

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCILCABINET4TH NOVEMBER 2019Present:

Councillor Joe Harris - Chair

Councillors -

Rachel Coxcoon	Jenny Forde
Tony Dale	Mark Harris
Andrew Doherty	Lisa Spivey
Mike Every	Clive Webster

Observers:

Stephen Andrews (invited to speak on Minute CAB.51)	Patrick Coleman
Juliet Layton	Richard Norris (invited to speak on Minute CAB.51 - from 6.45 p.m.)
Gary Selwyn	Nigel Robbins (until 7.10 p.m.)

CAB.43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest under the Code of Conduct for Members.

There were no declarations of interest under the Code of Conduct for Officers.

CAB.44 MINUTES

RESOLVED that, subject to the following amendments, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 7th October 2019 be approved as a correct record:

(a) the inclusion of the amended Motion as presented to Council on 25th September 2019, within Minute CAB.33 - Member Questions and as circulated as an Amendment to Agenda Item (3) - Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet of 7th October 2019 and published in advance of the Meeting;

(b) the deletion of the words 'be agree to' from resolution (a) of Minute CAB.39, so as to read 'Lots 1,2 and 3 be awarded to the Contractors as set out in Annex A of the report, to form the framework agreement'.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstentions 2, absent 0.

CAB.45 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No Public questions had been submitted.

CAB.46 MEMBER QUESTIONS

No Member questions had been received.

CAB.47 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader reminded the Cabinet of the Peer Review taking place at the Council from 5th - 7th November 2019 which he hoped would enable the Council to receive advice and feedback on successes and any areas that required improvement. The Leader stated that he hoped all Members would be honest when feeding into the review as it was important that a truthful and accurate assessment was received.

The Leader also wished to extend his thanks to Jan Britton, Managing Director designate of Publica, for an upcoming piece of work on the Council's identity and branding.

CAB.48 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES IN-CAB TECHNOLOGY SYSTEM

The Cabinet received a report detailing a business case on the costs, benefits and risks of procuring an Environmental Services In-Cab Technology system.

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Flooding and Environmental Health introduced the report and explained that the current system used by the Council was paper based and onerous upon Officers. He added that approval of the system would represent a huge step forward in regard to the management of the fleet and reflected the Council's desire to improve the timeliness and management of the service. It also formed a key element of the overall waste service review.

Various Members expressed their support for the system and were pleased to note the predicted immediate and future savings from the system.

The Leader then invited observing Members to ask any questions of the Cabinet Member on the system. In response to these questions, the Cabinet Member explained that the equipment would be able to be transferred from vehicle to vehicle, when this was required through vehicles no longer being fit-for-purpose, and there was an expectation that a reduction in the use of agency staff would be possible following the installation of the equipment.

The Leader wished to extend his thanks on behalf of the Cabinet to the Cabinet Member for his work on this item and also to the Council's Communications Officer for his recent work on social media highlighting the upcoming changes to the Council's waste service.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the Business Case be approved;**
- (b) Council be recommended to approve an allocation of up to £142,000 from the invest to save fund, to procure the Environmental Services In-Cab Technology system from Yotta;**
- (c) Council be recommended to approve the inclusion of revenue growth for software licences and maintenance of £26,000 per annum (to be offset by savings in the Ubico contract costs of at least £42,000).**

Record of Voting - for 9, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.49 LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTY STRATEGY

The Cabinet received a report detailing a new strategy for managing long term empty properties within Cotswold District.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness introduced the report and explained that there were currently 494 households within the District who were in need of emergency accommodation compared to a total of 648 empty properties. She added that whilst the Council was not required to have an empty property strategy, the adoption of one would enable the Council to work with owners constructively to bring properties back into use. Such an approach would link to existing Council policies.

The Cabinet was informed that an empty property was classified within the long term category if it had been visibly empty and unfurnished for more than six months. The strategy would look to target unsafe and unsightly properties; and would also require Officers to present a report to Members before any enforcement action was taken. It was explained that, insofar as council tax discounts were concerned, discounts would apply for months one and two, the full amount of tax would be required to be paid during months three to twenty four, and a premium would be applied after two years.

Various Cabinet Members expressed their support for the strategy, explaining that it would not only help those in desperate need of accommodation, but also neighbours of properties which were currently derelict and unused.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) Cabinet approves the implementation of the Long Term Empty Property strategy;**
- (b) should any enforcement action be contemplated/required (as detailed within paragraph 7 of the strategy), a further report detailing the proposed action plan be brought back to Cabinet for approval.**

Record of Voting - for 9, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.50 PROPERTY OPTION APPRAISALS

The Cabinet received a report suggesting that a budget be established to allow feasibility studies to be carried out on existing Council owned sites or other sites which could be used to support the delivery of the Council's priorities.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the item and explained that the recommendations would result in the allocations not requiring referral to, and consequent approval by, Cabinet, thereby avoiding delay that a more formal requirement would bring. In this connection, and to provide even more flexibility, the Deputy Leader explained that he wished to propose an amendment to recommendation (b) of the report, so that consultation on any intended exercise of delegated authority could be with either the Leader or Deputy Leader.

Various Members expressed their support for the request and explained that it would ensure that all Council assets were being used proactively. Those Members also agreed that the financial amount, as recommended by Officers, was suitable and were satisfied that Officers would ensure finances associated with this item would be reviewed and any issues consequently reported back to Cabinet.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) Cabinet agrees to the allocation of £50,000 from the Priorities Fund for appraisals of land and property;**
- (b) delegated authority be given to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council, to approve requests to draw down on this budget.**

Record of Voting - for 9, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.51 NOTICE OF MOTION - LEISURE FACILITIES IN FAIRFORD AND TETBURY

The Leader explained that the Motion presented to the Cabinet had been referred for consideration from the September 2019 Council Meeting. In accordance with standard practice, the Proposer and Seconder of the Motion, Councillors Norris and Andrews, had been invited to the Meeting to speak to their Motion.

In the absence of the Proposer from the Meeting at the start of the item, the Seconder read out comments on behalf of the Proposer (who subsequently joined the Meeting). The Proposer explained that he did not understand why the Council had not committed to offer financial support to the leisure centres as soon as they had been closed, which he considered would have, in turn, allowed a well thought out and well-presented community plan for the future to be considered and actioned. He added that the centres did not just provide a facility for clubs and users, but also offered innovative classes and development as part of the centres' roles as community assets - as was specifically referred to within the Tetbury's Neighbourhood Plan. Councillor Norris added that the amended Motion requested the Council provide help and encouragement to the community to be proactive and to help shape the future for the centres. He also explained that Sir William Romney's School had stated they were willing to listen to proposals which would ensure the facility remained a community asset, but needed to be informed as to who was managing the bookings and marketing the facility. Whilst recognising the centre had reopened for hall use, Councillor Norris explained that fluctuations in membership should be expected and that bookings could not always be relied upon to ensure the centre's continued use. He concluded that the centres required professional intervention and funds immediately, and that the Council needed to be proactive and act on the statement the Leader had made at a recent Tetbury Town Council Meeting to ensure the Council was not seen to let the centres be 'aimlessly destroyed' and instead ensure the centres were fit for purpose to serve both towns.

In Seconding the Motion, Councillor Andrews explained that the positions of the Tetbury and Fairford centres were slightly different in that Tetbury had formed a community action group which were looking at future plans in the hope that the District Council would provide both financial and moral support following discussions with the school. Councillor Andrews also highlighted that the Motion intended for the relevant Cabinet Member to have the ultimate decision on any business cases presented to the Council for consideration.

The Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Public Safety thanked Councillors Norris and Andrews for attending the Meeting and for presenting their Motion to the Cabinet. She explained that she had previously met with both Councillors to discuss how the combined funding figure of £50,000 had been reached. The Cabinet Member explained that the Council was in some ways being pressurised into forcing the schools to engage; but the Council had recognised that the schools

were not necessarily best positioned to delivering sports facilities alongside delivering high quality educational services. She concluded by explaining that the Council was committed to delivering a District-wide leisure strategy, and whilst sympathetic to both towns for the loss of their facilities, the Council would remain committed to delivering this strategy by Easter 2020, which would aim to ensure high quality leisure services for the whole of the District.

The Cabinet Member then Proposed the following recommendations:-

The Council -

- (a) continue the current work relating to the production of a District-wide leisure strategy, looking at provision holistically, based on current and future needs;*
- (b) prioritise potential solutions for Tetbury and Fairford as part of that work, and invite engagement with interested parties in those towns to help with our research and to frame the future;*
- (c) in the meantime, and without prejudicing the strategy work, reaffirm that the Council would be prepared to consider funding well-planned and costed solutions in future that demonstrate real community benefit.*

The Cabinet Member for Planning Policy, Climate Change and Energy explained that as the Tetbury Centre had been listed as a community asset within the town's Neighbourhood Plan, there was an option to the community via a 'right to buy' scheme and that this would be open to the public for a period of six weeks. The Cabinet Member also added that should the schools be minded to sell the centres, the Council should look to provide support to the schools where possible.

The Cabinet expressed its support for the recommendations as Proposed by the Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Public Safety, and hoped that the Strategy would enable the Council to take swift action upon the issue and ensure that the Council was no longer dependent upon the schools to deliver the leisure facilities on the Council's behalf.

In Seconding the Proposition, the Deputy Leader highlighted that approval of the recommendations did not rule out the Council possibly providing financial assistance in the future, subject to robust proposals coming forward.

Prior to inviting the Proposer of the Motion to make any final comments, the Leader explained that the Council had to ensure it spent Council finances carefully and based on evidence. He added that the Council would look to prioritise solutions for Fairford and Tetbury and that it could emerge that there was a need for greater finances than had been requested, but that this could only be informed by the District-wide strategy.

Councillor Norris was invited to address the Meeting again and in doing so, he thanked the Cabinet for the due consideration given to the Motion. He explained that he appreciated the Cabinet's desire not to 'throw money away'; but, as the relevant Ward Member, was concerned that the centres could run the risk of slowly fading away.

RESOLVED that the Council:

- (a) continue the current work relating to the production of a District-wide leisure strategy, looking at provision holistically, based on current and future needs;**
- (b) prioritise potential solutions for Tetbury and Fairford as part of that work, and invite engagement with interested parties in those towns to help with our research and to frame the future;**
- (c) in the meantime, and without prejudicing the strategy work, reaffirm that the Council would be prepared to consider funding well-planned and costed solutions in future that demonstrate real community benefit.**

Record of Voting - for 9, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CAB.52 ISSUE(S) ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND/OR AUDIT

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

CAB.53 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business that was urgent.

The Meeting commenced at 6.05 p.m. and closed at 7.22 p.m.

Chair

(END