

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

23RD FEBRUARY 2016

Present:

Councillor Mark F Annett	- Chairman
Councillors -	
SI Andrews	SG Hirst
Miss AML Beccle	RC Hughes
AW Berry	RL Hughes
AR Brassington	Mrs. SL Jepson
T Cheung	RG Keeling
Sue Coakley	Juliet Layton
Alison Coggins	MGE MacKenzie-Charrington
PCB Coleman	Jim Parsons
RW Dutton	NJW Parsons
Jenny Forde	SDE Parsons
David Fowles	NP Robbins
C Hancock	Tina Stevenson
JA Harris	Lynden Stowe
M Harris	R Theodoulou
Maggie Heaven (until 12.03 p.m.)	LR Wilkins
Jenny Hincks	

Apologies:

Julian Beale	BS Dare
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CL.43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(1) Declarations by Members

There were no declarations of interest by Members.

(2) Declarations by Officers

The two Strategic Directors, Frank Wilson and Christine Gore, declared interests in agenda item (13) - 2020 Vision Programme Appointments - and stated that they would both withdraw from the Meeting whilst such item was under consideration.

CL.44 MINUTES

RESOLVED that:

(a) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 15th December 2015 be approved as a correct record;

Record of Voting - for 29, against 0, abstentions 3, absent 2.

(b) the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Council held on 15th December 2015 be approved as a correct record;

Record of Voting - for 27, against 0, abstentions 5, absent 2.

CL.45 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, LEADER OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

(i) Filming/Recording of Proceedings - the Chairman explained that the Council had received notification from a member of the public that he intended to film the Council Meeting, and stated that, accordingly, the Council would make its own audio recording of the Meeting.

(ii) Formal Questions - the Chairman referred to the high number of formal questions that had been received, and the Constitutional time limit of 15 minutes for each set of questions, Public and Member. The Chairman stated that, in order to maximise the time for supplementary questions to be posed and answered, he would follow the usual practice of 'taking as read' the original questions and responses (as these had been circulated to all Members, and the questioners, in advance of the Meeting). The Chairman asked questioners to focus on the supplementary question to be posed, rather than seek to provide further context by way of a preamble. The Chairman added that, while he had the discretion to extend the time period, this could not be open-ended, and he needed to have regard to the other business to be dealt with at the Meeting. While acknowledging that the issues raised within the questions were important, particularly the Chesterton proposals for which there was a good public attendance, the Chairman could not ignore that there was also a full agenda of key business items.

(iii) Budget and Council Tax Items - the Chairman reminded Members that all of the votes relating to the Budget and Council Tax, including on any amendments put forward, were required by legislation to take the form of Recorded Votes.

There were no announcements from the Leader and/or the Chief Executive.

CL.46 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10, questions had been submitted, and responses provided, as follows:-

(1) From Mr. I Bullock of South Cerney to Councillor Sue Coakley, Cabinet Member for Health, Environment and Communities

'It is nine months since Councillor Stowe announced at a public meeting in South Cerney Village Hall that the Council were withdrawing their planning application for a waste transfer station at the Packers Leaze site in South Cerney in the light of public outcry and objection. Since that time the Council has also withdrawn their application for planning permission for a transport depot at the site, instead pursuing a CLEUD for the site. It is understood that the Council has now bought the site and works are being undertaken in preparation for the transfer of transport operations to the site. Can the Councillor please set out what the Council's intentions are for the site including answers to the following questions?

1. Can the Council confirm that they have purchased the site and set out the cost of the acquisition (including taxes and acquisition costs)?
2. What works are the Council undertaking at the site in preparation for the transfer of the transport facilities to the site?
3. When are transport operations expected to relocate from the T Barry site to the Packers Leaze site?
4. When will all SITA waste containers and other equipment be removed from the site?
5. Is the Council assessing the suitability of the site for a waste transfer station and is it the Council's intention to re-apply for planning permission for a waste transfer station at the Packers Leaze site?

Response from Councillor Coakley

I would respond as follows:-

1. *Yes, the Council has purchased the site. The purchase price was £1,674,722; and land taxes amounted to £68,098.*
2. *Predominantly internal refurbishment works to the office/workshops to increase office, storage and welfare facilities.*
3. *At the end of May 2016.*
4. *SITA have a licence to occupy the area to the front of the site until October 2017.*
5. *There is no intention to progress this at this time.*

By way of a supplementary question, Mr. Bullock asked the following:-

At the packed public meeting held in South Cerney Village Hall on 6th May 2015, Councillor Stowe promised that research into state-of-the-art methods of Waste Transfer station operation would be completed and a public consultation held before any planning application for a station in South Cerney would be considered. Can Councillor Coakley confirm that, should the matter proceed, the Council will comply with this public commitment?

In response, Councillor Coakley confirmed that this would be the case.

(2) From Mr. T Golics of Cirencester to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

'This question is concerned with the Local Plan and the Bathurst outline application for building 2350 homes on the edge of Cirencester.

The Head of Cirencester Town Council's Planning Committee has stepped down from the Conservative's local branch saying he thought it wise to do so, so that there is no suggestion of party politics and to avoid accusations of a

conflict of interests and accusations of cronyism. We understand why he has done that.

In the context of this and comments made in the public realm about cronyism, are CDC and its individual councillors confident that it, and they, are unaffected by possible conflicts of interest?’

Response from Councillor Parsons

Members of Cotswold District Council have a duty to act in accordance with the Council’s Constitution and Code of Conduct. The Code not only refers to the seven principles of public life, but also the circumstances in which Members are required to declare Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) and Other Interests. If Members have an interest to declare in respect of Council business then they must do so; indeed, failure to declare a DPI without a reasonable excuse is a criminal offence and could lead to investigation by the Police and referral to the Director of Public Prosecutions. If a Member is unsure as to whether an interest should be declared, then he/she can seek advice from the Council’s Monitoring Officer and/or an independent source, albeit that the decision to declare ultimately rests with the Member.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr. Golics asked the following:-

‘Councillor Parsons is a Partner, and Head of Private Client and Agriculture, with Sewell Mullings Logie, a leading and long established solicitors firm in Cirencester. The firm has had, and presumably has, and will have, commercial dealings with Earl Bathurst and his associated activities. The Bathurst Estate is a large business owning residential, commercial and agricultural land in, and around, Cirencester. It would be hugely surprising if Sewell Mullings Logie did not have a business relationship with the Bathurst Estate. Councillor Parsons, either directly or indirectly, benefits from business that his firm transacts with Bathurst.

It has been pointed out to Save Our Cirencester that, unlike most councillors, Councillor Parsons has not found it necessary to make any declarations of interests at any council or committee meetings. As we understand it, an interest is considered to be material whenever there is a reasonable perception that it will have an impact on the actions of a councillor. Given the circumstances and relationships described above, it would assist public confidence in the operation of the Council if Councillor Parsons were to explain why he has not declared any interests and to perhaps put that right. Will he do so?’

In response, Councillor Parsons referred to his original response, explained that he was fully alert to the requirements as a Councillor and confirmed that he was satisfied that he had not had to declare any interests in respect of this matter.

(3) From Mr. P Moylan of Cirencester to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

‘The local plan states "Having tested many options and combinations for delivering the appropriate amount of housing for Cirencester, it concludes that a single strategic site is the only viable solution". Many local people think otherwise. An alternative site or sites would be to build on poorer quality farmland south of Preston toll bar adjacent to the A419 and also land nearby

between the A419 and the A417. This location is much better than at South Chesterton for many reasons including proximity of roads and utilities and services already provided to the Dobbies site and the military base.

Can the council provide evidence that it has in fact tested "many" options and combinations and whether it has actively sought alternatives for delivering housing, including extending the development boundary to the south/south east alongside the A419 and A417?'

Response from Councillor Parsons

I can confirm that considerable effort has been expended throughout the Plan preparation process to identify appropriate and deliverable sites in sustainable locations. It is a requirement of all local planning authorities to explore all realistic options when: (i) preparing a Development Strategy for delivering future growth in the area; and (ii) identifying sustainable and deliverable sites. This is done through an exhaustive process of evidence gathering and assessment. All of the evidence is available to view on the Council's Website. However, some of the key documents to help you are set out below with the relevant links:

- *Consideration of various strategic options for locating development - Core Strategy Second Issues and Options (December 2010):*
http://consult.cotswold.gov.uk/portal/fp/cs/2nd_io?tab=files
- *Consideration of all available sites made known to the Council - Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (various dates):*
<http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/residents/planning-building/planning-policy/emerging-local-plan/evidence-base-and-monitoring/>
- *Explanation of various strands of evidence, including consultation stages, leading up to the January 2015 consultation - Development Strategy Evidence Paper (December 2014):*
<http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/1087625/EVIDENCE-PAPER-Development-Strategy-December-2014.pdf>
- *Independent assessment of reasonable alternatives for the Strategy, including site options appraisal - Sustainability Appraisal December 2014:*
http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/1060692/CDLP_-_Interim-SA-Report_v-4-0_031214-FINAL.pdf and
http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/1060695/CDLP_Interim-SA-Report-appendices-FINAL_v-2-0_031214.pdf

The preparation of District-wide strategy options concluded that Cirencester is the location where a strategic scale of development should be located. These options appraisals were subjected to Sustainability Appraisal.

I would refer you to the Sustainability Appraisal which accompanied the Preferred Development Strategy (May 2013) which compared several potential sites of strategic scale at Cirencester:

http://consult.cotswold.gov.uk/portal/fp/sa/sa_interim_report_2013?tab=files

These included land at Hare Bushes and east of Kingshill Lane, as well as south of Chesterton, even though the first two hadn't been put forward through the SHLAA process (and were therefore technically not available/ deliverable). These sites were considered for comparison purposes and to ensure that CDC had adopted a transparent approach to the selection of a suitable strategic

site. It has subsequently been confirmed, by the landowner, that the other two sites are not available, and Cirencester Town Council has also opposed Hare Bushes in particular.

I would also refer you to the Development Strategy Evidence Paper:

http://consult.cotswold.gov.uk/portal/fp/development_strategy_evidence_paper_-_2013/evidence_paper_2013?tab=files

which concluded that Chesterton was a reasonable location for a strategic scale of development, taking account of all the evidence available. That evidence included the identification of Cirencester as the District's pre-eminent centre, as well as sites that had emerged through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) process.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr. Moylan asked the following:-

'It is undeniable that the site at South Chesterton is huge and given the potential damage that such a massive single development could have on this town, it is surely right that the Council should seek alternatives.

There is an alternative of land near Dobbies with we understand at least one willing landowner. This location is hardly more removed from the town than Chesterton, is now on the urban edge and overcomes many of the shortfalls of Chesterton. It is on poorer agricultural land than the good land at Chesterton; it is adjacent to the major routes and it seems a more sensible direction of future growth than westwards along the A433.

Will the Council reduce the vast scale of Chesterton by revisiting this appealing option and modifying its Local Plan?'

Councillor Parsons first declared an 'other' interest in this issue as a member of Mr. Moylan's family worked for the same firm as Councillor Parsons; but he confirmed that it was not something that had a pecuniary involvement as regards himself.

In response to the supplementary question, Councillor Parsons referred to the extensive reply provided to the initial question. He explained that it was not possible to create or debate a Local Plan 'in committee' at the Council, given the huge nature of such a task; and, as such, he had nothing further to add to the original response.

(4) From Mr. J Nicholas of Cirencester to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

'Of the Chesterton strategic site, the local plan says "This will probably be the largest development in the District over the next 20 years and as such it is important that the community and stakeholders are fully involved in its conception and design"

Section 61W of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 added by the Localism Act 2011 places a legal duty on developers to consult local communities on very large scale development proposals prior to submitting a planning application. The obligations of the council were thus fortunately taken on mostly by the developer.

The council set out a table of methods that could be used:-

- Media (local press, radio, etc)
- Internet (website, e-mails, etc)
- Notice boards
- Town meetings
- Public exhibitions
- One to one meetings
- Focus groups
- Workshops
- Working groups

Given the importance the council attaches to communication and consultation, it is surely important to have a record of which of these methods were used, their frequency, who attended and so on. It would be important also to try and measure how effective these methods have been, for example by eliciting community feedback. Does it believe that a good job has been done and how does it know this?’

Response from Councillor Parsons

I can assure Mr. Nicholas that the Council has consulted widely with the public on the proposals for the Chesterton Strategic site.

In 2011 we consulted the public (via several CDC-arranged events and media releases/Website postings) when we issued a ‘Core Strategy Second Issues and Options’ paper, resulting in almost 1,300 representations from 140 individuals and organisations. These comments influenced the content of the emerging Local Plan, including the requirement for a strategic site. We issued several media releases in 2012 charting progress on the Local Plan, and also commissioned interviews with local journalists to explain the basics. We also provided details about Local Plan progress in the August 2012 CDC Cotswold News magazine, including a map of the potential site at Chesterton, and this was sent to all households in the District.

The table below shows more detail from 2013 onwards to emphasise the effort which we have expended on ensuring the public and principal stakeholders have been consulted and informed as the Local Plan has taken shape. This is not exhaustive by any means because it is focused on issues with a bearing on the Chesterton strategic site. It also does not account for a wide range of related ad hoc queries we have dealt with from the public and the media about Chesterton.

CDC actions	Date	CDC consultation/information
Cabinet Meeting to seek approval of Preferred Development Strategy	9 May 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio Holder issued briefing note to Members (including specific reference to Chesterton) • Press release was issued and posted on CDC Website advising of forthcoming public consultation on paper setting out strategies for the development of 17 settlements (including Chesterton). • Press release was issued and posted

		<p>on CDC Website calling for public to nominate land or buildings with potential to meet future housing, employment, retail or commercial need.</p>
<p><i>Public Consultation (Six-week period)</i></p>	<p><i>June-July 2013</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Further press releases were issued and posted on CDC Website advising launch of consultation on paper setting out strategies for the development of 17 settlements plus issues such as access to services and facilities, transport and commuting issues, demographic changes, and matters related to the local economy.</i> • <i>Press release issued and posted on CDC Website advising of dates for related public consultation meetings (Cirencester and Moreton)</i> • <i>CDC distributed individual leaflets regarding the Chesterton Strategic site proposals to 12,000 homes in the Cirencester area, including information about how to comment during the June/July 2013 public consultation.</i> • <i>CDC hosted community meeting in Chesterton church on 5 June attended by over 160 people.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Further CDC-hosted consultation meetings at St Lawrence's Hall, Chesterton 28 June; CDC Chamber 2 July; Moreton Area Centre 3 July (public notified by Press Release/Website/social media and also paid-for announcement in local press).</i> • <i>CDC posted information about the consultation period on its newly launched social media account.</i> • <i>CDC Paid-for Notice appeared in local press</i> • <i>Planning Matters e-newsletter issued (on CDC Website)</i> • <i>Briefs sent to Members and emails to Town and Parish Clerks</i> • <i>Verbal briefings provided to local media</i> • <i>Press package (Q/A style) was handed to media.</i> • <i>Explanatory leaflets were distributed at public meetings</i>
<p><i>CDC Workshops and community engagement with</i></p>	<p><i>January-March 2014</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>CDC developed plans, data and other information to help inform these engagement exercises</i>

<p><i>town and parish councillors and other community reps - focus was on the 17 settlements included in the Preferred Development Strategy.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Information was cascaded to residents via community reps who attended CDC workshops</i> • <i>Specific briefing sessions took place in communities</i> • <i>March briefing notes were sent to CDC Councillors.</i>
<p><i>Actions prior to CDC Cabinet consideration of Local Plan on 4 Dec 2014</i></p>	<p><i>November 2014</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>CDC contacted all settlements who took part in community engagement workshops. Sent them covering letter and site allocations based on their feedback.</i> • <i>All Parish and Town Council's received details of the forthcoming consultation period (Jan-Feb 2015) and an edited version that could re-produced in their own parish magazines.</i> • <i>Parish and Town Councils received update briefings from CDC on 24 Nov and 1 Dec.</i> • <i>Press Release was issued and posted on CDC Website/social media site outlining the forthcoming consultation period dates.</i>
<p><i>Six-week public consultation on emerging Local Plan development strategy and site allocations (Reg.18)</i></p>	<p><i>January-February 2015</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cotswold News magazine (December 2014) was issued to all households, advising how to comment.</i> • <i>Press releases were issued and posted on CDC Website/social media site.</i> • <i>Cirencester Town Council Website displayed consultation details.</i> • <i>A second leaflet focusing on proposals for Chesterton was sent to 12,000 homes in Cirencester area</i> • <i>Briefs sent to CDC Councillors and emails to Town and Parish Clerks</i> • <i>Verbal briefings to local media</i> • <i>Public Drop-in events at Cirencester and Moreton</i> • <i>CDC-hosted business breakfast (Cirencester)</i> • <i>Press package (Q/A style) was provided to media</i> • <i>Hard copies of consultation documents sent to local libraries and also to the 18 settlements earmarked for development.</i> • <i>Posters affixed to CDC noticeboards around town and on other noticeboards, including Cirencester Town Council.</i> • <i>Bespoke communications were issued to all Parish and Town Clerks,</i>

		<p>including hard copy posters to deploy and CD copies of all documentation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feature item about consultation appeared on Cotswold TV
Online survey to gather residents' views on provision of open spaces in emerging Local Plan.	July-August 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release was issued and posted on CDC Website/social media site. • Survey was posted online until 14 August; printed copies were also made available at public buildings, including local libraries and CDC offices in Cirencester and Moreton Area Centre.
Development Management Policies Consultation (Reg. 18)	<p>October 2015 Cabinet approval</p> <p>November-December 2015 public consultation</p>	<p>Pre-consultation (Oct/Nov 2015)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanatory emails sent to members and Town and Parish Councils (plus other key stakeholders) • Briefing to Members in Chamber • Briefed Parish and Town Councils • Press briefing plus Q/A style press package issued. • CDC officials met with Cirencester Town Council (5 Nov) • Press release preparing ground was issued prior to consultation. Also posted on CDC Website/social media site. <p>During consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases were issued setting out how to comment. Posted on CDC Website/social media site. • Cirencester Town Council website included details of consultation. • CDC Forward Planning manager briefed media on consultation. More verbal briefings were provided to media as required. • Cotswold News residents magazine was delivered to all households, focusing on the consultation, and advising how to comment. • CDC planners hosted drop-in sessions at Cirencester and Moreton. Information boards were on display for public to view. • Briefs given to CDC Councillors and emails sent to Town and Parish Clerks • Posters on CDC noticeboards (and other noticeboards) • Press package (Q/A style) developed and provided to media. • Hard copies of Local Plan documents sent to local libraries
Feedback from Reg. 18 consultations	December 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDC issued two press releases directing the public to the relevant Website pages listing all responses to

		<p><i>the Reg. 18 consultations in Jan-Feb 2015 and Nov-Dec 2015. Both releases were posted on our Website/social media site.</i></p>
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To sum up, I believe that the Council has undertaken a comprehensive public relations exercise, ensuring that residents and other important stakeholders have been made aware of proposals for Chesterton and have been informed about how they can contribute to the process. The total number of responses that CDC has received for just the Reg. 18 consultations alone - 2,447 consultees submitting 11,667 comments - demonstrates that our engagement methods have been successful.

As Mr. Nicholas has indicated, Bathurst Development Ltd (BDL) also engaged extensively with the community prior to submitting an outline planning application for Chesterton in December 2015. BDL's obligation to produce a Master Plan Framework (MPF) and the required extent of their community engagement was specified within the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. We believe that they produced the MPF in accordance with our stipulations.

Here are some details of their community engagement actions:

- *Creation of a Website www.chestertoncirencester.co.uk to display information and to provide details of community events and consultations.*
- *Community events including: Community Planning Weekend - 9 & 10 May 2014 (involving workshops and a drop-in exhibition); Community Forum - 18 June 2014 (involving a workshop and presentations); Learning Journey - 15 August 2014 (involving visits to three schemes outside of the District); Community Forum - 22 October 2014 (involving updates on the technical work that had been carried out and updates on the progress of the planning application and the Local Plan, along with new exhibition boards); Movement and Transport Day - 26 November 2014 (involving a series of workshops assessing movement and transport); Community Update Exhibition 13-14 July 2015 (involving updates on the progress of the MPF and the application, including emerging transport mitigation measures, exhibition boards and a hand-out).*
- *Three-week consultation period on the MPF itself, from 5 - 26 October 2015. Consultation flyers were delivered to 9,980 households in Cirencester, Stratton and Siddington. Letters were posted to 323 local stakeholders who had been identified by John Thompson and Partners (JTP) or who had provided their contact details to JTP. Householders in the immediate vicinity of the site received a hand-out that summarised the MPF and two advertisements were placed within the Wilts and Glos Standard on consecutive weeks.*
- *Hard copies of the MPF were made available for the public to view at the Cirencester Library, at the offices of Cirencester Town Council and Cotswold District Council and, for certain times, at the St Lawrence Church Centre.*
- *Responses to the MPF from third parties (a total of 69) and stakeholders were collated and analysed by the applicant's team.*

- *Final public presentation of the MPF on 20 and 21 November before it was submitted to the Council on 15 December 2015.*

Finally, I note that several critics (mostly hiding behind assumed names) have cast doubts about CDC's efforts to draw public attention to the BDL outline application, claiming that we are preventing them from exercising their right to comment. For the record, please note that CDC has gone far beyond the normal requirements laid upon a local authority when considering a planning application. Here are some examples:

- *We extended the deadline for comments on the BDL outline application to six weeks rather than the statutory time period of 21 days. Furthermore, we have made it clear that the extended deadline (until 3 March 2016) is not a 'cut-off date' and that we will accept comments up to the point of issuing a decision. However, we have pointed out that it will help us to receive comments within a defined timescale in case there are any queries or points raised which require further information or clarification.*
- *On receiving the outline application, the CDC planning team sent out over 700 letters of notification and posted 34 pairs of site notices in and around the application site and in close proximity to the highways works. In the interests of transparency, photographs and a 'location map' of the notices were added to the Planning Register. The team also compiled a very useful Frequently Asked Questions guide at <http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/residents/planning-building/planning/chesterton-planning-application/> to help anyone wishing to make a comment.*
- *When the application arrived at CDC, we issued a Press Release informing the public that we would announce a consultation period as soon as the application had been processed. A second Press Release was duly issued, instructing readers how to comment, and referring them to the FAQ guide. Both Press Releases gave rise to articles in the local media. They were also displayed prominently on the CDC website home page and on our social media site.*

Mr. Nicholas thanked Councillor Parsons for a very full response but stated that what was missing was any recognition of a response regarding the effects of that consultation to those who had responded to the consultation. Mr. Nicholas drew attention to the great deal of evidence that had been produced - including via a petition to Council, the Wilts & Glos Standard W&G poll, and as part of the consultation on the current planning application relating to the strategic site. Given the great deal of opposition to the Local Plan and the strategic site, Mr. Nicholas asked Councillor Parsons and the Council to consider this issue carefully.

In response, Councillor Parsons reminded members of the public and Members that the population of the Cotswolds was some 84,637 which comprised some 36,236 households.

He explained that at the first Regulation 18 consultation response the Council had received 50 representations which suggested that there were other ways of dealing with the strategic site.

Councillor Parsons was confident from the information provided in the written answer that the Council had consulted fully regarding the production of the Local Plan over many, many years going back to 2008 or 2009.

He further explained that the recognition sought would be spelt out in the next consultation document, which was the Regulation 19 consultation document, which would produce a summary of representations received in the two Regulation 18 consultations.

(5) From Mr. D James of Cirencester to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

'In CDC's promotional leaflet for Chesterton it says ... "to help Cirencester remain a good place to live and work, and further improve its facilities in the future, the town must continue to accommodate a sizeable share of the district's future housing and employment requirement".

Can Councillor Parsons explain why accommodating a sizeable share of the district's future housing will help Cirencester remain a good place to live and also why such a sizeable share will further improve facilities in the town and what those improvements will be (over and above those changes, e.g. highways, which are required for the development per se)?'

Response from Councillor Parsons

Work to date on the Local Plan has identified Cirencester as the most sustainable place within the Cotswold District for development. It has therefore been allocated a proportionate amount of employment and housing sites within the Plan.

By increasing employment opportunities in Cirencester, the Local Plan will improve the employment prospects within the Town.

The allocation of a strategic site to Cirencester within the Local Plan will ensure that this development will be properly supported with the required infrastructure.

An increased population living and working in Cirencester will help the Town to prosper and to compete successfully against neighbouring centres such as Swindon, Cheltenham Stroud and Gloucester.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr. James asked the following:-

'CDC's promotional leaflet refers to a "sizeable share" of housing. The share has also been referred to as fair and proportionate. It is nothing of the sort. An analytical comparison with other towns of a similar size to Cirencester within the UK shows that the allocation of new houses, relative to its population, is higher for Cirencester than for all of the other 29 towns, in fact **two and a half times higher than the national average** (at 17 v 7 new houses per 100 residents). Based on the randomness and statistical validity of that sample, it is true to say that Cirencester has the highest relative burden of housing than anywhere else in the country. Will CDC now recognise the enormity of this scheme and reduce the allocation to a much lesser number?'

In response, Councillor Parsons referred to the published consultation documents where it was clearly shown that the allocation for Cirencester in the emerging Local Plan was not disproportionate.

(6) From Mr. G Burley of Cirencester to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

'As we understand it, the size of the Chesterton strategic site at 110 hectares, on which it was planned to build 2,500 houses, was found to have constraints which led to a rather more than expected diminution in space so that only 55 hectares could be built on. The local plan and the BDL application now proposes 2,350 dwellings. The council must be aware that to persist with 2,350 dwellings with such a large and unexpected diminution will result in a housing density much higher than originally envisaged. Will the council explain why it is trying to meet its target on an ever smaller area of land?'
Response from Councillor Parsons

CDC has always been aware of the constraints of the Chesterton strategic site and these have been factored in throughout the process. The gross density of the site is 19.6 dwellings per hectare compared with 28 dwellings per hectare for the existing housing areas nearest to the allocated site. That is about two-thirds the gross density of the Cranhams Park development, which lacks areas of open space. Mixed densities add variety and visual interest to development schemes, which is often lacking in more homogenous developments built several decades ago. The densities originally envisaged for the Chesterton site were gross densities in the knowledge that significant open spaces, community hub, etc., would form an integral part of this mixed use proposal (the site also includes 9.1 hectares of employment land), plus an acknowledgement that there were areas of the site which could not be built upon due to constraints (e.g. gas pipeline, overhead cables).

By way of a supplementary question, Mr. Burley asked the following:-

'The response to the original question is academic and derogatory. The gross density figure is totally irrelevant because it is the net figure that will have impact on the dwellings. Houses in the nearest developments have gardens and green areas interspersed with the housing and thus give a relative open feel. Dwellings on the new development will be cramped and overbearing. The huge swathe of land that cannot be developed is adjacent to open countryside. The open spaces do NOT form an *integral* part of this proposal. The comparison should be - old developments 28 per hectare compared with 40-55 on the new. That is almost twice the net density of Cranhams Park! Nowhere else in Cirencester has this latter density.

Does the Council agree that knowingly committing to a development where a significant proportion of the dwellings will be crammed in at 55 per hectare is irresponsible?'

Councillor Parsons first declared an 'other' interest in this issue as a member of Mr. Burley's family worked part-time for the same firm as Councillor Parsons; but he confirmed that it was not something that had a pecuniary involvement as regards himself.

In response, Councillor Parsons explained that his answer did not differ greatly from the response already given. He stated that the Local Plan process was very complex and very thorough, with issues of density having been looked at carefully in conjunction with government guidelines and constraints within the NPPF. Councillor Parsons was confident that the proposals coming forward matched those requirements.

(7) From Mr. M Pratley of Cirencester to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

'Cirencester has 3,387 new homes allocated to it in the draft local plan. Since the start of the plan period, and in the absence of an approved local plan, houses have been built and permissions granted for at least one thousand dwellings. An application has been made for 2,350 homes at Chesterton. It is likely that new builds and permissions will continue so that the Cirencester target allocation will be exceeded unless the number at Chesterton is reduced accordingly.

Is it the council's policy to irrespectively ring fence Chesterton so that 2,350 dwellings will be built and is it possible that Cirencester could in fact get many more new homes than 3,387 over the plan period?

Given that 3,387 means that Cirencester already has the highest burden of new homes of similar sized towns, how can the council justify this policy and this outcome?'

Response from Councillor Parsons

Many of the 1,000 homes built/approved at Cirencester since 2011 have been at Kingshill on sites that were allocated in the 2006 Local Plan. Further 'windfalls' within the town would yield nothing like this number of dwellings.

In any event, the District-wide housing requirement, derived from the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN), is not a ceiling. It is a minimum target, which CDC must demonstrate it can deliver. To ensure 'soundness', Local Plans need to be based on up-to-date evidence, such as national household and economy projections, which can profoundly affect the OAN. Updates to the OAN could result in further increases to the District housing requirement. In a situation where it is challenging to identify sufficient deliverable/sustainable sites to meet the current requirement, every site identified to date makes an important contribution to the development strategy.

The outline application submitted by BDL is for up to 2,350 dwellings, if outline planning permission is granted, 2,350 will be the maximum number of dwellings that can be constructed on the site in accordance with the outline planning permission.

A reduction in the amount of housing proposed for any site would effectively mean alternative(s) having to be found elsewhere - potentially in less sustainable locations. Recent appeal decisions give a clear indication that the Government is serious about addressing housing supply issues, and it clearly expects local planning authorities to do the same.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr. Pratley asked the following:-

'120 hectares is a lot of farmland and building on productive farmland should not be undertaken lightly. You recognise this in your own planning guidelines where it states:- **'the use of Grade 3b or worse land should be used for development, and the best and most versatile ground, which includes Grade 2, should not be built on or developed'**.

In various evidence papers, sustainability reports and local farmers' evidence, the best and most versatile land is said to be extensive. In fact, in your earlier draft consultation document, you state that much of the site is Grade 2. Yet in the January 2015 version put out for public comment you omit any mention of land grading. Why was this omitted?

Bathurst Developments commissioned a report from EDP, a consultancy based in Barnsley, which claims that the overwhelming majority of the site is Grade 3b, and concludes that development conforms with the NPPF.

As this report, contradicts the evidence of others and your own statements, do you not agree that an independent organisation should be asked to carry out an agricultural land classification to avoid potentially adverse consequences?

In response, Councillor Parsons stated that the Planning Inspector would be an independent party and that it would be up to him to adjudicate on such issues, no doubt having heard from interested residents/parties at the public inquiry.

CL.47 MEMBER QUESTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, questions had been submitted, and responses provided, as follows:-

- (1) From Councillor Juliet Layton to Councillor Sue Coakley, Cabinet Member for Health, Environment and Communities

'Now that the Council has concluded its purchase of the Packers Leaze site at South Cerney, there remains the challenge to ensure that the amenity of local residents and leisure users are protected in line with British Standard 4142. To that end there is a short window of opportunity to establish baseline noise levels at the site before operations start in earnest later in the year. Will the Council undertake baseline noise assessments so that the impacts of operations at the site can be measured and controlled?'

Response from Councillor Coakley

As the Council's use will be broadly equivalent to when the site was being utilised by SITA, the Council will be complying with the associated noise condition as set out in original planning permissions.

It would not be appropriate to use noise levels when the site is unused as a baseline, as they would merely register the current position.

As the Council will now control the site through ownership/influence of Ubico, it will be better placed to ensure compliance than if a third party used the site.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Layton asked the following:-

'To quote you 'as the Council's use will be broadly equivalent to when the site was being utilised by SITA, the Council will be complying with the associated noise condition as set out in the original planning permissions'.

I would suggest that there are several things wrong with this statement.

1. As the original planning permission was granted in 2000, the Council should acknowledge that the highly valued tourist industry has changed in South Cerney with Hoburne Cotswold and the considerable extension of Watermark lodges just across the lake. In the interests of 'good neighbours', consideration should be given to these sensitive receptors and not forgetting the new residential Redrow estate.
2. It seems that since perhaps 2000, but certainly in June 2015, the noise conditions were not met, though I believe the way the original condition is written it would be hard to enforce a breach.
3. As the Council has avoided the tests of planning permission and gained what looks to be a free reign by benefitting from breaches of use of land, I ask that the residents and visitors of South Cerney be respected by the Council and are given assurance that the Council will not benefit from the breach in noise levels and sets new conditions in line with British Standard 4142 recommendations.

To close on a later quote in your answer 'as the Council will now control the site.... it will be better placed to ensure compliance than if a third party used the site'. This does not leave me with any confidence unless the Council can promise rigorous measures and put proper procedures in place to suspend operations if the noise levels are breached.'

In response, Councillor Coakley explained that noise levels were subject to environmental health legislation and that the Council would take enforcement action if relevant. Councillor Coakley confirmed that she would ensure that the site was operated within current constraints of environmental health legislation.

(2) From Councillor Juliet Layton to Councillor Mrs. SL Jepson, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing

'Can Councillor Jepson assure me that the Highway conditions on visibility splays at the Packers Lease site are being met? Highways stated that visibility splays of 4m x 150m and 100m should be maintained (Condition 6.2000) - are these figures consistent with current Highway's guidance, and are they being met by the recent changes to the neighbouring Berite fence?'

Response from Councillor Mrs. Jepson

The Council will seek to ensure that it uses the site in line with the previous user.

Permission was granted for the adjoining fence in October 2015 - the Highways Officer raised no objection to the proposal. That said, if the Council can do anything to improve visibility splays, then naturally it will.

With regard to highways issues, Councillor Layton will recall that, in response to a related question at the September 2015 Council Meeting, the Cabinet Member for Health, Environment and Communities had suggested that a speed limit reduction should be sought along this length of road to the benefit of all users of the road. I too am fully supportive of such a proposal, and would ask whether Councillor Layton would lend her support in calling for such a measure?

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Layton asked the following:-

'As In my previous supplementary question, an assurance that the Council will seek to ensure that it uses the site in line with the previous user does nothing to assuage fear.

We know that many breaches of previous conditions were ignored by the Council, for example land use, fuel stores and, it seems, visibility splays.

The conditions set in 2000 stated that the splays should be 150m right and 100m left. The June 2015 Transport Statement by Peter Brett and Associates states 'At the existing site access, visibility of 143m right and 65m left can be achieved'. This is obviously less than recommended and does not state that these measurements are actually met.

The safety of the many users of Broadway Lane should be paramount in this current Council's thinking.

My question regards the egress left from the SITA site where the Berite fence obscures the bend in Broadway Lane, and I don't believe that question was answered.

The suggestion of a speed reduction has been voiced before and I did give it my support but I do not think that it replaces the importance of proper visibility. The lorries using Broadway Lane do not on the whole speed, the road is unlined and narrow and wide vehicles are driven with due caution, the speeding is done by those racing to park close to their work at the Lakeside Business Park. It is them that the lorry drivers need to see clearly when they pull out left on to Broadway Lane.

Please let us not allow a breach of use from the original splay recommendations from the conditions of what is going to be a site for many, many more vehicles than permitted in 2000. I ask that my original question is answered and that the original conditions are met.

In response, Councillor Mrs. Jepson reiterated that permission had been granted for the adjoining fence in 2015, and that the Highways Authority had raised no objection to the proposal. Councillor Mrs. Jepson confirmed that the situation would continue to be monitored; and was pleased to see support for the speed restriction proposal, which would be followed up.

(3) From Councillor RC Hughes to Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council

'Clean for the Queen' is a campaign to clear up Britain in time for Her Majesty the Queen's 90th Birthday in June.

Fly tipping is an issue around the Cotswolds and costs the Council money to clean up. Would the Leader consider waiving the charges for collection of bulky goods during March and April to support this campaign? Applications could still be booked in and limited to 3 items per household.'

Response from Councillor Stowe

In accordance with our usual practice, I have asked the relevant Cabinet Member to deal with your question, and Councillor Coakley's response is as follows:-

In numbers terms, during the financial year 2014/15, the Council identified 349 incidences of fly-tipping and spent £21,121 on clear-ups. For the same period, we undertook almost 2,500 bulky waste collections, for which we charge £14 for up to 3 items and £5 per item for up to three additional items. We have deliberately kept this price competitive, with no increases for many years. During the calendar year 2015, we collected almost 7,000 individual items.

I believe that the above figures illustrate that people are not put off by the cost, and we would be unlikely to reduce fly tipping by waiving the charges for bulky collections over such a short period of time. I would also encourage anyone who witnesses a fly-tipping incident to come forward with details of the incident and as much supporting information as possible, so that we can then take appropriate legal action. As we have seen before, continued successful prosecutions are a far greater deterrent to would-be fly-tippers.

Councillor Coakley will also respond to any supplementary question you may have.

Councillor Hughes stated that he did not have a supplementary question.

(4) From Councillor JA Harris to Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council

Please can the Leader give an update on the plan to rehome Syrian refugees in the Cotswolds?

Response from Councillor Stowe

In accordance with our usual practice, I have asked the relevant Cabinet Member to deal with your question, and Councillor Coakley's response is as follows:-

The Council has identified two properties in Cirencester in preparation for receiving the first two families. We are currently working with the other Gloucestershire Districts, and the County Council, to put in place an effective support package from the day of their arrival. We have updated the Home Office on our readiness and anticipate the arrival of the first two families in March 2016. Syrian Refugees will come to the UK with five years humanitarian leave to remain, and the Home Office have now confirmed the funding arrangements for the full five years. The Member/Officer group set up to manage our proposal is confident that we can accommodate and support the families and has gained some valuable experience from supporting the two families recently received by West Oxfordshire District Council.

Councillor Coakley will also respond to any supplementary question you may have.

Councillor Harris thanked Members for their cross-party support of efforts to rehome Syrian refugees and, by way of a supplementary question, asked the Cabinet Member to join him in lobbying government and the EU to re-home some 3,000 child refugees, who represented some of the neediest people in terms of help and support.

In response, Councillor Coakley stated that she completely agreed that those children were exceptionally vulnerable and would be more than happy to encourage the Government to consider whether children could be brought into the country safely; and, subject to ensuring that all implications had been properly thought through and relevant support structures were in place, to support such an initiative.

(5) From Councillor JA Harris to Councillor NJW Parsons, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

We have the ridiculous situation at present that dwellings built or given planning permission in Cirencester won't go towards reducing the overall number of houses at Chesterton.

How does the Deputy Leader plan on rectifying this?

Response from Councillor Parsons

Many of the 1,000 homes built/approved at Cirencester since 2011 have been at Kingshill on sites that were allocated in the 2006 Local Plan. They cannot be counted again in the context of the emerging Local Plan. Further 'windfalls' within the town would yield nothing like this number of dwellings. The Distribution Strategy for Cirencester, excluding the strategic site at Chesterton, allows for some 30 houses.

In any event, the District-wide housing requirement, derived from the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN), is not a ceiling. It is a minimum target, which CDC must demonstrate it can deliver. To ensure 'soundness', Local Plans need to be based on up-to-date evidence, such as national household and economy projections, which can profoundly affect the OAN. Updates to the OAN could result in further increases to the District housing requirement. In a situation where it is challenging to identify sufficient deliverable/sustainable sites to meet the current requirement, every site identified to date makes an important contribution to the development strategy.

The outline application submitted by BDL is for up to 2,350 dwellings, if outline planning permission is granted, 2,350 will be the maximum number of dwellings that can be constructed on the site in accordance with the outline planning permission.

A reduction in the amount of housing proposed for any site would effectively mean alternative(s) having to be found elsewhere - potentially in less sustainable locations. Recent appeal decisions give a clear indication that the Government is serious about addressing housing supply issues, and it clearly expects local planning authorities to do the same.

Councillor Harris stated that it was Liberal Democrat policy to support strategic sites and reminded Members that the NPPF put the onus on local councils and local government as to where and how many strategic sites there should be. Whilst he and his Group believed that, insofar as was possible, housing should be spread across the Cotswolds rather than 'dumped' in one location on the edge of Cirencester, he acknowledged that the Council was now in a situation where it would be difficult to change tack, and questioned whether the Local Plan situation had been handled competently.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Harris asked whether Councillor Parsons thought that the Local Plan process had been a success.

In response, Councillor Parsons expressed the view that it was hard to judge the success of a programme until it had been completed. He wished to highlight the extreme hard work of Officers in seeking to deliver a Local Plan in a professional, sensible and measured way and stated that the success or otherwise of the programme would ultimately be determined at inquiry. He could, however, confirm that the Council had taken soundings from the Planning Advisory Service on several occasions and that such organisation had commended the way in which the Local Plan had been handled.

(6) From Councillor AR Brassington to either Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council, or Councillor Sue Coakley, Cabinet Member for Health, Environment and Communities

'As part of the initial phase of the Vision 20-20 programme, the Public Protection services of Cotswold DC, Forest of Dean DC and West Oxon DC are gradually merging into one work-force, with full implementation due to be achieved by September 2016.

Can the Leader of the Council or the Cabinet Member for Health Environment and Communities:

- (i) state how many FTE qualified Environmental Health Officers worked for each separate local authority in March 2014 and how many will be employed by the new combined service in September 2016 and September 2017; and
- (ii) guarantee that front-line Public Protection services will not be negatively affected as a result of these changes.'

Response from Councillor Coakley

At the moment, I can really add nothing further to the responses given by the Leader and myself to your very similar questions on this subject at the Cabinet Meeting on 19th November 2015; and to the oral update given at the Joint Consultative Committee meeting on 10th December 2015, at which you were present. I also understand that, following on from that Meeting, Officers met with you to discuss the new shared service framework.

In the time available since the submission of your questions, it has not been possible to draw together the authority-specific details you have sought; but, given that the shaping of the service is still on-going, and will be for some time, it is also not possible to predict with certainty the numbers involved at this stage.

In short, and to reiterate what has previously been stated, we are not proposing to reduce the level of service, and the new framework will provide a more resilient delivery model.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Brassington asked the following:-

'The public protection service undertakes vitally important work to protect the people of the Cotswolds - for example, health and safety inspections protect workers in numerous work places and food safety inspections ensure high levels of hygiene in food establishments.

Our Leader has often stated that, despite reductions in staff numbers, front line services will not be reduced.

Can he therefore give a guarantee, not an intention or even an aspiration, but a guarantee that the number of health and safety workplace inspections and food safety inspections of food establishments will not be reduced over the coming next 3 years?'

In response, Councillor Coakley confirmed that there was no intention to reduce the number of food safety inspections but, given the on-going substantive review as to how local authorities should undertake food safety inspections, it would be foolish to say that the same number would be carried out in case the regime and requirements were to change. However, Councillor Coakley was prepared to give a guarantee that the Council would carry out the number of food safety inspections that this district required to ensure that its public was protected from any food safety issue.

Insofar as health and safety was concerned, and acknowledging that regimes and requirements could change, Councillor Coakley confirmed that the Council would do everything required of it to ensure that workers and members of the public in the District were protected.

CL.48 PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

CL.49 DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016/17 TO 2019/20 AND BUDGET 2016/17

The Chairman stated that whilst he did not wish to stifle debate, he would ask Members to be disciplined in their comments, avoid repetition and be succinct and to the point.

The Leader of the Council presented this item, and requested that the Council consider recommendations from the Cabinet in respect of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2016/17 to 2019/20, the Capital Programme for 2016/17 to 2018/19, the Budget for 2016/17 and the Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17. In so doing, the Leader drew attention to the updated report that had been circulated, which reflected the recommendations of the Cabinet.

The Leader wished to place on record his thanks to the Chief Finance Officer and her team for their work on the budget, not least due to late changes and information from the Government. Even now, clarification was still required on certain issues, including Business Rates.

It was noted that the draft Strategy and budget had been debated by both the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on two occasions, and had also been subject to public consultation.

The Leader amplified various aspects of the circulated report, and drew specific attention to the recommended freeze on Council Tax for the coming year. He

believed that only 10% of Councils would either cut or freeze Council Tax in the coming year and that the Council should therefore be proud of supporting a freeze. The Leader explained that a further cut could have been contemplated, as finances would be healthy for the next two years, but Government restrictions had prevented this as it would not be possible to retrieve the money in the future through increases. The Leader reminded Members that the four-year MTFS went beyond the life of this Council; and that lobbying for a better settlement had been successful, with the Government having recognised that provision of services in rural areas cost more.

In referring to the District element of the Council Tax bill, the Leader was proud to confirm that this had not increased in over eleven years, with Council Tax payers actually paying less now for this Council's services than they had been eleven years ago - in real terms there had been a 25% reduction in our element

The Leader stated that, when making comparisons with other Councils, the reference point should be average bills rather than Band D listings - other Gloucestershire authorities were on average 30% higher than this Council's, which had been due to the delivery of efficiencies early. Notwithstanding this, the Council had been able to maintain, and in some cases improve, the standard of front-line services; the waste service was better now than it had been six or seven years ago; and there was also an increased knowledge base and resilience across the authority.

The proposed budget also incorporated a freeze in parking and green bin charges; maintained grants to the CAB, VICs and voluntary sector; provided a prudent budget; and enabled some money to be placed into reserves. In summary, the budget would be balanced over the four years of the MTFS

In referring to capital expenditure, the Leader explained that the Government had been more generous than in previous years on Disabled Facilities Grants, which meant that some additional capital funding could be made available for worthy schemes. In this connection, and supplementary to the Cabinet's recommendations, the Leader wished to propose the following:-

- a sum of £500,000 be made available to facilitate the roll-out of broadband - he felt that the additional monies provided an opportunity to do something to improve broadband which was essential in communities albeit that provision was not good in many parts of the District where it had not kept up with faster speeds. While some progress had been made, such an allocation should be able to expedite matters and enable work to with the County Council to speed up the process. The sum would be match-funded by the County Council, and at CDC a working group would be established to look at the issues and administer the money.
- a sum of £75,000 be made available to facilitate an increase in capacity in the Old Memorial Hospital, Station and Waterloo car parks, Cirencester - in line with the previous decision to look at capacity, and consulting on and developing a strategy, the additional monies would be used to facilitate a significant development which would be opened up to the private sector by way of an option for a partnership opportunity to development the Old Memorial Hospital, Station and Waterloo car parks. The main purpose was to increase capacity by 2020; and the monies would be available to buy-in professional advice as needed.

The Leader concluded by Proposing the Budget as outlined (incorporating the Cabinet's recommended freeze in Council Tax for 2016/17, and the additional capital

allocations in respect of the broadband and car parking initiatives) details of which were circulated at the Meeting).

The Proposed Budget was Seconded by Councillor Sue Coakley, who did not otherwise speak on the Proposal.

Councillor JA Harris, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, was invited to respond to the Proposed Budget. He requested that the Council adjourn for a period of time to allow Members time to consider and discuss the updated budget proposals.

The Chairman agreed to the request. At this stage, the Leader asked for sight of any proposed budget amendments from the Liberal Democrat Group, so that his Group could also consider those proposals during the adjournment. These were duly provided, and the Chairman adjourned the Meeting.

When the Meeting reconvened, Councillor Harris thanked the Chairman for allowing the adjournment. Councillor Harris expressed concern at the proposed further freeze in Council Tax and reminded Members that the financial position remained uncertain. He believed that many changes were inevitable to local government funding, and that a freeze would reduce the money that the Council would have available. Councillor Harris drew particular attention to the fact that there had already been two years of cuts in Council Tax, and three or four years when it had been frozen, with residents now paying less than ten years' ago, which he did not feel to be sustainable. While efficiencies had been made, costs had increased and there had been a reduction in what the Council does and a number of service issues that needed to be addressed.

Against the above background, the Liberal Democrat Group wished to propose three amendments:-

- that a Council Tax rise of 1.99% be implemented, as originally envisaged;
- that Sunday parking charges be removed from the Brewery Car Park, Cirencester; and the 'Free after Three' initiative be implemented all year round;
- that a sum of £35,000 be allocated to fund an Environmental Warden specifically for the Cotswold District area.

Councillor JA Harris then formally Proposed the first Amendment, that a Council Tax rise of 1.99% be implemented, as originally envisaged. He explained that such a measure would cost tax payers 4p per week.

Councillor NP Robbins Seconded the Amendment. He stated that the Council's focus was on saving money and cutting costs and, in so doing, it had lost sight of the need to provide the services residents wanted. Reserves were in a good position; the Council had an investment target; interest rates were low; and the administration had achieved what it wanted, which was to be an efficient Council. However, Councillor Robbins did not believe that the Council was addressing the issues in more effort was needed to protect the localities - dog fouling and fly tipping; environment; more needed to be done to increase recycling rates. Whilst welcoming the broadband proposal, such monies would money come from capital not revenue reserves which were already extremely strong. In summary, he wished to support the proposed increase in Council Tax to improve services, rather than keep them at current levels.

The Leader expressed the view that there was no justification to increase Council Tax at this point but there was a good justification to reduce it given the figures. However, as he had previously mentioned, given that the Council would not be able to retrieve any reduction and increase Council Tax in years three and four of the MTFS, a freeze was being recommended for the coming year. As a principle, the Leader believed that the Council should not take more money than was needed to provide services, and there was no proven case to increase Council Tax.

A Member welcomed the cautionary approach in terms of a freeze rather than another cut, but felt that the approach should involve consideration of the Corporate Strategy, then the MTFS, and then the setting of the Council Tax. The Member suggested that local government needed to be active rather than passive, with councils taking positive action to improve services. A lack of inspiring vision, doing the minimum and charging less for it, was not a satisfactory approach.

Councillor JA Harris then summed up, stating that there were clearly ideological differences between the two political groups, with his Group advocating a rise in Council Tax due to the number of years of cuts or freezes, with an uncertain financial future.

On being put to the vote, the Amendment was LOST.

Note:

In accordance with legislative requirements, a Recorded Vote was taken in respect of the Amendment. The Record of Voting was as follows:-

For: - Councillors AR Brassington T Cheung, PCB Coleman, Jenny Forde, JA Harris, M Harris, Jenny Hincks, RC Hughes, Juliet Layton and NP Robbins - Total: 10;

Against: - Councillors SI Andrews, Mark F Annett, Miss AML Beccle, AW Berry, Sue Coakley, Alison Coggins, RW Dutton, David Fowles, C Hancock, Maggie Heaven, SG Hirst, RL Hughes, Mrs. SL Jepson, RG Keeling, MGE MacKenzie-Charrington, Jim Parsons, NJW Parsons, SDE Parsons, Tina Stevenson, Lynden Stowe, R Theodoulou and LR Wilkins - Total: 22;

Abstentions: - None - Total: 0

Absent: - Councillors Julian Beale and BS Dare - Total: 2.

Councillor PCB Coleman then Proposed the Second Amendment, that Sunday parking charges be removed from the Brewery Car Park, Cirencester; and the 'Free after Three' initiative be implemented all year round. In so doing, he welcomed the various proposals from Councillor Stowe on car parking, but suggested that these were longer-term solutions whereas his Amendment sought to help in the short-term.

Councillor Coleman drew attention to continuing complaints reported in the Press, and believed that the Council could afford to implement the proposals which would assure the town that the Council was supportive, did listen, and was prepared to take action to address problems.

Councillor Cheung Seconded the Amendment and explained that, having operated a business in the town for many years, he had first-hand experience that parking was a major issue; that the 24/7 charges had a detrimental impact on trade; and that some positive action was needed to address the current situation.

Councillor Hancock, the Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships, responded to the two parts of the Amendment. With regard to Sunday charges, he stated that Sunday was now a commercial day and there was also potentially going to be a relaxation of Sunday trading restrictions; and that there were other free parking facilities available in the town. Insofar as the proposed free parking initiative was concerned, Councillor Hancock confirmed that he had already been considering an extension, given that the car parks were fuller after 3.00 p.m. and it had proved to be a useful demand management tool. In the circumstances, that element of the Amendment was broadly welcomed and he would take on board an extension, initially for six months during the period of the revamp of the Market Place, following which the situation could be reviewed and, subject to any constraints, a possible further six-month extension could be considered. It was noted that the free parking initiative was supported by the Chamber of Commerce. The Leader explained that he would be happy to incorporate this into his overall budget proposals.

In the circumstances, and based on the assurances given, Councillors Coleman and Cheung withdrew their Amendment.

Councillor AR Brassington then Proposed the Third Amendment, that a sum of £35,000 be allocated to fund an Environmental Warden specifically for the Cotswold District area.

Councillor Brassington explained that shared services meant that existing Environmental Wardens had to cover large areas, sometimes with the effect that local issues such as dog fouling and litter took longer to address. It was suggested that a dedicated Warden could work with Town/Parish Councils, the Police Commissioner and other agencies on a number of issues to get solutions; and could also look at the green spaces, oversee litter picks etc. all of which would help to make the Cotswolds cleaner and greener, thereby protecting and enhancing the environment.

Councillor Jenny Forde Seconded the Amendment. She stated that, along with planning and parking, environmental issues such as dog fouling, the drainage, tourism, wildlife and the AONB, were regularly identified for attention.

In response, Councillor Coakley, the Cabinet Member for Health, Environment and Communities stated that she supported more focus on the environment but reminded Members that the approach had moved away from dedicated Officers in fixed locations; shared resources had a greater impact and there were different ways of allocating resources through the 2020 project; there would still be a local presence and the service would be demand-led; the public had a role to play in reporting incidents of fly tipping and dog fouling and providing evidence; Town/Parish Councils also had a role; and continuing the bespoke funding allocation to Ward Members would provide a resource for these activities and encourage Ward Members to use this budget to improve the environment.

Whilst acknowledging the many benefits of shared services, a number of Members supported the idea of a dedicated warden for the District and also suggested that a zero tolerance policy should be adopted in respect of dog fouling and litter. However, other Members considered the current demand-led approach was sensible and productive.

Councillor Brassington then summed up, stating that the creation of a dedicated post would go a long way to addressing public concerns and priorities.

On being put to the vote, the Amendment was LOST.

Note:

In accordance with legislative requirements, a Recorded Vote was taken in respect of the Amendment. The Record of Voting was as follows:-

For: - Councillors AR Brassington T Cheung, PCB Coleman, Jenny Forde, JA Harris, M Harris, Jenny Hincks, RC Hughes, Juliet Layton and NP Robbins - Total: 10;

Against: - Councillors SI Andrews, Mark F Annett, Miss AML Beccle, AW Berry, Sue Coakley, Alison Coggins, RW Dutton, David Fowles, C Hancock, Maggie Heaven, SG Hirst, RL Hughes, Mrs. SL Jepson, RG Keeling, MGE MacKenzie-Charrington, Jim Parsons, NJW Parsons, SDE Parsons, Tina Stevenson, Lynden Stowe, R Theodoulou and LR Wilkins - Total: 22;

Abstentions: - None - Total: 0

Absent: - Councillors Julian Beale and BS Dare - Total: 2.

The Council was then invited to consider the initial Proposition, as Proposed by Councillor Stowe, and Seconded by Councillor Coakley and including the extension of the 'Free after Three' parking initiative.

The Leader and the Chief Finance Officer responded to questions from Members relating to the recommended deletion of certain specific reserves; the links between the broadband initiative and Fastershire; and private sector involvement in car parking.

The Leader confirmed that he did not wish to add anything further in summing up, and the Meeting therefore proceeded to the vote.

RESOLVED that:

(a) subject to an allocation of £75,000 from the Council Priorities Fund to fund specialist work on car park capacity in Cirencester and an allocation of up to £120,000 from the Council Priorities Fund to fund the 'Free after Three' parking initiative up to the end of February 2017 (at which time the initiative shall be reviewed), and the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2016/17 to 2019/20, as detailed in Appendix 'A' to the updated report circulated at the Meeting (incorporating a Council Tax freeze for 2016/17) be approved;

(b) subject to an allocation of £500,000 to fund broadband improvements in the District (such sum to be match-funded by Gloucestershire County Council), the Capital Programme for 2016/17 to 2018/19, as detailed in paragraph 11 of, and Appendix 'B' to, the updated report circulated at the Meeting, be approved;

(c) the Net Budget Requirement for 2016/17, as detailed at paragraph 9.1 of the updated report circulated at the Meeting, and the Detailed Budget attached at Appendix 'B' to the updated report circulated at the Meeting, be approved;

(d) the Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17, attached at Appendix 'D' to the original report, be approved.

Record of Voting - for 30, against 0, abstentions 1, absent 0.

Note:

In accordance with legislative requirements, a Recorded Vote was also taken in respect of the Substantive Motion. The Record of Voting was as follows:-

For: - Councillors SI Andrews, Mark F Annett, Miss AML Beccle, AW Berry, T Cheung, Sue Coakley, Alison Coggins, PCB Coleman, RW Dutton, Jenny Forde, David Fowles, C Hancock, JA Harris, M Harris, Jenny Hincks, SG Hirst, RC Hughes, RL Hughes, Mrs. SL Jepson, RG Keeling, Juliet Layton, MGE MacKenzie-Charrington, Jim Parsons, NJW Parsons, SDE Parsons, NP Robbins, Tina Stevenson, Lynden Stowe, R Theodoulou and LR Wilkins - Total: 30;

Against: - None - Total: 0;

Abstentions: - Councillor AR Brassington - Total: 1;

Absent: - Councillors Julian Beale, BS Dare and Maggie Heaven - Total: 3.

CL.50 COUNCIL TAX 2016/17

The Leader of the Council introduced this item and drew attention to the updated report that had been circulated which reflected the revised recommendations of Cabinet, incorporating a freeze in the District Council element of Council Tax, and the Budget for 2016/17 approved by the Council under the previous item of business.

In response to a question, the Leader confirmed that, at the current time, he was unable to give any guarantee regarding Local Council Tax Support Grant to town and parish councils beyond the coming year. He did, however, fully understand, and was sympathetic to, the position faced, as was evidenced by the approach taken in previous years.

It was duly Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED that:

- 1) for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 Section 35(2), there are no special expenses for the District Council in 2016/17;**
- 2) it be noted that, using her delegated authority, the Chief Finance Officer calculated the Council Tax Base for 2016/17:**
 - (a) for the whole Council area as 38,418.11 [item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]; and**
 - (b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish Precept relates as in Schedule 1 to the circulated report;**
- 3) the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2016/17 (excluding Parish Precepts) is £126.40;**
- 4) the following amounts be calculated for the year 2016/17 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:-**

- (a) £54,970,129 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act, taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils and any additional special expenses;**
 - (b) £47,604,105 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act;**
 - (c) £7,366,024 being the amount by which the aggregate at 4(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 4(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act);**
 - (d) £191.73 being the amount at 4(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish Precepts and Special Expenses);**
 - (e) £2,509,975 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish Precepts and Special Expenses) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act as per Schedule 2 to the circulated report;**
 - (f) £126.40 being the amount at 4(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 4(e) above by Item T(1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish Precept or special item relates;**
 - (g) the amounts shown in Schedule 2 to the circulated report being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 4(f) above, the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area shown in Schedule 2 divided in each case by the amount at 2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate;**
 - (h) the amounts shown in Schedule 3 to the circulated report being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 4(f) and 4(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands;**
- 5) it be noted that for the year 2016/17 the Gloucestershire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire have issued precepts to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated below:-**

Valuation Band	Gloucestershire County Council	Police and Crime Commissioner
	£	£
A	756.01	140.21
B	882.01	163.57
C	1,008.01	186.94
D	1,134.01	210.31
E	1,386.01	257.05
F	1,638.01	303.78
G	1,890.02	350.52
H	2,268.02	420.62

6) the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in Schedule 4 to the circulated report as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2016/17 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings;

7) the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2016/17 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992;

8) the Chief Finance Officer, Principal Solicitor, Legal Executive, Group Manager Revenues and Welfare Support, Joint Operations Manager, Joint Support Lead Officer, Overpayments Officer, Senior Recovery Revenues Officer, Senior Revenues Officer, Revenues Officer and Recovery Officer be authorised to:-

- a) collect and recover any National Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax, and
- b) prosecute or defend on the Council's behalf or to appear on its behalf in proceedings before a magistrate's court in respect of unpaid National Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax.

Record of Voting - for 29, against 0, abstentions 2, absent 3.

Note:

In accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules, a Recorded Vote was taken in respect of the Proposition. The Record of Voting was as follows:-

For: - Councillors SI Andrews, Mark F Annett, Miss AML Beccle, AW Berry, Sue Coakley, Alison Coggins, PCB Coleman, RW Dutton, Jenny Forde, David Fowles, C Hancock, JA Harris, M Harris, Jenny Hincks, SG Hirst, RC Hughes, RL Hughes, Mrs. SL Jepson, RG Keeling, Juliet Layton, MGE MacKenzie-Charrington, Jim Parsons, NJW Parsons, SDE Parsons, NP Robbins, Tina Stevenson, Lynden Stowe, R Theodoulou and LR Wilkins - Total: 29;

Against: - None - Total: 0;

Abstentions: - Councillors AR Brassington and T Cheung - Total: 2;

Absent: - Councillors Julian Beale, BS Dare and Maggie Heaven - Total: 3.

CL.51 DRAFT CORPORATE STRATEGY 2016-2019

The Leader of the Council presented the report and recommendation of the Cabinet in respect of an updated Corporate Strategy for the period 2016-19.

The Leader advised that, as was usual following an election year, a review had been undertaken of the Council's the aim, priorities and objectives, in order to identify the strategy for the remainder of the Council term. He also drew attention to the consultation that had been carried out.

The Leader explained that the Strategy reflected a continuation of the key themes from the previous term, including the on-going policy of being the most efficient Council, which he considered to be a good aspiration. It was pointed out that some data would be added to the document before publication, primarily to reflect the financial decisions made earlier in the Meeting, and the Leader also confirmed that issues relating to broadband and car parking would be reinforced to reflect the initiatives agreed by the Council that day.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Working Group that had reviewed the strategy and performance measures had been taken into account when formulating the updated document.

During the ensuing debate, the following amendments were agreed:-

(i) the amendment of the second priority to read 'To protect and enhance the local environment whilst supporting economic growth';

(ii) the addition of the words 'and operating in a sustainable manner' at the end of the first paragraph of text under the second priority (page 71).

RESOLVED that, subject to (i) the amendments identified and (ii) the Leader being given delegated authority to further update the document to reinforce the decisions taken with regard to the broadband and car parking initiatives earlier in the meeting, the Corporate Strategy 2016-2019 be approved.

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 3.

CL.52 TREASURY MANAGEMENT - HALF-YEAR REPORT 2015/16 INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

The Leader of the Council drew attention to the circulated report which detailed Treasury Management activity, including Prudential Indicators, for the first half of the financial year 2015/16.

It was explained that the document had been thoroughly reviewed by the Audit Committee at a Special Meeting held on 16th February 2016, and commended to the Council.

RESOLVED that the Treasury Management 2015/16 Half-Year report, and the associated Prudential Indicators, be approved.

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 3.

CL.53 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2016/17

The Leader of the Council drew attention to the report and recommendation of the Audit Committee commending approval of the Treasury Management Strategy for 2016/17; and confirmed that no significant changes had been made to the 2015/16 Strategy

RESOLVED that the Treasury Management Strategy 2016/17 be approved.

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 3.

CL.54 2020 VISION PROGRAMME APPOINTMENTS

Further to the 2020 Vision Programme matters considered and approved by Council on 29th September 2015, the Council was requested to consider the residual staffing structure within Cotswold District Council.

The circulated report identified the operational issues in respect of the residual staffing structure within the Council (i.e. those areas which did not form part of the 2020 Partnership Shared Services) and set out the areas of responsibility of key officers and all service areas.

The Leader of the Council endorsed the proposals as the proper way forward for the Council, particularly as they would enable the current Chief Executive to fully pursue his new role of Managing Director of the 2020 Partnership. The Leader also stressed his support for, and confidence in, Mr Frank Wilson as proposed Lead Director and Head of Paid Service; and, in so doing, drew attention to the invaluable work Mr Wilson had undertaken on behalf of the Council in recent years.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the posts specified in paragraph 4.1 of the circulated report be deleted from the establishment with effect from 1st April 2016;**
- (b) Frank Wilson be appointed as the Lead Director and Head of Paid Service for the Council from 1st April 2016;**
- (c) as referenced in paragraph 5.3 of the circulated report, the salary of each of the Strategic Directors be increased by £1,366 per annum, with effect from 1st April 2016;**
- (d) the remaining content of the circulated report be noted.**

Record of Voting - for 30, against 0, abstentions 1, absent 3.

Note:

Following the vote on this matter, the Chief Executive stated that he would wish to place on record his thanks to Members for the support that they had given him in his role over the years and the fact that it had been a privilege to work on behalf of the Council and its residents. He would continue to support the Council, albeit in a slightly different role, and had every confidence in the level of service that would be provided by Frank Wilson and Christine Gore.

In response, the Leader of the Council expressed his thanks and gratitude to David Neudegg for the work he had undertaken on behalf of the Council, which had not only delivered against targets but had exceeded expectations. The Leader stated that

David had been instrumental in securing the extremely solid position in which the Council found itself.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group echoed the Leader's sentiments, and stated that Mr Neudegg had always been fair and done his utmost to deliver on behalf of the Council.

CL.55 ANY OTHER ISSUES ARISING FROM THE CABINET

There were no other issues arising from the Cabinet.

CL.56 ISSUES/REPORTS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND/OR AUDIT

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

CL.57 SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED that the **Common Seal of the Council be affixed to all contracts, conveyances and any other documents necessary for carrying into effect all resolutions passed by the Council.**

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 3.

CL.58 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under **Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public and Press be excluded from the Meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph (1) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the said Act (information relating to an individual) and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information concerned.**

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 3.

CL.59 2020 VISION PROGRAMME

The Council was requested to consider options in relation to a staffing issue arising out of the 2020 Vision Partnership arrangements. The circulated report set out the various implications associated with the two options.

It was noted that the matter was still to be considered by all of the 2020 partners.

RESOLVED that:

(a) Option B identified within the circulated report be pursued in respect of the holder of the post of Shared Strategic Director, given that such post is to be deleted from the establishment from 1st April 2016;

(b) the Council delegates authority to implement the decision of Council to the Head of Paid Service, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer and Leader of the Council, following further consideration by the 2020 partners.

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 3.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m., adjourned between 11.00 a.m. and 11.15 a.m., and closed at 12.54 p.m.

Chairman

(END)