



## **CABINET**

**MEETING** : Wednesday, 20th May 2020

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

### **Others in Attendance**

Cllrs Haigh, Hilton, Stephens and Wilson

Managing Director

Corporate Director

Corporate Director

Head of Place

Head of Communities

Head of Policy and Resources

Head of Cultural Services

Policy and Development Officer

Housing Services Operational Lead

Solicitor

Policy and Governance Manager

Democratic Services and Elections Team Leader

Democratic Services and Elections Officer

**APOLOGIES** : None

### **131. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **132. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 are confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair in due course.

### **133. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)**

There were no public questions.

### **134. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)**

There were no petitions or deputations.

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

Councillor Stephens referred to the more than 180 households in temporary accommodation across the Gloucestershire authorities, mostly in emergency hotel accommodation, 84 placed by the City Council. He sought reassurance that people would not be returned to the street after COVID-19 lockdown and that every effort was being made to re-home them not on a bed and breakfast basis or outside the city boundary. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods confirmed that this was the case and that the authority intended to work closely with partners and every household, not just those in priority need, on transition plans and to find a home. She reminded Members of the commitment towards finding a permanent solution given in the Housing and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 (Cabinet 12 February 2020) developed prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods further stated that everything would be done by the City Council and County Council colleagues to assist people who had usually or were likely to sleep rough.

Concerning the new Cabinet portfolio for Economic Recovery, Councillor Stephens sought clarification on how it would be progressed and whether there would be a commitment to political consensus and working with all sectors of the economy, including worker representatives, given its importance. The Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery replied that she had spent a very short time in post so far listening to businesses but did not rule out working with any sector of the economy. She emphasised that returning Gloucester to economic prosperity was an apolitical task and invited Councillor Stephens to discuss the matter further at a later date.

Regarding COVID-19 guidance Councillor Haigh asked what the city was doing to support social distancing for pedestrians and cyclists, in the context of recent proposals by the County Council with that objective, and to identify areas where such measures could be taken. The Cabinet Member for Environment gave examples of a range of proposals being considered for parts of the city centre including broadening pedestrianized zones, restricting non-essential traffic and removing on-street parking spaces. He advised that these were only informal proposals at this early stage and that he expected progress to be made shortly.

Councillor Haigh enquired how food parcels are to be supplied since the Food Consortium had closed and the County Help Hub continued to make referrals from people in need. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods stated that a document had just been sent to everyone involved in making referrals, including elected members, listing the various options still open to people requiring food assistance. She commented on the importance of all parties working together to address support for families in the longer term beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Councillor Hilton informed Members of concerns he had received from residents in his own and other wards over the growing number of family homes being converted into houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) mostly but not exclusively for students. He asked why this was not addressed in the proposed Council Plan Extension Plan (agenda item 7) with consideration of an 'Article 4 Declaration' to control development as had been successfully employed in the St. Paul's area of Cheltenham. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy reminded Members that the matter had been discussed at Cabinet, Council and Planning

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Policy Framework meetings and of the fine balance to be struck between the need for student accommodation and rentable family homes. He advised that he would be pleased to meet with Councillor Hilton and any other interested parties to consider the issue further. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods drew attention to the discussion of HMOs and student accommodation in the context of the Housing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (3 February 2020) and the commitment given to investigate the matter in the housing stock condition survey and consider what action to take.

Regarding the inclusion of consideration of a bid for UK City of Culture 2025 in the Council Plan Extension (agenda item 7 Appendix 2 No.4) Councillor Hilton enquired whether effort was being put into the bid that would have been better spent on city's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure reassured Members that the bid had not been actively worked on since January 2020. He indicated that the Gloucester Culture Trust had been invited to make representations and join discussions on the appetite in the city for a bid and commented that culture could become a major driver of recovery. Councillor Hilton agreed on the importance of developing the cultural offer in Gloucester but sought further clarification on whether the bid was the right means to do it especially as it had an estimated cost of £500,000 at a time when the Council was expected to have a funding deficit. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure replied that it was important to keep options open and that the cost would be mostly borne by partners rather than the Council. He commented that he did not recognise the figure given by Councillor Hilton.

Councillor Wilson sought an update on progress made by the administrator of Marketing Gloucester Limited (MGL) and in particular whether the full details of how the £400,000 grant from the Gloucestershire First Local Enterprise Partnership (GFirstLEP) had been spent were known. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources stated that the administrator's report that would enable an understanding of the GFirstLEP investment had not yet been made available. Councillor Wilson further asked if the options document prepared by the MGL Interim Chief Executive was available. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources responded that this document had been received by the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure and the Senior Management Team but had not yet been reviewed by other Cabinet Members prior to wider circulation.

**136. COUNCIL PLAN EXTENSION – PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS FOR 2020/21**

Cabinet considered the report of the Leader of the Council that sought a recommendation for Council to approve the proposed actions and priorities that were set out for the one year Council Plan extension in 2020-2021.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report as an opportunity to complete more actions from the 2017-20 plan and develop others in addition. He summarised the proposals for each priority and highlighted the most significant activities. In relation to the priority identified to reduce homelessness (Appendix 1 3.10), the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods commented on the importance of taking forward what had been learnt from the COVID-19 response. In particular she highlighted the role of the Council beyond its statutory duties influencing and

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working with partners and all parties to find solutions to benefit communities. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy reiterated that working with others was essential. He drew Members' attention to the Housing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 developed through collaboration with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods, providers and partners and advised them that he was exploring a range of activities and innovations to achieve its aims. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure looked forward to progressing the cultural elements of the proposed extension. He commented on the vital contribution various organisations across the sector have made and will make to help people recover from the COVID-19 lockdown with mental and physical stimulation. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure paid special tribute to the activities of the Gloucester Culture Trust in engaging people and reaching out to communities during the pandemic.

**RECOMMENDED** to Council that the one year extension to the Council Plan and the priorities and actions outlined in Appendix 1 of the report be approved.

**Time of commencement: 6.00 pm**  
**Time of conclusion: 6.45 pm**

**Chair**