

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

6 JULY 2020

Present:

Councillor Joe Harris - Chair

Councillors -

Rachel Coxcoon	Jenny Forde
Tony Dale	Lisa Spivey
Andrew Doherty	Clive Webster
Mike Every	

Observers:

Councillors Stephen Andrews, Tony Berry, Gina Blomefield, Nikki Ind.

CAB.1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Webster declared an interest in respect of Exempt Agenda Item (14), as he was a Member of Moreton-in-Marsh Town Council, but confirmed he would participate in the debate of the item in his capacity as the relevant Cabinet Member.

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

CAB.2 MINUTES

RESOLVED that, subject to the following amendments, the Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet on 1 June 2020 be approved as a correct record:

- (i) Addition of the word 'revised' so as to read 'revised Option B' within the resolution of Minute CAB.110;**
- (ii) deletion of the words 'and May' in the second sentence of the first paragraph of Minute CAB.113;**
- (iii) addition of the words 'was required' to the final paragraph of the preamble in relation to Minute CAB.113**

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.3 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Two public questions had been received from Mr. David Fowles of Poulton.

- (i) Question to Councillor Andrew Doherty, Cabinet Member for the Environment, Waste and Recycling

'As a former Councillor and Portfolio holder for the Environment, I have an avid interest in the CDC waste service in general and the green waste service in particular which the Conservatives introduced and which is now your Portfolio responsibility.

The Liberal Democrat administration appears to have completely altered its position from campaigning in the 2019 local elections to retain weekly green bin collection to terminating the service for several weeks during the pandemic to reintroducing it as a fortnightly service at a cost of £30 per annum presented to licence holders as ‘the same price as last year’ albeit for half the service!!

I now hear from friends and former colleagues across the District that there are persistent missed green waste collections in Tetbury, Rodmarton, Daglingworth, Birdlip, Ampney Crucis and even villages around Fairford!

I find this a very worrying trend and very ironic given your frequent briefings on the CDC Barn Theatre live-streams saying how effective the service was!

Could you explain verbally at the Cabinet meeting and in writing afterwards why so many collections are being missed on a service which has already been halved?

In the interests of transparency would you publish regular updates on missed collections on the Council website?

(ii) Question to Councillor Andrew Doherty, Cabinet Member for the Environment, Waste and Recycling

‘I am not alone in feeling short changed by your administration on having our weekly green bin collection service arbitrarily switched to once a fortnight and being told that I should be pleased that the cost of the service would be the same as 2019 at £30.00.

You have consistently justified this reduction as being necessary on both environmental grounds as well as economic grounds being the true cost of the service.

When the CDC was run by the Conservatives we promised to survey residents to ask them if they wished to retain the weekly green bin service and were willing to pay a lot more for the service. This choice was denied them by your administration.

Whilst the service has been reduced by half, you will agree that garden sizes haven’t reduced in size.

Many residents assumed that one solution would be to order a second bin and pay for it thus giving you the same bin capacity fortnightly to compensate for the halving of the service.

I was shocked to discover that you have denied residents this option because of capacity issues?!

Can you please explain both verbally today and in writing following the Cabinet meeting why this option has been cancelled?

If the reason is a capacity issue, how can this be the case because unless you have doubled the number of licence holders, you are only collecting the green waste once a fortnight and not weekly compared with previous years?’

Due to technical problems, Mr. Fowles was unable to join the Meeting. The Cabinet Member confirmed he would send full written responses to Mr. Fowles after the Meeting.

The following responses were subsequently provided:-

(i) Question 1

'Before answering I should note that I have tried to answer the questions with the degree of rigour that I presume a former portfolio holder would wish. Accordingly, I have assumed that the questioner has a level of familiarity with the council's decisions that a lay member of the public may not have.

I am a little surprised at the assertion that I have spent my time in the Barn Theatre saying how effective the service was. I thought I had spent much of that time explaining the what, why and where of the various issues that have arisen on the service during the pandemic and lockdown. I think we have been clear that, since less than half of households subscribe to our garden waste service, our priority during times of stress must be on the universal services used by all residents.

I do apologise to residents who have experienced problems. I have communicated personally with many of those who have been most severely affected, both to express those apologies personally and to offer explanation and resolution where we are able to do so.

Where possible we have taken measures to reduce or eliminate issues – notably running additional vehicles on the garden waste service to ensure we can meet the elevated level of demand seen during lockdown. We have significantly boosted the number of vehicles and crews in use generally. This has helped us to better meet the greatly increased demand that lockdown and home working arrangements have led to.

It is my understanding that there are currently 58 addresses, out of the 44,000 households in the district, that are experiencing regular and repeated misses. The waste team are already working with those residents to resolve their problems, through whatever measures are necessary.

We do already publish missed collections on the website and have been doing so for some time.'

(ii) Question 2

In response to the main question – the simple answer would be that there is no such policy. There have been waiting lists for new and extra licences to ensure that we can successfully deliver service to existing customers and add new ones without further issues.

The existence of, and option to join, the waiting list should have been clearly communicated to residents who have asked us about this. However, I am aware of at least one resident in my own ward left unclear about the arrangements. Assuming this may have happened to others I apologise if we have not always made the current arrangements clear.

Regarding a price consultation – I would have thought that a former portfolio holder would be aware that the council asked exactly that question in 2018, Before re-designing the service? Residents responded overwhelmingly, 3 to 1, against paying more a weekly service – it is not obvious that the answer to that question is in doubt.

I'm also surprised that a former portfolio holder would think that a change in collection frequency would automatically mean there is spare capacity – surely he would be aware that the last Conservative administration set the budget and placed

the relevant vehicle orders? Since I have been unable to find spare vehicles or crews lurking in CDC cupboards, I assume that they ordered the number of vehicles they thought were needed?

The sudden concern about capacity seems like opportunism, an ironic attempt to exploit the failing of the last Conservative administration to plan for the capacity they now seem to think is required. That said, given the lack of attention to detail in their decision making around the service it is entirely possible they thought there would be a “magic lorry tree” somewhere ... In the real-world garden waste vehicles cost £166,000 each, take 9-12 months to be delivered and need paid crews. These things limit when and what we can do – we have made this clear in public statements on the choices available for the service.

Finally, in respect of your introductory remarks in both questions – I think those statements might best be described as “alternative facts”. I had been given to understand that the contract for garden waste collections was agreed in 2002 – which would be the year before the Conservative administration started at CDC. Similarly, the change to fortnightly was a decision of the last Conservative administration. To refresh memories the following might be helpful:

REF: <11-DEC-2018: CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS>

Cllr Fowles seems also to have neglected to mention he was one of the proposers of the last motion that CDC passed in respect of garden waste – again setting the council on track to a fortnightly service. It is that specific motion that committed the council to the garden waste service now in effect.

REF: <FEB 2019: COUNCIL MOTION>

I can only assume that these selective memory lapses are an attempt by members of the last Conservative administration to pretend they did not have anything to do with a change they themselves instigated.

CAB.4 MEMBER QUESTIONS

No Member questions had been received.

CAB.5 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader wished to extend his thanks to Mr. Nigel Adams, the Council's former Head of Paid Service, who had retired from the Council on 30 June 2020 after 31 years' service to the Council and 40 years' service to local government. The Leader commented that Nigel had been a great public servant and support to him following his appointment as Leader of the Council in May 2019, and that he hoped an event could be organised to give Nigel an appropriate send-off once lockdown restrictions had eased.

The Leader then welcomed Dr Christine Gore as the Council's Interim Chief Executive to the Meeting and commented that he looked forward to working with her over the next few months.

In addition, the Leader also wished to extend his thanks to the Council's ERS team for their recent efforts over the weekend of 4-5 July 2020 in distributing information packs to hospitality venues across the District following their re-opening.

CAB.6 APPROVAL TO AWARD CONTRACT IN RESPECT OF THE PROVISION OF CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES SYSTEM

Cabinet was requested to agree a contract award for the cleaning and maintenance of public conveniences.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment, Waste, and Recycling introduced the item and explained that the preferred bidder only wished to provide the contract for two years but this option had been supported by the Procurement Team. He added that it was recognised that the commissioning process could have been improved, but confirmed that the Cabinet would receive early sight of any contract renewal going forward.

In response to a question from the Deputy Leader, the Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the circulated document regarding tenders could be published on the Council's website, in addition to the contract value and length.

RESOLVED that Cabinet award the contract for the cleaning and maintenance of public conveniences to Bidder A at a contract cost of £179,239 per annum.

CAB.7 COMMISSIONING OF CASHLESS PAYMENT PARKING SERVICES

The Cabinet received a report requesting the delegation of contract award for the cashless parking payment services.

The Deputy Leader presented the report and explained that the recommendation required updating to state that the delegation should be to the Interim Chief Executive in consultation with him as the Deputy Leader. He added the decision was being taken by the Cabinet now to ensure a decision was not delayed to the September 2020 Cabinet Meeting.

The Cabinet expressed their support for a move to cashless operations, given the reduction in potential contamination during the Covid-19 outbreak. The Deputy Leader confirmed he would review the price and quality considerations with the Interim Chief Executive in addition to the speed of paying via contactless with Officers.

In response to a request from an observing Member, the Leader confirmed that he would review the existing arrangements regarding on and off street parking and the associated responsibilities of the Council and County Council going forward with the relevant Cabinet Member.

RESOLVED that Cabinet agree to delegate authority to award the contract for the cashless parking payment services to the Interim Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance.

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.8 REVIEW OF PARKING CHARGES AND RELATED MATTERS

Cabinet received a report seeking to enable Cabinet to review tariffs and season ticket prices for each of the Council's car parks and increase charges in line with the agreed budget for 2020/21.

The Deputy Leader introduced the report and explained that he had reviewed the charges with the previous Cabinet Member and compared pricing with surrounding areas including Stroud, Gloucester, Cheltenham and Swindon. He added that the car parks were a significant asset to the Council and that it was reasonable, given the decision taken in February in the context of setting the overall budget, to now look to increase parking charges. The Deputy Leader reported that the change in charges would require advertising in order to notify the public, prior to any new charges being implemented from 1 September 2020. The Deputy Leader concluded that the 20 minute parking bays would help to address prior concerns regarding a shortage of short stay parking and that the proposed price increases would help the Council to manage and control parking going forward.

In response to questions from Cabinet Members, the Deputy Leader confirmed that the question to which 44% of responses had agreed was 'Do you agree that it is fair to increase parking charges for the first time since 2010?'; it had been difficult to forecast parking income at present as previous figures had been based on pre-Covid-19 levels and parking demand had not returned to the level previously seen prior to the virus outbreak; the initial decision to increase charges had been approved as part of the budget process agreed by the Council in February 2020 and a waiting list for season tickets currently existed.

The Cabinet expressed their support for the increase and whilst recognising the reluctance around increasing charges, noted this had been supported as part of the budget consultation and would assist with meeting shortfalls in government funding, whilst still retaining the 'free after 3pm' arrangement and the introduction of free 20 minute parking bays.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the proposed tariff pricing and season ticket charges; and**
- (b) the introduction of free 20 minute parking bays, be agreed.**

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.9 REVIEW OF OPTIONS AND NEED FOR ADDITIONAL PARKING PROVISION IN CIRENCESTER

The Cabinet was requested to consider the options for addressing the car parking requirements in Cirencester and resolve whether or not to submit a planning application for a multi storey car park at Waterloo, Cirencester.

The Leader introduced the report and thanked all members of the Council's Parking Board for their efforts in relation to parking within Cirencester. He explained that the plans had been progressing until January 2020, when the Council had paused to reflect upon the possible climate change implications of constructing a multi-storey car park at the Waterloo site. The Leader added that the proposal to now place the plans on hold for 12 months would enable the Council to assess the potential impact of Covid-19 on car usage and if the plans complied with the administration's climate priorities.

The Deputy Leader extended his thanks to Officers for their work in relation to parking within the town. He added that the intention was to encourage cycling and walking into the centre of Cirencester and given the knowledge that had been gained from the process so far, considered that the option to pause the project for one year would ensure that both the benefits and challenges of the scheme could be fully investigated, particularly as the recovery from the Covid-19 virus continued.

The Cabinet indicated their support for a pause of the project's plans. They commented that smaller sites around the town had resulted in 194 additional spaces being created; with a potential further 50 planned as part of a future scheme and that the Covid-19 virus outbreak had highlighted that dependency on car travel could reduce to much lower levels in the future. The Cabinet also indicated the potential need for the Council to invest in public transport to encourage more sustainable transport methods and different attitudes towards travel into and around the District going forward.

RESOLVED that Cabinet agree to pause the project for 12 months to allow a review of the parking demand in Cirencester and to consider options to mitigate the need for additional parking and promote sustainable transport solutions, (funding for this being included in the budget for the update of the Local Plan).

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.10 SCHEDULE OF DECISION(S) TAKEN BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBERS

Cabinet noted the schedule of decisions taken by the Leader of the Council and/or individual Cabinet Members since the last meeting of the Cabinet.

CAB.11 ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND/OR AUDIT

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

CAB.12 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and Press be excluded from the Meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph (3) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the said Act (Information relating to financial or business affairs) and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information concerned.

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.13 PROPERTY MATTER

To enable a decision to be made on the joint acquisition of a strategic site for future economic development purposes to support integrated transport infrastructure.

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommends Council to:

- (a) Enter into a joint agreement with Moreton-in-Marsh Town Council for the acquisition of the site, as a strategic site for economic development and therefore to:-
- (b) Include a sum up to £730,000 in the Council's Capital Programme over 2020/21 - 2021/22 for the acquisition and development of the site from capital receipts;
- (c) fund the cost of ownership in 2020/21 and 2021/22 from the Council Priorities Fund;

- (d) release the sum held by the Council under the Unilateral Undertaking dated 9th December 2014 for the development of the site as short term car park and longer term transport infrastructure objectives, as set out in the report;**
- (e) grant delegated authority to the Interim Chief Executive in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council to:-**
 - (i) finalise the terms for the acquisition of the property;**
 - (ii) complete all legal documentation for the purchase of the property, including any collaboration agreements, governance structure or other legal agreements associated with the joint purchase and leases to support the overall strategic objectives of the site;**
 - (iii) submit a planning application for the site for the provision of parking pending longer term transport hub ambitions;**
 - (iv) grant delegated authority to the Chief Finance Officer to update the Capital Strategy, Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy to reflect the decision;**
 - (v) update the revenue budget to include income and costs of ownership in line with the final details of the transaction.**

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm, adjourned between 7.29 pm and 7.34 pm, and closed at 8.03 pm

Chair

(END)