



COUNCIL

MEETING : Thursday, 21st February 2013

PRESENT : Cllrs. Brown (Mayor), McLellan (Sheriff & Deputy Mayor), James, Llewellyn, Williams, Organ, Dallimore, Hilton, Haigh, Gravells, Durrant, Tracey, Hobbs, C. Witts, Lugg, Noakes, Ravenhill, Hanman, Lewis, Wilson, S. Witts, Field, Dee, Taylor, Beeley, Hansdot, Wood, Gilson, Mozol, Patel, Randle, Toleman and Chatterton

Others in Attendance

Julian Wain, Chief Executive

Peter Gillett, Corporate Director of Resources

Martin Shields, Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods

Sue Mullins, Monitoring Officer and Group Manager, Legal and Democratic Services

Terry Rodway, Group Manager, Audit and Assurance

Tanya Davies, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Smith, Bhaimia and Porter

71. MINUTES

71.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 January 2013 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

72.1 Councillor S. Witts declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8, a joint report of the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources concerning the Budget Proposals for 2013/14, by virtue of her employment by Gloucestershire College.

73. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

73.1 Mr Barry Leach asked the Leader of the Council if he was aware that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) had cancelled funding for an incinerator in York due to lack of need, and whether he was therefore persuaded that the Council should join with Stroud and Cotswold District Councils in calling for the Secretary of State to review proposals for an incinerator at Javelin Park.

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73.2 Councillor James (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture) noted that the Council had debated the matter of the proposed incinerator on a number of occasions. He advised that he had not yet seen the statement from DEFRA, and would therefore provide Mr Leach with a written response.

74. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

74.1 There were no petitions or deputations.

75. ANNOUNCEMENTS (COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 2(VII))

The Mayor

75.1 The Mayor noted that Her Royal Highness Princess Anne had been guest of honour at the official opening of Blackbridge Athletics Track earlier in the day.

75.2 The Mayor reported that he had received a letter from the Royal British Legion thanking the Council for its ongoing support.

75.3 The Mayor advised that the Gloucester Shrievalty would be visiting the Cathedral Library on 22 February 2013 and that all Members were welcome to attend.

75.4 The Mayor congratulated both the City and Folk Museums for reaching the finals for the national 'Museums at Night Connect 10' competition.

75.5 The Mayor noted the sad death of former Liberal Democrat Councillor Eileen Drinan on 7 February 2013.

Leader of the Council

75.6 Councillor James reported that insurance firm Ecclesiastical had given notice to terminate their development agreement with the Council for the Southgate Moorings site for financial reasons. He advised that Ecclesiastical had confirmed their commitment to remaining in Gloucester and that the Council would continue to explore options with them.

Members of the Cabinet

75.7 Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Environment) announced that the Council had succeeded in securing funding from the Government for flood and risk management work in the City and that the project would be part-funded by the Council, Gloucester County Council and Gloucester City Homes.

Chief Executive

75.8 The Chief Executive announced that the Council's streetcare partner, Enterprise, had been acquired by Ferrovial Services and would be merged with Amey. He read out a statement from the Chief Executive of Amey, who gave assurances that business would continue as usual while the deal was being finalised.

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76. SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

- 76.1 Moved by Councillor James and seconded by Councillor Llewellyn (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources).
- 76.2 **RESOLVED** - That Council Procedure Rules be waived to allow the relevant officers to address the Council in respect of Agenda Items 8, 9 and 10.

77. BUDGET PROPOSALS 2013/14

- 77.1 Council considered a joint report of the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources concerning the Budget Proposals for 2013/14.
- 77.2 The Corporate Director of Resources noted that the Council was required to set a balanced budget and that responsibility for this lay with all Members. He advised that the budget proposals were consistent with both the Council Plan and the Money Plan and that the financial results from 2011/12 would not impact on the budget setting process. He reported that the general fund revenue balance at 1 April 2013 was forecast to be £2.1million, which was higher the previous year and that the budget proposals would ensure that the balance remained higher than the recommended range throughout the year ahead. He noted the significant changes to the way the Council was funded and highlighted the importance of adequate contingencies, replenishing reserves and achieving budget savings and efficiencies.
- 77.3 Councillor James moved the recommendations as set out in the report and made the following comments:
- The prevailing economic conditions meant that the Council would continue to face financial challenges.
 - Despite the late announcement by the Government of the Council's grant settlement, the Council went ahead with a public consultation exercise and received a higher response rate than in the previous two years.
 - Several of the consultation results were predictable, such as the preference for a council tax freeze and reducing the cost of management within the Council, but others were not, such as the willingness to allow grass to grow longer in parks and open spaces.
 - Parking charges would be frozen at the existing levels.
 - The Council was required to make savings totalling £1.9million in 2013/14 and sought to do this by finding efficiencies while protecting frontline services.
 - A large proportion of the proposed savings could only be achieved with the co-operation of partner organisations and the Council was grateful to each organisation for their part in the proposals.

Councillor James noted the significant changes to Government funding for local authorities, including council tax support and business rates pooling. He also noted the key areas in the savings proposals and thanked Council staff for their hard work in challenging circumstances. He stated that the Council's finances were in good order and that services would be protected by targeting where it was needed.

- 77.4 Councillor Llewellyn seconded the motion.

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- 77.5 Councillor Hilton stated that he could not support the budget proposals. He noted the delays in finalising the 2011/12 accounts and the late grant settlement announcement from the Government. He considered that the budget setting process had been inadequate and that Members had been provided with limited information on which to scrutinise the proposals and that more detailed information was still required, including the revenue outturn and capital programme. He called for Members to vote against the proposed budget to allow more time for detailed information to be provided.
- 77.6 Councillor Haigh stated that issues relating to the Council's accounts were not relevant to the budget setting process, but acknowledged that the late grant settlement announcement had presented additional challenges. She stated that the cuts imposed by the Government were not in the interests of the City or its residents and that it was essential for the Council to be the engineer of much-needed change in Gloucester.
- 77.7 Councillor Haigh moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Hobbs:
- (1) That, based on the outcome of the budget consultation, the budget proposals for 2013/14 included in the report be approved.
 - (2) That the continued ringfencing of the Homelessness Prevention Fund of £337,000 be endorsed.**
 - (3) That a further £30,000, arising from the changes in contractual arrangements for emergency provision following the Supporting People review, be invested in further prevention work.**
 - (4) That the Council continues to support the development of work with Gloucester City Homes, particularly in relation to a private sector leasing scheme and a rent guarantee scheme.**
 - (5) That the Council continues to fund a homelessness outreach worker for a minimum of 6 months through GEAR.**
 - (6) That the Council commits to using its increased allocation of Discretionary Housing Payment of £234,000 to prevent homelessness and support residents affected by the benefit changes.**
- 77.8 The motion was accepted by Councillor James.
- 77.9 Councillor Haigh moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Hobbs:
- (1) That, based on the outcome of the budget consultation, the budget proposals for 2013/14 included in the report be approved.
 - (2) That the continued ringfencing of the Homelessness Prevention Fund of £337,000 be endorsed.

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- (3) That a further £30,000, arising from the changes in contractual arrangements for emergency provision following the Supporting People review, be invested in further prevention work.
- (4) That the Council continues to support the development of work with Gloucester City Homes, particularly in relation to a private sector leasing scheme and a rent guarantee scheme.
- (5) That the Council continues to fund a homelessness outreach worker for a minimum of 6 months through GEAR.
- (6) That the Council commits to using its increased allocation of Discretionary Housing Payment of £234,000 to prevent homelessness and support residents affected by the benefit changes.
- (7) That Council notes that the budget implements deep and damaging cuts for the third year and that the Government intend to make further cuts in the following financial year. The National Audit Office predicts that some local authorities will become financially unsustainable and we believe that continuation of these cuts places the Council at risk. We call on the Government to take our concerns seriously in the interest of preserving local services which are of a good quality, cost effective and that the electorate support.**

77.10 Councillor James rejected the amendment. He advised that overall there had been a modest increase in financial support from the Government, but that Members had to acknowledge the changing landscape of local government and recognise that savings were required due to a range of factors.

77.11 Councillor Hobbs stated that the Government was responsible for creating financial uncertainty in the years to come and that local authorities must work together to lobby in respect of this.

77.12 The amendment was put to the vote and was lost.

77.13 Councillor Williams noted that the weather conditions in 2012/13 had presented some challenges in terms of service delivery, but that savings remained on target. She explained that the Council was working with Enterprise to identify efficiencies and reduce overheads, but that fortnightly recycling collections would not be pursued. She also noted savings identified through cemetery and crematorium fee increases.

77.14 Councillor Wood noted the Council's approaches to changes to council tax support and business rates and advised that the priorities were to protect the most vulnerable and minimise risk. He stated that the Council would continue to protect frontline services by identifying back office savings.

77.15 Councillor Organ (Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure) noted the savings identified within his portfolio including a review of the Housing Strategy Service and deletion of vacant posts. He advised that the Council was committed to

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preventing homelessness and as such the Homelessness Prevention Grant would continue to be ringfenced, with the Council working closely with P3, the new provider of county-wide homelessness services.

77.16 Councillor Hobbs criticised the budget consultation exercise and raised concerns about some aspects of the Enterprise service review, including the grass cutting schedule and the remodelling of waste and recycling collections from flats. He emphasised the importance of considering ways to increase recycling and the need to ensure that the City remains in good condition to attract developers.

77.17 Councillor Dallimore (Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods) noted that while there were no savings identified within her portfolio, the need to reduce costs across the Council inspired innovation and creativity when considering where efficiencies could be found. She stated that the Council had much to be proud of and highlighted the importance of empowering communities to help themselves through Asset Based Community Development

77.18 Councillor Hansdot requested that an extension of the properties in receipt of purple bags be considered as part of the streetcare review.

77.19 Councillor James advised that Members had been provided with more information on the budget setting process than in previous years and noted that no alternative proposals had been put forward. He welcomed Members comments in respect of the Enterprise service review. He stated that the City had much to be proud of, particularly in respect of regeneration work, and that the year ahead would bring an exciting agenda for ambitious City.

77.20 **RESOLVED –**

- (1) That, based on the outcome of the budget consultation, the budget proposals for 2013/14 included in the report be approved.
- (2) That the continued ringfencing of the Homelessness Prevention Fund of £337,000 be endorsed.
- (3) That a further £30,000, arising from the changes in contractual arrangements for emergency provision following the Supporting People review, be invested in further prevention work.
- (4) That the Council continues to support the development of work with Gloucester City Homes, particularly in relation to a private sector leasing scheme and a rent guarantee scheme.
- (5) That the Council continues to fund a homelessness outreach worker for a minimum of 6 months through GEAR.
- (6) That the Council commits to using its increased allocation of Discretionary Housing Payment of £234,000 to prevent homelessness and support residents affected by the benefit changes.

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78. COUNCIL TAX SETTING

- 78.1 Council considered a report of the Leader of the Council concerning the setting of Council Tax for 2013/14. The report was tabled at the meeting due to Gloucestershire County Council approving its budget the previous day.
- 78.2 Councillor James moved the recommendations as set out in the report.
- 78.3 Councillor Llewellyn seconded the motion.
- 78.4 **RESOLVED** – That the statutory resolutions, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be passed.

79. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES

- 79.1 Council considered the appointment of substitutes to committees.
- 79.2 Councillor Taylor (Chair of the Constitutional and Electoral Working Group) moved the following motion:
- ‘That Council, in accordance with Council Procedure Rules, appoint all Members as named deputies for all those meetings (with the exception of Cabinet, Planning Committee and the Licensing and Enforcement Committee) to which the Member has not been appointed.’
- 79.3 Councillor Field (Vice Chair of the Constitutional and Electoral Working Group) seconded the motion.
- 79.4 In response to a question from Councillor Haigh, Councillor Taylor confirmed that Members acting as substitutes for the Planning Committee and for the Licensing and Enforcement Committee must comply with the training requirements previously prescribed by the Council.
- 79.5 **RESOLVED** - That Council, in accordance with Council Procedure Rules, appoint all Members as named deputies for all those meetings (with the exception of Cabinet, Planning Committee and the Licensing and Enforcement Committee) to which the Member has not been appointed.

80. NOTICES OF MOTION

(a) Notice of Motion from the Labour Group

- 80a.1 Moved by Councillor Haigh and seconded by Councillor Hobbs:

“This Council notes that from April 2013 tenants in social housing will be liable for a ‘bedroom tax’ where they will have their housing benefit cut by 14% if they have one ‘spare’ bedroom and by 25% if they have 2.

This policy is a blunt instrument which does not take into account tenant’s individual circumstances. Furthermore it fails to consider the availability of smaller socially

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rented properties. As these are not readily available tenants will be forced into the private rented sector where rents are higher and tenancies are not secure.

This policy relies on tenant's moving into work in order to make up the shortfall in their benefits so they can remain in their homes. It takes no account of their ability to do that in the current economic climate and with increasing household costs such as fuel, food and travel.

The likelihood is that households will increasingly fall into arrears. The immediate costs of evicting and rehousing families are estimated at £5,700 for housing providers and £3,800 for local authorities per eviction, in possession orders, admin and repairs. The social costs will be far greater.

This Council resolves that the 'bedroom tax' is a punitive and regressive policy which will cost the taxpayer and society dearly and agrees that addressing the housing shortage is a far better way to address the spiraling costs of housing benefit and that better strategies exist to help encourage downsizing."

80a.2 The motion was put to the vote and was lost.

Time of commencement: 18:00 hours

Time of conclusion: 19:55 hours

Chair