

Cabinet  
06/September2021



COTSWOLD  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held in the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Trinity Road, Cirencester on Monday, 6 September 2021.**

Councillors present:

Tony Dale  
Andrew Doherty  
Mike Evemy

Jenny Forde  
Joe Harris  
Juliet Layton

Lisa Spivey

Officers present:

Angela Claridge, Interim Monitoring Officer  
Mandy Fathers, Business Manager, Operational Services  
Ben Patel-Sadler, Democratic Services  
Jenny Poole, Deputy Chief Executive (participated remotely)  
Frank Wilson, Group Finance Director

Observers:

Councillor Stephen Andrews

## **25 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Rachel Coxcoon.

## **26 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

There were no declarations of interest from Officers.

## **27 Minutes**

**Resolved** that, subject to the following amendment, the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5 July 2021 be approved as a correct record:

- Page 8, item 20 (Flood Warden Programme). South Cerney to be added to the list of areas which had been affected by flooding events.

**Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstention 0, absent 1.**

## **28 Chair's Announcements (if any)**

The Leader updated Cabinet in relation to the current situation in Afghanistan which had resulted in the resettlement scheme for refugees being initiated.

Cabinet noted the importance of ensuring that the Cotswolds was able to offer accommodation to a proportion of refugees from Afghanistan.

The Leader informed the Cabinet that Cotswold District Council was working with other District Councils and Gloucestershire County Council in this regard.

Cabinet further noted that seven properties within Gloucestershire had been made available to refugees from Afghanistan with five having been offered to families. It was anticipated that a total of 15 properties would be made available by the end of September 2021.

The Leader added that Cotswold District Council was working to ensure that appropriate properties could be offered to refugees wherever possible.

Cabinet noted that the Council was awaiting guidance from the Government in relation to any financial support around the health and education for newly-arriving refugees.

The Leader placed on record his thanks to those members of the public who had offered assistance to refugees, both now and in the past.

## **29 Council, Priority and Service Performance Report - 2021/22 - Quarter One**

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the report, with Cabinet noting the financial performance information from the first quarter of 2021/22.

In response to a query from a Cabinet Member around planning (the possibility of adding a service metric around income aligned to building control), the Deputy Chief Executive informed the Cabinet that Officers would look further into this matter.

The Cabinet noted the work which had been undertaken by Officers to pay out £33 million to 2100 local businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was further noted by Cabinet that a phased rollout of the cashless parking initiative had taken place to ensure that any issues arising could be rectified before the entirety of the scheme went live.

Members noted that work was being undertaken to clear a backlog of support claims, including those related to Council Tax and Housing Benefit.

The Council had experienced an increase in public demand for green waste collection services which had resulted in an increase in revenues collected in this area.

In relation to the call time waits experienced by the public when calling the Council, Cabinet noted the importance of the performance measure in this area being able to clarify the average time it took to speak to a member of staff.

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Although early in the financial year, Cabinet noted the current financial position which was matching the forecasted budget. The significance of Council car parking income was recognised with the Covid-19 pandemic having had a significant impact on revenue during 2020 and early 2021 when visitor numbers to the area were dramatically reduced due to nationwide restrictions.

Cabinet noted the increase in the number of planning applications when compared to the same quarter in 2020 which had placed a significant demand on the Council's planning service.

Funding had been secured by the Council from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for a specific project. Cabinet noted the importance of recognising that successful bids for Government funding were extremely complex processes. The Council had been recognised by the DWP for a recent innovative bid for funding which had been successful.

Councillor Stephen Andrews introduced a proposal for a Task and Finish Group which would focus on performance management and reporting. At a recent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it had been recognised that the performance across all areas of the Council should be displayed clearly and be easily understandable. The work of the proposed Task and Finish Group would seek to identify any performance trends, both positive and negative. Cabinet agreed that the formation of the Task and Finish group would be beneficial.

Cabinet agreed it was important to capture relevant data so that performance could be accurately compared with other local authorities.

**Resolved** that Cabinet approved the proposed changes to the performance indicator set.

**Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstention 0, absent 1.**

### **30 Ombudsman Decision - Reference 20 008 553 & Council Tax Section 13A Policy**

The Cabinet wished to place on record their apologies, on behalf of the Council, to the individual concerned in relation to this matter.

Following the feedback and recommendations provided by the ombudsman, Cabinet noted that procedures were now in place to mitigate against further incidents of this type. The Covid-19 pandemic had placed a significant amount of pressure on staff working across the Council (including in the Revenues and Benefits team) and this should be recognised as part of understanding why this incident had occurred.

Cabinet noted that a revised policy had been introduced. Although it was not mandatory for a policy to be in place, it had been implemented to assist in making decisions around any exemptions and reductions in Council Tax payments from qualifying individuals.

Cabinet noted that the purpose of the policy was to assist residents in the short-term (six months maximum) and was not intended to be a long-term solution for those individuals who were experiencing financial difficulties.

The Monitoring Officer (Interim) informed Cabinet that such instances of this type in relation to Council Tax arrears cases rarely occurred.

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Cabinet noted that all of the recommendations as proposed by the Ombudsman were now in place.

Cabinet further noted that this policy would be in operation across all other partner Councils.

Cabinet noted that the Audit Committee was now responsible for considering the Annual Ombudsman Report.

**Resolved** that the Cabinet:

1. Approve the Draft Council Tax Section 13A Policy;
2. Endorses a written invitation to the complainant to apply for discretionary relief, subject to approval of the Section 13A Policy at annex B.
3. The recommendations in paragraphs 2 a) to d), 3 and 4 form the Council's formal response to the Ombudsman's recommendations under section 31 of the Local Government Act 1974, and that the ombudsman be notified of the actions that the Council has taken.

**Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstention 0, absent 1.**

The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 6.51 pm

Chair

(END)