



CABINET

MEETING : Wednesday, 21st June 2017

PRESENT : Cllrs. James (Chair), Watkins, Noakes, D. Norman and Cook

Others in Attendance

Councillor Tom Coole

Councillor Andrew Gravells

Councillor Kevin Stephens

Jon McGinty, Managing Director

Jonathan Lund, Corporate Director

Anne Brinkhoff, Corporate Director

Jon Topping, Head of Finance

Parvati Diyar, Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllr. Organ

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2017, 27 April 2017 and 17 May 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. EXEMPT MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2017 (Part 2: Exempt minutes) and 17 May 2017 (Part 2: Exempt minutes) were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

Steve Gower

Mr Gower addressed the Cabinet expressing concerns regarding licensed HMO's and single dwellings, the effectiveness of the City Council's enforcement regime and the lack of support landlords provide to vulnerable tenants.

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Mr Gower referred to the Housing Act 2004, the City Council's duty of care to vulnerable tenants and suggested that an independent audit on the health and safety of buildings be carried out.

Mr Gower requested that the City Council ensure that private landlords complied with the HHSRS standards for their property and called for a network support system to support landlords dealing with mental or physical health issues that could occur during a tenancy.

Mr Gower noted that he had submitted a Freedom of Information request asking for the number of Environmental Health Officers employed in Gloucester from 2010 to present in addition to the number of deaths in Gloucester to persons of no fixed abode or living in licenced houses of multiple occupancy during the same period. He added that he had not yet received a response to his request.

The Leader of the Council assured Mr Gower that the Council took the HHSRS standards seriously and promised to provide Mr Gower with a full written answer to his questions.

A resident of the City, who did not wish to disclose his name, addressed the Cabinet expressing concerns regarding problems he had experienced with a letting agent.

He advised that having found suitable private rented accommodation, he had been without a working lavatory and hot water and it had taken several weeks before any action had been taken by the letting agent. He asked the Council to consider establishing its own lettings agency.

The Leader of the Council explained that the Council could intervene when all other options had been exhausted and tenants were encouraged to raise issues with their landlords and letting agents in the first instance. In response to a Council run letting agency, the Leader of the Council advised that this would be considered but was mindful of the limited resources within the Council.

The Managing Director commented that Cabinet would be considering a report on the introduction of a Selective Licensing Scheme to improve the conditions of privately rented accommodation, which would look to resolve issue similar to those the resident had faced.

The Leader of the Council thanked the resident for his attendance.

5. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

Councillor Andrew Gravells presented a petition on behalf of the residents of Abbeydale regarding the overgrown grass verges and open spaces in the area.

The Cabinet Member for Environment commented that Members would be aware of that the Contractor had been trialling a revised grass cutting regime for the past three months. The trial had been proposed by the Contractor in response to the City

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Council's request for contract savings. The proposal was estimated to save £125,000 in a full year.

Unfortunately the Contractor had not been able to maintain the six week schedule which had caused the backlog in grass cutting in some areas.

The Cabinet Member for Environment said this was completely unacceptable and the Council had taken immediate steps to bring in additional resources to catch up and reduce the future cycles between cuts to four weeks.

Cabinet noted that a press release would be issued, explaining the cause of delay.

The Cabinet Member for Environment apologised to Members who had received complaints regarding the grass cutting and asked that assurance be given to residents that the Council were taking action.

The Leader of the Council commented that the trial had not worked and would not continue in its current format, but the Council were taking steps to put the matter right.

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

There were no questions from Members to the Cabinet.

7. PROPERTY INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources outlining a strategy to enable further investment in property assets.

Members had been made aware of the amounts of savings the Council had to face. The Leader of the Council advised that the Property Investment Strategy had identified an alternative key source of income that would potentially deliver additional income to help meet the Council's financial requirements. He drew Members attention to the risks involved and the need for the Council to mitigate these risks.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources said he had been sceptical about the suggestion before speaking to other local authorities who had been actively increasing their investment. He believed the City Council should seek to source appropriate investment assets only after conducting vigorous due diligence well in advance.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources suggested an amendment to Appendix B to allow for a named substitute, which should be the Leader of the Council in the first instance. In his absence it should be the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources followed by the Deputy Leader of the Council.

RESOLVED that:

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- (1) The Property Investment Strategy, as set out in this report, be approved.
- (2) The setting up of a Property Investment Board in line with the Terms of Reference set out in Appendix B be approved.
- (3) Authority be delegated to the Council Solicitor to negotiate and conclude such documents deemed necessary or desirable to reflect the heads of terms negotiated by the S151 Officer and Head of Place to enable the completion of each acquisition.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that:

- (1) Authority be delegated to the S151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources to:
 - a) amend the capital programme to create a Property Investment fund of £80m in order to acquire new investment property;
 - b) borrow as required to fund investment property purchases; and
 - c) Amend the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators as necessary to reflect the Council's borrowing requirement.
 - d) Subject to the approval of recommendation 1, the following delegations be approved to proceed with the acquisition of assets, subject to the acquisitions meeting the parameters of the Property Investment Strategy:
 - e) Asset purchases of up to £15m to be approved by the S151 Officer in consultation with the Property Investment Board.
 - f) Asset purchases in excess of £15m be referred to the Cabinet.

8. GLOUCESTER MUSEUMS MEMBERSHIP

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure seeking agreement for amendments to the Gloucester City Museums pass tariffs and member benefits.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure advised that as part of the Together Gloucester process, the new Cultural and Traded Services Team had been tasked to deliver a great visitor experience, reduce costs and generate additional income. It was therefore proposed to introduce a modest increase to the annual membership fees for the City Council's two museums.

The current costs for the two museums would remain unchanged but the annual membership would increase to £7.50, which would be an annual increase of 21p a month. Family membership would also increase from £12 to £15 per year.

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The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure referred to paragraph 3.15 of the report which proposed that the Roman Soldier tours of the Eastgate Viewing Chamber would remain at £5 per person and would run alongside the Museums membership scheme which would entitle Members to a 10% discount off the full price as one of their benefits.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure recognised that an increase in price would never be a popular decision, however this would be a small rise and would still offer fantastic value for money.

RESOLVED that the current Gloucester City Museum membership price be increased and the benefits package revised as set out in paragraph 3.13.

9. VOLUNTARY SECTOR AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUNDING AND ACTIVITIES FOR 2017/18

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods outlining the Council's proposed approach for the use of the Voluntary and Community Sector grants and activities budget in the financial year to March 2018.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods summarised key areas of the report, highlighting the proposed reductions for the next two years. She added that the Gloucester Lottery had been very successful and was raising significant amounts of money.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources pointed out that the figure in the table at paragraph 3.3 of the report relating to Councillor Community Fund should be £19,500 and not £18,000).

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The proposed allocation and use of the VCS grants and activities budget for the 2017/18 financial year as outlined in paragraph 3.3 be approved.
- (2) Authority be delegated to the Corporate Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods to enter into agreements or other documentation as considered appropriate on terms approved by the Council's Solicitor.

10. REGENERATION AT KINGS QUARTER

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy noting the progress made for the new Kings Quarter regeneration proposals.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy advised that the Stanhope Development Agreement for Kings Quarter had been formally terminated. The City Council had been working closely with LDA Design and Jones Lang LaSalle to ensure the scheme was commercially and financially achievable. A further report

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would be presented to Cabinet in September 2017, together with a Business Plan, for their consideration.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy drew Members attention to paragraph 3.7 of the report identifying two areas which would require further technical information and advised that Cabinet would be updated on progress.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy referred to paragraph 3.9 relating to the perimeter plan. He advised that there was no planning application in place as yet, however the background work had been undertaken.

RESOLVED that progress made with the Kings Quarter regeneration be noted, in particular:

- (1) The Stanhope Development Agreement for Kings Quarter has now been formally terminated and the transfer with copyright for all the agreed documents completed.
- (2) Our Consultants LDA Design and Jones Lang LaSalle are on target to produce a Business Plan for the Kings Quarter regeneration for consideration by Cabinet at their meeting on 13th September 2017.

11. RAILWAY STATION GROWTH DEAL 3 APPLICATION REVIEW

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy concerning the bid for Growth Deal 3 Funding to secure improvements at Gloucester Railway Station and its environs.

The report responded to a Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Hilton.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy expressed his disappointment over the unsuccessful bid, but he hoped to secure funding in the future. He advised that meetings were currently taking place with partners to deliver this. Officers would continue to seek funding to deliver improvements around the station, however the footbridge would not be included as part of the proposals.

RESOLVED that authority be delegated to the Head of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Economy, to continue to seek funding and submit appropriate bids to deliver improvements around the railway station and its links into the City Centre.

12. POLICY OPTIONS TO IMPROVE THE CONDITIONS OF PRIVATELY RENTED PROPERTIES

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning regarding the introduction of a Selective Licensing Scheme for landlords in parts of the City where the quality of private rented accommodation failed below an acceptable level.

Cabinet were made aware that the report had been produced in response to the motion raised at the Council meeting on 1 December 2016.

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The Leader of the Council advised that tenants should live in decent and clean homes and that the Council would prosecute less responsible landlords of poorly maintained homes of multiple occupancy.

It was noted that further report would be presented to Cabinet next year.

Following the recent tragic events in London, the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources commented on the need for the City Council to ensure they work closely with the Fire Service to ensure high rise buildings in Gloucester are risk assessed.

The Managing Director advised that the City Council had been in regular contact with the Fire Service and Gloucester City Homes and risk assessments and emergency procedures were being undertaken.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) A further report be brought to Cabinet towards the end of 2018 recommending whether or not additional HMO licensing should be implemented in Gloucester and recommending the implementation of other policy options detailed in this report.
- (2) A policy for the implementation of fixed penalty notices for housing act offences be developed within the next six months.
- (3) The investigation for the case for a discretionary licensing scheme is postponed until 2018 which will be after the extended mandatory HMO licensing scheme has been implemented.
- (4) A policy for the implementation of fixed penalty notices be agreed with the relevant Cabinet Member within the next six months.

13. TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE - ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources fulfilling the requirements by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2016/17. The report met the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, (the Code), and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, (the Prudential Code).

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources advised that the report had been presented to Audit and Governance Committee. He highlighted the key areas of the report commenting that no long term borrowing had been undertaken during 2016/17.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

14. FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2016/17

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources informing Members of the final Council position against agreed budgets for the 2016/17 financial year, including a summary of how the Council had progressed against key savings targets for the year. It also highlighted some key performance indicators.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources summarised the key areas of the report highlighting that the Council had been prudent and were in a stable position, thanks to the advice given by Officers. He added that some failings existed but these would be addressed and the challenges met. He placed on record his thanks to the Head of Finance and his team for the work they had undertaken and the right action taken.

The Cabinet Member for Environment expressed his thanks to the Environment team following the successful introduction of the new Recycling Service.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure commented that the Guildhall and the Museums continued to endeavour to make savings.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods commented that Shopmobility had not been in a position to meet savings. It was disappointing the Service was unable to relocate as proposed but this was not financially feasible. She thanked Cabinet Members for supporting the Service.

The Leader of the Council placed on record his thanks to Officers during these difficult climates.

RESOLVED that:

1. It be noted that:
 - i) The savings achieved in year total £590k
 - ii) The year-end position for the financial year 2016/17 is to increase the Council's General Fund balance by £20k
 - iii) The General Fund balance has increased from £1.635m to £1.655m at the end of 2016/17.
 - iv) That this change in the General Fund balance is after a transfer to earmarked reserves of £692k
 - v) That the business rates pool has returned a surplus of £329k to the City Council.

2. The transfers to and from earmarked reserves as below and detailed in section 8 of this report be APPROVED

15. ACCOMMODATION REVIEW

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources outlining options to meet the future accommodation needs of the City Council and to recommend negotiations with Gloucestershire County Council to

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relocate the organisation to Shire Hall to facilitate the potential disposal for the HKP Warehouses.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources advised that the City Council needed to make savings and improve efficiency and would be investigating to relocate from their existing accommodation. The City Council would start discussions with the County Council to move into Shire Hall in 2018. This would allow staff to be able to work remotely from home, do more hot-desking and the opportunity for the City and County Council to work more closely across services.

Cabinet Members commented on the importance of the Civic function and history. It was noted that the City Council would retain the Civic Suite in North Warehouse to maintain the Civic tradition.

Other opportunities which had been explored was to provide a new purpose built accommodation in Kings Quarter and have a facility to include a new Civic Suite.

The Leader of the Council commented that it would be a sensible approach to start negotiations with the County Council and the need to keep a new building at Kings Quarter as an option.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The relocation of the City Council from its existing office accommodation in the Herbert, Kimberly and Philpott Warehouses, Gloucester Docks be supported;
- (2) The Corporate Director be authorised to commence formal discussions with the County Council to agree terms for the City Council to occupy available accommodation in Shire Hall;
- (3) Potential partial location into City Council owned premises at Westgate Street also be supported;
- (4) The top floor of North Warehouse be retained for Civic and Meetings purposes;
- (5) It be noted that further reports on the potential disposal of the vacated HKP Warehouses would follow in due course.

**Time of commencement: 6.00 pm
Time of conclusion: 7.15 pm**

Chair