



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet

08/February2021

Minutes of a meeting held remotely of Cabinet held on Monday, 8 February 2021.

Councillors present:

Rachel Coxcoon
Tony Dale
Andrew Doherty

Mike Evely
Jenny Forde
Joe Harris - Chair

Lisa Spivey
Clive Webster

Officers present:

Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Monitoring Officer
Executive Director - Commissioning

Group Manager - Commissioning
Business Manager - Assets, Land, Legal
and Property
Asset Manager - Land, Legal and Property
Democratic Services

Observers:

Councillors Stephen Andrews, Gina Blomefield, Patrick Coleman, Nikki Ind (to 6.50pm), Sue Jepson (to 7.20pm), Nick Maunder, Nigel Robbins (to 7.20pm), Gary Selwyn.

1 Apologies

There were no apologies received.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest by Members.

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

3 Minutes

To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 January 2021

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet of 4 January 2021 be approved as a correct record:

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstention 0, absent 0.

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4 Leader's Announcements (if any)

The Leader extended his thanks to all NHS workers and volunteers helping to deliver Covid-19 vaccinations in Gloucestershire.

5 Public Questions

(a) Question from Mr. David Fowles to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

'As you are aware, in recent weeks there have been media reports both nationally and locally about political campaigning principally by the Liberal Democrat party.

This has come to a head in Gloucestershire this week with the police stating that campaigning is illegal

Nationally, your leader Ed Davey has consistently said that your party interpreted the Covid19 guidelines such that leafleting by individual volunteers was permitted.

At the beginning of January you were asked what the Liberal Democrat position was locally and you stated that your party was continuing to leaflet because it was in the public interest.

On 22nd January the position clearly changed with Chloe Smith, the Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution issued a letter to members of the Parliamentary Parties Panel stating the following:

'Current national lockdown restrictions in England say ' you must not leave, or be outside of your house except where necessary. The Government's view is that these restrictions do not support door to door campaigning or leafleting by individual part political party activists.

This position has now been endorsed by Gloucestershire Police this week.

Can you explain why at least two of your candidates were seen campaigning in the last few days and can you confirm that the Cotswold Liberal Democrats are complying with these restrictions and have ceased campaigning locally?

Response from Councillor Harris

The Leader responded by confirming that no Liberal Democrats in the Cotswolds had been delivering election leaflets or canvassing and that he considered the question was an example of the Conservatives playing party politics.

He added that some local Councillors had been delivering Covid-19 information leaflets for residents who may need help or advice during lockdown, but that the leaflets contained no reference to the Liberal Democrat party.

The Leader concluded by explaining that some election leaflets had been delivered by Royal Mail in accordance with the current rules and that he had not been contacted by Gloucestershire Police regarding any break of lockdown rules by local candidates canvassing.

(b) Question from Mr. Rob Gibson to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance

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Despite reassurances of grants being processed last Monday 1 February by Jenny Poole, no progress was made in respect of grants with which my company and many others were entitled.

I sent an email on Thursday 4 February for an update and no reply was received until Friday 5 February at 5.00pm, the explanation in my opinion is completely unacceptable in light of the email I received on 1st February when I was assured grants would be paid by last Friday (5 February).

On Facebook of 4 February, it was indicated that most of the business grants would be paid by Friday 12 February. I'd like indication later as to how many of the loan applications have been paid and why the remaining have not been processed.

Finally, as time waits for no business, the demands on business increases which places substantial pressure on the viability of many. This impacts on employment opportunities and individual's mental health which the Leader Councillor Joe Harris has put huge emphasis on recently.

Why is CDC posting statements about grants and then not auctioning these posts and why are businesses being misled on the progress of payments to which they are entitled.

In April Councillor Evemy assured me in an email that processes had been put in place to ensure that grants would be paid seamlessly in the future. Did this happen and if not, why not? Are there underlying issues with the systems that are being used by the finance department of CDC and is additional resources required to action these grant payments?

I have been contacted by more than 70 businesses in the Cotswolds within the last week who have all experienced the same issues I am experiencing with a lack of grant payments processed by CDC. We as individuals can't all be wrong as there appears to be a common thread to everybody's complaints and they are that promises are being made by email and phone which are not being kept. The publicity of how many payments have been made by CDC on Facebook and in Barn Theatre productions are false. This happened in April and it has happened again and unacceptable delays are resulting in increased stress levels for business owners and adding to existing mental health issues at present.

I look forward to some response to these statements that I have made this evening and all my supporting documentation is attached to the questions which I submitted earlier today.'

Response from Councillor Evemy

The Deputy Leader responded that he had had sight of the documentation referred to by Mr. Gibson but only shortly before the meeting, so confirmed he would provide a full written response after the meeting.

He explained that the Council understood the pressures that businesses were under and were trying to make grant payments as soon as possible within the confines that had to be followed and on guidance from the Government, the latest of which had been received on 15 January 2021.

The Deputy Leader added that Officers were working on grants and who he considered were doing a good job in processing the 2,000 applications against the eight government schemes

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that had been received by the Council. He continued that 95% of grants received following an email sent to previous grant recipients by the Council would be paid by 12 February 2021 in accordance with previous statements by the Council.

The Deputy Leader concluded that the Council was doing everything it could do and that every business who had not received a grant and were eligible to do so would receive one as soon as possible.

6 Member Questions

No questions had been received from Members.

7 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22

The Cabinet received the draft Budget for 2021-22.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and highlighted various aspects. He explained that the Budget presented was an improvement from the revised 2020-21 Budget that had been presented to the Cabinet and Council in September 2020 but highlighted that £12.5 million was needed to deliver Council services annually. He concluded by thanking the Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committees for their consideration of the Budget at their recent meetings and then advised that he wished to propose the following amendment to the report recommendations:-

“The Cabinet notes the motion on fly-tipping proposed by Cllr Berry and seconded by Cllr Judd at Council on 20 January 2021. It further notes the feedback from the Budget Consultation considered at its meeting on 4 January 2021 and the comments about the need for improvements in our public realm it contained.

It proposes the inclusion of one-off funding of £200,000 for investment in a Civic Pride Programme to improve the public realm across the District beginning with the five largest settlements and the Cotswold Water Park. Subject to budgetary approval, the Programme will run for two years in the first instance starting in April 2021 with a report to come to Cabinet on 8 March outlining the proposals for the Programme. £150,000 of this investment will be funded from the Business Rates Movement Reserve with the remainder from the Council Priorities Fund.

That documents in a (i) to a (vi) be updated to include funding for the Civic Pride Programme and recommended to Council for adoption.

The Leader seconded the Amendment and explained that district councils faced challenges to their finances going forward and that the Council's Budget needed to ensure statutory services were provided to a good standard whilst also funding the ambitious ambitions of the administration.

The Cabinet expressed their support for the Budget and the Amendment and thanked both the Deputy Leader and Officers for their work on the Budget during challenging times. The Cabinet also highlighted the large volume of business grants that had been awarded to local businesses facing challenging times during the Covid-19 pandemic and the help that would be offered to the District's residents through the Council Tax Support Scheme.

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The Chairs of the Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committees were invited to make any comments. The Chair of the Overview of Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Andrews, added his thanks on behalf of the Committee to the Chief Finance Officer and her team and highlighted that the Committee would be looking for ways in which to link the various strategies implemented by the Council against the overall costs of delivering them going forward.

RESOLVED: THAT COUNCIL BE RECOMMENDED to approve the following set of documents:

- 1 the Budget proposals 2021/22,
 - 2 the Medium Term Financial Strategy,
 - 3 the Pay Policy Statement,
 - 4 the Capital Strategy
 - 5 the Investment Strategy
 - 6 the Treasury Management Strategy; and
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- a) Approve the revised fees and charges as set out at 2.40 to 2.42 to apply from 1 April 2021;
 - b) recommend the Local Council Tax Support Scheme as detailed at 2.49 to 2.51 for 2021/22 to Council;
 - c) subject to the Council approval of recommendation (b), Council delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer to approve the Local Council Tax Support Scheme annual uprating of allowances and non-dependant deductions in line with national regulations;
 - d) the Cabinet note the motion on fly-tipping proposed by Cllr Berry and seconded by Cllr Judd at Council on 20 January 2021. It further notes the feedback from the Budget Consultation considered at its meeting on 4 January 2021 and the comments about the need for improvements in our public realm it contained;
 - e) it proposes the inclusion of one-off funding of £200,000 for investment in a Civic Pride Programme to improve the public realm across the District beginning with the five largest settlements and the Cotswold Water Park. Subject to budgetary approval, the Programme to run for two years in the first instance starting in April 2021 with a report to come to Cabinet on 8 March outlining the proposals for the Programme. £150,000 of this investment to be funded from the Business Rates Movement Reserve with the remainder from the Council Priorities Fund;
 - f) that documents in a (i) to a (vi) be updated to include funding for the Civic Pride Programme and recommended to Council for adoption.

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

8 Ubico Contract Extension

The Cabinet received an update on the Ubico contract for Domestic Waste and Recycling collections, Street Cleansing, Grounds maintenance, Cemetery maintenance and Bin deliveries,

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which was due to end on 31 March 2022 and received details of a recommendation to negotiate an extension to the agreement term for a period of 5 years to 31 March 2027.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment, Waste and Recycling introduced the report and highlighted various aspects of the report. He drew attention to the high level of public satisfaction with the service Ubico provided and the low number of missed collections and also reported the improvements planned for the service going forward which sought to simplify the existing arrangements whilst maintaining the existing service standard.

The Cabinet expressed its support for the recommendations and commented that the waste service was the Council's single biggest expenditure. Cabinet also noted the effectiveness in which fly-tipping incidents were dealt with and the need to encourage the District's residents to reduce the amount of waste generated in the first instance, as well as encouraging recycling.

RESOLVED: That, Cabinet endorse the proposal and recommend to Council that the Ubico contract should be extended by 5 years from 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2027 on the following basis:

- i. the contract extension should be subject to a performance review at 2 years based upon expected outcomes;
- ii. that officers be delegated authority, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member(s) to negotiate the terms of a Deed of Variation to the existing contract.
- iii. the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and the Cabinet Member for Environment, Waste and Recycling be delegated authority to sign the Deed of Variation and contract extension

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstention 0, absent 0.

9 Update to Council Contract Rules

The Cabinet received a proposed update to the Council's Contract Rules.

The Deputy Leader introduced the report and explained that it was considered good practice to update procedure rules every five years, the previous update having been undertaken in 2015. He added that the Contract Rules had also been reviewed by the Audit Committee at its meeting in January 2021.

Cabinet supported the recommendations highlighting that the updates would seek to save time and costs where needed, increasing efficiency of Officers.

It was noted that the addition of the word 'by' was required in 16.1 of the report.

RESOLVED: That the updated Contract Rules be recommended to Council.

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstention 0, absent 0.

10 Affordable Housing Delivery

The Cabinet received a report which set out the delivery strategy for the Council to accelerate provision of social rented and affordable homes for local people.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness presented the report and explained that there was a housing affordability crisis in the District, which was only slightly mitigated by

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affordable rent properties. She added that the Council had previously relied too heavily on Section 106 grants and that she hoped the Strategy would result in the Council being a leader in the creation of exemplar, affordable homes within the District.

The Cabinet expressed its support for the recommendations and highlighted that the report made reference to the creation of low-carbon homes which would be low cost to run as well as affordable to purchase.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) Adopts the Delivery Strategy and Action Plan in Annex A;
- b) agrees that in order to facilitate longer term innovative delivery, the Council obtains specialist advice on establishing a formal delivery partnership with a Registered Provider and that up to £15,000 is allocated for this work from Council Priorities Fund allocation to support the Recovery Investment Strategy and that,
- c) subject to satisfactory advice received under (b) that delegated authority is granted to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing and Homelessness, the s151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal to progress the procurement of a suitable partnership with a Registered Provider and specialist Carbon consultant to bring forward exemplar schemes and test opportunities to deliver carbon zero social rented homes, which are financially sustainable for providers/developers and agree final terms of this agreement;
- d) agrees that officers should review and provide detailed prioritisation of Council owned sites to enable further reports to be brought forward for decision on:
 - i) Council owned sites suitable for development in line with the Affordable Housing Delivery Strategy through partnership delivery set out in (b & c) above, and,
 - ii) Council owned sites suitable for disposal as open market sites or self-build plots (as appropriate), with capital receipts earmarked for reinvestment in affordable housing delivery (e) that the preferred route to delivering housing at Station Road Kemble is in partnership with a Registered Provider for the purpose of affordable housing and that;
 - (i) Officers procure a Registered Provider to prepare a planning application, develop a detailed business case for the delivery of affordable, carbon zero homes on the Council's land and that;
 - (ii) a report be brought to Cabinet/ Council as necessary with the final business case and terms for any disposal for decision.

II Changes to Governance Arrangements at SWAP Internal Audit Services Ltd

The Cabinet received a report detailing changes to governance arrangements taking place in SWAP Internal Audit Services.

The Deputy Leader introduced the report and highlighted various aspects.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

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- a) Notes the changes to the SWAP Governance arrangements; and
- b) delegates authority to the Chief Executive to sign the updated Members Agreement.

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstention 0, absent 0.

12 Schedule of Decisions Taken by the Leader of the Council and/or Individual Cabinet Members

Cabinet noted the decisions taken by Cabinet Members since the previous Meeting of the Cabinet, which were set out in full in the agenda.

13 Issue(s) Arising From Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit (if any).

There were no issues arising.

14 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 item of business on the grounds that it involves likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3, (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), of Part I of Schedule 12A to the said Act and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information concerned.

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstention 0, absent 0.

15 Exempt Report

The Cabinet was requested to consider options and agree the future use or disposal of a property in Cirencester.

RESOLVED that the item be deferred.

The Meeting commenced at 6.00pm and closed at 8.20pm.

Chair

(END)