

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

5TH MARCH 2015

Present:

Councillor Lynden Stowe - Chairman
Councillor NJW Parsons - Vice-Chairman

Councillors -

Sue Coakley Mrs. SL Jepson
C Hancock Mrs. CH Topple

Observers:

JA Harris (until 4.33 p.m. - invited to speak on Minute CAB.98) Ms JM Layton (invited to speak on Minute CAB.109)
PR Hodgkinson (until 4.33 p.m. - invited to speak on Minute CAB.98) Mrs MS Rickman (from 4.10 p.m.)

CAB.93 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest under the Code of Conduct for Members or Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

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

CAB.94 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 5th February 2015 be approved as a correct record.

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

CAB.95 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

CAB.96 MEMBER QUESTIONS

No questions had been submitted by Members.

CAB.97 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader referred to the recent deaths of Honorary Aldermen Robert (Bob) Smith and Rex Williams, both of whom had been long-serving Members of the Council.

Mr. Smith had been instrumental in helping the Council to move towards a system of cabinet governance, and had been Deputy Leader of the Council between 2003 and 2006, before serving on the Cabinet in his final year as a councillor as Cabinet Member for Business Transformation.

Mr. Williams' key focus had been planning, having been Chairman of the main Committee between May 1988 and May 1991; and Chairman of the North Area Planning Sub-Committee between 1987 and 1991 and again between 1995 and 1998. His attention to detail had been meticulous.

Members, Officers and others present then joined the Leader in a period of silence in memory of two highly respected individuals who had given eminent service to the Council and their communities.

In noting that this was the last scheduled meeting of the Cabinet before the elections, the Leader stated that this was, therefore, likely to be the last Cabinet Meeting for Councillor Mrs. CH Topple, who was not seeking re-election in May. The Leader reminded Members that Councillor Mrs. Topple had been a Member of the Cabinet since its inception and that, over the years, she had been responsible for most portfolio areas. However, her impact was not just focussed on the District, with the wider County having benefitted greatly from her unstinting work around the health and well-being agenda. The Leader thanked Councillor Mrs. Topple for her significant contribution to the Council and beyond over many years, and wished her well for the future.

CAB.98

NOTICE OF MOTION - LITTER PICKING

The Cabinet was requested to consider the following Motion, referred by the Council from its Meeting on 24th February 2015, that called for a more proactive approach to litter picking, including more regular, programmed litter picks across the District. The Motion had been Proposed by Councillor PR Hodgkinson and Seconded by Councillor JA Harris:-

'This Council takes huge pride in the Cotswolds and wants to see it kept clean and tidy. It is saddened by the amount of litter along the verges of our country roads and lanes. It therefore calls for a more proactive approach to litter picking to be taken so that A and B roads in the Cotswolds receive more regular, programmed litter picks than is currently the case so that our area is kept free from unsightly rubbish.'

In accordance with the Council's procedures and custom and practice, Councillors Hodgkinson and Harris had been invited to attend the Meeting to present and speak to their Motion.

Councillor Hodgkinson was invited to address the Cabinet and speak to the Motion. He explained that he was calling for Cotswold District Council to be more proactive in clearing the area of unsightly rubbish. He stated that, at present, the Council picked up litter in some areas regularly but many rural roads faced long waits between visits by waste collectors; and that, at this time of year, with the verges clear of leaves, litter could be seen strewn everywhere, to the extreme detriment of our unique area. Councillor Hodgkinson questioned what message this sent out to visitors and residents who want to enjoy the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Councillor Hodgkinson also suggested that, because the Council's litter collections were so infrequent, people were taking the matter into their own hands and doing litter picks themselves - he too had taken part in such activities. He was heartened by the fact that so many people did take huge pride in the Cotswolds and wanted to see it kept clean and tidy, but was saddened by the amount of litter along the verges of country roads and lanes, and felt that it was time for action to be taken.

Whilst welcoming the Leader's initiative within the recent budget to allocate £2,000 to each Ward Member to fund and support environmental activities, and which could be used to tackle litter problems, Councillor Hodgkinson felt that more needed to be done. Against this background, Councillor Hodgkinson sought a more proactive approach to litter picking to be taken so that A and B roads in the Cotswolds received more regular, programmed clear-ups than was currently the case.

Councillor Harris was invited to address the Cabinet to formally Seconded the Motion and to speak to it. Councillor Harris suggested that it was not just the rural roads which were a problem, with litter also spoiling the District's towns. He had organised two litter picks recently around Cirencester with students from the Royal Agricultural University, and all those involved had helped to make the area cleaner.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Communities reminded the Cabinet that the Council operated both a proactive and demand-led programme of street and road cleansing, with workers responding to alerts from local residents and Councillors when a local issue needed attention. A schedule of works ensured that villages through the District were cleaned on a regular basis. Additional street cleaning would be carried out as and when the need arose. The issue was whether it was more effective, both operationally and from a cost perspective, to increase the frequency of cleaning on certain roads or in certain areas irrespective of need, or whether it was preferable to continue with a more flexible approach, enabling a targeted service in addition to the scheduled cleaning. The Cabinet Member felt that the latter approach was the most effective.

The Cabinet Member also stressed the need for more public awareness about the harm caused by littering in the District, and how to deal with it, and felt that there was scope to provide more information about the help available from the Council and to educate the public generally about ways to combat littering. That said, she acknowledged and appreciated the help from local communities that were willing to undertake their own litter picks, with the Council being able to provide gloves, pickers, bags and high visibility jackets and also then to collect the filled bags after the event.

The Cabinet Member stated that the Council was very fortunate to have extremely efficient and proactive environmental service professionals and also many residents who took such great pride in the appearance of the District, wanting it to look its best at all times of the year. However, she acknowledged that more could be done, as evidenced by the further funding allocated to the street cleansing budget. In closing, the Cabinet Member suggested that an options paper be produced to review current arrangements and investigate whether things could be done even better in the future.

To aid the general debate, the circulated report set out details of the current service provision, monitoring arrangements, budget and expenditure in recent years, health and safety issues, and other related activities carried out.

The Cabinet acknowledged the problems associated with dealing with litter issues. In addition to the work undertaken by Ubico operatives, it was felt that a combined approach of education and enforcement, as well as encouraging local ownership of the problem through the support of local litter picks, was perhaps the most effective way of tackling the cause of the problem, i.e. preventing people from littering in the first place. It was also suggested, and agreed, that there should be a simplified process for reporting littering - including fly tipping - which required the attention of our clean-up teams, possibly through a 'button' of the homepage of the website which could take an enquirer straight to the relevant webpage for reporting an incident, and enable the Council to attend to the matter promptly. Parish/Town Councils could also be asked to promote the reporting of incidents.

Councillor Hodgkinson concluded by reiterating the importance of addressing what he considered to be a major problem within the District. He urged a co-ordinated approach of all involved, and a concerted effort to secure improvements.

RESOLVED that:

(a) the content of the Motion, and the various comments made at the Meeting, be noted;

(b) Officers be requested to bring forward an options paper on the subject, for consideration by the Cabinet after the May 2015 elections.

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

CAB.99

PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships introduced this item, and explained that, following the adoption of common Contract Procedure Rules by the GO Shared Services (GOSS) Partner Councils, the GOSS Procurement team was now seeking to developing a common approach to achieve effective procurement across all partners by focusing on activities which led to financial savings and improved practices, including a common Procurement Strategy (subject of this report), standardised processes and documentation, and intranet and internet publications. The overall aim was to make it easier to engage with, and improve the experience for, all suppliers, especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

In this connection, the Cabinet was requested to consider a suggested Procurement and Contract Management Strategy, which also incorporated recent legislative changes. Application of the Strategy, together with compliance with the Council's Financial Rules and Contract Procedure Rules, would ensure that the Council conducted its procurement activity in compliance with statutory regulations and would help to mitigate the risk of fraud and corruption in procurement activity.

In reviewing the document, the following comments were made:-

- within the table in paragraph 4.1, this Council's 'Political Lead' for procurement was incorrect;
- within the table in paragraph 10, point 3 should be amended to reflect the fact that the Council publishes all of its expenditure;
- whilst acknowledging the principles and reasoning behind the various points included within the table in paragraph 10, it was felt that some re-wording or additional explanation would be of benefit.

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendments identified and the appropriate re-wording of some of the performance and achievement measurements included within the table in paragraph 10 of the document, the Procurement and Contract Management Strategy be approved.

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

CAB.100

REQUEST FOR THE RELEASE OF CAPITAL BUDGET FOR THE PROCUREMENT OF WASTE CONTAINERS

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Communities introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to consider the release of capital monies of £65,000, previously allocated in the Capital Programme for 2015/16 to 2018/19, for the provision of replacement waste containers.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member confirmed that whilst the Council did limit the size and number of black bins per household (in pursuance of the overall aim to drive down the amount of residual waste so as to reduce landfill), it did not generally limit the number of recycling containers allowed per household if it was clear that householders could recycle more; and that there would not be microchips in any of the new bins.

RESOLVED that release of capital budget in a sum of £65,000, for the on-going procurement of waste containers for 2015/16, be approved.

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

CAB.101

JOINT WASTE COMMITTEE - ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN AND BUDGET

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Communities introduced this item, and invited the Cabinet to consider the Gloucestershire Joint Waste Committee (JWC) Business Plan for 2015-18, and budget for 2015/16.

The Cabinet Member reminded the Cabinet of the background to the establishment of the Committee and its membership, and explained that, each year, the JWC formulated a revised Business Plan and supporting financial plan, for ratification by each partner authority. She also reported that the key focus of the Business Plan for the next three years was around the introduction of 'BID':-

- Broadening - there were currently five authorities on the JWC, and the aim was to form a JWC with all authorities by 31st March 2016;

- Integration - to seek savings and efficiencies through promoting common systems and objectives, where appropriate, across all areas of activities;
- Diversion - to encourage waste minimisation and reuse, maximise recycling and reduce waste to landfill.

The Cabinet Member also drew attention to some of the key elements in the Action Plan, and responded to a number of questions on both documents in relation to the retrieval of bins; bin standardisation and sizes; master composters and 'champion' networks; and 'soft' plastics.

RESOLVED that the Business Plan 2015-2018 and the budget 2015/16 for the Joint Waste Committee be approved.

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

CAB.102 SANCTION POLICY - REVENUES AND HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICES

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

It was explained that sanctions and prosecutions for Benefit Fraud were no longer the responsibility of the Council, but now fell to the Department for Work and Pensions under the Single Fraud Investigation Service.

In this connection, the Cabinet was requested to consider a proposed sanction policy in respect of Revenues and Housing Support Services, which replaced the previous Prosecution Policy and incorporated the sanctions still available to the Council.

It was noted that the aim of the proposed policy was to prevent fraud and error in the first instance by making it clear to customers that they had a responsibility to provide accurate and timely information, and that failure to adhere to that responsibility could result in certain sanctions being applied against them.

RESOLVED that the draft Sanction Policy be adopted.

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

CAB.103 BUSINESS RATE RELIEF

The Leader of the Council introduced this item, and requested the Cabinet to consider and approve a scheme to grant business rate transitional relief for 2015-16 and 2016-17 for qualifying properties.

It was explained that the Government had announced in the Autumn Statement 2014 that it would fund an extension of the Transitional Business Rate Relief scheme for two years, effective from 1st April 2015 (when the original scheme had been planned to end). In addition, the planned revaluation of all non-domestic properties had been deferred by the Government until 1st April 2017.

Local authorities were expected to administer the scheme, using Discretionary Relief powers introduced under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 to award any reliefs, and the Government would reimburse the local authority's share of the cost by way of a Section 31 Grant.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the scheme for the extension of transitional Business Rate Relief be approved;**
- (b) the Joint Head of Revenues and Housing Support be authorised to administer the scheme.**

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

CAB.104 SUMMARY PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 3, 2014/15

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Cabinet considered a report summarising the Council's performance in the third quarter of the 2014/15 financial year, with particular focus on progress towards achieving the Council's top tasks and efficiency measures. The report also provided information on the Council's capital expenditure, capital receipts and the use of reserves.

The Leader drew attention to the underspend on the Council's profiled budget of £838,797 as at the end of December 2014, and congratulated all of the Officers for not only achieving such underspend but also for ensuring that good performance and value for money were firmly embedded in the organisation.

The Leader amplified various aspects of the circulated report, and was pleased that the sickness absence rate figure showed a significant improvement and, also, that the overall ranking across all efficiency measures had improved.

RESOLVED that service and financial performance for the third quarter of the financial year 2014/15 be noted.

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

CAB.105 SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet noted a Schedule detailing decisions taken by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Health and Leisure.

CAB.106 ISSUE(S) ARISING FROM AUDIT AND SCRUTINY

There were no issues arising from Audit and Scrutiny.

CAB.107 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

CAB.108 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

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

CAB.109 APPROVAL OF BUSINESS CASE FOR A VEHICLE MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP FOR UBICO LTD AT NEW DEPOT SITE

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Communities introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to consider a business case to invest in the necessary works to prepare the proposed depot site for use as a vehicle maintenance workshop by Ubico Ltd. in delivering the Council's Environmental Services. The Cabinet Member provided details of the rationale for the preferred proposal, and the other option explored.

Councillor Ms Layton was invited to speak on this item, as one of the Ward Members, and conveyed the genuine concerns of many local people regarding the intensification of use, and expansion, of the proposed depot site, and other issues such as vehicle movements and access. It was explained that these matters would be dealt with through the planning process.

RESOLVED that the proposed development of the existing vehicle workshop be approved, and a sum of £95,000 be included in the 2015/16 capital programme to fund the vehicle maintenance development, to be financed from the 2013/14 Ubico Ltd. earmarked reserve, topped up as necessary from any 2014/15 Ubico Ltd. underspend.

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

The Meeting commenced at 4.00 p.m. and closed at 5.22 p.m.

Chairman

(END)