

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

21ST MARCH 2019

Present:

Councillor AW Berry - Chairman

Councillors -

Sue Coakley
C Hancock

SG Hirst
MGE MacKenzie-Charrington

Observers:

SI Andrews
AR Brassington
David Fowles (from 4.10 p.m.)

RA Morgan
LR Wilkins

Apologies

NJW Parsons

CAB.102 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor AW Berry declared an 'other' interest in respect of Agenda Item (8) - Leisure and Cultural Services - as he was a member of the Friends of Corinium Museum.

CAB.103 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 14th February 2019 be approved as a correct record.

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

CAB.104 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been submitted.

CAB.105 MEMBER QUESTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, the following question had been submitted by

Councillor AR Brassington to Councillor C Hancock, Cabinet Member for Enterprise & Partnerships:-

'How many electric vehicle charging points (EVCPs) have been installed in CDC car parks and offices in each of the last 3 calendar years 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19?'

The following response had been provided by Councillor Hancock:

'Following the success of the initial installation of EVCPs back in 2014, the Council agreed to expand the EVCP network; and this also led to WODC agreeing to participate in the initiative.

The current Corporate Strategy includes the following Top Task - 'Increase the number of electric vehicle charging points in the District for both public and council business use by the end of March 2019'.

With no suitable central government funding currently available for charging points in public car parks, the Council investigated options for future provision, particularly as the market and manufacturers offered different subsidies for EVCPs depending upon the funding arrangements and the degree of control to be retained by the councils.

As reported elsewhere in the Cabinet Meeting papers, it has taken longer than expected for external solicitors to put the legal framework for procurement in place, due to the complexities of the framework and the different legal arrangements that may result from the range of procurement options. However, those legal elements are now being concluded, which will enable the framework procurement to commence. Following the procurement, we expect to present a report to Cabinet in June/July 2019 so that Members can decide which procurement option they wish to pursue and allocated funding, based on cost and the amount of control they wish to retain. A mini tender can then be completed before EVCPs can be installed.

Therefore, whilst the answer to your specific question is 'none', there were reasons for this beyond our control (which have been regularly reported to Members). The Council remains committed to this initiative and, whilst we will obviously not meet our Top Task deadline, progress is not far away. You will also note that EVCP provision is now included as a matter of course in any car park development/redevelopment proposals, e.g. the Waterloo in Cirencester.'

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Brassington asked, given the rapid rise in electric vehicles, if the Council would commit to installing five Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs) in all Council-run car parks and at the Trinity Road Council Offices by 1st January 2020 or the completion of Brexit, whichever was the sooner.

In response, Councillor Hancock explained that he did not wish to commit the next Council to any promises made now and explained that the charging points would be expanded across the District when the need arose.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment also added that they had raised the matter with the District's MP to assist with making the charging points implementation easier. It was confirmed that charging points had been asked to be installed at the Council's waste depot so that electric fleet could be trialed.

CAB.106

LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

CAB.107 PUBLICA BUSINESS PLAN 2019/20

The Cabinet was requested to consider the draft Publica Business Plan for 2019/20 and recommend that the Leader approve the Plan and agree to set aside £70,000 of the anticipated underspend against the contract sum for Publica to utilise over the next two financial years to support a graduate and paid intern scheme.

The Chairman of Publica, Mr. Dave Brooks, was welcomed to the Meeting. He explained that Publica's main aim was to continue to do the day job well and that this would always be the priority. He added that this theme would continue in future Business Plans, especially given future changes regarding local government funding. Mr. Brooks explained that, whilst Publica had not created a significant improvement to services since its start date in November 2017, it had continued to deliver the services to the same level, whilst creating significant financial savings to the partner councils.

The Managing Director of Publica, Mr. David Neudegg, was also present at the Meeting. He explained that the delivery of financial savings was ahead of schedule but stressed that in 2020-21 the level of savings identified within the original Business Case was relatively small. He informed the Cabinet that in September-October 2019, a new Business Case for future years would be presented, setting out the additional benefits that could be delivered. With regard to commercialisation of the company, he explained that he was aware of various concerns from partner councils in regard to the risks, and he would seek to address these concerns prior to any decisions being made by partner councils. Mr. Neudegg concluded that the graduate and intern programme would provide an ongoing benefit in meeting the current challenge of replacing Officers in hard to recruit professions.

In response to various questions from Members it was stated that Publica's HR Strategy was focused both on the retention and development of current Officers alongside attracting new employees through its attractive new pay and grading scheme, excellent terms and conditions and the opportunities for career progression; Publica would offer a unique opportunity to any interns in regard to the opportunity to work and understand the processes across four different councils and understand the issues these individual councils experienced; with regard to the loss of senior Planning Officers, Mr. Neudegg stated that they were seldom 'lost' to other authorities and were generally 'poached' by private sector organisations; and Publica was committed to continue to meet with all of the partner councils both individually and collectively.

The Cabinet Member for Environment expressed her support for the Business Plan and highlighted the significant savings Publica had delivered to the Partner Councils whilst also maintaining standards of service during a period of significant change. She added that the savings were substantial enough to warrant a new intern scheme which would help to support and reinvigorate existing staff and that she considered that the digital transformation being undertaken before reviews to be 'very wise'.

The Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships explained that he wished to echo the comments made and explained that Publica were at or ahead of all targets. He also drew attention to the recent LGC Awards where Publica had made the final shortlist in the 'Best Service Delivery Model' and stated that the organisation should be commended on this.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the Leader be recommended to approve the Business Plan;
- (b) a sum of £70,000 be set aside from the anticipated underspend against the contract sum for Publica to utilise over the next two financial years to support a graduate and paid intern scheme.

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

CAB.108

LEISURE AND CULTURAL SERVICES

The Cabinet was requested to agree the scope for a review of the Leisure & Cultural Services Contract, having regard to the impending break clause option.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure introduced the item and explained that as a result of a break clause in 2020 the Council had the option to surrender the contract for any reasons it deemed fit, - which at present it had no reason to do, - and if so notice would need to be served by January 2020. He also explained that there were two leisure centres not included within the break clause review as these did not fall under the SLM contract.

The Head of Paid Service drew Members' attention to the additional pages to the circulated report and to the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its March 2019 Meeting. He explained that those Members who had expressed concern had been contacted and that one had since confirmed that he was satisfied with the content but that he had suggested that once the break clause had been disposed of, the Cabinet should consider the needs of the District's residents when producing a new Leisure and Cultural Services contract. The Head of Paid Service also added that the Committee had requested that the Council's three statutory Officers had sight of the review before it was presented to Members and that the review should also acknowledge the two centres not currently part of the contract but which should be included in the future review.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Licensing Services and Cirencester Car Parking Project explained that he was pleased to see that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had wanted an element of independence in the review. In this regard, the Cabinet Member for Environment explained that the review was about assessing how the contract had been operating and delivering services and that she considered the Council should trust Officers to manage the review as its main aim was to research what had been delivered and not how staff had delivered the services.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the suggested arrangements for, and scope of, the 'break clause review' be supported; in the knowledge that the Council's Statutory Officers will be invited to comment on the initial findings of the review (thereby providing independent challenge before presentation to Members);
- (b) the suggested approach to the strategic/holistic review of leisure and cultural provision be endorsed, subject to such review (i) being informed by, and incorporating, an evaluation of current service provision through the dual use facilities at Fairford and Tetbury; and (ii) having regard to related matters such as health and well-being.

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

CAB.109 REDUCING SINGLE USE PLASTICS

The Cabinet received an update report regarding current and planned actions to reduce avoidable single use plastics, following the Motion presented to Council in May 2018.

The Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the item and explained that she hoped the Cabinet would note the update provided and endorse the actions. She added that the Council had undertaken a review within the Council and of its contractors and that progress to reduce single use plastics was 'slow and steady' which included the Council using up its existing resource of single use plastics.

RESOLVED that Cabinet notes the update and endorses the actions being taken forward to reduce avoidable single use plastics.

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

CAB.110 APPLICATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF DOMESTIC ENERGY EFFICIENCY REGULATIONS

The Cabinet was requested to consider delegation arrangements in respect of the powers contained within the Energy Act 2011 to introduce minimum energy standards in the private rented sector.

The Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the item and explained that there were existing commitments to a carbon neutral Gloucestershire and to reaching the 'C' rating in the early 2020s and, for this reason, the Council should be encouraging the enforcement of the regulations. In response to a Member's question, the Cabinet Member also explained that there would be stringent rules for landlords to meet, should they wish to apply for an exemption from the regulations.

RESOLVED that:

(a) the Group Manager for Professional Services (Publica) be given delegated powers to enforce the provisions and sanctions contained within Sections 43 to 45 of the Energy Act 2011 and the Regulations made thereunder;

(b) the approved delegated powers be incorporated within the Council's Constitution.

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

CAB.110 CORPORATE ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Cabinet received a revised Corporate Enforcement Policy for approval and adoption.

The Counter Fraud Manager introduced the item and explained that the report presented a refresh of policy relating to enforcement in various service areas. She added that similar versions would be presented to other partner Councils, but that each one was individual and reflected the different objectives and shared service arrangements.

The Cabinet expressed its support for the Policy commenting that it made absolute sense and would minimise the risk of challenge.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the revised Corporate Enforcement Policy be approved and adopted;**
- (b) the Head of Paid Service be authorised to approve future minor amendments to the Policy in consultation with appropriate Officers, Members and the Legal Section.**

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

CAB.111

COUNCIL TAX, HOUSING BENEFIT AND COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT PENALTY AND PROSECUTION POLICY

The Cabinet received a report detailing a revised Council Tax, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Penalty and Prosecution Policy for approval and adoption.

The Counter Fraud Manager introduced the item, explained that individual service areas had a specific policy and confirmed that this report related to the Housing, Revenues and Benefits Service.

The Cabinet Member for Environment explained that the Policy had been produced to a very high standard and that it was essential the Council had a working document that was sufficiently strong and that enabled it to apply the necessary sanctions, if required.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the revised Council Tax, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Penalty and Prosecution Policy be approved and adopted;**
- (b) the Chief Finance Officer be authorised to approve future minor amendments to the Policy in consultation with appropriate Officers, Members and the Legal Section.**

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

CAB.112

SUMMARY FINANCE/SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT - 2018/19 QUARTER 3

The Cabinet received a report detailing the overall performance for the Council, with particular focus on progress towards achieving the Council's top tasks, and efficiency measures.

The Head of Paid Service informed the Cabinet that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had raised no issues on the report.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure commented that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) penalised authorities for not meeting affordable housing targets but that the Council was in the top 10 authorities for delivering affordable housing with 2,300 homes built over a three-year period against a target of 858.

Various Cabinet Members drew attention to the fact that the missed targets relating to the Corinium Museum were due to its current closure due to planned significant investment at the Museum and the fact that museum attendances were also currently on the decline nationally.

RESOLVED that service and financial performance for Quarter 3 of the financial year 2018/19 be noted.

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

CAB.113 SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER

The Cabinet noted a Schedule detailing decisions taken by the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Forward Planning, Cabinet Member for Environment, Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure and Cabinet Member for Planning and Licensing Services and Cirencester Car Parking Project.

CAB.114 ISSUE(S) ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND/ OR AUDIT (IF ANY)

There were no formal recommendations, or other matters, arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit.

CAB.115 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

CAB.116 FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND

The Cabinet was requested to approve the Council's Expression of Interest submission in respect of the Future High Streets Fund initiative.

The Forward Planning Manager introduced the item and explained that the government had recognised that high streets within towns were under pressure owing to the increase in online sales. He added that the Fund was looking to focus on rejuvenating high streets across the country and that £675m of investment would be made available from central government. Members were informed the Council would seek to attain funding through applications to both stages of the Fund and that a grant of between £5m-£10m was hoped to be achieved. The Forward Planning Manager concluded by drawing attention to the expression of interest as detailed in Exempt Appendix A of the circulated report and the letter of support from the Lead Commissioner and LEP and commented that he would also seek to obtain a letter of support from the Town Council.

The Cabinet wished to commend the Forward Planning Manager on the quality of his report and commented that they supported the proposals as outlined in the report.

RESOLVED that:

(a) the Expression of Interest (set out at Exempt Appendix A to the circulated report) be approved for submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government;

(b) the Head of Paid Service be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree any minor amendments necessary to the Expression of Interest.

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

The Meeting commenced at 4.00 p.m. and closed at 5.15 p.m.

Chairman

(END)

Unconfirmed