

Council
18/January2023



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Council held on Wednesday, 18 January 2023.

Councillors present:

Dilys Neill - Chair
Stephen Andrews
Tony Berry
Gina Blomefield
Claire Bloomer
Ray Brassington
Patrick Coleman
David Cunningham
Tony Dale
Andrew Doherty
Mike Evely

Nikki Ind – Vice Chair
Jenny Forde
Joe Harris
Mark Harris
Stephen Hirst
Robin Hughes
Sue Jepson
Julia Judd
Richard Keeling
Juliet Layton
Andrew Maclean

Nick Maunder
Richard Morgan
Richard Norris
Nigel Robbins
Gary Selwyn
Lisa Spivey
Tom Stowe
Clive Webster

Officers present:

Jan Britton, Managing Director - Publica
Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and
Development (Monitoring Officer)
Caleb Harris, Democratic Services
Ana Prelici, Democratic Services Officer

Wayne Smith
David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and
Chief Finance Officer
Robert Weaver, Chief Executive

59 Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillors Ray Theodoulou, Rachel Coxcoon, Roly Hughes and Steve Trotter

60 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest from Members

There were no Declarations of Interest from Officers

61 Minutes

Minutes of Council 16 November 2022 were considered and a small number of typographical errors had been reported and corrected.

The Chair stated that the introduction of Electronic Voting would enable the number of Councillors voting to be seen as how they had voted.

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RESOLVED: Council confirmed the Minutes of Council 16 November 2022 as a correct record, subject to the correction of minor errors being made.

Voting Record – For 30, Against 0, Abstentions 0, Absent 4,

62 Announcements from the Chair, Leader of Chief Executive (if any)

The Chair welcomed all Members, Officers and Members of the Public watching in person and on-line and introduced the Officers present.

The Chair provided an overview of how the Council meeting would be conducted and the protocols and conventions that would be observed when items were being discussed and voted upon.

The Chair and Councillor Tony Berry sent best wishes on behalf of all Members to to Councillor Ray Theodoulou, a devoted and long serving and resilient Councillor who could not attend Council due to poor health.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Joe Harris, added his best wishes to Councillor Theodoulou on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group and congratulated council Officer Caleb Harris on his appointment as Senior Democratic Services Officer.

The Leader of the Council provided an update on the Shared Prosperity Fund that the UK Government had provided to replace some of the European Union Funding that was no longer available. Council was provided with details of a number of projects that would benefit from the total fund of £1m that that would be provided over 3 years.

The Leader of the Council also referred to the 'Devolution Agenda' and how the Council would work with Gloucestershire County Council to take advantage of any benefits that this may be realised.

The Chief Executive echoed his best wishes to Councillor Theodoulou and congratulations to Senior Democratic Services Officer Caleb Harris.

63 Public Questions

QUESTION 1a: from Mr Gibson, to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance: Mr Gibson stated that he had questions from the Council's 2022/2023 accounts. **Could you please explain the payment of £130,000 listed in the Council's accounts spread over January , February and March to Aldi Store Ltd, and also a payment of £2200 to Market Garden marked against 'Christmas gifts'?**

RESPONSE 1a: from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for finance stated that 2022/2023 was the current year and as such February and March payments did not yet exist, however the Chief Finance Officer would investigate the Council's accounts to identify the items referred to and a written response would be provided.

QUESTION 1b: from Mr Gibson, to the Leader of the Council Mr Gibson stated that at the last Council meeting, a member of the Public raised a question about the autumn issue of Cotswold News, which had cost taxpayers about £15,000, and was completely full of stories about Liberal Democrat characters, in short a Lib Dem document.

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The Leader of the Council had refuted this and claimed that other political parties had been given the opportunity to contribute but Mr Gibson stated this had been completely rejected by the other groups. In the coming spring issue, cross party stories had been re-introduced along with the Members Directory with their contact details.

Why is this change of heart, and do you now admit that the last issue was biased and you were wrong in excluding the other political groups and their information?

RESPONSE 1b: from the Leader of the Council

On behalf of the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services responded by rejecting the claim that Cotswold News was biased, and stated that it was a fantastic way of communicating with all Cotswold residents, especially those hardest to reach. The last edition had focussed on the Cost of Living Crisis and had provided important information where support and advice could be found. The Cabinet member expressed surprise that Mr Gibson had received early details of the content of the spring edition, as an outline draft had only recently become available, and confirmed Cotswold News would continue to contain a wide variety of stories from a variety of authors that would be of interest to Cotswold residents.

QUESTION 2a: from Mrs Hilditch to the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Forward Planning

Mrs Hilditch stated that it was recognised that the Administration had signed up to the Climate Energy Emergency and the Clean and Green Agenda, and stated that in the current digital age where most people have computer, it was surprising that so much was being spent by CDC on paper and printing e.g. £12,000 on photocopier paper, £50,000 on photocopying, £4,000 on shredding paper and £60,000 on external printers: a total of £127,000 and local taxpayers were footing this bill through Council Taxes.

Can you not consume less, or consume better?

RESPONSE 2a: from the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Forward Planning.

On behalf of the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Forward Planning, The Leader of the Council responded by stating that the consumption and disposal of paper was down on previous years and had reduced during his term as Leader.

The Leader of the Council stated that although some Members had started the move to using computers and tablets to receive communications, paper copies of reports and documents were still popular and convenient for both Members and Officers. Other documents were required to be printed and securely shredded due to the confidential or restricted nature of their content. The Leader of the Council also made a commitment to regularly review paper usage and encourage the use of more sustainable methods of communication to reduce paper.

QUESTION 2b: from Mrs Hilditch to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance.

Mrs Hilditch stated that the expensive refurbishment of Council Offices at Trinity Road including additional meeting rooms had cost a lot of money. Since the Council was now encouraging flexible working amongst staff, the council building was often empty

Could you explain then why you had spent £16,000 on hiring external meeting facilities?

RESPONSE: 2b from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

On behalf of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services responded, stating that Council Offices at Trinity Road was a fantastic asset and the introduction of agile working was enabling Council Service teams to be decanted into 60% of the building, with the other 40% being rented out to other organisations and commercial businesses, to generate income for the Council. The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services also stated that details of the £16,000 expenditure was not immediately

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available, and written details would be sent, but it was likely that this was booked when suitable accommodation at the Council Offices was not available.

QUESTION 3a from Mrs Heathcoat-Amery to the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Transformation

Mrs Heathcote-Amery stated that the Council was responsible for the management of Car Parking and as part of the Clean and Green agenda had moved to cashless car-parking.

How does the Council's current expenditure of £320,000 on Officers uniforms, training and maintenance, and servicing of machines, reflect improved cost efficiency and Council transparency?

RESPONSE 3a: from the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Transformation

The Cabinet Member for the Economy and Transformation stated that the introduction of cashless car parking was comparatively new, but once completed across the District, would deliver efficiencies by avoiding the expense of emptying machines of cash and a reduction in machine vandalism. There were still some issues with the level of maintenance required to keep the machines clean, legible and in working order, however steps had been taken to address these. Moving forward maintenance would always be required to keep car parks clean, tidy, well lit and safe to use.

QUESTION 3b from Mrs Heathcoat-Amery to the Leader of the Council

Mrs Heathcote-Amery stated that having declared a Climate Emergency and a desire to support the local economy.

Could you explain the £750,000 spent on decarbonisation of which £680,000 (86%) was paid to an American Company?

RESPONSE 3b: from the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council stated that a full response would require a lot of detailed information, and agreed to send a written response.

QUESTION 4a from Mr Fowles to the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Forward Planning

Mr Fowles stated that on social media recently, Councillor Rachel Coxcoon had spoken about trying to top tourists that live in America and the Far East from coming to visit the Cotswolds because of their carbon footprint. At the previous week's Cabinet meeting Councillor Coxcoon had been asked to clarify her remarks and explain them, but neither had done. The Administration had also been given the opportunity to endorse (or not) her remarks.

Given the fact that Tourism is the main contributor to the Cotswold economy could you please explain why Councillor Coxcoon and the Administration appear to be anti-tourism and anti-business, and secondly if you do stand by her remarks, how in God's name do you plan to implement them?

RESPONSE 4a: from the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Forward Planning

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Forward Planning The Leader of the Council responded by stating that the neither the Council nor the Administration were anti-tourist, but on the contrary recognised that tourism was a key employer for the area. The Council was also committed to ensuring that travel to from and within the district was as sustainable as possible. Councillor Coxcoon was making the point that, although the Cotswolds would continue to be promoted globally as a popular and beautiful tourist destination by various tourist organisations, any tourist promotion undertaken by CDC should give proper consideration to the Climate Change impact of long haul air travel. To this end,

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promotions should focus on attracting tourists and visitors from across the UK, Europe and Scandinavia or where visitors transport produced lower carbon emissions.

QUESTION 4b from Mr Fowles to the to the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Transformation

Mr Fowles stated that, having held the portfolio for the Economy since being elected in 2019, the Cabinet Member had spoken eloquently on many occasions in support of local businesses and in particular the £68,000 that had been spent re-opening the High Street. In spite of this Mr Fowles had found it difficult to identify what tangibly this had meant.

I would be grateful if you could (now or outside this meeting), explain to me and residents what you have actually done personally and as an Administration to re-open the High Street in the Cotswolds

RESPONSE 4b: from the Cabinet Member for the Economy and Transformation.

The Cabinet Member for the Economy and Transformation responded by totally disagreeing with the founding tenants of the question. When the portfolio had been passed to the new Administration over three and a half years previously no Economic or Business Strategies existed. Since then the Economy of the Cotswolds had been supported by a District Council that was determined to see businesses survive and thrive across all sectors. The High Street was recognised as a key sector and High Street business occupancy across the Cotswolds was better than almost any other district in the United Kingdom with barely 4% vacancy rates. In addition to this incredible resurgence in retail, a new and unique digital training sector had developed, the agri-tech sector continued to flourish, IT and cyber industries had tripled in size each year, and with over £33m of additional investment over the previous three years, high quality, high value jobs had been created.

QUESTION 5a: from Mr Watson (Councillor of Tetbury Town Council (TTC)) to The Leader of the Council

Mr Watson stated that Tetbury was in need of infrastructure investment not least in transport links where the public transport services between Tetbury and Cirencester was particularly poor.

Would CDC be prepared to commit to working in partnership with TTC and Town and Parish Councils to address these issues and to see if a viable solution could be agreed together.

RESPONSE 5a: from the Leader of the Council.

The Leader of the Council responded, stating that it had been recognised that previously, the absence of a Five Year Housing Land Supply or Local Plan had resulted in additional housing being developed without the development of additional infrastructure. The Council would be happy to commit to working in partnership with TTC and Town and Parish councils to identify projects where collaborative working would be possible.

64 Member Questions

Question 1 from Councillor Julia Judd to Councillor Lisa Spivey, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

The Calendar option associated with our email accounts, can quickly schedule meetings and events and get reminders about upcoming activities, so you always know what's next. Calendar is designed for teams, this Council, both officers and members, is a perfect model for its use. It makes it easy to share schedules with others, is easy to navigate and can be viewed by day, week, or month. One of the main advantages is its sharing abilities and it's easy use from mobile phones.

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Calendar tells us who has been invited, where the meeting is, who has accepted and could give us quick and easy access to documents and attachments, if they are attached. Amendments made by the host are automatically fed through. The Calendar facility makes appointments and meeting arrangements faultless, easy to manage and efficient. It would be helpful if all officers are trained to use Calendar for all invitations, appointments and meetings and desist from sending just email invitations. All the meetings on the Council's Website Calendar of Meetings link should feed through to members' personal calendars where appropriate. Email reminders are automatically generated directly from Calendar, firstly when the invitation is generated and then when amendments are made, saving the need to 'double deal', and reducing human error.

Response 1 from Councillor Lisa Spivey, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services to Councillor Judd

I'm not quite sure what the question is. This appears to be a statement of opinion on particular IT software. Officers are well-aware of the calendar function as it is a core part of managing day to day tasks and responsibilities. All members have been sent invites to their calendar for meetings of Council, and Committee Members have been sent the dates for meetings to the end of this current Council year. The new meeting dates for 2023/24 will be made available on the Council's website shortly. These can be downloaded directly into members Google Suite calendar from the website (there is a link above the calendar of meetings). For Member briefings provided by officers, these invites are sent with 4-6 weeks of notice unless there are external timescales which prevent this from happening. There is a system in place for officers to request additional training if required.

Question 2 from Councillor Sue Jepson to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

In the Peer Review report, they state that staff morale is really low. Over many months/years the Conservative group has questioned you about staff morale and the constant turnover since 2019. Cllr Harris, you have always stated that staff morale is good and that there are no problems, very happy or words to that effect.

Will you please agree now we have questioned this many times and now the peer review has highlighted the situation.

Response 2 from Councillor Joe Harris the Leader of the Council to Councillor Jepson

The Council and Publica acknowledge the Peer Review's findings - as employers we are both striving for continuous improvement and welcome the opportunity to improve our standards further. That's why we commissioned a second LGA Peer Review under this administration. The Peer Review report makes a number of references to issues of staffing and staff morale. The findings of the Peer Review are somewhat at odds with other recent staff surveys, particularly the recent Publica Investors in People (IIP) Review, which was more positive. However, this isn't entirely surprising as both are snapshots at different points in time with different groups of employees being asked different questions. From the feedback received from the Peer Review team, these recommendations appear to focus around communication and channels of communication. I believe that the key to engagement with staff is getting communication absolutely right, especially between members, senior managers and the teams delivering services. This includes ensuring communications reflect supporting staff when they are under pressure, creating the space for them to deliver their projects and minimising the risk of any 'loss in translation' that can occur, especially via email communications. Ensuring messages are clear and are constructive, especially when things may not be going to plan, is incredibly important. So too is ensuring that messages are delivered at the appropriate level. It is too easy for those in positions of political power and management authority to overlook the impact that a brusque message can have on an employee. There are times when a message from a senior Councillor, Chief Executive or Managing Director might be better delivered by

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an employee's line manager who is likely to have a greater sense of the individual's workload and other commitments. The last two years have demonstrated one thing beyond all doubt – our people are our greatest strength. Throughout and since the Covid-19 pandemic the people of the Cotswolds have depended on the council and its partners, Publica and Ubico, in ways that we couldn't have imagined at the beginning of 2020 and I am incredibly proud of them. Across the public sector and in councils up and down the country staff are being asked to do more with less resource in an ever increasingly challenging working environment. The challenges in relation to the recruitment and retention of talented staff, and tightening labour markets, has been consistently reported in the media. Only this month it's been reported that "the gap between wage growth in the public and private sector is near a record high".

Workers in the private sector saw their average pay rise by 6.9% between August and October according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This compares to wage growth of just 2.7% for public sector employees. In July, Publica, who employ over 650 workers delivering Council services, were pleased to achieve the "Investors in People" standard. The assessor recognised that over the last twelve months "a number of improvements had been made, but there's still work in progress particularly around workloads and resource levels, but a huge positive cultural shift".

The external assessor identified several highlights:

The increased focus on wellbeing and the introduction of Mental Health First Aiders. The Staff Forum group and increased consultation with our staff through this forum.

Improvements made within reward and recognition and the continued focus ensuring that people are rewarded in ways that motivate them.

Embedding organisational values and Publica's employer brand.

Agile working has been organised well and staff enjoy the flexibility that supports a better work/life balance.

Increased Learning and Development opportunities including Apprenticeships.

Career development opportunities with internal transfers and promotions to retain key talent.

Increased level of trust and confidence.

Leadership and management training investment encouraging a more coaching style of management and increased awareness of the positive impact of good leadership and management.

Our performance during the last year gives huge confidence for the future. The pandemic created huge amounts of stress for everyone and this, linked with some dramatic changes in working arrangements, emphasised the importance of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to staff wellness. A healthy workforce is a productive workforce and the Employee Wellness programme is an integral element of our offer to staff. Through our ambitious Employee Wellness programme we have already put measures in place, including a range of physical and mental health and well-being resources, access to a free and confidential counselling service, and will continue to monitor the health and wellbeing of colleagues ensuring staff have the advice and support they need. Although much has been achieved already, without the right people in place we cannot hope to play a key role in supporting our residents in light of the cost of living crisis and deliver on our ambitions for the district over the next few years. We have incorporated the Peer Review findings into the Action Plan that is part of the report to the Council and we will work through them to understand and address the issues.

Supplementary Question 2a

Cllr Harris, you have always stated that staff morale is good and that there are no problems. Will you please agree now we have questioned this many times and now the peer review has highlighted the situation. What are you really going to do improve the staff morale problems. The peer review also intimate that the Leader of Council was very difficult to approach. I appreciate this will make it quite a difficult task for you to rectify things.

Supplementary Response 2a

I don't recognise a lot of what you have said and this is the first time I have been questioned about staff morale in a Council Meeting by an opposition group. Staff morale is an issue across the public sector and after ten to fifteen years of austerity in many cases, we are asking staff members to do a lot more with less resources. I want to put on record how proud I am of the staff at this Council and when I look at the challenges that this Council has faced Covid, flooding, fly tipping, it is our staff on the front line going above and beyond for our residents. I lead an Administration that is ambitious and impatient for change, and it is probably fair to say there have been times that our expectations have not been met, and I may have become exasperated and perhaps said something that on reflection, could have said more constructively, but I spend time nearly every day at the Council offices and believe I am one of the most open Leaders this Council has had, and I don't see that there is an issue with approaching me personally.

Question 3 from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

It was very interesting to read through the Peer Group Review report and whilst other members will also be picking up on other aspects contained within it, I would like to highlight the difficulties noted that Members can experience in getting their casework progressed due to the lack of clarity around prioritisation and timescales for responses to their queries on behalf of a resident. I am sure we all have experienced this at some point and indeed discovering the most appropriate officer to approach on a particular problem can also lead to delays in obtaining an answer for the resident concerned. Will the system of how queries by Members are prioritised and timescales for responses be addressed as a matter of urgency so that all officers have an understanding of this framework?

Response 3 from Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council Councillor Gina Blomefield

A link to 'Key Officer Contacts' for different Council services is available on the Member Portal. Officers will aim to respond to Member queries in a timely fashion. There isn't a set timescale for dealing with responses, but this matter will be referred to the Constitution Working Group for further consideration as part of an update to the approved Member/Officer Relations Protocol.

Supplementary Question 3a from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

I accept if you are in the Office nearly every day, you are going to get to know the Officers and their departments, but not all Members are here as often and Officers now work from home more often. Is it possible to create an organigram structure of the Council and its Officers from top to toe. I also think it would be helpful, for Officers to know Members, their Wards and Portfolios and feel able to approach us. This will be particularly important following the next election with newly elected Members.

Supplementary Response 3a from Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council to Councillor Gina Blomefield.

All Members are able to contact the Leadership Office and the Chief Executive Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Assistants who will be able to chase up reports from Officers. We will also be looking at asking Members to approach staff at a more senior Business Manager level to avoid Members asking busy Officers to prioritise responses to their enquiries over their other priority work.

Question 4 from Councillor Stephen Andrews to Councillor Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing and Armed Forces Champion

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In November last year, following extensive consultation with service providers, the Government published Statutory Guidance on how local authorities should treat current members of the Armed Forces, Veterans, their partners and families when providing some important services. This is an important step in strengthening the support to Veterans provided under the Armed Forces Covenant. Can she reassure the Council that CDC is fully compliant with all of those Statutory Regulations?

Response 4 from Councillor Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing and Armed Forces Champion to Councillor Stephen Andrews

Cotswold District Council complies with the statutory guidance on the Armed Forces Covenant duty for current members of the armed forces, veterans and their families. In some respects the Council and Publica exceed the requirements of the statutory guidance, particularly in respect of employees who are members of the reserve forces, as we provide generous additional leave for training requirements. However, the number of employees who are members of the reserve forces is very small.

Supplementary Question 4a from Councillor Stephen Andrews to Councillor Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing and Armed Forces Champion

I am pleased to know that CDC is compliant with the latest statutory guidance that covers some areas for which the Council is directly responsible, and others that it can influence. Could a short briefing note be prepared for Members providing details of the responsibilities.

Supplementary Response 4b from Councillor Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing and Armed Forces Champion to Councillor Andrew Stephens

Yes I will arrange for that to be prepared and sent out to Members.

65 Peer Review

The purpose of the report was to enable Council to consider the Local Government Association's Feedback Report and to note the Action Plan that details how the recommendations within the report would be implemented.

Councillor Joe Harris, the Leader of The Council introduced the report that provided feedback from the Council's recent external Peer Review and the recommendations within its Action Plan.

Council noted that this was the second Peer Review conducted during the term of the current Administration.

Council noted that the key recommendations from the previous (2019) review had been implemented including: developing a comprehensive Corporate Plan, strengthened the Senior Leadership Team and development of a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

Council welcomed the recent Peer Review report that both recognised areas of good practice as well as identifying issues and areas requiring improvement.

Council expressed concern that, should the Administration or the Executive not agree with any of the 'areas or issues requiring improvement', it was unlikely that these issues would be addressed or resolved.

Council noted the report compared a variety of CDC services and measurements with 15 similar councils across the UK and this had shown strong performance with External

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Communications, Waste Collection and Recycling and Affordable Housing, but less well with Council Tax and NNDR collection and Planning Applications.

Council noted that the Peer Review recommended that the relationship between CDC and Publica needed to be reviewed and more clearly defined and understood.

Council noted that it was important that a good relationship should exist between CDC and Gloucestershire County Council, and ongoing effort should be made to ensure this partnership continued and was strengthened.

Council noted the importance of the Overview and Scrutiny committee in providing an ongoing review of the Council and Administrations policies, decisions and performance.

The Council recognised the value of regular Peer Reviews acting in the role of an external 'critical friend' and dispassionately reviewing Council's culture policies and performance.

Council recognised that there were issues with poor morale and recommended that the Employee Recognition Scheme was relaunched to enable Officers' exceptional work to be recognised. The Chief Executive stated that this was already underway and in the next week staff would be invited to recommend their colleagues for additional recognition.

RESOLVED: That Council noted the Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report at annex A and **APPROVED** the Action Plan detailed at annex B.

Voting Record – For 19 , Against 0, Abstentions 8, Absent 0,

66 Draft Programme of Meetings - Follow up report

The purpose of the report was to set the programme of Council and Committee meetings for 2023-24.

Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council introduced the report and summarised the reasons for holding an additional Planning and Licensing Committee meeting in April 2023.

Council noted that the start time of future Planning and Licensing Committee meetings would be 2.00pm.

Council requested start times of all committee meetings should be included with dates in all meeting plans and schedules. Democratic Services agreed that this would be done.

Council noted that Site Inspection Briefings would usually take place one week before committee meetings.

Council noted that Planning and Licensing Committees were not political meetings and the Chair did not permit political discourse to take place during the committee.

RESOLVED: That Council **AGREED** to holding a meeting of the Planning and Licensing Committee on 19 April 2023.

Voting Record – For 27, Against 0, Abstention 0, Absent 1,

67 Amendments to the Constitution

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The purpose of the report was to enable Council to consider proposals from the Constitution Working Group for amendments to the Constitution to adopt, amended Articles 7, 8 and 9 to remove the requirement for each political group to provide an annual statement that demonstrates the necessary freedom of its Members from the whipping process on these Committees, amended Council Procedure Rules to include electronic voting and changes to public questions, approve the Protocol for Electronic Voting for inclusion in the Constitution and approve the Protocol for Cabinet Member Decision Making for inclusion in the Constitution.

Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council introduced the report and summarised the recommendations of the Constitutional Working following their work updating the Constitution, and proposed an amendment to the original recommendations regarding Electronic Voting and how Public Questions would be handled at Council, Cabinet and Committee Meetings.

Council noted that the recommendation to improve openness and transparency by making Individual Cabinet Member Decision Meetings public was made following consultation with other Councils.

Council noted that 'ORAL' more accurately described questions that were spoken and would therefore replace 'VERBAL' in the recommendation.

Council noted that the aim of permitting only oral questions at Council, Cabinet and Committee Meetings was to simplify the Public Questions process and encourage public engagement.

Council noted that the Constitution Working Group would be asked to consider options for Public Questions from those unable to attend meetings in person.

Councillor Joe Harris proposed and Councillor Mike Evemy seconded that the following amendments to Agenda item 9: 'Amendments to the Constitution' should be agreed

*RESOLVED: Council **Agreed** the following **Amendment** to Agenda item 9: Amendments to the Constitution

A. Amendment to the proposal on Public Questions:

10.1 Open forum questions at Council, Cabinet and Committees

Members of the public may ask a verbal question followed by a supplementary verbal question up to two ORAL spoken questions at Ordinary Meetings of the Council, Cabinet and Committees. A supplementary question must arise directly out of the original question or the reply.

A maximum period of fifteen minutes shall be allowed at any such meeting for open forum questions. Prior notice of verbal questions is not required. The time limit for a verbal question and a supplementary verbal question is one minute ...

An answer to an ORAL question or a supplementary verbal question may take the form of...

B Amendment to the protocol for Electronic Voting:

E10: DRAFT Protocol for Electronic Voting

Electronic Voting, where available, will be used when votes are taken on resolutions at meetings of Cabinet, and Council and the Planning and Licensing Committee, and at any other meetings of Committees or Sub-Committees that have agreed to utilise electronic voting.

~~*Cabinet and Council, and at meetings of any committees that have agreed to utilise electronic*~~

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~~voting~~. Should the technology fail to enable members to vote electronically, the meeting will revert to voting by a show of hands (or roll call for recorded votes).

Voting Record – For 20, Against 10, Abstentions 0, Absent 0,

Councillor Joe Harris proposed and Councillor Mike Every seconded that Agenda item 9: Amendments to the Constitution (including the amendment), should be agreed.

RESOLVED: Council **Agreed** the following recommended ‘Amendments to the Constitution’
***As Amended**

- a) That the following Articles of the Constitution:-Article 7, The Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Article 8, The Audit Committee, and, Article 9, The Planning and Licensing Committee, are amended with immediate effect to remove the requirement for each political group to present to the Proper Officer, at the start of each municipal year, a statement that demonstrates the necessary freedom of its Members from the whipping process on these Committees.
- b) To approve the amended Council Procedure Rules (section 16) incorporating the provision for electronic voting.
- *c) To approve the Protocol for Electronic Voting for inclusion in the Constitution.
- *d) To approve the amended Council Procedure Rules (section 10) changing the management of public questions.
- e) To approve the Cabinet Member Decision Meeting Procedure Rules (section 10) changing the management of public questions.
- e) To approve the Cabinet Member Decision Meeting Protocol for inclusion in the Constitution.
- f) To delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to make minor and consequential amendments to the Constitution.

Voting Record – For 21, Against 8, Abstentions, 0, Absent 0,

68 **Dispensations**

The purpose of the report was to approve a number of general dispensations to councillors under the Localism Act 2011 for a period of four years.

Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council introduced the report that updated the Constitution to enable Members to make decisions and vote on recommendations when they could not fully declare ‘no pecuniary interest’ e.g. vote on Council Tax changes whilst being a Council Tax payer.

Council noted that the Dispensations did not remove the requirement for all Members to declare pecuniary interest when this was required.

RESOLVED: Council agreed to approve, under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2022, the general dispensations listed at paragraph 2.1, for all elected members and co-opted members of Cotswold District Council, until 17 January 2027.

Voting Record – For 30, Against 0, Abstentions 0, Absent 0,

69 **Notice of Motions**

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Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt in the UK and around the world. The global temperature has already increased by 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels, and the natural world has reached crisis point, with [28% of plants and animals](#) (ICUN Red List) threatened with extinction.

Climate change

Unless we drastically change course, the world is set to exceed the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit. Pledges, such as the Paris Agreement and Glasgow Pact—and updated emissions targets—are not legally-binding. This gap between pledges and policy leaves the world on course for catastrophic warming of [near 3°C](#) (Climate Action Tracker). Following the “now or never” Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [report](#) in April 2022, the UN Secretary General António Guterres stated that “we are on a fast track to climate disaster. This is not fiction or exaggeration. It is what science tells us will result from our current energy policies”. In addition, the UK Government's [Net Zero Strategy](#) stated that “if we fail to limit global warming to 1.5°C, we risk reaching climatic tipping points, we could lose control of our climate for good”. The 1.5°C goal is ‘on life support’ and only ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector and local communities will help us realise it.

Biodiversity loss

The UK is [one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world](#) (WWF). More than one in seven of our plants and animals face extinction, and more than 40% are in decline. We therefore welcome the [Leaders' Pledge for Nature](#), signed by the UK Government, which states that—if we fail to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030—we increase the risk of further pandemics, rising global temperatures and loss of species. In order to achieve this, the UK needs a legally-enforceable nature target so that, by 2030, nature is visibly and measurably on the path of recovery—in line with the [Global Goal for Nature](#) (Nature Positive).

Cotswold District Council notes that:

The [Climate and Ecology Bill](#)—which has been introduced in the UK Parliament on several occasions since 2020—would require the development of a strategy to ensure that the UK's environmental response is in line with the latest science. The strategy would ensure that:

- the ecological crisis is tackled shoulder to shoulder with the climate crisis via a joined-up approach;
- the Paris Agreement aim is enshrined into law to ensure that the UK does its full and fair share to limit the global temperature rise to 1.5°C;
- we halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 to ensure that the UK's ecosystems are protected and restored;
- the UK takes responsibility for its greenhouse gas footprint, including international aviation and shipping—and by accounting for consumption emissions related to the goods and services that are imported and consumed in the UK;
- the UK takes responsibility for its ecological footprint in order to better protect the health and resilience of ecosystems—including along domestic and global supply chains; and
- an independent, temporary Climate and Nature Assembly is set-up—representative of the UK population—to engage with the UK Parliament and UK Government to help develop the strategy. This would be set up on broadly similar lines to the Climate Assembly 2020 which was very successful and very well received on all sides of the political divide.

Council

18/January2023

Cotswold District Council therefore resolves to:

1. Support the Climate and Ecology Bill;
2. Write to Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP to provide notice that the motion has been passed - request that the Climate and Ecology Bill is supported in Parliament, or provide thanks for already doing so; (as at 22.12.22 he does not appear to have signed up)...and
3. Write to [Zero Hour](#), the organisers of the cross-party campaign for the Bill, expressing its support (campaign@zerohour.uk).

Council welcomed the Motion and cross party agreement was stated for all of the points raised.

Councillor Nikki Ind proposed and Councillor Andrew Maclean seconded the Motion

RESOLVED: Council **AGREED** to Support the Climate and Ecology Bill

Write to Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP to provide notice that the motion has been passed - request that the Climate and Ecology Bill is supported in Parliament, or provide thanks for already doing so; (as at 22.12.22 he does not appear to have signed up)...and

Write to [Zero Hour](#), the organisers of the cross-party campaign for the Bill, expressing its support (campaign@zerohour.uk)

Voting Record – For 30, Against 0, Abstentions 0, Absent 0,

70 Next meeting

15 February 6.00pm

The Meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and closed at 4.50 pm

Chair

(END)