



CABINET

MEETING : Wednesday, 8th November 2023

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

Others in Attendance

Cllrs Hilton, Hyman and Wilson

Managing Director

Monitoring Officer

Head of Finance and Resources

Head of Place

Director of Communities

Head of Transformation and Commissioning

Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : None.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

37. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th October 2023 are confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

38. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

The Democratic and Electoral Services Officer read the following question submitted by a member of the public:

I would like to put a question forward for the item Open Space Strategy. When the council reviews its grounds maintenance contract can maximising the introduction of low mow areas to boost biodiversity be built into the review. Can the Council as part of this review work with community volunteer groups to identify potential low mow areas which could be trialled prior to being adopted permanently?

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The Cabinet Member for Environment gave the following response:

The Council continually reviews its grounds maintenance service in order to identify opportunities to increase biodiversity. We are happy to consider requests to vary mowing regimes where there is demonstratable support from local residents, and where this would not have implications for road safety.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Officer read the following question submitted by a member of the public:

In the light of the harm plastic pitches cause the environment due to microplastic pollution, chemical maintenance, killing the biodiversity underneath and contributing to urban heat, why does the City Council on the one hand state it recognises climate emergency and environmental issues, but on the other hand vote through taking away green space (available for everyone's leisure and wellbeing) for a 'pay to play' plastic pitch?

The Cabinet Member for Environment gave the following response:

The City Council is responsible for providing a range of facilities to support the wellbeing of its residents. This includes the provision of sports facilities which help to deliver a range of mental and physical health benefits. There is an identifiable need for an additional 3G all-weather sports pitch in Gloucester in order to meet a growing demand from local adult and youth teams. Efforts have been made to ensure that the development, as a whole, has a positive impact on the environment with plans to improve the biodiversity of the site through the creation of wildflower areas, a sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) and the planting of over 100 new trees.

39. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions or deputations.

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

In respect of question 1 Councillor Hyman queried whether savings would be made by outsourcing as this had not been the case with Marketing Gloucester Ltd and Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure commented that this had only become apparent in hindsight. He noted that these were small companies whereas Freedom Leisure, the chosen interim leisure services provider, was considerably larger and operated multiple sites. He expressed confidence that they would be cheaper for the taxpayer.

In respect of question 4 Councillor Hilton reminded Members that many roads across his ward had had a severe buildup of fallen leaves which needed prompt clearing to prevent problems. He asked for a clearing schedule relating to the Kingsholm and Wotton ward and specific streets within it. The Cabinet Member for Environment drew attention to the schedule provided (Questions Report Appendix 1). He noted that the four-week programme that this document laid out included references to the ward in question and particular streets within it.

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In respect of question 5 Councillor Hilton sought clarification concerning how many housing units the 38 families in hotel accommodation referred to in the report (3.13) would require. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy reiterated the administration's desire to end the use of hotels and provide accommodation best suited to people's needs within the financial constraints. She advised that the situation was too fluid to be sure but that it would become clearer as progress is made.

In respect of question 6 Councillor Hilton informed Members that he believed that the Environment Agency Flood Risk Map had not been revised to account for the flood alleviation major works carried out approximately ten years ago in his and the Westgate wards. He enquired if this was the case. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy gave assurance that a written answer would be provided.

In respect of question 7 Councillor Hilton asked if the Transport Hub stained glass windows would be in place for spring 2024. The Cabinet Member for Environment confirmed that these were in production and anticipated that they would be installed either late this or early next year. He noted that Councillors had already had the opportunity to inspect one of the windows when displayed in the Eastgate Council offices some weeks ago.

In respect of question 9 Councillor Wilson queried whether the 13.1% in the response should be a ratio rather than a percentage as the former was used by the Moody's ratings agency in their rankings. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources invited the Head of Finance and Resources to respond. The Head of Finance and Resources confirmed that it should be a ratio but would double check. He further advised that the figure included investment returns and that the actual calculations could be made available.

In respect of question 10 Councillor Wilson sought more detail on how far the Council was from issuing a S114 Notice. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources gave assurance that Cabinet Members and officers were doing everything in their power to prevent it and closely monitoring the constantly moving position. She noted that the Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring report would be published for the December Cabinet meeting enabling people to make their own judgement.

41. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE GRANT FUNDING PROVIDED TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods that outlined the Council's financial contributions towards the voluntary and community sector during the year 2022/23.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods drew Members' attention to the principles of Asset Based Community Development model of working which underpins activities of the Council in this sector (4.1-5). He gave

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examples of some of the 71 organisations that the Council had invested a total of £101,250 in.

The Cabinet Member for Environment informed Members that he was always pleased to see this annual report showing how much support was being given. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure reminded Members of the importance of this support as what might seem like a small amount of money often had a disproportionately large impact for the organisation involved. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy commented that it was great to see property developers contributing to the community through the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund (4.5).

RESOLVED that the report is noted and the same approach is endorsed for the 2023/24 year.

42. DOMESTIC ABUSE AND PLACES OF SAFETY

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy that sought that funding from other members of the Strategic Housing Partnership (the Partnership) be accepted to deliver Domestic Abuse Housing for Gloucestershire as lead authority for the Partnership and to ensure that the Council can receive partner funds to cover costs of the work.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy advised Members that the number of places of safety available for individuals and families would be doubled with scope for more should they accept the recommendations of the report. She informed them that a recent experience meeting an individual and their child who had endured a very difficult situation had reminded her of how such support transforms people's lives. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy highlighted the importance of the collaboration by the Partnership across district and regional borders in delivering this vital service. She further emphasised the benefit of the critical training pathways lead by the Partnership which enable the early signs of domestic abuse to be recognised and appropriate support to be offered.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources thanked the Director of Communities and her team for their work and noted that it represented a prime example of partnership working delivering a very much needed service for the community. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure commented that no one should live in fear at home and urged people in that situation to come forward and seek assistance.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) delegated authority is given to the Corporate Director following consultation with the Head of Finance and Resources and Director, One Legal to accept funding from other members of the Strategic Housing Partnership to deliver Domestic Abuse Housing;

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- (2) delegated authority is provided to the Corporate Director in consultation with the Head of Finance and Resources and the Director of One Legal to accept tenders following procurement exercises carried out on behalf of the Strategic Housing Partnership; and
- (3) the Council continues to employ a lead Member of staff on behalf of the Strategic Housing Partnership with a shared funding arrangement.

43. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ACQUISITION PROGRAMME

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy and the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources that proposed that a programme of capital investment be set out to increase the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio to reduce the costs associated with using hotels and other buildings.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy outlined the background to the report and reasons behind the increase in families requiring temporary accommodation (3.2) which she stressed was a national as well as a local issue. She noted that the proposed programme was only one of the solutions that the Council is working on to ensure that households who find themselves in the terrible position of homelessness can be supported. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources drew Members' attention to the financial implications (9.1) and made it clear that each acquisition should be decided on a case-by-case basis so that the right decision is made both for individuals and the finances of the Council. She thanked both the Communities and Finance Teams and especially the Housing Innovation Manager and Financial Services Manager. The Cabinet Member for Environment expressed his own gratitude to officers for moving so fast to find solutions to what was a nationwide problem. He noted that this proposal was innovative and advised Members that he had been approached by a Metropolitan Council with praise for it.

RECOMMENDED to Council that:

- (1) delegated authority be provided to the Corporate Director in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources and the Director of One Legal to:
 - a) approve the establishment of a capital investment fund, funded from borrowing, to enable an acquisition programme for buildings or other structures for use as temporary accommodation for households who present as homeless to the Council
 - b) explore options and appoint a provider, or other arrangement, to manage the temporary accommodation provided on behalf of the Council

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- c) procure and appoint contractors and associated professional services to carry out any works required to bring the properties into use as units of temporary accommodation
- (2) acquisitions be made in accordance with the principles of this report and the total costs will not exceed £5m.

44. CHELTENHAM, GLOUCESTER AND TEWKESBURY STRATEGIC AND LOCAL PLAN - PUBLIC CONSULTATION (REGULATION 18)

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy that sought approval for public and stakeholder consultation in relation to the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan (SLP) Consultation Document.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy outlined the background to the report. She advised Members that the cross-boundary approach was one that she strongly supported for the benefits it gave the authorities in production of the plan and developers and communities in its practice. She reminded Members that the proposed consultation would shape a draft SLP scheduled for early 2025 (3.8). The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure commented that consultation with all relevant parties was vital for future accommodation and jobs to be in the right place for what is a growing city.

RECOMMEND to Council that:

- (1) the Strategic and Local Plan Consultation Document (Appendix 1) be approved for consultation under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012
- (2) authority be delegated to the Head of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing, to prepare diagrams illustrating the general location of development options for inclusion in the consultation document, and to make any other necessary minor amendments, corrections and additions to the document prior to publication for consultation.

45. PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF BARBICAN HOUSE, 31 COMMERCIAL ROAD, TO GLOUCESTERSHIRE ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources that sought to progress the proposed disposal of Barbican House to Gloucestershire Academy of Music (GAM) further to the previous Cabinet decision (8th December 2021 Minute 70).

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources highlighted the key features of the report. She reaffirmed the Council's commitment to supporting GAM and that the extension of the previously agreed timeline to would enable the Council to do so. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure commented that GAM was highly regarded and good for the City. He advised that anything that could be done to

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keep them here should be done. The Cabinet Member for Environment stated that GAM already formed a vital part of Gloucester's cultural offer and that having Barbican House as their own would strengthen this further.

RESOLVED that authority is delegated to the Head of Finance and Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources and Property Investment Manager, to agree terms to dispose of the freehold interest or a long leasehold interest in Barbican House within the next two years.

46. OPEN SPACE STRATEGY CLARIFICATION

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Environment that proposed that a revised Open Space Strategy be adopted.

The Cabinet Member for Environment summarised the report and directed Members' attention to the detail of the proposed changes (3.3). He advised them that although financial savings were unlikely, they would reduce future risk (11.3). The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources underlined the importance of communicating with residents and that Ward Members be involved if the maintenance of particular areas is changed.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) amendments to the current Open Space Strategy, which have been made in order to clarify the Council's policy in respect of unadopted land, are noted
- (2) the Amendments Open Space Strategy is adopted
- (3) authority is delegated to the Corporate Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy, to make any other necessary minor factual amendments and corrections to the Open Space Strategy.

47. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA) - ANNUAL UPDATE

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources that updated Members on the Council's use of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources advised Members that there had been no changes to the procedural guide and that the powers had not been used in the past year.

RESOLVED that the annual update on the use of RIPA powers is noted.

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**Time of commencement: 6.00 pm
Time of conclusion: 6.34 pm**

Chair