



COUNCIL

MEETING : Thursday, 26th February 2015

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

Others in Attendance

Martin Shields, Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods

Ross Cook, Corporate Director

Sue Mullins, Head of Legal and Policy Development

Jon Topping, Head of Finance

Duncan May, Project Officer

Tanya Davies, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. McLellan, Lewis and Mozol

79. MINUTES

79.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 22 January 2015 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

80. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

80.1 Councillor Hobbs declared a prejudicial interest in the event of any discussions relating to Aspire as he was a member of the Board.

80.2 Councillors Hansdot, Lugg, Randle, Beeley and Toleman declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 10, Housing Stock Transfer – Transfer Agreement, as Board Members of Gloucester City Homes. They retired to the public gallery for this item.

80.3 Councillor Smith declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the event of any discussions relating to the Law Centre as she was employed there.

81. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

81.1 There were no public questions.

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82. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

82.1 There were no petitions of deputations.

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

Mayor

83.1 The Mayor reminded Members that the next Council meeting had been moved to Wednesday 18 March 2015.

83.2 The Mayor advised that Civic Ball tickets were available and could be obtained through the Corporate Support Team.

83.3 The Mayor invited Members to attend an informal ceremony at North Warehouse at 10.00am on Monday 9 March 2015 for the raising of the Commonwealth Flag.

Leader of the Council

83.4 Councillor James (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture) advised Members that the session on the Blackfriars Masterplan had been moved to the earlier time of 6.00pm on Monday 2 March 2015.

83.5 Councillor James announced that contracts had been exchanged on the sale of Bakers Quay to Rokeby Developments and that he looked forward to the development of the site.

84. SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

84.1 Moved by Councillor James (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture) and seconded by Councillor Dallimore (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods) –

84.2 **RESOLVED** - That Council Procedure Rules be suspended to allow the relevant officers to address the Council in respect of agenda items 8, 9, 10 and 12.

85. MONEY PLAN 2015-20 & BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2015/16

85.1 Council considered a joint report of the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources concerning the Council's Money Plan 2015-20 and Budget Proposals for 2015/16.

85.2 Councillor James moved the recommendations set out in the report.

85.3 Councillor Norman (Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources) seconded the motion.

85.4 Councillor James thanked the Head of Finance and other officers for their role in compiling the budget proposals and summarised the key successes achieved in 2014/15, including reductions in unemployment. He reported that cumulative savings of £9 million had been made through reviewing management structures,

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sharing services, working with partners and identifying efficiencies. £1.3 million of savings were required in 2015/16 and they would be primarily achieved through the implementation of a number of shared services; he noted the City Council's strong relationship with Gloucestershire County Council and that the joint appointment of a Managing Director/Commissioning Director would provide the Council with leadership and also deliver significant savings. He noted the proposal to freeze Council Tax for the fifth year in succession and that parking charges would also be frozen for a further year. He highlighted the progress made on key regeneration projects and the positive impact and legacy that Rugby World Cup Host City Status would bring. He advised that, within his portfolio, savings would be achieved through a review of Planning Services and implementing recommendations from the review of Cultural Services. He stated that the Council continued to be ambitious and to work in the interests of residents, and he thanked staff for delivering quality services with fewer resources.

- 85.5 Councillor Norman advised that the Council has to make difficult financial decisions that were essential to ensure the achievement of a sustainable financial plan. He explained that the plans were consistent with 2014/15 proposals and had been updated to reflect savings that had been achieved early. He considered that residents would welcome the Council Tax freeze, which would save them money which could then be spent in the City. He stated that back office savings and efficiencies were key and that £720,000 of savings had been identified within his portfolio.
- 85.6 Councillor Hilton noted that the budget proposals were consistent with the two year plan previously set out. He advised that he was pleased to see no plans to increase charges for the collection of garden waste and that other fees and charges had been frozen or increased in line with inflation. He welcomed proposals to freeze Council Tax and the government grant that would be received as a result. He stated that the Council was required to make substantial savings and that the proposals met those requirements.
- 85.7 Councillor Haigh expressed concern at central government's continued reductions in funding for local government and urged the devolution of more powers within England. She noted that the budget consultation showed that residents were willing to pay more for services, but that cuts continued to be proposed. She stated that savings identified previously had not been based on concrete proposals and that she was pleased to see that savings against the Amey street care contract for 2015/16 had been reduced, however, savings would instead be moved into future years. She stated that it was unclear how many of the proposals would impact on services and that there was no indication of savings required in 2016/17.
- 85.8 Councillor Haigh moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Chatterton.

“Reduce the cut from £50,000 from SLA's to advice services in 2015/16 to £30,000 and work with the SLA funded organisations to ensure that in implementing the cut we protect the most vulnerable people in the City.

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The Council to work with the funded organisations to see if further savings can be made in future years without adversely impacting the viability of the service.”

85.9 Councillor James rejected the amendment.

Note: Councillor Smith moved to the public gallery during the debate on the amendment in light of her disclosable pecuniary interest.

85.10 Councillor Haigh stated that the Law Centre played an important role in helping residents and that they were keen to work with the Council to find savings, but needed sufficient time to be able to do so. She emphasised the importance of supporting such services by using reserves to fund the shortfall.

85.11 Councillor Pullen urged Council to approve the reduction in cuts to the advice service for the benefit of needy people in the City.

85.12 Councillor Dallimore stated that Council have always been supportive of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), but that support could not continue at the same level when facing cuts to Council services and residents had not identified the advice services as a priority area. She noted that the advice services had been aware of the proposed reduction in funding for the past year, when they were first proposed and deferred. The Council would continue to engage with the advice services to provide non-financial support, such as identifying new income and funding streams and back office savings; it was hoped that the reduction would not impact on the frontline services delivered.

85.13 Councillor Chatterton stated that the reduction in funding to the advice services would result in the withdrawal of further services to residents who could otherwise not access that type of assistance.

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

85.15 Councillor Porter (Cabinet Member for Environment) advised that, from within his portfolio, higher levels of income from the Cemetery and Crematorium Service were expected to be recurring and would be built into the budget. He explained that savings required from the Amey street care contract in 2015/16 had been reduced with a proportion moved into the proceeding financial year; savings would be made through review and redesign of the services provided and a Working Group had been set up to look at it. Opportunities to bring in additional income were also being considered and the collection of two extra recyclates would be rolled out, resulting in increased income and reduced landfill costs. Other savings would be achieved through reviews of management structures and back office efficiencies.

85.16 Councillor Dallimore advised that the Council had driven a shift in its approach to working with communities and neighbourhoods through the introduction of Asset Based Community Development. She commended the Members Allocation Fund and confirmed that it would continue in 2015/16. She noted proposals to save £50,000 for the Service Level Agreement with advice services in the City by helping them to achieve back office savings and identify new income streams, and £50,000

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to be saved through a review of the Shopmobility Service including the methods of provision and delivery.

85.17 Councillor Organ noted from within his portfolio £200,000 of savings required from the Aspire management fee.

85.18 Councillor James stated that fundamentally the Council had to make savings and he noted there was no opposition to the proposal to freeze Council Tax. He advised that the cost to the Council of the museums and Guildhall had reduced and other actions would be taken. He also confirmed that there remained £100,000 in the budget for the provision of new public conveniences in the City Centre.

85.19 The motion was put to the vote and, in accordance with Part 4 Rule 18.05 of the Constitution, names were recorded as follows:

<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstentions</u>
Llewellyn	Haigh	Hilton
Noakes	Smith	Witts. C
James	Hobbs	Wilson
Dallimore	Lugg	Witts. S
Norman	Bhaimia	Field
Organ	Hansdot	Brown
Porter	Gilson	Beeley
Gravells	Chatterton	
Tracey	Pullen	
Hanman		
Ravenhill		
Williams		
Dee		
Taylor		
Patel		
Randle		
Toleman		
(17)	(9)	(7)

85.20 The motion was carried.

85.21 **RESOLVED** –

- (1) That the proposals for the 2015/16 budget in this report, including a Council Tax freeze for the fifth year, be approved.
- (2) That the target budget reductions set in the Money Plan 2015/2020 be implemented.
- (3) That it be noted that consultation has been undertaken on budget savings proposals to achieve the level of further savings required in 2015/16.

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86. COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2015/16

- 86.1 Council considered a report of the Leader of the Council concerning the Council's the setting of Council Tax for 2015/16.
- 86.2 Councillor James moved the recommendations set out in the report.
- 86.3 Councillor Dallimore seconded the motion.
- 86.4 The motion was put to the vote and, in accordance with Part 4 Rule 18.05 of the Constitution, names were recorded as follows:

<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstentions</u>
Llewellyn		Haigh
Noakes		Smith
James		Hobbs
Dallimore		Lugg
Norman		Bhaimia
Organ		Hansdot
Hilton		Gilson
Porter		Chatterton
Gravells		Pullen
Tracey		
Witts. C		
Hanman		
Wilson		
Ravenhill		
Witts. S		
Field		
Williams		
Brown		
Dee		
Taylor		
Beeley		
Patel		
Randle		
Toleman		
(24)	(0)	(8)

- 86.5 The motion was carried.
- 86.6 **RESOLVED** – That the Council pass the statutory resolutions as set out in the Appendix 1 to the report.

87. BOUNDARY REVIEW - DRAFT COUNCIL SUBMISSION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND RECOMMENDATIONS

Note: The Sheriff chaired the meeting for this item to enable the mayor to take part in the debate.

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- 87.1 Council considered a report of the Head of Legal and Policy Development concerning approval of the draft submission prepared by the Boundary Review Working Group (BRWG) on the recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) for the electoral arrangements for Gloucester.
- 87.2 Councillor Haigh (Chair of the BRWG) moved the recommendations set out in the report.
- 87.3 Councillor Hilton (Member of the BRWG) seconded the motion.
- 87.4 Councillor Haigh thanked the Members of the BRWG for achieving a significant amount of cross-party consensus for the Council's response to the LGBCE proposals and also thanked the Project Officer for his support to the Group. She explained that the Council's submission contained some minor amendments to open spaces, but that these would not affect any electors. She stated that the Council fundamentally opposed the boundary proposals for the Quedgeley/Kingsway area and that the Council's own proposal was the most appropriate, reflecting natural boundaries and communities and the views of residents. She urged residents to respond to the consultation.
- 87.5 Councillor Randle moved the following amendment that was seconded by Councillor Taylor and accepted by Councillor Haigh:
- “That the odd-numbered houses on West Lodge Drive be moved into the proposed Coney Hill ward as the only access to these properties is from Coney Hill Road.”**
- 87.6 The Mayor stated that the boundary proposals for Quedgeley did not take into account any of the views put forward by the Council or the LGBCE's own criteria of reflecting existing communities. She advised that a natural boundary already existed and should be maintained in order for the people, communities and heritage of Quedgeley to be preserved; Quedgeley and Kingsway were two very different communities in their own right and that should be reflected in the ward boundaries.
- 87.7 Councillor Chatterton echoed the comments made by the Mayor and stated that residents and Councillors objected to putting the oldest part of Quedgeley into a ward with the new community of Kingsway.
- 87.8 Councillor Hilton agreed that the proposals for Quedgeley/Kingsway did not properly take account of the communities in that area. In respect of the differing views in relation to Westgate ward, he explained that the Liberal Democrat Group would like the ward to be split into two wards, with two Members for the City Centre area and a single Member ward for Hempsted, to provide a better focus on the City Centre, distinct from the separate community in Hempsted. He thanked the BRWG for agreeing that Deansway Meadow should remain in Kingsholm and Wotton.
- 87.9 Councillor Norman stated that, as a resident of and ward Councillor in Quedgeley, the proposed boundary was inappropriate and that residents would be making their voices heard.

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87.10 Councillor Haigh noted the strong views expressed. She stated that individuals and Groups were welcome to submit their own views, but that the level of cross-party support was to be commended.

87.11 **RESOLVED –**

- (1) That, subject to the odd-numbered houses on West Lodge Drive being moved into the proposed Coney Hill ward, the draft submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England be approved.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Head of Legal and Policy Development, in consultation with Group Leaders, to finalise the Council's submission before it is submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England by 16 March 2015.

88. HOUSING STOCK TRANSFER - TRANSFER AGREEMENT

88.1 Council considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure concerning approval of the key terms of the Transfer Agreement, Development Agreement and consequential delegations to enable the transfer of the Council's housing land, housing stock, and associated functions to Gloucester City Homes (GCH).

88.2 Councillor Organ moved the recommendations set out in the report.

88.3 Councillor James seconded the motion.

88.4 Councillor Organ noted that this decision represented an important milestone for the Council and was the culmination of a project that had evolved over several years. It was a journey based on the rationale that something was needed urgently to sustain the Council's housing stock for the future and therefore ensure a decent standard of homes for the Council's tenants across the City.

88.5 Despite the Council having invested £389 million in the stock it had become apparent that the existing delivery of decent homes was not viable financially into the future and a new mechanism had to be sought.

88.6 Councillor Organ noted that the Housing Futures Options Board had been formed from Councillors of all parties, tenants and management from Gloucester City Homes and the Council together with specialist consultants. The team had worked exceptionally well together and tenants had received communications at each stage of the process. The tenants had voted for a re-formed Gloucester City Homes as their chosen landlord and the new delivery model had been approved by the Government.

88.7 He noted that the decision before Members would affect the housing needs of thousands of people across the city now and for the future. The writing off of existing debt was the largest single investment made by Government to the City of Gloucester and would enable Gloucester City Homes to be re-formed and to build

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one hundred new homes. A re-investment of £292 million would be used for maintaining and regenerating the existing stock over the next thirty years.

- 88.8 He expressed his thanks to the members of the former Housing Options Board, Councillor Hilton, Councillor Smith, Councillor Noakes, Ashley Green and the Gloucester City Homes management team, consultants and legal advisors, Martin Shields and the Council's management team, Officers and consultants and all Councillors.
- 88.9 Councillor S. Witts referred to paragraph (ii) (i) on Page 112 of the report and noted that it should refer to Gloucester rather than Salford.
- 88.10 Councillor Smith stated that she had not believed several years ago that she would be able to support any transfer of the Council's housing stock but she believed that this proposal was the best possible future for the stock and for tenants. She noted that the proposal would not have progressed to this stage without the amazing amount of work that had been done by the tenants. She believed that they had demonstrated an incredible level of knowledge and had worked with Officers on complex issues. She thanked Ian Harries and the Officers involved for their work and she fully supported the transfer which she believed would be an excellent move for the City.
- 88.11 Councillor Hilton believed that the transfer would ensure good quality well maintained housing stock and new homes for the City. He noted that the Council would not need to borrow more or guarantee the quality of the housing stock for the next 20 or 30 years. He noted that 64 per cent of the 90 percent of tenants who voted, had voted in favour of the transfer and he believed that an important factor was that Gloucester City Homes had done and would continue to do an excellent job in managing the stock.
- 88.12 He noted that the Council would still hold one third of the Board seats and the transfer would not preclude the Council from considering building new homes for rent in the future. He stated that there was still a shortage of decent homes in the City and other Registered Social Landlords needed to build more new homes.
- 88.13 Councillor Patel believed that Gloucester City Homes did an excellent job in managing the Council's stock and he thanked everyone involved.
- 88.14 Councillor Tracey congratulated every one involved and supported the possibility of the Council building more new homes in the future.
- 88.15 The Leader of the Council repeated the thanks recorded by Councillor Organ. He noted that Council Officers had dealt with a very technical subject; the Gloucester City Homes team had done a great job in managing the stock and had given tenants the confidence to vote for the transfer; the Council had been well served by its technical advisers; the tenants had demonstrated a great deal of knowledge. He thanked Councillors for the cross-party support for the transfer and he thanked Richard Graham MP for his support.

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88.16 He stated that the write of existing debt would represent the largest single investment in the City and he recalled the moment when the Housing Minister had handed him the letter approving the proposals for the transfer. He believed that the decision before Members was about greater investment and building new homes. It represented an historic moment but the hard work was not yet over.

88.17 Councillor Organ stated that it had been a long haul and hard work. He hoped that the compliments would be accepted by those involved in the spirit in which they had been made. He believed that there would be some celebrations to mark 16 March as the transfer would be very important for the quality of life of thousands of people across the City.

88.18 RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Transfer be completed once the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has given consent;
- (2) That the terms of the Transfer Agreement and Development Agreement be approved;
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Policy Development, the Head of Finance and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure to resolve any matters that remain outstanding;
- (4) That the Head of Legal and Policy Development be authorised to sign and deliver the Legal Opinion as set out in section 13; and
- (5) That the Head of Legal and Policy Development be authorised to seal the Collateral Funders Warranty, Transfer Agreement, Development Agreement, the Property Transfer (TR5) and any other deeds that need sealing and to sign any ancillary documentation on behalf of the Council and to do whatever else is necessary or expedient to complete the Transfer.

89. HOUSING STRATEGY

89.1 Council considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure concerning the outcome of consultation on the draft Housing Strategy and seeking approval for the adoption and implementation of the final version.

89.2 Councillor Organ moved the recommendations set out in the report.

89.3 Councillor James seconded the motion.

89.4 Councillor Organ explained that the Housing Strategy underpinned the Joint Core Strategy and the Council Plan; it was a forward looking document that would be refreshed as new data became available. He advised that it was essential to have a strategic plan in place to ensure that the Council met its statutory obligations.

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- 89.5 Councillor Haigh welcomed the intention to produce an executive summary of the strategy to clarify the overall strategic direction for housing in the City.
- 89.6 In response to a question from Councillor Smith regarding discretionary housing payments, Councillor Organ advised that he anticipated that the budget would be fully spent by the end of the year.
- 89.7 Councillor Organ acknowledged that the City's house-building rate was one of the highest in the country, despite the City's challenging boundaries. He emphasised the importance of working closely with developers and also working to improve standards in the private rented sector.
- 89.8 **RESOLVED –**
- (1) The Housing Strategy at Appendix 1 be adopted and implemented;
 - (2) Progress reports be brought to Council every two years; and
 - (3) Authority to make minor revisions to the action plan be delegated to the Housing Strategy and Enabling Service Manager in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health & Leisure.

90. NOTICES OF MOTION

- 90.1 There were no Notices of Motion.

Time of commencement: 18:00 hours

Time of conclusion: 19:55 hours

Chair