



Minutes of a meeting held remotely of Council held on Wednesday 23 September 2020.

Councillors present:

Nigel Robbins - Chair

Dilys Neill - Vice-Chair

Stephen Andrews
Julian Beale
Gina Blomefield
Claire Bloomer
Ray Brassington
Patrick Coleman
Rachel Coxcoon
Tony Dale
Andrew Doherty
Mike Evely
Jenny Forde

Joe Harris
Mark Harris
Nikki Ind
Stephen Hirst
Robin Hughes
Roly Hughes
Sue Jepson
Julia Judd
Richard Keeling
Juliet Layton
Andrew Maclean

Nick Maunder
Richard Morgan
Richard Norris
Gary Selwyn
Lisa Spivey
Ray Theodoulou
Steve Trotter
Clive Webster

Officers present:

Interim Chief Executive
Chief Finance Officer
Interim Monitoring Officer
Democratic Services

Head of Climate Action
Forward Planning Manager
Principal Planning Policy Officer

CL.33 Apologies were received from Councillors Mark Annett and Tony Berry.

CL.34 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Brassington declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item 14 as the recommended appointee was a friend of his. He therefore agreed to abstain from the vote on the item and to leave the meeting prior to consideration of the item.

CL.35 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that:

- a) **Subject to the addition of the record of voting for Minute CL.25 and CL.26, the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 15 July 2020 be approved as a correct record.**

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 1, absent 2.

- b) **Subject to the following amendments, the Minutes of the Special Meeting of Council held on 29 July 2020 be approved as a correct record**
- (i) **addition of the word ‘member’ in relation to the second declaration of Minute CL.28;**
 - (ii) **deletion of the figures in respect of the fifth paragraph of Minute CL.29 and their substitution by the following figures: sales amounting to £270m; dividend to shareholders of £10m; Director salaries of £665,000 plus unspecified pension contributions.**

Record of Voting - for 28, against 0, abstentions 4, absent 2.

CL.36 **Announcements from the Chair, Leader or Interim Chief Executive**

Death of Former Councillor Peter Clarke

The Chair informed Members of the recent death of former Councillor Peter Clarke. The Chair reported that Mr Clarke had been elected to the Council in 2008, to represent the Water Park Ward and served on the Council until resigning his seat in 2009 and prior to this had been an active County Council Member. The Chair requested all those present to pause for a period of silence in tribute to, and in memory of, former Councillor Clarke.

The Leader and Councillor Theodoulou then paid tribute to Mr Clarke.

Interim Monitoring Officer Patrick Arran

The Chair welcomed Patrick Arran to his first Meeting of the Council since his appointment in August 2020.

Councillor Robin Hughes - Special Council Meeting - 29 July 2020

Councillor Hughes expressed that he wished to apologise to the Chair and Council following his referral to confidential information at the last Council Meeting.

The Chair also informed the Council that he had been informed that no further action would be taken against Councillor Theodoulou who had made a similar breach at the June 2020 Council Meeting.

Announcements from the Leader

The Leader reported the recent resignation of West Oxfordshire District Council Leader James Mills due to family commitments and explained that despite political differences, he had enjoyed working with Councillor Mills and wished him and his family well for the future.

CL.37 **Public Questions**

(a) From Mr Lee Evans to Councillor Rachel Coxcoon, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Energy

It's great to see the awareness and recognition of the need for action in terms of our carbon consumption and ecological destruction in the Cotswolds. As it's widely reported we know that there are links between the pandemic and future pandemics and our environmental damage and so it's important we tackle this issue and turn the tap off.

Thanks to Officer Chris Crookall-Fallon for confirming that as part of the 2019 declaration, Council was going to look at its financial pension investments and banking and what strength it had in terms of controlling those. When will this be included within the Plan and does the Council currently invest through banking solutions into fossil fuels and industries that cause climate and ecological damage?

Also, through the Local Nature Partnership, there is a desire to increase tree cover by 50% in the Cotswolds, but I can find no reference to this in the Plan?

Response from Councillor Coxcoon

Thank you for your questions. Regarding pension investments and banking; I have met with the Council's Chief Finance Officer and this is something we will be looking into and we are committed to understanding where our investments lie and what the impacts are. One of the main things that came out of that meeting was the complications that come from the Publica structure which is where our staff are employed as well as direct pensions for Council-employed staff which are invested in the wider Gloucestershire pension scheme via the County Council; so we don't necessarily have direct control over them and this may be a case of using our lobbying power.

Chief Finance Officer: The Budget approved in February 2020 included a commitment that we would be reviewing the Council's investments to identify Council investments in fossil fuels. Since then, the Council has been engaged in the Covid-19 response, but it will be addressed.

Regarding the second question, we do have a very competent and advanced Heritage and Design Team and have also declared an ecological emergency. We are also looking to improve net gain and biodiversity and know there are some concerns about tree planting in the AONB and its effect on certain species and our main tools through planning and design should encourage landscaping on site. We hope to play a leading role working with the Cotswold Conservation Board and I agree that more tree planting across the District would be a good thing.

(b) Question from Mr David Fowles to Councillor Rachel Coxcoon, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Energy

When you were campaigning in the May 2019 local elections, you were unequivocal in making it clear to the electorate that you lived in at 38 Blenheim Way, Moreton and that 'as a local resident, residents could rely on you to fight for the community' whilst the Conservative candidate lived 4 miles down the road and had 'been parachuted in'

Since August 2019 when it is believed you sold your house, residents have been asking where you now live.

When I asked the Leader of the Council a public question at the most recent Cabinet meeting on 7th September, he said that you had moved out of the District for personal reasons and that 'you could live on the moon as far as he was concerned and he would still have you in his Cabinet!'

As I said to the Leader, I am not questioning your professional skills when it comes to climate change.

I note that as of 22nd September following my complaint to the Monitoring Officer on 21st September you have now removed your address from the register.

I would however ask you how you can represent the interests of the residents of Moreton when you now live outside the County of Gloucestershire.

Equally importantly, how can you justify being part of the Cabinet's setting of Council tax and taking an income from the Council when you yourself don't pay Cotswold District Council tax.'

Response from Councillor Coxcoon

I did live in Moreton when I was nominated for election and was still living there on election day and didn't know my circumstances would change significantly at the time and so have no apology to make regarding the information on my leaflets. I did inform Democratic Services of my updated address three days after the move and the fact the Register was not updated internally is a simple administrative error and the Monitoring Officer is looking into this. When Democratic Services followed up with me some months later to ask if there were any changes that I needed to make, I told them they were not as, as far as I was concerned, nothing had changed in the interim but there has certainly been no attempt to mislead anyone. I would question your assertion that residents are asking where I live as no residents have asked me in the past year.

I was the only candidate that lived in the town during the election, the Labour Candidate was from Andoversford and the Conservative candidate was from near Stow, and because I had already lived there for five years and through my professional experience, I could see the town had been hugely let down by Cotswold District Council and the County Council - through its failure to implement a successful Local Plan; for failing to control development in the town; and for failing in regard to the infrastructure the town needed. We had a lack of pre and first school places and traffic problems and it was because of my experience that I was incensed enough to stand for election and David, if you had had the common courtesy to ring me and ask about this situation in person instead of submitting Freedom of Information requests to try and learn my address behind my back and discourteously addressing your last question about this to the Leader and not to me, I could have told you that after the election my children's school closed down rather suddenly which was upsetting and that this coincided with my father's illness. I did consider stepping down and on reflection, I decided not to as I still serve members of the town and the District.

I think it is somewhat hypocritical of you to criticise my position when the Conservative group previously had Members who lived in France and Winchester who continued to serve on the Council. I have been in the office two days a week and have engaged in meetings and engaged with email and social media and think it is discourteous of you to reveal my personal address and feel you need to review the ruling that Members are no longer required to reveal their addresses (for elections). I hope that answers your questions and that we can now put this matter to a close.

CL.38 Member Questions

Councillor Juliet Layton to Councillor Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

Could Cllr Forde please update the Council on the re-opening of the Corinium Museum and the leisure centres in Cirencester, Bourton-on-the-Water and Chipping Campden. Were they reopened as and when described in the papers for Council on 29 July 2020? How have the leisure centres and the museum performed since their re-opening? What feedback have you and officers received about the re-opening?

Response from Councillor Forde

The Corinium Museum re-opened on the 3rd August and we were delighted to see visitor numbers were almost higher than the previous year - even with two days closed in August and with social distancing measures in place.

We're particularly pleased as visitors to the museum will no doubt have contributed to the local economy and the vibrancy we witnessed over the

summer. The leisure centres re-opened for gym and group exercise on 1st August and pools for public swimming were re-opened on 15th August. Swimming lessons restarted on 22nd August.

We have seen a steady increase in people returning to our leisure centres as confidence returns. Feedback on the social distancing measures in place have been very positive.

One of the many messages I've received from residents after re-opening:

I felt moved to email the CDC to express my gratitude at your swift, organised and safe re-opening of The Cirencester Leisure Centre. At a time when physical and mental health is at the top of all of our agendas, the centre is vital to the health and well-being of our community. My six year old daughter has missed the structure and friendships of her swimming lessons so much and even after being back in the pool just once last Saturday had greatly improved sleep. I know of many people in other areas who are still waiting for facilities to open. Wonderful to see CDC leading the way. Please extend my thanks to your colleagues for the careful planning undertaken in enabling the centre to open.

Councillor Layton did not ask a supplementary question.

Councillor Nick Maunder to Councillor Mike Evey, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

What is the current position regarding financial support for the operation of our leisure centres and museum? How does this compare with the forecasts presented to Members on 29 July? Can Cllr Evey please update the Council on what, if any, financial support for them we expect to be available from the Government? If required, when will Members be asked to approve any further financial support for our contractor?

Response from Councillor Evey

The table below shows the information provided to the Council by the SLM on an open book accounting basis for the period from April to July 2020.

	<u>A pr-20</u>	<u>May-20</u>	<u>June-20</u>	<u>Jul-20</u>
Income	(6,326)	(8,254)	(8,386)	(8,262)
Expenditure	149,543	156,717	148,632	178,234
Funding Government	(97,796)	(101,139)	(96,300)	(94,476)
Furlough Scheme				
Contribution from Cotswold DC	(18,500)	(18,500)	(18,500)	(18,500)
Gov Grant				(£25,000)

Waiver of management
fee payable to Cotswold
DC April
to July 2020 (34,932)

SLM (Surplus)/Deficit 26,921 28,823 25,446 (2,936)

SLM is obligated to provide financial data for August by 30th September 2020. The loss of income to the Council from the SLM Management Fee of £34,932 and the contribution from the Council towards SLM costs of £74,000 total £108,932 and are in line with the report to Council on 29th July 2020.

SLM are receiving direct government financial support under the furlough scheme and have reclaimed £389,711 for the period April to July 2020. SLM have also received a £25,000 grant from this Council under the government's Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant scheme.

The Council is expecting to receive grant funding from the Government under the local government income compensation scheme for lost sales, fees and charges. It is estimated that funding of £75,000 (£6,250 per month) will be available for the 2020/21 financial year. As it stands, the Government has not committed to provide support for councils funding their external leisure providers over and above this other than through the Covid-19 grant allocation.

Officers are working with SLM on a request for further funding from November. It is important that Council is able to consider the financial data for August and key elements of financial data for September. The September data will include income from SLM Membership, collected by Direct Debit, employee costs and income from swimming lessons. A special meeting of Council will need to be arranged for later in October to discuss and agree a further funding arrangement.

Councillor Maunder did not ask a supplementary question.

Councillor Robin Hughes to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

The Liberal Democratic administration scrapped the Multi- Storey car park in Cirencester when they took over control of Cotswold District Council. At the time parking was becoming a serious issue and it was becoming more and more difficult to find a parking space. At the moment shops and businesses in Cirencester are suffering because of Covid and parking is not a problem. When things get back to normal parking will become a major problem again, especially with the additional 2000 or so houses that are going to be built. Shops depend on footfall and easy accessibility for shoppers, parking

is a critical part of that. What solution do you have for town centre parking that allows shoppers to park close to shops and businesses enabling everyone to benefit?

Response from Councillor Harris

I refer Councillor Robin Hughes to the minutes of the cabinet meeting on July 6th 2020 under item CAB 9:

RESOLVED that Cabinet agree to pause the project for 12 months to allow a review of the parking demand in Cirencester and to consider options to mitigate the need for additional parking and promote sustainable transport solutions, (funding for this being included in the budget for the update of the Local Plan).

As is clearly stated the plans have been put on hold not scrapped. This decision was taken 14 months after the Liberal Democrats took control of the Council not 'when they took over' as stated in your question.

If he reads the report from that cabinet meeting he'll be able to view the reasons for this deferment and the context thereof.

We're now ready to open the new Whiteway Car Park at Cirencester Rugby Club, unfortunately this is being held up by the Conservative-run County Council.

When this site is allowed to open it will provide 158 new long stay parking spaces. In turn allowing us to turn existing long stay spaces into short stay spaces in town centre car parks enabling everyone to benefit.

Supplementary Question

Thank you to the Leader for his response. When operational, will parking at the Rugby Club be free? If not, who will the revenue go to?

Response to Supplementary Question

Parking is the main income to the Council and the Rugby Club car park will relieve the pressure of parking within the town and help the Council's finances and therefore parking will not be free at the site. Revenue from the car park will help go towards the Council continuing to reinvest in parking within the town.

Councillor Julia Judd to Councillor Andrew Doherty, Cabinet Member for the Environment, Waste and Recycling

The previous Conservative administration appointed Kevin Lea on a two-

year contract to oversee and manage fly-tipping in the Cotswolds. Our experience is that this important service has been well managed, it has been well rolled-out, easy to report and responses have been fast and reliable; some culprits have even been apprehended. Is it this Council's intention to retain this dedicated officer in the role on a permanent contract in light of the excellent service he has provided?

Response from Councillor Doherty

Yes, the proposed budget for 2021/22 agreed by Cabinet on 7 September contains an allocation in the base budget for this position.

Supplementary Question

Thank you to the Cabinet Member for the response. Could the Cabinet Member agree to the publishing of fly-tipping rates on a monthly basis?

Response to Supplementary Question

The percentage of fly-tipping rates increased during Covid-19 and Officers have done an excellent job in tackling this issue. I am attending a meeting in the coming weeks regarding statistics which will reveal the information you are seeking. I expect a quarterly, as opposed to monthly, basis for publishing this information will be possible.

Councillor Julia Judd to Councillor Andrew Doherty, Cabinet Member for the Environment, Waste and Recycling

In November 2019 Council approved the spending of £220,000 on In-Cab technology using GPS to track routes and eliminate missed collections. This technology was supposed to speed-up collections, eliminate the need for return journeys, prevent human error, enable unfamiliar drivers to follow exact routes and much more importantly, save money. Has the technology been fitted? If so when and in how many trucks and more importantly does it work?

Response from Councillor Doherty

The In-Cab project was scheduled to start shortly after the go-live of the new waste service. Unsurprisingly that schedule was disrupted by lockdown and subsequent restrictions.

We are awaiting the revised statement of works and timeline from the supplier, which is expected this week. We are planning for In-Cab technology to be introduced in February 2021. That allows time for the Christmas waste catch-ups to be completed and for crews to train with and learn to use the new technology. In the meantime our own in-house preparatory work (refining processes, ICT integration, administrative user

training etc.) is already ongoing and will continue up to Christmas.

Supplementary Question

Thank you to the Cabinet Member for his response. Can he please confirm what the £26,000 allocated for 'in-cab' within the 2020/21 Budget was for?

Response to Supplementary Question

This will be funding to investigate new technology platforms regarding customer services and re-working existing systems. Also, taking any upsides of lockdown regarding online service provision to customers. I can provide a further written response if required.

Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

I am aware that CDC proposes to replace all street sign names that are in poor condition or damaged on an ongoing basis with new ones which would incorporate the Council Logo and the name of the relevant ward.

If the current administration is entering discussions with Stroud and Cheltenham to investigate creating a new unitary council with them or indeed if a single unitary for Gloucester was formed as a result of the Government's White Paper on local government reform it is possible that these new signs would soon become a historic memento of the Cotswold District Council.

In these circumstances would it be sensible not to implement these new branded CDC street signs before resolving how local government will be organised in the future?

Response from Councillor Harris

The new street sign design will include the Council's crest and the locality or parish, not the ward name. This is being done as a part of the administration's civic pride agenda which I'll be providing more information on in the coming weeks. I'd welcome the Conservative group's input into this and I've been trying to catch up with the Leader of the Conservative group on this but unfortunately he's been very hard to get hold of.

In terms of delaying any roll out my administration is not going to allow the Conservative Government's flip flopping on devolution and local government reform to affect day to day services at Cotswold District Council including the roll out of street name plates.

In the interests of accuracy I should also clarify that we've begun discussions with Stroud and Cheltenham about options for a two unitary solution in Gloucestershire not about creating a Unitary authority with both of them as you've implied in your question.

Supplementary Question

Can the Leader explain what the difference in cost will be of replacing the signs with ones including colour and the CDC Ward as opposed to the existing signs?

Response to Supplementary Question

The cost is marginal and around a few pounds. I will provide full details of the costs after the meeting.

Following the meeting, a full response was provided by the Leader:

The cost of each individual nameplate varies according to the amount of text and whether any additional information is required – for example 'No Through Road'. However, by way of example, I can advise that an 'old style' sign for Chesterton Lane in Cirencester would have cost £50.50 and a 'new style' sign will cost £59.50. I believe this modest increase in cost is well worth the improvement in terms of civic pride across the District.

Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

During Storm Francis trees all over the Cotswolds were severely affected by the strong winds, losing their branches and in some cases the whole tree toppling over. Many of these were ash trees which provide 30% of the tree cover in this part of the country and are increasingly suffering from ash dieback which makes them brittle, and therefore vulnerable in high winds, before eventually killing them. Many of them are alongside roads and other public places including footpaths so present a danger to road traffic and pedestrians.

I understand that many landowners have been taking action by inspecting their trees in such places and where necessary felling them before they become dangerous or preferably where possible just reducing them in height as recommended.

Has CDC carried out a survey of the ash trees on the land that they own to check which are healthy and which require remedial action?

Response from Councillor Harris

Fortunately CDC does not own many ash trees. All CDC trees are inspected annually and any remedial works are carried out. In addition our tree officers carry out a 'storm watch' inspection visit of certain sites after storms.

With regard specifically to ash dieback our tree officers monitor communications from the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership Ash Dieback group and the Cotswolds and Vale Ash Dieback Forum.

Supplementary Question

Many residents would like to increased tree cover in the District, if a tree has to be felled what replacement plan does the Council have?

Response to Supplementary Question

The Council is committed to planting thousands of more trees, as are other authorities. It is a tragedy when a tree has to be felled and we need to ensure where we can, we are replacing and replanting. We need to question Gloucestershire County Council and the Highways Authority when roadside trees are felled and never replaced, so this will need a cross-party approach.

Councillor Richard Norris to Councillor Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

In its meeting 29th July this Council approved a grant in the sum of £222,140 to be paid to SLM, a Limited Company registered at Companies House. This grant was to support the opening of Cotswold Leisure Centres for the period August to October. It was also approved that SLM requirement to pay the Council a monthly management fee should be waived for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st October 2020 representing a loss of income to the Council of £61,411.

During the debate on an amendment proposing that these sums should be covered by a Loan from the Council to SLM rather than paid as a Grant, it became clear that you were unclear if support was being given to a Limited Company registered at Companies House or to a Charity, also described in the report as a "not for profit Trust". Following a recess, it was advised that this would be investigated, clarified and reported back.

Are you now clear on the status of the company to whom this grant and financial support has been given and are you able to describe what that status is?

Response from Councillor Forde

Firstly I'd like to make a correction - the support is '*underwriting*' not a grant. We are operating an open book accounting process so that we can verify the claims. We have an excellent team with external auditing skills undertaking the review of data provided to us.

A document setting out the corporate structure operated by SLM is attached.

Supplementary Question

Thank you for confirming the understanding of the company structure and that any payments made by CDC are ultimately to the benefit of Sports and Leisure management Ltd. A for profit company.

However, I note that there is some confusion remaining. You indicate that any payment made as a result of the Council underwriting the financial position of this For-Profit company will not be a grant, yet at the last meeting of Full Council it was agreed that it would not be a Loan either.

In order that this can be clarified will the cabinet member provide me with all correspondence, meeting notes and agreements concerning the support requested by SLM and granted by CDC and copies of the legal advice, if any, provided by CDC legal officers and/or CDC external lawyers relating to this support?'

Response to Supplementary Question

I would like to thank the opposition for setting up a sound leisure management company. There is a strange fixation with a fantasy loan - we are underwriting, not giving a grant. I am pleased with all the work that has taken place regarding the reopening and works to the centres and we should extend our thanks to the 180 workers who have enabled this to happen.

Financial decisions like this are complex and are not solely about money. We believe we need to support people to take responsibility for their own health and do everything possible to enable this. Our residents are not interested in party politics. If Members do want to help, they should campaign to the Government to ring fence funding for future leisure provision.

Councillor Richard Norris to Councillor Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

On the 25th September 2019 this Council approved your proposal that one of its key 2019-2023 aims and priorities should be to "Help residents, businesses and communities to access the support they need to ensure a high level of health and wellbeing". On the 4th November 2019 you informed the Cabinet that you would "continue the current work relating to the production of a District-wide leisure strategy looking at provision

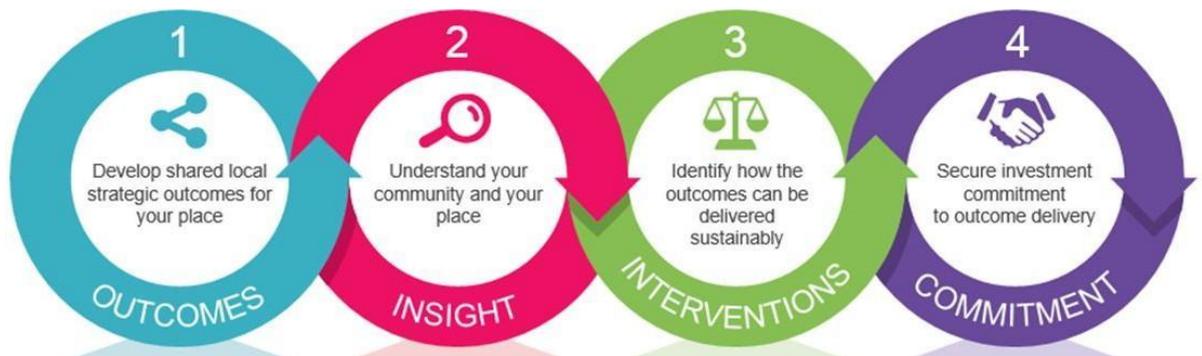
holistically, based on current and future needs”.

Can you provide an update on what the Health and WellBeing Strategy has found so far and in particular, when it will be completed?

Response from Councillor Forde

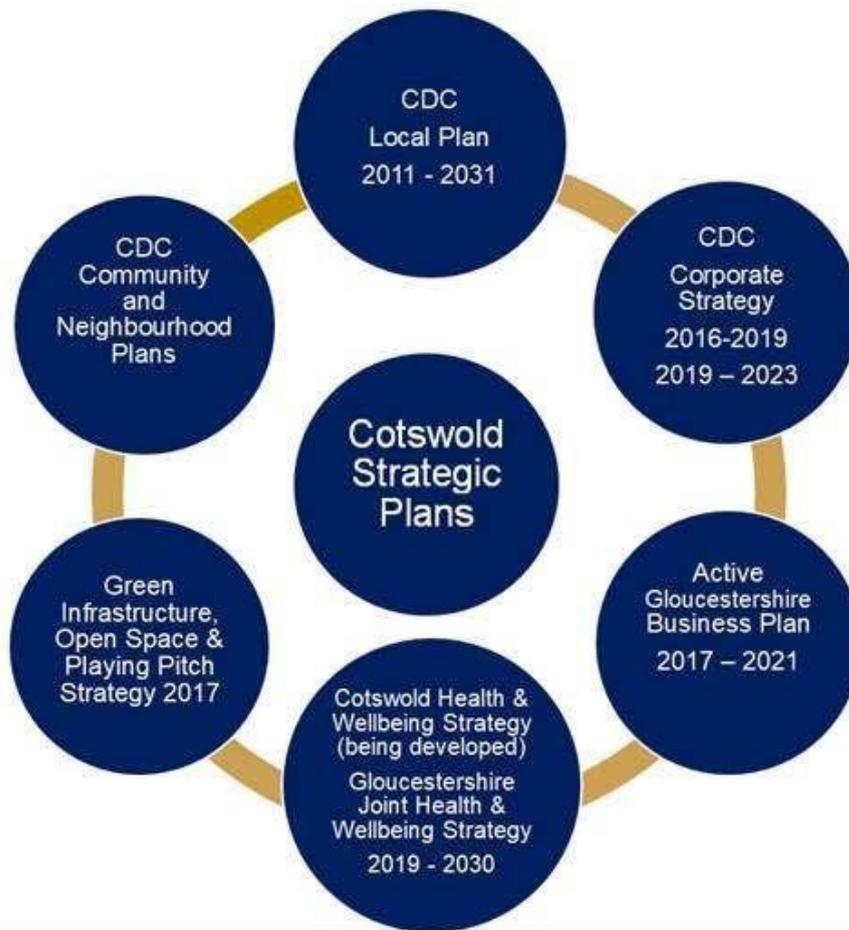
Thank you for your interest in our Leisure Review which will inform our Leisure strategy as a major part of our Health & Wellbeing plan for the District. I'm really pleased to tell you that the lockdown actually enabled us to progress very successfully with this large piece of work.

In order to develop a Strategic Planning Outcomes model for CDC we are using Sport England's guidance which follows 4 stages.



We are just about to complete stage 1 and 2 of the process.

National and local strategies/ priorities have been reviewed; these are shown in the diagram below:



The online survey was a huge success and closed with over 1,000 responses which is the optimum number to produce meaningful data.

I was also pleased that the main age category to fill in the survey was 55-64 years (25%). The key findings from the survey were;

- The importance of being physically active is well understood, with 98% considering it to be 'important' or 'very important', a figure slightly higher than our benchmark
- 57% stated that they 'definitely didn't' or 'probably didn't' do enough activity as they would like to, a figure significantly higher than our benchmark figure of 43%
- 78% of the sample stated they would like to do more, compared to our benchmark of 51%
- The reason for wanting to do more was overwhelmingly about 'improving/maintaining health', with 53% quoting this reason, followed by 'maintaining/losing weight' at 27%, a figure significantly higher than our benchmark of 15%
- 'Personal motivation/goals' and the 'accessibility/quality of local facilities', are the two most important factors when thinking about doing more activity
- 'Lower costs/prices' and 'cleanliness of facilities' were the two most important encouragement factors for using the centres/parks more

Active Travel

- 46% stated that they would definitely like to cycle/run/walk to their location if it was easier
- For people who would like to cycle more, 'dedicated cycle lanes' were the number one factor that would encourage them to use their bike more, followed by 'facilities for secure bike parking' and 'being separated from traffic' so better air quality
- 'Better dedicated footpaths' were the number 1 factor that would encourage people to walk more

Key dates for your information are:
18th Sept – Draft report for stage &2.

During October – Run focus groups.

Oct/Nov – Draft report for stage 3.

Nov/Dec – Draft report for stage 4.

We're delighted that this is transpiring in many ways to be a perfect time for this review. Attitudes towards leisure and fitness are changing so dramatically tying in with our aim to be green to the core. We hope to have a final strategy in the new year.

Supplementary Question

Thank you to the Cabinet Member for the response. Will Councillors, as key stakeholders, now be engaged in stages 3 and 4 as at the November 2019 Cabinet meeting, it was confirmed that a solution for Tetbury and Fairford leisure provision would be a priority as part of the Strategy work.

Response to Supplementary Question

Councillors were involved in stages 1 and 2 as I know many people in the towns responded to the survey. We are undertaking the survey to find out where the gaps are and what funding provision is needed and agree that this is being treated as a priority.

Councillor Sue Jepson to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

The Government are wanting the population to go back to work in their workplace.

Can Cllr Harris as the Leader of this Council tell me how many of CDC staff will be coming back to work in the Trinity Rd offices and The Moreton area offices and how many will be continuing to work from home on a permanent basis.

Can you give a date for when members will be able to resume meetings in the building, i.e. Full Council, Planning etc?

Response from Councillor Harris

I'm as keen as anybody to get staff back into the building and members meeting in person and return to some sort of normality.

However, the greatest responsibility for any political Leader is to ensure the protection of the public from harm and the continued operation of critical services. In order to ensure that the Council Offices are 'Covid secure' a number of measures have been put into place which significantly restrict the numbers of staff that can be accommodated at any given time, and an agile working strategy is now in place to allow staff to continue to work in a more flexible manner to accommodate both business and family needs at a time when the incidences of Covid-19 are increasing across the country.

As far as formal meetings are concerned, the advice is that these are governed by the 'rule of 6' and so cannot recommence until such time as that restriction is once again relaxed. Even then, our ability to hold meetings 'in person' will be restricted by the capacity of our meeting rooms to accommodate appropriate social distancing measures although I am hopeful that when our webcasting equipment is in place we will be able to hold 'hybrid' meetings for at least some of our business.

In both circumstances we will be led by the advice from Public Health England and the Government.

Supplementary Question

Thank you to the Leader for his response. Could he please provide the number of staff who will remain working in the offices and also from home?

Response to Supplementary Question

Across the Council partnership, 75% of staff will remain working from home and our priority remains the safety of staff, Members and members of the public and protecting them and their health.

Councillor Tony Berry to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

Please could you detail for me the names and titles of :-

- Staff directly employed (or being recruited by CDC).
- Staff employed (or being recruited by Publica specifically and exclusively for CDC.
- Any staff budgeted but not yet recruited which would fall into the above categories.

Response from Councillor Harris

The list of job titles in each category is attached as a separate document. I have not provided the names of individual officers as this would be a breach of the General Data Protection Regulations. I can however confirm that there are 17 members of staff who are directly employed by CDC; 68 members of staff employed (or being recruited) by Publica specifically and exclusively for CDC; and two posts budgeted but not yet recruited which would fall into the second category.

Councillor Berry was not present at the meeting to ask a supplementary question.

CL.39 Revised Budget 2020/21

The Council received the revised budget for 2020/21 reflecting the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's finances.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report and explained the rationale behind the context of the report and highlighted various aspects. He concluded by thanking the Chief Finance Officer and Officers for their work in relation to the revised Budget and proposed the Budget to Council for adoption.

Councillor Coxcoon, in seconding the proposals, echoed thanks to Officers and explained that the Budget represented a sensible solution to the ongoing challenge of adapting and responding to Covid-19.

Councillor Morgan then proposed an Amendment to the recommendations, the details of which had been previously circulated. He explained that he hoped, in time, the aims of the Amendment would be seen to be over-extreme but considered it to highlight the need for extreme caution regarding the Council's finances over the coming months. The Amendment was as follows:-

Addition of a recommendation (c) - As Europe stands on the precipice of a second COVID-19 wave, Cotswold District Council needs to be as prudent as possible and needs to put a hold on all but essential spending until the COVID-19 second wave situation can be fully assessed in the February 2021 full council budget meeting.

Until February 2021, this council should act like we are on the verge of a financial emergency and take every possible step to preserve our resources and reserves.

In addition, we should only concentrate on the core council services we are mandated to deliver and ensure we are not forced to make any cuts to these core, mandated services in the future. This emergency action should be temporary, and reviewed once the COVID-19 second wave situation is more transparent and / or reviewed again at the full council budget meeting in February 2021.

In seconding the Amendment, Councillor Beale echoed the comments of Councillor Morgan regarding the need for extreme care and caution and highlighted that whilst supportive of recent expenditure of the Council in regard to leisure provision, any unnecessary spending needed to be appropriately reviewed. He then commended the Amendment to Council for approval.

The Leader responded to the Amendment and explained that the Amendment sought to ridiculously suggest that the Council was on the verge of bankruptcy and he added that thanks to the hard work of both Members and Officers the Council was in a sound position to weather the storm of Covid-19. The Leader expressed that by voting to approve this Amendment, key services such as the garden waste recycling service and leisure strategy would need to be placed on hold as they were both not statutory funding requirements of the Council.

The Deputy Leader was invited to address the Council again and respond to the Amendment. He explained that he considered the Amendment sought to 'pull a handbrake' on the Council's finances and the recommendations suggested were used only when councils were on the verge of bankruptcy. He concluded that residents could have confidence in the finances of the Council and urged the Council to reject the Amendment.

On being put to the vote, the Amendment was LOST. The record of voting was as follows: - for 12, against 20, abstentions 0, absent 2.

Members then debated the recommendations as proposed by the Deputy Leader and contained within the report. Members expressed that no-one could have foreseen the impact Covid-19 would have had and the unknown impact of Brexit and potential local government reorganisation were also unknown concerns regarding future budget planning.

Other Members expressed disappointment at the Budget and drew attention to the seemingly high cost of maintaining the waste service and the need to ensure a limit on the Council's expenditure.

The Deputy Leader was invited to address the Council again and thanked Members for their contributions. He added that the work of the Chief Finance Officer demonstrated the soundness of the Council's finances and that savings had been made to lessen the impact of the virus outbreak. He urged Members to support the recommendations as proposed.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the revised budget 2020/21 be approved by the Council;**
- b) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Climate Action to use £10,000 from the Council Priorities Fund to commission support for local residents to access the Green Homes Grants.**

Record of Voting - for 20, against 12, abstentions 0, absent 2.

CL.40 Climate Emergency Strategy

The Council received a report detailing the Climate Emergency Strategy; the main points of the programme plan for climate actions; details of the proposed governance arrangements for overseeing the strategy and observations on how the Strategy, once adopted, could be published in the public domain.

Councillor Coxcoon introduced the report and extended her thanks to the Head of Climate Action for his work in relation to the Strategy. She explained that the Strategy made clear the nature of the emergency and provided a framework to enable conversations and actions to take place quickly and effectively. She then proposed the Strategy to Council for adoption and approval.

Councillor Maclean seconded the proposals and explained that he hoped the Council could push for change in regard to sustainable transport despite this being largely under the County Council's remit. He urged Members to support approval of the Strategy.

Councillor Andrews then proposed an Amendment to the Strategy. He explained that the document ignored a number of effects of climate change and that there had been little to no consultation in relation to food and farming aspects and countryside provision within the framework. He explained the Amendment was as follows:-

'That Council approves the Strategy as a draft for wider consultation'

The Amendment was then seconded by Councillor Judd.

Various Members spoke in approval of the Amendment and explained that the document was high-level and needed to be brought down to include specific details in relation to the Cotswold District.

Other Members commented the Amendment would seek to delay action and should therefore be rejected.

Councillor Coxcoon was invited to address the Council again and explained she agreed that approving the Strategy as a draft document would delay action and as a living document, the Strategy sought to build ongoing relationships and it was therefore not suitable to restart a second round of consultation.

On being put to the vote, the Amendment was LOST. The record of voting was as follows: - for 12, against 20, abstentions 0, absent 2.

Councillor Coxcoon was then invited to speak to the proposed recommendations and explained that the Strategy had not been Officer-led as had been implied during the debate and that progress had not been as swift as had been planned due to the effects of Covid-19 and the response that had required of the Council. She confirmed that further details would be brought to the Council regarding action taken as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that the Strategy and Programme Plan be approved by the Council.

Record of Voting - for 32, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 2.

CL.41 Corporate Plan

The Council was requested to consider and adopt a new Corporate Plan.

The Leader introduced the report and explained the Plan represented the ambitions and targets the administration wanted to achieve. He extended his thanks to the Interim Chief Executive for her input into the Plan and added that he hoped the Plan would be a 'springboard' for many good things to come and proposed the Plan to Council for adoption.

In seconding the Proposition, Councillor Spivey added that the Plan would be ambitious for the remaining three years of the Council term but that it set out a clear pathway for Officers and Members of the Council. She added that Officers were already delivering on some of the ambitions and she hoped the Council would support the adoption to enable this to continue.

Various Members expressed they did not support the Plan as in their view it was 'risky and unachievable'. Those Members also commented that they considered the Plan lacked detail and a timeline for the achievements and also added that the 'rebuilding of trust' referred to suggested this had previously not existed at the Council, which they considered was not the case.

Other Members expressed support for the Plan and highlighted the ongoing work the Council was undertaking with town and parish councils across the District who had previously felt neglected by the Council.

The Leader was invited to address the Council again and commented that he considered trust and confidence in the Council did need to be rebuilt and that the Plan would seek to achieve this and much more.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Plan be adopted by the Council.

Record of Voting - for 19, against 12, abstentions 1, absent 2.

CL.42 Treasury Management Review 2019-20

The Council received the annual report detailing the treasury management activities and results from the previous financial year.

The Deputy Leader and Councillor Coleman, as the Chair of the Audit Committee, jointly introduced the report and explained various aspects. They also extended their thanks to the Chief Finance Officer for her work in relation to the Review.

In response to a specific Member's question, the Chief Finance Officer confirmed that Arlingclose were reviewing all of the Council's investments, were not recommending selling any of the pooled investments and that dealings with CCLA Property Fund had been temporarily suspended but that trading in the Fund had since re-commenced.

The Deputy Leader concluded by informing Members that full details regarding the report and the activities were contained within reports presented to the Audit Committee.

RESOLVED that the Treasury Management Review 2019/20 be approved by the Council.

Record of Voting - for 32, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 2.

At this juncture, and in accordance with the Council's Constitution, as the meeting had continued without an adjournment for three hours, a vote was taken in order to determine if the meeting should continue for a further hour to the maximum four hour duration.

On being put to the vote, the Proposition by the Leader and Chair was SUPPORTED, the record of voting was as follows:-

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 1, absent 2.

CL.43 **Investment Strategy for Recovery of Cotswold District**

Council received a report which set out an investment strategy framework which described how the Council could invest in infrastructure, whilst also delivering on the Council's priorities.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills introduced the report and explained that the Council needed to deliver revenue that would sustain the Council's budget and that this revenue needed to come from a whole new approach to investment. He added that the Strategy was a framework and would support affordable housing and that he hoped it would address the funding gap and improve the Council's overall finances. He then proposed the Strategy to Council for adoption.

In seconding the Proposition, the Deputy Leader explained that the Strategy sought to place the Council's revenue budget on a level playing field and he urged Members to approve the Strategy's adoption.

Various Members indicated they did not support the Strategy commenting that they considered it included substantial funding to allocate with limited criteria and represented a naïve approach by the administration.

The Cabinet Member was invited to address the Council again and explained that the work of the Economic Development Lead Officer would be key to ensuring the success of the Strategy and that he would be working closely with businesses going forward.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the Council adopt the Strategy;**
- b) delegated authority be given to the Interim Chief Executive to establish appropriate governance structures to support the Strategy.**

Record of Voting - for 20, against 12, abstentions 0, absent 2.

CL.44 Cotswold District Council's Response to two National Consultations: White Paper: Planning for the Future and Changes to the Current Planning System

Council received a report detailing the Government's consultation on two documents it had released and the proposed responses by the Council.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Forward Planning introduced the report and explained that a severe lack of notice had been given by the Government regarding the White Paper and that the proposals represented a loss of determination of applications on their merits and in the democratic control over the planning process. She also highlighted the increase in the District's Housing Target from 430 to over 1,200 and the removal of CIL and S106 payments. The Cabinet Member urged the Council to reject the proposals.

Councillor Webster seconded the Proposition and added that the papers represented a chaotic mixture of confusing recommendations. He drew attention to the fact that 1 million homes currently had planning permission and were not built and that the proposals could be considered an assault on democracy, the environment and on neighbourhoods and urged Council to reject the two paper recommendations.

Councillor Andrews then Proposed the following Amendment:

'That the Leader seeks an early meeting with the MP so direct concerns are reported to him at the earliest opportunity'.

The Leader responded that a meeting had already been arranged.

Councillor Andrews confirmed he was therefore content to withdraw the amendment.

Members supported the recommendations and proposed response and indicated that they wished to thank the Leader for his early planning in relation to contacting the MP.

Councillor Coxcoon was invited to address the Council again and explained that following a suggestion by a Member, the covering report presented to Council would also be included within the narrative response Officers would submit to the consultations on the Council's behalf.

RESOLVED that the proposed responses to the Planning for the Future White Paper and Changes to the Current Planning System consultations be approved by the Council.

Record of Voting - for 32, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 2.

At this juncture, the Chair advised Members that he would be varying the order of items to deal with Agenda Item 14 prior to Item 13, owing to its time-critical nature.

CL.45 Appointment of Chief Executive

Council was requested to consider the recommendation of the Council's Statutory Officer Performance and Appointments Committee in regard to the appointment of Mr. Robert Weaver to the post of Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.

The Leader introduced the item and explained that the recommendation of Mr. Weaver to the position had been unanimously supported by the Committee and that he hoped he would receive unanimous support from the Council given that the Committee consisted of a cross-party membership. The Leader wished to extend his thanks to the Members who had served on the Committee and supporting Officers to enable a quick, efficient and proper appointments process to be undertaken. He concluded by stating that Robert had vast experience in local government and had excellent local and regional links and proposed his appointment to the Council for approval.

Councillor Hirst then Seconded the Proposition of the Leader.

RESOLVED that:

- a) Council approve the appointment of Robert Weaver as Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) such appointment to be subject to satisfactory pre-employment checks;**
- b) Robert Weaver be designated as the Council's Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer;**
- c) the salary shall be £100,000 per annum rising to £105,000 after successfully completing 12 months service;**
- d) the Human Resources Manager, in consultation with the Chair of the Statutory Officer Performance and Appointments Committee be granted delegated authority to finalise the arrangements and agree the start date for the Chief Executive.**

Record of Voting - for 31, against 0, abstentions 0, interest declared 1, absent 2.

CL.46 **Corporate Peer Challenge - Feedback Report**

Council was requested to consider the Local Government Association's Feedback Report following the Corporate Peer challenge, and to note the progress made in implementing the recommendations within the report.

The Leader introduced the report and explained that he had previously circulated the response of the Peer Challenge to Members. He explained there had previously been issues regarding retained Council Officers but that this had now been overcome by the appointment of Jenny Poole as a full-time Council Officer and no longer shared with West Oxfordshire and the appointment of Patrick Arran as the Council's Interim Monitoring Officer. He added that the Council decision just taken to appoint Robert Weaver as the Council's new Chief Executive also addressed a key recommendation of the Review and that in addition, a review of the Publica Board had also been undertaken and that he would circulate findings of the review to Members in due course.

Councillor Andrews drew attention to comments that he had circulated prior to the meeting which detailed the views of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and which he requested be formally recognised alongside the noting of the contents of the report.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report, the comments made in relation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the progress to date, be noted by the Council.

The Meeting commenced at 6.00pm and closed at 9.53pm

Chair

(END)