



CABINET

MEETING : Wednesday, 3rd May 2023

PRESENT : Cllrs. Norman (Vice-Chair), S. Chambers, Lewis and Padilla

Others in Attendance

Cllrs. Field, Hilton and Radley

Managing Director

Monitoring Officer

Head of Place

Head of Culture

Accountancy Manager

David Rice, Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllr. Cook

100. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

101. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5th April 2023 are confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chair.

102. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

103. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions or deputations.

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

In respect of question 2 Councillor Hilton stated that the £86,000 business rates liability probably arose because the intended conversion of the warehouses to a hotel had not materialised. He queried whether the cost could be recovered from the developer. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources confirmed that there was no legal route to do so.

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In respect of question 3 Councillor Hilton asked if the Cabinet Member was confident that bids would be received that could deliver the quality hotel as originally planned for the site. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources noted that the wider climate had changed since the original proposals. She advised that she was confident bids would be received for a range of uses and that nothing would be ruled in or out.

In respect of question 4 Councillor Hilton enquired whether it was thought right that zero business rates allow a company to hold onto a decaying building in a conservation area. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources advised that the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) had deemed the building 'beyond economic repair' with zero rateable value. She commented that if central government could be lobbied to change the regulations, then it would right to do so.

In respect of question 5 Councillor Hilton asked what the income from business rates would be if Spread Eagle Court and 67/69 London Road were fully occupied. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources noted that officers were doing what they could to encourage those premises to reopen. She gave assurance that the Revenues and Benefits Team would provide a response as best they can without spending an onerous amount of time on the matter as Spread Eagle Court had been divided into 37 units of varied rateable value.

In respect of question 6 Councillor Field sought further clarification on when the issues referred to would be resolved. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources reiterated that they were in the hands of the developer. She recommended that additional pressure on the developer from the Ward Member would be beneficial to expediting the process.

In respect of question 7 Councillor Field advised that he believed the success of the Blackbridge project would be part dependent on the new houses in the northern portion of the site and enquired whether the Cabinet Member was disappointed that the County Council had objected to the proposal. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure stated that it was a live planning matter and that he could comment no further.

In respect of question 8 Councillor Radley asked how many residents would need to contact officers, and in what format, for action to be taken. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources invited the Managing Director to respond. The Managing Director gave assurance that a written answer would be provided and stated that he believed, subject to confirmation, that the determining factor was the risk assessment rather than the number of residents raising concern. He informed Members that there was already a plan to install air quality monitors for an initial survey period and that the officer responsible is the Community Wellbeing Manager.

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105. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE - REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

Cabinet considered the report of the Leader of the Council that shared the report and recommendations resulting from the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) undertaken in November 2022 and sought the publication of the Council's response in the form of an Action Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources highlighted the key features of the report including the positive comments on the Council's organisational and place leadership (Appendix 1 4.2). She drew Members' attention to the challenges and recommendations addressed in the action plan (Appendix 2). The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources expressed gratitude to the Senior Management Team, Corporate Support officers and everyone who had been interviewed by the peer team. She commented that Members should be proud of the peers' conclusions.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure noted that the report helped give residents confidence that their money was being well spent and that it was a compliment to both officers and the administration. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy emphasised the reported strength of creative work being undertaken within the authority. She took the opportunity to thank officers, especially the IT teams, and those within her own portfolio for their achievements despite recent challenges. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods stated that the Council was fortunate to have such passionate and well-led staff. He informed Members that he looked forward to the planned improvements in communication (Appendix 2 No.2) as people needed to be aware of the Council's successes. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources advised that she and the Managing Director had already started work on a strategy to drive outcomes in this area.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the Corporate Peer Challenge report and recommendations is welcomed
- (2) the report is circulated to Members, officers and partners involved in the Corporate Peer Challenge and made available to the public via the council's website.
- (3) the Action Plan prepared in response to the recommendations is approved.

106. SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure that presented a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for the City of Gloucester.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure outlined the background to the report and noted the rigorous process undertaken by Active Gloucestershire to produce it (3.2). He advised Members that he believed the proposed strategy formed an

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excellent first step towards the vision of a healthier stronger and more active Gloucester for the years to come.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy noted that working with the third sector was to be prioritised (Appendix 1 Priority 4). She informed Members that she had observed in her own ward the great value third sector organisations, such as Quedgeley Wanderers Football Club, brought to the wider community which could not be underestimated. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources asked if the strategy would be sent to all interested parties should it be adopted. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure confirmed that the final strategy would be available to everyone in a more accessible form than the current draft (Appendix 1). The Managing Director reminded Members that a primary purpose of the strategy would be to inform the procurement of future leisure management services (7.3).

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods drew Members' attention to the importance given to achieving positive health outcomes (Appendix 1 Priority 1). He advised that he would like to see a focus on communities particularly affected by health inequalities such as the South Asian population.

RESOLVED that the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2023-2028 is adopted.

107. DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy that sought endorsement of the draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) relating to planning documents and applications and recommended that Members approve to undertake a public consultation.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy summarised the report. She emphasised the importance of including all stakeholders, especially young people, in planning policy as it looks to the future. She encouraged all Council Members and the public to engage with the proposed consultation. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure stated that consultation was necessary to gather diverse views and contribute to getting community decisions. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods reiterated the value of empowering communities to become involved in developments in their local areas.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the content of the draft Statement of Community Involvement is endorsed
- (2) the draft Statement of Community Involvement for public consultation is approved
- (3) authority is delegated for the correction of any errors such as spelling, grammar, referencing and formatting to the Planning Policy Manager, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing and Planning.

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108. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT - FEBRUARY 2023

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources that sought Members to note the year-end forecasts, and the financial pressures on the Council during the 11 months ended 28th February 2023.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources placed the report in the context of wider financial pressures such as cost inflation. She commented on the need to consider it before the outturn report comes before Cabinet. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources thanked the Finance Team for their hard work to get into a position to report despite the challenges of the past year.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure stated that he believed the services within his portfolio had started to turn a corner on their journey to becoming profitable. He highlighted recent positive developments such as Gloucester Guildhall's achievement of National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status and awards won by Blackfriars Priory. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure thanked staff for their hard work. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources reminded Members that although the refurbishment of the Guildhall had created an adverse budget variance in the short term (5.13), it had placed it in a good position for the longer term. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy pointed to the government consultation reviewing planning processes (5.16) and hoped that it would eventually enable the Council to cover its costs.

RESOLVED that it is noted that the:

- (1) forecast year-end position for the financial year is currently a decrease to the General Fund balance of £287k against a budgeted net zero position;
- (2) details of specific budgetary issues identified by officers and the actions being taken to address those issues;
- (3) current level of Capital expenditure as shown in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (4) work to reconstitute the large volume of data from the manual transactions processed following the cyber incident in December 2021 into the system is in progress. The volume of manual data being analysed and reconciled means that there will be movements between the outturns forecast for the detailed categories, and that the figures provided are the best estimates based on current analyses.

Time of commencement: 6.00 pm

Time of conclusion: 6.28 pm

Chair