

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET  
(HELD AT THE AREA CENTRE, MORETON-IN-MARSH)

16<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2017

Present:

Councillor Mark F Annett                      - Chairman  
  
Councillors -  
  
Sue Coakley    SG Hirst  
C Hancock    MGE MacKenzie-Charrington

Observers:

SI Andrews

Apologies:

NJW Parsons

CAB.50      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.51      MINUTES

**RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017 be approved as a correct record.**

**Record of Voting - for 4, against 0, abstentions 1, absent 1.**

CAB.52      PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been submitted.

CAB.53      MEMBER QUESTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, a question had been submitted, and a response provided, as follows:-

From Councillor AR Brassington to Councillor Mark F Annett, Leader of the Council

*'The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere increased at record speed last year to hit a level not seen for more than three million years, the United Nations has warned.*

*This new report has raised alarm among scientists and prompted calls for nations to consider more drastic emissions reductions at the upcoming climate negotiations in Bonn.*

*Globally averaged concentrations of CO2 reached 403.3 parts per million (ppm) in 2016, up from [400.00 ppm in 2015](#).*

*Furthermore 2017 is set to be in the top three hottest years on record, according to the World Meteorological Organization.*

*Long-term signs of climate change, including growing carbon dioxide concentrations, sea level rise and ocean acidification, also show no signs of slowing down, the WMO said.*

*Arctic sea ice coverage is still below average and Antarctic sea ice extent is at or near a record low.*

*In view of these alarming statistics what further measures will Cotswold District Council take to reduce its own levels of carbon dioxide?’*

The following response had been provided by Councillor Annett:-

‘In 2016/17, the Council’s carbon emissions reduced by 10.9% from the previous year (2015/16). Energy efficient improvements have been made to the Trinity Road offices, which included the introduction of LED lighting and the replacement of an old, inefficient boiler. Carbon emissions attributed to staff business travel were higher than in previous years, as joint working has been extended, but measures have been implemented to mitigate against the need to travel, such as video conferencing in meeting rooms and on laptops. Also, we are currently investigating the introduction of more pool cars (including the potential for hybrid and electric vehicles) at Cotswold, West Oxfordshire and Forest of Dean District Council sites to reduce the grey fleet mileage.’

Note:

Councillor Brassington was not present at the Meeting to pose any supplementary question.

CAB.54 LEADER’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements from the Leader.

CAB.55 DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2018/19 TO 2021/22

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

It was reported that the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2021/22 (MTFS) would be subject to consultation in advance of the budget proposals for the financial year 2018/19, including with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and with the public.

The Chief Finance Officer drew attention to the key items detailed in the circulated report, and amplified aspects in relation to retained Business Rates, revenue reserves and Local Council Tax Support Grant for Town/Parish Councils/Meetings.

In response to various questions from Members, it was reported that the MTFS would be reviewed following the public consultation exercise and, at that point, account could be taken of any new information received; local councils were aware of the proposals for the withdrawal of the Local Council Tax Support Grant; and the Council was awaiting the outcome of a technical consultation relating to the possible imposition of penalties through New Homes Bonus in respect of poor planning performance.

In respect of that latter issue, the Cabinet was reminded that there was a presumption in favour of development and that the Council should only refuse an application if there was a legitimate justification for doing so, based on sound, material considerations which the Council could defend at any subsequent appeal. It was considered that the possible penalties would have a greater impact on those Councils which were minded to refuse planning applications as a matter of course, but it was acknowledged that there were occasions where local circumstances and/or objection had led to decisions contrary to policy. In the circumstances, it was felt that the Council should review those planning applications which had been allowed on appeal and ascertain and assess the grounds for those overturned decisions; and also seek to ensure that future decisions to refuse planning permission were based on material planning considerations which could be robustly defended in the event that an appeal was lodged.

A Member commented that the Cotswolds Conservation Board was keen for the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to be designated as a National Park.

**RESOLVED that:**

**(a) the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy be noted, and the proposed budget consultation process be approved;**

**(b) the allocation of Local Council Tax Support Grant to Town/Parish Councils/Meetings in the financial year 2018/19, detailed at Appendix 'B' to the circulated report, be approved.**

**Record of Voting - for 5, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 1.**

CAB.55

SUMMARY FINANCE/SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT - 2017/18  
QUARTER 2

The Leader of the Council introduced this item.

The Cabinet was requested to consider and comment on the overall finance/service performance for the second quarter of the 2017/18 financial year.

It was noted that a similar report would be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its Meeting which was scheduled to be held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

Arising thereon:

(i) Paragraph 2.6 - it was suggested that the Council should investigate the reasons why planning application fee income for the first half of the year was approximately £120,000 below target; and that further consideration be given to increasing the fees for pre-application advice to ensure that such fees covered the cost of providing that service.

(ii) Paragraph 5.3 - it was reported that the Building Control Service performance was showing a positive trend on a month-by-month basis. The Cabinet Member for Environment explained that she was due to meet Officers to look at the fee structure for the Service in order to ensure that it was as competitive as possible. It was considered that the Council's Building Control Service had an excellent reputation within the building industry but the Cabinet Member commented that there was a perception that the Council's Service was not truly independent of its Development Control Service. As a result, many builders preferred to use other, often contracted, Building Control providers which, the Cabinet Member contended, made it difficult for the Council's Service to compete in the open market and on a 'level playing field'. It was reported that this was an acknowledged issue, which had also been identified by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and that improving the Service was a priority for the Environment and Regulatory Services Team. It was noted that a report on progress within the Service over the past six-eight months was due to be submitted for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its Meeting which was scheduled to be held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

In response to a question from a Member, the Cabinet Member explained that Officers were working through the Action Plan for the Service, and that there had already been a significant improvement in the time taken to deal with Development Control issues.

(iii) Appendix 'B' - Performance Indicators - Percentage of Telephone Calls Answered Within 20 Seconds (Page 32) - in response to a question from a Member, it was reported that the Council should aspire to public sector targets in relation to the time taken to answer telephone calls, and that Officers would continue to monitor the Council's response rates.

(iv) Appendix 'C' - Efficiency Measures - Sickness (Page 36) - in response to a question from a Member, it was reported that the Council's sickness absence rate had been lower in the first six months of this current financial year. Officers would continue to monitor sickness rates, and seek to ensure that the transfer to Publica did not have any negative impact; and the Cabinet was reminded that, across the longer term, sickness absence rates tended to fluctuate, particularly in a small local authority where two or three incidents of long-term sickness could have a disproportionate impact on the overall figures.

**RESOLVED that service and financial performance for Quarter 2 of the financial year 2017/18 be noted.**

**Record of Voting - for 5, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 1.**

CAB.56 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 Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning.

It was reported that a Referendum on the Tetbury and Tetbury Upton Neighbourhood Plan was due to be held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017; but that issues had been raised with the draft Fairford Neighbourhood Plan at the Independent Examination stage, which meant that further work was required and a Referendum was not imminent.

CAB.57 ISSUE(S) ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND/ OR AUDIT (IF  
ANY)

There were no issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit.

CAB.58 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

The Meeting commenced at 2.00 p.m. and closed at 2.30 p.m.

Chairman

(END)