



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Tuesday, 7 December 2021

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COUNCIL

You are summoned to attend a meeting of the Full Council to be held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Trinity Road, Cirencester on **Wednesday, 15 December 2021 at 2.00 pm.**

Rob Weaver
Chief Executive

To: All Members of the Council

Recording of Proceedings – The law allows the public proceedings of Council, Cabinet, and Committee Meetings to be recorded, which includes filming as well as audio-recording. Photography is also permitted.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Committee Administrator know prior to the date of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of interest from Members and Officers, relating to items to be considered at the meeting.

3. **Minutes 7 - 14**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 22 September 2021.

4. **Announcements from the Chair, Leader or Chief Executive (if any)**

5. **Public Questions**

To deal with questions from the public within the open forum question and answer session of fifteen minutes in total. Questions from each member of the public should be no longer than two minutes each and relate to issues under the Council's or Committee's remit. Any member of the public wishing to ask a public question is requested to contact Democratic Services by no later than 5.00pm the working day before the meeting.

6. **Member Questions**

The following questions have been submitted:

Question from Councillor Sue Jepson to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council:

As you know, one of the statutory responsibilities of a local authority is to provide a dedicated planning function. When Publica was created, we collectively as elected members, insisted that the CDC planning function was kept discrete and separate.

Can the Leader please confirm that Publica has no involvement in planning and if so, why in many instances do our case officers have Publica email addresses?

Question from Councillor Sue Jepson to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council:

As a long serving member of the Planning Committee, I share the concerns voiced by other members that the individual caseloads of officers are beyond breaking point which could affect their well-being and result in excessive delays in decision making.

Can the Leader please explain why the department appears to be under-resourced and provide details of the current structure, staffing levels and staff vacancies?

Question from Councillor Ray Theodoulou to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance:

The Pandemic has irrevocably changed working practices so that individuals will continue to work from home for at least part of their working life. Has Cllr Evemy estimated the impact these changes will bring to the Council's green agenda and how this Council can facilitate this impact.

Question from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Andrew Doherty, Cabinet Member for the Environment, Waste and Recycling:

I learnt from a local resident that the long-standing service allowing them to buy CDC paper sacks for storing their autumn leaves before being collected by Ubico was no longer available. Through Rob Weaver's intervention it has now been re-instated but only for residents who used it in the past.

Why was this valuable and surely very green service, cancelled without notification, despite the administration's principles of openness and transparency, both for the residents concerned and the customer service team who were unaware of it.

Question from Councillor Stephen Hirst to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Development Management and Licensing:

The efficiency of the Planning Department is subject to continuous query by those who submit applications and have to wait many weeks before there is any engagement from the Planners. There would appear to be a continuous list of personnel vacancies in the department, the result of which is a continuing deterioration in the service.

What plans are in hand to effect an acceptable level of service in the Planning Department.

7. Treasury Mid-Term Report 2021-22 15 - 26

Purpose

To receive and discuss details of the Council's Treasury Management performance for the period 1 April to 30 September 2021.

Recommendation(s)

That the Council's Treasury Management performance for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021 is considered.

8. Appointment of Monitoring Officer 27 - 30

Purpose

To consider an appointment to the Monitoring Officer role. Full Council needs to agree new arrangements to cover the statutory responsibilities as set out in Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Recommendation(s)

That Council agrees to appoint Angela Claridge as the Council's Monitoring Officer under the provisions of section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended) from 16th December 2021.

9. Cotswold District Council Draft Schedule of Meetings 2022-23 31 - 36

Purpose

To receive the draft Schedule of Meetings for the civic year 2022-23.

Recommendation(s)

That the Council approves the schedule of meetings for 2022-23.

10. Notice of Motions

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12, the following Motions have been received:-

a) E-Petition Tab on the Council website

Proposed by Councillor Julia Judd, Seconded by Councillor Tony Berry

In support of this Council's ambition to be open and transparent, residents need a facility to inform the Council of concerns, especially when they are shared by many people, which is visible to all across the District.

An e-Petition tab on the front of the Council's website would make it easier for residents to raise issues which are the responsibility of this Council, to be raised in an open and transparent forum. Petitions would have a clear statement, the name and contact details of the petition organiser or clerk to whom the correspondence can be sent. Details would be required to login to sign an e-petition as a safeguard against bogus petitions.

An e-petition facility supports this Council's ambition to be open and transparent and are successfully used by other councils.

b) Virtual and Hybrid Council Meetings

Proposed by Councillor Nick Maunder, Seconded by Councillor Garry Selwyn

Council notes:

A) The temporary enabling of virtual Council meetings in response to the coronavirus pandemic allowed the Council to continue making democratic decisions efficiently, transparently and safely without the need for physical meetings in one place. We welcomed the return to in-person meetings where they can safely and efficiently take place, but also recognise the benefits to democracy of providing flexible meeting options, including opening up local democratic decision-making and creating a more accessible experience for councillors and the public.

B) The following advantages of being able to hold remote and hybrid council meetings:

1) Some councillors and prospective councillors have work or caring commitments, or mobility or accessibility issues limiting their ability to attend meetings in person. Virtual meeting options provide more flexibility and accessibility for councillors to attend Council meetings. In the future, this flexibility and increased accessibility could help to attract a wider range of potential councillors.

2) Many councillors have to travel a long distance from their homes to the Council meeting place. This can make it more difficult for councillors to attend every meeting they would wish to attend. In addition, long travel time for short meetings may not be the most efficient use of councillor time; remote attendance on occasion may help maintain high levels of councillor attendance and be more

efficient.

3) A reduction in travel by attending some meetings virtually rather than driving would reduce emissions and cut down on the Council's carbon footprint.

4) Virtual meetings can save money for the Council in terms of travel expenses and venue costs.

5) Some councillors are also councillors for other Councils in the area, and virtual meetings options can help them attend more meetings, even meetings taking place on the same day. This increases engagement in the various tiers of government, which is an advantage for this Council and others affected.

6) Providing virtual meeting options can make Council meetings more accessible and produce better engagement from the public and the press on various issues.

Council therefore **resolves** to:

1) Write to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) urging a permanent amendment to the meeting rules set out in the Local Government Act 1972 by enabling local authorities to hold virtual, hybrid or physical meetings

2) Write to Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP to ask for support for this flexible approach to Council meetings

3) Continue to explore the use of technology to develop online meetings to attract a wider audience once our request has been successful.

c) **National Park Motion**

Proposed by Councillor Joe Harris, Seconded by Councillor Juliet Layton

In November 2019, following a review of National Parks and AONBs by Julian Glover, this Council debated and supported a motion urging Natural England, the MP for The Cotswolds Constituency and various Cabinet Ministers, that no further work should be undertaken on the proposal that the Cotswolds becomes a national park.

Whilst there has been very little public comment from the Government, two years on this proposal hasn't been dropped and Cotswold District Council, again, urges the Government not to undertake any further work on this proposal.

This Council therefore resolves to write to Natural England, the MP for the Cotswolds constituency and George Eustice MP, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to:

(i) Support the recommendations of the Landscapes Review to increase biodiversity recovery and enhance the 'national landscape' of the Cotswolds AONB through partnership working and increased Government funding.

(ii) Confirm that Cotswold District Council is taking a leadership role among the Cotswolds AONB Local Authorities to find quicker, cheaper and easier methods to deliver these benefits.

(iii) Support the creation of a National Landscapes Service to act as a coordinator,

facilitator and ombudsman for National Parks and AONBs.

(iv) Advise that Cotswold District Council has concluded that, on current evidence, the case for the Cotswolds AONB to be considered for National Park status is very weak - on the basis that doing so is likely to:

- take 10-20 years of costly consultation and technical work to deliver;
- exacerbate the chronic housing affordability crisis;
- hinder the Government's ability to deliver genuinely affordable housing in the communities that need it most
- limit or reduce economic, research and development potential;
- not significantly increase the benefits of tourism; and
- remove decision making for planning and development from the district and pass it to an unelected body.

11. **Next meeting**
19 January 2022 – 2pm

(END)