



Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held on Monday, 4 April 2022.

Councillors present:

Rachel Coxcoon
Tony Dale

Mike Evemy
Jenny Forde

Joe Harris
Lisa Spivey

Officers present:

James Brain, Forward Planning Manager
Amy Bridgewater-Carnall (Democratic Services Manager)
Jan Britton, Managing Director of Publica
Angela Claridge, Director of Governance & Development
Caleb Harris, Strategic Support Officer
Bill Oddy, Group Manager – Commercial Development
Jenny Poole, Deputy Chief Executive
Lois Taylor, Housing Enabling Officer
Rob Weaver, Chief Executive
Frank Wilson, Executive Director (Finance)

Observers:

Councillor Stephen Andrews
Councillor Patrick Coleman
Councillor Nikki Ind

113 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Andrew Doherty and Juliet Layton.

114 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

115 Minutes

It was proposed that the following amendments be made to the draft minutes:

Minute Number 101 – Apologies

Councillor Tony Dale to be added to the list of apologies

Minute Number 104 – Chair’s Announcements

Paragraph 5 to read “for ensuring that the **new** consultation platform”

Minute Number 107 – Financial, Council Priority and Service Performance Report
Paragraph 8 to read “made by the Planning Review Panel were robust”

Councillor Harris proposed that Cabinet approve the minutes of the 7 March 2022 meeting subject to the above amendments being made.

This was seconded and

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet of 7 March 2022 be approved as a correct record subject to the relevant amendments being made.

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

116 Chair's Announcements (if any)

There were no announcements from the Chair.

117 Public Questions

There were no questions from Members of the Public.

118 Member Questions

There were no Member Questions.

119 Publica Business Plan 2022-2024

Members received a report from the Managing Director, Publica Group (Support) Ltd and the Group Manager – Commercial Development which asked them to consider the Publica Business Plan 2022-25. In addition, Cabinet considered any comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which were included at section 3 of the report.

The report recommended that the Publica Business Plan 2022-25 be approved by the Leader, as the Council's Shareholder Representative for Publica Group (Support) Ltd, subject to any minor amendments that may have arisen from the final stages of consultation with the Shareholder Councils and general editing.

There were no alternative options detailed in the report.

The Chief Executive, Rob Weaver, introduced the report and outlined the timeline and approvals process the document had been through. He also introduced Publica's Managing Director, Jan Britton, who was present to respond to questions.

Councillor Coxcoo supported the document and welcomed the inclusion of the 'Planet' key theme. She also requested that the platinum level of Carbon Literacy Training be aimed for to ensure that 80% of staff were trained as soon as possible.

Councillor Every thanked the Publica board for a more ambitious plan which he felt reflected the support aspects in a more positive light and he received clarification on the Financial Landscape section.

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Councillor Forde was pleased with the document and welcomed the 'People' key theme. She hoped this would help Publica attract and retain staff and learn from other authorities.

Councillor Harris proposed that Cabinet agree to the recommendations as outlined in the report and this was duly seconded.

Having considered the report, and the comments made, Cabinet

Resolved that the Publica Business Plan 2022-25 be approved subject to any minor amendments that may have arisen from the final stages of consultation with the Shareholder Councils and general editing.

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

120 Recovery Investment Strategy

Members received a report from the Deputy Chief Executive (Chief Finance Officer) which outlined a refresh of the Recovery Investment Strategy framework.

The updated Recovery Investment Strategy was attached at Annex B and set out the revised framework within which the Council could consider investment opportunities that would deliver on the agreed corporate priorities.

An alternative option was that the Council could choose not to support the Strategy and seek to reduce the funding gap it faced through other means, such as raising Council Tax, further significantly increasing fees and charges such as Car Parking and Garden Waste or cutting service provision.

Councillor Dale introduced the report and addressed the Cabinet. He highlighted the key aspects of the report and provided assurance that the Cabinet recognized the risks of failing to take action. Councillor Dale therefore proposed that Cabinet agree to the recommendations as outlined in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Every who outlined the less attractive alternatives available and reminded the meeting that the Council needed to raise revenue, whilst dealing with the uncertainty of reduced government funding.

Following comments from Councillor Coxcoon relating to green energy, Councillor Dale advised that holistic thinking had been a critical part in the creation of the strategy. He made reference to the Digital Skills Centre and the strong engagement of the District.

Councillor Harris congratulated Councillors Dale and Every and the Chief Finance Officer for their input and highlighted the importance of growing Council finances to invest in services.

Having been proposed and duly seconded, and having heard from the Members present, Cabinet

Resolved that the Strategy attached at Annex B be recommended to Council for adoption.

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

121 First Homes

Members received a report from the Strategic Housing Manager which informed them of a new affordable housing tenure in the form of 'First Homes' and asked them to consider a Guidance Note on Interpretation of Policy H2 (Cotswold District Council Local Plan 2011-2031) following the introduction of First Homes.

On 24 May 2021, the Government published a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) setting out its plans for the delivery of First Homes, defining the product and changes to planning policy. Full guidance on the characteristics of First Homes was provided in the WMS, the Planning Practice Guidance and the draft guidance note therefore, key details were outlined at section 1.3 of the report.

An alternative option was that Cabinet could choose not to approve the Guidance Note, however, this was not recommended as it provided clarity to the Council's planning and strategic housing officers, developers, landowners, and the general public on the Council's approach to First Homes.

Councillor Spivey introduced the report and outlined the background as well as the key features as detailed in section 1.8 of the report. She also signposted Members to examples of the scheme in relation to proposed developments on page 93 of the document pack. Councillor Spivey also introduced officers from Housing, James Brain and Lois Taylor, who were present to answer any questions of clarification.

Following a question from Councillor Harris, it was confirmed that the scheme was not replacing Right To Buy.

Further queries raised included whether the scheme would make a difference to younger people, the issue of second homes and the fact that the discounted First Homes would remain in perpetuity.

Councillor Coleman raised a question relating to Neighbourhood Planning Groups and how need could be demonstrated. Mr Brain advised that the Council had a duty to provide guidance and support across the District and groups were welcome to contact the Council for advice.

Councillor Spivey proposed that Cabinet agree to the recommendations as outlined in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Harris. Councillor Harris highlighted the need for more homes in the District and stated that 90% of school people left the area due to unaffordability issues.

Having considered the report, having heard from the Members present and having thanked the officers in attendance, Cabinet

Resolved that

- a) the new tenure First Homes that will become part of the standard affordable housing offer on all new build sites, is noted; and
- b) the Guidance Note on Interpretation of Policy H2 (Cotswold District Council Local Plan 2011-2031), is approved following the introduction of First Homes.

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

122 Approval for the use of funds from the Capital Programme to invest in the Council's leisure facilities

Members received a report from the Business Manager for Contracts, which asked them to approve the use of funds in the Capital Programme for the delivery of a Capital Investment project, as detailed in the report and supporting documentation, by SLM Everyone Active (SLM).

The report advised that as part of the Leisure Management Contract with SLM Everyone Active (SLM), a schedule of agreed contributions towards Capital Replacement of Fitness Equipment was included. The investment was scheduled to take place at prescribed time intervals, however, due to the forced closures and disruption of 2020/21 the programme was put on pause until a clearer understanding of the emerging Leisure Sector could be gained following the stabilisation of the Country after the pandemic.

Cabinet were asked to recommend to Council that approval be given to complete the project and Option (1), as set out in Annex A to the report, be approved. In addition, authority to approve the expenditure of the retained balance of the Capital budget, would be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.

An alternative option was that Cabinet could choose to support Option (2) in the Health & Wellbeing report, although this proposal exceeded the Capital Budget for this project.

Councillor Forde introduced the report and addressed the Cabinet. She detailed the desire to attract new users as the Health and Wellbeing industry recovered from the pandemic. Councillor Forde therefore proposed that Cabinet agree to the recommendations as outlined in the report.

Councillor Harris reminded the meeting that the Council's leisure facilities were being left behind by the private sector and investment was crucial to keep up with competitors.

Further queries raised included the management of the café and the importance of this space for socializing.

Councillor Ind recognised that the leisure centres were an asset but highlighted the distance that some residents had to travel to use them. She queried if there was any capacity to provide subsidised places for residents.

The report was seconded by Councillor Every who congratulated officers on the upgrades completed at Bourton and Chipping Campden.

Having considered the report and having heard from the Members present, Cabinet

Recommended to Council that

- a) SLM is given approval to complete the Capital Investment project;
- b) SLM's proposed Option (1) as set out in Annex A is approved with the remainder of the Capital budget being retained for investment in Leisure Equipment; and
- c) the authority to approve expenditure of the retained balance of the Capital budget, if Option (1) is supported, is delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure.

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

123 £150 Council Tax Rebate and Refugee Hosting Allowance

Members received a revised report from the Business Manager for Operations and Enabling, which asked them to consider updating the Council's Section 13A Policy for the determination of applications for a reduction in Council Tax liability to ensure that households supporting Ukrainian refugees under the Homes for Ukraine scheme will not affect the sponsors benefits or Council Tax status.

In addition, payments in respect of the £150 Council Tax Rebate scheme (energy payments) could be treated as capital within the Council's Local Council Tax Support scheme and would therefore be disregarded for the purposes of calculating entitlement to Local Council Tax support.

The report advised that since the original report was prepared, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had issued a letter, a copy of which was attached at Annex A. The letter set out how the changes would be implemented and as consequence, the original recommendations in the report had been amended.

An alternative option was that Cabinet could choose not to make any changes to the Discretionary Council Tax Discount scheme.

Councillor Every introduced the revised report and addressed the Cabinet. He explained the challenges experienced since the publication of the government letter the Friday before the meeting, and outlined the amendments to the recommendation. Councillor Every therefore proposed the revised recommendation as laid out in the report.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer addressed the Cabinet and provided clarification on the detail, following a query from the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny.

The report was seconded by Councillor Harris who thanked the Chief Finance Officer and her team for responding to the late receipt of the letter and for the administration of the Council Tax rebate. He also reminded the meeting that households were trying to respond to the rising cost of living.

Having considered the report and having heard from the Members present, Cabinet

Resolved that the amendments to the discretionary Section 13A Policy for the determination of applications for a reduction in Council Tax liability as detailed within paragraph 2.11 and 2.12, be approved.

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

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

Cabinet noted the decisions taken.

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

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

The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 7.27 pm

Chair