



COUNCIL

MEETING : Thursday, 7th July 2022

PRESENT : Cllrs. Hyman (Mayor), J. Brown (Sheriff & Deputy Mayor), Cook, H. Norman, S. Chambers, Lewis, Padilla, Hilton, Gravells MBE, Morgan, Wilson, Field, Organ, Patel, Toleman, Brooker, Melvin, Bowkett, Ackroyd, Castle, A. Chambers, Chambers-Dubus, Conder, Dee, Durdey, Evans, Hudson, Kubaszczyk, O'Donnell, Radley, Zaman and Sawyer

Others in Attendance

Managing Director

Monitoring Officer

Director of Policy and Resources

Director of Communities

Head of Culture

Head of Place

Policy and Governance Manager

Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Pullen, Tracey, Bhaimia, Williams, D. Brown, Taylor and Finnegan

9. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held on 23rd May 2022 were approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made on this occasion.

11. CALL OVER

11.1 The Mayor invited Members to indicate whether they wished to reserve agenda items 9, 10 and 11 for discussion. Members indicated that they wished to reserve item 11 for discussion.

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- 11.2 Councillor Cook (Leader of the Council) moved and Councillor Norman (Deputy Leader of the Council) seconded that the Gloucester Local Development Scheme 2022-24 be approved.

RESOLVED that: -

- (1) The revised Gloucester Local Development Scheme (Appendix 1) is adopted by the Council and takes effect immediately.
- (2) The correction of any minor errors such as spelling, grammar, typographical and formatting changes that do not affect the substantive content of the plan be delegated to the Head of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning Strategy.

- 11.3 Councillor Cook moved and Councillor Norman seconded that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021-22 be approved.

RESOLVED that: -

- (1) The Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2021-22 be noted.

12. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

- 12.1 A Gloucester resident submitted the following question:

'It has been over 6 months since the cyber-attack. As a resident of Gloucester, I am still no clearer on whether my personal information has been compromised. Can the council provide this assurance yet?'

- 12.2 The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources responded:

'We apologise that we are still unable to comment any further on the nature or detail of this incident as it remains an active investigation. We are actively working with Information Commissioners Office and agencies regarding this incident.'

13. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

- 13.1 There were no petitions or deputations.

14. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor

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- 14.1 The Mayor reminded Members that he preferred to be referred to as Mayor rather than Mr Mayor.
- 14.2 The Mayor notified Members of the death of Mrs Daphne Arnold who had served as Gloucester City's Mayoress from 1982-83 and Sheriff's Lady from 1978-79.
- 14.3 The Mayor presented Councillor Andrew Lewis with a certificate commemorating his 20 years' service as a Councillor. Councillor Lewis announced that it was a privilege and an honour to serve as a Gloucester City Councillor and expressed the view that he worked with wonderful Councillors and officers. He informed Members that he was particularly honoured to serve as Mayor of Gloucester previously.

Members of the Cabinet

- 14.4 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources advised Members that the application process for non-direct debit holders to apply for their £150 Council Tax rebate was now live on the council website. She explained that eligible residents had up until 14th August 2022 to apply. Should they not reply within the timeframe, the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources confirmed that the rebate amount would be credited to the residents' future Council Tax bill. She noted that applicants would need a bank statement and their 10-digit Council Tax reference number to hand and urged Members to promote the application process to their communities. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources wanted to place on record the thanks of the administration to Revenues and Benefits staff for their hard work in administering the scheme.
- 14.5 The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure announced that Visit Gloucester had won a silver TXGB Trailblazer award from Visit England and paid tribute to the Tourism and Destination Marketing Team for their achievement. He also advised Members that the Museum of Gloucester had achieved 'highly commended' at the 2022 SoGlos Gloucestershire Lifestyle awards and encouraged Members to visit the Titanic Exhibition which was on display there.
- 14.6 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods referred to the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS) which he explained was an initiative of the Ministry of Defence which encourages employers to support armed forces members. He explained that the scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for organisations which demonstrate support to the armed forces community and confirmed that Gloucester City Council had achieved bronze status. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods advised Members that this meant that the City Council committed to statutory requirements, had armed forces-friendly policies in place to support armed forces members and reservists, took part in armed forces community events and supports the local armed forces community by linking them to useful resources and opportunities. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods commended this achievement and noted

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that the City Council hoped to build on this work by applying for silver status next year.

15. MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME

- 15.1 In respect of question 1, Councillor Hilton thanked the Leader of the Council for explaining the reasons as to why work on the Fleece Hotel had halted. He referred to the council's preferred bidder, Dowdeswell Group Ltd, and stated his understanding that one of the Dowdeswell Group's companies had recently gone into liquidation. Councillor Hilton asked whether the Leader could provide reassurance that the Fleece Hotel restoration was still viable. The Leader of the Council advised that officers would continue to work with Dowdeswell Group Ltd to ensure that the project was still viable.
- 15.2 Referring to question 2, Councillor Hilton asked whether the Leader of the Council was confident that Dowdeswell Group Ltd would still be in a position to raise the purchase price of the Herbert, Kimberley and Phillpotts (HKP) Warehouses. The Leader of the Council reiterated that officers would continue to work with the group to ensure that the purchase remained feasible. He noted that the council had a timeframe of 1 month to ensure that the company was still viable to work with.
- 15.3 Councillor Chambers-Dubus referred to question 3 and asked whether an action plan based on the CLS report could be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in draft form for consideration in September. The Leader of the Council confirmed that a dedicated Member group on Climate Change was in place, and they would be reviewing the plan in due course. It was his hope that the draft action plan would be available towards the end of the year.
- 15.4 In response to a further query from Councillor Chambers-Dubus in relation to question 4 and whether the Leader intended to ask the Monitoring Officer to carry out an investigation into whether there had been a breach of the City Council's Members' Code of Conduct, the Leader of the Council confirmed that all aspects of the matter were being looked into and he hoped it would not be necessary to approach the Monitoring Officer.
- 15.5 In relation to question 6, Councillor A Chambers referred to a recount at the elections in May 2021 and asked whether the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources had any concerns about those responsible for the election count. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources expressed the view that the work and efforts of those responsible for organising elections were commendable. She noted that the counting process was complex and largely paper based, and that it was not uncommon for recounts to take place. She advised that any concerns about elections should be put in writing to the Returning Officer.
- 15.6 Councillor A. Chambers referred to question 7 and stated that he had been advised by the Monitoring Officer that Council would need move into private session in order to receive his supplementary question. Following advice

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from the Monitoring Officer, the Mayor put the matter to Members, who indicated that they were not willing to exclude the press and public and move into private session.

- 15.7 In response to a query from Councillor A. Chambers in relation to question 8 and which measures were at Amber and Red, the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources confirmed that the Performance Monitoring Reports were taken to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis and suggested that Councillor A. Chambers attend the next session when the Committee considered the reports. She stated that she welcomed detailed challenge from Members.
- 15.8 In respect of question 9 and a request from Councillor A. Chambers for further clarity as to the responsibilities of the Licensing team in dealing with city events, the Leader of the Council referred to his written answer and the statement that many council departments feed into the process, including the Licensing Team.
- 15.9 Councillor A. Chambers referred to question 10 and raised concerns about delays in issuing documentation including licenses, plates, and ID numbers to taxi drivers. He asked what the council was doing to resolve this issue and deliver documentation in a timely manner. The Leader of the Council confirmed that the cyber-incident which had impacted the council since December 2021 had caused a delay with producing plates and suggested that Councillor A. Chambers provide details of any specific ongoing cases to officers to look into. He expressed the view that it was likely that Tewkesbury Borough Council would bring their driver standards to align with the rest of the Gloucestershire authorities.
- 15.10 In response to a further question from Councillor A. Chambers in respect of question 11 and whether the true costs of the cyber incident might be far in excess of the anticipated costs, the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources replied that she did not believe so.
- 15.11 With regard to question 12, Councillor A Chambers asked why insurance cover had not been put in place. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources explained that this query had been answered during Leader and Cabinet Members' question time at the Cabinet meeting on 15th June 2022 and suggested that Councillor A. Chambers consult the minutes of this particular meeting. She confirmed that if Councillor A. Chambers had any additional questions on this matter, she was happy to answer them at future Cabinet meetings.
- 15.12 Councillor A. Chambers referred to question 13 and queried whether it would have been more secure for the City Council to enter into a shared IT service with Gloucestershire County Council. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources referred Councillor Chambers to the ICT Services: Options Report which had been considered by Cabinet in October 2021. She confirmed that 3.2 and 3.3 in the report confirmed that during the Summer of 2019, the City Council had entered into discussions with Gloucestershire County Council to explore the possibility of a shared service, however by

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Spring 2021, the County Council had not yet developed a sufficient shared service design and cost model to provide certainty around cost and continuity.

- 15.13 In response to a further question from Councillor A. Chambers relating to question 14 and whether the City Council reported the cyber incident to the ICO within the 72-hour timeframe, the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources confirmed that the council had complied with this timeframe and reminded Members that the investigation was still active and ongoing.
- 15.14 In response to a follow-up query from Councillor A Chambers concerning question 15 and personal data, the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources reminded Members that the investigation had not yet concluded.
- 15.15 Councillor A. Chambers asked for clarification as to the response provided to question 16 and whether any traders had operated in a prime city location without paying rent. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources confirmed that she did not believe so but suggested that Councillor A. Chambers write to her with further details if he had any particular concerns.
- 15.16 In respect of question 17, Councillor A. Chambers asked whether the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources or senior officers were aware of any concerns raised regarding taxi driver licensing processes. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources advised that any such concerns should be reported via the appropriate channels and not brought into a public forum without evidence.
- 15.17 In respect of question 18, Councillor Castle asked whether it would be possible to have a document listing the locations of all the dog litter bins in Longlevens which the Leader of the Council confirmed he was happy to provide.
- 15.18 Councillor J. Brown referred to her concerns about the weeds surrounding the Gloucester Park War Memorial outlined at question 19 and asked whether there was a possibility of asking UBICO to clean and weed the area twice annually. The Leader of the Council confirmed that he too had been shocked at the weed overgrowth when he had recently passed the memorial. He noted that it was a difficult time of year with wet and warm weather but would ask if more attention could be paid to the monument.
- 15.19 In response to a follow-up question from Councillor A. Chambers regarding the process for reviewing the officer structure of the council, the Leader of the Council confirmed that, in relation to the Managing Director's role, it was a matter for Council.
- 15.20 Councillor A. Chambers referred to question 21 and asked whether defibrillators could be rolled out to the identified sites in Matson as soon as possible. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods advised that he would ask officers to keep Councillor A. Chambers updated on progress.

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- 15.21 In respect of question 22, Councillor A. Chambers stated that he had witnessed litter pickers sitting in their van. The Leader of the Council advised that this was a matter for UBICO supervisors and suggested that Councillor A. Chambers raise any concerns he had through the appropriate avenue. He noted that staff may have been on lunch break.
- 15.22 Councillor A. Chambers referred to question 23 and asked for assurances that the grass cutting was on schedule. The Leader of the Council confirmed that grass mowing and strimming were different tasks undertaken by different teams and that there were challenges with recruiting seasonal strimming staff. He anticipated that the team would catch up with the strimming work soon.
- 15.23 In relation to question 24, Councillor A. Chambers raised concerns that foreign objects from overspilling bins could be caught up in the grass mowing. The Leader of the Council reiterated that the team were catching up as quickly as possible, and it was his hoped that any overspilled rubbish would be picked up and disposed of appropriately. He suggested that Councillor A. Chambers raise specific concerns through Here to Help, who could then escalate with UBICO.
- 15.24 Councillor A. Chambers referred to question 25 and noted that an issue he had reported 24 weeks ago via Here to Help regarding a sharp-edged street sign had not yet been dealt with. The Leader of the Council explained that there had been UK-wide issues with supply chain problems and labour shortages which was impacting on how quickly new signs could be cut.
- 15.25 With regard to question 27, Councillor A. Chambers asked whether the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods thought 58 CCTV cameras was an acceptable amount for a city with a population of 130,000 people. The Cabinet Member stated that he would like more and would discuss the matter with officers to determine what was possible..
- 15.26 Councillor A. Chambers referred to question 30 concerning the Council Tax rebate and asked whether communication around the deadline for non-direct debit holders to apply for the rebate could be improved as he felt this should have been made clearer. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources noted that there had been an article on the scheme in Gloucestershire Live around 6 weeks ago. She noted that in terms of distributing the direct debit rebates, Gloucester had performed the best in the county despite the challenges with the cyber incident, with the rebate having been issued to 99.4% of residents who had signed up to direct debit payments. She noted that the remaining 0.6% residents with direct debit payments were awaiting an additional verification check and expressed the view that in this instance, the council had done a good job.
- 15.27 In respect of question 31, Councillor A. Chambers asked whether the council had a budget for new play equipment. The Leader of the Council confirmed that there was a budget in place to repair faulty play park equipment and replace equipment beyond repair where necessary, however this was a limited budget, and the works were carried out on a priority basis.

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- 15.28 In response to a supplementary question from Councillor A. Chambers regarding question 32 and the reporting of unsafe tarmacked areas to 'Here to Help' reporting facility, the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources explained that Here to Help were a front-facing team who passed issues on to the relevant service for resolution. She asked Councillor A. Chambers to send her any relevant correspondence so that she could follow the matter up with the relevant officers.
- 15.29 Councillor Conder referred to question 33 and asked whether the City Council could liaise with Gloucestershire County Council on behalf of elderly or vulnerable residents regarding uneven pavements in some areas of the city. The Leader of the Council agreed that he sympathised with residents who had difficulty navigating pavements however as the Gloucestershire County Council was the responsible authority for highways, he suggested that Councillor Conder raise the issue with the County Council through her County Council counterpart.
- 15.30 Councillor Chambers-Dubus referred to question 35 and noted that she had since learned that the City Council will need to write to all residents with a postal vote to ask them to complete a new application. She asked why this process was not already under way. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources explained that the electoral registration system was not up and running yet, but confirmed that the council would be writing to all postal vote holders in due course to ask them to submit another application if they still wanted a postal vote.
- 15.31 In relation to question 36, Councillor Chambers-Dubus asked whether the council would be contacting residents without a direct debit to advise them that the rebate would be credited to their Council Tax account in the event they did not apply. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources confirmed that the Revenues and Benefits Team were exploring how best to communicate with the residents concerned.
- 15.32 With regard to question 37, Councillor A. Chambers queried why there had been a significant reduction in council staff between 2015 and 2022 and whether this has had an impact on performance. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources referred to the City Council's restructure alongside the Together Gloucester initiative. She explained that during the times of austerity, the council had to reduce its costs to balance its budget and this included finding efficiencies and new ways of working that resulted in a reduction in staff. She noted that some services were outsourced or shared with other councils and that this reduced the council's own headcount.
- 15.33 In response to a follow-up question from Councillor A. Chambers in respect of question 38 and officers' salaries, the Leader of the Council explained that the council followed advice from the Local Government Association when setting senior officer pay scales.

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16. URGENT DECISION REPORTED TO COUNCIL

- 16.1 Councillor Cook moved and Councillor Norman seconded that in accordance with Part 4 of the Constitution, Council was being asked to resolve that the urgent decision of the Leader of the Council to submit a bid for Levelling Up Grant Funding for the regeneration of the Greyfriars/Eastgate Shopping Centre be noted.
- 16.2 Councillor Cook explained that back in 2017, the council had applied and been awarded £20m to spend on city regeneration projects. As Gloucester has 2 Members of Parliament, he noted that the council was eligible to make a second application. Councillor Cook confirmed that since the Council agenda was published, the deadline for making an application for Levelling Up Grant Funding had since been extended. He paid tribute to the excellent and rapid work of officers in pulling together a bid for regenerating the Eastgate/Greyfriars area.
- 16.3 Councillor Hilton explained that he had requested to debate this item as he felt that an urgent decision was no longer needed since the deadline had been deferred. He requested that a copy of the bid for Levelling Up Grant Funding be circulated to Group Leaders to provide them with an opportunity to consider the document.
- 16.4 Councillor Chambers-Dubus agreed that it was a good idea in principle but raised concerns that the redevelopment might be taken as an opportunity to gentrify the area. She felt it was important to keep the integrity of the market and keep stall holders involved with any decisions about Eastgate.
- 16.5 Councillor Lewis confirmed that the council had consulted traders and they had expressed that they were fully on board. He confirmed that the council would continue to communicate with stall holders and that nothing would be done without consulting them.
- 16.6 Councillor Cook reiterated that the market traders would be kept fully informed and confirmed that if time allowed, officers would be willing to share the bid document with Group Leaders. He noted that once the portal went live, it was likely that there would be limited time to submit the application.

RESOLVED that: -

The urgent decision of the Leader of the Council to submit a bid for Levelling Up Grant Funding for the regeneration of the Greyfriars/Eastgate Shopping Centre area of the City Centre to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities be noted.

17. NOTICES OF MOTION

- 17.1 Councillor Field proposed and Councillor Bowkett seconded the following motion:

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“Council notes that wildflower meadows have been planted in many areas of Gloucester and that these areas have been very popular with residents and a boon to mental health.

Council further notes that wildflowers enhance an area and help improve biodiversity through giving a habitat to bees, insects and other wildlife.

Council resolves to thank the funders, officers and volunteers involved, for their work in planting the wildflower meadows.

Council agrees to look for potential new sites, whilst remaining within the council budget, by collaborating with volunteer groups and charities to plant more wildflowers across the city in the future.”

17.2 The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

17.3 **RESOLVED that:** -

Council notes that wildflower meadows have been planted in many areas of Gloucester and that these areas have been very popular with residents and a boon to mental health.

Council further notes that wildflowers enhance an area and help improve biodiversity through giving a habitat to bees, insects and other wildlife.

Council resolves to thank the funders, officers and volunteers involved, for their work in planting the wildflower meadows.

Council agrees to look for potential new sites, whilst remaining within the council budget, by collaborating with volunteer groups and charities to plant more wildflowers across the city in the future.

17.4 Councillor Hilton proposed and Councillor Wilson seconded the following motion:

“The Council of Europe is an international organisation founded in the wake of World War II to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. It was first proposed by Winston Churchill in a BBC broadcast in 1943.

It was founded in 1949, it has 46 member states, with a population of approximately 675 million; it operates with an annual budget of approximately €500 million. The United Kingdom is one of the ten original members.

The organisation is distinct from the European Union, even though the EU shares the same flag as the Council for Europe. It’s HQ is in Strasbourg.

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The Council of Europe cannot make laws, but it does have the ability to push for the enforcement of select international agreements reached by member states on various topics.

The best-known body of the Council of Europe is the European Court of Human Rights, which functions on the basis of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The United Kingdom is therefore a signatory of the ECHR.

This council agrees that to continue to protect the human rights and political freedoms of the residents of Gloucester it is important that the United Kingdom continues to be a member of the Council of Europe and remains a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights.

We therefore agree that the Mayor and three group leaders write to the two members of parliament representing parts of Gloucester calling on them to both vote in parliament against any proposal to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights and the Council of Europe.”

17.5 The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

17.6 **RESOLVED that:** -

The Council of Europe is an international organisation founded in the wake of World War II to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. It was first proposed by Winston Churchill in a BBC broadcast in 1943.

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We therefore agree that the Mayor and three group leaders write to the two members of parliament representing parts of Gloucester calling on them to both vote in parliament against any proposal to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights and the Council of Europe.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 7.55 pm hours

Chair