



**Minutes of a meeting held of Council held on Wednesday, 15 December 2021.**

**Councillors present:**

Dilys Neill	Nikki Ind	
Stephen Andrews	Jenny Forde	Nick Maunder
Tony Berry	Joe Harris	Richard Morgan
Gina Blomefield	Mark Harris	Richard Norris
Ray Brassington	Stephen Hirst	Nigel Robbins
Patrick Coleman	Robin Hughes	Gary Selwyn
Rachel Coxcoon	Sue Jepson	Ray Theodoulou
Tony Dale	Julia Judd	Steve Trotter
Andrew Doherty	Juliet Layton	Clive Webster
Mike Evemy	Andrew Maclean	

**Officers present:**

Jan Britton, Managing Director, Publica Group Ltd  
Angela Claridge, Interim Monitoring Officer  
Susan Gargett, Interim Head of Legal Services  
Caleb Harris, Strategic Support Officer  
Claire Hughes, Business Manager, Corporate Responsibility  
Ben Patel-Sadler, Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Jenny Poole, Deputy Chief Executive  
Rob Weaver, Chief Executive

**37 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lisa Spivey, Claire Bloomer, David Cunningham, Richard Keeling and Roly Hughes.

**38 Declarations of Interest**

Angela Claridge, Interim Monitoring Officer declared an interest in agenda item 8 'Appointment of Monitoring Officer'. She would leave the room when this item was discussed by Council.

Councillor Clive Webster declared an interest as the CDC representative to the Cotswold National Landscape Board. The Interim Monitoring Officer confirmed that Councillor Webster could participate in discussions during agenda item 7 where this organisation was referenced.

Councillor Stephen Andrews declared an interest as the CDC representative of the Cotswold Canal Partnership Board. The Interim Monitoring Officer confirmed that Councillor Andrews could participate in discussions during agenda item 7 where this organisation was referenced.

### **39 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2021 were agreed as a true record subject to the following amendments:

Minute number 31: The word ‘exasperated’ should read ‘exacerbated’.

At page 12 of the minutes, item E, Councillor Jenny Forde expressed a view that where motions are discussed, the comments of the Councillor proposing the motion are captured appropriately.

Members noted the importance of capturing the wording of any resolutions agreed at the meeting if different from the recommendations outlined in reports.

Council noted that e-mails had been sent to all Members in relation to the proposal to move the November 2021 Council date so that the meeting instead took place on 15 December. The discussions held in relation to this matter were not had as part of a Council meeting, but were facilitated via e-mail following the completion of the September 2021 Council meeting.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2021 were agreed as a true record subject to the above amendments being made.

**Record of Voting – for: 27, against: 0, abstentions: 2, absent: 5.**

### **40 Announcements from the Chair, Leader or Chief Executive (if any)**

The Chair of the Council, Councillor Dilys Neill welcomed Members, Officers and those public present and watching the meeting online to the meeting.

The Chair of the Council outlined the importance of brevity.

Members noted that agenda item 9 ‘Cotswold District Council Draft Schedule of Meetings 2022-23’ would be deferred to the 19 January 2022 Council meeting so that further work could be undertaken to ensure that the 2022-23 schedule of meetings avoided clashes other events/meetings wherever possible. This decision had been taken following the agreement of the Chair of Council, the Leader of the Council, the Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Executive.

The following announcements were made by the Chair of the Council:

Members noted that the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer wished to inform the Council that due to the illness of a key member of the external audit team, it would not be possible to issue the external audit opinion on the Council’s 2020-21 statement of accounts before Christmas 2021.

Council

15/December2021

Council noted that the external auditor had provided a form of words which outlined that there were no issues with the draft statement of accounts. The Deputy Chief Executive would keep Members informed of the progress in relation to this matter during the early stages of 2022.

The Council noted the tributes to former CDC Councillor Tim Royle made by the Chair of Council, Councillor Dilys Neill.

Councillor Sue Jepson also paid tribute to former CDC Councillor Tim Royle.

The Chair of Council also paid tribute to Sir David Amess following his tragic murder.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Joe Harris paid tribute to Sir David Amess, acknowledging the threats posed to elected officials at all levels across the United Kingdom and emphasised the importance of Members taking all necessary precautions to remain safe as they served their communities.

The Chief Executive paid tribute to former CDC Officer Sally Davies who had recently passed away who would be sadly missed by all of her colleagues. Members noted the words provided by two of Sally's former line managers praising her personality and all of the work undertaken during her service to the Council.

The Leader of the Council also paid tribute to former CDC Officer Sally Davies.

The Leader wished to place on record his congratulations to Councillor Tony Berry on being appointed as the new Leader of the Conservative Group and placed on record his thanks to Councillor Richard Morgan for all of the work he had undertaken whilst serving as the previous Conservative Group Leader.

The Chief Executive wished to place on record his thanks to all CDC and Publica employees long with all Members for all of their work in supporting him over the previous 12 months which had been made more challenging due to the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Following completion of the tributes and announcements, the meeting attendees rose to observe a minute's silence to former CDC Councillor Tim Royle, Sir David Amess and former CDC Officer Sally Davies.

#### **41 Public Questions**

Mr Gibson attended the meeting to pose two questions which had not been submitted in advance of the meeting.

The first question related to a complaint which Mr Gibson had submitted on 2 October and was directed to the Chief Executive, Rob Weaver. Mr Gibson requested that a response was provided by Mr Weaver at the meeting.

The Interim Monitoring Officer informed the meeting that it was unusual for members of the public to pose questions directly to Officers at Council meetings. Standard practice was that public questions should be directed to Elected Members as they were the democratically elected representatives of residents.

Council

15/December2021

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Joe Harris informed Mr Gibson that a written response to the points made by him at the meeting would be provided.

The second question related to funding in relation to road repairs and was directed to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Joe Harris.

Councillor Harris informed Mr Gibson that the responsibility for the maintenance of highways within the District lay with Gloucestershire County Council. Mr Gibson was informed he would receive an appropriate response if he directed the question to the County Council.

Mr David Fowles attended the meeting to pose two questions which had not been submitted in advance of the meeting.

The first question related to the Council spend on the rugby club car park which in Mr Fowles' view was not being used. The question was directed to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Mike Evely.

Councillor Evely informed the Council that the car park became available for use in early 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic. Members noted was the car park would be made available on a permit holder basis only. Due to low demand for the car park due to the pandemic, the car park was now available for public use. A report on Council car park fees and charges would be considered by the Cabinet in January 2022.

The second question related to the relationship between Elected Members and Officers where Mr Fowles requested specific information on the number of staff who had left the Council since May 2019, how many of these staff had had their posts terminated, how many new posts which had been created as a result and the total cost of these changes to Council tax payers.

Councillor Evely informed the Council that he did not recognise the statement that Council staff worked in fear. The overall portfolio responsibility for Council staff rested with the Leader of the Council who would respond with the factual information information requested by Mr Fowles. The Council worked closely with Publica to ensure that the Council was a great place to work.

## **42 Member Questions**

A record of Member questions and answers are available in the schedule attached to these minutes.

Questions were asked by:

Councillor Sue Jepson to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council (two questions).

Councillor Ray Theodoulou to Councillor Mike Evely, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance.

Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Andrew Doherty, Cabinet Member for the Environment, Waste and Recycling.

Council  
15/December2021

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

#### **43 Treasury Mid-Term Report 2021-22**

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Mike Every introduced the report and informed Council that reports in relation to treasury management would be considered twice per year.

Council noted that the report which covered treasury management activity and the financial performance of the Council up until 30 September 2021 had been considered and reviewed by the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee had resolved to submit the report to Full Council for consideration and approval.

Council noted that all of the Council's treasury management functions complied with the strategy as agreed by the Council in February 2021.

Council noted the format and matters covered by the report in relation to treasury management activity.

Members noted the potential impact of inflation which was currently rising.

At the end of the previous financial year, Members noted that the Council was debt-free and held nearly £23.6 million of investments.

Council noted that the value of investments held had increased significantly due to Government funding being provided to support small and medium-sized businesses throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Members noted that the value of investments could rise and fall, although at the current time, the investment position remained stable.

Council noted that emergence of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 could have an impact on the Council's finances with the leisure and hospitality sectors likely to be significantly impacted.

Council noted the importance of effective partnership working between Members and also between Officers and external organisations such as Arlingclose.

Council noted the importance of ensuring that that the correct balance was continually struck in relation to investments and easy access to funding.

In relation to ethical investments, Council noted that an all-Member session for Members would be facilitated by Arlingclose on a future date which was yet to be confirmed but would which cover this topic. The Council noted that the Council did not yet have a dedicated ethical investment policy. Members further noted that there were also commercial confidentiality agreements which would prevent the sharing of certain investment information between authorities.

With regards to the overall performance of investments, specifically if anything could be learned from the best performing authorities, Members noted that local authorities each had

Council

15/December2021

their own investment strategy which resulted in investment performance changing over time depending on where funds were invested.

In relation to the meetings of the Capital Investment Board, Council noted that this group looked at which investments might be made at future points. All decisions made at these meetings would be considered by Cabinet and/or Council before any final decisions were made.

RESOLVED that the Council's Treasury Management performance for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021 was noted.

#### **44 Appointment of Monitoring Officer**

The Interim Monitoring Officer left the room before Council considered this item as she had previously declared an interest.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Joe Harris introduced the report which recommended the appointment of Angela Claridge as the permanent Monitoring Officer.

Council noted that an extensive recruitment process had been undertaken before this recommendation had been made to Council.

The appointment had been made following discussions between the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council along with other senior Offices which had resulted in agreement being reached that the Council did require a permanent Monitoring Officer to support the business and the senior leadership team.

This role, along with the role of the Democratic Services played an important role in supporting Members in ensuring they could fulfil their roles and obligations as elected officials. Council further noted the importance of ensuring that sufficient resources were allocated to the area of governance.

The Leader wished to place on record his thanks to the Appointments Panel who had assisted in the recruitment process related to this position (where agreement on Angela Claridge's appointment was unanimous).

Council noted that Angela Claridge had performed well whilst fulfilling this role on an interim basis.

Council further noted that in relation to the job description for the role, the Monitoring Officer would work closely with the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive to ensure that all relevant functions were covered.

Members noted that the permanent appointment would enable the work already undertaken around governance to be continued and completed by the same Officer which was important for business continuity purposes.

Council noted that the additional costs associated with the recruitment to this post would be funded via utilising a budget underspend to cover the forthcoming civic year.

Council  
15/December2021

Councillor Harris proposed 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.

This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Maclean.

RESOLVED 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.

**Record of Voting – for: 29 , against: 0, abstentions: 0, absent: 5**

#### **45      Cotswold District Council Draft Schedule of Meetings 2022-23**

The Chair of the Council, Councillor Dilys Neill informed Council that as stated earlier in the meeting, agreement had been reached to defer this item for consideration at the January 2022 Council meeting.

#### **46      Notice of Motions**

Members had been given notice of a number of Motions, detailed on the agenda.

##### **a) Motion - 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.

Councillor Judd provided further context around the Motion, highlighting the importance for members of the public being able to easily view and access historic and current petitions.

Councillor Berry expressed agreement that it was important for petitions to be easily accessible.

Council

15/December2021

Council noted that the CDC petitions scheme was available on the website. The Monitoring Officer informed Council that further work needed to be undertaken to determine how the functionality around e-petitions operated and how it may be made available on the CDC website.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Joe Harris informed the Council that the Liberal Democrat Group would be supporting the motion but that one amendment to the wording was requested which was that the word 'tab' be amended to read 'link'. This would result in the essence of the motion remaining but reflected that it might not be possible to place a tab on the front page of the Council website.

Council agreed that a link to ensure that e-petitions could be easily accessed on the CDC homepage would be beneficial.

Councillor Every seconded the amendment.

Council noted that there was a facility in Modern.gov which was a system utilised by CDC which could be used to service e-petitions and was a feature currently used by other Councils.

The proposer of the Motion agreed to the proposed amendment to the wording and acknowledged that the link to access e-petitions easily via the front page of the Council website was important and was the essence behind the submission of the Motion.

Council voted to support the Motion.

**Record of Voting – for: 29 , against: 0, abstentions: 0, absent: 5**

#### **b) Motion - 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



Council

15/December2021

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.

Councillor Maunder provided further context around the Motion, acknowledging the importance of being able to utilise hybrid/remote meetings during the pandemic whilst also referencing the logistical benefits of being able hold meetings on this basis in the future.

Cost savings had been made through reduced Member travel claims, with virtual meetings also resulting in time savings for Members and a reduction in carbon emissions where journeys had not been required. Due to the sparse, rural nature of the District, virtual meetings were beneficial where sufficient public transport networks were not in place, resulting in personal vehicles having to be used to travel to and from a central meeting location.

Council noted the ways in which organisations and businesses had adapted to new ways of remote working due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Council further noted the importance of the public sector being afforded the legislation to support them being able to take their own decisions in determining their own meeting arrangements (whether purely physical or a mixture of remote and physical for example).

The current legislation meant that all formal Council meetings had to be held in-person, despite the Covid-19 pandemic continuing.

Council acknowledged the importance of technology being able to support the function of hybrid/remote meetings if they were to be successful going forwards.

Council

15/December2021

The Council noted that the Council had responded to the Government's request for responses in relation to how Council meetings might be facilitated in the future.

Council acknowledged that non-aligned Members had found that the quality of debate had not been what it was when compared with physical meetings as they did not have an opportunity to liaise with Group Members in advance of meetings/ in-between meetings, etc as the Conservative and Liberal Democrats had been able to do given the number of their Members.

Whilst the Council acknowledged the importance of adapting to new ways of working, the quality of debate and engagement when meeting in-person should not be discounted.

Councillor Gary Selwyn seconded the Motion.

Council voted to support the Motion.

**Record of Voting – for: 27 , against: 0, abstentions: 2, absent: 5**

### **c) Motion - 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

Council  
15/December2021  
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.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Joe Harris provided further context around the Motion, which sought to oppose plans to have the Cotswold designated as a National Park.

Council noted that there had not been any expressions made by substantial numbers of residents seeking the Cotswolds to be designated as a National Park.

Council noted the importance of ensuring that local decisions on planning be taken by Elected Members.

Council further noted the potential for property price increases if the Cotswolds was designated as a National Park. The importance of delivering sustainable, affordable housing was recognised by the Council.

Council noted that the Glover Report had not sought to engage with District Councils who were currently responsible for determining planning applications. The Council would welcome an opportunity to put its views as part of the work being undertaken in this area.

Council further noted that the Cotswolds retained its uniqueness by not only the natural landscape, but also the built environment which was not typical of many National Parks.

Council acknowledged the pattern of tourist influxes to existing National Parks, Snowdonia for example and the potential negative impacts on biodiversity that this could have.

Some Members expressed a view that the potential benefits of designating the Cotswolds as a National Park would need to be analysed before a decision could be made on supporting this Motion.

Council acknowledged the quality of the debate in relation to this Motion.

Members acknowledged the importance of ensuring that the local area was shaped by the elected representatives of local people.

The Chair of the Council, Councillor Dilys Neill outlined the recommendations contained in the Motion.

Council voted to support the Motion.

**Record of Voting – for: 16, against: 5, abstentions: 8, absent: 5**

The Committee noted that a briefing on Member safety would be held on the same day in advance of the next Full Council meeting on 19 January 2022.

Council  
15/December2021

**47**    **Next meeting**

16 February 2022 – 6pm

The Meeting commenced at 2pm and closed at 5.05pm

Chair

(END)