

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

16TH FEBRUARY 2017

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

CAB.70 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.71 MINUTES

RESOLVED that, subject to the following two amendments, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th January 2017 be approved as a correct record:-

- (i) deletion of the words '20th October 2016' in the second line of the resolution at Minute CAB.58 and their substitution by the words '17th November 2016';**
- (ii) re-numbering of the penultimate Minute on page 37 to read 'CAB.68'.**

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

CAB.72 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

- (1) From Mr. P Moylan of Cirencester to Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council

'Cotswold District Council claims to be one of the most efficient in the country and has courted admiration for keeping council tax low. A national survey by 'Planning' magazine showed that a reduction in staff planning numbers over the past few years has led to a situation where planning authorities are often ill-equipped to deal with the upturn in development. It would be impossible to believe that this particular council's response to the increasing demands placed on planning have not been impoverished by its policies on staffing numbers. From what we have seen of the extensive professional expertise and limitless resources that Bathurst Development have called on to pursue the Chesterton Farm application, there is clearly a one-sided engagement between its planners and developers.

What reasons would the council give for this not being the case and thereby assure us that the planning and decision-making process has been administered to prevent over-development in Cirencester?'

Response from Councillor Lynden Stowe

'The Council has committed what it considers to be an appropriate dedicated level of resource to the BDL application, combining Officer resource with consultants and other external support to ensure that the relevant expertise is available to address what is a complex matter. However, in terms of our own staff, we have back-filled the resources required for this so as to ensure that it has not impacted detrimentally on the other work of the service.'

Mr. Moylan thanked the Leader for his response. He said that, speaking as one who spent a large part of his career in management consulting he was well aware of the value that consultants could bring when called in to offer strategic or specialist advice.

However, he expressed his view that they were expensive, especially for highly capable people and when deployed for extended periods. He contended that housing developers had been able to afford such expense, underwritten by the huge rewards if and when land was re-classified - as was the case at Chesterton where tens of millions or even hundreds of millions of pounds were at stake.

By way of a supplementary question, he asked what arguments would the Council make to disagree with the notion that in the face of this inequality Councils were unable or unwilling to resist serious over-development that was undesired by communities and often against the grain of Government policy for more housing?

Councillor Stowe confirmed that a written response would be provided.

CAB.73 MEMBER QUESTIONS

No questions had been submitted by Members.

CAB.74 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements from the Leader.

CAB.75 AMENDMENT TO THE PARKING STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to consider an amendment to the Parking Strategy 2010 to take account of increases in demand for car parking. The Cabinet Member amplified various aspects of the circulated report, and apprised the Cabinet of the potential, future demand for car parking. The Cabinet Member suggested that consideration be given under the subsequent Budget item to a possible extension of the 'Free After 3' parking initiative until 31st March 2018 (Minute CAB.77 below referred).

The proposed amendment to the Parking Strategy was considered to be essential.

RESOLVED that the Atkins Parking Study of December 2016 be adopted and included as an Appendix to the Council's existing Parking Strategy.

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

CAB.76 DEVELOPMENT OF THE WATERLOO CAR PARK, CIRENCESTER FOR DECKED CAR PARKING

The Cabinet Member for Planning Services and Cirencester Car Parking Project introduced this item.

The Cabinet considered a request from the Cirencester Parking Demand Project Board for funding in a sum of up to £225,000 to meet the cost of commissioning consultants to look at all aspects of the development of a decked car park at The Waterloo Car Park, Cirencester. The Cabinet Member amplified aspects of the proposal, including in relation to its impact across the town, constraints, and explained that the forthcoming business case would address various issues, including the number of decks being proposed. The Cabinet Member emphasised that this was an 'in principle' decision, and that further reports would be submitted to future Meetings of the Cabinet and the Council on the principles of any detailed planning application and business case for development. In conclusion, the Cabinet Member explained that, while there were no pre-conceived ideas in respect of the built appearance, it would be essential that it should sit comfortably in Cirencester and its historic surroundings.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Project Board for its work. The Cabinet was aware of the current lack of capacity in the Council's car parks, as evidenced by the previous item on the Agenda for this Meeting (Minute CAB.75 above referred) and it was considered that the Board had reached a

positive consensus which should be able to be progressed. The clear commitment for future community consultation over the proposal was welcomed and it was considered that this was an appropriate solution at this time.

RECOMMENDED that:

(a) detailed designs and surveys be developed to enable a full planning application to be progressed for a decked car park on the Waterloo Car Park, Cirencester site, as requested by the Cirencester Parking Demand Project Board;

(b) a sum of up to £225,000 be allocated from the Council Priorities Fund for the necessary work to enable submission of a full planning application for a decked car park on this site;

(c) the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Cirencester Parking Demand Project Board, be authorised to procure an Architect to design a suitable scheme to enable submission of a full planning application for development of a decked car park on this site;

(d) a further report be submitted to future Meetings of the Cabinet and the Council to approve the principles for a detailed planning application and the business case for the development, prior to submission of the planning application;

(e) The Environment Partnership be appointed as consultants, to carry out and provide the necessary services to progress a full planning application for development of a decked car park on this site.

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

CAB.77

DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2017/18 TO 2020/21 AND BUDGET 2017/18

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to consider the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2017/18 to 2020/21, budget proposals for 2017/18 and the Pay Policy Statement 2017/18, and to make recommendations thereon to the Council.

The Leader amplified various aspects of the circulated report, including the Cabinet's previous consideration of the draft MTFS; the Government's financial settlement and the responses received from the public consultations undertaken. The issues had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its Meeting on 6th December 2016 and at its Special Meeting on 7th February 2017 and the comments of that Committee had been appended to the circulated report. The Leader expressed his disappointment at the level of responses received in relation to the consultation exercise, but thanked those who had taken the time to respond, and noted that such responses had broadly supported the Council's proposals.

The Leader explained that information from the Government was not necessarily received in a timely fashion and, as a result, the Council's financial

situation was liable to change. Details of the Council's final settlement were still awaited from the Government, but the Council was required to set a balanced budget by no later than 1st March 2017. The Leader amplified aspects of the draft budget which had been confirmed and/or amended since the Cabinet's previous consideration at its Meeting on 17th November 2016, and he drew attention to some 'good news' stories therefrom. The Leader considered that the Council had taken a prudential approach to its financial situation and had delivered some long-term savings through its joint working ventures. The Leader reminded the Cabinet that the Council would have to conduct a referendum if it wished to increase Council Tax by more than 2% in the next financial year, and he amplified aspects of the draft MTFs, including income projections, Business Rates retention, Rural Services Delivery Grant and New Homes Bonus.

The Leader reminded the Cabinet that, at its Meeting on 17th November 2016, support had been expressed for an increase of 1.99% in Council Tax in the financial year 2017/18. However, such an increase had subsequently been proved to be unnecessary, given the Council's current financial position. By way of amendments to the circulated report, the Leader Proposed the following:-

- (i) Council Tax to be frozen for the financial year 2017/18;
- (ii) car parking charges and the 'green waste' charge to be frozen for the financial year 2017/18;
- (iii) extension of the 'Free After 3' initiative in The Brewery and Forum Car Parks, Cirencester; Rissington Road, Bourton-on-the-Water; Old Market Way, Moreton-in-Marsh; Mangersbury Road, Stow-on-the-Wold; and Church Street and West Street, Tetbury until 31st March 2018;
- (iv) an allocation in a sum of £225,000 to meet the cost of commissioning consultants to look at all aspects of the development of a decked car park at The Waterloo Car Park, Cirencester;
- (v) an allocation in a sum of £68,000, equating to £2,000 per Ward Member, to facilitate the provision of additional defibrillators in Wards;
- (vi) an additional allocation in a sum of £100,000 to complete the flood prevention scheme at Moreton-in-Marsh and to enable a number of other schemes to progress, including at Broadwell, Fairford, Poulton and Southrop;
- (vii) an allocation in a sum of £25,500, equating to £750 per Ward Member, to pump-prime projects to commemorate the end of the First World War;
- (viii) an allocation in a sum of £42,000 to fund additional resources in the Planning Enforcement Section.

The Leader expressed the view that Council Tax payers in the District were now paying up to 30% less in Council Tax than they had been paying ten years ago, and that freezing Council Tax for a further year represented a 'payback' for the support given over time to the Council by residents. It was

suggested that items (ii)-(viii) above could be funded from the Council Priorities Fund, which had been established to fund important, one-off projects. The 'Free After 3' initiative was considered to have been successful and to have helped local economies. The additional sums proposed would help to pump-prime the roll-out of defibrillators across the District and to facilitate events and activities in commemoration of the end of the First World War and would attract funding from other sources. The Council had a first class record of delivering flood relief, and the funding proposed would enable the completion of flood defence works in Moreton-in-Marsh and enable the progression of other schemes. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had supported additional resources for Planning Enforcement and it was considered that the proposal would enable the Council to address any outstanding enforcement issues as well as to provide quicker feedback to residents. The proposal was for a one-year allocation, which would be reviewed in twelve months' time when consideration could be given to its inclusion in the Council's base budget.

It was noted that the Council had previously decided not to allow extensive building in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and this approach could be continued as, in order to balance the Council's budget, the award of additional New Homes Bonus was not required. It was suggested that more responses might be submitted to future budget consultations if the Council was more provocative in its proposals, and the Council's commitment to joint working was considered to be outstanding. A Member commented that the proposed contribution in respect of flood relief schemes would deliver a lot more benefit to the District as such schemes would attract funding from other sources.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (a) the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2017/18 to 2020/21, detailed at Appendix 'A' to the circulated report, be approved as amended;**
- (b) the Capital Programme for the period 2017/18 to 2019/20, detailed at paragraph 13 of the circulated report, and attached at Appendix 'B' thereof, be approved;**
- (c) the Net Budget Requirement for 2017/18, detailed at paragraph 11.1 of the circulated report, and attached at Appendix 'B' thereof, be approved, as amended;**
- (d) the Pay Policy Statement for 2017/18, detailed at Appendix 'D' of the circulated report, be approved;**
- (e) the financial impact of any changes in the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2017/18 be managed through the General Fund Working Balance for 2017/18.**

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

Note:

On behalf of the Cabinet, the Leader thanked the Head of Paid Service, and the Chief Finance Officer and her team for their work in respect of the draft budget.

CAB.78 COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING FUND

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities introduced this item.

It was reported that, in December 2016, the Council had received notification of an allocation in a sum of £882,272 from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in support of community-led housing in the District during the financial year 2016/17, with further allocations of funding from the financial year 2017/18 depending partly on how the first allocation was spent. The Cabinet Member drew attention to the key risks identified in the circulated report, and explained that a further report on how the monies had been spent would be submitted to a future Meeting of the Cabinet.

The Cabinet welcomed this 'unexpected' funding and expressed the hope that the money would be well-spent and that the Council would be able to demonstrate specific outcomes within the next 1-2 years.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the draft Community Housing Fund Programme be approved for submission to the Government;**
- (b) the Head of Planning and Strategic Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, be authorised to amend the project plan and budget to reflect amendments to legislation and Government policy, and/or to respond to local or national opportunities;**
- (c) a report be submitted to a future Meeting of the Cabinet detailing individual projects in the programme and proposals for their funding;**
- (d) the funding be allocated to a new earmarked reserve for Community Housing.**

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

CAB.79 INTERNAL AUDIT SUPPLIER

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships introduced this item.

The Cabinet considered a report detailing the outcome of an evaluation exercise on the future provision of Internal Audit services to the Council. It was reported that the 2020 Joint Committee had recommended that South West Audit Partnership be commissioned to provide Internal Audit services with effect from 1st April 2017, and that such recommendation had been supported by the Audit Committee at its Meeting held on 24th January 2017 (Minute AUD.42 referred). It was noted that Forest of Dean District Council had a long-standing relationship with South West Audit Partnership and that the proposal would result in savings in a sum of £72,000 accruing to this Council.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (a) with effect from 1st April 2017, the Council becomes a member of the South West Audit Partnership;
- (b) the Chairman of the Audit Committee be nominated as the Council's representative on the Members' Board of the South West Audit Partnership;
- (c) the Group Manager, GO Shared Services, in her capacity as the Council's Section 151 Officer, be nominated as the Council's representative on the Board of Directors of the South West Audit Partnership;
- (d) the Group Manager, GO Shared Services, in her capacity as the Council's Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships, the Shared Strategic Director and Head of Paid Services, and the Group Manager (Land, Legal and Property), be authorised to enter into a Legal Agreement for the Provision of Audit Services and Deed of Adherence.

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

CAB.80

COUNTER FRAUD UNIT BUSINESS CASE

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships introduced this item.

The Cabinet considered the business case for the proposed establishment of a permanent Counter Fraud Unit. The Cabinet Member amplified aspects of the pilot project, drawing attention to the summary of work undertaken by the Unit, and the savings that had been accrued to the public purse.

RESOLVED that:

approved;

- (a) the establishment of a permanent Counter Fraud Unit be
- (b) the Group Manager GO Shared Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships, the Shared Strategic Director and Head of Paid Service, and the Group Manager (Land, Legal and Property), be authorised to enter into the necessary Legal Agreements.

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

CAB.81

**POLICY MATTERS - COUNTER FRAUD AND ANTI-CORRUPTION;
WHISTLE BLOWING; AND REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS
ACT (COMMUNICATIONS DATA)**

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to consider the formal adoption of a revised policy relating to Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption, and draft policies relating to Whistle Blowing and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act

(Communications Data). It was reported that the policies had been drawn up/amended to reflect new areas of work being undertaken by the Council.

RESOLVED that:

(a) the revised Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy, and the draft Whistle Blowing and Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (Communications Data) Policies, be approved;

(b) the Chief Finance Officer (Group Manager GO Shared Services), in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member and Officers (including a representative of the Land, Legal and Property team), be authorised to approve future, minor amendments to these Policies.

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

CAB.82 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, the Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships and the Cabinet Member for Environment.

CAB.83 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 draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 to 2020/21 and Budget 2017/18, and the Internal Audit Supplier.

CAB.84 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

The Meeting commenced at 4.00 p.m. and closed at 5.04 p.m.

Chairman

(END)