

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCILCABINET10 FEBRUARY 2020Present:

Councillor Joe Harris	-	Chair
Councillors -		
Rachel Coxcoon		Jenny Forde
Tony Dale		Mark Harris
Andrew Doherty		Lisa Spivey
Mike Every		Clive Webster

Observers:

Patrick Coleman	Nigel Robbins
Richard Norris	Gary Selwyn

CAB.82 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest under the Code of Conduct for Members.

There were no declarations of interest under the Code of Conduct for Officers.

CAB.83 MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 6 January 2020 be approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- (a) Minute No. CAB.76, Page 35 – Council Tax Support Scheme for 2020/21 – the following sentence - *The Deputy Leader added that the Council did not wish to disadvantage those with more than two children or with children from 'blended' families (children from separate marriages), should read children from 'different' families, instead of 'blended' families;*
- (b) Minute No. CAB.77, Commissioning Framework – correct the spelling of the word '*commisioning*'.

**Record of Voting - for 9, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.**

CAB.84 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No Public questions had been submitted.

CAB.85 MEMBER QUESTIONS

No Member questions had been received.

CAB.86 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader announced that Councillor Tony Dale would be given responsibility for the Commercialisation agenda, looking at bringing new investment into the Council in innovative ways. The Website and other information would be updated.

CAB.87 DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020/21 TO 2029/30 AND BUDGET 2020/21

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced this report. He apologised that the reports were circulated following the publication of the agenda, although there was a lot of work undertaken to produce the MTFs and Budget. He would highlight issues which were different to the report presented to Cabinet in December.

- (i) The Local Government Settlement had been announced, the value of New Homes Bonus awarded was £95,448 higher than previously anticipated. As previously reported, the budget for the waste service has increased as a result of revised contract sum figures provided by Ubico, from the anticipated costs considered by Council 12 months ago.
- (ii) The Capital Strategy, Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy were discussed at Audit Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- (iii) Gloucestershire County Council offered an opportunity to make a lump sum payment, to be made early in 2020/21, into the Gloucestershire Local Government Pension Scheme, which would provide revenue savings.
- (iv) Provision has been included for investment in new technology for the Council's waste and recycling service fleet.
- (v) A review of the Council's communication service had been carried out, investment for one-off projects to engage the public in the projects was proposed.
- (vi) A business case had been put forward for investment in roller-brake testing equipment at the Packers Leaze Depot in South Cerney.
- (vii) The Council is required each year to value its property assets. The property team requires additional resources to facilitate this work each year, an annual budget has been included to carry out this work.
- (viii) The Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool will continue.
- (ix) The Council Taxbase for 2020/21 has been increased to reflect an adjustment to the Tetbury Town Council Taxbase. The increased Taxbase will increase income from Council Tax by around £8,000. The Collection Fund forecast for 2019/20 indicates that there will be a deficit at the end of the 2019/20 financial year.
- (x) Consultation responses from residents had been positive with nine times more responses than last year. Members considered it was pleasing that nearly 300 residents had responded to the survey. Feedback from the consultation reflected that respondents' priorities were tackling the climate change emergency, the waste service and local plan; there was support for the proposed increase in parking charges and the principle that garden

waste collections should be paid for by service users. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the budget report last week and the Cirencester Chamber of Commerce would be considering the budget proposals this week.

- (xi) The Pay Policy statement was a document which required approval each year.
- (xii) The budget included £1 million worth of savings, although there was acknowledgement that there could still be budget pressures throughout the year.
- (xiii) Proposed Council Tax rise of £5 per Band D Council Tax property.

The Chief Finance Officer explained that Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 places a duty on the Chief Finance Officer to make a report to the Council on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of the Council reserves. She confirmed that the budget was prudent and robust.

It was explained that the Fair Funding Review, the new Business Rate Retention Scheme and the reset of the Business Rates Baseline were expected to result in a loss of Government funding to the Council. This represented a significant financial risk from 2021 onwards. The MTFs reflected the implications for the Council. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government is expected to publish a consultation, with illustrative figures, in the Spring, this will help to clarify the direction of travel. Investment in the Commercialisation Strategy will be subject to further reports to the Council to approve expenditure.

The key risks to the budget for 2020/21 were set out in the report and included: risks associated with the Council being part of the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool, the level of savings the Council is expecting Publica to deliver, income from fees and charges, although the budget included provision for a reduction of £100,000 from planning income and risk associated with the financial impact of emergency planning events.

The Officer confirmed that the Council had adequate levels of reserves in place.

The Leader thanked the Chief Finance Officer and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance for the hard work in producing this budget.

Questions from Members included and were responded to:

- (i) Council was waiting for the consultation to come out from Government in relation to Section 3.8 of the report in relation to Government funding. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the Society of District Council Treasurers, the Local Government Association and Sparse are all national organisations which are representing rural councils on this matter.
- (ii) The emergency planning risk assessment value was quite low. This is because the Government operates the Bellwin Scheme, which can be activated and provides some financial support when local authorities face unplanned expenditure as a result of emergency events. .
- (iii) The investments relating to the Commercialisation Strategy will be subject to business cases which will be considered by the Council.

- (iv) It was requested that funding be allocated for publicity campaigns for low level anti-social behaviour such as dog fouling, speeding or littering. The Leader explained that the communications plan will direct funding for issues such as dog fouling. The Council should also need to celebrate the good work it does for the district, as well as publicity campaigns such as ones for the low level anti-social behaviour.
- (v) Concern was expressed on the collection fund deficit. There are a number of properties in the District which are empty because they are being refurbished or demolished. At the time of estimating the Taxbase it was not known that these properties would be empty during 2019/20. The deficit is not a result of residents failing to pay their Council tax.
- (vi) The Chief Finance Officer explained that a Government grant would be provided to the Council to compensate for the impact of any Government announcements in relation to business rate reliefs.

The Leader highlighted that this budget was a 'stay of execution', the Government funding review will be difficult. The Government would be funding the social care crisis, therefore funding to the County Council would be a priority and smaller Councils will face funding reductions. There could be significant savings to be made, or other ideas to increase income into the Council as the Council would not want to reduce services. There was a need to have a proactive and practical approach to issues. The Council has a strong financial foundation to build on.

**RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL BE RECOMMENDED to approve the following set of documents:**

- (a) Budget proposals 2020/21, also to include in the papers to Council:**
  - i. the correction of the Council Tax Base as a result of the change to the Tetbury Town Council Taxbase which will increase Council Tax income;**
  - ii. referencing the results of the survey consultations, to include consultation responses from Fairford Town Council, Weston Sub-Edge Parish Council any further responses to the budget, thanking residents and organisations for their comments;**
- (b) Medium Term Financial Strategy;**
- (c) Pay Policy Statement;**
- (d) Capital Strategy;**
- (e) Investment Strategy;**
- (f) Treasury Management Strategy.**

**Record of Voting - for 9, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.**

**CAB.88 BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE UPDATE**

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Flooding and Environmental Health introduced the report and explained that for a period of time the service was under resourced and some performance levels had fallen as a result. The current key performance indicators (KPIs) were being reviewed and would be updated to reflect the new Council Priorities.

The Business Manager - Environmental and Regulatory Services explained that there had been poor performance on plan checking, as a result of resources. The vacancy had been filled and is now performing in line with expectations.

Financially, the service was generating sufficient income to cover its direct expenditure and was making a contribution towards the Council's corporate overheads. Feedback from customers was that they were satisfied with the service, and letters are being sent out to market the service to commercial development. The Business Manager explained that he would bring a further report to Cabinet in September.

Questions were responded to as follows:

- (i) The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance queried the surplus and the projected forecast for the year and how this related to the budget for the service. The Chief Finance Officer explained that the Business Manager was working with the accountants to set achievable targets.
- (ii) Members discussed market share and whether there was a marketing plan. Development of the market share remained a significant challenge and the need to have a good marketing plan was important.
- (iii) A question was asked about the service being more expensive than approved inspectors. The Officer explained that the local authority Building Control service offered a quality product, ensuring safety.
- (iv) The service consists of a Building Control Manager, four surveyors and one and half administration staff. This was a full complement of staff, an internal member of staff was recently promoted to a surveyor, the team is 'growing their own'. The Publica pay and grading review is nearing completion and the Business Manager was working with the team to implement the outcome of the review.
- (v) It was considered that the priority for the team needs to be the climate change / green agenda and delivering the building regulations on health and safety.

The Leader commented that Building Control should be a priority on the commercialisation agenda, putting together a good plan and delivering a great service.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

**Record of Voting - for 9, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.**

CAB.89 RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE HOMES STANDARD

The Cabinet Member for Planning Policy introduced this report and thanked the Forward Planning Manager for the work on the response to the consultation. She considered that these standards had major problems, they would not be applicable for five years, they were low ambition and a dangerous approach to changing building standards. The proposals were relying on decarbonisation of the electricity supply grid and removes the ability for local authorities to set their own standards. She supported the work on the response to this paper.

The Forward Planning Manager commented that it was good to work with a Member that is skilled in this area and welcomed the opportunity to learn a new discipline.

Comments from Members included:

- (i) Need to consider the benefit of hydrogen on the network which was a clean form of energy, although it was felt that this would be a bigger issue to the challenge faced.
- (ii) Having declared a climate emergency the Council needed to ensure that new housing is energy efficient and not expensive to run.
- (iii) The unenacted code for sustainable homes should be very applicable and easy to work with.
- (iv) A lot of work is taking place in market towns with their neighbourhood development plans.
- (v) Reassurance was given that the District Council Network was encouraging Councils to be robust in their approach to this standard.
- (vi) The Council had an opportunity to do something special with the Waterloo Car Park, showing leadership in property design and build.
- (vii) It was requested that the response was circulated to all Members.

**RESOLVED that:**

- (a) the briefing note at Annex A of the report is noted;**
- (b) the proposed response at Annex B is approved.**

**Record of Voting - for 9, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.**

CAB.90 REDUCING CARBON AND FINANCIAL IMPACTS OF WASTE AND STREET CLEANSING VEHICLES

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Flooding and Environmental Health introduced this report explaining that when lorries needed brakes and alignment testing, the lorries had to leave the site and the Council had to pay another company to do this. Purchasing this equipment would mean that this testing could be carried out on site at the depot.

It was considered whether this was a service which could be offered to other companies with big vehicles. It was possible, although the Council lorries would be the biggest services user, and it may be something considered for the future with possible interest from other public sector entities.

This was a good example of an “invest to save” initiative.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet agrees the allocation of £52,100 from the revenue underspend on the Ubico Waste contract in 2019/20 to purchase roller brake and light alignment testing equipment, based on the business case set out in this report.**

**Record of Voting - for 9, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.**

CAB.91 SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBERS

The schedule was discussed relating to the Somerford Keynes Neighbourhood Development Plan. It was commented that this was a proactive parish council and the community had done all the drafting of the plan on which they should be commended.

CAB.92 ISSUE(S) ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND/OR AUDIT

There were no issues arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the Audit Committee.

CAB.93 OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioning of Parking Enforcement, back office software and cashless systems.

This item was considered by the Chair to be urgent.

The Cabinet Member for Car Parks and Town and Parish Councils explained that work was ongoing to award a contract for new parking enforcement and back office systems. Delegated authority was being sought to enable this work to move forward. He would like to see all Cotswold car parks move to pay on exit and apologised for bringing this to Cabinet as an urgent item, this would enable the contracts to be awarded.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance queried why this could not be put forward to a decision at Council on 26 February 2020 as bids were due back on 25 February 2020.

The Group Manager – Commissioning explained that there will be a process to go through and due diligence to take place, which would take up to two weeks before a decision on contractors could be made, she was not anticipating any significant financial increase and existing enforcement suppliers were market leaders, which reduced the risk of significant price increases. A report would be presented to Cabinet in March 2020 explaining the contract costs.

This financial year the APCOA enforcement contract value for CDC would be under £90,000.

Members paid tribute to the traffic wardens and parking enforcement officers who do a difficult job, it was considered that traffic wardens could be ambassadors for the town

**RESOLVED that delegated authority be given to the Head of Paid Service, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and relevant Cabinet Member, to award contracts for parking enforcement, back office ICT and cashless systems.**

The Meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and closed at 7.43 p.m.

Chair

(END)