



CABINET

MEETING : Wednesday, 17th June 2015

PRESENT : Cllrs. James (Chair), Dallimore, Noakes, Organ and Porter

Others in Attendance

Martin Shields, Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods

Ross Cook, Corporate Director

Jon Topping, Head of Finance

Atika Tarajiya, Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Norman

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Porter (Cabinet Member for Environment) declared a personal interest in agenda item 14 (Changes to the Fit to Rent accreditation scheme for privately rented properties) through his role as a landlord for student accommodation and private rented properties.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25th March 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

4. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions and deputations.

5. PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources informing Members of the progress made in discussions between Gloucester City Council (GCC) and Gloucestershire County Council (GlosCC) working together to deliver back office functions and appropriate frontline customer services for the benefit of the residents of the City.

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Councillor James highlighted the key areas of the report acknowledging that the two authorities had already demonstrated successful partnership working which could be developed further. He noted that the arrival of the joint Managing Director on the 6 July 2015, the outsourcing of the Human Resources and Communications team to GlosCC and the joint Quayside and Blackfriars regeneration project, would continue to promote this shared working arrangement and lead the way forward for future collaboration.

The Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods reported that the proposal received cross party support when presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 15 June 2015, when Members had been advised and that they would be given an opportunity to participate in discussion on any of the future shared working proposals.

Cabinet Members endorsed the approach, acknowledging that staff would need to be kept clearly informed of any progress to ensure their full support. The Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods reported that steps had been taken to involve affected staff from the early stages of the project and to keep them informed throughout. He advised that the both GCC and GlosCC were in the process of developing a forward communications plan to ensure staff remain aware of the mutual benefits of the shared working arrangements.

RESOLVED:

1. That the High Level Implementation Plan in Appendix 1 which considers services which may be delivered by Gloucestershire County Council on behalf of the Council and those services which may be commissioned by Gloucestershire County Council from the Council be approved.
2. That the action plan in Appendix 3 be approved and authorisation be given to Director of Services & Neighbourhoods to adjust the dates as appropriate in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Performance & Resources.
3. That further reports be submitted to Cabinet in respect of each service, on a case by case basis, for consideration and approval as appropriate.

6. SHARED HR SERVICE BETWEEN GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources seeking Members' approval to progress with a Section 101 agreement for a joint HR service between Gloucester City Council (GCC) and Gloucestershire County Council (GlosCC).

Councillor Noakes highlighted the key areas of the report commenting that the proposals would mean staff would now have access to wide ranging and specialist advice and services that were unavailable at present due to lack of resource. She noted that staff could be better supported with their career progression.

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RESOLVED:

1. That the GCC's HR team be joined with GlosCC's HR team.
2. That GCC's HR service staff be transferred to GlosCC under the principles of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) on 1st September 2015 or other date as agreed between both parties.
3. That GCC's HR functions be delegated to GlosCC, as host authority, in accordance with section 101 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 and under Part 1A Chapter 2 section 9EA of the Local Government Act 2000 and pursuant to the Local Authorities (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012.
4. Authority be delegated to the Head of Paid Service in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources and the s151 Officer, to enter into the s101 agreement and any other legal documentation and to take all necessary steps to implement the above mentioned resolutions.

7. 2014-15 FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member of Performance and Resources informing Members of the final Council position against agreed budgets for the 2014/15 financial year and highlighting some key performance indicators.

Councillor James summarised the key areas of the report, noting that Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the recommendations on the 15 June 2015 and placed on record his thanks to Officers for the significant savings achieved in the financial year. He reported that the General Fund balance was less than anticipated due to the deficit payment to the Gloucestershire Business Pool Rates, though the City Council had appealed to the Government for financial help to mitigate this.

RESOLVED:

1. That it be NOTED that:
 - (i) The savings achieved in year total £1.010m.
 - (ii) That the year-end position for the financial year 2014/15 is to increase the Council's General Fund balance by £63k
 - (iii) The increase in the general fund balance from £1.869m to £1.932m at the end of 2014/15.
 - (iv) The closure of the Housing Revenue Account as a result of the successful stock transfer to Gloucester City Homes. (Paragraph 8.11 details proposed transfers to earmarked reserves for HRA balances).
 - (v) The Council has been required to make a deficit payment to the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool as a result of losses at Tewkesbury Borough Council, as detailed in Section 7.
2. That the transfers to and from earmarked reserves as below and detailed in sections 8 and 9 of this report be approved.
 - £1million to Environmental Liability Reserve

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- £400k to Major Repairs Reserve
- £275k to Pension Liability reserve
- £5k to Three Choirs Reserve
- £14k to Members Allocation Reserve
- £10k from Historic Buildings Reserve
- £12.5k to Portfolio Reserve
- £313k to Regeneration Reserve

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE - QUARTER 4 REPORT 2014/15

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources informing Members of the Treasury management activities for quarter 4: 1st December 2014 to 31st March 2015.

Cabinet Members endorsed the approach, noting the comprehensive detail provided within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and note that no changes are required to the prudential indicators.

9. PROPOSAL FOR A NEW FINANCIAL SYSTEM AND A SHARED SERVICE AGREEMENT

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources seeking approval for a change to the Council's financial system from Advanced Business Solutions (ABS) Financials to Civica Financials through the implementation of CIVICA financials in a shared working arrangement with Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC) and to confirm a willingness to enter into other shared Finance service arrangements with MHDC on systems administration and transaction processing.

Councillor Organ summarised the key areas of the report. Cabinet Members were pleased to note that the City Council would benefit for the expertise of MHDC and thereby improve existing service and procedures.

RESOLVED:

1. That the proposed shared working arrangement with Malvern Hills District Council and associated financial system to enable further improvement and resilience in the financial management of the Council be approved; and
2. Authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources to negotiate on further shared working arrangements and procurement with Malvern Hills District Council on financial systems, administration and transaction processing.

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3. Authority be delegated to the S151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, in entering into the required legal agreement and to take all the necessary steps to implement the above mentioned resolutions.

10. COUNCIL ADVERTISING NETWORK

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources seeking approval for the proposal to introduce advertising to the Council's website via the Council Advertising Network for a 1 year pilot, working with CapacityGrid, who offer an end-to-end solution for Councils.

Councillor Dallimore reported that this proposal enhanced the Council's refurbished website and was an appropriate way to generate income which could be utilised to promote City wide events and announcements to residents. She commented that other options had been considered though this was deemed most appropriate for the organisation.

Cabinet Members endorsed the approach reflecting that this was a positive step in generating income and tool to connect with residents. The Corporate Director advised Members that Civica had no IT security concerns and commented that CapacityGrid were offering a higher level of security than required.

RESOLVED:

1. That the proposal to work with the CapacityGrid for a minimum of 1 year to pilot income-generating advertising on the Council's website be approved.
2. That the project be monitored on a regular basis with a report produced after 1 year with findings and proposals for the future.

11. AN UPDATE ON ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH IN GLOUCESTER

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods updating Members on the progress of implementing Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and Public Health interventions.

Councillor Dallimore reported that the focus of the report was on the progress made in the last 12 months, though the scheme had been in operation since 2012. She advised Members that the County Commissioning Group (CCG) had been successful in their bid to the Prime Minister's Challenge Fund and secured an additional £1 million for the continuation of the Social Prescribing project.

Cabinet Members endorsed the approach acknowledging that the City Council had adapted their approach around the ABCD model. They were pleased to note that Councillor Dallimore would be leading on this topic at the Local Government Association (LGA) conference, as part of a peer review, later in the year.

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RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That the progress made against the Council Plan to implement the Asset Based approach be noted.

12. AFFORDABLE HOUSING PARTNERSHIP AND THE SELECTION OF PREFERRED REGISTERED PROVIDERS TO DELIVER AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACROSS THE JOINT CORE STRATEGY STRATEGIC SITES

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning seeking approval for the creation of an Affordable Housing Partnership and the undertaking of the selection of preferred Registered Providers to deliver homes in the strategic allocations of the Joint Core Strategy area.

Cabinet Members acknowledged that the proposal had been internally scrutinised and was designed to be a constructive method of advising developers across the Joint Core Strategy Area.

RESOLVED:

1. That an Affordable Housing Partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council to oversee the delivery of affordable homes across the Strategic Allocation Sites within the Joint Core Strategy area over the JCS Plan Period be approved.
2. Authority be given to the City Council to establish a list of preferred providers of affordable housing for a period of up to 5 years across the Strategic Allocation Sites within the Joint Core Strategy Area jointly with Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council.
3. Authority be delegated to the Housing Strategy & Enabling Service Manager to evaluate and select Preferred Providers for the delivery and/or management of new affordable housing on the Strategic Allocation Sites, noting that the selection will be carried out jointly with Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Councils and that the Councils will enter into a memorandum of understanding with the preferred providers.

13. CHANGES TO THE FIT TO RENT ACCREDITATION SCHEME FOR PRIVATELY RENTED PROPERTIES

Councillor Porter (Cabinet Member for Environment) declared a personal interest in agenda item 14 (Changes to the Fit to Rent accreditation scheme for privately rented properties) through his role as a landlord for student accommodation and private rented properties.

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Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning seeking approval to introduce a charging regime for the 'Fit to Rent' private rented accreditation scheme and to target the scheme to student accommodation.

Councillor Organ highlighted the key areas of the report and reported that the scheme would now focus on the student accommodation sector since it had best utilised and benefitted most from the original scheme.

Councillor James explained that this change would free up limited resources to tackle sub- standard accommodation within the City. He explained that the revision to the scheme was for the mutual benefit of landlords and students and noted that Hartpury College and the University of Gloucestershire had been consulted and pledged to continue referring their students to the Fit to Rent list.

RESOLVED:

1. That the existing Fit to Rent scheme is adapted to become an accreditation scheme for student accommodation.
2. That Landlords who wish to accredit their private rented properties for use as student accommodation be required to pay a Fit to Rent registration fee of £70.00 every three years to the Council. The fee will apply to all property sizes.

14. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN DECISIONS

Cabinet considered the report of the Monitoring Officer informing Members of two recent Ombudsman investigations resulting in findings of fault or injustice on the part of the Council.

The Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods highlighted the key areas of the report advising Members that measures had been taken to address the issues highlighted with the Ombudsman's report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the report be noted;
2. That the Local Authority is satisfied that steps have been taken to address the findings and consider whether any other action should be taken;
3. That authority be delegated to the Corporate Directors, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members, to produce a response to the Ombudsman's reports and ensure that this is sent to all Members and the Ombudsman.

15. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the following item of business on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of

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business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public are present during consideration of these items there will be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended.

16. CIVICA REVENUES & BENEFITS CONTRACT UPDATE EXTENSION

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources updating Members on the progress of the Civica Revenues and Benefits Business Partnership and seeking approval to offer extension of the existing revenues and benefits contract with Civica UK Ltd.

Cabinet Members acknowledged the need for a robust system to provide a high quality of service to residents particularly in light of significant Government Welfare changes planned for the future.

RESOLVED:

The recommendation as laid out in the exempt report.

17. RETAIL- LED REGENERATION AT KINGS QUARTER

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy updating Members on the further progress made on the new bus station for the Kings Quarter scheme and the revised tender sum for the design process.

RESOLVED:

The recommendations as laid out in the exempt report.

18. PROPERTY SEARCHES LITIGATION

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources updating Members on the progress of the negotiations with the APPS Claimants with regard to their claims against the Council for refunds of property search fees.

Councillor James summarised the main areas of the report and advised Members that a final settlement had now been agreed.

RESOLVED:

The recommendation as laid out in the exempt report.

Time of commencement: 18:00 hours

Time of conclusion: 18:45 hours

Chair