

(6) MEMBER QUESTIONS

Questions have been submitted, and responses provided, as follows:-

(1) From Councillor Jenny Forde to Councillor Mark MacKenzie-Charrington, Cabinet Member for Planning Services and Cirencester Car Parking Project

'Please could the Cabinet Member give this Meeting an update as to progress on tackling Cirencester's parking capacity issues?'

Response from Councillor MacKenzie-Charrington

'Our key focus is now on preparing a full planning application for a decked car park in the Waterloo which will deal with current and longer term parking demand in the town. We are currently procuring the services of an Architect to prepare designs and are hosting a consultation event for Waterloo residents and businesses and any other interested parties on 27th June, so they can feed into the process and we can ensure we take account of their requirements and concerns.

We are still in discussion with the land-owners of a number of other sites to try and deliver more short-term solutions and identify suitable alternative parking to the Waterloo during the construction stage (if planning permission is granted); however, we are reliant on the co-operation of those third parties, and securing suitable sites has proved very difficult.'

(2) From Councillor Dilys Neill to Councillor C Hancock, Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Partnerships

'One of the issues I campaigned on during my by-election campaign was to try and get to grips with parking and congestion problems in Stow.

Will the Cabinet Member please commit to meeting with myself, Officers and representatives of the community in Stow in order to try and start to find a solution?'

Response from Councillor Hancock

'I would be very happy to meet as requested at the earliest opportunity and have so offered. Where it is clear that additional parking capacity needs to be delivered, or congestion relieved, we can then see what opportunities exist for delivery of appropriate solutions amongst the various stakeholders.'

(3) From Councillor Juliet Layton to Councillor Sue Coakley, Cabinet Member for Environment

'Please could the Cabinet Member give me an update on current activities at the Packers Leaze site in South Cerney and this Council's intentions for the site in the future?'

Response from Councillor Coakley

'The Packers Leaze site is now operating as an Environmental services depot for Ubico, which includes the overnight storage of all vehicles involved in the operational waste, street cleansing and grounds maintenance services and the operation of a vehicle maintenance workshop. The Council's intention is to continue to use the site for this purpose in the future.'

(4) From Councillor Andrew Doherty to Councillor Mark F Annett, Leader of the Council

'When will a timetable and implementation plan for the transition to Publica be provided?'

Response from Councillor Annett

'When Full Council considered this matter in September 2016, it was reported that Companies will be established with appointments to Executive and Non-Executive roles by April 2017; with all staff transferring to the new companies in the Autumn of 2017. This timetable remains the case.'

There is a detailed Programme Plan to support the transfer of services and staff. The 2020 Partnership Joint Committee will receive an update on progress at its meeting on Friday 16th June.'

(5) From Councillor Andrew Doherty to Councillor Mark F Annett, Leader of the Council

'Recent incidents at British Airways, the National Health Service and Capita have shown the importance of proper business continuity and risk management arrangements. Since Publica will be critical to the running of multiple Councils, including Cotswold District, how will we be assured that sufficient attention is being given and resources provided to ensure that it is properly prepared?'

Response from Councillor Annett

'Insofar as our improved resilience and Disaster Recovery (DR) capabilities are concerned:-

- *We now operate a fully integrated IT network and infrastructure across all Councils. The integration has allowed us to enhance our service delivery and have a more flexible and agile approach to our security and hardware arrangements; this reduces downtimes and improves our system upgrades which, in turn, reduces the risks of cyber-attacks.*
- *We have enhanced security prevention measures in place, such as Next Generation Firewalls, that will detect and block sophisticated cyber threats. In the event of an unauthorised intrusion on our network, we have the ability to logically segment those parts of our network that may be compromised (also known as Micro-segmentation). This will allow us to operate continually until remediation can take place.*

- *We actively provide user awareness training to staff and users of our network, highlighting the risks of recent cyber incidents. We have also a framework of network access, communication and password policies in place for network users, which ensures good practices on information security.*

In light of recent incidents, we acknowledge that there is a growing threat, and perhaps an increased likelihood that we may be compromised. However, we have implemented a number of recover procedures:-

- *We have in place back-up solutions - this allows us to copy and replicate multiple copies of all our network systems, which we can safely store at remote sites and then restore when required.*
- *We have a Disaster Recovery (DR) Programme in place that will allow us to survive an incident or disaster and to re-establish our normal business operations quickly and efficiently. We continually undertake DR testing of key systems throughout the year.*
- *We have Business Continuity (BC) procedures in place. Our BC plans are maintained and updated throughout the year. Our Plans identify and prioritise which systems and processes must be sustained, and provide the necessary information for maintaining them.'*

(6) From Councillor Juliet Layton to Councillor SG Hirst, Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure

'The availability of affordable housing is a significant concern for residents of the Cotswolds. Residents often express dissatisfaction with the level of affordability achieved - it is common to hear it described as "unaffordable housing". While we are commonly told developers cannot afford more, company reports show even the worst performing major developers are able to achieve operating profit margins of 15% while some achieve almost 25%. The recent Association for Public Service Excellence "Building Homes, Creating Communities" report highlights the challenges involved and the need for Councils to take new approaches to satisfy this affordable housing demand. How will Cotswold District Council innovate to meet this need?'

Response from Councillor Hirst

'In terms of overall delivery the Council has been successful in enabling the completion of 262 new units of affordable housing in the last (financial) year 2016-2017. The Council's target is to deliver a minimum of 150 units per year.

There are a number of models for affordable housing currently available to the Council for new build sites. A mix of different types of affordable housing is secured in response to local need including: affordable rent, shared ownership, discounted market and social rent.

The Council has been proactive in managing to secure a greater discount for 'Discount Sales Home Ownership' than is referred to at a national level (20%) to reflect local affordability levels. This scheme involves negotiations as part

of the planning application process and typically in the Cotswold District a discount of between 30% and 40% off the open market value is negotiated.

The Council has also been innovative in recently trialling a new model of rent-to-buy at a site in Lechlade which delivered 11 new units and this could be applied to other sites.

Looking to the future, the Housing White Paper includes reference to Starter Homes and more should be known about this over the coming months. This could represent another model of affordable housing to meet local need and will be delivered if required.

For a more detailed picture of the models, a link to the Council website is provided below:-

<http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/residents/housing/affordable-home-ownership/>

(7) From Councillor JA Harris to Councillor Mark F Annett, Leader of the Council

'The Leader has now been in place for a month, yet we've heard nothing about his administration's plans and vision for the Cotswolds. Please could he tell us what these are?'

Response from Councillor Annett

'It is for the Council to determine the corporate aim, priorities, objectives and key tasks, and for these to then be implemented for the benefit of the District. Indeed, on the agenda for this Meeting is an item which invites the Council to review its current Corporate Strategy.'

The Cabinet is primarily responsible for ensuring delivery and I, as Leader, will do all that I can to implement the wishes and decisions of Council. However, I see no reason to divert away from what I believe is a very robust, realistic and successful strategy.'

(8) From Councillor JA Harris to Councillor Mark F Annett, Leader of the Council

'Most would agree that the reputation of the Council is poor and has been greatly damaged over the past 10 years, most recently amongst our neighbours as a result of the 'Coxit' proposals.

What steps is the Leader going to take to rectify this situation?'

Response from Councillor Annett

'I fundamentally disagree with your contention. As a Council we have continuously sought improvements for the benefit of all within the Cotswold District. We have not been afraid to innovate and seek different ways of doing things, but I fully support such an approach, with risk balanced against benefit. Our efficiency agenda has delivered cost savings which have

benefited residents through reductions and/or freezes in Council Tax for many years whilst at the same time protecting front-line services and jobs.

Our aspirational aim of being recognised as the most efficient Council in the country has underpinned our work moving forward, and our most recent ranking places us in third position out of 201 councils, which is a great achievement.

We have excellent relationships and close working ties with the County Council and our District colleagues; and the continuing strength, and expansion, of our shared working arrangements with West Oxfordshire DC, Forest of Dean DC and Cheltenham BC through the 2020 Partnership and through Publica in the future is real and tangible proof that we are a valued partner. Indeed, our innovative ways in pursuing the shared working agenda has led to praise on a national scale, and an enhancement of our reputation. Long may this continue.'

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.
- (END)