



COUNCIL

MEETING : Thursday, 22nd February 2024

PRESENT : Cllrs. Williams (Mayor), Hudson (Sheriff & Deputy Mayor), Cook, Norman, S. Chambers, Lewis, Padilla, Hilton, Chambers-Dubus, Gravells MBE, Tracey, Morgan, Wilson, Bhaimia, D. Brown, Taylor, Field, Patel, Toleman, Pullen, J. Brown, Hyman, Bowkett, Ackroyd, Castle, A. Chambers, Conder, Dee, Evans, Kubaszczyk, O'Donnell, Radley, Zaman, Sawyer, Campbell and Trimnell

Others in Attendance

Managing Director
Monitoring Officer
Director of Communities
Head of Finance and Resources
Head of Place
Policy and Governance Manager
Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Brooker and Durdey

71. MINUTES

RESOLVED:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2024 were approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

73. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

73.1 In respect of question 1, Mr Redgewell asked whether any heavy maintenance required at Gloucester Transport Hub, such as roof repairs or maintenance associated with the stained-glass window would be covered by the £66k operational budget. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Cook, advised that the operational budget was for general day to day maintenance and that the stained-glass window was covered by capital budget.

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73.2 In respect of question 2, Mr Redgewell asked what marketing plans the Council had in relation to the Transport Hub café and whether there was a ringfenced budget to allow for this. Councillor Cook confirmed that any marketing would be covered by a marketing budget and would not be part of the general budget.

73.3 In respect of question 3, Mr Redgewell asked whether the income generated from the public toilets in the Gloucester Transport Hub was ringfenced for bus station upkeep. Councillor Cook advised that the income from the toilets was not ringfenced and went into the Council's general fund.

74. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions nor deputations.

75. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor

The Mayor reminded Members that the Civic Charity Ball was due to take place on 6th April 2024, and confirmed that further details would be circulated in due course. She further advised that the Civic Service would be held on 27th April 2024 and that she hoped as many Councillors as possible would be available to attend.

Managing Director

The Managing Director advised Members that the Head of Culture and Leisure would shortly be leaving the Council. He noted his thanks to the Head of Culture and Leisure and appreciation for his work. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure also paid tribute to the Head of Culture and Leisure, noting that the city had directly benefited from his input and that he would be greatly missed.

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

76.1 Councillor Cook moved the motion as set out in the Final Budget Proposals 2024/25 and spoke in their support. He paid tribute to Cabinet Members, particularly the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, for their work on the budget, and thanked senior Officers, specifically the Head of Finance and Resources, for their input and for formulating the proposals. Councillor Cook also thanked Council staff for their commitment to the authority.

76.2 Councillor Cook noted that amendments had been tabled and confirmed that some had been accepted by the administration. He stated that 2023 had been memorably difficult due to the former Aspire Leisure Trust entering administration and the work which needed to be undertaken to restore Leisure Services following their closure. Councillor Cook further highlighted national issues which has put pressure on the Council's finances, including the need to procure more temporary accommodation and inflationary

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pressures which made any plans and projects more expensive to deliver, noting that pressures had also made it more difficult for the Council to replace staff.

- 76.3 Councillor Cook highlighted some of the major achievements across portfolios over the past year. He noted that the Property Investment Strategy had enabled the Council to deliver on Council Plan priorities. He referred to the acquisition of St Oswalds and the £2.2m Brownfield Land Remediation Grant which had enabled work to start on the mixed housing scheme which would include social and affordable homes, noting that the exchange of contracts with Rooftop had taken place.
- 76.4 It was noted that the High Street Heritage Action Zone had received considerable praise and that further planned work included planters and additional seating in the Cathedral Quarter. Councillor Cook advised that a new exit from the car park onto Metz way had been completed, and that work was ongoing to improve car park facilities to the front of Gloucester train station, underpass and other areas of the station. He further confirmed that the Barbican site development had concluded and had been occupied since December 2023, and that the Food Dock had been completed with new businesses occupying the various spaces.
- 76.5 Councillor Cook highlighted that the Kings Square development had seen its second-year anniversary and that in Kings Quarter, all bar one of the 19 Whitefriars apartments had been sold. He also advised Members that completion of the Forum development was expected later in the year and had already reached 70% occupancy. Councillor Cook further advised that the Council had received strong interest in occupying the former Chambers pub, and that Putt Putt Noodle would shortly be occupying the former Primark building. In respect of the former Debenhams building, Councillor Cook advised that work had been ongoing for the past 18 months with an anticipated completion of September 2024.
- 76.6 Members were advised that the Council had received £11m in Levelling Up Funding which was due to be used to develop the Garden Quarter around Greyfriars and the Eastgate Market.
- 76.7 Councillor Cook commended Ubico and their staff for their work in delivering waste and recycling services for Gloucester, noting that the value of recyclables had reached £550k, compared with £350k achieved 4 years ago.
- 76.8 In respect of savings, Councillor Cook noted that the planned relocation of the Council's face to face Housing and Customer Services from the Gateway to the Eastgate Management Offices was expected to generate savings of £85k.
- 76.9 In other portfolio areas, Councillor Cook confirmed that the Culture team had successfully applied for funding for repairs and improvements to Gloucester Guildhall, and that the Gloucester Culture Trust had been granted National Portfolio (NPO) status. Referring to events in the city, he praised the success of Gloucester Goes Retro, which had generated footfall figures of 27k in the

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Eastgate Shopping Centre, and the Lantern Parade for Christmas. In respect of Aspire Leisure Trust, it was noted that Officers and the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure had responded instantly to address the closure of Leisure facilities and that the new interim provider, Freedom Leisure, had already made improvements to the offering.

- 76.10 With regard to the Planning and Housing portfolio, Councillor Cook reminded Members that the Council had made available £5m to enable a temporary accommodation acquisition programme to reduce reliance on expensive temporary homelessness options. He confirmed that 7 properties had progressed towards purchase, with an estimated saving of £100k per year. Councillor Cook advised that the Council continued to work with registered housing providers to increase housing in the city, and that 1,354 new homes had been delivered over 2022/23 with 417 of these being affordable homes.
- 76.11 In the Communities and Neighbourhoods portfolio, Councillor Cook advised that there had been considerable activity, with the Council continuing to roll out the warm spaces grant. He noted that the Community Wellbeing Team continued to monitor additional funding opportunities to support local delivery partners, and that the team continued to work closely with the Stronger Safer Gloucester partnership. He advised that the city had achieved its 6th consecutive Purple Flag accolade and that the Community Wellbeing Team continued to support children and their families with access to free meals.
- 76.12 Councillor Cook reflected on the Council Plan priorities and objectives, which focused on inequalities and climate change, and noted that the draft Climate Change Strategy would be put out for public consultation prior to adoption.
- 76.13 In respect of the budget, Councillor Cook advised Members that over the past ten years, cumulative savings of £5.5m had been achieved by the Council. He advised that the administration was proposing a Council Tax increase of 2.99% and noted that the 2024/25 budget included both revenue and capital programme, which included the budgeted delivery of Greyfriars and Kings Quarter developments. Councillor Cook stated that in recognition of risks, the administration needed to ensure the Council finances were secure, and that it further recognised the importance of maintaining reserves. Councillor Cook referred to comments made by the Peer Review team following their review in November 2023 regarding legacy risks of the Forum development and cyber incident, and their belief that the Council would benefit from being prudent in spending. It was his belief that the budget proposals illustrated that the administration was ambitious but prudent.
- 76.14 Councillor Norman seconded the motion and outlined further detailed points about the budget proposals. She stated that local government finance continued to have a tough financial outlook with inflationary pressures impacting businesses, residents and local authorities. She noted that the budget and money plan had therefore been generated with prudent principles, using the best assumption on future central government changes to Business Rates baselines, New Homes Bonus and the impact of a future Fair Funding review.

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76.15 Councillor Norman outlined the support received by central government for Gloucester for the upcoming financial year, which included £17k increase in Revenue Support Grant and an additional year of New Homes Bonus allocation equating to £811k.

76.16 Councillor Norman advised Members that the impact of inflation had caused several cost pressures within the Council's budget which had resulted in the Council having to find further efficiencies or additional income, however she impressed that the Council was in a better position than many second-tier authorities.

76.17 With regards to the Performance and Resources portfolio, Councillor Norman advised that the following cost saving initiatives and income streams had been identified for the coming year:

- £85k saving from the relocation of the Customer Service and Housing services to Eastgate for face-to-face appointments,
- In-sourcing of parking enforcement aiming to deliver £25k
- Offering direct cremations aiming to deliver £50k per annum in income.

76.18 Councillor Norman noted that Council Tax could now increase by 2.99% for second-tier authorities and it has therefore been assumed annually within the Money Plan. She further noted that just 3 districts in the country had not planned on increasing Council Tax by the maximum amount. In practice, Councillor Norman advised that a band D household would now pay 61p per day for Council services.

76.19 Members were advised that the Council had limited Earmarked Reserves with the balance on 31st March 2024 being £4.266m. Councillor Norman confirmed that where earmarked reserves were not ringfenced for a specific use, they could potentially be used to support the General Fund which would, during the life span of the Money Plan, increase from £500k to £1.736m by 28/29, to reach a target of 10% of the Council's revenue budget.

76.20 Councillor Norman referred to the Council's budget consultation which had taken place between November 2023 – January 2024. She advised that 147 responses had been received, and that the top five priorities included:

- Street cleaning and litter collections
- Waste collections and recycling
- Parks, play areas and open spaces
- Land drainage and flood protection
- Homelessness and housing.

76.21 In concluding, Councillor Norman paid tribute to Officers within the Finance team and the Council as a whole in supporting the preparation of the budget. She particularly thanked the Head of Finance and Resources for leading on the generation of the budget.

Amendments

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76.22 The following amendments were agreed by the administration and Group Leaders in advance of the meeting:

Liberal Democrat Group and Labour Group proposal to remove the proposed increase to charges for bulky waste collections at a cost of £3,500.

Agreed Action

The Money Plan has been amended to reduce income inflation line, removing the £3,500 expected additional income from the proposed £1 increase to the Bulky Waste Fee, this reduces the transfer to the General Fund by £3,500 (see revised Appendix 1) and the Fees and Charges Book has been revised (see revised Appendix 6 extract).

Labour Group proposal to introduce a publicity and promotion poster campaign to create public awareness of the financial support and benefits the council offers to people struggling with increasing Cost of Living expenses at an estimated cost of £5,000.

Agreed Action

The Money Plan has been amended, adding a new base budget pressure of £5,000 and reducing the transfer of funds to the General Fund by £5,000 (see revised Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

76.23 Councillor Hilton moved and Councillor Wilson seconded the following amendments:

Amendment 1 – Garden Waste Collections 11 months per year

Improve the garden waste collection service by operating it 11 months a year rather than 10 months a year – additional cost £35,000 per annum.

Amendment 2 – Tree Watering

Establish a reserve of £25,000 to cover the cost of hiring a water bowser and staff over a 12-week period during the summer, if required, to water young trees on council land during hot dry periods.

Amendment 3 – Graffiti Removal Fund

Establish a £20,000 reserve for the removal of graffiti from prominent places across the city.

Amendments 1 to 3 (including the accepted amendment) annual cost £83,500 to be funded by

£41,000 additional central government grant within the final LG settlement.

£42,500 to come from the £900,000 environmental insurance reserve.

Amendment 4 – Water Refills

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Create an initial budget of £15,000 for the delivery of at least 3 water bottle refill units at public locations in central Gloucester starting with Kings Square. Funded by creating a capital budget from future capital receipts.

- 76.24 Councillor Hilton introduced the amendments. He noted that he was disappointed by the budget and commented that despite regeneration projects supported by various government grants, there were no plans to improve services. He noted that although he was supportive of the Forum development, it potentially remained a risk to the finances of the Council and further expressed the view that increasing Council Tax by 3% and fees and charges by 6% was excessive during the current cost of living crisis.
- 76.25 Councillor Hilton was concerned that the Council was placing too much focus on withdrawing from its balances and reserves, and noted that the current outturn predicted a £570k overspend in Q3 of 2023/24. He stated that the Council currently employed around 180 staff compared to 450 previously and raised concerns about Members needing to chase Officers due to heavy workloads. He noted that the Council currently had one Officer responsible for overseeing planning enforcement cases and further highlighted that the New Homes Bonus was not expected to exist in the following year.
- 76.26 In respect of other portfolio areas, Councillor Hilton raised concerns about litter bin shortages and the condition of the parks and open spaces in the city, commenting that the Council over-relied on volunteers rather than directly employing gardeners to upkeep green spaces.
- 76.27 With regard to the amendments, Councillor Hilton noted that he was pleased that the amendment pertaining to bulky waste had been accepted. He outlined and put forward his case for the remaining amendments, noting that garden waste collections for 10 months rather than 11 had caused annoyance to residents who had paid for the service.
- 76.28 Councillor Hilton reinforced his support for the proposed amendment to establish a reserve of £25k to support the watering of young trees during periods of hot dry weather, to avoid a former incident where young trees had perished as a result of extreme weather. Referring to the proposal for a Graffiti Removal Fund, Councillor Hilton impressed the need to tackle the issue as well as the full review recently agreed by Council and outlined his proposals for a water refill scheme. He concluded by outlining how his Members proposed to fund what they felt were modest amendments to the budget.
- 76.20 Councillor Cook responded to each of the amendments, noting that the Council had reduced garden waste collections 2 years ago following a budget consultation where the respondents had been supportive of the reduction. He noted that he had received few complaints around the matter and garden waste collections during the winter months had an adverse impact on the environment if large refuse vehicles were collecting minimal loads.
- 76.21 Councillor Cook advised Members that Gloucestershire County Council had already offered its assistance to the Woodland Trust in respect of tree

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watering, and that the motion passed by Council in January regarding graffiti had not yet reported back. He felt it was possible that the Council might be able to generate income depending on the results, by offering to clear graffiti on private residences at a cost, and it was noted that Ubico were already contracted to clear graffiti on Council owned property.

76.22 Councillor Cook stated that the water refill amendment had been raised the previous year and confirmed that a refill app showed that 80 organisations within 1 mile of Kings Square already offered a refill scheme.

76.23 Councillor A. Chambers noted his support for the water refill amendment and commented that it might particularly help vulnerable and homeless people stay hydrated. He noted that visitors may not be aware of the refill app and expressed the view that refill fountains would deliver a public health benefit for the city.

76.24 Councillor Lewis supported the budget proposals in their current form, noting his view that the current administration had been prudent in spending and as a result, the Council was financially viable and had delivered a balanced budget.

76.25 Councillor Chambers-Dubus noted her agreement that garden waste collections for 10 months of the year was not sufficient, and stated that residents living on tree lined streets faced particular challenges. She commented that cuts to regular street cleaning had made it more necessary to restore extra garden waste collection.

76.26 Councillor Patel noted that the proposal for water refill stations had already been debated at previous budget meetings. In respect of tree lined streets and street cleaning, he suggested that Members be proactive in reporting issues to the Council's Here to Help facility so that Officers could pass information relating to problem areas onto Ubico.

76.27 Councillor Wilson confirmed that garden waste was a significant issue in Hucclecote and reflected on residents' experiences. He also noted that in the current year, due to a quirk in dates the period of time between garden waste collections had fallen closer to 3 months than the expected 2. Councillor Wilson stated that he could not see why the water refill amendment could not be accepted, noting his view that £15k out of capital was a modest amount and that Kings Square would be an ideal location for the refill station. He noted that not all visitors would be aware of the refill app, and that some might feel embarrassed about entering shops to request a refill. Councillor Wilson further suggested that Severn Trent might be interested in assisting with the scheme.

76.28 In respect of the amendment relating to garden waste collections, Councillor Morgan highlighted that an environmentally beneficial option might be to compost any surplus leaves. He further noted that residents also had the option of recycling extra garden waste at the Hempsted Recycling centre.

76.29 Each amendment was put to the vote and all were lost.

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76.30 Councillor Pullen moved and Councillor Chamber-Dubus seconded the following amendments:

1. Remove the proposed charge for replacement Wheelie Bins.

Cost: £55,000.00

2. Obtain a suitable software package to enable the council to identify, target and offer financial support and benefits to people most in need and struggling with increasing Cost of Living expenses.

Cost: £20,000.00

Total cost of Amendments

(including the accepted amendments):

£83,500.00

Funded by:

1.Extra Funding from Local Government Settlement

£41,000.00

2.Transfer from Reserves

£42,500.00

£83,500.00

76.31 Councillor Pullen introduced his amendments and responded to the budget proposals. He stated that the Council had overspent by £680k and was facing a budget cut of £300k, which in his view meant that the Council was not financially viable.

76.32 Councillor Pullen noted that central government funding for the Council totaled £6.2m in 2015/16 and currently stood at £4.3m in 2023/24, which amounted to a significant cut in central government funding. He further highlighted that in 2014/15, Council Tax was raised by £6.4m and had this year raised by £9.1m, commenting that this showed that lack of funding from central government had forced the Council to increase Council Tax.

76.33 Councillor Pullen outlined his concerns about inefficiencies, including £500k spending on consultants and the disposal of the HKP Warehouses for £2m rather than the £3m market value. He further noted that Members had raised concerns about Aspire during the previous budget Council.

76.34 Councillor Pullen expressed the view that a failure in the budget pertained to the Housing and Homelessness budget. He stated that the cost-of-living crisis had resulted in a significant increase in the number of people losing their homes, and highlighted that there were currently 395 homeless cases in city, which was a rise of 62 from the previous year. Councillor Pullen further stated that there were currently 4814 people on the housing waiting list. In respect of the temporary accommodation acquisition programme which had been adopted by the Cabinet this year, Councillor Pullen asserted that this idea had been put forward by Labour Group back in 2019, as well as proposals for a Homeless Prevention Fund in 2022.

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- 76.35 Councillor Pullen further queried how the relocation of the Gateway would generate £85k in savings when the Council already owned both buildings.
- 76.36 In respect of the Labour Group amendments, Councillor Pullen noted that he was pleased that the amendment pertaining to bulky waste had been accepted, however he raised concerns about charging residents for lost wheelie bins where the loss was not down to the fault of residents.
- 76.37 Councillor Pullen thanked the Head of Finance and Resources and his team for their advice and assistance, and outlined what he felt were modest amendments to the budget,
- 76.38 Councillor Chambers-Dubus seconded the amendments. She noted that the Group had provided warnings about the Aspire Leisure Trust and the housing crisis in previous years, and that as interest rates increased, residents were getting less for their money. Councillor Chambers-Dubus expressed the view that funding cuts from central government meant that the Council could not fulfil its obligations.
- 76.39 Councillor Norman responded to the amendments, noting that Cabinet did not currently feel they could commit to the amendment from the Labour Group pertaining to the software package. She stated that she needed to understand more about the software, how it would work in practice and any implications of rolling it out. Councillor Norman noted that Officers were aware of a company which could potentially provide the software to enable to identify, target and offer financial support to residents who needed it, and that they would be willing to meet with them to ascertain whether this was the right thing for the Council to pursue. She noted that the longer-term costs and any ongoing revenue implications needed to be looked at in further detail, as well as any implications on staffing resources at the Council as the company who provided the software had highlighted that it could achieve administrative savings.
- 76.40 In respect of comments about the relocation of the Customer Services and Housing teams, Councillor Norman noted that the Gateway office had a larger square footage and that a comprehensive report regarding the proposals had previously been approved by Cabinet, which was at the time, open to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 76.41 Reflecting on the amendment pertaining to wheelie bins, Councillor Cook noted that a recent waste audit in Kingsway had shown that a street of 26 houses had 41 wheelie bins between them, and that the Council was keen to avoid waste in this respect and prevent abuse of the system.
- 76.42 Councillor O'Donnell raised concerns regarding the Review of Members' Allowances report which was considered by Council on 17 January.
- 76.43 Councillor A. Chambers noted that the proposal to obtain a software package to help target financial support to struggling residents could well save Officer time and assist residents who struggle with IT.

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76.44 Councillor S. Chambers responded to comments regarding the acquisition of temporary accommodation. She noted that in 2019, there were 19 households in temporary accommodation, and that to purchase temporary accommodation in the same scale back then would have resulted in wasted cost. It was her view that the Council had acted quickly to adapt to challenges brought on by the cost-of-living crisis and rising interest rates, and that other districts had commented on how quickly the Council had acted in this regard. She stated that the administration had overseen the building of a record number of homes, the highest since records began, and that the long-term focus needed to be on providing good quality homes.

76.45 In respect of comments around the Aspire Leisure Trust, Councillor Patel asserted that it was positive that the administration and local MP had worked together and that the Council had reopened facilities quickly following the initial closure.

76.46 Councilor Pullen summarised the debate. Each amendment was put to a vote and all were lost.

76.45 Councillor A. Chambers proposed and Councillor O'Donnell seconded the following amendment:

Based on the General Fund Summary 2024-2025 the council will be in arrears of £7,150.00.

The City Council has already looked to take the VAT Shelter funding for earmarked reserves and raid the full balance of the earmarked reserves.

Earmarked reserves is a budget equalisation – This reserve was established to provide a buffer with which to deal with the uncertainties in the forward financial planning.

It is proposed to utilise this reserve in 2023/24 to contribute towards the significant cost pressures the Council has seen this year, such as from temporary housing and inflationary pressures. This earmarked reserve was set up for this purpose and will reduce the annual impact on the overall General Fund position of the Council.

Therefore, the city council is already forecast to operate at a loss, and has no buffer left to facilitate any unidentified significant cost pressures.

Therefore it is imperative that the council is financially well and spending tax payers money correctly. If a private business was trading at a loss they have a legal responsibility to close the business.

Statutory Services are struggling and these are legally required by law.

Culture is not a statutory requirement and therefore needs to be addressed as such.

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Below is a breakdown of BlackFriars and Guildhall showing the sites separately, each site is operating at a significant loss to the tax payer.

Culture portfolio is costing the Gloucester Tax Payer £2,229,641.00 loss each year.

Blackfriars and Guildhall are set to continue to make losses based on their cash for the next 2 years.

Private cinema, bar and wedding venues when operated as a private business establishment are financially successful, employing people, generating a profit and servicing the community. My motion is for the City Council to sublet these premises to private businesses so that a profit can be generated for the business, they can be ran successfully by a private director and the premises can be fully maximised for the community. Furthermore, rental sublets for similar premises are around Guildhall £50,000- £65,000.00 per annum and Blackfriars Wedding Venue £35,000.00 - £40,000.00 per annum. This will therefore generate an income to the Gloucester Tax Payer of circa £85,000.00 to £105,000.00 per annum.

Furthermore, the deficit of the Guildhall & Blackfriars Wedding Venue costs the Gloucester Tax payer £459,830.00 a year in lost Tax payers money. It has continually made significant losses year on year and has not been able to at least break even.

Therefore, the total cost for the Gloucester Tax Payer for the Guild Hall & Blackfriars is £564,830.12

This money should be invested in emergency accommodation. Currently the city council is forecast to lose £1,577,300.00 on premises costs to support emergency accommodation such as hotels costs etc, which Government grants cover in some cases 10%- 20% of these costs.

Currently emergency housing costs to hotels in some circumstances cost the Gloucester tax payer £200.00 - £240.00 per night. 365 days in a year at £240.00 is £87,600.00 for one individual.

Therefore, 10 x individuals at £87,600.00 per year is a cost to the Gloucester Tax Payer of £876,000.00 per year. Therefore saving £477,230.12 to the Gloucester Tax Payer per year and on going savings per year of £876,000.00

Year On Year Saving

Year 1 = £876,000.00 – Minus cost of 10 x New build pods = £564,830.12 = £477,230.12

Year 2 = £876,000.00

Year 3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10 = £876,000.00 per annum

Year 10 SAVINGS OF £8,195,169.80 at a 10 year period.

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Furthermore, Gloucester City Council can purchase more pods with the generated saved income, and the on going saving of not facilitating the financially failing Guild hall & Blackfriars, while generating a on going lease income from these units while they remain functioning for the community.

Moreover to saving £8,195,169.80 over a 10 year period. Gloucester City Council will own outright a minimum of 10 x new build pods which are carbon neutral and are A+ EPC rated.

- 76.46 Councillor A. Chambers spoke in support of his amendments. He paid tribute to the Head of Finance and Resources and the Finance team for their work in preparing the budget and supporting Members with their questions on the proposals. He also thanked Councillor Norman as the responsible Cabinet Member overseeing the budget and for being available to answer questions from Members.
- 76.47 Councillor A. Chambers expressed the view that the Council had raided its VAT Shelter to fund the Forum project, and earmarked reserves for budget equalization. He felt that reserves should be used as a buffer for forward financial planning. Councillor A. Chambers further raised concerns around the figures contained in the General Fund Summary 2023/24 pertaining to the Communities and Culture portfolios. He noted that Culture was not a statutory service and expressed the view that there were other services which would benefit from more general fund budget, such as housing, parks, waste collection and businesses.
- 76.48 Councillor A. Chambers proposed that the Council consider subletting cultural venues, such as the Guildhall and Blackfriars Priory to a specialist business with a view of them running the facilities on the Council's behalf. He expressed the view that the Council was facilitating services it had no obligation to run and stated that more investment should be given to areas such as housing.
- 76.49 Councillor Lewis stated that culture was important for the vibrancy of the city. He advised Members that the Council had received advice from the specialist SLC consultancy confirming that cultural services were better off remaining in-house. He stated his view that the Guildhall was the best venue for comedy and live music in the city, which was used by thousands of people per week. Councillor Lewis further noted that the Council had received £500k in support from the Arts Council to invest in its cultural venues, which would not have been a possibility if cultural services was outsourced. He further advised that the Council had had a further £1m in funding guaranteed from the Arts Council.
- 76.50 Councillor Lewis expressed the view that Blackfriars Priory was the jewel in the crown for Gloucester and reflected on the awards the venue had won. He advised that the venue was currently performing well above predictions and that it was the expectation that Blackfriars would generate profit in 3-4 years' time. He concluded by stating that cutting culture was short-sighted.
- 76.51 Councillor Norman confirmed that the administration could not support the budget amendment from a financial perspective. She noted that when the

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Council had previously considered the option of outsourcing the Guildhall, high subsidies would be requested from the authority which suggested that it would not deliver savings as the amendment suggested.

- 76.52 In respect of comments around the provision of temporary accommodation, she confirmed that the current forecast spend as of December 2023 was £1.356m, which was £616k higher than the allocated budget. Councillor Norman impressed that as a statutory service, the Council needed to respond to this demand and the increased costs associated with temporary accommodation were a national trend. She referred Members to the recently agreed temporary accommodation acquisition programme which was intended to support a reduction in the Council's temporary accommodation costs in the 24/25 financial year and beyond and advised that the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy was already actively working on the installation of Pods in Gloucester which need to adhere to the relevant planning requirements.
- 76.53 In relation to the suggestion of transferring staff to another organisation, Councillor Norman noted her view that it would be remiss to agree to an unsettling time for Council staff with 48 hours' notice, and with no business case to support the amendment.
- 76.54 Councillor Wilson noted his agreement and highlighted that the £2.2m in savings also included provision for the Museum of Gloucester, Leisure Services and Shopmobility. He further observed in relation to the Pods suggestion that there was no detail in the amendment on costs, maintenance and land insurance, or the issue of planning permission and road infrastructure considerations. He expressed the view that Pods were a good idea, however more detailed analysis was needed.
- 76.55 Councillor Morgan spoke in opposition to the amendment and stated that the Gloucester's cultural heritage was a significant part of the city's value. He reflected on his experience as the former Cabinet Member for Culture and assured Members that budget monitoring was a constant element of the role, with all efforts made to reduce costs to the city. Councillor Morgan felt it was insulting to Officers, who worked hard to maximise income and to give a good service to residents, to demean their work. He expressed the view that the cultural offer was very important in promoting Gloucester as a great place to live, work and visit.
- 76.56 Councillor S. Chambers confirmed that the Council was looking at options around the use of modular Pod accommodation through the capital programme. She further advised that the Council was currently working with partners and local suppliers of Pods, and that the lifespan was equal to traditional builds and environmentally friendly. Councillor S. Chambers stated that although she could not agree to accept the budget amendment on this occasion, she looked forward to further cross-party working further on project.
- 76.57 Councillor Pullen raised concerns about privatising Council services in any sense, noting his view that this generally increased costs and reduced

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access for residents. He impressed that the Council should be trying to make access to culture and leisure as affordable as possible and he therefore could not support the amendment. He agreed that there could be some value in the proposal relating to Pods, however it was his view that this should be used as a last resort if all other options had been exhausted.

76.58 Councillor Chambers-Dubus paid tribute to the staff at the Guildhall and expressed the view that it was a fantastic asset for the city. She also noted that she found the Pods proposal interesting and a potential opportunity, but agreed with earlier sentiments that they should be used as a last resort.

76.59 Councillor O'Donnell shared concerns around the General Fund figures for the cultural portfolio.

76.60 Councillor A. Chambers summarised the debate. The amendment was put to a vote and was lost.

76.61 The budget, as amended, was put to a recorded vote and the votes were as follows:

| FOR | AGAINST | ABSTENTION |
|---|----------------|--|
| Williams Hudson Cook Norman Chambers S. Lewis Padilla | | Hilton Pullen |
| Gravells Tracey Morgan | | Wilson Bhaimia Brown D |
| Taylor | | Field |
| Patel Toleman | | Brown J. Hyman Bowkett Castle |
| | Chambers A. | Chambers-Dubus Conder |
| Dee Evans Kubaszczyk | | |

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O'Donnell

Radley

Zaman

Sawyer

Campbell

Trimnell

76.62 **RESOLVED that:-**

- 1) the proposals for the 2024/25 budget included in this report be approved.
- 2) it be noted that consultation had been undertaken on budget proposals.

77. COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2024/25

77.1 Councillor Cook moved and Councillor Norman seconded the motion.

77.2 A recorded vote was taken and the votes were as follows:

| FOR | AGAINST | ABSTENTION |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Williams | | |
| Hudson | | |
| Cook | | |
| Norman | | |
| Chambers S. | | |
| Lewis | | |
| Padilla | | |
| Hilton | | |
| Pullen | | |
| Gravells | | |
| Tracey | | |
| Morgan | | |
| Wilson | | |
| Bhaimia | | |
| Brown D. | | |
| Taylor | | |
| Field | | |
| Patel | | |
| Toleman | | |
| Brown J | | |
| Hyman | | |
| Bowkett | | |
| Ackroyd | | |
| Castle | | |
| | Chambers A. | |
| Chambers-Dubus | | |
| Conder | | |
| Dee | | |
| Evans | | |
| Kubaszczyk | | |

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O'Donnell

Radley
Zaman
Sawyer
Campbell

Trimnell

78. NOTICES OF MOTION

78.1 Councillor A. Chambers moved and Councillor O'Donnell seconded the following motion:

“Gloucester City Council notes that parts of the city centre could be described as is looking empty and bland. The city scene is not to the same standard when compared to that of the Gloucester Docks area. And parts of the city centre needs uplifting.

Gloucester City Councils mission is to get more people outside and green the grey in our city. We know adding beautiful planters and softening an urban landscape are great ways to achieve this. They create colourful and welcoming spaces for communities that people want to spend time in and enjoy.

Here are five reasons why improvements should be considered to help the city.

Improved air quality

Did you know plants absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen into the air? This is the process known as photosynthesis and as humans breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide plants do the opposite making the surrounding air quality better. Trees and plants also act as filters for urban pollutants and fine particulates by trapping the nasties in their leaves and bark. That's why the more plants we have in our Gloucester City environment the better, they not only help us breathe better and cleaner air they form an essential part of our surrounding atmosphere.

Good for mental and physical health

Studies have proven that seeing and being close to plants helps reduce anxiety and stress levels in human beings. Gloucester City is dominated by the hospital tower block some older 1960s apartment blocks that don't have any outside space, that can have a negative effect on adults and children including decreased concentration levels and increased psychological stress. Providing planters in Gloucester will help bring people closer to nature, they will create inviting greener spaces and people are more likely to leave their homes, go outside and exercise if there are attractive spaces filled with colourful plants to enjoy.

Sustainable communities

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The fact is we all want to contribute to living in a more sustainable world, in cities there are a number of ways we can use plants to contribute to our sustainable development. Rooftop allotments are a great way of growing fruit and vegetables in a sustainable way, it has long term environmental benefits; saves money and is much more nutritious than shop bought produce. The community benefits are also greater as urban gardening connects the community together over common sustainable purposes.

Economic benefits

In towns and shopping centres the addition of simple landscaping and planters by businesses can be largely effective in attracting more customers and boosting sales. The addition of plants, flowers and shrubs help to cultivate a positive environment where people can thrive. Greenery can also provide economic benefits to property owners; investing in landscaping can potentially boost property values and attract a wealthier market. Planting can reinforce a sense of identity amongst neighbourhoods providing potential jobs or hobbies for the community. Initiatives like rooftop allotments are a great example of this – they encourage residents to get involved in their communities through allotment rentals all the while providing fresh produce for the locals. City Council to look into a Greener Gloucester City Centre business Competition. Where businesses make the outside of their premises greener with plants and hanging baskets. The mayor will then pick a winner, second place and runner up.

Defining spaces & pedestrian movement

Planters, when used strategically, provide the ability to divide spaces and manage pedestrian movement to aid with meeting social distancing requirements; pathways can be clearly separated from other areas. They can also be used to hide unsightly areas, to act as subtle visual and physical access barriers, or simply to enhance dead space between commercial buildings and roads.

This Council notes that:

- any additional street furniture or planters should be considered in detail, to ensure the correct positioning and funding requirements.
- that the HSHAZ planned public realm works will include 30 planters of varying size, 11 with seating attached and 12 trees being planted in the area, in the first quarter of 2024.

This Council resolves to:

- To look into a Greener Gloucester City Centre business Competition. Where businesses make the outside of their premises greener with plants and hanging baskets. The Mayor will then pick a winner, second place and runner up.
- To look into the feasibility of using several roof top spaces on City Council buildings around the city that are not being used for another purpose for urban allotments.
- To look into the possibility of business sponsorship of any new street furniture in the gate streets, prior to installation.”

78.2 The motion was put to a vote and was carried.

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78.3 RESOLVED that:-

“Gloucester City Council notes that parts of the city centre could be described as is looking empty and bland. The city scene is not to the same standard when compared to that of the Gloucester Docks area. And parts of the city centre needs uplifting.

Gloucester City Councils mission is to get more people outside and green the grey in our city. We know adding beautiful planters and softening an urban landscape are great ways to achieve this. They create colourful and welcoming spaces for communities that people want to spend time in and enjoy.

Here are five reasons why improvements should be considered to help the city.

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Studies have proven that seeing and being close to plants helps reduce anxiety and stress levels in human beings. Gloucester City is dominated by the hospital tower block some older 1960s apartment blocks that don't have any outside space, that can have a negative effect on adults and children including decreased concentration levels and increased psychological stress. Providing planters in Gloucester will help bring people closer to nature, they will create inviting greener spaces and people are more likely to leave their homes, go outside and exercise if there are attractive spaces filled with colourful plants to enjoy.

Sustainable communities

The fact is we all want to contribute to living in a more sustainable world, in cities there are a number of ways we can use plants to contribute to our sustainable development. Rooftop allotments are a great way of growing fruit and vegetables in a sustainable way, it has long term environmental benefits; saves money and is much more nutritious than shop bought produce. The community benefits are also greater as urban gardening connects the community together over common sustainable purposes.

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cultivate a positive environment where people can thrive. Greenery can also provide economic benefits to property owners; investing in landscaping can potentially boost property values and attract a wealthier market. Planting can reinforce a sense of identity amongst neighbourhoods providing potential jobs or hobbies for the community. Initiatives like rooftop allotments are a great example of this – they encourage residents to get involved in their communities through allotment rentals all the while providing fresh produce for the locals. City Council to look into a Greener Gloucester City Centre business Competition. Where businesses make the outside of their premises greener with plants and hanging baskets. The mayor will then pick a winner, second place and runner up.

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Planters, when used strategically, provide the ability to divide spaces and manage pedestrian movement to aid with meeting social distancing requirements; pathways can be clearly separated from other areas. They can also be used to hide unsightly areas, to act as subtle visual and physical access barriers, or simply to enhance dead space between commercial buildings and roads.

This Council notes that:

- any additional street furniture or planters should be considered in detail, to ensure the correct positioning and funding requirements.
- that the HSHAZ planned public realm works will include 30 planters of varying size, 11 with seating attached and 12 trees being planted in the area, in the first quarter of 2024.

This Council resolves to:

- To look into a Greener Gloucester City Centre business Competition. Where businesses make the outside of their premises greener with plants and hanging baskets. The Mayor will then pick a winner, second place and runner up.
- To look into the feasibility of using several roof top spaces on City Council buildings around the city that are not being used for another purpose for urban allotments.
- To look into the possibility of business sponsorship of any new street furniture in the gate streets, prior to installation.”

78.4 Councillor O'Donnell proposed and Councillor A. Chambers seconded the following motion:

“Council members,

Motion that addresses a critical issue within our community – the urgent need for emergency accommodation. It is no secret that our city is facing a growing crisis of homelessness, exacerbated by a lack of affordable housing options. In light of this, I propose that we explore the possibility of converting empty properties into emergency accommodation to provide relief to those in need.

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Empty properties, whether they be vacant homes, or abandoned buildings, can present an opportunity to address the pressing issue of emergency housing. By repurposing these properties, we can swiftly provide safe and secure accommodation to individuals and families who find themselves without a home due to unforeseen circumstances.

This motion aims to achieve several key objectives:

1. Utilising Existing Resources: Empty properties represent an underutilised resource within our community. By converting them into emergency accommodation, we could make the most of these existing structures and ensure that they serve a purpose in addressing the urgent needs of our most vulnerable residents.
2. Swift Response to Emergencies: Converting empty properties into emergency accommodation could provide additional accommodation, along with other rest centres to help us to respond quickly to crises such as natural disasters, economic downturns, or sudden displacement. This immediate response could add another element to ensure that individuals and families have a safe place to stay during times of uncertainty.
3. Cost-Effective Solution: Repurposing existing structures, we can minimise expenses while still providing essential shelter and support services to those in need quickly.
4. Community Engagement and Revitalisation: This motion also presents an opportunity for community engagement and revitalisation. By converting empty properties, we can breathe new life into neglected areas, fostering a sense of pride and community ownership. This approach not only addresses the immediate need for emergency accommodation but also contributes to the long-term development of our city.

To achieve these objectives, I propose the following actions:

1. Update an inventory: Update a comprehensive survey to identify and assess empty properties within our jurisdiction that have the potential to be converted into emergency accommodation.
2. Establish partnerships: Continue to collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including property owners, community organisations, and housing agencies, to develop solutions for converting empty properties into emergency accommodation. This partnership will ensure the efficient utilisation of resources and expertise.
3. Streamline regulations: To continue to review local policy to encourage property owners to participate in this initiative.
4. Allocate funding: To continue with identifying and acquiring property to support consider the conversion of empty properties into emergency accommodation.
5. Monitor and evaluate: Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of the converted emergency accommodation and make necessary adjustments to ensure optimal outcomes for the residents.

Conclusion

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In conclusion, converting empty properties into emergency accommodation may present a viable and practical solution to address the pressing issue of homelessness and displacement within our community. By repurposing these properties, we can provide relief to those in need, utilise existing resources, and foster community engagement and revitalisation. I urge all council members to support this motion and work together to make a positive impact on the lives of our most vulnerable residents.”

78.5 The motion was put to a vote and was carried.

78.6 **RESOLVED that:-**

“Council members,

Motion that addresses a critical issue within our community – the urgent need for emergency accommodation. It is no secret that our city is facing a growing crisis of homelessness, exacerbated by a lack of affordable housing options. In light of this, I propose that we explore the possibility of converting empty properties into emergency accommodation to provide relief to those in need.

Empty properties, whether they be vacant homes, or abandoned buildings, can present an opportunity to address the pressing issue of emergency housing. By repurposing these properties, we can swiftly provide safe and secure accommodation to individuals and families who find themselves without a home due to unforeseen circumstances.

This motion aims to achieve several key objectives:

1. Utilising Existing Resources: Empty properties represent an underutilised resource within our community. By converting them into emergency accommodation, we could make the most of these existing structures and ensure that they serve a purpose in addressing the urgent needs of our most vulnerable residents.
2. Swift Response to Emergencies: Converting empty properties into emergency accommodation could provide additional accommodation, along with other rest centres to help us to respond quickly to crises such as natural disasters, economic downturns, or sudden displacement. This immediate response could add another element to ensure that individuals and families have a safe place to stay during times of uncertainty.
3. Cost-Effective Solution: Repurposing existing structures, we can minimise expenses while still providing essential shelter and support services to those in need quickly.
4. Community Engagement and Revitalisation: This motion also presents an opportunity for community engagement and revitalisation. By converting empty properties, we can breathe new life into neglected areas, fostering a sense of pride and community ownership. This approach not only addresses the immediate need for emergency accommodation but also contributes to the long-term development of our city.

To achieve these objectives, I propose the following actions:

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1. Update an inventory: Update a comprehensive survey to identify and assess empty properties within our jurisdiction that have the potential to be converted into emergency accommodation.
2. Establish partnerships: Continue to collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including property owners, community organisations, and housing agencies, to develop solutions for converting empty properties into emergency accommodation. This partnership will ensure the efficient utilisation of resources and expertise.
3. Streamline regulations: To continue to review local policy to encourage property owners to participate in this initiative.
4. Allocate funding: To continue with identifying and acquiring property to support consider the conversion of empty properties into emergency accommodation.
5. Monitor and evaluate: Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of the converted emergency accommodation and make necessary adjustments to ensure optimal outcomes for the residents.

Conclusion

In conclusion, converting empty properties into emergency accommodation may present a viable and practical solution to address the pressing issue of homelessness and displacement within our community. By repurposing these properties, we can provide relief to those in need, utilise existing resources, and foster community engagement and revitalisation. I urge all council members to support this motion and work together to make a positive impact on the lives of our most vulnerable residents.”

- 78.6 Councillor A. Chambers proposed and Councillor O'Donnell seconded the following motion:

“City council motion to ensure equality for hidden disabilities and undertake an audit of council equipment and buildings for disabled inclusion and compliance with Part M building regulations.

This council notes that there are areas of the city council that are not disability compliant and that there is disability discrimination in many parts. For example the very basic of democracy requires a platform for public speaking. It was evident that the city council's democratic public speaking platform was not all inclusive and that public residents attending the council meeting who were disabled were unable to access the public speaking platform. The public speaking platform/Podium was unable to be reached by the wheel chair users, the speaker platform/podium did not have enough space around it for wheel chair move ability/ turning and access, the speaker podium was too high for the wheel chair users to look over when delivering their questions to council. The speaker platform was not adjustable in anyway to suit disabled wheel chair users. This one very important piece of democracy for public speaking was breaching the equality act/ upsetting disabled public speaking residents and putting barriers in place for democracy. It meant that disabled public speakers were not treated the

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same as able bodied public speakers. Cllr Chambers demanded that the public speaking podium was immediately updated to an all inclusive one.

This council resolves to:

1. Raise Awareness: Start by raising awareness about hidden disabilities among council members, Council staff, Council subcontractors and communication campaign to the general public. This can be done through workshops, training sessions, and awareness campaigns.
2. Conduct an Audit: Undertake a comprehensive audit of all council equipment and buildings to assess their accessibility and compliance with Part M building regulations. This audit should include a review of physical access, signage, parking, and other facilities.
3. Consult with Disability Organisations: Engage with disability organisations and advocacy groups to gather insights and recommendations on how to improve accessibility and inclusion for people with hidden disabilities. These organisations can provide valuable expertise and guidance throughout the process.
4. Develop an Inclusion Plan and amend/update existing plans: Based on the audit findings and input from disability organisations, develop an inclusion plan that outlines specific actions and timelines for improving accessibility and inclusion. This plan should address both physical barriers and attitudinal barriers that may exist within the council.
5. Implement Accessibility Measures: Implement the recommendations from the inclusion plan, which may include installing ramps, accessible parking spaces, braille signage, sensory-friendly spaces, and other accommodations to ensure equal access for people with hidden disabilities.
6. Train Staff: Provide training to council staff on disability awareness, inclusive practices, and how to effectively communicate and support individuals with hidden disabilities. This will help create a more inclusive and supportive environment within the council.
7. Monitor and Evaluate: Regularly monitor and evaluate the progress of the inclusion plan to ensure that the implemented measures are effective and meeting the needs of people with hidden disabilities. Make adjustments as necessary based on feedback and ongoing assessments.
8. Educate Councillors: Provide training to councillors on disability awareness, inclusive practices, and how to effectively communicate and support individuals with hidden disabilities. This will help create a more inclusive and supportive environment within the council chamber and interaction with the public.

The city council will consult with legal and accessibility experts to ensure compliance with local regulations/ national equality legislation and best practices.”

- 78.7 Councillor Norman moved and Councillor Padilla seconded the following amendment:

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~~“City council motion to ensure equality for hidden disabilities and undertake an audit of council equipment and buildings for disabled inclusion and compliance with Part M building regulations.~~

~~This council notes that there are areas of the city council that are not **to be** disability compliant and that there is disability discrimination in many parts. For example the very basic of democracy requires a platform for public speaking. To was evident that the city councils democratic public speaking platform was not all inclusive and that public residents attending the council meeting who were disabled were unable to access the public speaking platform. The public speaking platform/Podium was unable to be reached by the wheel chair users, the speaker platform/podium did not have enough space around it for wheel chair move ability/ turning and access, the speaker podium was too high for the wheel chair users to look over when delivering their questions to council. The speaker platform was not adjustable in anyway to suit disabled wheel chair users. This one very important piece of democracy for public speaking was breaching the equality act/ upsetting disabled public speaking residents and putting barriers in place for democracy. It meant that disabled public speakers were not treated the same as able bodied public speakers. Cllr Chambers demanded that the public speaking podium was immediately updated to an all inclusive one.~~

At the January 2024 council meeting, members of the public were advised in advance of the arrangements for wheelchair users to ask their questions, however, we should and can do more to ensure that all residents can ask questions in the same disability compliant way. Many council buildings already have ramps, lifts and disabled toilet facilities, however regular review of disability compliance should be welcomed.

This council resolves to:

1. Raise Awareness: Start by raising awareness about hidden disabilities among council members, Council staff, Council subcontractors and a communication campaign to the general public. This can be done through workshops, training sessions, and awareness campaigns.
2. Conduct an Audit: Undertake a comprehensive audit of all council equipment and buildings to assess their accessibility and compliance with Part M building regulations. This audit should include a review of physical access, signage, parking, and other facilities.
3. Consult with Disability Organisations: Engage with disability organisations and advocacy groups to gather insights and recommendations on how to improve accessibility and inclusion for people with hidden disabilities. These organisations can provide valuable expertise and guidance throughout the process.
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5. Implement Accessibility Measures: Implement the recommendations from the inclusion plan, which may include installing ramps, accessible parking spaces, braille signage, sensory-friendly spaces, and other accommodations to ensure equal access for people with hidden disabilities.
6. Train Staff: Provide training to council staff on disability awareness, inclusive practices, and how to effectively communicate and support individuals with hidden disabilities. This will help create a more inclusive and supportive environment within the council.
7. Monitor and Evaluate: Regularly monitor and evaluate the progress of the inclusion plan to ensure that the implemented measures are effective and meeting the needs of people with hidden disabilities. Make adjustments as necessary based on feedback and ongoing assessments.
8. ~~Educate Councillors~~ **Awareness**: Provide training to councillors on disability awareness, inclusive practices, and how to effectively communicate and support individuals with hidden disabilities. This will help create a more inclusive and supportive environment within the council chamber and interaction with the public.

The city council will consult with legal and accessibility experts to ensure compliance with local regulations/ national equality legislation and best practices.”

78.8 The amendment was accepted by the proposer of the original motion and therefore became the substantive motion. The motion was put to a vote and was carried.

78.9 **RESOLVED that:-**

This council notes that it is important for the city council to be disability compliant.

At the January 2024 council meeting, members of the public were advised in advance of the arrangements for wheelchair users to ask their questions, however, we should and can do more to ensure that all residents can ask questions in the same disability compliant way. Many council buildings already have ramps, lifts and disabled toilet facilities, however regular review of disability compliance should be welcomed.

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improve accessibility and inclusion for people with hidden disabilities. These organisations can provide valuable expertise and guidance throughout the process.

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7. Monitor and Evaluate: Regularly monitor and evaluate the progress of the inclusion plan to ensure that the implemented measures are effective and meeting the needs of people with hidden disabilities. Make adjustments as necessary based on feedback and ongoing assessments.
8. Councillor Awareness: Provide training to councillors on disability awareness, inclusive practices, and how to effectively communicate and support individuals with hidden disabilities. This will help create a more inclusive and supportive environment within the council chamber and interaction with the public.

The city council will consult with legal and accessibility experts to ensure compliance with local regulations/ national equality legislation and best practices.”

Time of commencement: 6.00 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 8.49 pm hours

Chair