor Chris Twells to Councillor Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation</b></p> <p>Residents of West Street and Cottons Lane in Tetbury regularly raise the concern that, despite having purchased annual parking permits, they are often unable to park in West Street car park.</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member accept my invitation to visit Tetbury to speak to residents about how we balance the needs of visitors and residents in car parks such as West Street? Any visit would, of course, have to be after the triple Town Council by-election on Super Thursday (15 February).</p> <p><i>*Question received after publication of the agenda and the deadline for a guaranteed written response under Rule 11.10 of the Council Procedure Rules</i></p>	<p>We note residents' concerns and parking challenges which are raised by Members across the District. We are currently undertaking a review of all Cotswold District Council car parks and the consultation on this is currently live. We would welcome yours and your resident's feedback through this channel in order to help shape the future of parking services.</p> <p>We have planned walkabouts with Town and Parish Councils including Tetbury, scheduled for August and we would welcome Councillors to join us on this to highlight any issues of concern, or potential improvements. The invitation this has been sent to Town and Parish clerks.</p> <p>All Season Tickets are provided with the caveat that this does not guarantee the permit holder a space, however Tetbury does have a free long stay car park at the Rail Yard which residents could also use.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary from Councillor Chris Twells to Councillor Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation</b></p> <p>Councillor Twells stated he would encourage residents to take part in the review. It was noted that West Street in Tetbury had seen residents cars severely damaged and blocking access along the road. Councillor Twells asked if Councillor Dale would discuss this issue offline?</p>	<p>Councillor Dale thanked Councillor Twells for raising the specific issue and noted that officers were aware of this problem. It was noted that the wider challenges and concerns were being considered by the Council in balancing the visitor economy and the needs of local residents. It was noted that the consultation would take into account all needs and reiterated the importance of participation in the consultation.</p>