



CABINET

MEETING : Wednesday, 30th July 2014

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

Others in Attendance

Sue Mullins, Head of Legal and Policy Development

Wendy Jones, Contact Centre and Customer Services Manager

Parvati Diyar, Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Martin Shields, Corporate Director of Services & Neighbourhoods

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

15. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

16. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions or deputations.

17. ALLOTMENT STRATEGY

Cabinet considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Environment which recommended the adoption of a draft Allotment Strategy for Gloucester City, which detailed how the City Council intended to manage its allotment holding over the coming years.

Cabinet were informed that there had been considerable interest from the public in obtaining an allotment. Currently there was a waiting list for each site. It was proposed to move towards self management of allotments which could be carried out by an Association.

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The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources commented that at a recent association meeting, he had been challenged regarding the new allotment site at Kingsway. He questioned whether the 196 individuals on the waiting list were all residents of Kingsway and Quedgeley and asked whether priority could be given to residents within these Wards.

The Cabinet Member for Environment explained that many people were allocated allotments to their nearest site. Plots were then allocated on a first come first served basis. No preferential treatment would be given to any city centre or ward resident. He did not believe residents would apply for allotment sites which were not in close proximity to their home.

The Leader of the Council commented that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had raised an interesting point which suggested that the City Council's Neighbourhood Officers could take a proactive role in identifying residents who had large gardens and who would be willing to make them available as prospective allotment plots. The Cabinet Member for Environment responded that this was currently being explored.

Another issue raised at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee related to the charging policy for allotments. The Cabinet Member for Environment advised that a proposal had been made to move away from charging per square metre and for allotment holders to pay a set fee depending on the size of their plot. Individual plot holders were not in agreement and it had therefore been decided not to proceed with this. Following discussions it was decided to maintain the current system and continue to charge by the square metre. Concessions would be given for older people and those in receipt of benefits.

The Leader of the Council enquired on the timing to change the start of the allotment year from January to November. The Cabinet Member for Environment advised that the charging exercise was being carried out by Civica. He would confirm the reasons for this and report back to Cabinet.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Allotment Strategy attached at Appendix 1 be adopted as a draft for the purpose of public consultation.
- (2) That the outcome of the public consultation on the draft Allotment Strategy be reported back to Cabinet in due course.

18. GLOUCESTER CEMETERIES & CREMATORIUM RULES AND REGULATIONS 2014

Cabinet considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Environment which sought approval for a new set of Rules and Regulations for the future management of the Cemeteries and Crematorium in Gloucester.

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Cabinet were informed that the current policy was out of date and unclear. The new Rules and Regulations would reflect the current changes within the environment and would also help staff at the Cemeteries and Crematorium to provide a better service.

Cabinet recognised the good work undertaken by the staff due to the sensitive nature of their role. The new Rules and Regulations would ensure a consistent standard was adopted throughout the Cemeteries and Crematorium.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the new Rules and Regulations in respect of the Cemeteries in Gloucester as detailed in Appendix 1 be agreed and adopted for implementation from 11 August 2014.
- (2) That the new Rules and Regulations in respect of the Crematorium in Gloucester as detailed in Appendix 2 be agreed and adopted for implementation from 11 August 2014.

19. 2013-14 FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT

Cabinet considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources which informed them of the final Council position against agreed budgets for the 2013/14 financial year and which also highlighted key performance indicators.

Cabinet were informed that the report had been presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 21 July 2014. The report had received positive feedback and the Committee recognised the efforts which had been made by officers in the Finance team.

Cabinet were advised of the £297k overspend against budgets which would reduce the General Fund to £1.869m. Managers had continued to work hard to achieve £7.5m of savings in the last four years. A revision to the recommendations at 2.2 (3) of the report was noted.

Cabinet noted the report had highlighted the good performance relating to Off Street Parking and Council Tax arrears which had significantly reduced.

Cabinet were advised that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had commented that the Guildhall had not achieved its budgeted level of surplus. The Leader of the Council believed the issued was to ensure appropriate budgets were in place and confirmed that a review was now underway.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report which provided encouraging figures and detailed the satisfactory progress made.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the year end position for 13/14 was an overspend against budgets of £297k be noted.

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- (2) That the balance on the General Fund to £1.869m be noted.
- (3) That the implementation of the majority of the savings in 2013/14 following previous financial year's savings targets was an excellent achievement. This formed part of the £7.5m of savings that the Council had achieved in the last four years.
- (4) A transfer into an earmarked reserve of £17,000 representing the unspent portion of the £19,000 added by Cabinet to the City Centre Historic Area Grant Fund in June 2013, be noted.

20. COMPLAINTS POLICY

Cabinet received a report of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods which sought approval for a Corporate Complaints Policy.

Cabinet were informed of the updated policy. A new complaints policy form and process document had been produced which were available in reception. This provided a valuable form of feedback offered to customers. A Gov-Metric system had been introduced which helped analyse the level of customer satisfaction.

The report would be considered by the Audit and Governance Committee on 8 September 2014 and then presented to Council on 25 September 2014 for formal adoption in September 2014. At the request of officers, minor amendments had been made to the report which included information relating to Members who raise complaints.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources commented on the positive changes made to the policy and encouraged colleagues and officers to ensure this was kept as a 'live' document. He believed it was important to ensure compliments were also recorded.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods commented on the exceptional work undertaken by staff in Customer Services and the Contact Centre and advised that compliments were communicated to staff.

Reference was made to complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman. Cabinet were advised that a number of these complaints had been referred back for resolution.

Cabinet welcomed the improvements which had been made to the Complaints Policy.

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

**Time of commencement: 18:00 hours
Time of conclusion: 18:35 hours**

Chair