

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

22ND JANUARY 2020

Present:

Councillor Nigel Robbins - Chair
Councillor Dilys Neill - Vice-Chair

Councillors -

Stephen Andrews	Stephen Hirst
Mark Annett (until 3.35 p.m.)	Roly Hughes
Julian Beale	Robin Hughes (until 5.50 p.m.)
Gina Blomefield	Sue Jepson (until 5.55 p.m.)
Claire Bloomer	Julia Judd
Tony Berry	Richard Keeling
Ray Brassington	Juliet Layton
Patrick Coleman	Nick Maunder
Rachel Coxcoon	Richard Morgan
Tony Dale	Richard Norris
Andrew Doherty	Gary Selwyn
Mike Evely	Lisa Spivey
Jenny Forde	Ray Theodoulou (until 4.30 p.m.)
Joe Harris	Steve Trotter
Mark Harris	Clive Webster
Nikki Ind	

Apologies:

Andrew Maclean

CL.65 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest by Members.

There were no declarations of interest by Officers.

CL.66 MINUTES

RESOLVED that:

(a) subject to the following amendments, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 27th November/5th December 2019 be approved as a correct record:-

(i) the addition of the name of 'Gina Blomefield' in the list of Members present at the Meeting;

(ii) the deletion of the name of 'Claire Bloomer' from the list of Members present at the Meeting.

Record of Voting - for 15, against 0, abstentions 18, absent 1.

CL.67 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR, LEADER OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

(i) Chair's Announcements

- Filming/Recording of Proceedings - the Chair referred to the standing notification previously received from a member of the public of the intention to film the Council Meeting; and stated that, accordingly, the Council would make its own audio recording of the proceedings.
- Death of former Councillor Gerald Green - the Chair informed Members of the recent death of former Councillor and Council Officer Gerald Green, at the age of 91. The Chair reported that Mr Green had been elected to the Council on 2nd May 1991, to represent the Northleach Ward, and had served on the Council for four years until 1995. He explained that Mr Green had served on the Council's Planning and Development, Environmental Services and Housing Committees in addition to three of the Council's Working Groups in relation to road safety and river management; and, prior to his time as an elected Member, had also served as a Building Control Officer at the Council for 40 years. The funeral service had taken place on 17th January 2020 at Northleach Church and had been attended by Council Officers. The Chair then requested all those present to stand for a period of silence in tribute to, and in memory of, former Councillor Green.

The Leader of the Council expressed that he had communicated with Mr Green on various matters over the years and his thoughts went out to his family and friends.

- Council Motions - the Chair informed Members that all Motions would be debated at the Meeting but that, in the interests of efficient business, he intended to limit all speakers to a maximum speech period of five minutes.

(ii) Leader's Announcements

- District Council Network - the Leader provided an update in relation to the recent District Council Network Conference that he had attended, and explained that some form of change was likely across local government as a result of devolution and/or reorganisation. He informed Members that the Queen's Speech had highlighted support for elected Mayors, and explained that proposals for unitary governance within Gloucestershire were being researched on which he welcomed Members' involvement.
- Budget Consultation 2020 - the Leader explained that the Deputy Leader had been undertaking a substantial volume of work in relation to the Budget Consultation, to which there had already been a greater number of responses than in previous years. The Leader wished to

extend his thanks to the Communications Team and Finance Officers for their work in relation to the consultation process and activities.

- Launch of new Waste and Recycling Service - March 2020 - the Leader explained that the new service would help the Council to address its climate change emergency and that the upcoming launch dates were both realistic and achievable.
- MP Flood Meeting - the Leader informed Members that the next Flood Meeting organised by Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP would take place on Friday 28th January 2020; and expressed the hope that Members would attend to highlight, and hopefully receive responses to, their concerns in relation to flooding within the District.
- Appointment of Climate Change Manager - the Leader informed the Council that Chris Crookall-Fallon had been appointed as the Climate Change Manager for the Council and that he had been an exceptional candidate with significant industry experience.
- Housing Crisis - the Leader commented that the Council was working to address the lack of affordable social rented homes within the District, which was a challenge owing to the Council not having its own stock or owning significant development land. He explained that a report was being prepared which would set out the options available to the Council in terms of delivering more social rented housing. The Leader confirmed that the Council was also aiming to build eight social rented homes at the Kemble Community Garden site and that a consultation on the Homeseeker Plus Policy was shortly to be undertaken.
- Member Mental Health Champion - the Leader stated that Councillor Nick Maunder had agreed to take on the role of Member Mental Health Champion. The Leader also referred to the recent 16-day action campaign which had received 29,000 online views and had resulted in an increased number of referrals during the period. 300 posters had also been delivered across the District as part of the campaign.
- Planning Services - the Leader explained that the Cabinet Member for Development Management, Landscape and Heritage had been meeting regularly with Planning Officers regarding increasing and maximising the Council's receipt of Section 106 monies from developers. He added that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had reviewed the matter at its December 2019 Meeting and had considered the monies previously received to have been 'conservative'. The Leader extended his thanks to those Members involved in this review for their efforts.
- Parking Provision within Cirencester - the Leader informed the Council that a review would shortly be undertaken regarding the proposed multi-storey car park at the Waterloo to determine if the proposals were the best solution for tackling the existing parking problem within Cirencester; and that the site at the Old Memorial Hospital would be operational from mid-March 2020.

- Commercialisation - the Leader explained that the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Skills and Young People had been looking at inward investment and involvement within the private sector in addition to autonomous and electric vehicles and confirmed that a £350,000 fund for commercialisation would be included within the Budget proposals to be presented to the Council in February 2020.

(iii) Head of Paid Service Announcement

- Retirement of Annette Penney - the Head of Paid Service informed Members of the impending retirement of Annette Penney, General Assistant, after 14 years' service to the Council. He explained that he wished to extend his thanks on behalf of all Members and Officers to Annette for her invaluable service, her permanent cheerful disposition, and her exemplary approach to her work.

Various Members commented that they considered Annette's service to have been invaluable and that she would be much missed. Members extended their best wishes to Annette for a long and enjoyable retirement.

CL.68 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10, questions had been submitted as follows. However, given the timing of submission of the questions, written responses would be provided after the Meeting.

(i) Question from Mr David Fowles of Poulton to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

'The new Community Infrastructure Levy has been in existence for several months now.

Please could the Leader provide details of the amount of money that has been raised so far and what infrastructure projects have been identified for the levy to be spent on?'

(ii) Question from Mr David Fowles of Poulton to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

'In January 2019, exactly one year ago, a conference on Cirencester Futures was held at the RAU attended by 120 delegates.

This conference was conceived and executed by the CDC Programme Board established to monitor the progress on the Local Plan and subsequently to be the body that would progress the Cirencester Masterplan.

At this conference a number of very useful themes were identified for the future development of Cirencester including infrastructure, tourism, community and town centre business.

The objective was to progress these important themes and seek to have full participation and engagement from individuals and organisations outside the officers and elected members of CDC.

Please could the Leader answer the following questions:

1. How much did the conference cost?
2. What progress if any has been made on the Masterplan?
3. What participation and engagement has there been from stakeholders outside CDC?

CL.69 MEMBER QUESTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10, questions had been submitted, and responses provided, as follows:-

(i) Question from Councillor Sue Jepson to Councillor Nigel Robbins, Chair of the Council

'I understand that all members were invited to a gathering on Tuesday 17th December, together with our officers, to bid a friendly farewell to Mr David Neudegg - for ten years or more this Council's Chief Executive.

Given Mr Neudegg's widely recognised track record of delivering ground-breaking change at this council - and also our partner councils - could the Chairman please explain why he was unable to attend or, indeed, to send a deputy?

Response from Councillor Robbins

'I was not aware of a formal invitation to this event, either in my role as Chair or indeed as a member.

Having looked into the matter as a result of your question, I have found out that, as part of the regular Keeping Councillors Connected e-mail, David Neudegg mentioned the staff gatherings that would be held across the Publica partner sites in the run-up to Christmas, and his intention to use such events to say his personal farewells before leaving Publica.'

Councillor Jepson did not ask a supplementary question.

(ii) Question from Councillor Mark Annett to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

'I understand that all members were invited to a gathering on Tuesday 17th December, together with our officers, to bid a friendly farewell to Mr David Neudegg, for ten years or more this council's Chief Executive. Given Mr Neudegg's widely recognised track record of delivering ground-breaking change at this council – and at our partner councils – could the Leader of the Council please explain why he was unable to attend? Perhaps he could also comment as to why no member of his Cabinet or indeed no member of the whole Cotswold Liberal Democrat group were able to attend either?'

Response from Councillor Joe Harris

'I wasn't formally invited to the gathering and, in any event, was attending a meeting with the Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council at the time exploring how we can work together to rebuild the Council. This was a long-standing diary commitment.

As noted by the Council Chair, it would seem that this was an informal event.'

Councillor Annett did not ask a supplementary question.

(iii) Question from Councillor Stephen Hirst to Councillor Lisa Spivey, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

'There was a survey in the local press recently regarding the provision of affordable social housing in the County. All six District Councils were asked to express their plans to increase the supply of affordable social housing to meet demand; five councils provided reasoned positive statements. Cotswold District Council on the other hand provided what could only be described as a political rant against the previous Cotswold administration.

This would indicate that the current administration have no reasoned plans to provide new affordable homes, after all they keep repeating that we have a housing crisis in the Cotswolds. How do they intend to resolve this?'

Response from Councillor Spivey

'The provision for affordable housing is set out in the current Local Plan and site allocations up to 2031 have been identified.

In addition to these allocations, we have a Community-Led Housing enabler (Lois Taylor) who is working local communities to help them bring forward affordable housing for towns and rural settlements and set up community groups to deliver them. This administration has been very clear in its intent to work with parishes and help them deliver genuinely affordable housing in their area. We held a seminar in Northleach last year to encourage town and parish councils to come forward and we will be working with GRCC to carry out more parish needs surveys this year and are identifying parishes on an opportunity basis - either potential land coming forward or a parish with a desire to deliver more affordable homes. Town and Parish Councils can also help by coming forward and identifying opportunities themselves. We have practical and financial support available to help them deliver.

Stow is a good example where they are actively looking to bring forward affordable homes; however, with AONB and development constraints, this is very challenging.

Furthermore, this administration is exploring other ways of providing additional affordable homes, most specifically social rented homes. This could be done through a variety of methods which are currently being scoped out but include, direct provision where the Council sets

up a Housing Company and directly delivers housing, working with strategic partners to deliver additional affordable homes on sites the Council owns, and a far more robust approach with developers on S106 agreements and viability studies.

Through these combined methods, this administration will, by design, ensure the increased delivery of genuinely affordable homes for our residents most in need.'

Councillor Hirst thanked the Cabinet Member for her response and, by way of a supplementary question, asked if the Cabinet Member considered that (i) a thorough review to provide all types of housing in a balanced manner across the District was required; and (ii) increased employment needed to be provided within the District to ensure travel out of the District for working was reduced as much as possible?

In response, the Cabinet Member explained that she did agree with the need for a review. She also stated that the Council needed to ensure that jobs created were well-paid jobs of a suitable standard and explained that within the proposed budget to be presented to Council in February 2020 was a £350,000 sum for economic development related matters.

(iv) Question from Councillor Stephen Hirst to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

'Is it not time that this current administration provide a detailed, costed and comprehensive Corporate Plan to provide major benefits for the residents of the Cotswolds following more than ten years of progressive benefit achievement for all residents?'

Response from Councillor Joe Harris

'As I outlined when the corporate strategy was adopted in September 2019, and as noted in the minutes of that meeting, the more detailed plan on how we rebuild the Council will be presented to full Council in May 2020.'

Councillor Hirst did not ask a supplementary question.

(v) Question from Councillor Julian Beale to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

'May we please be informed if and when Mr Jan Britton will make a formal presentation to Councillors of his progress plans and aspirations for Publica?'

Response from Councillor Joe Harris

'I will organise for Jan to come to a Conservative group meeting and brief you on what he's up to, his plans for Publica, and how we can work with Publica to rebuild the Council.'

Councillor Beale did not ask a supplementary question.

(vi) Question from Councillor Ray Theodoulou to Councillor Mike Evely, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance

'Last year CDC provided in the budget a sum of £500,000 to facilitate broadband services in hard to reach areas of the District.

Can the Deputy Leader confirm that the provision is unused and remains in the accounts; also will the Deputy Leader advise Council what plans he has to use this reserve for the purpose?'

Response from Councillor Evely

'The provision of £500,000 within the Capital Programme for 2019/20 has not been used.

Fastershire presented their progress to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2019 and advised that it was reviewing its strategy in light of recent statements by HM Government about changes to the universal obligation and new developments in 5G. Fastershire have now completed that review and included an option for local funds to supplement their next procurement process. This is anticipated to move to a procurement stage in March.

The Council will formally consider the outcome of the Fastershire review and, assuming the Council supports the recommendations from the Fastershire review, funding can be included in the Capital Programme 2020/21. A report back from Fastershire is expected in April after the completion of the procurement process.'

Councillor Theodoulou thanked the Deputy Leader for his response and commented that broadband was important to residents across the District. By way of a supplementary question, he asked if the Deputy Leader could confirm what work the Council had undertaken to reach hard-to-reach areas and if there was a plan to use Council funds in association with Fastershire to reach the target timelines.

In response, the Deputy Leader explained that he did not have a plan and that he would ask Officers to establish what work had already been undertaken, and then provide a full response following the Meeting. He added that the Council was waiting for Fastershire to come back to the Council with proposals and acknowledged the importance of coverage across the District.

(vii) Question from Councillor Ray Theodoulou to Councillor Mike Evely, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance

'The provisional budget proposes a significant level of borrowing for CDC which has for many years been debt free. Will the Deputy Leader confirm how the debt trajectory will rise in the life of this Council and list the projects each with its associated borrowings included in this forecast?'

Will he also provide an estimated annual cost of servicing this debt as to interest and capital repayment as well as detail how this debt will be sourced?'

Will he also confirm that before incurring any borrowing the Administration will dispose of investment assets held for yield only as opposed to strategic holdings?’

Response from Councillor Evemy

‘The Council will be asked to consider updates to the Council’s Capital Strategy, Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy in February, following scrutiny by the Audit Committee on 30 January. These strategic documents set out the framework for the Council’s capital spend and treasury management activity.

The capital projects which will require borrowing are set out below:

- *Waterloo car park - £7.2 million*
- *Cirencester Leisure Centre - £1.2 million*
- *Commercialisation Strategy: which will include investment in housing, economic development and green technology - £47.5 million. At present we are assuming that funding streams would be as follows: (i) social housing £30 million (100% borrowing), (ii) green technology £5 million (50% borrowing, 50% external funding) and (iii) economic development £12.5 million (50% borrowing, 50% external funding). The Commercialisation Strategy is still in development; therefore these figures are indicative only.*

Before any expenditure is committed on any capital project, including those listed above, the Council will consider business cases which will include capital financing costs, other revenue impacts, risk and contribution to Council priorities.

The set of strategy documents set out details of the expected level of borrowing over the next three years. The Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy includes the cost of servicing the debt (see Annex A2). The sources of external borrowing are set out in the Treasury Management Strategy.

The Treasury Management Strategy sets out that the Council will look to maximise the use of “internal borrowing” (surplus cash holdings) to fund capital expenditure rather than accessing external borrowing. With cash deposits earning less than 1%, the loss of investment income represents better value for money than external borrowing - with the associated interest charge and requirement to make a revenue provision for repayment of the debt. The Council is unlikely to be able to fund all of its borrowing from low interest cash deposits and eventually will need to consider whether it is more cost effective to use cash held in pooled funds for investment purposes or access external borrowing. Officers will seek advice from the Council’s treasury advisors (Arlingclose) and these decisions will be considered by the Council’s Audit Committee and full Council through regular reporting on Treasury Management performance.’

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Theodoulou asked if the £47 million the Council was expecting to borrow included the borrowing of £30 million for the provision of social housing within the District; and what plans the Council had for the deployment of these funds and for the sites of the social homes.

In response, the Deputy Leader explained that reports had been presented to the Audit Committee detailing the various strategies, although some of the details had been contained within confidential reports. He confirmed that many Members of the Council would be involved in future discussions and that he would happily provide a detailed reply, explaining the information he could currently provide, following the Meeting.

(viii) Question from Councillor Sue Jepson to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

‘Could the Leader of the Council please explain the delay in bestowing Honorary Alderman status on those former members of this Council who either stood-down or were not re-elected at the May 2019 District elections, and who had amassed the necessary length of service and points under the rules of our extant Constitution.

It is now more than eight months since those elections. Today’s meeting is the sixth meeting of full council (including Special Meetings) to have taken place since those elections and the matter is once again not on the agenda.

In the continued absence of the necessary Officer Report, please could the Leader publish as part of his answer to my question both the extant “point-scoring” rules under which those members would have served this council, together with the “points” amassed by each councillor who either stood down or were not re-elected in May 2019?’

Response from Councillor Joe Harris

‘The Liberal Democrat group does not believe that the Honorary Alderman scheme is compatible with the modernisation agenda we are implementing or with the motion about democratic renewal unanimously agreed by Council in July.

Insofar as the extant scheme is concerned:-

(a) *the points system to determine eligibility is as follows:-*

- *each year as an Elected Member of the Cotswold District Council or one of its predecessor Councils - 1 point;*
- *each year as Chair of the Council (pre September 2001) - 3 points;*
- *each year as Chair of the Council (post September 2001) - 2 points;*
- *each year as Vice-Chair of the Council (post June 2003) - 2 points;*
- *each year as Leader of the Council - 3 points;*
- *each year as Deputy Leader of the Council - 2 points;*
- *each year as a Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) - 2 points;*

- *each year as Chair of a main Committee - 2 points.*
- (b) *the Council has previously accepted that a former Councillor accruing 15 points or more would be automatically considered for the title;*
- (c) *the Council has not ruled out, in exceptional circumstances, conferring the title of Honorary Alderman on former Members who may not have accrued the necessary points but have otherwise rendered eminent service to the Council:*
- (d) *by using the points scheme at (a) above, those councillors who either stood down or who were not successful at the May 2019 elections would have accrued the following points:-*

Former Councillor	Number of Points Accrued
<i>Tatyan Cheung</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Sue Coakley</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Alison Coggins</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Robert Dutton</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>David Fowles</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Chris Hancock</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Maggie Heaven</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Jenny Hincks</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Mark MacKenzie-Charrington</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Nick Parsons</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Shaun Parsons</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Tina Stevenson</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Lynden Stowe</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Len Wilkins</i>	<i>18</i>

Councillor Jepson commented that she had been very disappointed by the Leader's response and that this matter had not specifically been discussed at the July 2019 Council Meeting. She added that she considered the response to be arrogant and, by way of a supplementary question, asked if the Leader would be writing to former Liberal Democrat Councillors and Honorary Aldermen Hodgkinson, Nash and Edney informing them that the role of Honorary Alderman was effectively redundant, as it was no longer compatible with, or important to, the Council's work.

The Leader responded that he was not 'sacking' any existing Aldermen but that the administration had decided that it did not wish to appoint any more Alderman; given that, to do so, would mean that the number of Aldermen would exceed the number of current serving Members. He added that it would remain a matter for a future Council to determine if any future appointments would be made, but that he was happy to discuss the matter further after the Meeting.

(ix) Question from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Lisa Spivey, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

'How often is the housing list reviewed to check on whether individuals' and families' requirements have changed or to find out if they have been found homes by some other agency or means?'

Response from Councillor Spivey

'Checking whether families' circumstances have changed or whether they have been housed elsewhere is an ongoing task which Officers are engaged with daily.

There are 3 main points to consider:

1. *The responsibility to ensure an applicant's details are up-to-date rests on the individual applicant themselves. If there has been a change in their circumstances, they have a duty to inform us, especially where it could affect their priority banding, bedroom need or local connection.*

2. *In regard to Officers checking information, this happens at 2 main stages:*

- *At the time the application is submitted - documents will be requested to confirm the information provided on the application, this in turns allows us to correctly award their priority banding, bedroom need or local connection. This would also be used to reduce fraudulent applicants - only last week we caught someone who lied, saying they weren't a homeowner when they were.*

- *At the time the applicant is considered on a shortlist - documents will be requested and further checks are made to ensure the applicants circumstances are the same. If their circumstances have changed and they have not informed us then they would be bypassed on the shortlist.*

3. *On top of these, we also run an Annual Review through the system. This is an email/letter which goes out to applicants who haven't updated their circumstances within the preceding 11 months. It gives people 28 days to respond. If no response is received or the email/letter bounces back, then their application is removed. The Annual Reviews are sent out at the start of each month.'*

Councillor Blomefield did not ask a supplementary question.

(x) Question from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Lisa Spivey, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

'Parish and Town Councils conduct housing needs surveys when doing their Neighbourhood or Local Plans - are these cross-referenced with the housing lists to clarify where and what types of homes are required?'

Response from Councillor Spivey

'Parish Needs Surveys for Cotswold District Council's work are carried out on CDC's behalf by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, using a standard developed format for comparison and consistency. Respondents are asked if they are registered on the Council's Housing Register - Homeseeker Plus; however, as Parish Needs Surveys are anonymised, it is only possible to cross reference numerically to avoid double counting when assessing demand. Parish Needs Surveys are used to inform the need for rural exception sites - sites for affordable housing where local need cannot be met through other forms of delivery such as planning obligations on market sites. The Council also uses other sources of information when assessing demand for housing and has recently commissioned a Local Housing Needs Survey, with its Gloucestershire District and Borough partners, which informs Local Plan work. This examines existing supply and demand, including the Council's Housing Register, as well as demographic and economic forecasts for projected growth. This is carried out on a district-wide basis.

Parish and Town Councils commission their own housing needs surveys when preparing their Neighbourhood Plans. GRCC is usually commissioned to carry out the survey however CDC does not control the format. Statistical information on need from the Council's Housing Register, subject to GDPR, is provided to Parish and Town Councils, and GRCC on their behalf, when requested, so that Parish and Town Councils can compare data. Please note that Council's Housing Register, Homeseeker Plus, only captures the demand for rented affordable housing, not low cost home ownership.'

Councillor Blomefield did not ask a supplementary question.

(xi) Question from Councillor Tony Berry to Councillor Mike Evely, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance

'In the 'Budget Consultation Pack' you quote that Government funding has decreased from £5.9 million in 2009/10 to £2.5million in 2019/20. Please could you tell me how much of this drop in funding has been managed through the various joint working initiatives which finally led to setting up Publica?'

Response from Councillor Evely

'The table below shows the new savings each year achieved through joint working together with the cumulative savings.

	2008-9 £000	2009/10 £000	2010/11 £000	2011/12 £000	2012/13 £000
<i>New Savings</i>	25	48	218	165	388
<i>Cumulative Saving</i>	25	73	290	455	843
	2013/14 £000	2014/15 £000	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	Total savings £000
<i>New Savings</i>	313	598	541	1,200	3,492
<i>Cumulative Saving</i>	1,155	1,753	2,294	3,492	

It is incumbent upon all Councils to ensure that they are financially prudent and have built resilience so they can weather difficult times. Clearly savings were made by the administration Cllr Berry supported and latterly led in response to the reduction in government funding. We are now awaiting consultations on a new local government financial regime from 2021/22 which we anticipate will put further pressure on our revenue budget. The budget consultation to which Cllr Berry refers gives us the opportunity to explain and discuss with residents our current financial situation, how we are looking to rebuild the Council and ensure the financial resilience of the Council to cope with this challenge.'

Councillor Berry did not ask a supplementary question.

(xii) Question from Councillor Tony Berry to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance

'The Cabinet report on the Medium -Term Financial Strategy and Budget highlights a number of areas where funds either have been committed (£47 thousand on increased Members Allowances, FTE for a Climate Change Manager etc.), or are planned expenditure such as:-

- Strategic financial support enhancement £50k
- Commercialisation strategy development £350k
- Property options £50k
- Development of a strategy for Health, Wellbeing and Leisure £50k

Please could you explain how these latter monies are to be spent and the expected outcome and the total cost of the initiatives (including office refurbishment and the cost of officers' involvement in out of hours meetings) instigated by your administration?'

Response from Councillor Evemy

'Our Medium Term Financial Strategy as outlined in the Cabinet report has rebuilding the Council at its core.'

Strategic financial support enhancement provides funding for our Chief Finance Officer to be dedicated to Cotswold District Council rather than being shared with West Oxfordshire District Council.

The Commercialisation Strategy will be key to increasing income to the Council both to replace lost income from Government and to enable the Council to invest in services in line with its priorities. The allocation of £350,000 will provide funding for support for economic development in the District as well as support to develop and implement the Commercialisation Strategy.

£50,000 on 'Property Options' reflects the decision taken by Cabinet on 4 November 2019 to provide funding to enable feasibility studies to be carried out on existing Council owned sites, or other sites, which could be used to support the delivery of the Council's priorities.

The £50,000 provision for the development of the Health, Wellbeing and Leisure Strategy will fund a strategic review of these needs across the District and identify existing service provision. From this evidence, the Council will then identify where there are gaps in service provision and how it plans to contribute towards improving Health, Wellbeing and Leisure across the District.

Cabinet Members will work with Officers to identify how these outcomes can be delivered and to commission and procure services accordingly. Procurement will be in line with the Council's Contract Rules and Financial Rules and, where necessary, reports will be brought to Cabinet and Council.

At this point, Publica has not requested additional funding to support the work on these Council Priorities. Therefore, Officer costs are within the proposed budget. There are no office refurbishment costs associated with these proposals.'

Councillor Berry thanked the Deputy Leader for his response but commented that his question submitted had omitted reference to 'providing the total cost of Officer involvement in attending evening meetings' and that he wished this matter to be answered by the Deputy Leader in writing after the Meeting.

In response, the Deputy Leader explained that reference to Officer involvement had not been included in the question submitted and that this had been highlighted shortly before the Meeting. He added that he was happy to provide the various costs and confirmed that there was no cost of Publica Officers attending evening meetings and those Officers who remained employed by CDC were entitled to a £40 evening meeting allowance (although this did not apply to the three most senior CDC Officers).

- (xiii) Question from Councillor Stephen Andrews to Councillor Rachel Coxcoo, Cabinet Member for Planning Policy, Climate Change and Energy

'In July 2019 the Council declared a state of Climate Emergency and committed to carbon and energy targets.

In September 2019 the Council approved that funding of £70,000 be provided to Publica for the recruitment of a Strategic Climate Change Manager in this Financial Year. It is understood that this appointment has now been made.

Can Cllr Coxcoon please provide detail of the priorities that the Strategic Climate Change Manager will be working to, in particular the top three priorities they will be given, together with the key milestones for the delivery of tangible and measurable outcomes for each of those three priorities in order that it can subsequently be shown that this post is delivering, on time, the work expected of them by this Council in line with the urgency this Council has given to this subject.'

Response from Councillor Coxcoon

'The Climate Change Manager starts on 3rd February and the Officer will be working to review existing data and commission additional reports and data gathering to enable priorities to be established. Informed decisions on desired outcomes need to be based on data showing where the greatest opportunities lie to generate carbon reductions. A Strategy and action plan with key milestones will be reported to this Council in July 2020. This is the timetable originally committed to in the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration, which was a reasonable timetable given that the Climate Emergency Declaration represented a complete departure from the priorities of the previous administration, and there was no officer capacity or internal skills base to draw on to deliver this challenging new priority.

We are confident that the new Climate Emergency Manager is a high calibre individual who will be able to hit the ground running and bring an action plan to the Council by July, in line with the original commitment.

I will be meeting with the new Climate Emergency Manager in their first week to lay out some key priorities to build the action plan from. Our priorities will be based on the levers of influence we have as a local authority:

- *Direct Control - ensuring our own operations, staff practices, travel policies, directly provided services are net zero*
- *Procurement and Commissioning - requiring non-council suppliers to demonstrate that they provide services and goods that are carbon zero*
- *Place-shaping - Applying our existing powers and using our local plan review to design and apply policies to determine and control quality and style of new developments and to direct purpose and nature of regeneration, infrastructure investment and economic development to create net zero outcomes*
- *Engaging - Communicating, potentially in partnership with others, to make this global issue locally relevant and to motivate effective individual and collective responses, encourage behavioural change, promote community wellbeing and lead by example*
- *Convening - Bringing people together to create and support effective partnerships across sectors to develop shared purpose and co-ordinated efforts and communications*

- *Showcasing - Demonstrating, promoting and rewarding good practice (e.g. flagship initiatives, open days and study tours, awards programmes etc.).'*

Councillor Andrews did not ask a supplementary question.

(xiv) Question from Councillor Stephen Andrews to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

'Although the prime focus of this question is in the context of the declaration by this Council of a Climate Change Emergency in July 2019, it also cuts across areas that are the responsibility of others in the Cabinet.

The Planning Committee have on a number of occasions commented upon their inability to be more proactive in addressing Climate Change issues when considering Planning Applications.

The Government is currently consulting on the "The Future Homes Standard" that should be applied to all new build housing. The consultation specifically covers proposed changes to Part L (conservation of fuel and power) and Part F (ventilation) of the Building Regulations for new dwellings. This consultation has been open since October 2019 and is due to finish on the 7th February 2020.

Can Cllr Joe Harris confirm that this Council is preparing a response based upon its experience as a Local Planning Authority and its planned efforts to address Climate Change? Can he also reassure Councillors, particularly those who are members of the Planning Committee, that they will have the opportunity to comment on that response before it is submitted?'

Response from Councillor Coxcoo (as key Cabinet Member), on behalf of Councillor Joe Harris

'The Council has prepared a response to the Government's Future Homes Standard consultation and this will be presented to Cabinet on 10th February for its consideration and approval. The Council raises serious concerns about the government's commitment and ability to meet its legal requirement to become zero carbon by 2050. Proposals do not go far or quickly enough and rely too heavily on the energy sector to meet reductions in carbon emissions.

Equally, we reject the government's proposal to remove our ability to set local housing standards higher than Building Regulations (e.g. zero carbon homes). The Council's Local Plan does not require higher building standards and it is our ambition and commitment to rectify this along with other climate emergency measures to ensure development becomes carbon neutral as soon as possible.

I'm happy for any member of the Council to contact me about the Council's response and to receive their views.'

Councillor Andrews did not ask a supplementary question.

(xv) Question from Councillor Richard Norris to Councillor Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Public Safety

'The Communities of Tetbury and Fairford welcomed the decision taken by the Cabinet on the 4th November 2019 to:

- prioritise potential solutions for Tetbury and Fairford, and invite engagement with interested parties in those towns to help with our research and to frame the future; whilst,
- in the meantime, and without prejudicing the strategy work, reaffirm that the Council would be prepared to consider funding well-planned and costed solutions in future that demonstrate real community benefit.

This was set against the work that was continuing at that time relating to the production of a District-wide leisure strategy, looking at provision holistically, based on current and future needs.

During the debate at that Cabinet meeting, Cllr Mark Harris noted that it was reasonable for the communities of Tetbury and Fairford to know when this District-wide leisure strategy might be available in order that they could frame their own work. In response, Cllr Forde reassured Cabinet that she anticipated its completion at Easter.

Can Cllr Forde reassure the communities of Tetbury and Fairford that this remains the case and that they can expect to be contacted imminently to assist with the research being undertaken in advance of the completion of the Leisure Strategy this coming Easter?'

Response from Councillor Forde

'Thank you for your question Cllr. Norris. We are all very eager to have a Leisure Strategy especially given that, to date, the District hasn't had one - and which is why, as part of rebuilding the Council, we are investing in leisure, health and wellbeing. I hope to be able to communicate a more definitive timetable shortly.

Meanwhile, you may not be aware but we are already in contact with the communities of Tetbury and Fairford and I thought you might be interested in a brief summary of the work we are already involved in Tetbury and Fairford/Lechlade:

Tetbury:

1. *S106 Care contribution funding (Steepleton Development)*

The aim of this project is to help the older people of Tebury (55+) improve their quality of life, by putting in place services that address the key areas of need, for this cohort. We are facilitating partnership working and decision making on how the money might be spent. In this role we are giving in-kind advice and professional support.

2. Tetbury Town Council - Tetbury Health and Wellbeing Group (Cllrs Hirst and Ind)

The purpose of this group is:

- *To act as an advisory group for Tetbury Town Council*
- *To focus on health and wellbeing for the community of Tetbury Town parished area*
- *To link with, and build on, the work started by the Tetbury Cares initiative and Action Plan*
- *To give additional capacity to the Town Council*
- *To report back every 3 months and make recommendations to the Town Council for the health and wellbeing of residents.*

The work is directed by a committee. We are a committee member and have already been able to influence their work positively.

Fairford/Lechlade:

Working for Wellbeing in Fairford and Lechlade

This initiative started at the beginning of 2019 with a group of local people supported by Cllr Andrews that got together to address local health and wellbeing needs due to a lack of services (in particular around end of life care). A Community Wellbeing Action Day has been held in the autumn where over 30 organisations in the Fairford and Lechlade catchment areas attended. The aim of this event was to gather intelligence around local assets and needs and to see whether there is an appetite to address these collaboratively. This initiative looks at the Frome Care Navigators Model as best practice and had a guest speaker from the Frome programme presenting at the event. Subsequently, a project group has been formed to look at the identified priorities and to focus on initial actions. GRCC, Cllrs Doherty and Andrews, as well as our CDC Community Wellbeing Manager, are part of this group. The group meets on a monthly/bi-monthly basis.'

Councillor Norris did not ask a supplementary question.

(xvi) Question from Councillor Richard Norris to Councillor Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Public Safety

'There is a budgetary provision of £1.2m to increase capacity at Cirencester leisure centre, increase revenue generation and/or make provision for activities that are not currently being provided. Alternative options such as ten pin bowling have also been presented.

A recent report provided to Overview and Scrutiny advises that no decision has been made regarding these options. There is an aspiration to commission consultants to complete a leisure facility strategy for the Cotswold District which will require approval from Cabinet. Does this form part of the Health and Well Being Strategy and when will this happen?'

Response from Councillor Forde

'We believe that £1.2m is a lot of money to spend on increasing the capacity of a Leisure Centre without any District Wide Strategy. Therefore, I'm sure you'll agree, it makes sense to make informed decisions on how this money is spent once we have one. The Leisure Facilities Strategy referred to previously will provide needs-based evidence to inform any decisions the Council might make regarding any leisure facility investments.'

'Whilst the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan and Leisure Facility Strategy are separate work strands, they all form part of our overall plan for the entire Cotswolds to enable residents to achieve a high level of health and wellbeing. I look forward to presenting this to you and working with you to deliver it in your Ward(s).'

Councillor Norris thanked the Cabinet Member for her response and commented that he looked forward to receiving the definitive dates. By way of a supplementary question, he asked if the £1.2 million capital spend was for Cirencester or a District-wide strategy.

In response, the Cabinet Member explained that a District-wide strategy was currently being produced and that she considered there to be little financial sense in spending £1.2 million entirely on provision within Cirencester without assessing the leisure needs of the entire District. She added that the strategy would be a blueprint for future leisure provision and the Council wished to achieve a high level of health and wellbeing.

(xvi) Question from Councillor Richard Morgan to Councillor Clive Webster, Cabinet Member for Development Management, Landscape and Heritage

'It is our understanding that the Lib Dem administration are reviewing the Chesterton development and you are attempting to increase the amount of affordable housing on this specific development. Could we please have an update regarding this review and the progress made so far? In addition, could you specifically confirm if it's your intention to reduce some of the infrastructure projects related to the Chesterton development in return for more affordable housing, and if so, which infrastructure projects you are willing relinquish?'

Response from Councillor Webster

'We currently have no plans to renegotiate or vary the S106 agreements for the Chesterton development proposals. In more general terms, Councillor Morgan is correct to say that we are committed to finding ways to deliver more truly affordable housing for the residents of this district. We are developing multiple options to do this, including direct delivery and a greater proportion of social rented housing within Affordable Housing allocations, but this must not be at the cost of much-needed infrastructure improvements. We remain confident that we can deliver higher levels of truly affordable homes, more resource-efficient housing and strategic investment for our towns and villages.'

Councillor Morgan did not ask a supplementary question.

(xviii) Question from Councillor Richard Morgan to Councillor Lisa Spivey, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

'It is our understanding that the Lib Dem administration are intending to borrow money and provide council housing and socially rented housing. Could you confirm if you intend for CDC to develop and build this housing provision itself, or is it your intention to purchase existing (already built) housing from the open market at current market valuations?'

Response from Councillor Spivey

'It is no secret that this administration wants to provide genuinely affordable homes in the District, especially social rented as outlined in my response to Question 3.

To that end, a report is being prepared to consider options for the provision of affordable/ social rented housing. This will include consideration and viability of building on existing sites within the Council's ownership, purchasing land to build on, purchasing open market housing and purchasing housing off plan to develop (on sites which have planning permission but have not been built out and would be built by third party developer).

As with any financial decision, this report will come before Cabinet and Council for full consideration and decision.'

Councillor Morgan did not ask a supplementary question.

CL.70 PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

CL.71 ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION PHASE OF THE RUGBY CLUB CAR PARK, CIRENCESTER

The Council was requested to consider the allocation of additional funding to meet the construction cost of the car park at the Cirencester Rugby Club site, as recommended by the Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member for Car Parks and Town and Parish Councils introduced the item and explained that he regretted having to request additional funding. He had considered whether a project review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be beneficial, but had been made aware of a review commissioned by senior officers of the approach to programme and project management. Such review had led to new processes being put in place which ensured a greater oversight of the Council's programmes and projects; sought to enable existing programmes and projects to be 'retrofitted' into the new arrangements with appropriate controls; and ensured that senior officer accountabilities were clearly set out, together with requirements for financial and other support. He hoped that such actions would enable more robust arrangements in future.

The Cabinet Member explained that the increased costs had been due to (i) undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which had been suggested by the Landscape Officer; (ii) the proposed further widening of the car park entrance which had increased costs; (iii) a £95,000 risk allowance having been factored into the cost plan. The Cabinet Member added that delegated authority had been granted to secure parking provision at the Kennels Site for 346 spaces and, along with this provision, this would provide the opportunity to review the proposals for the Waterloo site. He concluded that the scheme was part of resolving the current parking shortfall in Cirencester; and he wished to thank Officers and Members for their work in relation to the Parking Board and also former Councillors Hancock and MacKenzie-Charrington for their previous input.

In response to various questions from Members, the Cabinet Member confirmed that he would not be presenting the request to Council if he did not consider it presented value for money; the funding requested had been reviewed by the Parking Board and statutory Officers and should be viewed as one of a group of projects which represented a holistic approach to tackling the lack of parking provision within Cirencester; and the Council would be able to claim any VAT costs back from the contractors.

The Deputy Leader commented that he did support the recommendations and that he welcomed the review undertaken by Officers. He felt that the Council should approve the sum requested and note that this figure would be taken from the £15 million proposed for the construction of the Waterloo Car Park.

The Head of Paid Service confirmed that new processes had been implemented which ensured greater oversight of projects and more robust management of projects.

A Member questioned if the Council would include a clause in future projects in order to ensure as much as possible that all projects were delivered on time. In response, the Cabinet Member explained that Officers were often at the mercy of suppliers and the information presented by them; but that he agreed such penalties should be insisted on in future.

Another Member commented that one of the extra benefits that would arise from the construction of the car park would be in relation to the health and wellbeing aspects of increasing parking and striding to the town centre from the Rugby Club site; which also addressed the primary issue of the lack of parking provision within the town.

Some Members questioned whether the surplus income from car parks could not be used for this and future car park projects. In response, the Cabinet Member confirmed that whilst the Council made a surplus from its car parks, this income had previously been used to supplement zero increases in Council Tax. He added that the income was a revenue stream and that most councils across the country supplemented their service delivery through parking funds. He concluded by stating that he hoped the parking situation within the District would be significantly different, and improved, in 10 years' time.

RESOLVED that:

(a) the Council includes an additional sum of £192,000 in the Capital Programme 2020/21 to meet the construction cost of the Rugby Club car park;

(b) the funds be allocated from the Waterloo car park project within the Capital Programme.

Record of Voting - for 33, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 1.

Note:

At this juncture, the Meeting was briefly adjourned (between 3.25 p.m. and 3.35 p.m.).

Following the break, the Leader informed the Council that Mr Nick Gazzard of the Hollie Gazzard Trust was present at the Meeting to provide a presentation to Members in relation to the work of the Trust; and how this linked to the related Motion on domestic abuse. In this connection, Members noted that the Trust had been established by the Gazzard Family following the murder of 20-year-old Hollie Gazzard by an ex-partner in Gloucester in 2014; and the Trust sought to help reduce domestic violence through creating and delivering programmes on domestic abuse and promoting healthy relationships to schools and colleges.

In thanking Mr Gazzard for his interesting and thought-provoking presentation, the Chair explained that he intended to vary the order of business in order to consider Motion 18 2019/20 re: Domestic Violence as the next item.

CL.72 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

(i) Motion 18 of 2019/20 re: Domestic Violence

Proposed by Councillor Jenny Forde, Seconded by Councillor Maunder:

'Council notes:

- *An estimated 1.9 million adults aged 16 to 59 experience domestic abuse each year.*
- *Between March 2018 and March 2019, there were 751 domestic abuse referrals to Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) for the Cotswold District and 7,017 referrals across Gloucestershire.*
- *In most rural areas, abuse can last 25 per cent longer due to isolation and rural victims are half as likely as urban victims to report their abuse.*

Council commends:

- *The work done by organisations such as GDASS and Gloucestershire Constabulary to raise awareness of, and tackle domestic abuse in all its forms.*

- *The recent '16 days of action' campaign that Cotswold District Council participated in.*
- *The work done by the Hollie Gazzard Trust & GDASS in Gloucestershire to raise awareness of domestic violence, to provide support to young people and deliver healthy relationship education.*

Council resolves to:

- *Develop an ongoing programme of events and awareness-raising across the Cotswolds and utilise the expertise of the Safer Communities Project Officer.*
- *Ensure all our frontline services have the skills, training and attitude to recognise signs of domestic abuse and act appropriately.*
- *Work through the Community Safety Partnership to raise awareness and improve access to support services, particularly in our rural communities.*
- *Continue to build, expand and support our DA Champion network across the Cotswold District to support communities to come together to make the Cotswolds safer.*
- *Work with our DA partners, specifically GDASS & the Hollie Gazzard Trust, to raise awareness of the charities work, aims and objectives within the Cotswold District.'*

In Proposing the Motion, Councillor Forde explained that the issue of domestic violence was still misunderstood and underfunded. She explained that the Motion aimed to provide an opportunity to pause and acknowledge the fact that domestic violence did happen within the District and for Members to place themselves in the victim's shoes. Councillor Forde continued that nearly all victims were known to those abusing them and that victims could come from any background, be it wealthy, poor, gay, straight, male or female. She added that whilst Cotswold District currently had the lowest number of reported crimes in the County, it was vital to establish whether this was genuinely due to a small number of incidents or, as might be the case, was due to a fear of reporting incidents. In her view, it was essential that cases were reported and that the issue was no longer underestimated.

In Seconding the Motion, Councillor Maunder commented that he had been affected by reading a recent report of the Rural Crime Network which had concluded that rural victims were half as likely to report cases of domestic violence as those in urban areas. He added that the effects were also devastating for the children of any victim(s) and that a total of 1 million adults had experienced abuse before they were 16 years old, though the issue was intergenerational. Councillor Maunder continued that domestic violence cost £23 billion annually, of which personal costs could not be calculated, and that the key issue to tackling domestic violence was in victims coming forward. He concluded by stating that, with proper training, Officers and Members could be alert to the symptoms and signs and be able to take action if necessary.

A Member commented that through his experience as a Community First Responder he had been trained to look for signs of domestic violence in patients and that domestic violence was considered as part of safeguarding issues.

The Leader of the Conservative Group confirmed that his Group Members were fully supportive of the Motion, and commented that the issue was not a political matter or for political debate.

In response to a question from a Member, Councillor Forde confirmed that discussions would take place through the Community Safety Partnership over the next 18 months and that training had already been scheduled by the Hollie Gazzard Trust and Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Services (GDASS). Training had also been arranged for taxi drivers within the District.

Other Members thanked the Councillors for presenting the Motion and commented that the Motion focussed on the principles of tackling domestic violence and not on the associated finances and therefore should be supported wholly by the Council.

RESOLVED that the Motion be supported.

Record of Voting - for 32, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 2.

CL.73 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME FOR 2020/21

The Council received a report detailing the results of the public consultation carried out on proposals for revising the current Council Tax Support scheme; and was requested to approve the proposed amendments (which would become effective from 1st April 2020), as recommended by the Cabinet.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and explained that he was proud to present the item to the Council which was the culmination of a large volume of work undertaken by Officers, Members and the Citizens Advice Bureau. He added that the Scheme was a local one, to be determined by the Council. The Deputy Leader amplified various aspects of the recommended scheme, which sought to provide support for those residents on low incomes, and explained that the total cost to the Council would be £7,000. He concluded by highlighting the suggested amendment to refer to larger families (which related to children from previous relationships) and urged the Council to support the recommendations of the Cabinet.

The Leader of the Council expressed his support for the recommendations and stated that the Scheme would remove the need for the poorest residents in the District to pay council tax. He also wished to extend his thanks to the staff of the Citizens Advice Bureau for their work in relation to the Scheme.

RESOLVED that the amendments to the current Council Tax Support Scheme, in relation to Working Age claimants for 2020/21, including any uprating, be approved as follows:

- (i) amend the banding scheme as set out in Annexes A and D to the circulated report;
- (ii) introduce an 'extended period' of up to eight weeks;
- (iii) remove the two child limit to help larger families have more disposable income;
- (iv) increase the capital limit from £6,000 to £10,000.

Record of Voting - for 32, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 2.

CL.74 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2020/21 AND MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

The Council was requested to consider the draft Schedule of Meetings for 2020/21; and a number of suggestions arising out of the deliberations of the Constitution Working Group relating to future meeting arrangements (to be effective from the start of the 2020/21 Municipal Year).

The Leader of the Council drew attention to an updated schedule that had been tabled, which incorporated some amended dates in relation to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings. The Head of Paid Service provided the rationale behind the further changes proposed, and apologised for the fact that the original schedule had omitted some Planning and Licensing Committee Meeting dates. The Leader also confirmed that the proposed dates should avoid meetings of Gloucestershire County Council and that the dates also sought to avoid clashes with Town and Parish Council Meetings where possible.

The Council then turned to the various suggestions in respect of meeting arrangements.

Members were content with the proposed frequency of Council Meetings, namely that, in addition to the Annual and Budget/Council Tax setting meetings, there should be six ordinary business meetings of the Council; and that, as a result, the February Budget/Council Tax setting meeting would deal solely with Budget/Council Tax matters.

However, there was a difference of opinion in relation to the suggestions put forward by the Working Group in relation to the timing of meetings. In acknowledging this, the Leader and Deputy Leader submitted the following changes to the Working Group suggestions:-

- For 2020/21 Council meetings would remain either at 2pm or 6pm (in principle summer meetings will be held at 6pm and winter meetings at 2pm to avoid long journeys after 10pm, but with the exception being the budget meeting which would be held at 6pm);
- The Planning and Licensing Committee would trial half of its meetings no earlier than 2pm over 2020/21 (with the Committee being able to decide the exact start time at or after 2pm);
- Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committee meetings should start no earlier than 4pm (with those Committees being able to decide the exact start time at or after 4pm);
- That Democratic Services would survey all Members about their preference for the timing and location of full Council Meetings.

It was suggested that meeting times for the Licensing Sub-Committees and the Appeals Committee should be agreed by the Members selected to participate, given the ad hoc nature of those meetings.

With particular regard to the proposed survey of Members, the Leader expected that this would be undertaken a reasonable time after any new arrangements had been in operation, so that views were based on actual experience of the revised arrangements.

Members acknowledged that the issue of meeting start times had been the subject of numerous debates over the years, with a divergence of views often being proffered; and that there was no simple solution that was likely to suit all Members. The circulated report identified previous competing views and arguments for and against the different options.

The Chair of the Planning and Licensing Committee welcomed the suggested trial of alternate start times, and stated that Committee business was also dependent upon the Scheme of Delegation, which was due to be reviewed.

With regard to the proposed variation to the maximum duration of meetings, the Deputy Leader explained that he did not consider that it was good practice for any Council or Committee Meeting to continue beyond four hours. That said, and following discussions with the Chair of the Planning and Licensing Committee, he agreed that, for the time being and pending the review of the scheme of delegation, such Committee should not be subject to the same proposed restrictions given the quasi-judicial nature of its business and the more extensive third party participation in its meetings.

In response to a comment raised, the Head of Paid Service suggested that the proposed cut-off time should allow for the Council/Committee to conclude any item of business that was under discussion at that time; with a decision then being taken as to whether to adjourn the meeting to another date or dealing with the outstanding items at the next scheduled meeting.

A Member drew attention to the fact that, given the proposed increase in the number of Council Meetings per year; the length of Meeting times should hopefully be reduced.

In response to a Member's question, the Deputy Leader confirmed that webcasting would form part of the Council Budget proposals being presented in February 2020.

Some Members commented that they considered that the Planning and Licensing Committee should retain a morning start time owing to the number of applications the Committee regularly dealt with and the desire of the Committee to have external representatives from Highways and other authorities at the Meetings.

A Member commented that, as a Member of the Constitution Working Group, he was much in favour of a survey of Members to be undertaken but that he considered there to be no reason why such survey could not be undertaken immediately.

Other Members felt that the survey should be extended to include the views of town/parish councils within the District; and added that whilst recognising the move to afternoon/evening meetings would assist those who worked during the day, it could also be a problem for those who had to manage childcare and other responsibilities in the evening.

The Leader concluded that the proposals represented a compromise position and would be trialled for the 2020/21 Council Year, and then reviewed in the light of experience.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the amended draft Schedule of Meetings for 2020/21, as circulated at the Meeting, be approved;**
- (b) the Head of Paid Service be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Chair and Leader of the Council to agree any necessary changes to the Schedule either prior to, or during, the municipal year;**
- (c) for 2020/21, in addition to the Annual and Budget/Council Tax setting meetings, there shall be six ordinary business meetings of the Council; and that, as a result, the February Budget/Council Tax setting meeting will deal solely with Budget/Council Tax matters.**

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 3.

- (d) for 2020/21, Council meetings will remain either at 2pm or 6pm (in principle summer meetings (during BST) will be held at 6pm and winter meetings (during GMT) at 2pm, but with the exception being the February Budget/Council Tax meeting which will be held at 6pm);**
- (e) for 2020/21, the Planning and Licensing Committee will trial half of its meetings no earlier than 2pm (with the Committee being able to decide the exact start time at or after 2pm);**
- (f) for 2020/21, Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committee meetings shall start no earlier than 4pm (with those Committees being able to decide the exact start time at or after 4pm);**
- (g) for 2020/21, meeting times for the Licensing Sub-Committees and the Appeals Committee shall be determined by the Members selected to participate, given the ad hoc nature of those meetings;**

Record of Voting - for 19, against 11, abstentions 1, absent 3.

- (h) for 2020/21, the maximum duration of any one sitting of a meeting be set at 4 hours - and meetings at the time limit can either be adjourned or the business rescheduled to a subsequent meeting;**
- (i) for 2020/21, at the conclusion of an item of business after three hours have elapsed, the meeting shall vote by a simple majority to continue for the final hour;**
- (j) the restrictions at resolutions (h) and (i) above shall not apply to meetings of the Planning and Licensing Committee;**

Record of Voting - for 29, against 0, abstentions 2, absent 3.

- (k) during the course of 2020/21, the Democratic Services Team be requested to survey all Members about their preference for the timing and location of full Council Meetings.**

(I) the Head of Paid Service be given delegated authority to make any necessary changes to the Constitution arising out of the Council's decisions.

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 3.

CL.75 CABINET DECISIONS - 2ND DECEMBER 2019 AND 6TH JANUARY 2020

The Council received a report detailing decisions taken by the Cabinet at recent meetings.

A Member commented upon Minute CAB.78, Members' ICT Allowance, and the fact this matter had not been debated by the IT Members' Working Group. In response, the Head of Paid Service explained that the decision represented a pragmatic solution to what was an agreed approach. Wider and future issues as to provision would be discussed by the Working Group when it was reconvened, hopefully in the next few months.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 3.

CL.76 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DECISIONS - 3RD DECEMBER 2019

The Council received a report detailing decisions taken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a recent meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 3.

CL.77 NOTICE OF MOTIONS (CONTINUED)

(ii) Motion 14 of 2019/20 re: Mental Health

Proposed by Councillor Forde and Seconded by Councillor Coxcoon:

'This Council notes:

- *1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in any given year.*
- *The World Health Organisation predicts that depression will be the second most common health condition worldwide by 2020.*
- *Mental ill health costs some £105 billion each year in England alone.*
- *People with a severe mental illness die up to 20 years younger than their peers in the UK.*

This Council believes:

- *As a local authority we have a crucial role to play in improving the mental health of everyone in our community and tackling some of the widest and most entrenched inequalities in health.*
- *Mental health should be a priority across all the local authority's areas of responsibility, including housing, community safety and planning.*

- *All Councillors, whether Members of the Executive or Scrutiny and in our community and casework roles, can play a positive role in championing mental health on an individual and strategic basis.*

This Council resolves:

- *To sign the Local Authorities' Mental Health Challenge run by Centre for Mental Health, Mental Health Foundation, AMHP, Mind, Rethink Mental Illness, Royal College of Psychiatrists and YoungMinds.*
- *We commit to appoint an elected Member as 'mental health champion' across the Council.*
- *We will seek to identify a member of staff within the Council to act as 'lead officer' for mental health.*

The Council will also:

- *Support positive mental health in our community, including in local schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces.*
- *Work to reduce inequalities in mental health in our community.*
- *Work with local partners to offer effective support for people with mental health needs.*
- *Tackle discrimination on the grounds of mental health in our community.*
- *Proactively listen to people of all ages and backgrounds about what they need for better mental health.'*

In Proposing the Motion, Councillor Forde explained that all Councillors had a positive role to play in championing mental health. She explained that whilst life expectancy for those who lived within rural areas was higher than in urban areas, those living in rural areas had less access to health-care facilities and this was also associated with the high suicide rate of farmers nationally. Councillor Forde continued that the Council was committed to ensuring high levels of health and well-being for the residents of the District and in preventing mental health illness. She concluded that Members could offer leadership and engagement and could bring about a marked shift for mental health and hoped the Motion would achieve cross party support.

In Seconding the Motion, Councillor Coxcoon stated that, through her own employment, she was fully aware of the improvements around the recognition of mental health and highlighted the fact that her employer had instigated policies on mental health sickness leave. She added that mental health could be partially addressed by taking advantage of the fact that 80% of the District was located within the AONB and by the Council offering help by ensuring people had access to the countryside and green spaces.

Councillor Maunder commented that he was pleased to offer his support to the Motion and stated that he had recently been appointed as the Member Mental Health Champion and that he wished to credit the Council's former administration for their work in relation to dementia awareness programmes.

Various Members expressed their support for the Motion and commented that the Council should research the opportunities for mental health first aid training.

Councillor Forde was invited to address the Council again. In doing so, she commented that the Motion was about the Council expressing its commitment to mental health and recognising it as one of its top priorities.

RESOLVED that the Motion be supported.

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 3.

(iii) Motion 15 of 2019/20 re: General Election - December 2019

Proposed by Councillor Jepson and Seconded by Councillor Robin Hughes (in the absence of Councillor Annett from the Meeting at this juncture):

‘Council congratulates Mr Boris Johnson on the very significant General Election Result and warmly welcomes the fact that Gloucestershire is represented once gain by a full slate of six Conservative Members of Parliament.

Accordingly, the Council instructs the Leader of the Council to write to the Prime Minister expressing our collective congratulations and willingness to work closely with his parliamentary colleagues to the benefit of all the residents of the Cotswold District.’

In Proposing the Motion, Councillor Jepson explained that the Motion stood as presented and that she hoped the Council recognised the need to show a willingness to work with Parliament to ensure the best results were achieved for the District’s residents.

In Seconding the Motion, Councillor Hughes commented that he echoed the comments made by Councillor Jepson as funding from government would prove key to achieving the Council’s aims and ambitions.

The Leader commented that his Group would not support the Motion though the administration was willing to work with all to deliver on the Council’s aims.

RESOLVED that the Motion be not supported.

Record of Voting - for 12, against 18, abstentions 0, absent 4.

(iv) Motion 16 of 2019/20 re: Electoral Wards

Proposed by Councillor Andrews and Seconded by Councillor Berry;

‘This Council notes that whilst a boundary review for the Wards of Cotswold District Council was completed in 2014 much has changed across the District that was not taken into account at that time. This has included developments in areas of the Cotswold that have added significantly to the number of electors in some Wards and the decline in the number of Electors in some Wards for other reasons.

The table below provides a breakdown by Ward of elector representation. It is based on the 1st August 2019 electoral register.

<i>Srl</i>	<i>Ward</i>	<i>Number of Electors</i>	<i>Number of Councillors</i>	<i>Elector Representation</i>
1	Abbey	1921	1	1921
2	Blockley	2130	1	2130
3	Bourton Vale	2204	1	2204
4	Bourton Village	2452	1	2452
5	Campden & Vale	4872	2	2436
6	Chedworth & Churn Valley	1990	1	1990
7	Chesterton	1884	1	1884
8	Coln Valley	2009	1	2009
9	Ermin	2064	1	2064
10	Fairford North	2007	1	2007
11	Fosseridge	2134	1	2134
12	Four Acres	1573	1	1573
13	Grumbolds Ash with Avening	2091	1	2091
14	Kemble	2155	1	2155
15	Lechlade, Kempsford & Fairford South	4851	2	2426
16	Moreton East	2327	1	2327
17	Moreton West	1961	1	1961
18	New Mills	1882	1	1882
19	Northleach	2201	1	2201
20	Sandywell	2147	1	2147
21	Siddington & Cerney Rural	2102	1	2102
22	South Cerney Village	2106	1	2106
23	St Michael's	1865	1	1865
24	Stow	2099	1	2099
25	Stratton	2083	1	2083
26	Tetbury East & Rural	1901	1	1901
27	Tetbury Town	1790	1	1790
28	Tetbury with Upton	1721	1	1721
29	The Ampneys & Hampton	2207	1	2207
30	The Beeches	2238	1	2238
31	The Rissingtons	1997	1	1997
32	Watermoor	2077	1	2077
	<i>Totals:</i>	<i>71041</i>	<i>34</i>	

The current allocation of electors to Wards shows a discrepancy between one Ward in Cirencester (Four Acres) which has only 1573 electors whilst others have in excess of 2400 electors per Councillor with the District having an average of 2089 electors per Councillor. This represents a significant electoral inequality within the District where the smallest ward is some 33% smaller than the average number of electors per Ward Councillor.

To quote the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) - <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/how-reviews-work> - "The most common reasons for undertaking an electoral review are where significant change in population, localised increases from major housing developments or the movement of people into, out of, or within the local authority have resulted in poor levels of electoral equality'.

A review can be conducted at the request of the local authority or may be triggered by particular circumstances - such as when a Ward is plus or minus 30% (or more) from the average number of electors per Ward Councillor for the authority.

This District has met that particular circumstance. The motion is therefore that:

- *the Administration should now seek a review by the LGBCE in order to address this democratic deficit; and,*
- *the review be completed in time for any changes to be in place for the District elections to be held in May 2023.'*

In Proposing the Motion, Councillor Andrews explained that there had been a significant increase to the number of electors within the Moreton East Ward in recent years and that the Four Acres Ward of Cirencester had seen a decrease in the number of electors which had exacerbated the difference in comparison to other Wards of Cirencester to around 30%. He added that he considered the matter should be referred to the Local Government Boundary Commission to ensure the Council was acting in the interests of fairness, and to address elector inequality.

In Seconding the Motion, Councillor Berry added that a review would take a significant period of time and the Council needed to ensure it acted prior to the substantial developments which were due to be constructed in Cirencester, as these would make a difference to the number of electors within many of the Cirencester District Wards.

A Member commented that previous boundary reviews undertaken by the Council had caused a significant volume of Officer work.

The Leader confirmed that he would not be supporting the Motion as the Boundary Commission had stated that it would seek to review Ward boundaries every 10 to 15 years and that the Council's last District-wide review had only been undertaken in 2014, and which had resulted in a reduction in the number of Members of the Council. Whilst acknowledging the various triggers for a review, e.g. when more than 30% of wards within a district had an electoral imbalance of more than 10%, he explained that a review was not automatic if there was only one ward imbalance. The Leader also explained that, every year, the Council was required to submit its overall electorate figure, and also breakdowns by district ward and county division, to the Commission, so that it could determine whether it wished to consider a review.

The Leader reiterated that a review was a lengthy and resource intensive undertaking and drew attention to the fact that, exceptionally, the Commission had allowed the Council to consider the impact of the then potential Chesterton application when projecting electorate figures during the last District-wide boundary review.

In conclusion, the Leader advised that the Head of Paid Service had been in touch with the Review Manager at the Commission, who had confirmed that:

- in general, the Commission would not consider a further review for at least a period of five years from any previous new arrangements taking effect;
- reviews were not automatic having regard to cases of elector imbalance;
- before undertaking a further review, the Commission would have regard to whether the imbalance was likely to be corrected by population change within a reasonable period - and reasonable period could be 2/3/4 years;
- the process would involve an initial exploratory letter from the Commission and then dialogue with the council, to assess whether and how the situation is likely to be addressed.

Having regard to the Commission guidance, the Leader was of the view that the current imbalance was likely to be corrected by population change within a reasonable period and, therefore, that a request for a review at this stage was premature and not necessary.

Various Members commented that increases across the District were often due to holiday lets and B&Bs, and houses in multiple occupation.

Councillor Andrews was invited to address the Council again but explained he had no further comment he wished to make.

RESOLVED that the Motion be not supported.

Record of Voting - for 10, against 19, abstentions 1, absent 4.

(iv) Motion 17 of 2019/20 re: Cirencester Very Light Railway

Proposed by Councillor Mark Harris and Seconded by Councillor Berry:

'For the past four years Cllr Harris and Cllr Berry have been working with local groups on developing a feasibility study to unlock Government funding for connecting a Very Light Railway from Kemble to Cirencester.

Those Groups include Cirencester Town Council, St James's Place, Cirencester Community Development Trust, a representative from Kemble Parish Council, and several interested individuals.

The first phase of the study will cost £53,000. CTC, St James's Place, the Development Trust, the Winstone Trust and a local businessman have all pledged monies towards that and we are seeking £13,000 to make up the short-fall.

On the 16th November the Prime Minister announced £500m of funding to reopen former Beeching lines - [\[https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/11/15/conservatives-reopen-railway-lines-closed-1960s-beeching-cuts/\]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/11/15/conservatives-reopen-railway-lines-closed-1960s-beeching-cuts/). In order to access that money, there needs to be a plan.

There are clearly environmental benefits over road use, not least the reduction in the amount of particulate matter that buses create from brake linings and rubber tyres on tarmac, known as the Oslo effect -
[\[https://www.applrquk.co.uk/media/files/LR-UK-Transport-Select-Committee-March-2017-v26pdf\]](https://www.applrquk.co.uk/media/files/LR-UK-Transport-Select-Committee-March-2017-v26pdf).

Council agrees to support the development of a feasibility study for a Very Light Railway from Kemble to Cirencester by funding the current shortfall of £13,000. This will help:

- *address the Climate Change Emergency*
- *reduce rural isolation*
- *support the local economy*
- *reduce particulate emissions.*

It will also provide a template for opening other lines in the Cotswolds such as Tetbury, Bourton and others.'

In Proposing the Motion, Councillor Harris explained that he had obtained a letter of support from Network Rail and Rail Futures and that the proposals would include a cycle path alongside the old railway line. The aim of the project was to be inclusive of all levels of mobility and he hoped Members would support the Motion in order for a feasibility study to be undertaken.

In Seconding the Motion, Councillor Berry commented that he considered the Motion to highlight that the railway was a very exciting project and he drew attention to the high level of support the project had already received from local companies and organisations in Cirencester.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance commented that he fully supported the Motion and that he wished to suggest the required sum of £13,000 be met from the Council Priorities Fund.

A Member wished to record his thanks to the Gunner Family for their work and input into the project over the last three years.

RESOLVED that the Motion be supported, and the finance be met from the Council Priorities Fund.

Record of Voting - for 27, against 0, abstentions 1, absent 6.

CL.78 SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED that the Common Seal of the Council be affixed to all contracts, conveyances and any other documents necessary for carrying into effect all resolutions passed by the Council.

Record of Voting - for 28, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 6.

The Meeting commenced at 2.00 p.m., adjourned between 3.25 p.m. and 3.35 p.m., and closed at 6.00 p.m.