



CABINET

MEETING : Wednesday, 16th September 2020

PRESENT : Cllrs. Cook (Chair), H. Norman, Gravells, Melvin, Morgan and Watkins

Others in Attendance

Cllrs Hilton and Hyman

Managing Director

Corporate Director

Corporate Director

Head of Place

Head of Policy and Resources

Head of Cultural Services

Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : None

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

26. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15th July 2020 are confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair in due course.

27. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

28. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions or deputations.

29. LEADER AND CABINET MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

Councillor Hilton noted that Wellington Parade Garden had been closed since 2018. He enquired if the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods was still committed to its reopening and reconstruction in line with the design that had been

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published in 2019 for consultation intended to discourage anti-social behaviour. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods expressed frustration at the length of closure, confirmed her commitment to its reopening and advised that she would pursue the matter.

Councillor Hilton asked if works might commence from the end of the month using the £14,000 previously set aside by the Council for the scheme rather than continuing to await the outcome of the application made in November 2019 to the Great Western Railway Customer and Communities Improvement Fund for a £35,000 contribution. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods announced that notification had just been received that the application had been unsuccessful so other finance options would be explored to ensure the project is done properly. She reiterated her commitment to getting the garden open, especially given its important location.

Regarding the petition from residents of Green Pippin Close presented to Council (9 July 2020 Minute 14.1) concerning the footpath linking it to Barnwood Road, Councillor Hyman sought an update on the investigation conducted by Project Solace into claims of anti-social and criminal behaviour. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods stated that the inquiry had not yet reached its conclusion. She informed Members that representations had been received from residents both for and against closing the footpath, that since 1st June 2019 there had been 13 incidents reported in the vicinity, of which 5 were crime related, and that from July 2020 police officers had spoken to 10 residents displeased with its use and they had cited reasons other than specific crimes and anti-social behaviour. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods commented that a Public Space Protection Order to close a footpath should be seen as a last resort and had to be justified with evidence of crime and anti-social behaviour to a level not yet met in this case. So that an appropriate solution can be found she urged residents and elected members to report relevant incidents so that they may be recorded.

The Cabinet Member for Environment advised Members that the County Council owned the footpath so that a Gating Order would be required to close it following investigation and the consent of the County and residents. Councillor Hyman noted that land around the footpath was City Council owned and sought reassurance that both councils would cooperate to resolve the issue. The Cabinet Member for Environment replied that they would.

30. COUNTER FRAUD AND CORRUPTION POLICY STATEMENT AND STRATEGY 2020–2023

Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Audit Risk Assurance (Chief Internal Auditor) that sought approval of the Council's updated Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement and Strategy 2020-2023.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources summarised the key elements of the report and reminded Members that this was the right time to review the approach to tackling fraud. She emphasised that Gloucester City Council took its responsibilities in this area very seriously. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy commented that the dishonest minority of people would

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receive a robust response and that the message going out is that fraud will not be tolerated and perpetrators will be found.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement and Strategy 2020-2023 be approved; and
- (2) the strategy be disseminated to managers in accordance with a communications plan, to reaffirm the Council's counter fraud culture and objectives.

31. FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 1 REPORT

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources that sought Members to note year-end forecasts and the financial pressures on the Council during the 1st Quarter ended 30th June 2020.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources placed the report in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic which had impacted all areas and stressed that the figures given were best estimates in current circumstances. In her own portfolio she highlighted that parking had been the most affected function and that the income from property investments had been positive and that a business rates rebate had been received in relation to the underspend in Asset Management and that income from the property investments was forecast to be positive.

In his portfolio the Cabinet Member for Environment noted the overspend due to COVID-19 and advised that the money would be claimed back from central government. He anticipated that the financial position would improve in the remaining three quarters of 2020/21. The Cabinet Member for Environment informed Members that income had risen due to increased recycling collections and recycle values although he warned that the values do fluctuate.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods reminded Members that the overall position would have been worse without the tremendous efforts of officers and their teamwork alongside elected members of all parties.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery and Growth reiterated the thanks due to officers, especially the Head of Policy and Resources and his team. She asked officers present for an indication of the COVID-19 losses and what proportion might be recovered from central government. The Head of Policy and Resources advised Members that 75 pence in the pound of lost income was expected to be reimbursed after a 5% deduction against the overall income budget. He however made it clear that the claim, due to be submitted at the end of the month, was still being worked on so the final figures were unknown but that £1 million was anticipated to be returned for the first quarter.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure also acknowledged the work of officers but especially those at the Guildhall, Blackfriars Priory and Museum of Gloucester who despite the difficult circumstances had kept activity and public interest going in those venues. He further informed Members that they were

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mindful of the need to generate income opportunities and so the museum was already open to a limited extent and the Guildhall would follow soon.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy also particularly thanked the finance team not just for their achievements over the 1st quarter and reminded Members of the praise they regularly received from external auditors on presentation of their accounts. In regard to his own portfolio he noted that income from planning fees was on target after a deficit the previous year and advised Members that the £71,000 over budget forecast (9.1) was due to a reduction in land searches, an function whose place in the portfolio budget had been questioned and so might not appear in future.

The Cabinet Member for Environment echoed the thanks given by Members and commented that the financial position would have been much worse had the COVID-19 Gloucester City Recovery Plan not been developed.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the forecast year end position is currently for a decrease to the Council's General Fund balance of £523k against a budgeted decrease of £49k be noted
- (2) the uncertainty surrounding the exact levels of grant income to be received from Government will affect the eventual financial outcome for the year be noted
- (3) the details of specific budgetary issues identified by officers and the actions being taken to address those issues be noted
- (4) the current level of Capital expenditure as shown in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.

Time of commencement: 6.02 pm

Time of conclusion: 6.30 pm

Chair