



COUNCIL

MEETING : Thursday, 23rd February 2023

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

Others in Attendance

Managing Director
Monitoring Officer
Director Of Communities
Director of Policy and Resources
Head of Culture
Head of Place
Policy and Governance Manager
Democratic and Electoral Services Team Leader

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Field, A. Chambers, O'Donnell and Sawyer

51. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2023 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Mayor.

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

53. CALL OVER

53.1 Agenda Items 8 (Final Budget Proposals) and 9 (Council Tax Setting 2022/23) could not be called over as each required a recorded vote in accordance with Regulation 2 of The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 and Council Procedure Rule 18.05.

53.2 Agenda item 10 was not reserved for discussion.

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53.3 **RESOLVED that:** - Council note:

- (1) That no changes be made to the allocation of seats on Committees at this time and a further review will take place following the Westgate by-election.
- (2) Receive and note the following nominations to Committees as required by the proposed changes:
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 1 vacant seat (Conservative) Councillor Taylor.
 - Licensing and Enforcement Committee – 1 vacant seat (Conservative) – Councillor Kubaszczyk.
 - Planning Committee – 1 vacant seat (Conservative) – Councillor Campbell.
 - Audit and Governance Committee – 1 vacant seat (Conservative) – Councillor Morgan.
- (3) Note that Dawn Melvin will continue her term as the Council's representative on the Board of Gloucestershire Airport Limited.
- (4) Note that Councillor Finnegan has been appointed to the vacant position on the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel.

54. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

55. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions nor deputations.

56. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Cook, reminded Members that a silent walk starting at the Mariner's Church in the Docks followed by a vigil would take place on Friday 24 February beginning at 4.45pm in order to mark one year since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Lewis, informed Members that the Tree of Light had raised £7k and that £1.8k would be donated to the Mayor's charity – Pride in Gloucestershire.

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57. MONEY PLAN 2023-28 & BUDGET PROPOSALS 2023-24

- 57.1 Councillor Cook moved the motion and thanked Cabinet colleagues, the finance team particularly the Director of Policy and Resources as s. 151 Officer and all Council staff for the work they would undertake in the coming year.
- 57.2 Councillor Cook noted that amendments had been tabled and informed Members that the administration would not be accepting them.
- 57.3 He outlined that 2022 has been a difficult year both financially and in the context of the cyber incident. The recent Peer Challenge panel said “Gloucester City Council has done remarkably well to continue to deliver its facilities and services following the cyber incident.” Councillor Cook sought to assure Members that the administration was working very hard to ensure that the council emerges strongly from the difficulties we continue to face.
- 57.4 The outcome of the re-opening economy after Covid had seen shortages of labour and a surge in inflationary pressures. It had been difficult to replace staff and cost pressures made previous plans more difficult and more expensive to deliver. Reduced income from markets, car parking, Guildhall, Museum and our commercial investments had also been encountered.
- 57.5 Councillor Cook outlined some of the major achievements across portfolios during the past year.

The Property Investment strategy had enabled the Council to deliver on Council plan priorities. The acquisition of St Oswalds and the £2.2M brownfield remediation grant had enabled work to start on the large new mixed housing scheme which would include social and affordable homes. Exchange of contracts with Rooftop would be happening soon.

The High Street Heritage Action Zone received considerable praise for the work which had been conducted in the City.

- 57.6 A new exit from the car park onto Metz way at the railway station had been completed and work had started to make improvements to the underpass and other areas at the station.

The remaining development of the Barbican site had almost concluded. One of the new buildings had been occupied with the remainder expecting their new student intake in September 2023, which will bring in an additional 200 students assisting the vibrancy and footfall in the city centre.

- 57.7 Work on Kings Square was completed with an opening ceremony in early May 2022. Overlooking Kings Square, in Kings House, The Music Works and Jolt, the Headquarters of Gloucester Culture Trust were well placed to help deliver the cultural vibrancy of the Square. Adjacent in Kings Quarter, building of the new Tesco and 19 apartments had been completed. Grosvenor House has been demolished and construction work on the Forum

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itself has been underway for several months. Work at the former Debenhams building by the university has been continuing for several months with an anticipated date of January 2024 for the first intake of students, which themselves would add to the vibrancy of the city centre.

- 57.8 In other areas of the Council services, Councillor Cook commend Ubico and their staff who had seamlessly taken over the delivery of waste, recycling and grounds maintenance services from Urbaser. The huge increase in the value of recyclates is, in part, down to Ubico's handling of collection, handling and storage. The contract now in place with Plan B enhances the value of our recyclables such that the value of our recycling in 2022/23 is expected to total nearly £1.25M.

The environmental enforcement team had also been working extremely hard. Having investigated over 341 instances of fly tipping in last year, 161 Fixed Penalty notices have been issued and 100 warning letters sent. Collectively, some £48,000 in fines have been issued.

- 57.9 Councillor Cook stated that the Culture and Leisure portfolio had performed impressively with enthusiasm and innovation. It has successfully applied for funding for the Museum of Gloucester to carry out repairs and improvements, the Guildhall has been chosen to join the prestigious Arts Council England's National Portfolio which will result in funding over the next three years, and Gloucester Culture Trust had similarly been awarded National Portfolio status

- 57.10 Gloucester History festival was unfortunately postponed as a result of the period of mourning surrounding the Queen's death but would be delivered in April. Gloucester Goes Retro, Rooftop Festival, the very successful Lantern parade for Christmas and other events over the past year brought thousands of people out from Gloucester and beyond.

- 57.11 In the Planning and Housing portfolio, the Gloucester City Plan 2011 - 2031 was adopted by Gloucester City Council at a meeting of Full Council on 26 January 2023. It formed part of the development plan for the City.

Councillor Cook informed Members that further to the recent bid to DLUHC for funding through the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) to tackle the problems had been identified in the supported housing sector) DLUHC advised that our bid was successful and we've been awarded £673k over the next three years.

Planning permission was recently approved for 315 dwellings with 26 affordable housing units to develop a brownfield site within the railway triangle and would provide market value and affordable housing for the city

- 57.12 In the Communities and Neighbourhoods portfolio there had been considerable activity. The Wellington Parade garden, a known antisocial behaviour hotspot for years, had been successfully revamped into an open green space for residents to enjoy.

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In the night time economy, we and our partners are vying this year for our sixth consecutive purple flag, recognising Gloucester for providing a diverse and vibrant mix of dining, entertainment and culture while promoting safety and well-being of visitors and residents.

- 57.13 Councillor Cook stated that funding had been secured to support voluntary and community organisations to turn their premises into warm and welcoming spaces for those struggling to heat their homes. There were now 33 of these premises across the city.

Councillor Cook summarised the new Council Plan that had the overarching theme of “Building a greener, fairer, better Gloucester for everyone.”

He stated that the Plan sought to continue and build on many of the promises in the previous plan, improving the city through ambitious plans for regeneration and culture, with a focus on two themes: tackling inequalities and taking action on climate change.

- 57.14 Councillor Cook outline that the financial environment continued to be difficult. Over the past nine years, the council had achieved cumulative savings of £5.5m whilst also generating additional income for the Council.

- 57.15 He advised that the administration proposed to increase Council Tax by 2.99%. The average increase since 2004 was 2.3%. He stated that this compared to the average of 10% a year for the previous ten years when opposition parties ran the City Council. A Band D householder would pay less than 60 pence per day for the services provided by the City Council, and the proportion of the total council tax bill which went to support the city council was around 11% of the total payable.

- 57.16 The budget included both revenue and the capital programme and Councillor Cook advised that the administration had budgeted for the further delivery of The Forum and the Food Dock.

- 57.17 Councillor Cook informed members that the Council continued to face budget pressures from the potential impact on income because of the ongoing pandemic and have put in place a Budget Equalisation Reserve to manage any potential pressures. Recovery from the cyber incident meant the Council has made substantial investment in further IT infrastructure.

- 57.18 The Corporate peer panel stated that the council needed to give serious consideration to continuing to strengthen its financial resilience; whilst there was evidence that the council’s political and organisational leadership were cognisant of the current risks arising from the state of the economy and the financial challenges faced by the sector, potential legacy risks from the cyber incident and current construction delivery and borrowing risks in relation to the Forum development, the council would benefit from being in a healthier position in relation to the level of its Reserves and provisions.

- 57.19 Councillor Cook advised that the budget had been drawn up against a continuing backdrop of a continued difficult financial environment, but sought

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to give the best opportunity of delivering a programme for the city. Councillor Cook stated that the administration was ambitious for the city and sought to make improvements at every opportunity.

57.20 Councillor Norman seconded the motion and outlined key aspects of the proposed Money Plan 2023-28. Local government finance continued to have a difficult financial outlook, considering the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and inflationary pressures impacting businesses, residents and local authorities.

57.21 The budget and money plan had been generated with prudent principles and 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. Councillor Norman outlined that government support for Gloucester for the forthcoming financial year included:

- The Core Spending Power Funding Guarantee has given us £320K, however with the removal of the Lower Tier Grant, this provided a net gain of £151k
- An additional one-off New Homes Bonus of £217k had also been received.

57.22 Councillor Norman advised that, within her own portfolio of Performance and Resources cost saving initiatives and income generation had been identified:

- Full years savings from the office relocation
- The potential of in sourcing of the parking enforcement
- In the coming financial year, we also see the generation of income from the Food Dock which was a property investment scheme

57.23 Councillor Norman advised that the council faced significant uncertainty from 2025/26 and it was expected there would be a significant reduction in retained funding from business rates when the Government undertake their proposed Fair Funding Review. This Review had been delayed several times and was not expected to occur prior to 2025. The Council needed to ensure there was sufficient funding in the Business Rates reserve to offset the expected changes when they occur and as such the plan assumed £1m will be drawn from this reserve from 2025 to 2028.

57.24 Consultation on the budget had been undertaken and received 258 responses. The top five priorities included:

- Waste Collection and Recycling
- Street Cleaning and Litter Collection
- Parks Play Areas & Open Spaces
- Land Drainage & Flood Protection
- Economic development and regeneration

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57.25 In concluding, Councillor Norman thanked all officers at the Council and wished the outgoing Director of Policy and Resources and s. 151 Officer well in his retirement.

57.26 Councillor Hilton responded to the budget and moved the following amendments:

- That the Council Green Waste collections be restored for the Month of January (to be reviewed after one year).

To be financed by a reduction in the Councillor community allocations (from £750 to £500 per councillor) and £5k from the General Fund.

Total cost = £15k.

- That the council employs an Urban Designer on an initial two-year contract. To be funded from the VAT Shelter Reserve.

Cost = £49k per annum. Total cost (over 2 years) = £98k.

- That the council establishes a reserve to cover a tree watering gang and bowser to ensure young trees are adequately watered during hot summer days.

Cost Break Down as follows:

Hire of a bowser on a weekly basis Approx £200-250

Staff to water trees Approx £120/day

Total Cost for one Summer £20k

To be financed from

Climate Change Reserve £10k

Neighbourhood Spaces Reserve £10k

57.27 Councillor Hilton stated that over a number of years the Council had received significant reductions in central government support. Compared to grants and other funding in 2009-10, current levels of funding would have to be significantly greater. The advancement of projects was therefore becoming extremely difficult. Due to the significant costs of cyber recovery, Councillor Hilton shared his view that the result of this was that some matters could not be fulfilled.

57.28 Councillor Hilton stated that, were there to be a Liberal Democrat administration, planning enforcement would be improved, bulky waste collection would be made free and garden waste provision would be extended.

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- 57.29 Councillor Wilson seconded the amendments. In respect of garden waste collection he stated that, as a ward Member, he had received a great deal of correspondence related to the reduction in provision. He stated that he would be willing to review the proposal in a year to ascertain additional take up of the service. He further stated that the extension would be for January only.
- 57.30 With regard to the proposal to directly employ an urban designer, Councillor Wilson stated that it was necessary to have professionals who sought to bring ambitious visions to life and that ambition needed to be matched with resource. He understood that much of this work was outsourced but that it was important for the Council to have its own designer.
- 57.31 In relation to the amendment regarding a 'water gang' Councillor Wilson stated that, were newly planted trees to die during another heatwave, the risk of reputational damage to the Council was great. It was suggested that a reserve be created as it was possible that such watering may not be necessary.
- 57.32 Councillor Cook responded to the amendments. With regard to the garden waste proposal, he stated that the consultation had indicated public support to reduce provision to ten months, particularly because it freed up staff for other delayed waste collections. In respect of the 'water gang' Councillor Cook advised that, as the trees were provided by the County Council, they were examining their own provision of watering the trees themselves.
- 57.33 Councillor S. Chambers responded to the amendment to employ an urban designer. She stated that planning officers were trained in such matters and that many lived in the City and had deep knowledge of it. Above all, planning officers were passionate about the City and cared deeply about its development. Where external advice was necessary, the applicant paid for this provision. Councillor S. Chambers advised that a new enforcement officer had been recruited and that the expense could not be justified to employ an urban designer.
- 57.34 Commenting on the amendments, Councillor Lewis stated that in order to fulfil them, the public would be paying. In relation to halving Councillor community allocations, this would have an impact on the voluntary and charities it was designed to assist.
- 57.35 Councillor Chambers-Dubus shared her view that the Council was not in the necessary financial position to fulfil the amendments. Once the Council was running better basic services, further spending could be considered.
- 57.36 Councillor Hilton clarified that the proposals were not for additional spending but were budgetary adjustments.
- 57.37 All three amendments were voted on individually and were lost.
- 57.38 Councillor Pullen responded to the budget. On behalf of the Labour Group he thanked the outgoing s. 151 Officer for all his assistance and advice over a number of years.

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- 57.39 Councillor Pullen highlighted that there had been numerous years of cuts to budgets, staffing and services and that this was impacting on hard working families. He noted that this also came at a time of escalating interest rates, rising energy costs and inflation. He expressed concern for the position on interest rates and the impact it could have on current development being undertaken.
- 57.40 He queried whether £360k allocated for Aspire would be sufficient for them to be able to deliver quality leisure facilities particularly as it was his understanding that this figure did not include utility costs.
- 57.41 In respect of changes to car park charges, Councillor Pullen stated that he was opposed to the changes with particular reference to the removal of the 1-hour stay fee as businesses and traders were struggling. He also noted that there had not been public consultation on the changes.
- 57.42 Councillor Pullen advised that the Labour Group had intended to table amendments to make funds available to continue support to vulnerable households struggling with the cost of living. As the Household Support Fund had been extended by the Government, however, these amendments had been withdrawn. He asked for the administration to publicise widely its availability in prominent sites across the City.
- 57.43 In summation, Councillor Cook referred to Councillor Hilton's reference to funds available in 2009 and that much of this related to housing stock held by the Council which was now not the case and that there had been service transfers out of the Council. In relation to Councillor Pullen's remarks, Councillor Cook questioned why the Labour Group had not table amendments when they had issues with the budget.
- 57.43 The budget was put to a recorded vote and the votes were as follows:

For	Against	Abstention
	Hyman Brown J.	
Cook Norman Chambers S. Lewis Padilla		
	Hilton Pullen	
Gravells Tracey Morgan Wilson		
	Bhaimia	
Williams		

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Taylor	Brown D.
Patel	
Toleman	
Brooker	
Finnegan	
Ackroyd	Bowkett
	Castle
	Chambers-Dubus
	Conder
Dee	
Durdey	
Evans	
Hudson	
Kubaszczyk	
Zaman	Radley
Campbell	
(22)	(12)

57.44 **RESOLVED** that: - (1) the proposals for the 2023/24 budget included in the report be approved. (2) it be noted that consultation has been undertaken on budget proposals.

58. COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2023/24

58.1 Councillor Cook moved and Councillor Norman seconded the motion. A recorded vote was taken and the results were as follows:

For	Against	Abstention
Hyman		
Brown J.		
Cook		
Norman		
Chambers S.		
Lewis		
Padilla		
Hilton		
Pullen		
Gravells		
Tracey		
Morgan		
Wilson		
Bhaimia		
Williams		
Brown D.		
Taylor		

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Patel
Toleman
Brooker
Finnegan
Bowkett
Ackroyd
Castle
Chambers-Dubus
Conder
Dee
Durdey
Evans
Hudson
Kubaszczyk
Radley
Zaman
Campbell

(34)

58.2 **RESOLVED that** : - Council approve the statutory Council Tax resolutions as set out in the Appendix 1 to the report.

59. REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE ON COMMITTEES AND VARIOUS APPOINTMENTS

RESOLVED that: - Council note:

- (1) That no changes be made to the allocation of seats on Committees at this time and a further review will take place following the Westgate by-election.
- (2) Receive and note the following nominations to Committees as required by the proposed changes:
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 1 vacant seat (Conservative) Councillor Taylor.
 - Licensing and Enforcement Committee – 1 vacant seat (Conservative) – Councillor Kubaszczyk.
 - Planning Committee – 1 vacant seat (Conservative) – Councillor Campbell.
 - Audit and Governance Committee – 1 vacant seat (Conservative) – Councillor Morgan.
- (3) Note that Dawn Melvin will continue her term as the Council's representative on the Board of Gloucestershire Airport Limited.

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(4) Note that Councillor Finnegan has been appointed to the vacant position on the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel.

60. NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no notices of motion.

Time of commencement: 6.00 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 7.05 pm hours

Chair