

Cabinet  
02/November2023



COTSWOLD  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held on Thursday, 2 November 2023

### Councillors present:

Lisa Spivey - Chair  
Claire Bloomer  
Tony Dale

Paul Hodgkinson  
Juliet Layton

### 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, Group Finance Director  
(Publica)  
Jon Dearing, Assistant Director for Resident  
Services

Claire Locke, Assistant Director for Property  
and Regeneration  
Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business  
Manager  
Caleb Harris, Senior Democratic Services  
Officer  
Ana Prelici, Democratic Services Officer

### Observers:

Councillors Patrick Coleman and Nikki Ind  
Councillor Joe Harris (joining remotely)

### **182 Apologies**

Apologies were received from the Leader Councillor Joe Harris, and the Deputy Leader Councillor Evely.

Councillor Lisa Spivey assumed the Chair.

### **183 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

The Chair notified Members that a number of officers employed by the Publica Group had a disclosable pecuniary interest in regards to item 11 on the agenda and would leave the chamber for the duration of the item.

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#### **184 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting on 2 October 2023 were considered as presented in the document pack.

Councillor Bloomer proposed to accept the minutes and Councillor Layton seconded.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 2 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

#### **Voting Record**

**4 for, 0 against, 1 abstention**

#### **185 Leader's Announcements**

The Chair noted the announcement of Storm Ciaran and the work of flood wardens and the Council's emergency response team.

#### **186 Public Questions**

There were none.

#### **187 Member Questions**

There were none.

#### **188 Issues Arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit and Governance**

The Chair noted the recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 31 October. These were included in the supplement.

It was noted that the recommendations would be considered as part of the Parking Strategy and the Playing Pitch Strategy on the agenda.

#### **189 Publica Review**

The Chair notified Members that this item would be taken first, and then asked Publica officers who felt that they should leave the room to do so.

The purpose of the report was to present the recommendations from the consultants Human Engine.

The Leader, who had joined the meeting remotely, was invited to introduce the report.

The Leader renewed his apologies to Members for not being able to be present in person due to participation in a peer review exercise at South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The Leader outlined the report and presented the following points;

- Cotswold District Council in 2017 set up the teckal company Publica Group Ltd along with Cheltenham Borough Council, Forest of Dean District Council and West

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Oxfordshire District Council to create a cost-effective model for providing day-to-day services.

- It was noted that the majority of staff in 2017 were transferred to Publica, with the savings achieved through the rationalising of staff structures and not enrolling new employees into the Local Government Pension Scheme.
- It was outlined that the model had mostly achieved the savings it was designed for, but it was noted that the new administrations in the partner councils since its creation, and other challenges such as Covid-19 had presented pressures for the Publica model.
- It was also noted that the Peer Review conducted in 2022 had highlighted challenges such as governance and staff identity between the Council's and Publica as the service delivery company.
- Following the Peer Review recommendations agreed in January 2023, it was outlined that the consultancy firm Human Engine had been commissioned by the partner councils to look at the appropriateness of future services remaining within Publica.
- It was highlighted that the review undertaken had concluded that only repatriating select services would not address the challenges outlined. It was highlighted the recommendation from Human Engine was to return the majority of services to the Council, and to keep a few select services within the Publica partnership.
- The Leader noted that the recommendation from the report would require some upfront costs in the short-term as outlined within section 5.3 of Annex B. However, it was noted that the saving from reducing senior management costs, and Publica contract costs would mitigate these challenges.
- It was highlighted that that the decision was a major change for the Council, but that it was felt to be the best for residents.

It was noted that the Leader was not allowed to vote on the recommendations due to participating virtually.

The Chief Executive was then invited to provide any further comments. The following points were outlined:

- The transition plan was noted as being very important, and would be considered by Cabinet and Council in early 2024.
- It was noted that there was a need to work closely with Publica management to provide support to staff who may be nervous about the transition.
- It was noted that the transition plan would be outlined as soon as possible, providing the recommendations were agreed by all the partner councils.

It was noted that a Special Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting was provisionally scheduled to take place before Full Council considers the recommendation.

The Cabinet wished to thank officers for their work in delivering the report, and to providing the support to staff. The Chair noted the work of staff in going above and beyond to meet the needs of the Council and provide essential services.

Councillor Spivey proposed the recommendations, and Councillor Hodgkinson seconded.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

AGREED to recommend to Full Council to:

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1. APPROVE the recommendations set out in the Human Engine report (that the majority of services are returned to the Council as per the detail provided on page 12 of the Human Engine report);
2. AGREE That the Chief Executive oversees the creation of a detailed transition plan for subsequent agreement by Cabinet and Council;
3. ENDORSE the approach to the further due diligence outlined in the financial implications of the report including analysis of the detailed payroll data required, which will be essential to calculate the short and long-term costs associated with the recommendations set out in the Human Engine report.

#### **\*Voting Record**

**5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions, 3 Absent**

\*For technical reasons, the vote was taken by a show of hands.

## **190 Parking Strategy**

The purpose of the report was to consider proposals to undertake a full review of the Council's parking provision to ensure the efficient utilisation of the Council's off-street carparks and support access to the District's Town Centres including the gathering of further data on carpark usage ensure best use of Council assets.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation introduced the report and outlined the following points:

- It was noted that the last full review was in 2010 which was then refreshed in 2016.
- It was highlighted that the considerations had changed which included the increase in electric cars, the use of electric bikes and the focus on tackling climate change.
- It was noted that there was a strong desire to involve key stakeholders such as Town and Parish Councils in the review. It was highlighted that Gloucestershire County Council would also be involved as on-street parking was within its remit.
- It was noted that the strategy would seek to make the most of assets, and future-proof car parks. It was also highlighted that technology changes would need to be considered within the future strategy.
- It was highlighted that the Parent and Child Bays trial in the Brewery Car Park in Cirencester, had resulted in a large amount of positive feedback.

It was noted that Overview and Scrutiny Committee has raised a few considerations and the Cabinet's written response had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- Recommendation 1 on widening car parking bays – It was noted that these were part of traffic regulations, but that the car parks that had been renovated which included Sheep Street, The Forum, Rissington Road now had spaces which were 1 metre wider.
- Recommendation 2 on considering the level of need for and provision of disabled parking spaces – It was noted that these vary across the District but will be taken into account across the District.
- Recommendation 3 on the provision of secure bicycle parking – It was noted that there was a lot of sympathy with this recommendation, as standard and electric bikes

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were more valuable now. However, it was noted that the location of parking for bikes would vary depending on need.

There were comments around Northleach, Bourton and Bibury where parking is limited, and how issues like coach parking were examined within the strategy.

There were questions around consultation with businesses and residents, and consideration of long-stay car park nearer to the centre of Cirencester. The Cabinet Member noted that there would be the opportunity for online feedback for residents to provide comments to improve the strategy. It was also commented that considerations around the use of car parks, would be examined within the formation of the strategy.

It was highlighted that the strategy sought to meet the needs of most people as the use of personal vehicle transportation was prevalent.

It was noted that this review would also inform the update of the Local Plan and the Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan.

Councillor Ind as an observer, noted the importance of Town and Parish Council involvement, and the local work in Tetbury.

Councillor Coleman as an observer asked about the review in relation to the paused multi-storey car park development in Cirencester. Councillor Dale responded by noting that this review was about the overall strategy for parking and not moving immediately to solutions for the needs of areas at present.

Councillor Dale proposed and Councillor Layton seconded.

**RESOLVED:** That Cabinet

1. **AGREED** to review and update the Parking strategy to better reflect the changing needs of service users.
2. **AGREED** to undertake a full review to understand the requirements of the Councils future parking provision as detailed in Annex C.
3. **ENDORSED** the proposal at paragraph 7.1 to employ the services of a professional customer insight gathering company.

**\*Voting Record**

**5 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions**

\*Due to a technical error, the vote was taken by a show of hands

## **191** Playing Pitch Strategy

Councillor Dale left the meeting before this item started.

The purpose of this report was to consider the findings and recommendations proposed by consultants commissioned to develop a Playing Pitch Strategy for the District and to approve the Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture, Councillor Hodgkinson, introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- The report covered sports that were played on pitches in the winter (football, rugby, rugby league and hockey) and summer sports of cricket and polo.
- It was noted that this report was a refresh which usually takes place every 3 years.
- It was noted that the strategy was required to form part of the Local Plan to account for land use to meet current and future needs.
- It was highlighted that at present there were sufficient pitches to meet demands across most sports, but that population growth might change this.
- It was noted that the Council would collaborate with local organisations such as sports clubs and Town and Parish Councils to deliver on the action plan.
- The Member thanked the officers and the consultants for their work.

The Overview & Scrutiny recommendations were then examined in addition to the responses published in the agenda supplement:

- Recommendation 1 on the safety of 3G pitches – It was noted that only a part of the pitch would be affected, but that officers were consulting with Sport England on this.
- Recommendation 2 on bowling greens – It was noted that bowling was not considered a pitch sport and not part of the strategy. However, officers would consider other sports and whether they could be considered separately outside of the strategy.
- Recommendation 3 on the Steadings development – It was noted that the pitches had not been created yet within the development but would be added in the monitoring phase.
- Recommendation 4 on the use of Community Infrastructure Levy monies to fund sports facilities – It was outlined that Community Infrastructure Levy funding could be considered and that there were options for the Council and Town and Parish Councils.
- Recommendation 5 on encouraging volunteers to support sports clubs - It was outlined that officers would work with stakeholders to encourage volunteers.

There was a question about accessibility for individuals with disabilities and sports that cover all genders.

It was noted that the strategy was meant to include sports for all genders and that the Cabinet Member would ask officers consider the issue of accessibility for sports. It was highlighted that this would also be considered when those stakeholders were promoting sports.

Councillor Hodgkinson proposed the recommendations and Councillor Bloomer seconded.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

1. ENDORSED the findings of the consultants and approve the Playing Pitch Strategy, including the key recommendations and site specific action plan;
2. AGREED TO AUTHORISE officers to work in partnership with other organisations to establish the feasibility and funding sources for the projects identified within the strategy and to prepare business cases, where opportunities arise, and bring them forward for consideration;
3. NOTED that the resources needed to develop these partnerships and implement the action plan will be met from existing resources by reprioritising existing work.

**4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 4 Absent**

**192 2024/25 Budget Strategy And Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Update**

This report set out the Budget Strategy to support the preparation of the 2024/25 revenue and capital budgets and present an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy forecast.

The Chair then introduced the report in the absence of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Councillor Evemy. The following points were outlined.

- It was noted that the financial pressures faced by the Council were faced by councils nationally such as inflation and reductions in central government funding. It was highlighted that the Cabinet should be mindful of these factors for the upcoming budget.
- It was highlighted that the Cabinet Transformation Working Group was working with partners in Publica and Ubico to reduce the in-year financial pressures of £860,000 identified and further external pressures of around £450,000.
- It was noted in table ES3 that in 2024 a budget shortfall of £1.3 million was projected.
- It was noted that in the financial years of 2026/27 and 2027/28 the upcoming fairer funding review was projected to reset the position on business rates and lead to a reduction in income from £5 million to £2.3 million.
- It was highlighted that in 2024/25 and 2025/26 that the focus would be on building reserves to mitigate the challenges later in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- It was outlined that capital projects would need to be reviewed carefully in line with their business cases due to increases in interest rates.

The Deputy Chief Executive then addressed Cabinet and outlined the following points:

- It was outlined at paragraph 2.9 of the report that there was no immediate risk of a Section 114 notice needing to be issued, but there is a budget gap which must be closed.
- It was noted that the projected surplus for the next two financial years would be used to build the financial reserves for the year 2026/27 and 2027/28.
- It was noted that the staff pay award for 2023/24 had been agreed with an increase of £1,925 or 3.88% depending on individual salaries.
- It was highlighted that high interest rates were a risk in terms of any borrowing undertaken but had boosted cash balances that the Council holds.
- It was noted that the work up to the budget in 2024 was focussed on financial sustainability and delivering upon the priorities for the Council.

The Cabinet wished to thank officers for their work in driving down the budget gap and providing support to residents.

There were questions about the impact of the Fairer Funding Review and what representations were being made. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the impact would be moving funding from district councils to those local authorities with responsibility for Adult Social Care. The Chair then highlighted on the question of representations that these conversations would be brought up through the Local Government Association.

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It was highlighted that the consideration of fees and charges would need to take into account the increase in costs of providing non-statutory services.

Councillor Coleman as an observer asked about contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). The Deputy Chief Executive noted at paragraph 4.17, the review and revised employer funding schedule taking place would be taking place resulting in a £531,000 difference between the financial years 2023/24 and 2025/26.

The Chair noted that there was an assumption by the Government when formulating the Local Government Settlement that the maximum increase to Council Tax would be applied by councils. It was highlighted that the 1997 sale of homes by the councils has only provided reserves once and was no longer usable.

It was also noted that a public consultation was taking place from 3 November 2023 to the 8 December 2023 and would be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 11 January 2024.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

1. APPROVED the 2024/25 Budget Strategy as outlined in Section 4 of the report.
2. NOTED the forecast surplus on the General Fund revenue budget in 2024/25 and proposed transfer to the Financial Resilience Reserve.

**Voting Record - 4 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 4 Absent**

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

Cabinet noted the decisions taken.

The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 7.38 pm

Chair

(END)