

Bourton Vale Ward

District Councillor's Report November 2023

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CABINET DECISIONS 2ND OCTOBER 2023

Main decision was to propose a reduced telephone access hours to the public on a trial basis from Monday 16th October 2023. The trial will last for period of 6 months when a report detailing the findings and recommendations from the trial will be considered by the cabinet.

CDC's customer services telephone system now closes at 2pm from Monday to Friday in order to save money. In-person services are unaffected.

The Cabinet considered the Budget Strategy needed to support the preparation of the 2024/25 revenue and capital budgets and presents an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy forecast. Likely increases in charges appeared in the October report.

There were no cabinet meetings in October.

NEW APPOINTMENT

Councillor Angus Jenkinson will be taking on the role of Councillor for Regenerative Agricultures and ecology. His responsibilities will cover a broad spectrum of agricultural practises including rewilding, regenerative, organic, mixed and conservation farming. The aim is to create a climate-friendly environment.

PUBLICA

Publica, a Techkal company set up by four council administrations in 2017, is to be disassembled. The company is a not-for-profit service delivery company and is owned by Cheltenham Borough Council; Cotswold District Council; Forest of Dean District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council. Originally envisaged as a vehicle to generate commercial opportunities whilst also providing core services it shifted its strategy in 2020 as the councils decided the provision of core services must be given adequate priority. Publica was most effective under Covid and enabled continued services and cost savings under difficult circumstances.

Originally set up as money saving company politically the four administrations have all changes since 2019 and now want to go their separate ways. They will all proposing to move 95% of Publica's work back inhouse with only a few back-office functions remaining.

The four councils believe this will allow them to be more agile individually which will allow them to deliver a better service to residents and to facilitate staff recruitment. Publica cannot off the beneficial Local Government Pension Scheme which other local authorities can.

At present Publica's provides over 95% of the staff who deliver the local services that were originally provided by three of the administrations whilst it provides business support services to Cheltenham.

The cost and ramifications of unravelling Publica have yet to be calculated. CDC has suggested it will be in the region of £150k but others feel the true costs will be much, much higher.

WASTE LORRY FIRE

A fire broke out in the back of a UBICO bin lorry probably due to a lithium-ion battery. Fires are becoming a regular problem with these batteries whilst disposable vapes have the posed to ignite or explode if damage by the compacting equipment on the vehicle.

Please could we ask residents to keep these batteries or items containing them out of their rubbish and disposed of responsibly. By law, shops selling electrical and electronic items must offer a like-for-like take-back service. Residents can also recycle their old electronic equipment using the Council's fortnightly recycling service by putting items into an old carrier bag and placing this inside a black recycling box.

UBICO also reported a team had discovered a Sharps bucket filled with old hypodermic needles. These should never be put into waste or recycling collections. Sharps boxes should be sealed and handed to a GP, Vet or Pharmacy for disposal.

FLY TIPPING PROSECUTION

Another successful prosecution has been made. CDC's environmental services and its counter fraud team helped. It is the responsibility of the household occupier to make sure disposal is safe and legal. Anyone disposing of waste must make sure it is disposed by an authorised person. Fines can be up to £400.

PARKING REVIEW

CDC is to undertake a full review of the Council's parking provision to ensure the efficient utilisation of the Council's off-street car parks and support access to the District's Town Centres including the gathering of further data on carpark usage ensure best use of Council assets.