



COUNCIL

MEETING : Thursday, 28th January 2016

PRESENT : Cllrs. Field (Mayor), Beeley (Sheriff & Deputy Mayor), James, Dallimore, Noakes, D. Norman, Organ, Porter, Haigh, Hilton, Tracey, McLellan, Smith, Hobbs, Lugg, C. Witts, Hanman, Lewis, Bhaimia, S. Witts, Llewellyn, Williams, Brown, Dee, Taylor, Hansdot, Patel, Randle, Toleman, Chatterton, Pullen, Etheridge, Hampson, H. Norman and Pearsall

Others in Attendance

Jon McGinty, Managing Director

Ross Cook, Corporate Director

Andrew Cummings, Management Accountant

Shirin Wotherspoon, Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Tanya Davies, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

APOLOGIES : Cllr. Gravells

48. MINUTES

48.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2015 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

49.1 Councillors Lugg, Hansdot, Toleman, Beeley (Sheriff) declared personal interests in Agenda Item 13(2), a Notice of Motion from the Labour Group concerning social housing rents, as they were Gloucester City Homes Board Members.

49.2 Councillors Porter (Cabinet Member for Environment), Organ (Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning) and Patel declared personal interests in Agenda Item 9, a report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources seeking approval to change the level of discount for Class C empty properties, as they were private landlords for properties within the City boundaries.

49.3 Councillor Dallimore (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods) declared a personal interest in Items 13 (1), (3) and (4) as she was employed by Richard Graham MP.

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50. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

- 50.1 Mr Mark Ward noted his disappointment at having been prevented from asking his question the Licensing and Enforcement Committee meeting on 8 December 2015 because it was deemed not to be relevant to the business of the meeting. He asked the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods why the Council was granting private hire licenses to individuals convicted of dealing drugs.
- 50.2 Councillor Dallimore thanked Mr Ward for his question and noted that it was up to the Chair of a meeting to determine what was and was not relevant to the business of that meeting. She explained that the Council took public safety very seriously and that, while she was unable to comment on individual cases, she could give an assurance that each case was judged on its own merits and that the appropriate processes were followed.

51. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

- 51.1 Mr Zeya Ahmed, Chair of Gloucester Hackney Carriage Association (GHCA) stated the GHCA had worked closely with the Council over many years to resolve any issues as they arose and that he was disappointed that the same had not been possible in respect of the decision to make both private hire and hackney carriage drivers retake their driving test every 10 years, including existing drivers. He advised that he considered the consultation to be flawed and did not accept the results. He explained the GHCA had its own processes in place to deal with disciplinary matters and therefore considered the new policy to be prejudiced against drivers of good standing. He stated that the GHCA had lost confidence in the Chair of the Licensing and Enforcement Committee and asked the Council to reconsider the decision or face legal action.
- 51.2 Councillor James (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy) expressed disappointment in the personal remarks made and stated that, while he appreciated the views of drivers and the GHCA, the decision had been taken some time ago and was agreed on a cross-party basis following appropriate consultation. A number of drivers had already taken the test, therefore it would not be appropriate to consider rescinding the decision. He noted that the general public were supportive of the new policy and he encouraged the GHCA to continue working with the Council in the interests of the City and its residents.

52. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor

- 52.1 The Mayor announced that the date of the Mayor's Ball had been moved and would now take place on 20 May 2016.
- 52.2 The Mayor noted that he had taken part in the 'Mayor of Where?' feature on Radio 1 and encouraged Members to listen to the recording.

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Cabinet Members

- 52.3 Councillor Dallimore reported that the Gloucester had been shortlisted for the Best New Scheme in the Best Bar None Awards. She congratulated all involved and highlighted the significant efforts made by premises' to drive up standards.

53. MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME

Leader and Cabinet Members' Question Time

- 53.1 Councillor Haigh (Leader of the Labour Group) noted a recent court case and asked the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources whether there had been any Housing Benefit appeals that disputed the application of an under-occupation reduction because of a disabled child or a panic room.
- 53.2 Councillor D. Norman (Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources) stated that he was not aware of any such issues being raised, but undertook to provide a full written response.
- 53.3 Councillor Haigh asked the Cabinet Member to also provide details of the number of discretionary housing payments made to cover hardship caused by the under-occupation reduction.
- 53.4 Councillor D. Norman undertook to provide the information requested.
- 53.5 Councillor Haigh asked the Leader of the Council whether the City would step up and find homes for refugee children in Europe and make a formal offer of help to the Government.
- 53.6 Councillor James stated that Gloucester was a welcoming City; offers of help to refugees had previously been made in partnership with the County and neighbouring District Councils and he was sure the Council would continue to take whatever steps it could to help.
- 53.7 Councillor Hilton (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) asked the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources how the devolution bid was progressing and what the likelihood was of receiving a good deal from the Government.
- 53.8 Councillor D. Norman reported that the process was ongoing and that it was important to be a part of that process. A significant amount of work had been carried out very quickly, but it was not yet at a stage where a statement could be made because a draft deal had not yet been received.
- 53.9 Councillor Hilton asked the Leader of the Council whether he would continue to object to any suggestion that Gloucestershire should have a directly elected Mayor.
- 53.10 Councillor James advised that there was no appetite on any side for a directly elected Mayor.

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- 53.11 Councillor Hilton asked the Leader of the Council how confident he was that a planning application from Stanhope in respect of the Kings Quarter scheme would be submitted by the deadline of 31 March 2016.
- 53.12 Councillor James stated that he was not prepared to comment on commercial matters in an open Council meeting. He advised that Phase 1 of the scheme would commence shortly with the redevelopment of the bus station and he was confident that Phase 2 would be ready to begin on completion of Phase 1.
- 53.13 Councillor Hilton asked whether the anchor store tenancy has been agreed and for confirmation of the tenant.
- 53.14 Councillor James referred Councillor Hilton to his previous response and advised that he would not discuss commercial matters in an open meeting.
- 53.15 Councillor Pullen asked the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods what discussions the Council had had with the County Council regarding proposals to exclude private hire drivers from bus lanes in the City.
- 53.16 Councillor Dallimore stated that she was not in favour of the proposals and that a formal response to the consultation may already have been submitted. She undertook to provide Councillor Pullen with details of the Council's response.
- 53.17 Councillor Pullen asked if the Cabinet Member could also confirm whether drivers would continue to be given stickers to authorise their use of the bus lanes.
- 53.18 Councillor Dallimore undertook to include the information in her response.
- 53.19 Councillor Hampson asked the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning what interim measures the Council had put in place in respect of the statutory out of hours homelessness service since the County Council withdrew the emergency duty team, what the long term plans were and what budgetary provision had been made.
- 53.20 Councillor Organ (Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning) advised that the Council was working with St Mungos to make provision as they were very experienced and were familiar with many of those sleeping on the streets in Gloucester. He explained that there were very few genuinely homeless individuals in the City, however, there were a significant number of individuals with complex needs who slept rough despite having accommodation available to them. He stated that preventing people from getting to the point of sleeping on the street was a key priority and the Council worked with a number of agencies on this. He noted the importance of being aware of all the facts so that each case could be dealt with in the right way.
- 53.21 Councillor Hampson asked the Cabinet Member to confirm the rate payable to on call staff during the interim measures.
- 53.22 Councillor Organ advised that he did not get involved in staff pay matters and undertook to provide a written response.

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- 53.23 Councillor Lugg asked the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods why Members of the Licensing and Enforcement Committee were led to believe that a number of Councils were implementing a policy of requiring all private hire drivers to retake their driving test every 10 years, as opposed to only applying it to new applicants, when in fact only one other Council had done this.
- 53.24 Councillor Dallimore stated that she appreciated the views of the GHCA, but noted that the matter had been well-debated and approved with cross-party support. She advised that other Councils were implementing the same policy for the same reasons of public safety. She noted that a number of drivers had already taken the test and that she hoped others would follow suit.
- 53.25 Councillor Williams asked the Cabinet Member for Environment if he agreed that the Clean for the Queen scheme was a positive initiative and a good way of involving communities in the life of the City.
- 53.26 Councillor Porter (Cabinet Member for Environment) stated that the Clean for the Queen scheme was an excellent idea and he congratulated Ismael Rhyman, Neighbourhood Manager, for the work undertaken. He reported that Keep Britain Tidy had become aware of the idea and were keen to see it duplicated around the country. He noted that the cleanliness of the City was not only the responsibility of the Council and he encouraged Members and the public to bring any issues to his attention.
- 53.27 Councillor McLellan (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) asked the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning if, in the wake of recent floods around the country, he would be asking Planning Officers to look at the issue of building on flood plains and review policies as necessary.
- 53.28 Councillor Organ advised that the Joint Core Strategy was under review by the Inspector and the Council awaited the feedback. He stated that the matter of flooding was discussed frequently and that officers were very aware of the relevant concerns.

54. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

- 54.1 Council considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources seeking approval to retain the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS) for 2016/17.
- 54.2 Councillor D. Norman moved the recommendations set out in the report. He explained that a review of claimants under the scheme had revealed that there had been a reduction, which had served to offset the reduction in funding received. He noted that the Council's major preceptors supported the Council's approach, but shared its concerns about the future cost of the scheme in light of further reductions in funding.
- 54.3 Councillor James seconded the motion.
- 54.4 **RESOLVED** - That the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme be adopted as the approved scheme for Gloucester City Council for 2016/17.

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55. CHANGE IN DISCOUNT LEVELS FOR CLASS C EMPTY PROPERTIES

- 55.1 Council considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources seeking approval to change the level of discount for Class C empty properties from 100% in the first month and 25% in subsequent 5 months, to 25% for the 6 months' period.
- 55.2 Councillor D. Norman moved the recommendation set out in the report and explained that the proposed change would generate an additional income of £25,000 for the Council. He noted that the majority of the District Councils in the City had also removed the 100% exemption.
- 55.3 Councillor James seconded the motion.
- 55.4 In response to a question from Councillor Smith concerning the Council's ability to use its own discretion to deviate from the policy in exceptional circumstances, such as extreme financial hardship, Councillor D. Norman advised that he was confident that the Council retained this discretion, but that he would confirm in a written response.
- 55.5 **RESOLVED** - That the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme be adopted as the approved scheme for Gloucester City Council for 2016/17.

56. GLOUCESTER PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY 2015-2025

- 56.1 Council considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources seeking the adoption of the revised Playing Pitch Strategy and Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy following a period of public consultation.
- 56.2 Councillor Organ moved the recommendations set out in the report and explained that the strategy had already been endorsed by the Planning Policy Sub-Committee and the Cabinet. He stated that the strategy demonstrated the Council's recognition of the importance of sport in the City and provided a framework for improvement and future provision. He noted that the consultation resulted in some minor amendments and explained that the Council would drive delivery of the strategy together with the delivery group formed of key stakeholders.
- 56.3 Councillor Taylor seconded the motion.
- 56.4 Councillor McLellan welcomed the strategy and stated that he hoped it would be successfully delivered.
- 56.5 Councillor Hilton thanked the Steering Group for including in the strategy clear guidance in respect of proposals for the former Civil Service Ground, which was owned by a developer. He encouraged the Council to continue efforts to bring the site back into use as a sports field and resist proposals for high-density residential development.
- 56.6 Councillor Tracey echoed calls to bring the former Civil Service Ground back into use and stated that residential development of the site would have a significant

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impact on infrastructure in the area. She suggested that the Council gave consideration to a compulsory purchase order.

56.7 Councillor Organ advised that the strategy would not be delivered overnight, but that the delivery group would oversee the implementation of the framework that had been developed. He noted the comments regarding the former Civil Service Ground and agreed that it would be preferable to retain the site as an open space, but as the Council did own the land, no guarantees could be given.

56.8 **RESOLVED –**

(1) That the Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy 2015 – 2025, as provided at Appendix 3, and the Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy, as provided at Appendix 4, be adopted by the Council; and

(2) That an officer led Delivery Group be established for a period of three years from adoption of Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy 2015 - 2025 and the Artificial Grass Pitch Strategy to monitor, evaluate and review the delivery of the strategies and related action plan as set out in paragraph 9.2, which shall report to the Cabinet on an annual basis.

57. 2016 REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

57.1 Council considered a report of the Chair of the independent Members' Allowances Panel concerning the 2016 review of the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme and seeking a decision on an appropriate scheme for the payment of allowances in 2016-17.

57.2 Councillor James acknowledged the recommendations of the Panel contained within the report and moved the following motion:

That the current Members' Allowances Scheme be adopted as the approved Scheme for 2016-17.

57.3 Councillor Dallimore seconded the motion.

57.4 Councillor James explained that the Council would not ordinarily seek to depart from the recommendations of the independent Panel, however, the consultation undertaken demonstrated that Members were happy with the scheme, therefore he saw no reason to amend it at the present time. He noted the Panel's proposal to remove the provision for annual indexation in line with the staff pay award and explained that as the hourly rate used in the formula was now out of date, there was no logic in preserving the formula. If the formula was updated, it would award Councillors a greater increase than that proposed for staff, therefore the most sensible approach was for current scheme to be adopted for 2016-17, including the retention of the annual indexation provision.

57.5 **RESOLVED -** That the current Members' Allowances Scheme be adopted as the approved Scheme for 2016-17.

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58. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS, MAY 2016-NOVEMBER 2018

- 58.1 Council considered a report of the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager seeking approval for a two-year programme of ordinary meetings of Council and other meetings for the period of May 2016 to April 2018.
- 58.2 Councillor D. Norman moved the recommendation set out in the report and advised that the Council was required to approve a programme of meetings each year.
- 58.3 Councillor James seconded the motion.
- 58.4 Councillor Lugg noted that Airport Board meetings had been moved to the first Monday of each month.
- 58.5 Councillor Smith thanked officers for providing a two-year programme as it made it possible for Members' to plan much further ahead.
- 58.6 **RESOLVED** – That the two-year programme of ordinary meetings of Council and other meetings for the period of May 2016 to April 2018 be approved.

59. NOTICES OF MOTION

(1) Notice of Motion from the Labour Group

- 59.1 Moved by Councillor Hobbs and seconded by Councillor Smith:

“More than half of new homes built today are not big enough to meet the needs of the people who live in them. Research by the Royal Institute of Architects shows that houses are being built up to 25sq ft smaller than the recommended size for a three bed family home.

This County needs to build more housing, but these houses need to be built to the recommended space standards.

This Council:

1. Instructs the Planning Policy Committee to develop local planning policy which ensures all future houses are built to the recommended national space standards.
2. Seeks to ensure the minimum standard is applied to the Joint Core Strategy.

Calls on the MP to support a change in legislation through Parliament to make the recommended space standards be applied to all houses across the country.”

- 59.2 The motion was put to the vote and was lost.

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(2) Notice of Motion from the Labour Group

59.3 Moved by Councillor Haigh and seconded by Councillor Smith:

“This Council notes that the announcement by the Government in July to cut social housing rents by 1% for the next four years has made it tougher for Councils and housing associations to build more housing across the country.

Before the General Election the City MP advocated and worked towards the transfer of the Council’s housing stock to an independent housing association. He spoke at the time of the investment in existing and new social housing this would allow as the Council was unable to borrow to do this. Since the election this announcement on rents together with introduction of the Housing and Planning Bill has set out a Government policy that will result in fewer homes being available for affordable and social rent. This was also supported by the Housing Minister, Kris Hopkins MP, our City MP and the City’s Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning.

This Council believes that tackling the housing deficit will require an increase in supply across all tenures. We support measures that increase home ownership but there is also a need to provide homes for affordable and social rent. Investing in affordable housing for low wage earners and those on social housing waiting lists can help reduce the £24 billion annual housing benefit bill; boost employment in the construction industry; support local economies; and reduce the £2.5 billion cost of poor quality housing to the NHS. We believe the Bill does not support this aspiration.

This Council calls on the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to write to the City MP asking what he is doing to ensure that all residents of the City will be able to access the homes they need in the future and that his response is published on the Council website.”

59.4 The motion was put to the vote and was lost.

(3) Notice of Motion from the Liberal Democrat Group

59.5 Moved by Councillor Hilton and seconded by Councillor McLellan:

“This Council expresses concern about the number of homeless people that have been sleeping rough on the streets of Gloucester this winter, particularly in the city centre.

This Council agrees that no-one should have to sleep rough on the streets of Gloucester and that this council should make provision for adequate emergency night shelter accommodation so that the homeless can be offered somewhere warm to stay overnight.

This Council, therefore asks, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to report back to this Council with proposals to provide enhanced support to homeless people who arrive in Gloucester, ensuring that no-one has to sleep rough within the boundaries of this Council.”

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- 59.6 Councillor Organ moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor James:

“This Council:

expresses concern about the number of homeless people that have been sleeping rough on the streets of Gloucester this winter, particularly in the city centre-;

~~This Council~~ agrees that no-one should have to sleep rough on the streets of Gloucester and that ~~this council should make~~ **there should continue to be** provision for adequate emergency ~~night shelter~~ accommodation so that the homeless can be offered somewhere warm to stay overnight-;

notes that many rough sleepers do have accommodation elsewhere and acknowledges that the decision to sleep rough is often as a result of complex personal issues;

~~This Council, therefore asks,~~ the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to report back to ~~this Council~~ **Members** with ~~proposals to provide enhanced support to homeless people who arrive in Gloucester, ensuring that no-one has to sleep rough within the boundaries of this Council~~ **details of the outreach service provided by St Mungos and proposals to secure additional emergency accommodation in partnership with other local authorities.”**

- 59.7 Councillor Hilton accepted the amendment.

- 59.8 The following motion, as amended, was put to the vote and was carried:

“This Council:

expresses concern about the number of people that have been sleeping rough on the streets of Gloucester this winter, particularly in the city centre;

agrees that no-one should have to sleep rough on the streets of Gloucester and that there should continue to be provision for adequate emergency accommodation so that the homeless can be offered somewhere warm to stay overnight;

notes that many rough sleepers do have accommodation elsewhere and acknowledges that the decision to sleep rough is often as a result of complex personal issues;

asks the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to report back to Members with details of the outreach service provided by St Mungos and proposals to secure additional emergency accommodation in partnership with other local authorities.”

- 59.9 The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

(4) Notice of Motion from the Conservative Group

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59.10 Moved by Councillor James and seconded by Councillor Noakes:

“This Council:

notes that 2016 is the 800th anniversary of the coronation of Henry III in Gloucester Cathedral and resolves to work with the Cathedral, Marketing Gloucester and other partners to maximise the benefits in social, cultural and economic terms of this important occasion;

notes the suggestion made on social media that Gloucester should petition to be granted Royal City status on the basis of the Henry III anniversary and the city’s many other royal connections and resolves to consult the public and key stakeholders, including the City MP, as to whether this suggestion should be pursued.”

59.11 Councillor Hilton moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor McLellan:

“This Council:

notes that 2016 is the 800th anniversary of the coronation of Henry III in Gloucester Cathedral and resolves to work with the Cathedral, Marketing Gloucester and other partners to maximise the benefits in social, cultural and economic terms of this important occasion;

notes the suggestion made on social media that Gloucester should petition to be granted Royal City status on the basis of the Henry III anniversary and the city’s many other royal connections and resolves to **consider this at an all-party working group ahead of consulting** the public and key stakeholders, including the City MP, as to whether this suggestion should be pursued.”

59.12 Councillor James accepted the amendment.

59.13 The following motion, as amended, was put to the vote and was carried:

“This Council:

notes that 2016 is the 800th anniversary of the coronation of Henry III in Gloucester Cathedral and resolves to work with the Cathedral, Marketing Gloucester and other partners to maximise the benefits in social, cultural and economic terms of this important occasion;

notes the suggestion made on social media that Gloucester should petition to be granted Royal City status on the basis of the Henry III anniversary and the city’s many other royal connections and resolves to consider this at an all-party working group ahead of consulting the public and key stakeholders, including the City MP, as to whether this suggestion should be pursued.”

59.14 The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

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60. WRITTEN QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS

60.1 There were no written questions.

Time of commencement: 7.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 10.50 pm hours

Chair