

(6) MEMBER QUESTIONS

The following questions have been submitted, and responses provided:-

(1) From Councillor Jenny Hincks to Councillor Chris Hancock, Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships

'Please could the cabinet member give an update on the administration's plans for the Old Station building in Cirencester?'

Response from Councillor Hancock

In April 2016, the Cabinet agreed to progress with the marketing of the Old Memorial Hospital, Old Station and Waterloo car parking sites for redevelopment to provide additional car parking spaces and mixed use residential and commercial development, including the invitation of bids.

In order to invite bids for the sites, the Council requires a brief for each site setting out the Council's requirements from any development. The Old Station building needs to be considered along with the surrounding car park, to ensure that the Council does not agree to progress a development of the building in isolation, as this could impact on potential for full-site development. One of the significant requirements within a brief for any of the Council's sites in Cirencester is the parking requirements. The Car Parking Demand Project Board (the Board) has therefore been progressing with the work on the feasibility of the town centre sites for future car parking provision. A report was considered by Cabinet last week setting out the parking demand for Cirencester, taking into account committed developments and developments set out in the emerging local plan. The next stage is for the Board to consider an outline Masterplan for the Council's development sites in Cirencester, predominantly car parks, and buildings including the Old Station. The Board will review various related documents which impact on land/property use, including the emerging local plan, the feasibility work carried out on the car park sites, and the Parking Study. This will allow a view to be taken on what development/car parking is required on each site and the likely phasing of any development. The key to unlocking any of the development sites is to provide additional car parking, either separately or as part of the development. The Council Agenda includes a separate report which sets out a request for funding to progress with a planning application for decked parking at the Waterloo car park which, if successful, will start the process of providing the additional parking required and allow development of other sites.

The Council continues to invest money in the protection of the property, which is a grade II listed building. In consultation with Heritage Officers, work to the external structure has been carried out over the last three years to conserve and protect the asset. Annual inspections take place to monitor its condition, and appropriate works are scheduled should any priority defects be identified.

(2) From Councillor Tatyán Cheung to Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council

'Please could the Leader give an update as to progress with respect to my motion at the September Council meeting regarding the Spine Road through the Cotswold Water Park?'

Response from Councillor Stowe

Response to follow.

(3) From Councillor Juliet Layton to Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council

'The Cotswold Water Park is one of the jewels in the Cotswolds' crown. It is understood that the Cotswold Water Park Trust (CWPT) is in considerable financial difficulty and is now only carrying out very basic environmental tasks.

On the CWPT website it states:

*We **fundraise**... for a wide range of projects including: more and better public paths, improved parking facilities, the creation of nature reserves and campaigns to protect endangered species like the Water Vole, Otter, Bats and Black Poplar.*

*We **manage**...hundreds of acres of land, from Neigh Bridge Country Park near Somerford Keynes to Riverside Park in Lechlade for the benefit of local people, visitors and wildlife.*

*We **promote**...better understanding through our schools education programme and exciting public events, such as our sell out fossil hunts, talks, walks and workshops.*

*We **work**...to help people understand why the Cotswold Water Park is so unique - we all want to ensure it's used and cared for in ways which will maintain it for future generations.*

When a representative of the CWPT spoke to our Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was clear that fundraising wasn't proactive, that the trust plans on disposing a number of sites, that promotion of the area was basic and that many of the sites that the CWPT are responsible for are falling into a state of disrepair.

We all want to see the Water Park succeed especially since the scandal in recent years. What can Cotswold District Council do to support the Trust in better meeting these aims?'

Response from Councillor Stowe

The presentation to our Overview and Scrutiny Committee took place in March 2016, as part of which the Trust's Managing Director highlighted the then current challenges relating to funding, alongside various opportunities and initiatives.

Since that time, Officers have sought to maintain a dialogue with the Trust, although contact has been sporadic. However, I understand that, within the last few weeks, our Strategic Director has been made aware of some options/proposals that the Trust would like to pursue given that it has regained control over Keynes Country Park - these have yet to be assessed, or discussed with Members.

(4) From Councillor Ray Brassington to Councillor Sue Jepson, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

'The Council is due to rule on the Bathurst Development Ltd planning application for 2350 homes at Chesterton. I am aware that ward members cannot vote on planning applications in their own ward.

Given that this application is the largest ever submitted to CDC in its history, the major impact that it will have on the town and that the full Council will determine it, I strongly believe that this ruling should be suspended for this application.

Will the Cabinet support me on this matter?'

Response from Councillor Jepson

The issue is constitutional and, therefore, the question falls to be determined by the Council rather than any Cabinet Member. Indeed, there is an agenda item within our Council papers relating to the Chesterton Strategic site, which includes a section on Ward Member voting.

(5) From Councillor Patrick Coleman to Councillor Nick Parsons, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

'In view of the Council's experience when our 5 year housing supply was below target, does the deputy leader agree that the supply figure should be calculated and published quarterly?'

Response from Councillor Parsons

I fully support the desire to have up-to-date figures, given that these will help frame our planning policy and development control processes. That said, quarterly calculations would be both time consuming and resource intensive, and also unlikely to identify significant changes to those figures unless, in turn, there had been significant changes either in the calculation methodology or local circumstances.

Having regard to the current position, I would not support the suggestion put forward, and am content to continue with an annual review. However, additional calculations could be carried out if there were significant changes in circumstances.

(6) From Councillor JA Harris to Councillor Nick Parsons, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning

'This year sees the sixth anniversary of when the District's local plan was supposed to be in place.

Will the Deputy Leader apologise to the people of the Cotswolds for the area's Local Plan being more than half a decade late under his watch?'

Response from Councillor Parsons

As Councillor Harris is fully aware, the process for producing a Local Plan is set down in legislation, with many stages and many consultations. A vast

amount of work - particularly evidence gathering - is required to ensure that a sound and fully-compliant Plan can be submitted for examination, in accordance with the instructions of Council.

With regard to Plan submission, it would not be sensible in my judgement or in the judgement of the professional Officers, to submit a Local Plan prematurely or one with incomplete evidence because this would present a significant risk to adoption with the likelihood of our timetable being put back very seriously.

(7) From Councillor Patrick Coleman to Councillor Lynden Stowe, Leader of the Council

'At the budget meeting two years ago, the forecast for total capital receipts for the end of 2018/19 was £5.328 million. The corresponding figure for the same date is now £10.565 million. What does the Leader see as the priorities for the use of these funds?'

Response from Councillor Stowe

As part of our deliberations at the Council Meeting, we will be deciding upon the Council's revenue and capital proposals for the coming year and beyond. The capital programme within our papers sets out our spending priorities for the next four years, based on the Council's previously-agreed strategic aims and objectives.

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

'I'd like to welcome the news that the planning application for 2350 homes on the edge of by Bathurst Development Ltd is going to be decided by full Council. When it comes to the vote on the Bathurst application for 2350 homes on the edge of Cirencester, will the Leader, like me, be instructing his fellow Conservative Councillors to declare their interests and refrain from voting where there is an appearance of conflict of interest?'

Response from Councillor Stowe

I would refer Councillor Harris to the agenda item within the Council papers relating to the Chesterton Strategic site, which includes a section on Member/Officer interests. That report sets out a suggestion made by myself and the Deputy Leader, and the approach that the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer intend to use in an attempt to ensure exceptional transparency in our consideration of the BDL application.

I would expect all Members to abide by the Code of Conduct and to declare all relevant interests at all times. I am also a firm believer that Members should seek advice from our professional Officers on such matters, particularly if in any doubt on a matter, including around issues of perception. That said, it is ultimately the decision of each individual Member as to whether he/she has any interest to be declared. Perception is very 'real', but I would hope that the proposed approach, coupled with open-ness and integrity on the part of all Members, would overcome and dispel any perception issues.

Notes:

(i) The above questions were submitted after the deadline by which responses could be guaranteed to be provided to the questioner at least 24 hours before the Council Meeting, or by or at the Meeting (by virtue of the Council's Procedure Rules). However, the Members to whom the questions have been addressed have been able to provide responses.

(ii) If the questioners are present at the Meeting, they will be entitled to ask one supplementary question arising directly out of either the answer given or their original question.

(iii) The Member to whom any supplementary question is addressed will try and answer any supplementary question at the Meeting; but if this is not possible, then the Member will answer as much as possible at the Meeting and then provide a full response within five working days. If, for any reason, a full response cannot be provided within those five days, then a holding response will be sent to the questioner, along with the reason for delay and a likely timescale for the full response.

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