

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Council held remotely on
Tuesday, 29 September 2020 commencing at 6:30 pm**

Present:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Deputy Mayor

Councillor G F Blackwell
Councillor A S Reece

and Councillors:

R A Bird, G J Bocking, C L J Carter, C M Cody, K J Cromwell, M Dean, R D East, L A Gerrard, P A Godwin, M A Gore, D W Gray, D J Harwood, M L Jordan, E J MacTiernan, J R Mason, H C McLain, P D McLain, H S Munro, J W Murphy, P W Ockelton, C Reid, J K Smith, P E Smith, R J G Smith, V D Smith, C Softley, R J Stanley, S A T Stevens, P D Surman, M G Szymiak, S Thomson, R J E Vines, M J Williams and P N Workman

CL.21 ANNOUNCEMENTS

21.1 The Mayor advised that the meeting was being held under the emergency provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and, specifically, The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. The meeting was being broadcast live via the internet, it was not being recorded by the Council but, under the usual transparency rules, it may be being recorded by others.

CL.22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

22.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J H Evetts and A Hollaway.

CL.23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

23.1 The Committee's attention was drawn to the Tewkesbury Borough Council Code of Conduct which was adopted by the Council on 26 June 2012 and took effect from 1 July 2012.

23.2 The following declarations were made:

Councillor	Application No./Item	Nature of Interest (where disclosed)	Declared Action in respect of Disclosure
R D East	Item 6 – Member Questions Properly Submitted in Accordance with Council Procedure Rules.	Is a Council representative on the Board of Cleeve Common Conservators.	Would speak and vote.

C Reid	Item 10d – Notice of Motion – Invitation to Gloucestershire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to Present its Latest Proposals for Cheltenham A&E.	Is an employee of the NHS but her position was not affected by the decision on the Motion.	Would speak and vote.
C Softley	Item 7a – Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Discounts 2021/22.	Declaration made in accordance with Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.	Would not speak or vote and would leave the meeting for the consideration of this item.
S A T Stevens	Item 7a - Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Discounts 2021/22.	Declaration made in accordance with Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.	Would not speak or vote and would leave the meeting for the consideration of this item.

23.3 There were no further declarations made on this occasion.

CL.24 MINUTES

24.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2020, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record subject to an amendment to the attendance to include a number of Members who were missing.

CL.25 ITEMS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

25.1 There were no items from members of the public.

CL.26 MEMBER QUESTIONS PROPERLY SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

26.1 The following questions had been received from Councillor Stanley to the Lead Member for Built Environment. The answers were given by the Lead Member for Built Environment, Councillor Gore, but were taken as read without discussion.

Update on the primary schools

On 26 January 2020 Council resolved that:

1. the Council confirms its continued support for the provision of adequate school places across Tewkesbury Borough, noting the County Council's own policy that any such primary schools should be within walking distance of most of the new developments.

2. the Council works with the County Council, and any other interested party, to find a solution that works for everyone.

Question 1:

What is the latest update from Gloucestershire County Council on the school for the north of Bishop's Cleeve?

Answer 1:

The County Council has advised that work is still ongoing in relation to identifying a location and land for the new school.

Section 106 Infrastructure

Tewkesbury Borough has seen substantial housing growth over recent years with further large development expected in the future. Developer Section 106 commitments are an essential part of ensuring that the local infrastructure needs of our residents are met and where these commitments are overdue, it is the Borough which is responsible for enforcement.

As a ward Councillor, I have been seeking details of all Section 106 Agreements in Bishop's Cleeve where commitment trigger points have passed, and the agreements are outstanding.

Question 1:

What Section 106 Agreements are outstanding in Bishop's Cleeve?

Answer 1:

In Bishop's Cleeve there are both financial and non-financial obligations that are due now and into the future. The table below provides an indication of the outstanding S106 Agreements for the Bishop's Cleeve area relating to the S106 Agreements that the Borough Council has entered into. Most of the obligations below are not due yet, as the trigger point has not been met.

In addition, there are also Gloucestershire County Council S106 planning obligations as part of Bishop's Cleeve developments, such as highway mitigation, education and library contributions. The County Council currently negotiates S106 Agreements independently of the Borough Council for their elements, which they also enter into separate legal agreements. As a result, the Borough Council does not currently monitor the County Council S106 Agreements. A full list has been requested from the County Council and can be provided to Members once it has been received. Working in partnership with the County Council, Officers are commencing discussions on how the S106 process can be improved.

Financial Contributions

App No	Address	Obligation	Amount	Status
10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	Contribution to Bowls	£1,596.90	Not due until Community Building is handed over
10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane,	"LEAP" means a 'local equipped	-	Not due or determined yet - if management company then no

	Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	area for play' commuted Sum (maintenance fee)		commuted sum
10/01216/OUT	Cleavelands, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve	"MUGA Maintenance Commuted Sum" (maintenance fee) means the sum of £16,421 (sixteen thousand four hundred and twenty one pounds)	-	Not due or determined yet - if management company then no commuted sum.
10/01216/OUT	Cleavelands, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve	"Sports Equipment Contribution"	£10,000.00	Linked with the Community Building.
10/01216/OUT	Cleavelands, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve	Three LEAP maintenance commuted sums of £33,512 x 3 instalments	-	Not due or determined yet - if management company then no commuted sum
18/00249/OUT	Land At Stoke Road, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 7DG	the Recycling and Waste Bins Contribution' means the sum of £73 (seventy three pounds) per Dwelling payable towards the costs	-	Obligations not due yet, development not started.
18/00249/OUT	Land At Stoke Road, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 7DG	Pitches Contribution' payable towards costs of the provision of off-site playing pitches & changing facilities at Cheltenham North RFC	£80,000.00	Obligations not due yet, development not started

14/01233/FUL	Part Parcel 7346, Evesham Road, Millham House	Dog Bins	£322.00	Obligations not due yet, development not started
14/01233/FUL	Part Parcel 7346, Evesham Road, Millham House	Off-site sports facilities	£43,513.00	Obligations not due yet, development not started
14/01233/FUL	Part Parcel 7346, Evesham Road, Millham House	Off-site play facilities	£19,994.00	Obligations not due yet, development not started
14/01233/FUL	Part Parcel 7346, Evesham Road, Millham House	Indoor sports	£11,321.00	Obligations not due yet, development not started
14/01233/FUL	Part Parcel 7346, Evesham Road, Millham House	Recycling	£1,300.00	Obligations not due yet, development not started
17/00449/OUT	Local Centre Plots 7 And 8	Still being uploaded + DOV	-	Deed of Variation still in progress

Non-Financial Contributions

AH = Affordable Housing

POS = Public Open Space

LEAP = Local Equipped Area for Play

MUGA = Multi-Use Games Area

App No	Address	Obligation Type
07/00448/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve	AH - Units On Site
07/00448/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve	POS - Commuted Sum
07/00448/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve	POS - Transfer of Land
10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	Highways - S106 Provided On Site
10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	AH - Units On Site
10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	Ecology/Wildlife - S106 On Site Provision

10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	POS - S106 Provided On Site
10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	POS - Transfer of Land
10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	Allotments - S106 Provided On Site Pitches & Changing Rooms - S106 Provided On Site
10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	POS MUGA - S106 Provided On Site
10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	POS LEAP - S106 Provided On Site
10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	POS LEAP - S106 Provided On Site
10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	POS LEAP - S106 Provided On Site
10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	S106 Miscellaneous - Youth Shelter Community Centre - to be provided on site – discussions ongoing
10/01005/OUT	Homelands Farm, Gotherington Lane, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 8EN	
15/01177/FUL	Adjacent, 74 Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire	AH - Units On Site
15/01177/FUL	Adjacent, 74 Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire	POS - S106 Provided On Site
15/01177/FUL	Adjacent, 74 Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire	Play Facilities - S106 Provided On Site
15/01177/FUL	Adjacent, 74 Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire	POS - Transfer of Land
10/01216/OUT	Cleavelands, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve	AH - Units On Site
10/01216/OUT	Cleavelands, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve	POS - S106 Provided On Site
10/01216/OUT	Cleavelands, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve	POS LEAP - S106 Provided On Site
10/01216/OUT	Cleavelands, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve	POS LEAP - S106 Provided On Site
10/01216/OUT	Cleavelands, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve	POS LEAP - S106 Provided On Site
10/01216/OUT	Cleavelands, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve	POS MUGA - S106 Provided On Site
10/01216/OUT	Cleavelands, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve	Pitches &

	Bishop's Cleeve	Changing Rooms - S106 Provided On Site Community Centre – to be provided on site – discussions ongoing
10/01216/OUT	Cleavelands, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve	Smart Water - S106 Provision
10/01216/OUT	Cleavelands, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve	Ecology/Wildlife - S106 On Site Provision
10/01216/OUT	Cleavelands, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve	
18/00249/OUT	Land At Stoke Road, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 7DG	AH - Units On Site
18/00249/OUT	Land At Stoke Road, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 7DG	POS- S106 Provided On Site
18/00249/OUT	Land At Stoke Road, Bishop's Cleeve, GL52 7DG	Play Facilities - S106 Provided On Site
18/00249/OUT	Part Parcel 7346, Millham House, Evesham Road, Bishop's Cleeve, Cheltenham	
14/01233/FUL	Local Centre Plots 7 And 8, Cleavelands	AH - Units on Site
17/00449/OUT		DOV in progress

Question 2:

How many outstanding Section 106 commitments are there across the Borough?

Answer 2:

The monitoring of Section 106 Agreements has been highlighted as an important issue for the Council and one that I have been championing. Officers will continue to work with the Lead Member to improve processes and monitoring systems. Exacom, a new computer system, has been acquired to assist in the management, administration, monitoring and co-ordination of Section 106 Agreements and sums. A dedicated temporary officer is to be appointed to input all the historical and current 106 Agreements onto the new system. This will allow all S106 Agreements to be reviewed. It is anticipated that this work will take approximately six months to complete.

26.2 The Mayor invited supplementary questions. The Member asked the following and the answers were provided by the Head of Development Services:

Question:

The Councillor had hoped for detailed conversations between Tewkesbury Borough Council and the County Council regarding school provision in Bishop's Cleeve, he understood the school was due to open by 2023 but things had still not moved forward. What will the Borough Council do to ensure it receives a detailed update on the Bishop's Cleeve school and on other schools in the Borough as this was not the only school that Councillors had been concerned about.

Answer:

The Head of Development Services indicated that she would provide a written response following the meeting.

Question:

What are the trigger points for the S106 Agreements?

Answer:

The Head of Development Services indicated that she would provide a written response following the meeting.

Question:

When will the work to establish the number of outstanding S106 Agreements be completed?

Answer:

The Head of Development Services indicated that she would provide a written response following the meeting.

26.3

The following questions had been received from Councillor Munro to the Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management. The answers were given by the Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management, Councillor Vines, but were taken as read without discussion.

Cleeve Common is one of Tewkesbury Borough Council's best open spaces and is extensively used by residents of both Tewkesbury Borough and Cheltenham Borough. It has been a lifeline during the pandemic for local residents. The recent decisions made by the Council's Executive Committee have caused a lot of consternation on social media which as a local Councillor I was not able to counter as I had not been party to the decisions made at the meeting on 26 August.

I have the following questions:

Question 1:

What assurances can the Council give local residents that the loss of the historic golf club, and income it provides, will not affect the standard of maintenance of the Common? The rent is understood to be about 20% of the Cleeve Conservators (who maintain the Common) income and they have indicated on social media that they will not be able to maintain the Common to current standards. Did the Council specifically work with the Conservators to understand their income streams to be able to understand the implications of the income loss and how this can be made good.

Answer 1:

The Council has a good relationship with Cleeve Common Trust and Officers have maintained a dialogue with Trustees over the last 18 months regarding the possibility of the Council being forced to exercise a break clause in its licence for the use of the Common for the provision of golf. This position was crystallised this year following notice being served by the Council's golf tenant and the break clause for the Common expiring in September. A decision to exercise the break clause was made in recognition of the Council's extremely difficult financial position and following confirmation from an independent industry expert of the financial unviability of the current provision.

It was understood from previous discussions with the Trust that the loss of licence income could be offset by grants that were available from various sources to manage the Common as common land rather than it being used for golf. It is not known by Officers whether those sources of funding are still available following recent events and with the forthcoming withdrawal from the European Union.

Regardless of the grant funding position, the Council maintains a good relationship with the Trust and Officers are working alongside it to investigate possible options for the continuation of golf on the Common without the Council's exposure to the financial risks and liabilities associated with direct golf provision by the Council. Officers are currently in confidential negotiations with a number of interested parties which could result in the continued provision of golf and would maintain income levels for the Trust.

Question 2:

In terms of the clubhouse building, which is scheduled to be demolished as soon as possible after 31 March 2021, what is the timeline for a business case for a replacement facility and how does the Council plan to consult with local residents to establish what people would like to see. Has the Council contacted local clubs that use the Common and clubhouse to see how the changes will affect them? Is the Council considering working with partner organisations, such as Cheltenham Borough Council, to see if there is scope for joint initiatives for any new facility?

Answer 2:

Should discussions with interested parties fail to materialise into a viable solution for the use of the clubhouse to support a third-party provision of golf, Officers will review options being put forward by other interested parties for alternative uses. All potential uses will need to ensure continued community use of the asset and remove the Council from the financial liabilities associated with the current provision and the asset itself.

Should no viable proposition be found, Officers will need to move forward with plans for the demolition of the building and the provision of parking facilities. The option of providing replacement facilities will be considered in 2021 and, depending on the viability of any business case, Officers will then develop a communications and consultation plan to engage the community.

Officers have spoken to the golf club about its position with regards to the licence agreement and the affect it will have on that club. No other casual users of the premises have currently been consulted.

Officers are currently working with Cleeve Common Trust and interested parties to find potential solutions. No contact has been made with Cheltenham Borough Council, but the question can be asked of them if they wish to invest in community facilities outside of their Borough boundary, should Members wish that question to be raised.

Question 3:

In the short term, the clubhouse provides the only public toilet facility on Cleeve Hill. The importance of public toilets both for public health and for enabling residents to enjoy the open space cannot be overstressed. What provision does the Council plan to make?

Answer 3:

The provision of public toilets is not a service that the Borough Council delivers in any part of the Borough. Public toilets, where they do exist, are now provided at a Parish level. Should the Council demolish the current facility, it will engage with the local Parish Council about the possibility of re-provision.

Question 4:

What support is being given to employees affected by the closure of the clubhouse?

Answer 4:

Responsibility for the employee's rests with the current employer, the Share Club Ltd. Officers will, however, seek to provide indirect help and advice where it can. It will also seek to ensure that TUPE requirements between employers, where applicable, are met should that opportunity arise.

Question 5:

How will the Council secure the car park at night to ensure it does not attract anti-social behaviour?

Answer 5:

Officers will look at a range of measures including height barriers, lockable gates and CCTV. The consideration of anti-social behaviour will need to be made if the Council wishes to see the re-provision of public toilets on site.

Question 6:

The decisions made at the Executive Committee are of interest to the public and there has been a lot of disquiet about what is happening and the lack of public scrutiny. Please can you advise who made the decision to commission a report on the golf club, what the cost was, and set out Member involvement in the issue prior to the Executive Committee on 26 August. Please can you explain why this was not an issue that full Council was asked to consider.

Answer 6:

The decision to commission an independent report by an industry expert was made by the Head of Finance and Asset Management in order to give Members of the Executive Committee an independent view on the viability of the current golf provision when considering whether to continue with the licence for the Common. Without this viewpoint it would have been difficult for Members to fully consider the financial implications for the Council.

The report cost £3,650.

The Members of the Executive Committee were briefed about the golf club at informal Exec/CLT meetings on 26 June and 13 August 2020.

In accordance with the Constitution, the decision was made by the Executive Committee as this is not a matter reserved to Council.

26.4 The Mayor invited supplementary questions. The Member asked the following and the answers were provided by the Head of Finance and Asset Management:

Question:

The Member questioned whether there was assurance that the finances were available for Cleeve Common Trust to maintain the Common to its current high standards; whether Officers had undertaken detailed discussions about that; and whether the shortfall had been spelt out to the Executive Committee when it had considered the issue.

Answer:

The Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that several discussions had taken place with the Trust about licences and finances – initially the Council had been led to believe funding was available through grants - but the Trust had not provided any confirmation on that to date. The team was working with the Cleeve Common Trust looking at sources of funding as well as potential other licensees for the land. Within the report to the Executive Committee, it had been stated that £25,000 was no longer payable to the Trust so he could confirm that Members had been advised of the shortfall.

Question:

The Member was pleased to see the Council was discussing the continuation of golf on the Common but questioned whether those could come to fruition by the end of March.

Answer:

The Head of Finance and Asset Management explained that there were no exact timescales at the moment but informal exploratory conversations had been held and, as negotiations developed, timescales would be established; he was hopeful to bring the information back to Members as soon as possible.

Question:

The Member was concerned that the decisions had been made 'behind closed doors' and questioned how the Council would keep Members updated on progress, negotiations with golf clubs and whether the Council would be involved in the decisions moving forward.

Answer:

The Head of Finance and Asset Management confirmed that reports would be brought forward as necessary in line with the Council's Constitution. They would be confidential depending on the decisions to be made and the information contained within the reports.

26.5 The following question had been received from Councillor Munro to the Lead Member for Built Environment. The answer was given by the Lead Member for Built Environment, Councillor Gore, but was taken as read without discussion.

Question 1:

The plan is for the Grangefield to be seeded as a wildflower meadow, originally in autumn 2019, then spring 2020, and now autumn 2020. Please can the Council advise of the project timetable for the works due to happen this autumn, when it expects the wildflower seeding to take place and how it will communicate its plan to local residents?

Answer 1:

The Grangefield project was based on biodiversity principles and this was the basis upon which the grant for the scheme was awarded. This was to enable the creation of a space where nature can thrive and evolving landscape can change, which in turn requires a very different form of management and therefore the usual principle of a detailed management plan is not in place.

Staff resource issues have unfortunately delayed this work; however, I can advise that Officers recently met at the Grangefield to discuss future works on site and a plan of action for the next six months is now under development. A contractor will be engaged to plant the seeds in time for the next growing season. Once the contractor has been appointed, and we have a detailed work programme, this will be promoted on the Council's website, social media, local school and signage on site.

26.6 The Mayor invited supplementary questions. The Member asked the following and the answer was provided by the Head of Development Services:

Question:

When will the plan be completed and available to Members and can confirmation be given whether the seeds will be sown this autumn or next spring as it was unclear what is meant by the 'next growing season'?

Answer:

The Head of Development Services indicated that she would provide a written response following the meeting.

CL.27 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Discounts 2021/22**

- 27.1 At its meeting on 26 August 2020, the Executive Committee had considered the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Discounts 2021/22 and recommended to Council that the default Council Tax Reduction Scheme be adopted effective from 1 April 2021 with a minor revision to the national working age regulations to allow for a de minimis tolerance for income changes; that authority be delegated to the Head of Finance and Asset Management, in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management, to agree the uprating of the working age regulations incorporated into the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme in line with those announced by the Department for Work and Pensions; that the following Council Tax discounts be adopted effective from 1 April 2021: the discount for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties is 25% for a maximum period of six months; the discount for properties which are vacant and require major repair work to render them habitable is 25% for a maximum period of 12 months; the discount for unoccupied furnished properties (second homes) is zero; an empty homes premium of an additional 100% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least two years, but less than five years; an empty homes premium of an additional 200% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least five years, but less than ten years; and an empty homes premium of an additional 300% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least ten years.
- 27.2 The report which was considered by the Executive Committee had been circulated with the Agenda for the current meeting at Pages No. 15-20.
- 27.3 The Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee, who had chaired the meeting on 26 August 2020, proposed the recommendation and the Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management seconded it.
- 27.4 A brief discussion ensued, in which a Member questioned how 'substantially unfurnished' was defined. In response, the Revenues and Benefits Manager indicated that this was a property that was essentially devoid of furniture which someone would need to live there, e.g. no bed, however, if it had white goods it could still be deemed to be substantially unfurnished.
- 27.5 Accordingly, it was
- RESOLVED**
1. That the default Council Tax Reduction Scheme be **ADOPTED** effective from 1 April 2021 with a minor revision to the national working age regulations to allow for a de minimis tolerance for income changes.
 2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Finance and Asset Management, in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management, to agree the uprating of the working age regulations incorporated into the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme in line with those announced by the Department for Work and Pensions.
 3. That the following Council Tax discounts be **ADOPTED** effective from 1 April 2021:
 - The discount for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished

properties is 25% for a maximum period of six months.

- The discount for properties which are vacant and require major repair work to render them habitable is 25% for a maximum period of 12 months.
- The discount for unoccupied furnished properties (second homes) is zero.
- An empty homes premium of an additional 100% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least two years, but less than five years.
- An empty homes premium of an additional 200% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least five years, but less than ten years.
- An empty homes premium of an additional 300% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least ten years.

CL.28 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

- 28.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Head of Corporate Services, circulated at Pages No. 21-23, which attached the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's report that had been approved by the Committee at its meeting on 1 September 2020. The Council was asked to consider the contents of the report.
- 28.2 The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee drew attention to Pages No. 24-53 of the Council papers and indicated that he was particularly pleased with how well the new Committee had bonded and carried on the good work of previous Members. This had been acknowledged by the Local Government Association Peer Challenge Team which had reported positively on the Committee's contribution to the Council's governance structure. He felt the report spoke for itself, demonstrating the breadth of work overseen by the Committee, and he was confident this would continue into 2020/21.
- 28.3 Within the Council's work programme there were key plans to scrutinise, such as the new Council Plan, the COVID-19 Recovery Plan and the Peer Challenge Action Plan as well as key strategies such as climate change, housing and economic development and tourism.
- 28.4 The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was of the view that scrutiny would need to continue in the current virtual environment for the foreseeable future and he offered his thanks to both the Members and Officers for their efforts to ensure the success of the Council's new virtual world.
- 28.5 Accordingly, it was
- RESOLVED** That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report be **NOTED**.

CL.29 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

- 29.1 The Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee drew attention to the Committee's Annual Report 2019/20 which had been circulated at Pages No. 54-64.

The Council was asked to consider the report which had been approved by the Committee at its meeting on 23 September 2020.

- 29.2 The Chair advised that the report demonstrated the breadth of items that were considered by the Committee. It received reports from a variety of sources that helped to give the Committee assurances that systems and processes were operating as they should be; those mainly came from the internal audit team, the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, and the finance team. Similar to the previous Agenda item on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report, the Peer Challenge Team had commented positively on an area the Committee depended upon, that being the experienced, and technically strong, finance team which helped ensure the Council's statement of accounts were signed off with a minimum of fuss.
- 29.3 The Committee's biggest source of assurance came from the Council's internal audit team. The team provided Members with an independent and objective opinion on its findings. Overall, as detailed in Pages No. 59-60 of the report, its findings were positive; however, where issues were identified, those were supported by recommendations for improvement and progress in implementing them was monitored by the Committee.
- 29.4 For the majority of 2019/20, internal audit work had been unhindered but, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and until recently, the three members of the internal audit team had been deployed to support the administration of business grants. Despite that situation, it had been a pleasure for the Committee to recently approve an audit plan for the next six months, with an audit resource now available to deliver that plan.
- 29.5 The Audit and Governance Committee Chair thanked the Members of the Committee for their support during the year and Officers, both internal and external, who reported into the Committee or supported its administration. He felt the Committee had adapted well to its virtual surroundings and he looked forward to the continued success despite the challenges faced.
- 29.6 Accordingly, it was
RESOLVED That the Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report 2019/20 be **NOTED**.

CL.30 NOTICES OF MOTION

Local Electricity Bill

- 30.1 The Worshipful the Mayor referred to the Notice of Motion set out on the Agenda and indicated that, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, it was necessary for the Council firstly to decide whether it wished to debate and determine the Motion at this evening's meeting, or whether it wished to refer the Motion, without debate, to a Committee for consideration with authority either to make a decision on the matter or to bring a recommendation back to Council.
- 30.2 A Member expressed the view that, whilst he supported green energy initiatives in principle, he felt the Motion lacked detail in its current format and that it should be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and make a recommendation to the Executive Committee for decision.

30.3 A recorded vote was requested and, upon receiving the appropriate level of support, voting was recorded as follows:

For	Against	Abstain	Absent
R A Bird	C L J Carter		J H Evetts
G F Blackwell	C M Cody		A Hollaway
G J Bocking	L A Gerrard		
K J Cromwell	D J Harwood		
M Dean	M L Jordan		
R D East	H S Munro		
P A Godwin	P W Ockelton		
M A Gore	P E Smith		
D W Gray	R J G Smith		
E J MacTiernan	C Softley		
J R Mason	R J Stanley		
H C McLain	S A T Stevens		
P D McLain	M G Sztymiak		
J W Murphy	S Thomson		
A S Reece	P N Workman		
C Reid			
J K Smith			
V D Smith			
P D Surman			
R J E Vines			
M J Williams			

30.4 With 21 votes in favour and 15 against, it was agreed that the Motion would be deferred for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and recommendation to the Executive Committee for decision.

30.5 In accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, the proposer was invited to briefly introduce her Motion. She indicated that one of the Council's key priorities was 'sustainable environment' and she was of the view that this could be supported

by the Local Electricity Bill. This was a cross-party Bill and 57 county and local authorities had already supported it, including 11 which were in overall Conservative control. She had not expected the Motion to be controversial and had hoped Members would be able to support it. Her view was that the Bill looked to the future and the Council's support of it would help enable a better future for its residents. She welcomed the input of Overview and Scrutiny, and was pleased the Motion would be further discussed, but she felt it should not really be necessary.

30.6 In line with the recorded vote, it was

RESOLVED That the Motion be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration and recommendation to the Executive Committee for decision.

Support for Increased Provision for Cyclists within Tewkesbury Borough

30.7 The Worshipful the Mayor referred to the Notice of Motion set out on the Agenda and indicated that, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, it was necessary for the Council firstly to decide whether it wished to debate and determine the Motion at this evening's meeting, or whether it wished to refer the Motion, without debate, to a Committee for consideration with authority either to make a decision on the matter or to bring a recommendation back to Council.

30.8 It was agreed that the Motion would be considered at the current meeting and, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, the proposer of the Motion was invited to present the Motion. She explained that one of the few positives to come out of the COVID-19 pandemic was the increase in cycling that had been seen across the county when the roads had been quiet and her Motion sought to build on that. She felt it was a joy to explore the Borough on a bicycle and, whilst accepting that the Highways Authority was the lead authority in terms of cycleways, the Motion hoped to promote Tewkesbury Borough Council as a leader in supporting such initiatives. She was of the view that the kind of support offered could include press releases, social media, articles on the website and in the Borough News. The Motion also provided the opportunity for Tewkesbury Borough Council to show its support publicly for the County Council and its cycling and walking initiatives. In addition, she hoped Tewkesbury Borough Council could put pressure on the County Council to start the Bishop's Cleeve to Gotherington cycleway. The seconder of the Motion agreed, and indicated that, essentially, the Motion asked the Borough Council to publicly confirm its support for cycling, as well as the County Council's initiative on cycling, and asked the County Council to push forward a scheme which was well overdue.

30.9 During the discussion which ensued, a Member noted that sustrans had been an initiative for active travel which the Borough Council had supported several years previously and that had included a cycleway between Bishop's Cleeve and Gotherington so he questioned why that had not yet been built. Another Member indicated that sustrans was still in existence and was creating a national network of cycling routes across the country working alongside County Councils. He knew the organisation had done a considerable amount of work in the Borough over the years but could not recall the previous discussions about a Bishop's Cleeve to Gotherington cycleway.

30.10 The view was expressed that the Motion contained quite a lot of misunderstanding. The Member indicated that both the Borough and County Councils had done a lot of promotion of safe cycling and safe cycleways; specifically, Tewkesbury Borough Council had been asked by the County Council to put forward its top three schemes which it had done. He felt the reality was that the Borough Council had been promoting effective cycling for a long time and as such the Motion was not necessary. In respect of the Bishop's Cleeve to Gotherington cycleway, he felt

there was confusion about what was available. To his knowledge there was no Section 106 Agreement for the specific cycleway from Bishop's Cleeve to Gotherington, there was due to be a cycleway installed on Gotherington Lane as part of the development in Gotherington which would result in changes to the road layout but that was currently being assessed. The Section 106 Agreement specifically related to cycle signage around the Borough and the footway/cycle link between Bishop's Cleeve and Cheltenham which was an entirely separate scheme. Overall, he felt the Borough Council was at the forefront of safe cycling and cycleways which was in direct conflict with the sentiment of the Motion being considered. In expressing an alternative view, a Member indicated that she supported the Motion as the Council had previously declared a climate emergency and safe cycling went a long way to reducing carbon emissions which was one of the Council's aims. She agreed that the uptake in cycling had been helped by the lockdown earlier in the year and she really wanted to see the Council do everything it could to support the continuation of that habit.

- 30.11 In endorsing the previous comments against the Motion, a Member was disappointed and saddened by the amount of work that the Borough and County Councils had done to date which was not recognised by the Motion. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, work had been ongoing on cycling strategies and the two authorities had worked together to deliver great schemes such as the cycleway from Mitton to Tewkesbury Town; the extension to the Newtown cycle track – which was one of the most used in the county seeing 550 daily movements; discussions about the cycleway between Cheltenham and Gloucester which would go right through the heart of Churchdown; the Cheltenham to Bishop's Cleeve cycleway which should come online next year; as well as the 'travel by cycle' five year strategy which sought to build a network, meaning someone could get on a bike in Tewkesbury and cycle to Tetbury. Another Member agreed with that view and added that the Tewkesbury Borough Plan showed clearly how the Council felt about safe cycling schemes through the policies within it which supported active travel.
- 30.12 A number of Members felt that there were cycling and walking links missing in their particular communities despite the amount of building that had taken place across a number of large developments. Whilst they accepted there was progress with cycle links in some areas, this was not the case in every area and this did need to be addressed; they felt that, however well the Council was already doing, more could always be done. One Member expressed concern about the tone of some of the debate so far which had been unhelpful and that, in her view, any Motion that a Member felt was worthy of being discussed at Council should be shown a level of respect without the proposer and seconder feeling discredited. Other Members agreed and felt the Motion was about acknowledging that more could always be done to keep residents safe; particularly when new developments were being built, and changes were being made to the highway anyway, the Council could push for the addition of cycle lanes etc. It was also suggested that, if some Members knew more than others about schemes that were being put forward, there may need to be clearer communication about those things between Councillors. In terms of the suggestion that there was to be no cycleway between Bishop's Cleeve and Gotherington, the proposer of the Motion advised that Officers had shown her a route map for the proposed path so if it was actually not happening, as had been muted by another Member, this was certainly a very confusing picture.
- 30.13 A Member indicated that he was an avid supporter of cycling; however, he was concerned about the Motion as it set out a public statement of intent about things the Council was already doing, it sought to offer support to the County Council which, again, was something the Borough Council already did, and it asked the County Council to prioritise one particular area – Bishop's Cleeve and Gotherington – above other areas such as Brockworth, Churchdown and Twigworth which were also in need of active travel connections. A Member

proposed an amendment, which the proposer and seconder of the original Motion agreed, that point 3 of the Motion be amended from “ask the County Council to prioritise the works of the highways legal team to ensure that the Bishop’s Cleeve to Gotherington cycleway is not delayed further, with a request for work to start on building the cycleway by the end of the current financial year” to “ask the County Council to work alongside Tewkesbury Borough Council to identify and prioritise areas within the Borough that are in desperate need of cycling routes”. Some Members felt the amendment did not offer any clarity on what was required, whereas, others felt it was a good amendment which made it clear there were a number of areas across the Borough that were in need of cycling facilities.

- 30.14 It was proposed and seconded that point 3 of the Motion be amended to ask the County Council to work alongside Tewkesbury Borough Council to identify and prioritise areas within the Borough that are in desperate need of cycling routes. A recorded vote was requested and, upon receiving the appropriate level of support, voting was recorded as follows:

For	Against	Abstain	Absent
C L J Carter	R A Bird	H S Munro	J H Evetts
C M Cody	G F Blackwell	R J G Smith	A Hollaway
L A Gerrard	G J Bocking	R J Stanley	
D J Harwood	K J Cromwell		
M L Jordan	M Dean		
P W Ockelton	R D East		
P E Smith	P A Godwin		
C Softley	M A Gore		
S A T Stevens	D W Gray		
M G Sztymiak	E J MacTiernan		
S Thomson	J R Mason		
P N Workman	H C McLain		
	P D McLain		
	J W Murphy		
	A S Reece		
	C Reid		
	J K Smith		
	V D Smith		
	P D Surman		
	R J E Vines		

M J Williams

30.15 With 12 votes in favour, 21 against and three abstentions, the amendment was lost.

30.16 A recorded vote was requested and, upon receiving the appropriate level of support, voting on the original Motion was recorded as follows:

For	Against	Abstain	Absent
C L J Carter	R A Bird		J H Evetts
C M Cody	G F Blackwell		A Hollaway
L A Gerrard	G J Bocking		
D J Harwood	K J Cromwell		
M L Jordan	M Dean		
H S Munro	R D East		
P W Ockelton	P A Godwin		
P E Smith	M A Gore		
R J G Smith	D W Gray		
C Softley	E J MacTiernan		
R J Stanley	J R Mason		
S A T Stevens	H C McLain		
M G Sztymiak	P D McLain		
S Thomson	J W Murphy		
P N Workman	A S Reece		
	C Reid		
	J K Smith		
	V D Smith		
	P D Surman		
	R J E Vines		
	M J Williams		

30.17 With 15 in favour and 21 votes against, the Motion was lost.

30.18 Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED That the Motion not be approved.

Adjournment

- 30.19 The meeting was adjourned for a ten-minute break at 8:25pm. The meeting reconvened at 8:35pm with the same Membership present.

Transparency and Openness of Tewkesbury Borough Council Proceedings

- 30.20 The Worshipful the Mayor referred to the Notice of Motion set out on the Agenda and indicated that, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, it was necessary for the Council firstly to decide whether it wished to debate and determine the Motion at this evening's meeting, or whether it wished to refer the Motion, without debate, to a Committee for consideration with authority either to make a decision on the matter or to bring a recommendation back to Council.
- 30.21 It was agreed that the Motion would be considered at the current meeting and, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, the proposer of the Motion was invited to present the Motion. He indicated that the Motion was intended to improve the Council's transparency to residents as well as bringing Tewkesbury Borough Council into step with the other authorities in the county. In terms of members of the public asking supplementary questions, it was felt that offering a right of reply would enhance the experience and engagement of the public in the Council's business which could only be a good thing in respect of the scheme of public participation. In relation to the publication of a decision notice following meetings of the Council, it was envisaged this would follow the same process as the Executive Committee decision notices which Officers had confirmed would be achievable taking account of current resources. The seconder of the Motion agreed with the proposer and expressed the importance of local government being seen to be open, transparent and accountable as well as encouraging members of the public to come forward and ask questions about things which were of concern to them. She also felt it was important to get decisions of the Council out into the public domain as quickly as possible.
- 30.22 During the discussion which ensued, a Member expressed the view that the Motion was a perfectly sensible proposal which would bring Tewkesbury Borough Council into line with other authorities. In agreement, another Member felt that community engagement should be encouraged and this meant offering residents the opportunity to respond to answers received; she was of the opinion that the Council could not be too open or too transparent and, as such, she would be supporting the Motion. In offering an alternative view, a Member indicated that the Borough Council had operated its current constitutional procedures for a very long time with no identified problems and therefore he was unsure of the need for the Motion. The recent Peer Challenge Review had commended the authority for the way it carried out its business; he felt the fundamental point was that the Council changed things through its constitutional structures following thorough investigation and considered analysis rather than on an ad-hoc basis through Council Motions and the Council should be proud of its open and transparent history. Another Member felt it was embarrassing to the Council that a member of the public could take the time to engage by asking questions and then not be given the opportunity to come back if they were not satisfied with the response provided. He was of the view that allowing a follow-up question was a common courtesy which should be extended to all.
- 30.23 A Member drew attention to the last time the Constitution was considered by the Council and the fact that, within that revision, the right to ask supplementary

questions had been amended – shown by track-changes – and, whilst it did not state that supplementary questions were allowed, it also did not say they were not. In addition, she felt it should be noted that decisions made at Executive Committee were not made ‘behind closed doors’; any Councillor could attend the meeting and all open business was streamed online for anyone to watch. She found the suggestion that the Council was not transparent to be upsetting as she was proud to be a Member of Tewkesbury Borough Council and felt it demonstrated its openness to its residents all the time. In response to an earlier statement, another Member indicated that the Council could change things because it wanted to improve them rather than because it had to and he saw no reason not to make the changes suggested in the Motion, the core of which, was to improve the experience of the public when they engaged with the Council. In agreeing with that view, a Member noted that residents did not ask questions for no reason, they were there because they were passionate about an issue and the Council should engage with that and encourage it.

- 30.24 There was some concern expressed about the tone of the discussion and debate and it was suggested it might be helpful for Motions to be discussed informally in the first instance to enable a full understanding of the reasons for it and what it aimed to achieve. A Member indicated that she had tried to use that approach in the past, but it had not resulted in support for her Motion and concern was expressed at the political nature of the debate which was not the intention of the Motions put forward. Some Members expressed offence at the suggestion that the Council was not transparent and it was confirmed that there had been no intention to cause offence to any other Member.
- 30.25 Clarification was requested about supplementary questions not being mentioned in the Constitution and, in response, the Borough Solicitor confirmed that the Council’s Procedure Rules were silent on the matter, i.e. they did not say there was or was not a right for the public to ask supplementary questions, and on that basis the inference was that there was no right.
- 30.26 It was proposed and seconded that the Motion ‘be put’ and, upon receiving the appropriate level of support, a recorded vote was taken as follows:

For	Against	Abstain	Absent	Not Voting
R A Bird			J H Evetts	P W Ockelton
G F Blackwell			A Hollaway	
G J Bocking				
C L J Carter				
C M Cody				
K J Cromwell				
M Dean				
R D East				
L A Gerrard				
P A Godwin				
M A Gore				
D W Gray				

D J Harwood

M L Jordan

E J
MacTiernan

J R Mason

H C McLain

P D McLain

H S Munro

J W Murphy

A S Reece

C Reid

J K Smith

P E Smith

R J G Smith

V D Smith

C Softley

R J Stanley

S A T Stevens

P D Surman

M G Sztymiak

S Thomson

R J E Vines

M J Williams

P N Workman

30.27 Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED That the Motion be put.

30.28 A recorded vote was requested and, upon receiving the appropriate level of support, voting on the Motion was recorded as follows:

For	Against	Abstain	Absent	Not Voting
C L J Carter	R A Bird		J H Evetts	P W Ockelton
C M Cody	G F Blackwell		A Hollaway	

L A Gerrard	G J Bocking
D J Harwood	K J Cromwell
M L Jordan	M Dean
H S Munro	R D East
P E Smith	P A Godwin
R J G Smith	M A Gore
C Softley	D W Gray
R J Stanley	E J MacTiernan
S A T Stevens	J R Mason
M G Sztymiak	H C McLain
S Thomson	P D McLain
P N Workman	J W Murphy
	A S Reece
	C Reid
	J K Smith
	V D Smith
	P D Surman
	R J E Vines
	M J Williams

30.29 With 14 votes in favour and 21 against, the Motion was lost.

30.30 Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED That the Motion not be approved.

Invitation to Gloucestershire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to Present its Latest Proposals for Cheltenham A&E

30.31 The Worshipful the Mayor referred to the Notice of Motion set out on the Agenda and indicated that, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, it was necessary for the Council firstly to decide whether it wished to debate and determine the Motion at this evening's meeting, or whether it wished to refer the Motion, without debate, to a Committee for consideration with authority either to make a decision on the matter or to bring a recommendation back to Council.

30.32 It was agreed that the Motion would be considered at the current meeting and, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, the proposer was invited to present the Motion. He expressed his thanks to the NHS staff and the Gloucestershire NHS Trust for all their hard work, on a day to day basis as well as

throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. He also offered his thanks to the campaign, Restore Emergency at Cheltenham General Hospital (REACH) for its support with the Motion. It was understood that the three-month closure of Cheltenham General Hospital had been to keep it COVID-19 free and the extension was also for that purpose. However, he felt it was important that District Councillors were as well informed as possible prior to the consultation which was the reason for the request in the Motion; in addition, he understood that other Councils were preparing similar Motions so they were fully aware of the facts prior to the consultation. The seconder of the Motion indicated that the temporary closure of the Accident and Emergency department affected all residents and would have a potentially devastating effect if it became permanent. There had been a great deal of media coverage about the issue and she felt it would be helpful for Councillors to have the opportunity to question the Clinical Commissioning Group and hold it to account.

- 30.33 A Member indicated that he was not aware of anyone that did not oppose any intention to reduce or close Cheltenham Accident and Emergency department, as had been discussed when a previous Motion on the possible closure of the department had been submitted to Council. He was supportive of the sentiment of the current Motion but felt there was a need to consider COVID-19 and the role the Clinical Commissioning Group played in that and, for that reason, he proposed an amendment to make the point that, whilst the Council wanted to invite the Clinical Commissioning Group to explain its proposals, that needed to be at a time that was appropriate for them. Accordingly, he proposed “that this Council remains opposed to permanent closure or downgrading of Accident & Emergency facilities at Cheltenham General Hospital, in accordance with the Motion by Councillors Gore and Hollaway approved on 1 October 2019, and we fully support the effective work by local MPs Laurence Robertson and Alex Chalk in this regard. We thank the NHS Trust for its hard work and commitment during the COVID-19 emergency, and note that the recent three month closure of Accident and Emergency was understood to help keep Cheltenham General ‘COVID Free’ during the height of the COVID transmission, in order that elective surgery could be resumed. However, at the Gloucestershire Health Overview Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) meeting on 15 September 2020, the Gloucestershire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust proposed to extend the three-month closure of Cheltenham’s Type 1 Accident and Emergency Department for a further six months. We are concerned about the proposed six month extension both in terms of the Accident and Emergency at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital having the capacity to cope with all Accident and Emergency patients from the whole County together with the capacity of Emergency Ambulance services and that the additional six month extension could become a long term or permanent change. We are grateful to the Clinical Commissioning Group for responding to our previous motion in such a positive way and taking the time to present their plans to us on 18 October 2019. In view of the latest developments we would welcome further representations from the Clinical Commissioning Group on its long-term intentions, but recognise that this needs to be when critical emergency COVID-19 work allows, so we extend an invitation to the Clinical Commissioning Group to provide us with an update on their proposals at an appropriate time”. The amendment was seconded. Other Members agreed that it was right to hold the Clinical Commissioning Group to account but that had to be at the right time so it did not detract from the COVID-19 response. A Member indicated that the Clinical Commissioning Group had consistently given out ‘cast-iron’ assurances that the Accident and Emergency department at Cheltenham General Hospital would reopen and that Gloucester Royal Hospital could not cope on its own as a single Accident and Emergency site but he would like to know when numbers would allow the department to reopen and what the ‘R Rate’ would have to be – it was then that the local MPs and the County Council’s Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be able to make judgments as to the genuine intentions for the Accident and Emergency

department at Cheltenham General Hospital.

30.34 There was some concern about the fact that many Members had not had foresight of the amendment and it was suggested there was a need for Councillors to communicate more effectively. The proposer of the Motion, indicated that there appeared to be some confusion between frontline Accident and Emergency staff and the NHS Trust and he felt there was a need to question the Trust before the consultation – particularly as other local authorities in the county would be doing the same and he did not want Tewkesbury Borough to be at the ‘back of the queue’ in terms of being able to speak to the Trust.

30.35 The amendment, as proposed, was circulated to the Council for consideration. The proposer of the original Motion advised that he was happy to accept the amendment except for the last line which he suggested was further amended to read ‘....so we extend an invitation to the Clinical Commissioning Group to provide us with an update on their proposals at **the earliest** appropriate time’. This was agreed as the substantive Motion and, upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED

That this Council remains opposed to permanent closure or downgrading of Accident & Emergency (A&E) facilities at Cheltenham General Hospital, in accordance with the motion by Councillors Gore and Hollaway approved on 1 October 2019, and we fully support the effective work by local MPs Laurence Robertson and Alex Chalk in this regard.

We thank the NHS Trust for its hard work and commitment during this COVID-19 emergency, and note that the recent three month closure of A&E was understood to help keep Cheltenham General ‘COVID Free’ during the height of the COVID transmission, in order that elective surgery could be resumed.

However, at the Gloucestershire Health Overview Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) meeting on 15 September 2020, the Gloucestershire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust proposed to extend the three-month closure of Cheltenham’s Type 1 A&E Department for a further six months.

We are concerned about the proposed six month extension both in terms of the A&E at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital having the capacity to cope with all A&E patients from the whole County together with the capacity of Emergency Ambulance services and that the additional six month extension could become a long term or permanent change.

We are grateful to the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for responding to our previous motion in such a positive way and taking the time to present their plans to us on 18 October 2019. In view of the latest developments we would welcome further representations from the CCG on its long-term intentions, but recognise that this needs to be when critical emergency COVID-19 work allows, so we extend an invitation to the CCG to provide us with an update on their proposals at the earliest appropriate time.

The meeting closed at 9:45 pm