



COUNCIL

MEETING : Thursday, 27th February 2020

PRESENT : Cllrs. Finnegan (Sheriff & Deputy Mayor), Cook, H. Norman, Gravells, Morgan, Watkins, Hilton, Stephens, Tracey, James, Lugg, Hanman, Lewis, Wilson, Bhaimia, Haigh, Williams, D. Brown, Dee, Taylor, Field, Hansdot, Patel, Toleman, D. Norman, Pullen, Hampson, Brooker, Brazil, J. Brown, Coole, Derbyshire, Hyman, Melvin, Ryall, Walford and Bowkett

Others in Attendance

Managing Director
Corporate Director (Partnerships)
Corporate Director (Transformation)
Solicitor
Head of Policy and Resources
Head of Communities
Head of Place
Head of Cultural Services
Policy and Governance Manager
Democratic and Electoral Services Team Leader

APOLOGIES : Cllr. Organ

68. MINUTES

68.1 The minutes of the Special Council meeting held on 27 November 2019 and of the Ordinary Council meeting on 30 January 2020 were signed as a correct record by the Deputy Mayor.

69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

69.1 Councillor Stephens declared a personal interest in the Final Budget Proposals by virtue of his involvement with Gloucester Law Centre.

70. CALL OVER

70.1 Items 8 and 9 were not called over as each required a recorded vote in accordance with Regulation 2 of The Local Authorities (Standing Orders)

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(England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 and Council Procedure Rule 18.05.

71. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

71.1 There were no public questions.

72. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

72.1 There were no petitions or deputations.

73. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Deputy Mayor

73.1 The Deputy Mayor informed Members that the Annual Civic Service would take place at 3pm on 8 March at Gloucester Cathedral. She further informed Members that the Mayor's Charity Ball would take place on 22nd May at Hatherley Manor.

The Leader of the Council

73.2 The Leader of the Council, Councillor Cook, stated that there had been speculation over the Council's relationship with the Barn Owl Centre and that the Council was attempting to move the Centre. Councillor Cook confirmed that this was not the case.

Members of the Cabinet

73.3 The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, Councillor H. Norman announced that the Gender Pay Gap for Gloucester City Council on 31 March 2019 had significantly reduced to 5.4% from 15.36% as of 31 March 2018.

This reduction was in part due to both a slightly higher number of staff falling within the reporting threshold and a slightly higher proportion of female staff falling within the upper pay quartile when compared to 2018.

73.4 Councillor Norman also updated Members on the progress since the implementation of the contact centres in January 2020. She informed Members the contact centre received over 2,000 calls. 40% to customer services, 29% to council tax or business rates, 13% to benefits, 11% to housing and 7% to pay invoices.

The new contact centre software was enabling managers within the various services to monitor calls for quality assistance and training and to monitor trends in call subjects.

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- 73.5 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy, Councillor Gravells, stated that, in view of reports of building on flood plains, there was a requirement as part of the Joint Core Strategy to mitigate against flood risk and that developments should lead to a reduction in flood risk.
- 73.6 The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Morgan, informed Members that the Culture Trust expected to make a bid for £150k and that, if successful, would improve the City's cultural offer.

74. FINAL BUDGET PROPOSALS (INCLUDING MONEY PLAN AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME)

- 74.1 The Leader of the Council, Councillor Cook moved and the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor H. Norman seconded the budget.
- 74.2 Councillor Cook thanked his Cabinet colleagues, and specifically the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, for their hard work on the budget proposals. He also thanked senior officers, particularly the Head of Policy and Resources for their efforts in formulating the proposals. Councillor Cook expressed his thanks to staff from across the authority in advance for the work that lay ahead.
- 74.3 Councillor Cook stated that the Council was operating in a different context compared to when the last budget was proposed. He outlined that the country was working to higher levels of certainty than previous years due to a clear direction on Brexit and with the UK now having a government with a solid majority following Boris Johnson's election victory in December 2019. Councillor Cook also noted that Gloucester had also elected a Conservative MP in Richard Graham with a majority of over 10,000.
- 74.3 Councillor Cook outlined some of the achievements of the Council over the past year:
- 74.4 The Property Investment strategy enabled the Council to deliver Council plan priorities. The acquisition of St Oswalds enabled options for the authority to proceed with a housing scheme, with a paper expected at Cabinet in March 2020 to enable the first steps of social housing delivery on site. The purchase of the Eastgate shopping centre removed a lease liability for the Council as well as presenting long term improvement opportunities for the city centre by changing the mix of uses. Unlike other councils, Gloucester was investing in its economic area, ensuring that plans could be drawn up for the short, medium and longer term, and fulfil ambitions for the city.
- 74.5 The opening of Potters Place was expected to reduce the temporary accommodation budget by up to £200k per annum and showed that this administration is focussing on providing the best possible support and working hard to keep those people in temporary housing need within the city. The initial investment from the council was £1.4M and had already seen substantial year on year savings.

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- 74.6 •The transformation programme that had been undertaken had delivered significant changes, including the move to Shire Hall, new IT equipment to officers and Members, the deployment of Firmstep processes and most recently the new contact centre launch for Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits and Housing which enabled the council to be flexible with resources and capture performance data which had not been possible previously. The HKP warehouses would soon be disposed of which would provide a financial saving to the council and continuing the regeneration of the Docks. The cultural change within TG2 and the recent staff survey included positive trends on key factors connected to officer satisfaction.
- 74.7 Councillor Cook noted the ongoing work in Kings Square, and the demolition of the car park and Bentinck House in Bruton Way, which was part of the redevelopment of the wider Kings Quarter which would equate to an investment of approximately £90m. He further stated that a preferred partner had been identified for the Fleece with detailed plans expected at Cabinet following the elections taking place in May. The administration had also committed to support the Cathedral with Project Pilgrim II. He advised that the Council had committed £150K to assist with match funding. Councillor Cook highlighted that the Westgate Heritage Action Zone was set to deliver a total improvement spend of £3.8million. Additionally, the remaining development of the Barbican site for student accommodation was in final negotiations and was expected to commence on site shortly, with a target completion date of September 2021, which would bring in an additional 200 students which would assist the vibrancy and footfall in the city centre.
- 74.8 Councillor Cook highlighted new services at the Crematorium which were expected to generate a further £40k of income. These services would involve the provision of services of differing durations including 30, 45 and 60 minute offerings.
- 74.9 Councillor Cook informed Members that there would be a further increase in income as a result of enforcement work. Thus far 2372 fines have been issued for littering and fly tipping. Amongst other results it was recently noted that Gloucester was the only district in the county to have a reduction in fly tipping.
- 74.10 Councillor Cook stated that the Council had recently appointed a climate change manager. A climate change 'road map' was due to Cabinet next month. This would initially identify some immediate measures, such as:
- PhotoVoltaics on council buildings. The Guildhall recently had PV panels installed, which over the lifetime of the feed in tariff would return six times the cost of installation;
 - Electric cars/bikes;
 - The intention to install EV charging points in Council owned car parks;
 - Tree planting projects such as the Westgate arboretum which had recently begun and would develop over 2-3 years. Additional tree planting had taken place at Saintbridge ponds and the rose garden at Tuffley Avenue and Stroud Road;

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- Flood management projects which included European Structural Investment funding work on watercourses;
- Food waste collection at council premises
- improved wildflower planting on road verges.

74.11 Councillor Cook explained that the financial environment was operating in continued to be difficult. There were, however, no proposed savings within this financial year. He highlighted that this was the first budget in ten years without major savings. Difficult decisions had been taken in the past so that the Council's finances were more robust at present and into the future. Over the last seven years the Council had achieved cumulative savings of £5.5m. This had been undertaken whilst also increasing the income generation for the Council.

74.12 Councillor Cook advised that, within the budget plans, the Council had received greater than expected funding from the new homes bonus and revenue support grant, which was non-recurring, and it was planned to enter earmarked reserves, many of which could be needed to deliver future priorities.

74.13 Councillor Cook announced the following measures:

- £200k would go into a marketing reserve which would support the development of a new Destination Marketing organisation. Whilst all options would be considered following the election, a review of all council companies and key suppliers was underway to ensure that all lessons from the Marketing Gloucester issue were learned;
- £100k would go into a homelessness reserve which would help to support housing strategy and implement a private landlord scheme;
- £100k would form a climate change reserve to help deliver on some of the measures previously announced. Business cases could be presented to demonstrate the need for capital investment to achieve significant climate change goals;
- £100k would be paid into a neighbourhood environmental improvement fund, which would be used to deliver improvements in community gardens and open spaces. The community gardens and open space element was an accepted amendment from both the Liberal Democrat and Labour groups and combined with the £70K the administration had already earmarked for this measure.
- £30k into a communities reserve to fund a post to further the work of Citysafe and Streetaware.
- £50k into a planning appeals reserve. Councillor Cook stated that the Council had not been able to fund such a reserve in the past, but with the potential costs of defending such appeals, it was felt prudent to do so now when in receipt of 'one-off' funding.
- £39k into an asset management reserve. Councillor Cook stated that this was necessary to reduce the need for reactive responses to building maintenance issues and could set the scene for more proactive planning.

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- Councillor Cook informed Members that the administration had also agreed to make £6k available to fund defibrillators after a mapping exercise demonstrated a need for their emplacement in areas around the city.

74.13 Councillor Cook announced new schemes to be funded from current budgets:

- Each Member would be offered a budget of 300 trees to be planted in their ward with advice from officers and the help of community groups. Collectively this could deliver almost 12000 new trees in Gloucester.
- A city centre spring clean similar to the Lower Eastgate/Barton Street spring clean in 2019.
- New street recycling bins to replace the majority of the existing street bins in the city centre. Councillor Cook hoped this would improve recycling rates.

74.14 Councillor Cook stated that the budget had been put together against a backdrop of a continued difficult financial environment but that the administration aimed to deliver improvements in many areas around the city.

74.15 Councillor H. Norman, in seconding the motion, outlined the Money Plan. She stated that while there was a difficult outlook for local government finance, the Money Plan had been put together with prudence in mind. Councillor Norman further stated that further long term decisions would be made in May 2020 through the spending review.

74.16 Councillor Norman also highlighted the success of the transformation programme which had enhanced how the council communicated with residents.

74.17 Councillor Norman informed Members the budget consultation had received approximately 200 hundred responses from residents and that the responses showed that statutory services remained the most important. Councillor Norman also noted that more than half of those who had responded would support an increase in Council Tax.

74.18 Councillor Norman stated that she was confident that the proposed budget was a prudent one and thanked the Head of Policy and Resources and his team for their work in preparing the budget.

Amendments

74.19 The following amendments were agreed by the administration and Group Leaders in advance of the meeting:

1. ***Labour Group Amendment to introduce a one-off Neighbourhood Environmental Improvement Fund to the value of £100,000 and Liberal***

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***Democrat Group Amendment** for effectively the same purpose to the value of £80,000.*

Agreed Action

The money plan will be amended to include an Environmental Improvement Reserve of £100k which meets the objectives of all three political groups to set aside additional funds to deal with small areas of public open spaces and community gardens. Councillors and/or organisations will be able to bid for funds from this reserve, details for how this will operate will be developed and publicised.

2. ***Liberal Democrat Group Amendment** to introduce one-off funding to the value of £6,000 to procure some defibrillators at suitable locations across Gloucester.*

Agreed Action

The money plan will be amended to include a Defibrillator Reserve of £6k. A piece of work will be undertaken by officers to establish the location of existing publicly accessible defibrillators, before deciding where additional defibrillators could be located.

74.20 Councillor Hilton proposed and Councillor Wilson seconded the following amendment:

1. Improving our small public open spaces, setting aside funds to deal with forgotten small areas of public open spaces – one off funding of £80,000.
2. Funding some defibrillators at suitable locations in Gloucester – one off funding of £6,000.
3. Employing archaeologist to catalogue the large number uncatalogued items held by the museum service. A two-year project to work with a team of volunteers - one off funding £100,000.
4. Setting aside funds to help to provide grants to community organisations to carry out repairs buildings that they manage – one off funding £80,000.
5. Investing in public art, with the first call on creating a statue of Æthelflæd – one off funding of £80,000.
6. Installation of free drinking water refill points around city centre and the Quays – one off funding £10,000.

The total earmarked reserves are projected to be £6,234,000 by 31st March 2021. A large proportion of these funds are not allocated to specific projects. We propose to use these unallocated funds to support the above project, leaving the cabinet to decide the final source of funding.

Total investment required £356,000 – (5.71%) of reserves

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- 74.21 Councillor Hilton introduced the amendment and stated that he was pleased with the amendment agreed between the three political groups. He shared his view that it was necessary to engage an expert for cataloguing the large number of artefacts in the Council's possession. He also pointed to the part of the amendment which called for grants to community organisations and that there were a number of locations which required help.
- 74.22 Councillor Hilton stated that, given the commemorations in 2019, he could not see why there was not a commissioned piece of public art to commemorate Æthelflæd further. He also noted that there were much smaller parts of the country with good water refill schemes and queried why the administration could not support the proposal contained within the amendments.
- 74.23 Councillor Wilson stated that cataloguing artefacts had been put off for some time and that it could not keep being postponed. In relation to the water refill point proposal, Councillor Wilson brought to Members' attention a mobile application app called, 'Refill'. He stated that there was only one refill point in the City Centre. There were ten further points but these were all in the suburbs and he asked that the administration reconsider its position.
- 74.24 Councillor Morgan asked Councillor Hilton to clarify whether an archaeologist, archivist or curator was proposed. He advised that work was underway to examine building capacity where necessary and agreed that making use of volunteers was a good idea. Councillor Morgan stated that the museum service was building a case to bid for funding and that the amendment was not necessary.
- 74.25 Councillor Hyman stated that even a small amount of funding could help community organisations and that extra money was needed to assist valuable community assets.
- 74.26 Councillor Cook acknowledged that there were good examples of community ownership and self-organisation. He advised that investigating asset transfers was at an embryonic stage and that it would be better aligned with a policy rather than as part of the budget.
- 74.27 Councillor Cook advised that 40 businesses had been recruited to the water refill scheme in the previous 18 months.
- 74.28 Councillor Lugg suggested contacting the individual who organises the distribution of defibrillators so as to make the most of officer resources.
- 74.29 Councillor Hilton clarified that most of the artefacts that required cataloguing were archaeological finds.
- 74.30 Each part of the amendment was put to the vote and all were lost.
- 74.31 Councillor Stephens proposed and Councillor Pullen seconded the following amendment:

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1. Social Housing Investment Fund (New borrowing approval)

With drawn-down subject to the establishment of a council owned housing development company with a clear business plan. All housing projects to be subject to due diligence, with agreed sustainable financial strategy that ensures they are self-financing.

i) Private Sector Acquisition Fund to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households
5,000,000

ii) Social Housing Partnership Fund
20,000,000

Total Cost
£25,000,000

2. Creation of new Council-owned Housing Development Company
£10,000

Financed via Business Rates Reserve or VAT Shelter Reserve

3. Neighbourhood Environmental Improvement Fund
£100,000

Financed via Business Rates Reserve or VAT Shelter Reserve

4. Managing Director – make full-time post
£80,000

Financed via increased income Property Investment Fund

5. Enhanced fly-tipping and enforcement scheme; 1- year pilot focussed on Barton & Tredworth, Kingsholm, Moreland & Westgate Wards

1.5 x Enforcement Officer (Grade F)

56,000

0.5 x Education Officer (Grade E)

16,500

4 x CCTV portable units (RDC)

10,000

Sundry costs promotional/ educational materials etc.

27,500

Total Cost
£100,000

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Financed via Business Rates Reserve

- 74.32 Councillor Stephens stated that the Conservative Group had formed the administration during the period of austerity and that over 100 jobs and over £12m of funding had been lost in that time. He queried what lobbying of Central Government had taken place to improve the settlement for Gloucester.
- 74.33 Councillor Stephens stated that little had been done to tackle the climate emergency and very little money had been provided. He also stated that nothing had been done to tackle the housing crisis and there was a need to build homes for social rent. Councillor Stephens welcomed the £100k for a private landlord licensing scheme and noted that this had been proposed by the Labour Group three years previously.
- 74.34 Councillor Stephens welcomed the proposals for King's Square and King's Quarter and agreed with the recent property acquisitions such as Potter's Place.
- 74.35 Councillor Stephens noted that the fair funding review would take place in 2021 and that Labour had calculated that this would result in a reduction of approximately £1m in funding.
- 74.36 Councillor Watkins stated that the figures provided within the amendment were not realistic. She stated that, had the administration accepted previous proposals from the Labour Group, the Council would not have been able to make improvements to temporary accommodation provision through the year. She advised that there had been improvements in terms of homelessness and that there was still further work to be done.
- 74.37 Councillor Gravells shared his view that the amendment was lacking in detail and time-scales. He stated that Labour had made significant cuts when the administration.
- 74.38 Councillor Gravells praised the work of the Conservative MP, Richard Graham in achieving the write-off of £60m of housing debt enabling the establishment of Gloucester City Homes which, in turn, had enabled borrowing of £80m. He stated that the administration was committed to providing good housing across the City.
- 74.39 Councillor Hilton indicated that the Liberal Democrat Group would support the amendment. He stated he was particularly pleased with the wording of the first part. He stated that he had been raising fly-tipping matters for some considerable time and that the Streetcare contract required root and branch review. Councillor Hilton further stated that the Managing Director should only be responsible for the City.
- 74.40 Councillor H. Norman noted the benefits of the shared Managing Director role such as shared working with the County Council and shared office space. She shared her view that the managerial and leadership ratios were healthy.

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- 74.41 Councillor Cook informed Members that there was a projected 8.1% reduction in fly tipping on the previous year and that this was through robust enforcement work by 3GS. He did not accept the need to employ further officers when the work was already being conducted by 3GS.
- 74.42 Councillor Coole stated that more social homes were needed and that some in Matson lived in very poor quality housing. He queried whether the administration's interpretation of the term, 'affordable housing' was accurate. Councillor Coole also noted that when Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid MP suggested Councils establish Housing Development Companies such as that proposed in the amendment.
- 74.43 Councillor Coole stated that he was pleased with the accepted amendment and suggested that the reduction in reports of fly-tipping could be due to under reporting by residents due to poor previous experience.
- 74.44 Councillor Haigh stated that residents continuing to live in poor housing was not acceptable. She also shared her view that a full-time Chief Executive was needed. Regarding fly-tipping, Councillor Haigh shared her view that, with specialist officers, the Council could act more quickly and that this would help with building public confidence.
- 74.45 Councillor Melvin stated that she wished to refute the fact that officers did not deal with fly-tipping. She shared her experience of officers regularly being sent to fly-tipping sites in her Westgate ward.
- 74.46 Councillor Pullen stated that the amendment included investments for solutions to serious problems. He queried why, if investments could be made at St. Oswald's and Eastgate why the Council could not invest in homes for people. In inner-city wards, Councillor Pullen stated that fly-tipping was a major issue that was going unchallenged.
- 74.47 Regarding the proposal to make the Managing Director post full time, Councillor Pullen stated that the proposal was not a reflection on the current Managing Director but that all other districts had a full time post.
- 74.48 The Labour Group requested a recorded vote in respect of part five of the amendment and was lost. The votes were as follows.

FOR

Hilton
Stephens

AGAINST

Finnegan
Cook
H. Norman
Gravells
Morgan
Watkins

ABSTENTION

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	Tracey James
Lugg	
	Hanman Lewis
Wilson Bhaimia Haigh	
D. Brown	Williams
	Dee Taylor
Field Hansdot	
	Patel Toleman D. Norman
Pullen Hampson	
	Brooker
Brazil J. Brown Coole Derbyshire Hyman	
Ryall	Melvin
	Walford
Bowkett (18)	(19)

74.49 The amendment as a whole was put to the vote and was lost.

74.50 In debating the substantive budget, Councillor Haigh shared her view that there was a desire within Central Government to abolish district Council's and disputed the positive picture as presented by the Leader of the Council.

74.51 Councillor Haigh stated that the budget had challenges in terms of providing the services that are needed. She stated that people's life chances were worse and queried what the administration was doing to make people's lives better.

74.52 Councillor Cook noted that £100k had been ear marked for work to tackle the climate emergency and noted that this matter was not included in opposition groups' amendments.

74.53 Councillor Cook stated that the Council was making efforts and progress regarding fly-tipping and noted that City streets were markedly cleaner. He finally pointed to the success of the administration in driving regeneration across the City.

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74.54 The motion was put to a recorded vote and was carried. The votes were as follows:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTENTION
Finnegan Cook H. Norman Gravells Morgan Watkins		Hilton Stephens
Tracey James		Lugg
Hanman Lewis		Wilson Bhaimia Haigh
Williams		D. Brown
Dee Taylor		Field Hansdot
Patel Toleman D. Norman		Pullen Hampson
Brooker		Brazil J. Brown Coole Derbyshire Hyman
Melvin		Ryall Walford Bowkett
(19)		(18)

74.55 **RESOLVED that:-**

- (1) The proposals for the 2019/20 budget included in this report and including the agreed amendments be approved.
- (2) The implementation of the target budget reductions set in the Money plan 2019/24 be approved.

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(3) It be noted that consultation has been undertaken on budget proposals to achieve the level of savings required in 2019/20.

75. COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2020/21

75.1 Councillor Cook moved and Councillor H. Norman seconded the motion. Councillor Cook stated that the proposals in the report included precepts for the City Council, Quedgeley Town Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

75.2 The motion was put to a recorded vote and was carried. The votes were as follows:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTENTION
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Finnegan		
Cook		
H. Norman		
Gravells		
Morgan		
Watkins		
Hilton		
Stephens		
Tracey		
James		
Lugg		
Hanman		
Lewis		
Wilson		
Bhaimia		
Haigh		
Williams		
D. Brown		
Dee		
Taylor		
Field		
Hansdot		
Patel		
Toleman		
D. Norman		
Pullen		
Hampson		
Brooker		
Brazil		
J. Brown		
Coole		
Derbyshire		

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Hyman
Melvin
Ryall
Walford
Bowkett

(37)

75.3 RESOLVED that:-

The statutory Council Tax resolutions as set out in the Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

76. NOTICES OF MOTION

76.1 There were no notices of motion.

Time of commencement: 6.00 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 8.30 pm hours

Chair