

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

15TH SEPTEMBER 2016

Present:

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

Councillors -

Sue Coakley Mrs. SL Jepson
Alison Coggins MGE MacKenzie-Charrington
C Hancock

Observers:

SI Andrews (from 4.22 p.m.) Miss AML Beccle

CAB.14 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.

CAB15 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 16th June 2016 be approved as a correct record.

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

CAB.16 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

CAB.17 MEMBER QUESTIONS

No questions had been submitted by Members.

CAB.18 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements from the Leader.

CAB.19 2020 PARTNERSHIP - ESTABLISHMENT OF COMPANIES

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Cabinet was invited to consider, for onward recommendation to the Council, the updated business case and issues relating to the establishment of a number of local authority-owned companies to deliver services on behalf of the 2020 Partnership Partner Councils.

The Leader stated that the formation of companies represented the next stage in the delivery of the 2020 Partnership Vision, and would ensure that the Partnership was best placed to secure financial savings whilst delivering the agreed outcomes for each Partner and with no detriment to the customer - service delivery remained key.

The Leader amplified various aspects of the circulated report, including in relation to the challenges faced by the Council; the key drivers behind the project; and the Council's track record in the delivery of services through a 'Teckal' company, namely Ubico, which had resulted in significant savings being achieved as well as improvements in the level of service provided. The Leader mentioned that the proposed structure would offer greater opportunities to the Council in the future, including in relation to commercialism, but explained that any such opportunities would be considered at the appropriate time.

The Leader concluded by confirming that the updated business case provided a pay-back period of one and a half years, with additional overall annual savings, and commended the proposals.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the proposals would be subject to consideration by the Partner Councils and by the 2020 Partnership Joint Committee; the proposed company framework sought to best meet current requirements and criteria but was sufficiently flexible to respond to changing priorities, needs and membership changes; pension benefits for existing staff would not be reduced, although new staff would be employed under stakeholder pension arrangements; extensive engagement with staff and union representatives had already taken place, and would continue, in respect of the proposed new arrangements; the Council was seeking to improve the reward and recognition 'package' to staff in order to recruit new staff, retain existing staff, and become an 'employer of choice'; and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had received a presentation on the proposals but had not submitted formal recommendations on the matter.

The Cabinet was unanimous in its endorsement of the proposals as the way forward.

RESOLVED that the updated 2020 Partnership Business Case be received, and the potential financial implications be noted.

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

RECOMMENDED that the Council:-

- (a) agrees to form local authority-owned Companies with 2020 Partner Councils, subject to the Joint Committee agreeing to the final proposal on 30th September 2016;**
- (b) delegates authority to the Council's Head of Paid Service, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Section 151 Officer, Council's Solicitor, and Partnership Managing Director, to agree the Articles of Association, the Company's constitutional documents, Service Level Agreement and all other legal documents to enable the Companies formation and any subsequent decisions necessary to establish the company model;**
- (c) approves the required funding of £1.821m;**
- (d) appoints the Leader of the Council as the Shareholder Representative for the Company.**

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

CAB.20

MULTI-YEAR SETTLEMENTS AND EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to consider seeking the adoption of a Multi-Year Settlement for the financial years 2017/18 to 2019/20, for onward recommendation to the Council.

The Leader stated that the current system of notification of funding settlements was far from satisfactory. He believed that the introduction of Multi-Year Settlements could reduce the risks to the Council, aid financial planning, and afford a level of certainty when seeking to plan for the future.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that any agreed settlement would guarantee a minimum funding amount each year.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (a) the submission of a request for a Multi-Year Settlement to the Department for Communities and Local Government be approved;**
- (b) subject to the approval of recommendation (a), the Chief Finance Officer be authorised to prepare and submit a Four-Year Efficiency Plan to the Department for Communities and Local Government using the approved Medium Term Financial Strategy as the basis for that submission.**

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

CAB.21

DRAFT HOUSING PLAN 2016-2020

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities introduced this item, and highlighted the various consultation elements that had been undertaken, in line with the process previously agreed by the Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member drew particular attention to the responses received, which had generally been positive about the content of the Plan; and to the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who had suggested the insertion of key risks and information relating to armed forces personnel. It was explained that, in the light of the consultation responses, some changes had been proposed, which had been incorporated in to the documents presented to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet was also asked to give specific consideration to a possible increase in the target delivery of affordable homes per annum (the Action Plan relating to Strategic Housing Priority Two within Appendix 'C' referred). However, it was felt that the target figure of 150 should be retained as a minimum for the following reasons:-

- whilst the delivery trajectory suggested that a target of 200 affordable homes could be supported during the first two years of the Housing Plan, many of the homes were scheduled for completion in the final quarter of both years;
- the impact of external factors, e.g. poor weather, could disrupt construction schedules and result in the delivery of the affordable homes due in the final quarter slipping to the subsequent year, which would result in an under-delivery against target for the year concerned.

The Cabinet thanked Anne Powell, the Strategic Housing Manager, and other Officers, for their hard work in undertaking this significant review.

RECOMMENDED that:

(a) the draft Housing Plan 2016-2020 be approved as presented, to include the target delivery of a minimum of 150 affordable homes per annum;

(b) the appropriate Strategic Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, be authorised to approve any subsequent changes to the Plan as may be necessary to reflect amendments to Government policy and/or legislation.

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

CAB.22

REVIEW OF ENFORCEMENT PROCESS - COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES

The Leader of the Council introduced this item, and invited the Cabinet to review the administration of the 'Compliance' stage of the enforcement process in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates.

In essence, the proposal sought to minimise the use of enforcement agents and allow Officers the opportunity to make contact with defaulters and secure a payment arrangement, thereby avoiding potentially unnecessary enforcement action and the associated costs. As such, the use of

enforcement agents/bailiffs would be a last resort, for those who simply refused to pay.

RESOLVED that:

(a) the Compliance stage of the enforcement process in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates be internalised with effect from 1st April 2017;

(b) the Joint Operations Manager be authorised to act as 'Certified Enforcement Agent' to carry out this function on behalf of the Council;

(c) Officers ensure that, when cases are passed to the enforcement stage, debtors do not get charged a second compliance fee.

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

CAB.23

SUMMARY FINANCE/SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT - 2016/17
QUARTER 1

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to consider and comment on the overall finance/service performance for the first quarter of the 2016/17 financial year, with particular focus on progress towards achieving the Council's top tasks, and efficiency measures.

The following specific issues were highlighted:-

- overall, summary performance across all indicators showed an improvement over the first quarter of 2015/16 - with performance in respect of 91% of indicators either having exceeded or having been on target, or within agreed tolerances, as opposed to 82% for the same period in the previous year;
- there appeared to be some stability in terms of the market share in respect of building control;
- increased expenditure relating to household waste related to the success of recycling and the need to purchase additional bins and recycling containers to meet demand.

While acknowledging that the data only reflected the first three months of the year, the Leader congratulated staff on performance to date, not only in terms of the key tasks and efficiency measures but also from a financial perspective. The Leader felt that such performance boded well for the remainder of the year.

RESOLVED that service and financial performance for the first quarter of the financial year 2016/17 be noted.

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

CAB.24 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 (i) the Leader of the Council, (ii) the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning, (iii) the Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships, and (iv) the Cabinet Member for Planning Services and Cirencester Car Parking Project.

CAB.25 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 Service Performance Report - 2016/17 Quarter 1.

CAB.26 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

The Meeting commenced at 4.00 p.m. and closed at 4.38 p.m.

Chairman

(END)