

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

21ST APRIL 2016

Present:

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

Councillors -

Sue Coakley Mrs. SL Jepson
C Hancock

Observers:

SI Andrews	M Harris (invited to speak on Minute CAB.99)
Miss AML Beccle	SG Hirst (from 4.10 p.m.)
AW Berry (invited to speak on Minute CAB.95(1))	RC Hughes
AR Brassington (invited to speak on Minutes CAB.95(2) and CAB.99)	RL Hughes
Alison Coggins	Juliet Layton
RW Dutton	MGE MacKenzie-Charrington
JA Harris (invited to speak on Minute CAB.99)	NP Robbins (invited to speak on Minute CAB.99)
	Tina Stevenson (from 4.30 p.m.)

CAB.92 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 for Officers.

CAB.93 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 18th February 2016 be approved as a correct record.

Record of Voting - for 5, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.94 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10, a question had been submitted, and a response provided, as follows:-

From Dr. D James of Cirencester to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

'In CDC's Evidence document 'Sustainability Appraisal of the Cotswold District Local Plan', Appendix I Points of the Compass Analysis on page 17 states: "Approximately 40% of the (Chesterton) area is covered by land classified as Grade 2 Agricultural Land" which equates to 48 hectares of "best and most versatile agricultural land". This is supported by evidence from yields and the range of crops provided by tenant farmers past and present. In this case, how is it sustainable to allow this Greenfield site to be lost to housing development, particularly when there is widespread Government recognition that UK food policy is currently inadequate to meet the needs of a burgeoning UK population?'

Response from Councillor NJW Parsons:

The Agricultural Land Classification system (ALC) was introduced in England in 1966 by the then Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) in order to provide information on the quality of agricultural land to enable decisions to be made on future land uses within the planning system. The classification system is not based on the productivity of land for a particular crop but on the versatility of cropping options. The "best and most versatile" agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) is capable of growing high value vegetable crops, such as potatoes. Land in lower grades, such as subgrade 3b and grade 4, may be capable of supporting consistent good yields of combinable cereal or oilseed crops, but not the greater range of crops expected of land in the best and most versatile category.

The current ALC guidelines were updated by MAFF in 1988 and Natural England advises that "Information based on detailed ALC field surveys in accordance with current guidelines (MAFF, 1988) is the most definitive source".

The information of the ALC of the Chesterton site that the Council had at the time of allocating the Chesterton site was provided by Natural England. The designation was undertaken by MAFF prior to 1988 and the site has not been assessed by MAFF/Natural England since that time. Therefore, the ALC information that the Council holds for the Chesterton site can be considered to be general guidance only.

The planning application has been accompanied by a detailed ALC survey which has identified that the majority of the site is Grade 3b land (86.3%), with some Grade 3a land (7.4%). Whilst the Council is not questioning the findings of this survey, as part of the process of reviewing the Environmental Statement, and given the level of public interest, the Council will be obtaining an external opinion on the validation of the soil testing methodology.

Nevertheless, the presence of higher grade agricultural land on any development site does not automatically prohibit development and, in accordance with paragraph 112 of the National Planning Policy Framework, when considering any application that results in the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land the Council needs to balance the loss with the economic and other benefits of delivering housing.'

Dr. James thanked the Deputy Leader for his response, and asked the following supplementary questions:-

'The draft consultation document presented to, and approved by CDC Cabinet at their meeting on 4th December 2014 stated the following:

7.3 The strategic site comprises 120 hectares of predominantly agricultural land, much of it grade 2 and divided into small to medium sized arable fields.

However, in the version of that same consultation document provided for public comment in January 2015 there is no mention of the grading of this land (the equivalent section is 8.19):

8.19 The strategic site comprises 120 hectares of predominantly agricultural land, divided into small to medium sized arable fields.

The key phrase "much of it grade 2" was missing

Who removed these five words from the version available for public comment? Who authorised the removal? And why?'

The Deputy Leader confirmed that a written response would be provided.

CAB.95

MEMBER QUESTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, questions had been submitted, and responses provided, as follows:-

(1) From Councillors AW Berry and M Harris to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

'There is considerable interest and enthusiasm being shown about a proposal to run a hybrid electric/diesel light-railway between Cirencester and Kemble by re-opening the old railway line.

The track would start on the edge of the proposed Chesterton development, with a car park under the electricity pylons (space which could be used for little else) and the possibility of a regular bus circuit to and from the town centre. (A possible 'park and ride' operation?)

This proposal is being driven by Warwick University (with other universities) who want a track to test their new driver-less hybrid light-railway train. It is expected that they would agree to conduct an initial survey by students which, if successful, would need to be supported by a follow-on specialist survey.

The project is not without its potential problems, mainly the lack of a bridge over the A429 just outside Kemble; however, we would appreciate Cabinet giving a response to the following:-

- Do you like the concept?
- Would you be prepared to support it:-
 - as a project?
 - by making available funds for the professional survey?

- The survey and all other things being positive, would you support the raising of funds for the project, including financial assistance, possibly from the new strategic infrastructure fund? Further information is available at: <http://cirenttrain.org.uk>

Response from Councillor NJW Parsons

“I thank you for your question - the proposal would appear an interesting concept.

I have read with interest the initial scheme/project document, and note that it is realistic in identifying not only the positive implications and benefits but also the negative aspects and many challenges (particularly regarding bridge construction/works, and land assembly).

I would also support the intention to undertake early stake-holder engagement, including those involved with the Chesterton Strategic Site given not only the land use aspects but the funding assumption made in the scheme document - ‘It is anticipated that the rail service would be seen as an integral part of the housing development adjacent to Chesterton, as there will be an obligation on the developer to contribute to local public transport enhancement’. It may also be worth contacting the County Council, given its current Local Transport Plan deliberations.

In response to your specific questions, I believe that any formal support would depend on the findings/outcome of the initial study, and any stake-holder responses. I am sure that you will acknowledge that it would not be possible, or indeed right, to commit the Council to future funding at this stage, even in principle - this would need to be considered in the light of the initial study findings.’

Councillor Berry thanked the Deputy Leader for his response and, by way of a supplementary question, asked whether such response constituted a ‘positive’ one.

In reply, the Deputy Leader stated that, within the constraints of the Local Plan scheme, it did.

(2) Question from Councillor AR Brassington to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

‘Will the Council undertake a review of the various lighting systems used both inside and outside its buildings with a view to replacing old units with LED lights? Their use would significantly reduce energy demands and therefore emissions of Carbon Dioxide which are a contributor to climate change.

LEDs last as much as 20 times longer than other lighting sources, and therefore don’t need to be replaced so often. This reduces the impact of manufacturing, packaging and shipping. LEDs also are designed to provide more than a decade of near maintenance-free service.

Additionally, LEDs consume less energy than incandescent and high-intensity discharge (HID) lights. LED lights use only 2-17 watts of

electricity, which is 25%-80% less energy than standard lighting systems. And while compact fluorescent lights are also energy-efficient, LEDs use even less energy.

LEDs contain no mercury, unlike their HID counterparts, whose mercury-laden remnants can seep into our water supply and adversely affect sea life, and those who eat it. A downstream benefit to using LED lights is that they produce significantly less heat than other lighting sources, meaning cooling costs are greatly reduced. This adds up to considerable energy savings.'

Response from Councillor Parsons

'The observations and comments of Councillor Brassington are valid, and I can confirm that they are matters of which we are aware and, indeed, have been, and continue to be, the subject of on-going action.

By way of detail, I would advise as follows:

Through its Property Services and Energy Conservation Officers, the Council has considered several schemes to introduce LED and other high efficiency/low energy consumption lighting over recent years. In the early stages of this process, fluorescent lighting was converted to high frequency, low energy T5 type and compact fluorescent lamps utilised in other luminaires.

Prior to the agreement to contract out the operation of the Leisure and Cultural Facilities, the Council had set out schemes for a variety of energy reduction strategies within these properties, including the conversion of traditional lighting to LED. These requirements were included as conditions of the contract arrangements agreed and have recently been implemented by the Contractor throughout.

The Forum Car Park refurbishment scheme includes LED lighting and similar options are being considered for inclusion within further upgrading schemes. Supplementary car park lighting to our own 'green' car park at Trinity Road provides high level LED flood type luminaires.

In terms of our offices:-

- The areas of the link and south wing recently converted for the co-location of DWP has LED lighting throughout; and some smaller trails schemes have been implemented as part of the recently completed office/officer relocation project carried out to facilitate the release of the Link Block and South Wing for tenancy availability. The first floor thereof is due for upgrading works in the near future to provide for these additional tenancies, together with certain other retained areas, and will include LED lighting within the schemes adopted.
- The areas of the planning atrium for the collective occupation of the restructured Public Protection service, located beneath the Council Chamber, are due to have all lighting converted to LED

within the next few weeks, in readiness for the 'go live' date of 23rd May 2016.

- We are currently in the process of grouping other areas for upgrade, based upon previous studies, and are looking to embark upon an upgrading programme of these additional areas, which will then be extended to our other properties within the District, including the Moreton Area Centre.

It is anticipated that, mindful of the expenditure involved, roll-out needs to be planned according to budget availability; however, within any reactive replacement works which occur in the interim, we will seek to implement the lowest energy and most cost-effective solutions.

It is accepted and acknowledged that advances in LED technology, colour rendering/resolution, performance and cost in both capital and on-going maintenance terms have significantly improved the viability of LED against other lighting technologies.'

Councillor Brassington thanked the Deputy Leader for his response and, referred to the external security at the Council's Trinity Road offices. By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Brassington asked if the Council would consider replacing the old floodlights which are attached to the outside of the Trinity Road offices with the more efficient LED lights.

The Deputy Leader confirmed that a written response would be provided.

CAB.96 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements from the Leader.

CAB.97 CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT HOUSING PLAN

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning introduced this item.

The Cabinet considered a report detailing the process for public consultation in relation to the draft Housing Plan 2016-2020. It was considered that the draft Plan constituted a comprehensive document which had highlighted previous successes and suggested innovative and sensible ways of addressing future local needs and connections.

The Leader commented on the volume of work necessary to reach this stage in the process which, he considered, would ensure that the Council was able to react to changes in the future.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the draft Housing Plan be approved for consultation;**
- (b) the process and questions for consulting on the draft Housing Plan (including formal consultation with the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee), be approved;**
- (c) the Housing Plan 2012-2016 continues in force until a new Housing Plan has been approved by the Council.**

Record of Voting - for 5, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

Notes:

(i) It was noted that the draft Housing Plan 2016-19 would be submitted to the Council following the above-mentioned consultation.

(ii) The Cabinet Member commended the Strategic Housing Team for its work in producing the draft Housing Plan and the delivery of affordable housing for local people in Fairford.

CAB.98

ALLOCATION OF FUNDING TO SUPPORT UNITARY GOVERNANCE

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to approve a contribution in a sum of up to £25,000 towards a bid for Unitary Authority status based on the Cotswold and West Oxfordshire Districts.

The Leader amplified various aspects of the bid, which had been mooted informally as part of a wider Gloucestershire/Oxfordshire/Northamptonshire proposal for local government, and explained that it would build on the Council's excellent record in relation to joint working and shared services. The Leader referred to the clear lead by the Government towards a Unitary Authority trend and expressed the view that this would deliver further efficiencies as well as creating a single point of contact for residents. The Leader explained that the proposal had been supported by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and that, following initial investigations into 'cross-boundary' complications, the key financial and service arrangements would be considered. The Leader contended that the information gathered could be useful in respect of other potential options for the delivery of local government services in the event that the Unitary proposal was not pursued. The Leader stated that the Unitary proposal would not impinge on devolution bids within Gloucestershire or Oxfordshire, and that he would wish to see further work undertaken within Gloucestershire in relation to the potential benefits that could accrue through devolution. The Leader emphasised that all possible options should be looked at to ensure that the best solution was achieved for the Cotswold District. The Leader reported that this initial investigation would be carried out by Price Waterhouse Cooper, and he commented that the expenditure would represent an investment in the context of the funding received from the Government in relation to the 2020 Vision. The Leader reminded the Cabinet that, to date, joint working had delivered approximately £8.8m in savings across this Council and West Oxfordshire District Council, and he concluded by referring to the subsequent stages that would ensue if the initial investigation concluded that the Unitary Authority proposal was feasible.

The Cabinet expressed support for the proposal which, it was suggested, could highlight other useful ideas.

RESOLVED that:

(a) the Cabinet agrees to work with the District Councils in Oxfordshire, South Northamptonshire District Council and other partners to further develop the initial Unitary devolution proposals;

(b) it be agreed that independent consultants should be jointly appointed by the District Councils to undertake detailed work, and a contribution of up to £25,000 be made available from the Council Priorities Fund to facilitate those studies.

Record of Voting - for 5, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.99

CIRENCESTER PROPERTY - OLD MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, OLD STATION AND WATERLOO CAR PARKING SITES

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning introduced this item.

The Cabinet considered a report detailing progress on proposals for the redevelopment of the Old Memorial Hospital, Old Station and Waterloo Car Parks, Cirencester, including the potential demolition of the Old Memorial Hospital. The Deputy Leader amplified aspects of the circulated report relating to the phasing and monitoring of the project; short and long term benefits; and the preserving of historic artefacts currently situated at the Old Memorial Hospital.

Members representing Wards in Cirencester were invited to address the Cabinet and some of those Members considered that demolition was the only viable option for the Old Memorial Hospital, as they believed that the building was now beyond repair. Other Members suggested there was a strong bond between the community and this building, even though it was not as significant a building as the Old Station building, and they urged investment in that building to ensure its preservation. Some other Members expressed the view that the Council should endeavour to retain the Old Hospital building, either on its own or in conjunction with the Old Station building. In response to a question from one of the Ward Members, it was reported that stakeholder consultation had not engendered any strong support for retaining the Old Memorial Hospital building. In response to a further question, it was reported that a phased approach to any redevelopment had been raised as a key issue by the Car Parking Demand Project Board, in order to ensure the continued use of as much existing parking space as possible whilst additional parking spaces were being provided.

It was considered that the proposals accorded with the Council's priorities and were realistic and sustainable.

RESOLVED that:

(a) Officers progress with the marketing of the Old Memorial Hospital, Old Station and Waterloo car parking sites for redevelopment to provide additional car parking spaces and mixed use residential and commercial development;

(b) the relevant Strategic Director, in consultation with Members of the Car Parking Demand Project Board, be authorised to take the

relevant decisions, within the remit of the project, to complete the appropriate work prior to reporting back to future Meetings of the Cabinet and the Council, as necessary, for formal decisions;

(c) Officers progress and submit all necessary applications for demolition of the main building on the Old Memorial Hospital site and the provision of additional public car parking spaces;

(d) authority be given for the funding previously approved for the Car Parking Demand project in a sum of £75,000 and the redevelopment and marketing of the sites, also in a sum of £75,000 to be combined and managed as a single fund in a sum of £150,000 for the overall progressing of both elements of work.

Record of Voting - for 5, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.100 PLANNING AND RELATED APPLICATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Cabinet considered a report detailing proposals to deal with planning and related applications submitted on behalf of the Council.

RESOLVED that Strategic Directors, Group Managers and Heads of Service be authorised to submit, amend and withdraw planning and other related applications on behalf of the Council, subject to prior consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.

Record of Voting - for 5, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.101 SUMMARY FINANCE/SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT - 2015/16 QUARTER 3

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to consider and comment on the Summary Finance/Service Performance report for the third quarter of the 2015/16 financial year.

Arising thereon:

(i) Performance Against all Indicators (Paragraph 1.10) - it was noted that there had been a small drop in the number of Performance Indicators on target or exceeding target compared to the previous quarter.

(ii) Capital Expenditure, Capital Receipts and Resources (Paragraph 3) - it was considered that the Council was performing well in relation to efficiency measures, budget and income variance.

(iii) Percentage of Household Waste Sent for Reuse, Recycling and Composting (Page 74) - it was suggested that, although the value of recyclates had fallen, the Council should not reduce its focus in this area but should continue to seek a market for recyclates.

(iv) Building Control (Page 76) - it was considered that it was taking too long for plans to be vetted. Although there was some evidence that the situation was improving, it was further considered that the situation warranted investigation.

(v) Overview and Scrutiny Committee - this report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its Meeting held on 1st March 2016, when that Committee had also expressed concern in relation to the percentage of the market share retained by the Council's Building Control Service.

(vi) General Comment - the Leader welcomed the work undertaken in respect of flood alleviation and he commented that, whilst this had been a positive report overall, the Council should concentrate on the self-evident negatives therein.

RESOLVED that service and financial performance for Quarter 3 of the financial year 2015/16 be noted.

Record of Voting - for 5, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.102 SCHEDULE OF DECISION(S) 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, the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning, and the Cabinet Members for Enterprise and Partnerships; Health, Environment and Communities; and Planning and Housing.

CAB.103 ISSUE(S) ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND/OR AUDIT

There were no issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit, apart from the Summary Finance/Performance Report - 2015/16 Quarter 3.

CAB.104 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

The Meeting commenced at 4.00 p.m. and closed at 4.50 p.m.

Chairman

(END)