

Cabinet

Tuesday, 9th June, 2020
6.00 - 6.45 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Steve Jordan (Leader of the Council), Flo Clucas (Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles), Chris Coleman (Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment), Rowena Hay (Cabinet Member Finance), Alex Hegenbarth (Cabinet Member Corporate Services), Peter Jeffries (Cabinet Member Housing) and Andrew McKinlay (Cabinet Member Development and Safety)
Also in attendance:	Gareth Edmundson, Sarah Farooqi, Harry Mayo, Beverly Thomas and Paul Jones

Minutes

- 1. APOLOGIES**
There were none.
- 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
There were none.
- 3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**
The minutes of the meeting on 14th May 2020 were unanimously approved and signed as the correct record.
- 4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**
There were none.
- 5. ALLOCATION OF HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION FUNDING**
The Cabinet Member Housing presented the report, which set out how the council intended to allocate the homelessness prevention funding of £107,284 received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. He explained that changes to the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2008 significantly changed how the council undertook its work in this area. He emphasised the benefits of collaborative working to benefit the whole county, since homelessness and rough sleeping were not Cheltenham-specific issues. He noted that £44,000 had been allocated to the recruitment of a specialist Domestic Abuse Officer, while residual funding would assist with outreach service across the county, and added that the report aimed to take into account the many Covid-19 related challenges, and allowed some flexibility to help cope with this.

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles asked for clarification regarding the domestic abuse officer position. The Cabinet Member Housing responded that it was a countywide post, but one that sits within the borough council team.

The Cabinet Member Development and Safety added that the funding was both vital and well-timed, with street homelessness expected to rise in the coming months as a consequence of the Covid-19 crisis.

The Leader of the Council added that homelessness had always been a high priority of the council, and that working in partnership with other authorities across the county was essential. The council's pre-Covid groundwork stood it in good stead, and it was able to help both those who were already homeless and those who had become homeless as a result of the crisis. He congratulated those involved, but emphasised that work needed to continue, so that those who are temporarily housed could find permanent accommodation after the crisis is over.

The Cabinet Member Housing placed on record his thanks to both council officers and Cheltenham Borough Homes, whose ongoing work to house rough sleepers had been invaluable. The council was able to temporarily house 36 rough sleepers, and as of 9th June, had found permanent accommodation for 18 of them. He added that all of these individuals continued to be supported and engaged with by the council.

RESOLVED THAT

- 1. The transfer of £107,284 to Cheltenham Borough Homes' Housing Options be approved; this being a windfall MHCLG homelessness prevention funding allocation made to the council during 2019.**
- 2. The transfer of £44,000 to Cheltenham Borough Homes' Housing Options Service be approved, subject to the council receiving this funding allocation from MHCLG during 2020; this being MHCLG's funding allocation to support survivors of domestic abuse.**
- 3. The allocation of an additional £14,000 funding (to be spread over 3 years) be approved to support the recommissioning of our county-wide, jointly commissioned Assertive Outreach service for rough sleepers; and that it be noted that this funding represents the remaining unallocated element of the MHCLG's Flexible Homelessness Support Grant funding allocation to the council for 2019/20.**
- 4. Authority be delegated to the Lead Commissioner – Housing Services, in consultation with Cabinet Member – Housing, to make any changes to these spending plans, if required; noting that the indicative expenditures detailed within Appendix 2 of the report may need to be flexible, depending upon demands of the service, and particularly in light of the COVID-19 outbreak.**

5. **Authority be delegated to the Lead Commissioner – Housing Services, in consultation with Cabinet Member – Housing and Executive Director – Finance & Assets, any future allocations of MHCLG homelessness prevention funding (including the MHCLG funding allocation for 2020/21).**

6. JOINT CORE STRATEGY AFFORDABLE HOUSING PARTNERSHIP: REVIEW OF PREFERRED REGISTERED PROVIDERS

The Cabinet Member Housing presented the report, and reminded members of the council's work in leading the Affordable Housing Partnership in line with the Joint Core Strategy since 2015. He advocated a collective approach and outlined some key contextual points, including changes to Universal Credit and the Homelessness Reduction Act, which needed to be taken into account. He added that a third outcome had been added to the framework, namely to support local authorities' aims of reducing homelessness.

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles asked whether the fact that a number of the suppliers were part of the same consortium would affect the situation. The Cabinet Member Housing responded that he was aware of this and did not believe it would cause any issues.

RESOLVED THAT:

1. **It be noted that the Affordable Housing Partnership with Gloucester City Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council, which was set up to oversee the delivery of affordable homes across the Strategic Allocation Sites within the Joint Core Strategy area, will continue for the duration of the JCS Plan Period (currently 31st December 2031).**
2. **The Authority's review of the current list of Preferred Providers of affordable housing, which will include inviting existing Preferred Providers and other Registered Providers to bid to become a Preferred Provider across the Strategic Allocation Sites within the Joint Core Strategy area, jointly with Gloucester City Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council, be approved.**
3. **Authority be delegated to the Lead Commissioner, Housing Services to:**
 - 3.1 **evaluate and select Preferred Providers for the delivery and/or management of new affordable housing on the Strategic Allocation Sites, noting that the selection will be carried out jointly with Gloucester City and Tewkesbury Borough Councils,**
 - 3.2 **agree changes to the Terms of Reference of the partnership and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Councils and Preferred Providers (which shall take effect from November 2020) and to note that these documents shall be updated annually,**

3.3 undertake any future reviews of the Preferred Provider arrangements within the triggers as detailed in sections 3.3 to 3.5 of this report; whilst noting that these triggers may be updated from time to time as part of the annual review of the Memorandum of Understanding.

7. DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS GRANTS FUND

The Cabinet Member Finance presented the report. She thanked officers for their hard work against considerable time pressure, and emphasised the importance of responding proactively to a quickly evolving situation.

She welcomed the additional support to Cheltenham's businesses that had missed out on the first round of grants. She explained that central government had provided the council with £1,128,750, which equated to 5% of the funding allocation for the estimated number of businesses eligible for the Small Business Grants Fund and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants as of the 4th May. The 5% funding was being made available from any residual unspent balance of the initial grant allocation. Additional funding would be provided by central government, where the remaining unspent balance was insufficient for the 5% allocation. She acknowledged that at present, the government was not allocating funding above the 5%, so any grants awarded above this allocation would have to be funded by the council.

She added that as funding was limited, the actual level of grants to businesses was to be decided once applications had been received and it was known how many businesses were entitled. New burdens funding would be provided for the administrative costs of the scheme.

She clarified that the grants were to be primarily aimed at small and micro-businesses, as well as the following:

- businesses with relatively high ongoing fixed property-related costs
- businesses which could demonstrate that they had suffered a significant fall in income due to the COVID-19 crisis
- businesses which occupy property or part of a property with a rateable value, annual rent or annual mortgage payments below £51,000

She acknowledged that although the council was able to exercise some discretion when allocating the fund to support business types most relevant to the local economy, the government had prioritised the following types of businesses to be included in schemes:

- small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces, e.g. units in industrial parks, science parks and incubators which do not have their own business rates assessment
- regular market traders with fixed building costs such as rent, who do not have their own business rates assessment

- bed & breakfasts which pay council tax instead of business rates
- charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief

She reported that in designing the scheme, the four councils included an additional local priority to support certain businesses in the hospitality sector which were likely to remain closed for a longer period due to the COVID-19 restrictions and were not eligible for support in the previous scheme. This additional priority group was intended to benefit many local independent local businesses, including bars, restaurants, cafes nightclubs, pubs and boutique hotels that have a rateable value of between £51,000 and £105,001.

She proposed that the following grants would be awarded to the following groups, all subject to demand:

- market traders – up to a maximum of £5,000
- bed and breakfasts – up to a maximum of £5,000
- charities – up to a maximum of £10,000
- small and micro businesses in shared office space – up to a maximum of £10,000
- Local Priority Businesses, as defined in section 7 and meeting the criteria in sections 3 and 4 of the scheme – up to a maximum of £25,000

She reminded members that funding for the grant scheme was limited, and therefore the scheme would only be open for businesses to submit applications during a short period between 9th and 21st June via an online application form on the Council's website. All applications were to be assessed once the window was closed. The maximum level of grant for each category of business type would then be determined based on demand, before grant payments began from the 25th June.

She emphasised the importance of working collaboratively, noting that Gloucester, Stroud and Tewkesbury district councils, Gloucestershire County Council, GFirst LEP, Cheltenham BID and the Cheltenham MP's office had all been consulted to ensure the scheme provided consistent support to priority businesses across the county.

She added that the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had waived the right to call-in, and therefore that the application process would be made live as soon as Cabinet approved the report.

The Leader of the Council added that business grants were of great importance, and that he hoped they would help keep businesses going in a difficult time.

RESOLVED THAT:

1. **The Local Discretionary Business Grant Scheme in Appendix 2 be approved.**
2. **Authority be delegated to the Head of Revenues and Benefits to take decisions relating to applications made under the Local Discretionary Business Grant Scheme and to delegate authority to the Executive Director Finance and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance, to consider and determine any reviews requested in respect of such decisions.**

8. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles informed members about upcoming announcements regarding Cheltenham General Hospital, as well as a recent safeguarding incident in Regent's Arcade. She also reported that the food network would meet later in the week to discuss bringing partners together to form a network that would be both effective and long-lasting. She praised support from Springbank, Charlton Park and the Big Local in particular. Cultural partners have met, and approved submission of the recovery document prepared by the council. She also reported that the council had been asked to take part in a number of international events, including a UN meeting in July regarding how Covid-19 affects sustainable development goals, and a European Business Summit on June 10th. She emphasised that these events offered an opportunity to gain international recognition for the work done in Cheltenham, and also to learn from international partners.

The Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment added to his remarks at the previous Cabinet meeting, particularly regarding green waste, recycling, parks and gardens, and the cemetery and crematorium. He emphasised that there had been no great change since then, which was good news, and thanked everybody involved for ensuring that services were still running. He reminded members that at the last Cabinet meeting, they had celebrated the opening of the household recycling centre. The centre made sure to allow only a carefully limited number of people inside at once, which had now increased in line with the relevant health and safety advice. He added that collection of bulky items had restarted on the morning of the 9th June, and thanked residents for their patience. He also updated members on the situation regarding the number of mourners permitted at the cemetery and crematorium. This had been under constant review, and he announced that they were now able to increase it to 20. He expressed sympathy for bereaved families and thanked them for the sacrifices they had made for public safety.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services praised the work of officers under his portfolio, and added that as the council slowly moved towards a 'new normal', it needed to approach both new and old problems in the most effective way possible.

The Cabinet Member Housing echoed this, and placed on record his thanks to Cheltenham Borough Homes.

The Cabinet Member Development and Safety updated members on the situation with the West Cheltenham development. He reported that the council had recently changed planning and licensing rules to allow an easier application process for temporary structures, in order to aid recovery from the lockdown. Rules around street trading were relaxed in order to allow socially distanced operations, and applicants would find the process to be simpler and more streamlined going forward. From this month, car parking regulations were to be formally enforced again, tying in with the reopening of the retail sector. He also praised the hard work of environmental health staff, and noted that some staff were likely to be seconded to the countywide scheme for up to 18 months, as attempts to tackle Covid-19 continue.

The Leader of the Council discussed the Black Lives Matter protest in Pittville Park on the 8th June, which he welcomed as a peaceful and dignified gathering. He added that he was pleased that BLM would be debated at the full council meeting on the 15th June, as it was important for the council to be constantly looking at what it can do to ensure that black lives matter. On the topic of that same council meeting, he noted his disappointment that the council would not be able to consider the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Document. He reported that this item would be considered at the July meeting instead. He also referred to the upcoming reopening of the High Street, and suggested that this needed to be done in both an economically sensible and safety-conscious way.

The Cabinet Member Development and Safety outlined the two Cabinet Member decisions he had made since the last meeting, both pertaining to the council's taxi policy.

9. CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST MEETING

Decision	Cabinet Member	Date	Link
To reject the Cheltenham Taxi Drivers Association's request that, in light of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the licensed trade, the implementation date of the adopted wheelchair accessible (WAV) policy for hackney carriages be reviewed.	Development and Safety, Andrew McKinlay	21 st May 2020	https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1362
To approve the 'Partitions or screens in Hackney Carriages or Private Hire Vehicles' policy for consultation.	Development and Safety, Andrew McKinlay	1 st June 2020	https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1363

Chairman