

**Minutes of a meeting held remotely of Council held on Wednesday, 16 February 2022.**

Councillors present:

Dilys Neill – Chair	Nikki Ind – Vice-Chair	
Stephen Andrews	Mike Evemy	Juliet Layton
Tony Berry	Jenny Forde	Andrew Maclean
Gina Blomefield	Mark Harris	Nick Maunder
Claire Bloomer	Stephen Hirst	Richard Morgan
Ray Brassington	Robin Hughes	Richard Norris
Patrick Coleman	Roly Hughes	Nigel Robbins
David Cunningham	Sue Jepson	Gary Selwyn
Tony Dale	Julia Judd	Tom Stowe
Andrew Doherty	Richard Keeling	Clive Webster

Officers present:

OfficerPresentTitleOnlyColNo1of2

OfficerPresentTitleOnlyColNo2of2

**59 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joe Harris, Rachel Coxcoon, Ray Theodoulou and Steve Trotter.

**60 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**61 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2022 were agreed as a true record subject to the following amendment:

In relation to the Armed Forces Motion, the reference made by Councillor Julia Judd to the Cadet Force should be included, specifically that there were 21 Cadet Forces throughout Gloucestershire who could provide young people with a variety of activities.

**Record of Voting – for: 28, against: 0, abstentions: 2, absent: 4 .**

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

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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 wished to place on record her thanks to all Officers and the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance for all of the work undertaken in preparing the proposed budget.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Tom Stowe who was elected to the Council following the Campden & Vale ward by-election.

The Chair requested that the top table introduced themselves for the benefit of viewers at home.

The Chair drew Members' attention to the budget setting process which would be utilised at the meeting.

The Chair congratulated Her Majesty the Queen on her Platinum Jubilee. A round of applause was given by all Officers and Members in attendance.

In the absence of the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council did not have any announcements to make.

The Chief Executive congratulated Councillor Tom Stowe on his appointment to the Council.

Members were encouraged to use the Council switchboard number in the event that the ongoing severe weather would result in emergency planning procedures having to be utilised.

## **63 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 comments made by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Joe Harris in relation to a Member of Parliament.

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Mike Every responded and informed Mr Gibson that the previous Secretary of State had said that local Councils would be given 'whatever it takes' in relation to ensuring that the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic could be mitigated as much as possible at a local level. Although the Government had provided the Council with funding throughout the pandemic, the Council was in deficit due to the Government grants not covering the full costs covered by the Council in relation to the pandemic.

The Monitoring Officer addressed the meeting and informed Members around the processes and procedures associated with speaking in the Chamber. A complaints process in relation to the conduct of Members was available for members of the public to utilise if they felt the Members Code of Conduct had been breached in any way.

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Mr Gibson's second question related to a statement made by Councillor Joe Harris in March 2015 in relation to the reduction of car parking charges should the Liberal Democrats achieve overall control of the Council. Council noted that the Liberal Democrats did not win control of the Council until the 2019 elections.

Cabinet had taken decisions at the February 2022 meeting in relation to future car parking fees and charges. Members noted that the issue of car parking would also be considered as part of the budget discussions held at this meeting.

#### **64 Member Questions**

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

Questions were asked by:

Councillor Richard Morgan to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Development Management and Licensing.

Councillor Stephen Andrews to Councillor Rachel Coxcoon, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Forward Planning.

Councillor Stephen Hirst to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council.

Councillor Stephen Hirst Question to Councillor Lisa Spivey, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness.

Question from Councillor Robin Hughes to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council.

#### **65 Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2022/23**

The Deputy Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance proposed the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2022/23.

Councillor Evemy commented that it was an honour to propose the third annual budget, which continued the work the administration had begun to rebuild the Council's finance and invest in the Cotswolds.

Councillor Evemy highlighted Government funding cuts, which over the previous decade had resulted in a £2.4 million real terms funding cut to the Council.

Members noted that it was likely that a further £228,000 Government funding reduction would occur for the 2023/24 year.

Initial analysis of the Fairer Funding Review (due to be implemented in 2023/24) had indicated that Cotswold District Council could be one of the worst affected Councils nationally.

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The Council noted that continued innovation was key, particularly in relation to how the Council could generate its own funding in future years.

Additional funding had been allocated to improvements in recycling, increased car parking provision and in the webcasting technology being used to improve the transparency around Council decisions.

Members noted that a key aim of this budget was to ensure the delivery of efficient services.

Council noted the need to borrow and invest in the future to ensure the Council continued to deliver high quality services to its residents.

There would be continued investment in solar and other green schemes. Council noted that the public would have an opportunity during the spring of 2022 to invest in some of the Council's green initiatives to achieve a return on their investment which would also serve to improve the environment.

Members noted that the local Council Tax support scheme would continue.

The Council would continue to seek appropriate external funding from Government and other funders so that investment in communities could continue.

Council noted that the proposed budget also sought to ensure that an effective economic recovery took place following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Members noted the support provided by the Council to businesses throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, along with the financial support of those self-isolating.

Members noted the investments made by the administration during the Liberal Democrat tenure as the majority group.

Council noted the importance and associated difficulties of delivering a balanced budget during a difficult economic period.

Councillor Every highlighted examples of investment in the health and wellbeing of residents and of schemes such as the Clean and Green Programme.

Members noted that the Local Plan Review was green to the core.

Councillor Every wished to place on record his thanks to all Officers who had assisted with the budget and to all staff working across the Council in delivering services to local people.

The Council remained committed to the provision of affordable homes.

Members noted that the largest ever budget consultation had taken place in advance of this proposed budget being formulated. Thanks were expressed to all those who had participated in the consultation.

Council noted the forthcoming budget pressures in relation to inflation increases and the potential decrease in the usage of Council car parks.

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Councillor Mike Evemy formally proposed the recommendations as outlined in the report.

The Council then moved to questions in relation to the proposed budget.

In response to a Member question, the Council noted that Officers would seek specialist investment advice in relation to any potential investments to be made by the Council. A specific amount had been set aside for the provision of this advice but it was not yet known what percentage would be required to procure the advice (this would be specific to investment type, amount to be invested and the exact advice required). This work would be overseen by the Capital Programme Investment Board of which the membership was comprised of Officers and Members.

In response to a Member question, the Council noted that the priorities of the current administration were listed. Despite some of the budget references being made to the year 2025 and beyond (at which point a new administration may control the Council), Members noted that the budget pressures highlighted would likely continue beyond the current administration which is why reference was made to years beyond May 2023.

Councillor Tony Berry responded on behalf of the Conservative Group, informing the Council that the previous Conservative administration had sought to devise the arrangement with Publica and the associated sharing of services to mitigate against Government funding cuts at that time.

Councillor Berry expressed a view that despite significant recruitment, a number of Officers leaving the business had resulted in a loss of organisational knowledge which had impacted on the delivery of services.

Councillor Berry expressed a view that it was difficult to measure the performance of Liberal Democratic initiatives. Reference was also made to the increasing costs of car parking, Council Tax and garden waste recycling.

Councillor Berry expressed concern with the proposed levels of borrowing outlined for future years.

The view of the Conservative Group was that the current administration was spending too much and as a result, looking to undertake significant borrowings to sustain the level of spend in future years.

The Conservative Group would not be supporting the budget.

The Conservative Group had proposed two motions to the Budget which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

Councillor Andrew Maclean addressed the Council and expressed a view that greenhouse gases were impacting the world significantly. Councillor Maclean acknowledged the impact of inflation on household budgets. Councillor Maclean welcomed the budget in respect of the green initiatives included and the increase of social housing. The investment in young businesses was also important. How Councils were funded was also crucial for future years (reform was required). He did not propose any changes to the budget.

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Councillor Nikki Ind did not wish to raise any additional points.

Councillor David Cunningham introduced his amendment which related to charging back election costs to Town and Parish Councils. This was seconded by Councillor Tony Berry:

**Given that the expected benefit to CDC is budgeted at only £14k over the next 4 years, or 0.2% of the expected budget savings, we therefore recommend to the Council that it reverts to CDC carrying the cost.**

Councillor Every responded and informed Council that the savings over a four year period in relation to charging election costs back to Town and Parish Councils amounted to approximately £35,000.

Council noted that the costs to Town and Parish Councils would be cumulative.

It would be the decision of Town and Parish Councils to set their own precepts and manage their own finances.

Members were provided with an overview of the indicative costs to Town and Parish Councils as part of the proposals considered by Cabinet.

Councillor Richard Norris introduced his amendment which related to the withdrawal of the 'Free after 3pm' car parking scheme. This was seconded by Councillor Tony Berry.

**We don't believe that the expected additional income is achievable due to a number of variables and the opportunity for drivers to go to out of town shops where there are no charges. Supporting our high streets to recover far outweighs the speculative figure removing free after 3 will generate, we therefore propose the free after 3 facility is retained.**

Councillor Every responded and informed the Council that the withdrawal of the scheme would deliver income generation to the Council of approximately £300,000.

Council noted that the £300,000 figure was based on collected statistical data and site visits to the car parks. The estimate was rounded down and so the future income generated could be higher than £300,000.

The meeting was adjourned for 20 minutes for the Groups to discuss the proposed Conservative Groups amendments.

The meeting reconvened, with Councillor Every confirming that both amendments would be debated.

The Chair reminded Members of the exact amendments which were displayed on the screens in the Chamber and also via the webcast for the benefit of viewers.

In relation to the amendment relating to election costs, Council noted that government guidance stipulated that elections should form part of the natural processes for Councils. The majority of local Councils did arrange and facilitate elections (and budgeted for them as such).

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The Liberal Democrats would not be supporting the proposed amendment.

Council noted that any vacant seats should be contested wherever possible in the spirit of democracy. It was important to encourage elections so that local people could become involved in Town and Parish elections. The Council was the exception in Gloucestershire and was currently the only authority not to be charging election costs to Town and Parish Councils.

Council noted that Town and Parish Councils could raise their precepts as they saw fit (of which there was currently no limit).

Council noted that the cost savings associated with the decision to charge Town and Parish Councils with election costs could not be ignored due to the impending central Government funding cuts facing the Council.

Council noted that due to the small number of candidates historically, it was not guaranteed that the number of Town and Parish Council elections would increase in the future and as such, the amendments to the arrangement would not necessarily result in Town and Parish Councils facing significant future election costs.

On being put to the vote the first amendment was LOST:

For: Councillors Andrews, Berry, Blomefield, Cunningham, Hirst, Hughes, Jepson, Judd, Keeling, Maclean, Morgan, Norris, Stowe – Total: 13

Against: Councillors Bloomer, Brassington, Coleman, Dale, Doherty, Evemy, Forde, Harris, Hughes (Roly), Ind, Layton, Maunder, Neill, Robbins, Selwyn, Spivey – Total: 16

Abstain: Webster – Total: 1

In relation to the amendment relating to the 'Free After 3pm' car parking scheme, Council acknowledged the challenges facing high street businesses, but the Council was required to deliver a balanced budget.

Council noted that 20 minutes of free parking was available in Cirencester.

Council further noted that businesses could apply to purchase season tickets if they wished to do so.

The Council noted that in order to deliver services to the public, the current funding model necessitated that the Council charged for car parking to fund these services.

Councillor Ind addressed the Council and expressed concerns around the impact on local businesses but understood the requirement to deliver a balanced budget.

Councillor Ind expressed a view that the car parking situation should be monitored every 12 months where decisions could be taken in the light of Council budget requirements and when the impact on businesses could be analysed.

Members encouraged residents to shop locally wherever possible.

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A view was expressed that the removal of the scheme could result in shoppers travelling further afield to shop.

Members noted that although some shops could sell items online, some services/businesses could not do this based on the products/services they offered.

Council acknowledged the unique nature of the shops and services available in the Cotswolds and the need to support these businesses as much as possible.

Members acknowledged that these proposed changes would help to ensure that the number of short journeys into town centres decreased which would help to improve the environment.

On being put to the vote the second amendment was LOST:

For: Councillors Andrews, Berry, Blomefield, Cunningham, Hirst, Hughes, Jepson, Judd, Keeling, Morgan, Norris, Stowe – Total: 12

Against: Councillors Bloomer, Brassington, Coleman, Dale, Doherty, Evemy, Forde, Harris, Hughes (Roly), Ind, Layton, Maclean, Maunder, Neill, Selwyn, Spivey, Webster – Total: 17

Abstain: Robbins – Total: 1

Although the three hour mark had not yet been met, the debate around the budget was likely to take the meeting past the three hour point. The Chair proposed that a vote be taken on whether or not the meeting should continue beyond three hours.

**Record of Voting – for: 27, against: 1, abstentions: 2, absent: 4.**

The meeting continued.

Council noted the significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the District and the associated impact on the 2022/23 budget and the likely impact on future budgets.

The role played by residents across the District was acknowledged by the Council.

The Council noted that the performance of the Planning Department continued to improve.

Councillor Ind addressed the Council and expressed a view that it was surprising that a central Government agreement on Council funding had not yet been agreed for future years. She wished to place on record her thanks to Officers who had worked to ensure the budget was presented in advance of this meeting.

Council noted that the proposed budget sought to remain balanced but also sought to be as ambitious as it could be.

Council noted the Conservative Group view that less should be spent and a focus should be on delivering core services. Due to cuts in funding, the Council would need to reduce spending in the future. The Conservative Group expressed further concern in relation to the proposed levels of future borrowing.

As the seconder of the recommendations, Councillor Dale spoke to summarise the debate and the aims of the proposed budget, in particular the innovative businesses who were locating to the Cotswolds and the associated jobs creation associated with this.

Councillor Evemy summed up thanking Councillors for their comments.

**RESOLVED that**

**Council considers the budget proposals from Cabinet and approves:**

- a) the Budget proposals 2022/23,**
- b) the Medium Term Financial Strategy,**
- c) the Pay Policy Statement,**
- d) the Capital Strategy**
- e) the Investment Strategy**
- f) the Treasury Management Strategy; Page 17**
- g) the opportunity to issue a £1 million Community Municipal Investment, with approve of the final terms being delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance,**
- h) the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23 as detailed at 2.61 to 2.63,**
- i) subject to the Council approval of recommendation (h), Council delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Executive to approve the Local Council Tax Support Scheme annual uprating of allowances and non-dependant deductions in line with national regulations.**

For: Councillors Bloomer, Brassington, Coleman, Dale, Doherty, Evemy, Forde, Harris, Hughes (Roly), Ind, Layton, Maclean, Maunder, Neill, Robbins, Selwyn, Spivey, Webster – Total: 18

Against: Councillors Andrews, Berry, Blomefield, Cunningham, Hirst, Hughes, Jepson, Judd, Keeling, Morgan, Norris, Stowe – Total: 12

**66 Council Tax 2022/23**

Councillor Evemy proposed the recommendations for setting the Council Tax for the next municipal year, 2022/23, which included precepts for Gloucestershire County Council, Town and Parish Councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Councillor Dale seconded the proposals which he considered were clear and prudent.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the figures contained within the report remained unchanged.

**RESOLVED that:**

**1) for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 Section 35(2), there are no special expenses for the District Council in 2022/23;**

**2) it be noted that, using her delegated authority, the Deputy Chief Executive calculated the Council Tax Base for 2022/23:**

**(a) for the whole Council area as 42,192.93 [item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]; and**

**(b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish Precept relates as in the attached Schedule 1.**

**3) the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2022/23 (excluding Parish Precepts) is £143.93.**

**4) the following amounts be calculated for the year 2022/23 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:**

**(a) £46,754,944 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act, taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils and any additional special expenses.**

**(b) £36,821,092 being the aggregate of the amounts which the**

**Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.**

**(c) £9,933,852 being the amount by which the aggregate at 4(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 4(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).**

**(d) £235.44 being the amount at 4(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish Precepts and Special Expenses);**

**(e) £3,861,014 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish Precepts and Special Expenses) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act as per the attached Schedule 2.**

**(f) £143.93 being the amount at 4(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 4(e) above by Item T(2(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish Precept or special item relates;**

**(g) the amounts shown in Schedule 2 being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 4(f) above, the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area shown in Schedule 2 divided in each case by the amount at 2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate;**

(h) the amounts shown in Schedule 3 being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 4(f) and 4(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation Band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands;

5) it be noted that for the year 2022/23 the Gloucestershire County Council and the Police & Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire have issued precepts to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated below:

<i>Valuation Band</i>	<i>Gloucestershire County Council</i>	<i>Police and Crime Commissioner</i>
	£	£
A	967.57	186.72
B	1.12	217.84
C	8.84	248.96
	1,290.09	
D	1,451.36	280.08
E	1,773.88	342.32
F	2.09	404.56
G	6.41	466.80
H	2,418.93	560.16
	2.90	
	2.72	

6) the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in Schedule 4 as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2022/23 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

7) the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2022/23 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.

8) the following Council/Public Officers: Deputy Chief Executive, Group Manager – Resident Services, Director of Governance and Development, Legal Executive, Business Manager – Operational Services, Revenues Manager, Revenues Lead and Court Officer be authorised to:

(a) collect and recover any National Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax; and

(b) prosecute or defend on the Council's behalf or to appear on its behalf in proceedings before a magistrate's court in respect of unpaid National Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax.

For: Councillors Bloomer, Brassington, Coleman, Dale, Doherty, Evemy, Forde, Harris, Hughes (Roly), Ind, Layton, Maclean, Maunder, Neill, Robbins, Selwyn, Spivey, Webster – Total: 18

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Against: Councillors Andrews, Berry, Cunningham, Hirst, Hughes, Jepson, Judd, Keeling, Morgan, Norris, Stowe – Total: 11

(Councillor Blomefield left the meeting before voting commenced)

## **67 Community Governance Review**

Councillor Mike Every introduced the report with Council noting that this exercise had been completed for the first time in nine years.

This item was seeking approval for the consultation to commence.

Councillor Every proposed the recommendations as outlined in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Jenny Forde.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That Council approve and adopt the Terms of Reference and Draft Proposals for consultation for the Community Governance Review.**

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

The Meeting commenced at 6.00pm and closed 9.45pm.

## **68 Notice of Motions**

There were no Motions submitted for consideration at this meeting.

## **69 Next meeting**

16 March 2022 – 2pm

The Meeting commenced at Time Not Specified and closed at Time Not Specified

Chair

(END)