



COUNCIL

MEETING : Thursday, 22nd February 2018

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

Others in Attendance

Managing Director
Corporate Director (Partnership Working)
Corporate Director (Service Transformation)
Head of Policy and Resources
Policy and Governance Manager
Democratic and Electoral Services Team Leader

APOLOGIES : None

60. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

60.1 That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2018 be approved as a correct record.

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 61.1 Councillor Williams declared a personal interest in agenda item 8: Money Plan 2018-23 and Budget Proposals 2018/19 by virtue of her being a member of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.
- 61.2 Councillor Stephens declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 8: Money Plan 2018-23 and Budget Proposals 2018/19 in respect of a Labour Group amendment by virtue of his spouse's employment at Gloucester Law Centre.

He explained that he had been granted a dispensation by the Audit and Governance Committee to participate in the business of the Council in

COUNCIL
22.02.18

relation to the determination of the Budget, except in circumstances where, by way of a motion or amendment (as in this case), the matter under consideration referred specifically and predominantly to his disclosable pecuniary interest. He explained that he would withdraw from the meeting and take no part in the debate or vote on the Labour Group amendment in respect of funding of the voluntary sector.

- 61.3 Councillor Hampson declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 8: Money Plan 2018-23 and Budget Proposals 2018/19 by virtue of being a private sector landlord. He advised that in instances where the matter under consideration referred specifically and predominantly to this interest, he would withdraw from the meeting and take no part in the debate or vote on any motion or amendment.
- 61.4 Councillor Hansdot declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 8: Money Plan 2018-23 and Budget Proposals 2018/19 by virtue of being a private sector landlord. He advised that in instances where the matter under consideration referred specifically and predominantly to this interest, he would withdraw from the meeting and take no part in the debate or vote on any motion or amendment.
- 61.5 Councillor Pullen advised that he was employed part-time by SHARP Life and Learning Skills – a voluntary organisation. Having consulted with the Monitoring Officer, he confirmed that this would not give rise to a disclosable interest.
- 61.6 Councillor James declared a personal interest in agenda item 8: Money Plan 2018-23 and Budget Proposals 2018/19 as Chairman of Marketing Gloucester Limited and advised that in instances where the matter under consideration referred specifically and predominantly to this interest, he would withdraw from the meeting and take no part in the debate or vote on any motion or amendment.
- 61.7 Councillor Organ declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 8: Money Plan 2018-23 and Budget Proposals 2018/19 by virtue of being a private sector landlord. He advised that in instances where the matter under consideration referred specifically and predominantly to this interest, he would withdraw from the meeting and take no part in the debate or vote on any motion or amendment.
- 61.8 Councillor Noakes declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 8: Money Plan 2018-23 and Budget Proposals 2018/19 by virtue of being a private sector landlord. She advised that in instances where the matter under consideration referred specifically and predominantly to this interest, she would withdraw from the meeting and take no part in the debate or vote on any motion or amendment.
- 61.9 Councillor Melvin declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 8: Money Plan 2018-23 and Budget Proposals 2018/19 by virtue of being a private sector landlord. She advised that in instances where the matter under consideration referred specifically and predominantly to this interest, she

**COUNCIL
22.02.18**

would withdraw from the meeting and take no part in the debate or vote on any motion or amendment.

- 61.10 Councillor Patel declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 8: Money Plan 2018-23 and Budget Proposals 2018/19 by virtue of being a private sector landlord. He advised that in instances where the matter under consideration referred specifically and predominantly to this interest, he would withdraw from the meeting and take no part in the debate or vote on any motion or amendment.
- 61.11 Councillor Toleman declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 8: Money Plan 2018-23 and Budget Proposals 2018/19 by virtue of being a private sector landlord. He advised that in instances where the matter under consideration referred specifically and predominantly to this interest, he would withdraw from the meeting and take no part in the debate or vote on any motion or amendment.

62. CALL OVER

- 62.1 The Mayor invited Members to indicate whether they wished to reserve agenda items 8 and 9 for discussion. Members indicated that they wished to reserve both items for discussion.

63. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

- 63.1 There were no public questions.

64. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

- 64.1 There were no petitions or deputations.

65. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor

- 65.1 The Mayor reminded Members of the following events:

29th April 2018 – The Annual Civic Service at Gloucester Cathedral.

5th May 2018 – The Annual Civic at Bowden Hall.

He advised that invitations would be circulated in the near future and that all Members were welcome.

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

- 66.1 Council considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources (Councillor David Norman MBE) which sought

COUNCIL
22.02.18

approval for the 2018-23 Money Plan & the 2018/19 Budget Proposals.

The Leader of the Council (Councillor Paul James) moved the recommendations set out in the report. He thanked Councillor D. Norman and the Head of Policy and Resources for their work in putting the budget proposals together. He further thanked staff across the authority for their work over the past year as well as for the work they would undertake in the year ahead. He requested that the vote on the item be recorded and was supported by the remaining Members of the Cabinet.

- 66.2 Councillor James stated that the Council's financial position had been significantly strengthened over the past five years. He referenced the improvement in the Council's reserves which stood at £112k in 2013 and presently stood at £4.2 million.
- 66.3 He advised that the financial climate had been challenging over recent years although savings of £12.4 million had been made over seven years through a number of initiatives. By way of example, he highlighted the Council driving efficiencies, shared services with other authorities and new income generation. He also highlighted that partner organisations had been part of this drive towards efficiencies such as Amey having made savings of £1m over four years, Civica delivering a saving of £100k per annum and voluntary sector funding having been reduced.
- 66.4 Councillor James informed the Council that central government had reduced funding to Gloucester by a further £1m and that the total government grant funding for 2018/19 would be £1.745m – down from £10.172m in 2013/14. As such, he advised that Local Government had played its part in national deficit reduction. He commented that changes to the New Homes Bonus had disadvantaged the Council but the Council had made the case for no further reductions in incentives within the scheme. He stated that he was pleased that the Government had not increased the 0.4% deadweight before which New Homes Bonus was payable.
- 66.5 On the Together Gloucester programme, Councillor James advised that the Council had overachieved on the savings target of £1m having made additional savings of £200k. He further confirmed that there were no proposals to reduce staffing levels.
- 66.6 Councillor James referred to Gloucester's rich heritage and its historic position in self-government having been handed down by Royal Charters over centuries. He announced that the Council would be contributing £5k to a project with Gloucestershire Archives to protect and display the 29 Charters from Henry II to Charles II.
- 66.7 He stated that the Kings Walk deal and the revenue generated was a key reason why the savings target was just £200k. He further stated

COUNCIL
22.02.18

that it demonstrated how income from investments could help to both support the Council's budget and services it provided.

- 66.8 Turning to the Property Investment Fund, Councillor James advised that when fully utilised, it was forecast to provide a net income of c.£700k to the general fund. He stated that the Council had not made any investments at the present time but was examining possibilities. He informed the Council that the strategy allowed for investment in both residential and commercial property.
- 66.9 Councillor James confirmed that the Council's office accommodation would be moved to Shire Hall to both make financial savings and to benefit from closer working with the County Council. He stated that the intention was to offer the long leasehold interest to the market. With regard to housing, Councillor James stated that it was one of the Council's top priorities. He further stated that major deals in Housing Zone sites (of which Gloucester was one) were anticipated and that the Chief Executive of Homes England would be visiting Gloucester in March 2018.
- 66.10 With regards to fees and charges, Councillor James informed Council that car parking charges had been increased modestly for the first time in ten years. While some other nearby areas were to increase charges, there would be no increase for 2018/19. With regard to markets, he stated that this had been an area of budget pressure for a considerable time. Due to higher occupancy levels and trader incentives, the markets saving target had been reduced by £30k. Additionally, there was a proposed reduction of £10k. He continued that the budget changes to the markets and museums did not spending any new funds but relieved a pressure on the budget.
- 66.11 Councillor James advised that the capital budget included £2.9m for the construction of the bus station – the first phase of the Kings Quarter development. He expected the second phase to be on site towards the end of the 2018/19 financial year. He further stated that he expected to see progress at The Fleece which would be taken out to market shortly. In terms of regeneration projects, Councillor James estimated that over £120m worth of regeneration was underway at present.
- 66.12 Councillor James confirmed that the Council's bid to GFirst LEP for funding to improve the rail station and its environs had been successful and an award of £3.75m had been confirmed. He highlighted that numerous partners were assisting in securing funding such as £1.5m of Great Places funding, a social impact bond of £900k to help entrenched rough sleepers in the County and £400k secured by Marketing Gloucester to establish the UK Digital Retail Innovation Centre in Gloucester.
- 66.13 Councillor James highlighted that Gloucester City Council was part of the 100% rates retention pilot in Gloucestershire for 2018/19. He

COUNCIL
22.02.18

brought to Council's attention that the benefits of joining the pilot were not quantifiable and, as such, no assumption of benefit was included in the Money Plan. He advised that once the pilot had been completed, any gain could be taken into reserves or allocated according to priority objectives.

- 66.14 Councillor James concluded that the proposed budget was constructed in the context of a continued difficult financial environment. He stated that a combination of sound management and entrepreneurial spirit could continue to support vital services and deliver for the City.
- 66.15 Councillor D. Norman seconded the motion and reported that Local Government finance presented a real challenge to Councils. He highlighted that small, urban districts were unfairly penalised and that programmes such as greater commercialisation and making savings would go some way to alleviating this pressure.
- 66.16 He further stated that continuing the transformation process was the best way to deal with such challenges and thanked staff who were embracing transformation such as the project team tasked with arranging the move to Shire Hall. He also outlined the Council's commitment to upgrading their IT services.
- 66.16 With specific regard to his own portfolio, Councillor Norman advised that there being no proposed staff cuts was due to the CCLA providing a saving of £450k. He stated that the Council would continue to deliver quality services as well as recognising the need to keep Council Tax low.
- 66.17 Councillor Norman advised that funds raised from business rates retention would be examined once it had been ascertained what had been achieved. He concluded by stating that he was confident the proposed budget was measured and that the Council was prepared to meet further financial challenges.
- 66.18 Councillor Pullen stated that eight years of government led by the Conservative Party had brought 40% cuts in funding to Councils across the country and that the Administration's refusal to increase Council Tax previously had resulted in making cuts. He continued that it was unacceptable to have austerity which impacted not only the most vulnerable but also many in work and those who were just managing to get by.
- 66.19 He stated that he recognised that the budget was in a healthy position and that the Council had benefitted from the CCLA fund but queried what services weren't being delivered due to savings that had been made. He noted that grants to the voluntary sector had been reduced considerably and that the Administration was proposing an increase in Shopmobility fees.

COUNCIL
22.02.18

- 66.20 With regard to housing and homelessness, Councillor Pullen shared his view that the Council could not afford, both socially and financially, to continue placing those awaiting housing in hotels, bed and breakfast premises or sending people to Bristol.
- 66.21 Councillor Pullen recognised and welcomed funding for IT in the proposed budget but stated that, in his view, the need for such an injection was as a result of years of under-funding this service. He further noted that there had been a drive to have the Council operate on in a more business-like way. He suggested that it was good business practice to invest in services and questioned why this was not happening when the Council had the finance to do so.
- 66.22 In relation to the anticipated amendments from the Liberal Democrats Group regarding the Culture portfolio, Councillor Pullen stated that it required balance and that funds could be targeted towards social regeneration. He stated that he wanted Gloucester to be a City of Culture but that the Council could not stand by when many were living in poor quality housing and too little was spent on voluntary organisations.
- 66.23 Councillor Pullen concluded that the Labour Group's amendments were best for those who had suffered under financial constraint over recent years. He added that Labour's budget proposals were fully costed within the budgetary framework, were affordable and aimed to develop a more measured budget that removed damaging cuts to public services in Gloucester.
- 66.24 Councillor Hilton thanked Members for their contributions to the budget debate. He expressed his view that, whilst he did not consider the proposed budget to be an inherently bad one, it was not what the Liberal Democrats Group would have put forward. He recognised the comparative financial health of the Council but stated that recent job losses had put increasing pressures on Council staff meaning that the Council could not be as effective as it had been.
- 66.25 With regard to the proposed rise in Council Tax, he noted it was the largest increase for some considerable time and even with such a rise, the budget could still not be balanced. He shared his belief that the Council would have to sell its office accommodation as its finances were not strong enough to remain which he considered disappointing and a step backwards.
- 66.26 Councillor Hilton noted that Councillor James had not referred to the StreetCare contract in his moving of the budget proposals. He queried deep cleans of streets being withdrawn with no consultation and cited this as an example of the Council failing to deliver services.
- 66.27 In relation to business rates retention, Councillor Hilton stated that the County Council were projected to receive £9.2m from the pilots and that District authorities were projected to receive around 30% of the

**COUNCIL
22.02.18**

equivalent sum. He thus queried why the Council had declined to allocate projected receipts at a time when the County had done so.

66.28 Councillor Pullen, seconded by Councillor Fearn, proposed the following composite amendment (which consisted of six independent constituent parts):

“Council resolves that the 2018/19 Revenue & Capital Budgets and the Money Plan for 2018-23 be amended by:

Capital Budget 2018/19 - Property Investment Fund

- That the Property Investment Fund be reduced to £55,000,000
- That a Private Property Acquisition Fund be established to the value of £5,000,000
- That a Social Housing Investment Fund be established to the value of £20,000,000

Revenue Budget 2018/19

The following amendments to the proposed budget:

- Create Private Sector Housing post to administer Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme in 2018/19 at a total annual cost of £39,000.
- £6,000 one off costs in 2018/19 for the submission of an application for Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme to Secretary of State
- Annual ongoing costs of this post to be self-financing through the scheme.
- Provide one off funding in 2018-19 for additional Welfare Benefit Advice of £35,000 in grant to advice agencies.
- Remove the proposed saving of £50,000 to the Voluntary Sector Grants in 2018/19.

To be funded by:

- Reduce Cabinet by one member with the removal of Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure saving £10,000 per annum
- Remove the proposed increase in Market budgets of £30,000 per annum.
- Remove the proposed increase in Museum budgets of £10,000 per annum.
- Remove the one-off funding in 2018-19 of £40,000 to Markets.
- Reduce the one-off funding to Museums in 2018-19 by £20,000.
- Remove the one-off funding in 2018-19 of £20,000 for Community Schemes

**COUNCIL
22.02.18**

Summary:

One Off 2018-19

• Private Sector Housing Post	£39,000
• Application Cost	£ 6,000
• Welfare Support	£35,000
• Total Cost	£80,000

Funded by

• Museums	£20,000
• Markets	£40,000
• Community Schemes	£20,000
• Total	£80,000

Ongoing

- Remove Voluntary Sector Saving £50,000

Funded by

• Cabinet Post	£10,000
• Museum & Market proposed saving	£40,000

Increased Charges for Shopmobility Scheme

That the increased charges for the Shopmobility Scheme agreed at Cabinet on 7th February 2018 are rescinded and that the fees and charges book be amended to reflect this.”

66.29 Councillor Pullen stated that the composite amendment was fully costed in line with the Money Plan and reported that Labour's priorities were housing and homelessness, support for those moving to the Universal Credit benefit system and the reversal of cuts to the voluntary sector. He highlighted that 131 homeless applications were yet to be determined and 69 were families with children. He stated that the Labour amendment proposed a fund of £5k to buy properties for temporary accommodation which would reduce the need for using expensive B & B accommodation.

66.30 He further stated that the administration had failed to invest in social housing and that many were unable to buy their first home. He highlighted that the Council had £80m in the Property Investment Fund and Labour proposed to reduce this to £55m in order to fund a programme of social housing. Councillor Pullen further outlined that the Labour Group sought to fund a welfare benefit advice worker to ease transition to Universal Credit as well as

COUNCIL
22.02.18

retaining the level of the Councillors' Community Fund. He explained the final element of the composite amendment was to remove the increase in Shopmobility fees. He brought to Council's attention that Shopmobility was a lifeline for vulnerable and disabled people in Gloucester, many of whom depended on the service for independence and the ability to contribute to the life of the City.

- 66.31 Councillor James did not accept the amendment.
- 66.32 Councillor James thanked Councillors Pullen and Hilton for providing advance sight of their amendments. He stated that, having been considered, the Conservative Group would not be supporting either amendments. He stated, however, that he hoped that some of the commitments that would be made in the course of debate would assuage Members' concerns.
- 66.33 Councillor James disputed that the Council had not invested in social housing. He stated that the administration had invested £40m and that £52m of historic debt had been written off by the Government. He highlighted the Podsmead and Matson regeneration programme where £1.25m had been earmarked for investment. On the issues raised by Councillor Pullen with regards to the quality of private housing, Councillor James advised that the Cabinet would debate Fixed Penalty Notices for private landlords as well as investigating a licensing scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupancy.
- 66.34 Councillor Norman highlighted that the Property Investment Fund allowed for investment in both residential and commercial property. He stated that the proposal to introduce a fixed financial threshold could inhibit the flexibility contained in the strategy. Councillor Norman further stated that, any use of this strategy would be considered through due diligence procedures.
- 66.35 The Councillor Watkins (Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods) stated that the Council continued to remain generous in financial support towards the voluntary sector and highlighted Councillor Community Funds and Service Level Agreements by way of example. She noted that the Gloucester Lottery had raised £27k in its first year and that the Council would continue to work closely with partners. With regard to welfare and benefit advice, Councillor Watkins stated that personal budgeting support could be put out to tender in the future and the Council could consider taking this area of work itself.
- 66.36 In responding to the Labour Group's amendment regarding Shopmobility, Councillor Watkins stated that the Council wished to protect and continue the service and that an increase in fees would help stabilise its financial position. She further stated that it was necessary to find a good balance between the majority of Gloucester residents and those who used the Shopmobility service.

COUNCIL
22.02.18

- 66.37 Councillor Wilson indicated that the Liberal Democrats group would not support Labour's composite amendment in its entirety but would support parts 1, 2 and 6. He highlighted the social value of providing social housing as well as the possibility of investment. In relation to Labour's remaining amendments, Councillor Wilson stated that these amendments all involved reductions in the museums and markets. He continued that these were important to the whole community and required greater funding and not less.
- 66.38 In summation, Councillor Fearn shared her view that, given the reduction in funding, the budget was about political choices and that Labour would make different choices. She stated that, under Labour's proposed amendment(s), there was an option to invest in the City and its people.
- 66.39 The amendment was put to the vote and was lost.
- 66.40 Councillor Stephens, seconded by Councillor Hampson, moved the following amendment:
- “Council resolves that:
- Reduction of Property Investment Fund to £75,000,000
 - Establishment of a Private Sector Property Acquisition Fund of £5,000,000”.
- 66.41 Councillor Stephens highlighted that a significant number of individuals and families required housing and that a family was placed in a Bournemouth refuge as the Council had closed Gloucester's. He stated that the amendment was a realistic way to remedy this situation and could also serve as an investment for the future.
- 66.42 Councillor Hampson raised those suffering from mental health issues when they experience difficulties in housing. He highlighted that numerous people are evicted through no fault and that this amendment was an alternative.
- 66.43 Councillor James did not accept the amendment.
- 66.44 Councillor Hilton indicated that the Liberal Democrats Group would support the amendment. He stated that a Private Sector Property Acquisition Fund would be a good use of £5m of capital and that it would be useful to strategically plan such borrowing.
- 66.45 Councillor James stated that he had sympathy with the sentiment of the amendment but that investment in residential property had always been possible. He advised that a Housing Transformation Plan would be considered by the Cabinet in May 2018 and suggested that the Council wait until this had been discussed. He further highlighted the enactment of the

COUNCIL
22.02.18

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and that this enabled action to prevent homelessness to be taken earlier.

- 66.46 Councillor Stephens confirmed to Councillor Hilton that the investment would go through the relevant due diligence processes. He shared his view that the administration often delayed taking action in this area when other authorities were attempting to deal with it. He welcomed the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 but stated that investment was required in order for it to be meaningful.
- 66.47 The amendment was put to the vote and lost.
- 66.48 Councillor Stephens, seconded by Councillor Hampson, proposed the following amendment:
- “Council resolves that:
- Reduction of Property Investment Fund to £60,000,000
 - Establishment of Social Housing Investment Fund of £20,000,000
- 66.49 Councillor Stephens stated that 4846 individuals were awaiting accommodation and that this figure was likely to be higher. He queried what the Council was building and shared his view that nowhere was this need being met. He highlighted by way of example that the number of homes built last year was 66 and that the Council could not rely solely on market housing.
- 66.50 Councillor Hampson stated that the Conservative administration was aware of what the issues were and that he could think of no good reason to not act in this way.
- 66.51 Councillor Hilton indicated the Liberal Democrats Group would support the amendment as it was a sound use of borrowing money. He stated that it was less risk than some other investments, had a distinct social value and that the Cabinet Member had previously accepted that there was a need for this.
- 66.52 Councillor James agreed that the Council could not rely only on market housing. He highlighted the achievements in working with Housing Associations which had delivered exclusively affordable housing. He shared his view that a £20m injection directly from the Council would not make a great deal of difference to Gloucester's housing shortage. He stated that the essence of the Property Investment Fund was promoting regeneration in the City and that the priority was to invest in the City. He noted that £1.25m had been allocated for the Matson and Podsmead regeneration programme.
- 66.53 Councillor Stephens clarified that the fund would be for partnership working with organisations such as Housing Associations and Gloucester City

COUNCIL
22.02.18

Homes. He further highlighted that the monies allocated for Matson and Podsmead regeneration were for planning and did not equate to actual investment.

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

66.55 Councillor Coole, seconded by Councillor Haigh, moved the following amendment:

“Council resolves that the 2018/19 Revenue Budget be amended by:

- Creation of a Private Sector Housing Officer Post at a cost of £39,000
- Consultancy fee of £6,000 to make application to Secretary of State for Introduction of Private Landlord Selective Licensing Scheme.

To be funded by:

- Remove the one-off funding in 2018/19 to Markets £40,000
- Reduce the one-off funding in 2018/19 to Museums £5,000”

66.56 Councillor Coole outlined that the proposed post would be specifically to deal with the poor quality of some private rented housing which, he added, had been introduced previously. He stated that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had examined this issue and that it was his view that it would see positive change in the sector.

66.57 He further stated that the proposed scheme would be self-financing as had been the case in other authorities. Councillor Coole also suggested that, were the amendment to be adopted, it would show that the Council took the rights of tenants seriously and it would benefit good landlords. He highlighted the example of Blackpool adopting the scheme and that this was held in high regard having reduced anti-social behaviour in the town.

66.58 Councillor James did not accept the amendment.

66.59 Councillor Wilson stated that the amendment was a positive idea but expressed concern that its proposed funding suggested a zero-sum game. He shared his view that he was pleased to see an increase in funding for markets and museums and that this should be preserved. On this basis, Councillor Wilson indicated that the Liberal Democrats group would not support the amendment.

66.60 Councillor James proposed that the question be put. Councillor Stephens, supported by four other Members of the Labour Group, requested a recorded vote on the matter of whether the question be put, the results of which were as follows:

For	Against	Abstaining
Morgan Watkins	Pullen Hilton	

**COUNCIL
22.02.18**

Cook	Stephens
Noakes	Lugg
D. Norman	Wilson
Gravells	Bhaimia
Tracey	Haigh
Hanman	D. Brown
Lewis	J. Brown
Williams	Coole
Dee	Fearn
Taylor	Hyman
H. Norman	Ryall
Pearsall	Smith
Finnegan	
Hawthorne	
Walford	

(16)	(14)	(0)
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66.61 The amendment was put to the vote and was lost.

66.62 Councillor Smith, seconded by Councillor Hampson, proposed the following amendment:

“Council resolves that the 2018/19 Revenue Budget be amended by:

Resource Provision to the voluntary sector to fund	£35,000
Advice Worker in respect of Universal Credit	

To be funded by:

Remove the one-off funding for Community Schemes	£20,000
Reduce the one-off funding for Museums	£15,000”

66.63 Councillor Smith brought to Council's attention that Universal Credit had been causing great concern and that nationally, it had caused numerous problems for recipients of the benefit. She further stated that there was no indication of how many would be affected.

66.64 Councillor Smith highlighted that in the region of 20% waited more than six weeks for their payment with many falling into rental arrears. She stated that advice services were already stretched and that with the anticipated issues that Universal Credit would cause to Gloucester residents, it was necessary to mitigate this by way of a dedicated welfare advice worker. The proposed worker would be sited within the voluntary sector so as to be independent from Council services.

66.65 Councillor Hampson stated that while many people agreed with the principle of Universal Credit, it was its implementation that was causing such consternation. He noted the provision of personal budgeting support but queried how realistic it was to expect individuals to budget with nothing given

**COUNCIL
22.02.18**

the five week wait for payments. He stated that it would be a sensible provision to fund an advice worker.

66.66 Councillor James did not accept the amendment.

66.67 Councillor Watkins indicated that the Council wanted access to advice for residents and noted that, given many Universal Credit claimants would be working, many would access advice remotely such as through telephone and email. She stated that the Council had been working with the Department for Work and Pensions and that there was the possibility of having a Council worker in Job Centres to encourage Discretionary Housing Payment and Council Tax Support claims.

66.68 Councillor Lugg highlighted a resident in her ward who had suffered extreme mental distress following a request to attend a Universal Credit interview. She advised that it had not been made clear that every claimant was required to attend an interview and that this had not been communicated to the individual in this case who believed he had been singled out. She noted that this highlighted the need for good independent advice for those in receipt of Universal Credit.

66.69 In summation, Councillor Smith stated that there was a clear need for a welfare advice worker and further noted that, whilst there was some provision, those in private rented housing have no source of support by way of advice.

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

66.71 Councillor Pullen, seconded by Councillor Lugg, proposed the following amendment:

“Council resolves that the 2018/19 Revenue Budget be amended by:

Remove Voluntary Sector saving £50,000

To be funded by:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| • Removal of 1 x Cabinet Post
(Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure) | £10,000 |
| • Museum & Market proposed saving | £40,000” |

66.72 Councillor Pullen outlined that the amendment was in order to remove the £50k cut in funding to voluntary sector organisations. He stated that the voluntary sector do an excellent job and should be supported in their work.

66.73 He highlighted that many small organisations do not have the ability to employ staff and that small amounts of funding can make a great deal of

COUNCIL
22.02.18

difference. He further suggested that providing such funding was a good example of Asset Based Community Development.

- 66.74 With regard to Members' community funding, Councillor Pullen stated that it was important that organisation received a small amount of money in order to begin their community work.
- 66.75 Councillor Lugg stated that many organisations depended on this funding and reducing the fund to £500 per Member would see some provision disappear.
- 66.76 Councillor James did not accept the amendment.
- 66.77 Councillor Haigh highlighted that matched funding was commonplace and that, were this fund reduced, it could prove difficult to receive other funding. She highlighted a number of projects in her ward which had been assisted by the fund including a £200 period poverty scheme, a lunch club for the socially isolated and alleviating holiday hunger.
- 66.78 Councillor Watkins stated that she was pleased that Members had found the fund useful. In relation to Asset Based Community Development, she stated that this was not simply about money and that it would be doing community groups a dis-service to focus only on the financial aspects.
- 66.79 Councillor Watkins highlighted the work of the Gloucester Lottery which had provided funds to numerous groups.
- 66.80 Councillor Pullen stated that the Cabinet Member had previously given assurances that funding from the Gloucester Lottery would not replace grants and that the proposed reduction in community funds was the wrong choice.
- 66.81 The amendment was put to the vote and was lost.
- 66.82 Councillor Coole, Seconded by Councillor Hansdot, proposed the following motion:
- “Council resolves:
- That the increased charges for the Shopmobility Scheme agreed at Cabinet on 7th February 2018 are rescinded and that the fees and charges book be amended to reflect this”
- 66.83 Councillor Coole expressed concern that the increase in fees for the Shopmobility service would affect those with a protected characteristic (as defined under the Equality Act 2010) and that there was no suggestion of remedial action that would be taken as a result of the People Impact Assessment.

COUNCIL
22.02.18

- 66.84 He further noted that, according to responses to the consultation, more than 50% of users avail of the service more than once a week – something not reflected in the report on the matter.
- 66.85 Councillor Hansdot highlighted that residents very much valued the service and that it was essential for those with mobility difficulties. He stated that the changes to the fee structure did not reflect the fact that it would have a negative impact on those who used it most.
- 66.86 Councillor Watkins stated that the Council was keen to keep the service and that it was necessary to place it on a more sustainable footing. She noted that there had been no increase in fees since 2012 and was still comparatively low for the region.
- 66.87 The amendment was put to the vote and was lost.
- 66.88 Councillor Hilton proposed the following composite amendment:
- The Liberal Democrat group proposes £270,000 further investment in city council services, concentrating on culture and community. There will be no increase in the council tax from the 3% proposed by the cabinet.
- £100,000 towards new public art projects.
- Funded by:** First call on the expected surplus from the 100% business rates retention pilot.
- £100,000 to process and sort uncatalogued historic artefacts held by the museum service.
- Funded by:** Second call on the expected surplus from the 100% business rates retention pilot.
- £10,000 to install drinking water fountains in public spaces.
- Funded by:** Third call on the expected surplus from the 100% business rates retention pilot.
- £20,000 to establish a Gloucester narrow boat festival to be held at Gloucester Docks.
- Funded by:** Fourth call on the expected surplus from the 100% business rates retention pilot.
- £40,000 over two years. Increase Members Allocation Allowance by £500 per councillor taking the sum back to £1,000 per year for each councillor to allocate to community projects in their ward. Years 18/19 & 19/20
- Funded by:** Fifth call on the expected surplus from the 100% business rates retention pilot.
- 66.89 Councillor Hilton outlined that the County Council had projected figures for the receipts of the business rates retention pilot and had resolved to allocate

COUNCIL
22.02.18

funds on the basis of this projection. He noted that, in any event, the Gloucester Window was due to cost £100k. He stated his hope that, by drawing down these funds there would be scope for public art.

- 66.90 With regard to processing and sorting uncatalogued historical artefacts, Councillor Hilton stated that their storage was not suitable and did not have environmental quality. He advised that 16,000 items had not received basic cataloguing. Additionally, the proposal to use £10k of the business rates retention pilot to install drinking fountains would help to reduce plastic waste in the City.
- 66.91 He further stated that the £20k proposal to establish a narrow boat festival would celebrate the City's industrial heritage and could alternate with the Tall Ships festival.
- 66.92 Councillor Wilson queried why, if the County Council had determined to allocate funds from the rates retention pilot, the City Council could not. He stated that, whilst funds could never be guaranteed, the proposed amendment accounted for less than a third of the projected income and, as such, the majority of funds would remain unspent.
- 66.93 Councillor James did not accept the amendment.
- 66.94 Councillor Noakes (Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure) stated that the Council could not spend money it did not have but did appreciate the support for culture and leisure. She further stated that it was not the time to spend £100k on art and that such matters could not be decided on an *ad hoc* basis.
- 66.95 **Rules of Procedure – 6:** The meeting had, at this point lasted three hours. The length of time of Council meetings shall be limited to three hours, but shall only be closed after three hours if a two-thirds majority of those Members in attendance vote to close the meeting. A two-thirds majority was not reached and, as such, the meeting continued.
- 66.96 Councillor Pullen indicated that the Labour Group would support the amendment and expressed surprise that such a number of artefacts had not been catalogued. He stated that, in pursuing the provision of public art, he would like to see the involvement of public artists.
- 66.97 Councillor Cook (Cabinet Member for Environment) noted that there could be a public health issue in terms of providing water fountains and officers were investigating water re-fill points – a proposal which would go to Cabinet. He further stated that the Member for Parliament had commenced water re-fill points in Gloucester's venues.
- 66.98 Councillor James thanked Councillor Hilton for advanced sight of the amendments and reiterated that there was no certainty on how much money would be received through the pilot.
- 66.99 Councillor Stephens expressed concern about the financial implications of such a proposal and stated that he could not recall an occasion when the

COUNCIL
22.02.18

Council had gone against the advice of the s. 151 Officer. He further queried at what stage the monies would be drawn down.

- 66.100 Councillor D. Norman highlighted the advice provided by the s. 151 Officer and stated that it was not appropriate to allocate funds more than twelve months in advance given that it could introduce a risk for the Council's finances.
- 66.101 Councillor Norman advised that the distribution of benefit would occur when it is released in line with the Council's priorities.
- 66.102 In relation to the proposal to increase the Members' Allocation Allowance by £500 per Member, Councillor Watkins stated that she would be happy to review this in 2019/20.
- 66.103 Councillor Haigh queried why Councillor Norman had taken a different view on this matter when it was raised at the County Council.
- 66.104 Councillor Hilton stated that he appreciated the level of debate on the proposed amendment. In response to a point raised by Councillor Noakes, he stated that he was not attempting to suggest what public art there should be but that there could be a pool of money from which a team could examine what could be commissioned and/or displayed.
- 66.105 He further stated that he took issue in not considering the preservation of artefacts. He noted that business rates would be paid from April 2018 so that the funds would begin to be received immediately after the pilot was introduced. He queried whether the Administration would accept any of the part amendments. Councillor James indicated that no parts would be accepted.
- 66.106 Councillor Hilton withdrew the Liberal Democrats Group's further amendments
- 66.107 On the substantive budget proposal, Councillor James stated that services were not being stopped but that they were being delivered in a different way. With regard to the Council's operations moving to Shire Hall, he advised that it was not merely because of savings that could be made but that there were also benefits to closer working with the County Council.
- 66.108 The motion was put to a recorded vote and was carried. The results were as follows:

For	Against	Abstention
Morgan	Pullen	
Toleman	Hilton	
James	Stephens	
Watkins	Lugg	
Cook	Wilson	
Noakes	Bhaimia	

**COUNCIL
22.02.18**

D. Norman	Haigh
Organ	D Brown
Gravells	Hansdot
Tracey	Hampson
Hanman	Brazil
Lewis	J Brown
Williams	Coole
Dee	Fearn
Taylor	Hyman
H. Norman	Ryall
Pearsall	Smith
Finnegan	
Hawthorne	
Melvin	
Walford	

(22) (17)

66.109 RESOLVED:

- (1) That the proposals for the 2017/18 budget included in this report be approved.
- (2) That the implementation of the target budget reductions set in the Money plan 2017/2022 be approved.
- (3) That the implementation of the target budget reductions set in the Money plan 2017/2022 be approved.

67. COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2018/19

- 67.1 Council considered the report of the Leader of the Council recommending passing the resolution as set out in the Appendix 1 of the report relating to the setting of Council Tax.
- 67.2 Councillor James moved the recommendations as laid out in the report. In accordance with Part 4 Rule 18.05 of the Constitution and at the request of Councillors James, Watkins, D. Norman, Organ and Noakes, names were recorded as follows:

For	Against	Abstention
Morgan		
Toleman		
James		
Watkins		
Cook		
Noakes		
Norman D		
Organ		
Pullen		

**COUNCIL
22.02.18**

Hilton		
Gravells		
Tracey		
Stephens		
Lugg		
Hanman		
Lewis		
Wilson		
Bhaimia		
Haigh		
Williams		
D Brown		
Dee		
Taylor		
Hansdot		
Patel		
Hampson		
Norman H		
Pearsall		
Brazil		
J Brown		
Coole		
Fearn		
Finnegan		
Hawthorne		
Hyman		
Melvin		
Ryall		
Smith		
Walford		
(22)	(0)	(0)

67.3 **RESOLVED:** That the Council pass the statutory resolutions as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

68. NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no notices of motion.

Time of commencement: 6.00 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 9.40 pm hours

Chair