



Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held on Thursday, 1 February 2024

Councillors present:

Joe Harris - Leader
Claire Bloomer
Paul Hodgkinson

Mike Evemy – Deputy Leader
Juliet Layton
Lisa Spivey

Officers present:

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

Claire Locke, Assistant Director for Property
and Regeneration
Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business
Manager
Caleb Harris, Senior Democratic Services
Officer
Kira Thompson, Election and Democratic
Services Support Assistant

223 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Dale.

224 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bloomer declared a pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda item 13 and would leave the room before Cabinet considered the item.

There were no declarations of interest from Officers.

225 Minutes

Cabinet considered the minutes from 11 January 2024 as presented in the document pack.

The minutes were proposed by Councillor Joe Harris and seconded by Councillor Evemy

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 11 January 2024 be approved as a correct record.

Record of Voting

For 4, Against 0, Abstention 2, Absent/Did not vote 2

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

226 Leader's Announcements

The Leader started by making an announcement around the additional £500 million made available for local authorities. Whilst the additional funding was welcomed, it was stated that the funding would not be sufficient against the projected reduction in funding. It was also highlighted that the funding would largely go to authorities with responsibility for adult social care and children social services.

227 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

228 Member Questions

There were no member questions.

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

Other than the report of the Public Conveniences Working Group (item 7a), there were no recommendations/issues arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the Audit and Governance for Cabinet to consider.

a) Report of the Overview and Committee's Public Conveniences Review Group

The purpose of the report was to present to Cabinet the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Public Conveniences Review Group.

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

- Following a request from the Deputy Leader, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up the Public Conveniences Review Group on 26 September 2023 to look at the future provision of public conveniences within the District.
- The Deputy Leader highlighted the work done by the Review Group and thanked the group and the lead officer, Claire Locke - Assistant Director for Property and Regeneration, for their work.
- It was noted that the current contract for the maintenance of public conveniences with Danfo was in place until 30 September 2024. It was noted that in the lead up to this, the purpose of the review was to examine options for the future provision of public conveniences as a discretionary service.
- Following the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet, Councillor Evemy tabled the responses to each recommendation (as listed in Cabinet response published).

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During the tabling of the recommendations, the following points were noted:

- It was noted that the view of the group which the Cabinet shared was that a public convenience service should be continued across the District.
- It was recognised that the financial pressures of the service faced by the Council would need to be reduced but that a nil-cost option for taxpayers would not be achievable. Therefore a reduction in the number of facilities where there were multiple facilities in a town or village would be required.
- It was noted that any closures would be done in consultation with Town and Parish Councils who would have the opportunity to take on responsibility for continuing to run the facilities should they wish to do so.
- It was noted at recommendation 5 that whilst it was agreed that the current system of charging needed to be made consistent across all facilities, it was proposed that the capital programme was not changed at this time but that proposals would come forward in a separate report to Cabinet as required.
- In regard to recommendation 8, it was noted that with the recent introduction of card readers, there currently wasn't sufficient data available to accurately forecast revenue. It was proposed that Cabinet maintain the current charge and review it when the contract is retendered and there is a minimum of 6 months of usage data.

Councillor Spivey in seconding the Cabinet response also wished to thank the Review Group for their work, and wished to propose a further response about looking at additional ways to commercialise the public convenience facilities to seek any additional revenue that can be raised such as through advertising. Councillor Evely accepted this additional response to ask officers to investigate opportunities for generating further commercial revenues from the public convenience facilities.

Councillor Evely also noted that the Equality and Rurality Impact Assessment tabled at the meeting would be published to the meeting page online.

The Cabinet response was tabled and proposed by Councillor Evely and seconded by Councillor Spivey.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet considered and **AGREED** its response to the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Voting Record

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

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

230 Discretionary Rate Relief in excess of £10,000

To purpose of the report was to consider one new application in respect of Hardship Relief in excess of £10,000 for the 2021/2022 to 2022/2023 financial years.

The Deputy Leader introduced this item and outlined the following points:

- The business applicant for relief had faced some difficulties caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic and by the UK withdrawal from the European Union.
- It was noted that at paragraph 3.10 that £167,498.25 had been repaid but an outstanding liability of £33,904.43 remained. It was proposed by officers that a hardship payment of 50% of the liability totally £16,952.21 be given to support their recovery. The remaining balance would be covered by a payment plan agreed between the applicant and the agent.
- It was outlined at paragraph 5.2 that the cost was split between the major preceptors and the UK Government and therefore the loss on the collection fund which the Council would see totalled £6780.88.
- It was noted that the business supported local jobs within the District and the business had provided confidential financial information to support the decision.

Cabinet asked if there were any other businesses that had applied for relief as these applications were rare. It was confirmed by the Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service that this was the only application at present and any other similar applications that arise would need to be considered by Cabinet. It was also confirmed that the revenues team worked with businesses to secure payment, and this hardship relief was after all options had been exhausted and appropriate evidence had been provided.

Cabinet also asked if there could be a repeat application and how that would be processed. It was confirmed that whilst a new application could be submitted, this would need to be considered with appropriate evidence.

Cabinet noted the significant hardship faced by the business and that this would be an appropriate use of Hardship Relief powers to protect local jobs.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Evely and seconded by Councillor Joe Harris

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

1. APPROVED a Hardship relief award of £16,952.21; and
2. AGREED to instruct officers to make a suitable repayment plan to recover the remaining £16,952.22

Voting Record

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

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer			Mike McKeown
Joe Harris			Tony Dale

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Juliet Layton			
Lisa Spivey			
Mike Evey			
Paul Hodgkinson			

231 2024/25 Budget – Fees and Charges Report

The purpose of this report was to present a revised schedule of fees and charges for 2024/25. The report also described the rationale for the revised charges compared to current charges for 2023/24.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and outlined the following points:

- It was highlighted that the charges within the annual report covered all of the charges other than the parking fees and charges considered at the January Cabinet meeting.
- It was highlighted that the Garden Waste charge was the largest with the proposed changes providing £169,000 for the revenue budget which would cover the increasing cost of the discretionary service provided.
- The majority of charges would see a 6.7% increase unless they were frozen or had an alternative change due to circumstances such as already providing a full cost recovery.
- The decision within the report would see additional revenue of £169,000 on garden waste and £27,000 on the remainder of the charges.

Cabinet asked about the increase in charges in line with inflation as this rate had been much higher. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed the September figure was the standard mediate figure used although it was recognised there had been a more volatile inflationary economic environment over the past 2 years.

Cabinet asked about the increases to Green Waste Collection and whether there would be a discount for those receiving state benefits. The Deputy Leader confirmed that there was a 50% discount for those receiving council tax support and housing support payments.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Evey and seconded by Councillor Joe Harris

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

1. ENDORSED the rationale for revising fees and charges as set out in the report; and
2. APPROVED the implementation of revised fees and charges for 2024/25 as detailed in Annex A from 1 April 2024.

Voting Record

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

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Claire Bloomer			Mike McKeown

Joe Harris			Tony Dale
Juliet Layton			
Lisa Spivey			
Mike Evemy			
Paul Hodgkinson			

232 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25

The purpose of the report was to consider recommending to Full Council the 2024/25 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Evemy introduced the report and outlined the following points:

- It was outlined that the indicative position with the fairer funding review was currently £5 million gap in 2026/27.
- It was noted that there had been a number of Section 114 Notices declared by local authorities who were unable to obtain a balanced financial budget due to financial and service delivery pressures.
- It was reaffirmed that there was no immediate risk to the Council of a Section 114 Notice but action needed to be taken now.
- It was highlighted that there were upcoming pressures for the Council around areas like homelessness.
- It was noted that the proposals would increase the average Council Tax Band D precepts by £5 a year.
- It was noted that the Publica Review had been identified as one of the larger risks which the Council needed to manage through the Budget with £500,000 allocated to support the transition. It was outlined in Paragraph 1.18 that the key focus for services transferred back to the Council would be efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- It was noted that at this stage the cost of providing services throughout the transition from Publica to the Councils had not been changed other than accounting for inflation.
- It was outlined in table ES1 that the Budget would seek to put £500,000 back into the reserves to ensure these were replenished ahead of the funding challenges in 2026/27.
- On the Capital Programme it was noted that the capital allocation would be rolled over into next year for Leisure & Communities and for Environment as the work was still ongoing.
- It was outlined there was no borrowing projected other than the Community Municipal Investment Bond that had met its investment target.

The Leader noted that this proposed Budget would be considered at the Full Council meeting on 21 February where there would be opportunity to discuss the measures within.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet **AGREED** to recommend to Council to approve:

1. the Medium-Term Financial Strategy set out in Annex B
2. the Savings and Transformation items for inclusion in the budget, set out in Annex C
3. the Council Tax Requirement of £6,596,813 for this Council
4. the Council Tax level for Cotswold District Council purposes of £153.93 for a Band D property in 2024/25 (an increase of £5)
5. the Capital Programme, set out in Annex D
6. the Annual Capital Strategy 2024/25, as set out in Annex E

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7. the Annual Treasury Management Strategy and Non-Treasury Management Investment Strategy 2024/25, as set out in Annex F

8. the Strategy for the Flexible use of Capital Receipts, as set out in Annex H

9. the balances and reserves forecast for 2024/25 to 2027/28 as set out in Section 6 of the report.

Cabinet APPROVED the delegation to the Council's Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance to:

10. Agree changes to the General Fund Summary arising from the Local Government Finance Settlement and the Business Rates Retention Scheme estimates prior to submission to Council.

11. Agree any changes to the General Fund Summary arising from the recommendations to Cabinet made within the Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Public Conveniences Review Group

Voting Record

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

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

233 Future of the Old Station and Memorial Cottages Cirencester

The purpose the report was to seek agreement and allocation of funding to carry out structural works to rebuild an unstable wall at the Old Station, Cirencester.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced this report and highlighted the following points:

- The Old Station building was noted as one of the historic assets the Council owned which required structural renovation works to make the wall at the station safe.
- It was outlined that the Council had been in discussion with New Brewery Arts regarding potential projects with the Old Station but that they had now withdrawn from these discussions.
- It was outlined that Cabinet would be asking Full Council to approve the £158,000 of capital funding to repair the wall to make it safe.

It was noted that this building would be a part of the Asset Management Strategy being developed and would be considered by Cabinet in due course.

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The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Evemy and seconded by Councillor Joe Harris.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet AGREED to recommend to Council to:

1. AGREE to carry out the works to rebuild the unstable wall at The Old Station, utilising £158,000 of capital budget from the Asset Management Strategy capital scheme.

Voting Record

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

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

234 Agile working update and tenancy proposals for Trinity Road Council Offices in Cirencester

Councillor Bloomer having declared an interest left the room before the start of this item.

The purpose of the report was to update Cabinet on the work that had been completed to make changes to the Trinity Road offices to facilitate agile working and free up space for tenants and to make recommendations on a future tenant for the space created.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and outlined the following points:

- The Agile Working Project originated around the changes in working practices due to Covid-19 Pandemic and the empty space provided.
- It was noted that the decision could be made under delegated authority but it was felt that it was important for Cabinet to make this decision for openness and transparency.
- It was noted that around 30% of the building had been made available for let and potential tenants had been identified.
- It was noted that other options had been considered but that some of these models would require additional resources which was not preferred.
- It had been noted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the forecast revenue was around £115,000 and would be less than that projection within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy of £151,000.
- It was highlighted that a 3-year agreement proposed would minimise any financial risk.

Cabinet welcomed the work done of the reassessment of the building and whilst the provider would not be taking on the whole building, it was highlighted that this would help the Council maximise the use of the asset.

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The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Evemy and seconded by Councillor Joe Harris.

RESOLVED That Cabinet:

1. AGREED to enter into a legal agreement with the Serviced Office Provider shown in Annex A as the Preferred Tenant.

2. DELEGATED AUTHORITY to the Deputy Chief Executive and S.151 Officer in consultation with the Head of Legal Services to agree the appropriate form and terms of a legal agreement.

Voting Record*

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

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

**Due to an issue with the presentation of the vote outcome, Cabinet confirmed the outcome by a show of hands.*

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

No decisions had been taken by the Leader and/or Individual Cabinet Members.

236 Matters exempt from publication

Cabinet did not enter private session.

237 Exempt Annex B for Item 7a

Cabinet did not enter into private session to consider this Annex.

238 Exempt Annexes for Agenda Item 8

Cabinet did not enter into private session to consider this Annex.

239 Exempt Annex for Agenda Item 11

Cabinet did not enter into private session to consider this Annex.

240 Exempt Annex for Agenda Item 12

Cabinet did not enter into private session to consider this Annex.

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The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 6.51 pm

Chair

(END)