

Cabinet
07/March2024



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held on Thursday, 7 March 2024

Councillors present:

Mike Evely - Deputy Leader
Claire Bloomer

Tony Dale
Juliet Layton

Mike McKeown

Officers present:

Robert Weaver, Chief Executive
David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and
Chief Finance Officer
Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and
Development (Monitoring Officer)
Frank Wilson, Interim Managing Director
(Publica)
Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business
Manager

Caleb Harris, Senior Democratic Services
Officer
Mandy Fathers, Business Manager for
Environmental, Welfare and Revenue Service
Susan McPherson, Senior Officer - ERS
Kira Thompson, Election and Democratic
Services Support Assistant

241 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Joe Harris, Lisa Spivey and Paul Hodgkinson.

In the absence of the Leader, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Evely assumed the Chair for the meeting.

242 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from Members present.

A number of officers present employed by the Publica Group had a discloseable pecuniary interest and would leave the room before the start of Agenda Item 9: Publica Review Report.

243 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 1 February 2024 were considered as presented in the document pack.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Evely and seconded by Councillor Bloomer.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 1 February be approved as a correct record.

Voting Record

3 For, 0 Against, 2 Abstention, 3 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer		Mike McKeown	Joe Harris
Juliet Layton		Tony Dale	Lisa Spivey
Mike Every			Paul Hodgkinson

244 Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements from the Chair.

245 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

246 Member Questions

There were no Member questions.

247 Issue(s) Arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit

The purpose of this item was for Cabinet to receive recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or to consider any matters raised by the Audit and Governance Committee.

Cabinet considered the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the proposed Cabinet responses tabled as part of the supplement published.

Councillor Every proposed and Councillor Bloomer seconded the Cabinet's response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendations.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet AGREED to the response tabled.

Voting Record

5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 3 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer			Joe Harris
Juliet Layton			Lisa Spivey
Mike Every			Paul Hodgkinson
Mike McKeown			
Tony Dale			

248 Lechlade Air Quality Management Area Revocation

The purpose of the report was to consider the approval for the revocation of the Lechlade Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

Councillor Layton as Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services introduced this report and made the following points:

- It was identified in April 2014 in Thames Street in Lechlade that vehicle congestion had caused a very high reading of nitrogen oxide due to the traffic light sequencing and the surrounding buildings. This led to a AQMA being established by the Council.
- There had been changes made to the traffic lights in the area and this had led to a significant reduction in the levels of nitrogen oxide as outlined on Figure 2 within the report.
- The Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) recommend that once three consecutive years of readings below the national objective have been achieved, the AQMA should be revoked.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- I. APPROVED the revocation of the Lechlade AQMA

Voting Record

5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 3 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer			Joe Harris
Juliet Layton			Lisa Spivey
Mike Evemy			Paul Hodgkinson
Mike McKeown			
Tony Dale			

249 Council Tax Reduction for Care Leavers

The purpose of the report was to consider recommending to Full Council proposals to extend the age up to which Care Leavers could receive a reduction in Council Tax from 21 years to 25 years.

Councillor Evemy as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and made the following points:

- The current scheme meant that those leaving local authority care were automatically exempted up to the age of 21.
- The new scheme across Gloucestershire would mean that those solely liable for Council Tax would see 100% reduction and 50% reduction for those jointly liable.
- The recommendations would support some of the most vulnerable people in society who need to be supported to avoid circumstances such as homelessness which was common.

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- It was noted that whilst there were only two care leavers within the Cotswold District as highlighted at paragraph 5.3 in the report, the principle of providing this support was important to approve.

Cabinet asked about the application process for those who need to obtain the exemption. The Business Manager confirmed that individuals from within Gloucestershire would not need to apply as the information is held by the County Council.

The Chair asked about those arriving from outside the area. The Business Manager noted that the County Council and the District Council would provide appropriate communications to ensure that individuals in these circumstances not known to the County Council already knew about the scheme.

Councillor Every proposed the recommendations and Councillor Bloomer seconded.

That Cabinet AGREED to recommend to Full Council to:

1. Approve to extend the age that a care leaver can receive a reduction in their council tax from 21 years to 25 years;
2. Approve to include those care leavers from outside of Gloucestershire County within the offer;
3. Approve the amended Eligibility Criteria as set out in Annex A.

Voting Record

5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 3 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer			Joe Harris
Juliet Layton			Lisa Spivey
Mike Every			Paul Hodgkinson
Mike McKeown			
Tony Dale			

250 Council Tax Premium - Second Homes And Long-Term Empty Properties

The purpose of the report was to consider the proposals to introduce a Council Tax Premium on second homes and apply a premium to long term empty properties after one year.

Councillor Every as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and made the following points:

- The UK Government had passed the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 which provided provisions to local authorities regarding premiums for empty properties for 1 year and second homes within the District.
- 1 April 2025 would be the start date for Second Homes premium as 12 months' notice is required as opposed to 1 April 2024 for the Empty Homes Premium proposal.
- There were 1500 second homes within the District which would be charged a 100% Council Tax Charge except for those classed as Holiday Lets which were subject to Business Rates and met the relevant criteria.

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- Subject to the guidance, the proposal for Cabinet was to not include purpose-built holiday homes such as those within the Cotswold Waterpark as these properties did not detract from housing supply within the District.
- The issue of second homes within the towns and villages had an impact on community life and services within the area.
- The additional Council Tax revenue from the second homes levy would support affordable housing provision.
- The Leader and the Chief Executive would be asked to discuss with the other major preceptors how this additional income could provide benefits within the District.

Cabinet commented on the impact on the economy and communities that second home ownership could have (other than purpose-built holiday lets).

Cabinet asked about the purpose-built second home figure outlined and if this was a reflection of the figure. The Deputy Leader noted that around 365 homes within the 1500 figure were classed as purpose built second homes. The Deputy Chief Executive noted that the numbers provided were those within the Council Tax system but there were others that were classed under the Business Rates system. It was highlighted that there would be further work done to ensure the data was accurate before the charges came into effect.

Councillor Every proposed the recommendations and Councillor Layton seconded.

That Cabinet AGREED to recommend to Full Council to:

1. Agree from 01 April 2024 to levy the maximum level of premium for Empty Homes as set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023:
 - i) Premium of 100% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) after 1 year up to 5 years of becoming empty;
 - ii) Premium of 200% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) between 5 years and 10 years;
 - iii) Premium of 300% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) for 10 years or more.
2. Agree in principle from 01 April 2025 to the implementation of a premium (Second Homes Premium) of 100% for dwellings that are no one's sole or main residence and which are substantially furnished subject to the conditions at paragraph 3.7
3. Agree to issue the mandatory notice of 12 months to all owners of second homes that a premium will commence from 1 April 2025; and,
4. Note that where premiums are to be applied, the Council is mindful of the current consultation by government which recommends exceptions in certain circumstances outlined within this report. Subject to the outcome of that consultation, a further report may be presented to Cabinet and Council prior to the implementation of the Council's policy on premiums taking into account statute, the Council's requirements and any guidance given by the Secretary of State.

Voting Record

5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 3 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer			Joe Harris

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Juliet Layton			Lisa Spivey
Mike Evely			Paul Hodgkinson
Mike McKeown			
Tony Dale			

251 Business Rates Relief: 2024/2025. Retail, Hospitality And Leisure Scheme

The purpose of the report was to consider a scheme of rate relief for retail premises as outlined by Government in the Autumn Statement 2023

Councillor Evely as the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and made the following points:

- The Autumn Statement 2023 continued to offer relief of 75% or up to a cap of £110,000 for businesses from 1 April 2024.
- The funding for the scheme would come directly from the UK Government to local authorities.
- There would be no application requirement for businesses as officers would apply the criteria in Annex A.

Councillor Dale spoke as the seconder on the proposal and noted the material benefit to hospitality businesses when trade was lower after the Christmas period.

Councillor Evely proposed the recommendations and Councillor Dale seconded.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

1. APPROVED the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure scheme as set out in Annex A for 2024/2025;
2. DELEGATED AUTHORITY to the Assistant Director for Resident Services the award of such reliefs.

Voting Record

5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 3 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer			Joe Harris
Juliet Layton			Lisa Spivey
Mike Evely			Paul Hodgkinson
Mike McKeown			
Tony Dale			

252 Pay Policy Statement 2024/25

The purpose of the report was to consider the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25.

Councillor Evely as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report on behalf of the Leader, Councillor Joe Harris, and made the following points:

- The report was previously presented as an annex to the Budget Report at Full Council but it was felt that it was more transparent for it to be a standalone item for Cabinet and Council.

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- Some of the positions such as the statutory officers were mentioned in the report and the Deputy Leader was conscious that they were present in the room for this item.
- The publication requirements for pay and benefits were noted within the report.
- The pay differential looked at the highest paid officer and the median paid officer which was noted as being a ratio of 2.91.
- The Pay Policy Statement accounted for the Publica transition being finalised and may need to be revised to reflect any changes to the senior management structure.

Councillor Evely proposed the recommendations and Councillor Dale seconded.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet AGREED to recommend to Council to:

1. Approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25.
2. Agree that the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 will be updated and republished to reflect any changes to the senior management structure at that point.

Voting Record

5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 3 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer			Joe Harris
Juliet Layton			Lisa Spivey
Mike Evely			Paul Hodgkinson
Mike McKeown			
Tony Dale			

253 Gloucestershire City Regions Board

The purpose of the report was to consider the emerging form and function of the Gloucestershire City Region Board, the nature of its authority, terms of reference, membership, and joint scrutiny arrangements. It was also to enable the Council to play an active part in the formalisation of a new Gloucestershire Region Board to support the development of a vision for the future growth and economic success of the whole of the Gloucestershire economic area.

Councillor Dale as Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation introduced the report and made the following points:

- The proposal was designed to support economic growth within Gloucestershire and to enable further participation by the Council in decisions taken across the region.
- The City Region Board would replace many of the separate boards in existence through a new Inter-Authority Agreement but would be based on '1 representative 1 vote' from the existing Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee.
- The agreement would be subject to the agreement of the other Councils.

Cabinet asked if there would be any cost saving from the proposal. Councillor Dale noted that Gloucestershire County Council would have fewer meetings to administer but the focus would be on the clarity of approach to supporting economic growth.

Councillor Dale proposed the recommendations and Councillor Bloomer seconded.

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RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. AGREED to the establishment of the Gloucestershire City Region Board (GCRB);
2. DELEGATED AUTHORITY to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation, to finalise and complete the Inter-Authority Agreement (including the Constitution) and other key documentation and to take all necessary steps to create the GCRB, including finalising the terms of reference for the GCRB;
3. AGREED that the above recommendations will not be effective until all Gloucestershire Councils pass equivalent resolutions;
4. AGREED upon the establishment of the GCRB to;
 - 4.1 Delegate this Council's functions as are necessary for the delivery of the functions identified in the Terms of Reference at Annexe A to this report to the GCRB;
 - 4.2 Confirm the appointment of Gloucestershire County Council as the Administering Authority;
 - 4.3 Appoint the Cabinet member for Economy and Council Transformation of Cotswold District Council to the GCRB as the nominated member of the Board and to nominate a deputy to be agreed.

Voting Record

5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 3 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer			Joe Harris
Juliet Layton			Lisa Spivey
Mike Every			Paul Hodgkinson
Mike McKeown			
Tony Dale			

254 Council Priority and Service Performance Report - 2023-24 Quarter Three

The purpose of the report was to provide an update on progress on the Council's priorities and service performance.

The Chief Executive was invited by the Deputy Leader to introduce the report and outlined its contents in respect of service performance and actions to date.

The Chief Executive made the following points:

- Sustainable transport strategy, planning enforcement digitalisation, and Crowdfund Cotswold were noted as being on target and the benefits provided to residents (page 95).
- The Asset Management Strategy was currently off target with setbacks from consultants involved but the work was continuing to formalise the data (page 96).
- The roll-out of Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs) was an area officers were working on with Distribution Network Operators to get chargers installed as soon as practicable.
- Above target areas such as customer satisfaction and planning application processing were above target.

The implementation of the final changing places toilets and the channel choice trial were welcomed as important achievements within the report.

Cabinet made various comments regarding Distribution Network Operators delaying the installation of EVCPs, which was disappointing.

Cabinet asked about the processing time for Council Benefit Change of Circumstances and how this was off target. The Deputy Leader noted on page 98 that the year-to-date figure was 8 days but the quarterly figure was 5 which showed a trend in the right direction.

It was noted by the Chair that the missed bin figure of 47 against a target of 80 out of 100,000 showed the strong work within Ubico and that the Council Tax collection performance was coming back towards pre-pandemic target of 99%.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet NOTED overall progress on the Council priorities and service performance for 2023-24 Q3.

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer			Joe Harris
Juliet Layton			Lisa Spivey
Mike Every			Paul Hodgkinson
Mike McKeown			
Tony Dale			

255 Financial Performance Report Q3 2023/24

The purpose of the report was to set out the latest budget monitoring position for the 2023/24 financial year.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance invited the Deputy Chief Executive Officer to introduce the report and its contents.

The Deputy Chief Executive Officer made the following points:

- This was the third quarterly monitoring report but followed on from the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved by Full Council in February 2024.
- The Q3 position was an improved position with a movement in the variation of £318,000 deriving from investment income gains and interest gains from cash balances.
- The Publica vacancy management of £275,000 against the contract sum was also part of this movement.
- The ongoing cost of temporary scaffolding for the Old Station, Cirencester totalled £48,000 which highlighted the importance of carrying out the repairs as soon as possible.
- There was also a loss on the rental income from the investment property of the former Wilko site of £74,000 accounted for in the MTFS.
- It was also noted that there had been a slippage in the capital programme due to delays with the roof repairs for the Council Offices.

Cabinet asked about the investment property and what marketing was being done to secure a tenant. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer noted that active marketing was in place to secure a tenant but this building would be examined as part of the Asset Management Strategy.

Cabinet thanked officers of the Council and the Publica Finance Team for their work to bring in the savings the Council required in order to reduce the use of reserves.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet NOTED the Q3 financial position set out in this report.

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer			Joe Harris
Juliet Layton			Lisa Spivey
Mike Evemy			Paul Hodgkinson
Mike McKeown			
Tony Dale			

256 Publica Review - Local Partnerships Transition Plan

The purpose of the report was to consider the Local Partnerships report and to approve the recommendations therein.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance then notified Cabinet that there were officers in the room employed by the Publica Group who were directly affected by the item and would be leaving the room.

Once the officers had left the room, Councillor Dale was then invited to introduce the item on behalf of the Leader of the Council:

- Following the report by Human Engine presented to Council on 22 November 2023, the Council secured Local Partnerships consultancy support to provide further clarity on the next steps for the Council.
- The report was set out as a bridging document to look at the future possibilities for the Council.
- The report at section 2 set design guidelines to ensure that the Council structure was modern and commercially minded where appropriate.
- Section 2.2 of the Local Partnership report set out the future delivery models between those services within Publica, 'sovereign' within the Councils and opportunities to share services between the Councils outside of Publica.
- The Local Partnership phases for change set out a timeline of 6 months from April to October for 'sovereign' services to return to Councils which was noted as an ambitious timeline and that there were opportunities for the proposed structure to change.

It was noted that climate change officers were not part of the structure column. The Chief Executive Officer noted within the cover report presented that not all services were included in the Local Partnerships report and the report was focussed on the key areas.

It was noted that some of the services in opportunities to share would still need to be finalised as part of the final transition plan to deliver the best services for residents.

It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had also had the opportunity to ask questions of the Interim Programme Director.

Councillor Dale proposed the recommendations and Councillor Evemy seconded.

That Cabinet **AGREED** to recommend to Full Council to:

1. Approve the recommendations set out in the Local Partnerships report;

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2. Instruct the Interim Programme Director to prepare a detailed transition plan, building on the recommendations set out in the Local Partnerships report, for subsequent agreement by Cabinet and Council.

Voting Record

5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 3 Absent/Did not vote*

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer			Joe Harris
Juliet Layton			Lisa Spivey
Mike Evemy			Paul Hodgkinson
Mike McKeown			
Tony Dale			

*As Democratic Services Officers had left the room as required for this item, the vote was taken by a show of hands

257 Decision Taken Under Urgency Powers

The purpose of the report was to report to Cabinet and Council on a decision taken by the Chief Executive Officer under urgency powers.

The Deputy Leader introduced this item on behalf of the Leader and made the following points:

- The decision was taken at January's Cabinet meeting not to discuss the Corporate Plan in the presented format.
- The Corporate Plan as part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework needed to be recommended to Full Council by Cabinet.
- In light of this, the Chief Executive Officer had taken an urgent decision in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to approve to recommend the Corporate Plan to Full Council using the Urgency Powers within the Constitution.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Evemy and Councillor McKeown seconded.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. NOTED the decision taken as set out in Annex A.
2. AGREED recommend to Council to note the decision taken as set out in Annex A.

Voting Record

5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 3 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer			Joe Harris
Juliet Layton			Lisa Spivey
Mike Evemy			Paul Hodgkinson

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Mike McKeown			
Tony Dale			

258 Schedule of Decisions taken by the Leader of the Council and/or Individual Cabinet Members

The purpose of the report was to note the decisions taken by the Leader of the Council and/or individual Cabinet Members.

The Deputy Leader introduced the decisions and asked for any comments on each one.

The Deputy Leader highlighted the importance of these meetings being webcast to ensure open decision-making within the Council.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet NOTED the decisions taken within the agenda supplement provided.

The Meeting commenced at 6.03 pm and closed at 7.39 pm

Chair

(END)