

Cabinet
07/February2022



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

Councillors present:

Rachel Coxcoon
Andrew Doherty
Mike Evemy

Jenny Forde
Joe Harris - Chair
Juliet Layton

Lisa Spivey

Officers present:

Angela Claridge, Director of Governance & Development
Caroline Clissold, Housing Manager
Mandy Fathers, Business Manager, Operational Services
Ben Patel-Sadler, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Jenny Poole, Deputy Chief Executive
Rob Weaver, Chief Executive

Observers:

Councillor Stephen Andrews

86 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Tony Dale.

87 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

88 Minutes

Cabinet agreed that the following amendments would be made to the draft minutes:

At page 9 of the draft minutes, just above the word 'RESOLVED', the word 'to' should be replaced with the word 'so'.

At page 12 of the draft minutes, at recommendation n), it should read 'an update to the Parking Order'.

Councillor Mike Evemy proposed that the Cabinet approve the minutes of the 10 January 2022 meeting subject to the above amendments being made.

Councillor Evemy made the proposal as he chaired the 10 January meeting on behalf of the Leader of the Council who had submitted apologies.

This was seconded by Councillor Rachel Coxcoon.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet of 10 January 2022 be approved as a correct record subject to the relevant amendments being made.

Record of Voting – for: 5, against: 0, abstention: 2, absent: 1.

89 Chair's Announcements (if any)

The Chair congratulated Her Royal Highness the Queen on her Platinum Jubilee (acknowledging the Royal ties associated with the District).

The Chair welcomed Councillor Thomas Stowe to the Council following the recent Campden and Vale election.

The Chair acknowledged the Local Plan Consultation (which was now live) and the associated importance of how this would shape the future of the District.

Cabinet noted the urgent decision which was taken by the Chief Executive in December 2021 in relation to the Household Support Fund.

90 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

91 Member Questions

There were no Member questions.

92 Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2022/23

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and addressed the Cabinet.

Cabinet noted that a Council decision on the 2022/23 budget would take place at the 16 February 2022 Full Council meeting.

Cabinet had considered the draft budget proposals in October 2021 with Members noting that a six week consultation on the proposed budget had also taken place.

Cabinet noted that both the Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committees had also considered the draft budget. The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance had attended both of these meetings.

Cabinet further noted that the budget proposals were outlined in detail within the appended report. A significant factor, which had shaped the budget, was the Government Funding Settlement (which was provisional at this stage). The provisional figure reflected a funding cut of approximately £228,000. Once the exact figure was confirmed by the Government, the budget would be updated in readiness for consideration at Full Council on 16 February.

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Cabinet noted that the Council Taxbase (the number of properties which would be issued with a Council Tax bill for 2022-23) was smaller than forecast at October 21, reducing the amount of Council Tax income to the Council. This reduction was partially offset by additional income as a result of the Cabinet's approval, in January 2022, of a revised level of Council Tax discount available for empty properties. .. Cabinet noted the Council Tax revenue which would be collected during 2022/23.

Cabinet further noted the potential impact of interest rate rises during the coming year and also in future years.

Cabinet noted the financial impact of recycling collection, inflation within the Publica contract, the procurement of insurance and the procurement of renewable energy sources for the Council.

Cabinet further noted the savings which would be achieved via the reduction in contributions to the Gloucestershire Local Government Pension Scheme.

Cabinet noted that approximately £800,000 of savings had been identified within the draft budget.

Cabinet noted that the Council was currently debt-free, although there was an expectation that some borrowing would be undertaken in the latter part of the financial year of around £500,000. The minimum revenue provision, reflecting the need to provide for repayment of this loan, had been included in the 2022/23 budget proposals.

Cabinet further noted that the future funding model for District Councils remained uncertain and it was therefore difficult to undertake detailed future financial planning. The Council's future financial planning was based on an assumption that significant cuts to Government funding were likely.

Cabinet noted the proposed community municipal investment scheme would be used to support the Council's investment in the addressing the climate emergency. Importantly, this would also deliver investment returns to community investors.

Cabinet noted that the leased coach park arrangements at Bourton-on-the-Water had not been renewed when the lease expired in October 2021 as there was no benefit to the Council or the residents of the District.

Cabinet noted that an increased inflation provision of 2.5% had resulted in additional costs to the Council of £332,000.

Cabinet further noted that, it was hoped that future funding agreements to the Council from the Government would cover a minimum of two years so that appropriate planning and budget setting could take place in the coming years.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Deputy Chief Executive (and associated Officers) for all of the work which had been undertaken to produce a balanced, draft budget for consideration by Council.

Cabinet noted the difficulties faced by the Council in terms of financial planning due to the way in which the funding levels from Government were communicated.

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Cabinet acknowledged the importance of Councils being afforded the ability to take decisions on how revenues could be increased as Government funding decreased.

Councillor Mike Every proposed that the Cabinet agreed to the recommendations as outlined in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Joe Harris

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet

a) considered:

(i) the Budget proposals 2022/23,

(ii) the Medium Term Financial Strategy,

(iii) the Pay Policy Statement,

(iv) the Capital Strategy

(v) the Investment Strategy

(vi) the Treasury Management Strategy;

(vii) the opportunity to issue a £1 million Community Municipal Investment, with approve of the final terms being delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance; and

b), Recommended the above set of documents to Council.

c) Recommended the Local Council Tax Support Scheme as detailed at 2.61 to 2.63 for 2022/23 to Council.

d) Recommends to Council that, subject to the Council approval of recommendation (c), Council delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Executive to approve the Local Council Tax Support Scheme annual uprating of allowances and non-dependant deductions in line with national regulations.

Record of Voting – for: 7, against: 0, abstention: 0, absent: 1

93 Discretionary Rate Relief - Business Rates (Expanded Retail Discount)

Councillor Mike Every introduced the report and addressed the Cabinet.

Cabinet noted that the Council would facilitate the payment of the Government provided grant funding to eligible businesses. These payments would be made to eligible businesses starting on 1 April 2022.

Cabinet noted that the Government eligibility criteria was mandatory and betting shops were included with those eligible businesses who could apply for rate relief.

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Councillor Mike Every proposed that the Cabinet agreed to the recommendations as outlined in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Rachel Coxcoon.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet notes the contents of this report and endorses the following:

- a) Expanded Retail Discount as detailed in point 2 and Annex A;
- b) That delegation for award of such relief is given to the Group Manager for Resident Services.

Record of Voting – for: 7, against: 0, abstention: 0, absent: 1

94 S13A Discretionary Council Tax Appeal

Councillor Mike Every introduced the report and addressed the Cabinet.

Cabinet noted the reasons for the original decision on this matter which were outlined at paragraph 3.1 of the report.

Cabinet further noted that the property was not the main residence of the applicant.

Cabinet commented that the existing policy in relation to Council Tax appeals was straightforward and therefore the recommendations outlined in the report were fair and appropriate.

Cabinet noted that discounts in relation to Council Tax had already been applied to this property and further discounts were not eligible as per the existing policy.

Councillor Mike Every abstained from the vote as Cabinet were voting on a decision previously taken by him at a Decision Making meeting on this matter.

Councillor Jenny Forde proposed that the Cabinet agreed to the recommendations as outlined in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Doherty

RESOLVED:

- a) That Cabinet considered the appeal for Council Tax Discretionary discount submitted under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992
- b) That Cabinet upheld the Cabinet Member decision for the reasons detailed in paragraphs 2.3, 3.1 and 6.2 of this report

Record of Voting – for: 6, against: 0, abstention: 1, absent: 1.

95 Covid 19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF)

Councillor Mike Every introduced the report and addressed the Cabinet.

Cabinet noted that the Council would administer the funds attributed to the Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund to eligible businesses within the District.

Cabinet further noted that the Council had used the criteria specified by the Government when formulating the policy to determine the eligibility of businesses applying for funding.

Cabinet noted that significant grants (unrelated to this Fund) had already been distributed by the Council to businesses within the hospitality and retail sectors.

Cabinet acknowledged the work undertaken by Officers in ensuring that Government funding was efficiently and effectively provided to eligible businesses by the Council.

Councillor Mike Every proposed that the Cabinet agreed to the recommendations as outlined in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Joe Harris.

RESOLVED:
That Cabinet:

- a) Approved the Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund Policy, attached at Annex A;
- b) Approved a discount of 16 per cent to be applied to the eligible business rate accounts as set out in Annex B;
- c) Delegated authority to award further relief for the period to 30 September 2022 to the Deputy Chief Executive.

Record of Voting – for: 7, against: 0, abstention: 0, absent: 1

96 Planned Expenditure of the Homelessness Prevention Grant 2022-23

Councillor Lisa Spivey introduced the report and addressed the Cabinet.

Cabinet noted the importance of ensuring that all efforts continued to be made to ensure that instances of homelessness were prevented wherever possible.

Cabinet further noted the work undertaken by Officers throughout the pandemic to ensure that vulnerable people were provided with appropriate accommodation, both on short-term and longer term arrangements.

Cabinet noted the increasing inflation which would place further financial strain on those individuals and families on low incomes.

Cabinet noted the importance of ensuring all residents were placed in suitable accommodation.

Cabinet agreed that there needed to be a move nationally towards ensuring that short-term, expensive temporary accommodation was not utilised so heavily. Stable, longer term housing options were appropriate. This was the way in which the Council were approaching the housing requirements of its residents.

Cabinet noted that specific Officers were in place to ensure instances of homelessness did not occur and that all possible accommodation/housing options were utilised to the benefit of residents.

Cabinet further noted that the Council was committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable residents of the District were protected and provided with appropriate housing.

Councillor Lisa Spivey proposed that the Cabinet agreed to the recommendations as outlined in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Joe Harris.

RESOLVED That Cabinet:

- a) Approved the expenditure detailed within paragraphs 2.1 to 2.8 of this report.
- b) Approved the delegation of any amendments to these allocations to the Housing Manager in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness and the Deputy Chief Executive subject to compliance with the ring fenced grant conditions.
- c) Approved the delegation of any other uplifts or grants that may be given over the financial year to contain Covid outbreaks or address increased demands on the Housing Service be given to the Housing Manager in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness and Deputy Chief Executive Officer subject to compliance with the ring fenced grant conditions as set out in 3.1 to 3.5.

Record of Voting – for: 7, against: 0, abstention: 0, absent: 1.

97 Freedom of Information Act Requests Update

Councillor Joe Harris introduced the report.

Cabinet noted the importance of greater transparency and openness in relation to Council decisions and public access to information.

Cabinet noted the steps taken by the current administration including the installation of a webcasting system to make Council meetings more accessible to the general public.

All Council payments above £500 were available to view on the website.

In relation to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, the Council would be publishing information released following previous requests. It was important that the public could access information quickly and easily and the Council wanted to move to a position whereby FOI requests were not required via the publication of additional information.

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Councillor Joe Harris proposed that Cabinet agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Mike Evely.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- a) Noted the report;
- b) Acknowledged that quarterly statistics are now being published online; and
- c) Agreed that all freedom of information requests will be published on the councils website with effect from March 2022.

Record of Voting – for: 7, against: 0, abstention: 0, absent: 1.

98 Decision to Participate in 'Solar Together Cotswold' Group Buying Scheme for Domestic Solar Photovoltaic Panels

Cabinet agreed that this item would be deferred to a future meeting due to further information being required before a decision could be taken.

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

Cabinet noted the decisions taken by the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Forward Planning and the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance.

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

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

Meeting commenced at 6.00pm and closed at 7.16pm

Chair

(END)