

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

6TH MARCH 2014

Present:

Councillor Lynden Stowe - Chairman
Councillor NJW Parsons - Vice-Chairman
(from 4.05 p.m.)

Councillors -

John Burgess Mrs. SL Jepson
David Fowles Mrs. CH Topple
BD Gibbs

Observers:

DC Broad AJ Lichnowski
BS Dare Mrs. MS Rickman
Sir Edward Horsfall

CAB.89 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the Meeting, there were no declarations of interest under the Code of Conduct for Members or Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Councillor David Fowles later declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item (10), Review of Local Council Tax Discounts - Rate Relief for Retail Premises in that he owned business premises that would be eligible for the Scheme, and he left the Meeting during the determination of this item.

There were no Declarations of Interest under the Code of Conduct from Officers.

CAB.90 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 6th February 2014 be approved as a correct record.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.91 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

CAB.92 MEMBER QUESTIONS

No questions had been received from Members.

CAB.93 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements from the Leader.

CAB.94 JOINT WASTE COMMITTEE - BUSINESS PLAN 2014-17

The Cabinet Member for Environment introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to agree to the Joint Waste Committee (JWC) Business Plan for the period 2014-17. It was explained that, while the Cabinet had authorised the JWC to undertake this Council's functions in relation to the collection, management, disposal treatment, or recycling of waste and street cleansing, it had retained a number of decisions including budget-setting and business planning. The JWC partners each considered those items separately, as retained decisions for each partner authority.

In response to a question on the absence of reference to the proposed waste incinerator, it was explained that that was something being dealt with by the Secretary of State, and would be subject to various legal agreements. Also, the incinerator project was a matter of procurement by Gloucestershire County Council, rather than the JWC, which had taken no part in the decisions on the incinerator. However, some background information had been supplied in the Section 'Priorities for 2014/15' in Appendix 'A' to the circulated report.

RESOLVED that the Business Plan and Budget for the Joint Waste Committee for 2014-17 be approved.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.95 CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL WARDEN VEHICLES

The Cabinet Member for Environment introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to approve the investment of capital in two replacement vehicles for the Environmental Warden Service.

It was noted that the Council had previously leased vehicles for the Environmental Warden Service, and currently used second-hand vehicles. It was Officers' view that the current vehicles (which had previously been acquired for use by Parking Services, prior to that service being outsourced to APCOA) were now unfit for purpose and needed to be replaced. The vehicles were now being used regularly to inspect sites where fly tipping had occurred and those sites were frequently located down unmade roads and in remote locations. The vehicles had hard suspensions, which could not be adjusted and this meant that some areas could not be accessed and that staff health and safety was being placed at risk. It was felt that allocating the Council's own capital to fund the purchase of these vehicles presented the best opportunity to obtain suitable vehicles whilst reducing revenue expenditure

Following discussion, and clarification of various aspects by Officers, it was AGREED that the Council should phase in any purchase of vehicles, and that rather than purchase two vehicles immediately, as had been recommended, approval would now be given only for the purchase of the proposed four-wheel drive vehicle.

RESOLVED that a sum of £13,500 be allocated from useable Capital Receipts to fund the purchase of a new four-wheel drive for use by the Environmental Warden Service.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.96 NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES WRITE-OFFS IN EXCESS OF £5,000

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to approve the writing-off of two National Non-Domestic Rate debts in excess of £5,000 where the defaulters had absconded. In response to Members' questions, Officers amplified on the actions taken to pursue such debts, and outlined what was known of the circumstances of the two debtors concerned.

RESOLVED that the write-off of two National Non-Domestic Rate debts, each in excess of £5,000, be approved.

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

CAB.97 REVIEW OF LOCAL COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS - RATE RELIEF FOR RETAIL PREMISES

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to consider a scheme of rate relief for retail premises as outlined by the Government in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement 2013. It was explained that the cost of that relief was borne by the Government and it was considered appropriate to pass on that relief, which could amount to as much as £2 m of benefit over a two-year period.

It was noted that the Department for Communities and Local Government had issued guidance relating to which types of establishment should be considered for rate relief, and the Cabinet was requested to decide on whether to include Charity Shops. In response to a question on how European Union rules on State Aid considerations affected national charities with a number of premises around the country, Officers were of the view that such considerations did not include the charity sector. It was AGREED that Charity Shops should be excluded from the scheme, as they already benefitted from high levels of Mandatory Relief.

RESOLVED that:

(a) a scheme of rate relief for retail premises be approved, in accordance with the principles detailed at Appendix 'A' to the circulated report;

(b) the relief be applied to all of the categories outlined in the guidance within the circulated report, with the exclusion of Charity Shops, in view of the high levels of Mandatory Relief such shops are already in receipt of;

(c) the Head of Revenues and Benefits be authorised to determine the award of such relief;

(d) a further report be submitted to the Cabinet in October 2014 detailing the take-up of such relief throughout the District.

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

CAB.98 DECLARATION OF AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA - THAMES STREET, LECHLADE

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Health introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to consider declaring Thames Street, Lechlade an Air Quality Management Area. The location was an area of Thames Street, Lechlade, at the junction of the A417 and A436 where residential properties were affected. The source of the pollution was emissions from road traffic vehicles and Air Quality Monitoring had shown that the level of nitrogen dioxide was exceeding the National Air Quality Objectives.

It was noted that one of the Ward Members was in favour of the proposal, but that, to date, no comments had been received from the other Ward Member.

RESOLVED that Thames Street, Lechlade be declared an Air Quality Management Area.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.99 SUMMARY FINANCE/SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT - 2013/14 QUARTER 3

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Cabinet received a report summarising overall performance for the Council, with particular focus on progress towards achieving the Council's top tasks, and efficiency measures; and providing information on the Council's capital expenditure, capital receipts and use of reserves.

The Cabinet congratulated the Officers involved with the implementation of the new joint website, about which a number of positive comments had been received.

RESOLVED that service and financial performance for Quarter 3 of the financial year 2013/14 be noted.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

Note:

The Leader requested that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee be advised that the Cabinet would particularly welcome any consideration that Committee might wish to give to the detail of this Report.

CAB.100 FLOOD SUPPORT PACKAGES

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Cabinet received a report requesting that Officers be authorised to administer the various flood support packages recently announced by the Government, namely the Business Rate Relief Scheme; Council Tax exemption for flooded properties; Repair and Renewal Grants; Business Support Scheme; and Severe Weather Recovery Scheme.

The Leader explained that there was an element of risk, in that the Council might not get the full costs back from the Government if the Council were to receive a lot of applications.

In response to a Member's question as to whether the scheme would also be open to farmers, who were eligible for similar funding from the Addington Fund, Officers explained that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs also had a Farming Recovery Fund and they were not aware if the packages proposed contained a link to either of those schemes.

RESOLVED that:

(a) the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources), in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Head of Finance, Audit and GO Shared Services, be authorised to develop a Repair and Renew Grant Scheme;

(b) the local Business Rates Flooding Relief scheme, detailed at paragraph 3.3 of the circulated report, be approved;

(c) the Head of Revenues and Benefits be authorised to determine applications for Council Tax discounts as a result of flooding, subject to relief being granted for a maximum period of up to six months;

(d) the Leader of the Council or the Deputy Leader be authorised to determine applications for grant aid under the Business Support scheme, detailed at paragraphs 5.3 to 5.5 of the circulated report, up to a maximum grant allocation threshold of £5,000;

(e) the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources), in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Head of Finance, Audit and GO Shared Services, be authorised to develop a Severe Weather Recovery Scheme.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.101 DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet noted a Schedule detailing a decision taken by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Health.

CAB.102 ISSUE(S) ARISING FROM AUDIT AND SCRUTINY

There were no issues arising from Audit and Scrutiny.

CAB.103 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

The Meeting commenced at 4.04 p.m. and closed at 4.45 p.m.

Chairman

(END)