Cabinet

Tuesday, 16th October, 2012
6.00 - 6.30 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Steve Jordan (Leader of the Council), John Rawson (Cabinet Member Finance), Rowena Hay (Cabinet Member Sport and Culture), Peter Jeffries (Cabinet Member Housing and Safety), Andrew McKinlay (Cabinet Member Built Environment), Jon Walklett (Cabinet Member Corporate Services) and Roger Whyborn (Cabinet Member Sustainability)

Minutes

1. **APOLOGIES**
    There were none.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
    There were none.

3. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**
    RESOLVED
    That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September be approved and signed as a correct record.

4. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**
    There were none.

5. **SCRUTINY TASK GROUP ICT REVIEW FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**
    The Chair of the Scrutiny Task Group (STG), Councillor Colin Hay, introduced the report and explained that the terms of reference the task group had been given did cross over with work which was ongoing in the framework of the commissioning review of ICT services. Therefore the group took the view just to focus on undertaking a healthcheck of ICT. It was now for Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny and the Commissioning review to take the recommendations further.

    The Chair of the STG outlined the recommendations from scrutiny. He highlighted that over a number of years investment in and prominence of ICT had drifted and there had been a lack of leadership within the Senior Leadership team. This had since been addressed and ICT infrastructure would be taken forward in the commissioning review. He also emphasised the impact the GO project, in terms of hosting the service, had on the ICT team particularly when members of the team had been affected by single status. The STG also recommended that cabinet be mindful of the impact of the council's accommodation strategy in terms of investment in ICT. It was recognised that

Draft minutes to be approved at the next meeting on. Tuesday, 13 November 2012

the Government Connect project had also added an unnecessary burden on the team and it was important that further representations be made to government about this.

With regard to member ICT the Chair of the STG highlighted the fact that members could currently not log in to Citrix on their equipment in the council offices due to restricted use of WIFI. In the context of using members allowances for purchasing IT equipment the group requested the Independent Remuneration Panel to re-examine this should members so wish.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services thanked the Scrutiny Task Group for its work and gave Cabinet's full endorsement of the recommendations. In his view the recommendations fell in to two categories-those which would be addressed by the commissioning review and those directly relating to members ICT in conjunction with the Democratic Services Manager. He expressed his disappointment that the cabinet member working group had not materialised.

RESOLVED

To agree the recommendations of the Scrutiny Task Group and note the implications set out in the report

6.   **QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO END OF AUGUST 2012**
The Cabinet Member Finance introduced the report and explained that at the end of August a possible overspend of £281 000 had been identified. This would be actively managed in terms of examining individual overspends and to rein in spending in terms of a freeze on purchasing services and supplies.

The possible overspend amounted to one third of one percent of the council's total gross budget. The Cabinet Member highlighted that this year there was a shortfall in income for both off-street car parking and building control and this reflected the general economic situation. On a positive note he reported that there was a predicted surplus of interest of £40 000 to report on Treasury Management within the general fund for 2012/13.

The Cabinet Member was confident that, like last year, services would be delivered within budget. The Leader added that the overspend was considerably less than previous years.

RESOLVED that

1. the contents of this report including the key projected variances to the original 2012/13 budget identified at this stage and the potential projected overspend of £281,000 for the financial year 2012/13 be noted.
2. a freeze on supplies and service expenditure budgets be introduced, where possible, until further notice, to be reflected in the revised 2012/13 budget.
3. If, following the more detailed monitoring process currently being undertaken as part of the budget setting process for 2013/14, the potential overspend is confirmed, corrective action be taken to ensure that the Council delivers services within the overall net budget for the year.

7. **BUDGET STRATEGY AND PROCESS**

The Cabinet Member Finance explained that the budget process had started back in February 2012 and a £735k funding gap had been identified at that point between what the Council would need to spend to maintain service and what it could spend assuming an illustrative council tax increase of 2.5 %. Since 2010 the government grant had been cut by 23 % and a further cut was expected in December. A 5 % cut in government grant was assumed next year and it was hoped that the Council tax increase would be as low as possible. The Bridging the Gap group continued to meet on a regular basis and a 5 year strategy was being developed with intelligent targets based on work which was already being undertaken, such as the Leisure and Culture review and various restructures.

The Cabinet member Finance wished to put on record his thanks to the Bridging the Gap group and officers across the council for identifying savings. There was still however more to do.

The Leader of the Council also paid tribute to the work being done.

RESOLVED that

1. the budget setting timetable at Appendix 2 be approved.
2. the estimated funding gap for 2013/14 of £0.95m- £1.2m and the steps taken to close it at Appendix 3 be noted.
3. the budget strategy outlined in section 5 below be approved.
4. Authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to consider the suggestions from the Budget Scrutiny Working Group in preparing the interim budget proposals for 2013/14 as outlined in section 5.

8. **CHELTENHAM BOROUGH HOMES DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS REVIEW**

The Cabinet Member Housing and Safety paid tribute to Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) for the positive work they had done in St Pauls. He then invited Paul Stephenson, Chief Executive, CBH, to introduce the report.

The Chief Executive CBH explained that Cabinet had mandated CBH in March 2012 to review development options for Crabtree Place, Cakebridge Place and four garage sites and to seek a development partner for these schemes following the completion of an appropriate competitive selection process. He highlighted that the recommendations in the report recognised that the work was incomplete and that final design and financial and legal implications needed to be worked through. With reference to recommendation (iv) the Chief Executive CBH mentioned that there had been two working group meetings of senior officers from CBC and CBH where the concepts had been worked through and key issues addressed.

Communication and consultation was key to the process and this had been illustrated by the experience of the Brighton Road and St Paul's developments. The selection process was multifaceted and consulting with the community was a critical part of this.

Draft minutes to be approved at the next meeting on Tuesday, 13 November 2012

CBH had been mandated to complete the developer selection process and to commence the next phase. The garage sites already had planning permission and with other schemes design considerations still needed to be modified. He expressed his gratitude to his council colleagues involved in the selection process.

The Cabinet Member Housing and Safety said these developments was good news for affordable homes in Cheltenham and thanked officers for their work.

Members welcomed the continued involvement of ward members in the process.

The Leader explained that this was a positive process. Developments in Brighton Road and St Pauls had been successful and these new developments would add to affordable housing in the town. He highlighted however that this process was not routine as each area comprised different communities with different issues and concerns.

RESOLVED that:

(i)   CBH be mandated to secure the best available deal from developers in respect of net construction cost for the three schemes.
 (ii)   CBH can continue contractual negotiations such that early planning submissions can be made in respect of Cakebridge Place and Crabtree Place.
 (iii)   CBH be mandated to act in respect of decanting tenants and securing the freeholds of privately owned properties, in full consultation with affected persons and subject to acceptance of appropriate terms and rehousing options.
 (iv)   The decision with regard to ownership of the developments be delegated to Grahame Lewis, Executive Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Housing & Safety, Section 151 Officer and CBH following receipt of legal advice. This decision is to be made prior to any contractual commitment being entered into with any developer.
 (v)   If the decision at (iv) is for CBH to own the completed properties the council will, subject to all necessary consents being received from the Secretary of State, agree to transfer land as required at nil cost (on the assumption that the capital receipt from sales land values at St Pauls will be used to subsidise development costs) and provide financial support through the affordable housing reserve and provide access to PWLB borrowing.

9.   **BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS**
The Leader informed the meeting that he would be making a decision this week with regard to allocating the remaining funding of the Promoting Cheltenham Fund.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services explained that a decision would be forthcoming with regard to the Community Right to Challenge process.

Chairman