

Cabinet
10/January2022



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held on Monday, 10 January 2022.

Councillors present:

Rachel Coxcoon
Tony Dale

Andrew Doherty
Mike Evemy - Chair

Juliet Layton
Lisa Spivey

Officers present:

Jan Britton, Managing Director (Publica)
Emma Cathcart, Counter Fraud Manager
Angela Claridge, Director of Governance & Development
Sarah Dalby, Electoral Services Manager
Mandy Fathers, Business Manager, Operational Services
Caleb Harris, Strategic Support Officer
Paul James, Economic Development Lead
Ben Patel-Sadler, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Jenny Poole, Deputy Chief Executive
Rob Weaver, Chief Executive

Observers:

Councillor Stephen Andrews
Councillor Patrick Coleman

69 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Joe Harris and Jenny Forde.

70 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Andrew Doherty declared an interest in agenda item 8 'Parish and Town Council Election Costs' as the Chair of the Finance Committee at Fairford Town Council.

There were no declarations of interest from Officers.

71 Minutes

Cabinet agreed to approve the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet of 6 December 2021 subject to the following amendments being made:

At minute 61, paragraph one and also under RESOLVED, 'a consultation' should read 'discussions'.

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At minute 62, 'SIL' should read 'CIL'.

At minute 62, the sentence 'These positions did not need to be politically balanced, reflecting the political balance of the Council' should be reworded to read 'These positions did not need to reflect the political balance of the Council'.

Cabinet noted that Members attending meetings as observers should be recorded in the minutes.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet of 6 December 2021 be approved as a correct record.

Record of Voting – for: 5, against: 0, abstention: 1, absent: 2.

72 Chair's Announcements (if any)

The Chair wished a Happy New Year to all Members, Officers and members of the public both present in the Chamber and also watching the meeting online.

73 Public Questions

There was one public question in relation to agenda item 9 'Review of Parking Charges and Season Tickets', specifically expressing a view that if the Cabinet took a decision to increase existing car parking charges and implement charges on car parks where there had previously been no charge/smaller charges, this could have a negative impact on businesses in Cirencester due to a potential decrease in footfall.

RESOLVED that Cabinet would be discussing options related to parking charges and season tickets as part of agenda item 9.

74 Member Questions

A Member question had been received from Councillor Richard Norris which would be read out by Democratic Services at agenda item 9 as it related directly to this item.

75 Budget Consultation Feedback

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and addressed the Cabinet, with Members noting that this had been the most extensive budget consultation exercise undertaken by the Council and which had been included in an edition of Cotswold News which had been delivered to every household within the District.

A budget question and answer session had also been facilitated by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance as well as discussions with Town and Parish Councils.

Cabinet noted that these and the other engagement activities outlined in the report had sought to inform the public of the Council's budget position and also to enable the public to share their views on the budget proposals. There had been 436 responses to the consultation which was an increase from the previous year.

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The Chair wished to place on record his thanks to the Communications team for their work in relation to the consultation process.

Cabinet noted the four questions asked as part of the consultation and the feedback which had been received.

Cabinet further noted the implications of adopting certain car parking charge structures and the potential impact these could have on the budget. These had also been shared with members of the public as part of the consultation process.

Cabinet further noted the statistics related to the feedback received in relation to car parking charging proposals.

Cabinet noted that the written responses provided had been published.

Cabinet noted the significant work undertaken to enable as many people as possible to participate in the budget consultation.

Although the participation levels were the highest they had been in terms of responses received, Cabinet noted the difficulties associated with ensuring higher numbers of residents responded to all Council consultations (not just the budget consultation).

Cabinet noted that funding had been received from Central Government which would be used to invest in a revised consultation platform. This may ensure higher numbers of consultation participants in the future. Cabinet encouraged members of the public to provide feedback on all Council consultations so that their views and opinions could be used to help shape Council strategies and projects.

RESOLVED that Cabinet noted the feedback from the consultation.

76 Parish and Town Council Election Costs

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Mike Every introduced the report.

Cabinet noted that the purpose of this report was to set out the proposal to consider the option of recharging the costs of elections to Town and Parish Councils. This would bring Cotswold District Council in line with all other local authorities across Gloucestershire and most in the South West, where Town and Parish Councils meet the costs associated with elections in their areas.

Following the discussions held with Town and Parish Councils, Cabinet noted that the revised version of this report addressed the comments previously raised when this item was originally deferred from the December 2021 Cabinet meeting.

Cabinet noted the revised, phased proposal in relation to Town and Parish Councils covering election costs which formed the recommendations of the report. The revised approach would enable Town and Parish Councils to effectively plan ahead in relation to the future budgets required to cover future election costs.

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Cabinet acknowledged that in many Town and Parish Councils, elections were uncontested and so there were no additional costs to cover when this occurred.

Cabinet agreed that an increase in the number of contested elections could only be positive for democracy across the District.

Councillor Mike Every proposed that the Cabinet agreed to the recommendations as outlined in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Juliet Layton.

RESOLVED:

a) That the Cabinet agrees to recharge Town and Parish Councils for contested 4-yearly elections at a rate of 50% of their share of the cost in 2023 and 100% of their share in 2027 and thereafter

b) That the Cabinet agrees to recharge Town and Parish Councils for contested by-elections taking place on or after the dates shown at the rates indicated:

(i) from 01/04/2024 - 50% of the cost

(ii) from 01/04/2025 - 75% of the cost

(iii) from 01/04/2026 - 100% of the cost

Record of Voting – for: 5, against: 0, abstention: 1, absent 2

77 **Review of Parking Charges and Season Tickets**

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Mike Every introduced the report.

Cabinet noted that car parking tariffs would be reviewed by the Council every two years.

The Member question submitted by Councillor Richard Norris was read out by Democratic Services.

Cabinet noted that in order to improve the turnover of vehicles in the Church Street and West Street car parks, users needed to be encouraged to use the free long stay Railyard car park. It was therefore proposed, over time, to align the charges in Tetbury to those in Cirencester and to introduce a 3 hour charge in the West Street car park.

Cabinet further noted that in relation to putting a residential qualification on season tickets, this was currently in place for off-peak season tickets operated in Cirencester, but not for any season ticket offered for full-day purposes. The addition of a residential qualification would add additional complexity to the systems used by the Council.

Cabinet noted that the season ticket aspect of the recommendations (if agreed) would result in additional car parking spaces becoming available for use in Cirencester.

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Cabinet noted that the 'Free after 3pm' scheme was implemented when car parking in Cirencester was limited. Additional parking provision was now available for use.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically how travel, work and leisure habits had changed because of this and the current financial position of the Council (which was very different to when the 'Free after 3pm' scheme was implemented) were just two factors resulting in the formulation of the report recommendations:

Cabinet noted this was a difficult decision to take, but acknowledged that revenue generated from car park usage was a significant revenue source for the Council and that the Council could no longer afford to subsidise parking in the District.

Cabinet noted the importance of continuing to support local residents and businesses whilst acknowledging the requirement to ensure that the Council remained financially secure, now and in the future.

Cabinet noted the proposed tariff increases and season tickets as outlined in the report.

Cabinet further noted the proposed revenue increases which were anticipated following the implementation of the revised tariffs.

Cabinet noted the revised version of Annex B which was circulated at the meeting and which reflected minor amendments to the original proposed car parking charges at Annex B.

These amendments related to Mangersbury Road (Stow on the Wold) and Rissington Road (Bourton on the Water) car parks:

- The three-hour charge at the Rissington Road car park would be £4.40
- The five-hour charge at the Rissington Road car park would be £5.80
- The ten-hour charge at the Rissington Road car park would be £8.40
- The five-hour charge at the Mangersby Road car park would be £5.30

Cabinet noted that the Council would continue to invest in their car parks to ensure they remained easily accessible and usable.

Cabinet further noted that the additional revenue collected via the increase in parking tariffs would be used to supplement services across the Council.

Cabinet acknowledged the work being undertaken as part of the Council's green strategy to reduce pollution by encouraging members of the public to walk, cycle or use public transport wherever possible. This was also relevant given the context of increasing housing developments across the district and the need for new residents being able to easily access amenities (via the provision of improved public transport and walking/cycling routes).

Councillor Mike Every proposed that the Cabinet agreed to the recommendations as outlined in the report, with Cabinet noting the minor amendments circulated on a revised version of Annex B.

This was seconded by Councillor Rachel Coxcoon.

RESOLVED that That Cabinet considered and approved:

- a) aligning charging periods for all car parks owned by the Council to 8am to 6pm on Mondays to Saturdays, removing the 'free after 3 pm' concession from six car parks;
- b) the removal of the four hour charging period in the Forum car park to encourage the use of the car park for short stay purposes;
- c) the proposal to align charges across the District over time;
- d) the proposed increases to charges in Church Street and West Street in Tetbury to improve the availability of parking spaces;
- e) the proposed increase to charges in Old Market Way in Moreton in Marsh to move towards alignment of car parking charges across the District;
- f) the introduction of charges for the large vehicle bays reserved for coaches and minibuses at the Mangersbury Road car park in Stow-on-the-Wold;
- g) that car park charges, are increased by 5% (rounded up to nearest 10p), to reflect the impact of inflation since April 2020;
- h) implementing a maximum season ticket allocation of 50% in each car park;
- i) removal of the Nursery permit;
- j) increasing the fee for season tickets as per Annex D, a higher than inflationary increase to reduce the level of subsidy offered for season tickets;
- k) reducing the season ticket fee for the Whiteway car park to reflect the fact that it can only be used Monday to Friday rather than Monday to Saturday as in the other Cirencester car parks;
- l) introducing three month and six month season tickets in the Whiteway car park in line with all other season tickets.
- m) the requirement to invest in the Council's car parks through its Capital Programme to be considered by Cabinet and Council in February 2022.
- n) an update the Parking Order to enable enforcement action to be taken for vehicles utilising parking spaces equipped with Electric Vehicle Charging Points in all Council owned car parks; and
- o) delegating authority to consider the Parking Order consultation responses to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance.

Record of Voting – for: 6, against: 0, abstention: 0, absent 2.

78 External Audit Contract

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Mike Every introduced the report.

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The purpose of this report was to enable Cabinet to consider the options for procuring the Council's external audit services for the period from 2023/24 and to make a recommendation to the Council.

Cabinet noted that after analysis by the Audit Committee, the recommendations represented the most appropriate option for the Council.

Councillor Mike Evemy proposed that the Cabinet agreed to the recommendations as outlined in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Tony Dale

RESOLVED:

- a) That Cabinet considers the options for procuring the Council's external audit service for the period from 2023/24; and
- b) Recommends to Council procurement through the National Procurement Framework using Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd.

Record of Voting – for: 6, against: 0, abstention: 0, absent: 2.

79 **Review of Council Tax Discounts**

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Mike Evemy introduced the report.

The purpose of this report was to consider amendments to discounts for domestic properties that are empty and unfurnished from 1 April 2022.

Cabinet noted the reasons why some residents were exempt from paying Council Tax which were outlined in the appendix to the report.

The anticipated savings to the Council if the recommendations were agreed to by the Cabinet would be in the region of £35,000.

Cabinet further noted the modelling exercise which had been undertaken by Officers which reflected the anticipated changes should the recommendations be adopted.

Councillor Mike Evemy proposed that the Cabinet agreed to the recommendations as outlined in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Doherty.

RESOLVED That Cabinet:

- a) Approve amendments to a Class C discount from 1 April 2022; and
- b) That the discount be amended to 25% for a maximum of 6 months

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Record of Voting – for: 6, against: 0, abstention: 0, absent: 2.

80 Discretionary Business Rate Relief Policy

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Mike Every introduced the report.

The purpose of this report was to consider the implementation of a Discretionary Rate Relief Policy in line with Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act (1988).

Cabinet noted the importance of ensuring that the definitions around hardship relief were clear and understandable.

At 7.4 of the annex to the report, Cabinet noted that the final bullet point be replaced with the text 'The businesses latest set of audited financial accounts must demonstrate that the entity is a going concern in accordance with accounting standards under generally accepted accounting practice'

At 7.5 of the annex to the report, Cabinet noted that a further bullet point would be added to read 'Where a business is eligible for support with business rates under any relevant Government scheme related to the Covid-19 pandemic'.

At 6.5 of the annex to the report, Cabinet noted that the words 'or certified' would be added after the word 'audited'.

These changes were being incorporated to ensure that any cases covered by the policy were exceptional and not typical.

Cabinet noted that to date, around £50 million had been circulated to businesses across the District via the Government schemes in operation related to business hardship.

The Deputy Chief Executive addressed the Cabinet, with Members noting that a very experienced team of Officers were in place which would serve to ensure that applications were considered thoroughly and subsequent decisions made in relation to individual cases were made correctly.

Cabinet discussed the definition of reasonableness in terms of the aims and objectives of the policy.

Councillor Mike Every proposed that Cabinet agreed the recommendations as set out in the report, plus the inclusion of the amendments to points 6.5, 7.4 and 7.5 of the appendix.

This was seconded by Councillor Tony Dale.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approved the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy at Annex A.

Record of Voting – for: 6, against: 0, abstention: 0, absent: 2.

81 Approval of the Approach to Litter Bin Placement and Renewal Programme in Cotswold District

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The Cabinet Member for the Environment, Waste and Recycling, Councillor Andrew Doherty introduced the report.

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the issues being experienced with litter and dog bins in Cotswold District and to seek approval for a bin placement review and renewal programme to be delivered over the next five years.

Cabinet noted that due to the sparse nature of the District, significant distances needed to be covered to empty litter bins.

This is why it was important to ensure litter bins were placed in the right locations to save on travel, emitting less carbon and to ensure that litter bins were best placed for use by residents.

Cabinet further noted that discussions between Town and Parish Councils needed to take place (along with an appropriate mechanism being in place) in terms of agreeing additional litter bin placement across the District. This may also include the removal of bins in certain locations to supplement bins in other locations for example.

Cabinet noted the importance of education around littering so that poor behaviour could be reduced with locations then becoming much cleaner and tidier for all residents to enjoy.

Cabinet noted that work was being undertaken to determine if bins could be installed which accommodated different types of waste within the same receptacle to improve recycling rates by reducing contamination of recyclables by general waste.

Councillor Andrew Doherty proposed that Cabinet agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Juliet Layton

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) Notes the risks and financial implications relating to the provision and servicing of the current litter and dog waste bins;
- b) Approves the introduction of the set of principles for the placement of litter and dog waste bins going forward;
- c) Approves the proposal to complete a rationalisation exercise of the existing litter and dog waste bins to ensure that the coverage is suitable for the District and that bins are located in the most appropriate places and in line with the agreed set of principles referenced in b) above;
- d) Approves the principle that a charging mechanism is introduced for installation and servicing of litter bins in Town and Parish Council areas which are outside of the principles proposed in recommendation b);
- e) Supports the inclusion of an annual capital budget of up to £10,000 per annum over the next five years as part of the Council's budget setting process in February 2022 (up to £50,000 total), for bin purchases and fitting; and

f) That officers work with Ubico to identify the revenue savings arising from this rationalisation and, by agreement, seek to reduce the contract value accordingly.

Record of Voting – for: 6, against: 0, abstention: 0, absent: 2.

82 Broadband Delivery Update

The Cabinet Member for the Economy and Council Transformation, Councillor Tony Dale introduced the report which related to the provision of unlimited fibre broadband to households within the District.

Cabinet noted that superfast broadband was now available across 97.6% of the Cotswolds and ultrafast broadband was now available across 47.7% of the Cotswolds.

Because the District was sparse, further work was required to deliver superfast broadband across 100% of the District.

Cabinet noted that although much of the District was covered by superfast broadband, some areas closer to larger towns as well as some rural areas were still experiencing very slow broadband speeds.

Cabinet noted the importance of ensuring that conversations with the correct organisations/providers were essential to ensure that any future service gaps in relation to broadband provision were addressed.

Cabinet wished to place on record their thanks to the Economic Development Lead, Paul James for all of the work undertaken to ensure broadband accessibility and performance across the District was improved.

Cabinet noted the importance of ensuring that budget allocations were used appropriately to deliver improved services for residents of the District.

Councillor Tony Dale proposed that Cabinet agreed to delete recommendation b) as it was superfluous and agreed the remainder of the recommendations as set out in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Doherty.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) That progress in delivering high speed broadband across the District is noted.
- b) That Officers work with Fastershire to draw up a top-up scheme for their existing Community Broadband Grant, for approval by Cabinet, to assist with delivery of broadband within the District that would otherwise not be viable.
- c) That any requests for drawdown of the capital allocation in the meantime are subject to business case approval by Cabinet/Council as necessary.
- d) That annual updates on broadband delivery within the District are brought to Cabinet.

Record of Voting – for: 6, against: 0, abstention: 0, absent: 2.

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83 Use of the Internet and Social Media for Investigations and Enforcement Policy

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Mike Every introduced the report.

The purpose of this report was to present Cabinet with a new Use of the Internet and Social Media in Investigations and Enforcement Policy for adoption.

Cabinet noted that Internal Audit or the Counter Fraud Unit would undertake this work if there was a legitimate reason for enactment of the policy in relation to any investigations.

Councillor Mike Every proposed that Cabinet agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Lisa Spivey.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) Approves and adopts the Policy attached to this report and;
- b) Authorise the Chief Executive to approve future minor amendments to the Policy in consultation with the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit, Legal Services and the Leader of the Council.

Record of Voting – for: 6, against: 0, abstention: 0, absent: 2.

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

Cabinet noted the decisions taken by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, the Cabinet Member for Development Management and Licensing and the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Waste and Recycling.

85 Issue(s) Arising From Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit

There were no issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny or Audit.

The meeting commenced at 6pm and closed at 8.45pm

Chair

(END)