



Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held on Thursday, 6 February 2025

Members present:

Joe Harris

Mike Evely

Claire Bloomer

Paul Hodgkinson

Juliet Layton

Officers present:

Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services

Nickie Mackenzie-Daste, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer)

David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer

Julia Gibson, Democratic Services Officer

Robert Weaver, Chief Executive

Paul James, Economic Development Lead

Maria Wheatley, Shared Parking Manager

56 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Tristan Wilkinson.

57 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

58 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting 9 January 2025 were considered.

There were no amendments.

A proposal to approve the minutes of the previous meeting held 9 January 2025 was proposed by Councillor Harris and seconded by Councillor Evely.

RESOLVED: Cabinet approved the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 9 January 2025 as a correct record.

RESOLVED: Cabinet approved the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2025. (Resolution)		
For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Evely, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson and Juliet Layton	5
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

59 Leader's Announcements

There were no announcements from the Leader.

60 Public Questions

There was one Public Question :

Andy Farmer introduced himself as a recent candidate in the Chesterton by-election. He explained that his campaign included gathering residents' views on council spending. 87 residents had provided input, with a resulting wish-list of some 47 items. He noted the potential for an underspend from various grant funding streams at the end of the financial year and suggested that early planning could help the council spend this money effectively on residents.

Mr Farmer had already had discussions with Councillor Tristan Wilkinson, and was due to meet the Economic Development lead to discuss further.

- In response to a question about the process for submitting non-grant-related spending requests, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation confirmed that requests should be addressed to himself and the Deputy Chief Executive Officer.
- Mr Farmer stated that parking charges were one of the main concerns raised by residents. The removal of the "free after three" parking initiative was questioned.
- In response the Cabinet Member for Health, Culture, and Visitor Experience confirmed that the initiative had been discontinued due to financial constraints and shifting post-COVID trends. He also stated that some parking charges would be frozen and mentioned the introduction of 20-minute free parking bays. It was also noted that despite previous tariff increases car park ticket sales had increased in 2024. He also confirmed that recent parking consultations would form the basis of data analysis to guide future decisions.
- Mr Farmer suggested that initiatives such as "free after four" might be a way of offering support to lower-income residents struggling with parking costs. The Cabinet Member for Health, Culture, and Visitor Experience highlighted that

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Trinity Road car park remained free on weekends, providing an option for those facing financial difficulties.

61 Member Questions

There were no member questions.

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

There were no issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 February 2025.

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

No individual Cabinet Member decisions have been taken since the previous meeting of Cabinet, held on 9 January 2025.

64 UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund update February 2025

The purpose of the report was to update Cabinet on the delivery of UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund projects to date and seek approval for the approach to the delivery of UKSPF projects in 2025/26 along with the necessary delegations.

In Councillor Wilkinson's absence Councillor Harris, Leader of the Council, introduced the item.

The report highlighted the successful attribution of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) & Rural England Prosperity Fund grants which had funded multiple projects over recent years, delivering tangible benefits to the district.

It was highlighted that the Council remained committed to strong communities, sustainable economic growth, and climate action.

The grants had funded strategic investment supporting communities, local businesses, and skills development.

Recent key achievements were mentioned including:

- Cirencester Growth Hub: Became the county's top-performing hub, supporting businesses despite the loss of EU funding.
- Grace Network Project: Repurposed the historic House of Fraser building, preserving heritage and boosting the local economy.
- Cost of Living Support: Investments helped struggling residents, particularly with food support initiatives.

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- Village Hall Improvements: Funded sustainability measures, including solar panels and insulation, aligning with climate goals.
- Gloucestershire Employment & Skills Hub: Assisted economically inactive residents in returning to work, training, or volunteering.

Future plans (2025-26) were discussed with the £327,000 additional funding to be invested in business skills, community support, and climate-aligned projects.

It was confirmed that there would be ongoing funding for the Growth Hub and employment programmes, alongside new opportunities for engagement. Expressions of interest had already been received for efficient and effective projects delivering real benefits to residents.

Special thanks were extended to officers, stakeholders, and community partners, with special recognition for Councillors Tony Dale and Tristan Wilkinson, and the Economic Development Lead.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Harris, Leader, and seconded by Councillor Layton, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning, put to the vote and agreed by Cabinet.

Voting Record 5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

RESOLVED: that Cabinet
1. NOTED the progress of the delivery of UKSPF and REPF projects,
2. NOTED the 2025/2026 UKSPF funding award of £327,416,
3. AGREED to allocate up to £140,000 for 2025/26 to Cirencester Growth Hub and up to £50,000 to a local employment and skills project,
4. DELEGATED authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Environment, to allocate the remaining funding, having regard to the recommendations of the UKSPF Assessment Panel.
(Resolution)

For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Evely, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson and Juliet Layton	5
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0

Carried

65 Review of Parking Charges and Season Tickets

The purpose of the report was to detail proposed changes to the day tariffs and season ticket fees in the district car parks to take effect from 1st April 2025.

The Cabinet Member for Health, Culture, and Visitor Experience introduced the item.

- It was confirmed that charges for the first hour would be frozen, recognising that the short stay tariff was used by residents for errands, whilst other, longer stay tariffs would be increased slightly to account for inflation.
- The impact on businesses was discussed and it was confirmed that Cirencester businesses remained resilient, and that parking charges seem to have minimal effect on footfall.
- It was noted that the revenue from parking fees helped to fund essential council services, including cost-of-living support and planning services.
- It was agreed that small increases were preferable to financial instability for the Council.
- Extra parking spaces designated as mother and child spaces were welcomed as was the online information available about access to parking permits.
- It was noted that the proposed charges for Rissington Road Car Park would include a 10p increase in the tourism levy previously agreed in November 2024

Thanks were extended to the Parking Manager, her team, and to the parking enforcement officers for their work.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Councillor Hodgkinson, Cabinet Member for Health, Culture, and Visitor Experience, seconded by Councillor Evely, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation, put to the vote and agreed by Cabinet.

Voting Record 5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

RESOLVED that Cabinet		
1. APPROVED the freezing of car-park charges for short stays of 1/2hour or 1 hour at all the Council's Car Parks;		
2. APPROVED the car-park charges for stays of 2 hours or more being increased by 2.7% (rounded to 10p), to reflect CPI inflation between October 2023 and October 2024;		
3. NOTED the proposed charges for Rissington Road car-park include the tourism levy increases from 50p to 60p agreed November 2024;		
4. APPROVED increasing the fee for season ticket holders as per annex D; 5. approve the updating of the Parking Order to reflect agreed changes (Resolution)		
For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Evely, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson and Juliet Layton	5
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

66 2025/2026 Fees and Charges

The purpose of the report was to present a revised schedule of fees and charges for 2025/26. The report also described the rationale for the revised charges compared to current charges for 2024/25. Revised charges were presented at Annex A alongside current charges for 2024/25.

The report was presented by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation, Councillor Evemy.

It was noted that this report was an annual review of fees and charges to account for inflation and ensure cost recovery for services.

- Most charges were increased by approximately 2%, appropriately rounded

The following changes were discussed

- Garden Waste: Subscription fee increased by £5 to £69 to cover rising service costs.
- Planning Fees: Statutory fees are determined by central government, it was noted that Discretionary fees remained unchanged, but under review, due to a forthcoming review with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS).
- High Hedge Complaints: A significant fee increase was proposed due to historical under-recovery.
- Licensing Fees were increased to fund additional staffing support.
- Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been taken into account with the streamlining of public conveniences and the introduction of charges at previously free locations; no further increases were planned until the impact of these changes had been assessed.
- Support for low-income residents was welcomed with 50% discounts available on garden waste and bulky waste collection for those on benefits.
- The bulky waste service was recognised as a valuable and well-run service, with the potential for better promotion.
- It was noted that the recommendation was for revised charges to take effect from April 1, 2025.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation and seconded by Councillor Claire Bloomer, Cabinet Member for Communities, put to the vote and agreed by Cabinet.

Voting Record: 5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet		
1. ENDORSED the rationale for revising fees and charges and;		
2. APPROVED the implementation of revised fees and charges for 2025/26 as detailed in the report , from 1 April 2025. (Resolution)		
For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Evemy, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson and Juliet Layton	5
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

67 Budget 2025/26 and Medium Term Financial Strategy

The purpose of the report was to present the Revenue Budget for 2025/26, the Capital Programme and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2025/26 to 2028/29.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation, Councillor Evemy introduced the report and emphasised that the Budget 2025/26, the Capital Programme and the Medium -Term Financial Strategy were crucial documents for consideration. Following the decision of Cabinet the final determination of the Council's budget and the setting of Council Tax would happen on Monday 24 February at Full Council.

- A draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had been presented before Christmas after a provisional government funding settlement had been announced.
- It was noted that a reduced budget consultation had taken place in January 2025 due to staffing changes and a by-election, this had led to only 46 responses instead of the usual 400 plus.
- The final government settlement had been received in the first week of February 2025 and was the worst funding settlement in nearly six years, with no increase in core government support or provision for inflation. The settlement was cash-neutral after accounting for the maximum allowable Council Tax increases.
- The Rural Services Delivery Grant, £800,000 funding was removed but later replaced through an alternative government mechanism.
- The Deputy Chief Executive and Deputy Leader had presented the financial position and answered questions at the recent Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- It was noted that the increase to employer National Insurance contributions would cost the Council £400,000 annually, with government funding covering only £133,000, leaving a significant shortfall.

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- A £4 million funding gap was initially projected before Christmas, but revised assumptions and plans including service transformation, efficiency improvements, and revenue reserve utilization had reduced that figure.
- A £2 million loss of government funding was expected from 2026/27 onward.
- There had been recent positive news around Pooled Funds suggesting the Council would not need to set aside reserves for potential investment losses.
- Significant future costs were included in the Capital Program, including £5m for waste vehicle replacements in 2026/27, which would require potential borrowing of £2.87m.
- A projected surplus of £662,000 for the next year would align with the Council's motion from November 2023 to set aside surpluses in preparation for future financial challenges.
- However it was noted that future funding would remain unclear due to continued consultation on proposed changes to local authority funding, and uncertainty around potential mitigation measures.
- It was noted that the Council received £1.5 million this year from Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Funding, this was to support waste and recycling services, shifting costs onto producers.
- Risks around EPR funding were seen as:
 - Uncertainty about whether the Council could retain the full amount.
 - Lack of clarity around future funding levels.
 - Uncertainty as to whether producers might alter packaging to reduce their costs, which could positively impact the environment but reduce Council funding.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that an updated version of the report with clarifications, but no major financial changes would be prepared in time for Full Council.

Financial Sustainability was emphasised and the requirement that the Council address a growing budget gap post-2026 to remain financially sustainable was noted. It was recognised that Cotswold District Council was in a better position than most District Councils but that the position was still a difficult one.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation and seconded by Councillor Harris, Leader, put to the vote and agreed by Cabinet.

Voting Record: 5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention.

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet APPROVED for recommendation to Council:

- 1. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy;**
- 2. The Budget Pressures and Savings for inclusion in the budget;**
- 3. The Council Tax Requirement of £7,065,418 for this Council ;**
- 4. The Council Tax level for Cotswold District Council purposes of £158.93 for a Band D property in 2025- 2026;**
- 5. The Capital Programme;**
- 6. The Annual Capital Strategy 2025- 2026 ;**
- 7. The Annual Treasury Management Strategy and Non-Treasury Management Investment Strategy 2025-2026;**
- 8. The Strategy for the Flexible use of Capital Receipts;**
- 9. The Balances and Reserves forecast for 2025-2026 to 2028-2029; and**
- 10. NOTED the renewal of the CIVICA OpenRevenues 3-year software contract from 01 June 2025;**
- 11. DELEGATED to the Council’s Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Deputy Leader to 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. (Resolution)**

For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Every, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson and Juliet Layton	5
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 7.28 pm