

Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held on Monday, 7 November 2022.

Councillors present:

Rachel Coxcoom	Mike Evemy	Juliet Layton
Tony Dale	Jenny Forde	Lisa Spivey
Andrew Doherty	Joe Harris - Chair	

Officers present:

Robert Weaver – Chief Executive
David Stanley – Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer
Angela Claridge – Director for Governance
Claire Locke – Group Manager for Property and Regeneration
Mandy Fathers – Business Manager for Environmental, Welfare and Revenues
Emma Cathcart – Head of Service, Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit
Caleb Harris – Democratic Services
Wayne Smith – Democratic Services

Observers:

Councillor Stephen Andrews
Councillor Nikki Ind

49 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence

50 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

There were no declarations of interest from Officers

51 Minutes

Minute 18 (para 2) "...and the development of disabled access **hanging** places.", changed to
"...and the development of disabled access **changing** places and toilets."

Minute 43 "There were no Public Questions", changed to "There were no Member Questions"

Minute 46 "The number of missed binned had halved....", changed to "The number of missed bins had halved..."

"The revenue figure showed a very small underspend...", changed to The revenue figure showed a very small projected underspend..."

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“Share Prosperity Fund bid...”, changed to “UK Shared Prosperity Fund...”

The Leader had also referred a number of agenda formatting changes and minor spelling corrections in reports to Democratic Services for amendment.

RESOLVED: Cabinet approved the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet of 3 October 2022 as a correct record subject to the relevant amendments being made.

Voting Record – For 8, Against 0, Abstention 0, Absent 0

52 Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements from the Chair.

53 Public Questions

There were no Public questions.

54 Member Questions

There were no Member questions

55 Council Tax Support Scheme

The purpose of the report was to present the results of the public consultation on proposals for revising the current Council Tax Support scheme with effect from 1 April 2023.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and summarised the results of a consultation in August and September 2022 on changes to the income bands that determine entitlement to Council Tax Discount.

Cabinet noted changes had been made to the band affecting those on the lowest incomes and the impact this would have on Council Tax income.

Cabinet noted that the scheme included £4.5m that was used to support residents across the district on the lowest incomes.

Cabinet noted that an amendment had been proposed to the recommendations to enable, ‘In exceptional circumstances’ (defined), the backdating of Council Tax Discount could be for more than the current four week maximum, but no more than a new maximum of six months.

Cabinet noted that the Council was consulting with the Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB) on smoothing the differentials between the bands to avoid ‘cliff edge’ drops when recipients’ circumstances change.

At the Chair’s invitation a representative of CAB addressed Cabinet as a public participant and made the following comments:

- Cotswold District Council was recognised and thanked for providing such a good and generous Council Tax Support scheme
- Although the 25% single person discount was widely known (and claimed), the CTS schemes was less well known with lower numbers of applicants.
- The ‘cliff-edge’ drops between bands could be eased by the introduction of a series

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percentages and this was being discussed.

RESOLVED: Cabinet agreed to

- recommend to Council to approve the increase to income bands as detailed within paragraph 2.8 and Annex B of this report from 1 April 2023 and
- the recommendation that officers may consider backdating Council Tax Support for a period beyond four weeks, but no longer than six months, if there are exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances (or good cause) would apply in situations such as: the claimant was seriously ill (physically or mentally), someone the claimant should have been able to rely on for support did not give the support required (such as the Council, Advice Agency, DWP or a support worker, and therefore the claimant was not aware they were able to claim for Council Tax Support, or some external factor that prevented a claim being made (such as imprisonment, detained under the Mental Health Act).

Voting Record – For 8, Against 0, Abstentions 0, Absent 0

56 Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy approval

The purpose of the report was to present Cabinet with an updated Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy for approval.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and summarised the changes to the updated Policy

Cabinet noted that the Policy has been reviewed to ensure the content reflected current legislation and the Council's Policies and Procedures and would replace the existing Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy.

Cabinet noted that the updated Policy had been referred to the Audit Committee who had considered and endorsed the recommendations.

RESOLVED: The Cabinet agreed to approve and adopt the Counter Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy and authorised the Deputy Chief Executive to approve future minor amendments to the Policy in consultation with the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit, Legal Services and the Cabinet Member for Finance.

Voting Record – For 8, Against 0, Abstentions, Absent 0

57 Long Term Council Tax Empty Premium Exemption on Proposed Demolition Properties

The purpose of the report was for Cabinet to consider the removal of the Long Term Empty Premium on individual Bromford properties that have been, or are pending, demolition.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and provided context for the proposed removal of increased Council Tax premiums usually added to properties left empty for long periods.

Cabinet noted the properties affected were all owned by Bromford Housing and scheduled for demolition to enable redevelopment that had taken longer than expected.

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Cabinet noted that the same approach to the Removal of Long Term Empty Premiums would apply to privately owned properties that were compulsorily purchased.

Cabinet noted that the proposal was specific to the properties listed and time limited and as such was not a blanket policy that could be exploited by individuals with multiple properties to avoid paying Long Term Empty Premiums if/when these were left empty.

RESOLVED: Cabinet agreed to approve the removal of the four Long Term Empty Premiums on properties in Cross Tree Crescent, Kempsford until 1 April 2023, approve the removal of four Long Term Empty Premiums on properties in Stockwells, Moreton in Marsh, three Long Term Empty Premiums on properties in Berkeley Close, South Cerney for a 12 month period and delegate authority to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, the suspension of further Long Term Empty Premiums being applied on the sites as detailed in paragraph 2.9 of this report

Voting Record – For: 8, Against, 0, Abstentions 0, Absent 0

58 Recovery Investment Strategy

The purpose of this report was to rescind the current Recovery Investment Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for the Economy and Transformation introduced the report and provided context and the circumstances that had caused the Cabinet to conclude that the Recovery Investment Strategy should be rescinded.

Cabinet noted that the strategy had been developed with a number of visionary and ambitious initiatives that would deliver funds that would underpin Corporate Priorities and enable Council services to be supported. Cabinet stated that unfortunately, the Government's 'mini-budget' on 23 September 2022 had a catastrophic effect on financial markets, caused huge spikes in gilt yields, dramatic falls in the value of sterling, increased interest rates and brought about a period of unprecedented political and financial instability.

Cabinet stated that during the current period of financial instability, the proposed investments within the strategy could no longer be reasonably expected to deliver strong anticipated rates of return, and the current Recovery Investment Strategy should therefore be rescinded.

Cabinet noted that the corporate priorities were unchanged and, although it was recommended that the strategy was rescinded, important investment opportunities supporting these would still be considered, developed and initiated where these made sound financial sense and strong business cases could be established.

Cabinet noted that financial returns on future investments may take longer to deliver during a challenging financial period.

Cabinet noted that the Council's only current borrowing was £500k (at 2.5%) that had funded the Cotswold Climate Investment, delivering Electric Vehicle Charging Points and reducing the carbon impact of the Council's building.

RESOLVED: Cabinet agreed to recommend that Council rescinded the Recovery Investment Strategy, for the reasons as set out in the report

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Voting Record – For 8, Against 0, Abstention 0, Absent 0

59 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy

The purpose of the report was to present to Cabinet for approval the Council's draft budget proposals for 2023/24 together with a refresh of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) forecasts. These proposals would form the basis of public consultation starting in November 2022.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and provided context for its revised format that provided three potential budget scenarios. This was due to recent periods of political paralysis, that removed clarity and certainty over future levels of Council funding, followed by periods of unprecedented financial instability and increases in inflation and energy and fuel costs.

Cabinet noted that on a current budget of £12.5m, taking the middle scenario an additional £3m will be needed to meet the Council's increased costs for 2023/24.

Cabinet noted that the £3m additional costs were driven in part by the additional cost of running leisure services, increasing cyber security, running elections, paying for energy and maintaining Waste Services.

Cabinet noted that the £3m additional costs will be offset from savings delivered by Publica, savings delivered by Ubico, savings delivered by CDC Corporate Expenditure, increasing fees and charges (in consultation) with any shortfall met by transfer from Council reserves.

RESOLVED: Cabinet approved the draft 2023/24 revenue budget for consultation, and noted the potential use of general fund and earmarked reserves to balance the budget for 2023/24.

Voting Record – For 8, Against 0, Abstentions 0, Absent 0

60 Rural England Prosperity Fund

The purpose of the report was to inform Cabinet of the Council's indicative allocation of funding under the Rural England Prosperity Fund, to seek in principle approval of the overall approach to use of that funding, and to seek delegated authority to finalise the submission to Government which was due by 30th November.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Transformation introduced the report and confirmed that the fund was for capital expenditure to improve lower productivity, poor connectivity and access to key services.

Cabinet noted that around 60 businesses and groups had responded to the call for interest for this funding

RESOLVED: Cabinet noted the Council's indicative allocation of £764,292 from the Government's Rural Prosperity Fund, approved the proposed approach to the use of the fund set out in Section 4 of this report and delegated authority to the Chief Executive to finalise the submission to Government in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation

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Voting Record – For: 8, Against: 0, Abstention: 0, Absent: 0

61 Response to warm places motion and funding to support cost of living crisis

The purpose of the report was to set out how the Council was responding to the Cost of Living and Warm Places Motion, proposed by Councillor Gina Blomefield, and to make recommendations for funding allocations for specific initiatives.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing introduced the report and updated Cabinet on the decision to create a Cost of Living Working Group and summarised the work that it had been completed.

Cabinet noted that Council on 21 September 2022 had resolved to refer the Warm Places Motion to November Cabinet to feed into the key objectives and requirements of the wider Cost Of Living Working Group that will report to the November Council meeting.

Cabinet noted that the Group had focused on further building the resilience of communities so that help could be provided at a very local level and on ensuring people knew where to go for help, using Cotswold Matters, Council newsletters and the Council's website and social media to communicate and signpost to organisations and places offering support.

RESOLVED: Cabinet noted the response to the Cost of Living and Warm Places Motion detailed in this report, recommended to Council to agree to allocate match funding of £20,000 for the Council Tax Hardship Fund from the balance of the Covid-19 Hardship Fund earmarked reserve, and recommended to Council to agree to allocate £40,000 from the Council Priorities Fund towards establishing a Food Network.

Voting Record – For: 8, Against: 0, Abstention: 0, Absent: 0

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

Decisions taken by the Cabinet Member for Economy and Transformation and the Cabinet member for Development Management and Licensing were noted.

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

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

64 Delivery of carbon zero affordable homes through a collaboration agreement with Bromford Housing Association and the transfer of land at Broadleaze, Down Ampney

The purpose of the report was to seek agreement to enter into a Collaboration Agreement with Bromford Housing Association to facilitate the delivery of carbon zero affordable homes on land at Broadleaze, Down Ampney and other future sites and to agree to the transfer of the above land for development within the terms of the Collaboration Agreement.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and summarised the reasons for entering into a collaboration agreement with Bromford Housing Association in order to deliver Carbon Zero Affordable Homes.

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Cabinet noted that the Leader of the Council requested that the Chief Executive ensure that all legal agreements and/or planning controls were explored to ensure that all of the homes remain as housing for social rent in perpetuity, and the Chief Executive agreed that this would be done.

RESOLVED: Cabinet agreed to:

- (a) Enter into a Collaboration Agreement with Bromford Housing Association to deliver carbon zero affordable homes, based on the delivery, management and ownership terms set out in the Agreement.
- (b) Delegate authority for the final negotiation on the terms of the Collaboration Agreement and any subsequent variations to it, to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance.
- (c) Proceed, subject to planning permission being granted, with the development of the site at Broadleaze, Down Ampney in partnership with Bromford Housing Association to deliver carbon zero affordable homes.
- (d) Based on indicative costs, to fund the gap in funding and to delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance to agree the final contribution, based on funding within the MTFS and capital receipt from the Sale of the Cotswold Club.
- (e) Enter into a Collaboration Agreement with Bromford Housing Association to enable them to submit a planning application including land at this site that is in both the Council's ownership (vacant plot) and Bromford's ownership (adjacent garages).
- (f) Allocate a further £10,000 for legal costs in the completion of the legal agreements.
- (g) Agree to transfer the land at Broadleaze, Down Ampney to Bromford Housing Association once planning permission has been granted, a Collaboration Agreement signed and financial terms for the development agreed.

Voting Record – For: 8, Against: 0, Abstention: 0, Absent: 0

65 Matters exempt from publication

Cabinet did not exclude the press and public from the Committee meeting as they did not discuss the contents from the exempt annexes

66 Exempt Annexes for Item 15: Delivery of carbon zero affordable homes through a collaboration agreement with Bromford Housing Association and the transfer of land at Broadleaze, Down Ampney

Cabinet did not exclude the press and public from the Committee meeting as they did not discuss the contents from the exempt annexes.

The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 8.20 pm

Chair

(END)