

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet

Minutes

Meeting date: 25 July 2023

Meeting time: 5.00 pm - 5.35 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Rowena Hay, Peter Jeffries, Victoria Atherstone, Flo Clucas, Mike Collins, Iain Dobie, Alisha Lewis and Max Wilkinson

Also in attendance:

Gareth Edmundson (Chief Executive) and Richard Gibson (Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Horwood.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023 will be considered at Cabinet in September.

4 Public and Member Questions and Petitions

There were none.

5 Local Development Scheme 2023

The Leader introduced the report and explained that Local Planning Authorities are required by law to prepare, publish, and maintain a Local Development Scheme

(LDS) setting out the timetable for preparing statutory Development Plan Documents (DPD), which form the Local Plan.

The Local Development Scheme 2023 will deliver the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan (CGTSLP). In simple terms this will draw together four core elements within a single examination; collectively this being the CGTSLP and made up of:

1. the strategic plan policies (incorporating any generic policies that are relevant across the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury administrative areas);
2. Cheltenham local plan policies;
3. Gloucester local plan policies;
4. Tewkesbury local plan policies.

An updated Partnership Agreement will provide the safeguards that sets out the terms and conditions for the operation of the partnership. This would include a clear protocol that individual districts would not seek to fetter the discretion of the other district authorities in the drafting of the local plan policies.

The Council's current LDS was adopted in 2022 and is in need of updating. There are a number of reasons for this including;

- Cheltenham's local plan policies are directly linked to the overall land allocation figures relating to employment, housing and retail – these are out of date. Of particular relevance are the housing numbers and in regard to this we are in the position that Cheltenham does not have an up-to-date plan in regards housing delivery.
- The Planning Service Review gave strong recommendations (extract below) which emphasised the value of joint working and the importance of making progress on plan making. With specific regards to plan making the clear message was 'do not delay'
- Plan making is resource hungry in respect of officer resource, consultancy time and costs to facilitate this, public consultation and examination on public. The approach now set out via the LDS has sought to think creatively about how we manage the financial cost of plan making in context of local authority budgets & impact on wider financial demands – to support more predictable and consistent spend/flattening out spend
- build efficiency and effectiveness in preparing the evidence base required to meet our statutory obligations
- facilitate staff recruitment and retention
- develop specialisms and enhance depth– save costs (long term) by less reliance on commissioning of consultants
- respond robustly to Government change/uncertainty

The Leader reported that sovereignty of decision-making is critical to all three councils, and this is being embodied in our governance and approach, as illustrated in the diagram in the report.

Finally, the Leader emphasised that the council was working within the realms of what was best for the residents and communities in the town.

Members thanked the Leader for all her hard work on this important, exciting and challenging project, appreciating the need for speed and looking forward to working collaboratively with our neighbouring councils to maintain high standards in planning and provide the decisions we need. They made the following points:

- as the other authorities are not as advanced as CBC, which already has SPD documents and policies in place, Cheltenham is well placed to take the lead;
- thanks to the Leader and officers, particularly Gareth Edmundson and Tracey Birkinshaw for their intense work and creative, can-do thinking on this, making the impossible possible, and providing an exciting opportunity to raise standards by working together with neighbouring authorities;
- climate change in particular does not respect boundaries and this provides a welcome opportunity to work together effectively to protect the planet and set a high bar across the board;
- CBC has traditionally led the way with innovative planning solutions, and can take forward its high environmental standards, such as protecting local green space and achieving net zero housing. These can feed into the documents, and will result in more strategic planning than has been achieved previously, through deep partnership with our neighbours. It's hoped that those at national level will be impressed by this innovative approach;
- the success of Ubico, which now serves every district in Gloucestershire, with the Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling and Street Services now chairing the Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Partnership, demonstrates CBC's ability to lead on important initiatives, particularly green ones;
- the importance of community involvement and protection of local green space in the preparation of future plans is welcomed, and it will be good to see how the Florence Convention, which gives communities the right to have their say in respect of new building developments, can be incorporated into future versions of the plan.

In summing up, the Leader referred to the recent government announcement on new planning flexibilities allowing councils to compulsory purchase vacant town centre buildings and convert them into homes. She queried how this could rejuvenate the high street when there were no details on how this could be financed by local authorities.

She noted government interest in what Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury were proposing and the provision of a person to work with our three strategic teams. This was very much welcomed.

RESOLVED THAT:

1. **the updated Local Development Scheme for Cheltenham Borough, attached to the report at Appendix 2, is adopted, to take effect immediately. This is the programme for preparation of the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan (CGTSLP) which includes;**
 - **strategic plan policies covering the entirety of the area of Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury administrative**

areas (this will include any relevant generic policies that affect all individual areas equally), and

- **local plan policies addressing any locality specific issues of the individual administrative areas**
- 2. authority is delegated to the Director of Community & Economic Development, in consultation with the Leader, to prepare the Local Development Scheme for publication, correcting any minor errors such as spelling, grammar, typographical and formatting changes that do not affect the substantive content of the Local Development Scheme.**

6 Physical activity and sport strategy for Cheltenham, Part 1 - draft vision and outcomes

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Culture, Tourism and Well-being introduced the report, thanking Richard Gibson and the many people from communities and stakeholder groups across Cheltenham who took part in important workshops to tell us what Cheltenham needs. Stage 1 of the strategy sets the vision, with Stage 2, including technical assessment of sports pitch need, to follow after further widespread consultation. He highlighted the following points:

physical activity is important for people's physical and mental health, as well as being good for business by boosting productivity, and protecting the NHS by preventing short and long-term ill health;

more than 1 in 5 Cheltenham people are classed as inactive, below the national average of 1 in 4, but drilling down into the statistics shows that inactivity is lower in low income communities, lowering health outcomes for the people in greatest need. The strategy must focus on access for everyone, including the disabled and minority groups who are more likely to suffer as result of inactivity;

Cheltenham is relatively well served by sports facilities, with private gyms, health clubs and private schools, as well as Leisure@ and the Prince of Wales Stadium. The next stage of the strategy will look to augment these, following wider consultation;

tackling ingrained health problems and inactivity is a long-term challenge for the nation and for Cheltenham, to create healthier, happier and more productive communities, which can thrive in the future, and also protect the NHS.

Members welcomed the report and strategy and made the following comments:

it is good to see the incredible range of ways to get active and involved in sport portrayed in the strategy, rather than stereotypical activities;

It would be a challenge to list the many benefits from being an active sportsperson, over and above simply keeping fit, including meeting friends and being part of a sports community;

Cheltenham already enjoys a great sporting culture from gymnastics and skittles to football and horseracing, and there is no doubt that team sports help children's' development, improving mental health and well-being by working together collaboratively;

this strategy is the start of a journey to discover what is possible. We are very lucky to have Leisure@, which opened in 1972, but it is good to consider if this is the right facility for now and the future, and how we can add to it. We need a policy to formulate where to go next.

RESOLVED THAT:

our draft vision and outcomes for physical activity and sport document, as attached as Appendix 2, is agreed;

the progress with appointing consultants to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the borough's playing pitches and built sports facilities up to 2041 is noted.

7 Appointment of a supplier for delivery of fixed power supply

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets introduced his report, reminding Members of the successful ice rink in Imperial Gardens in 2021 and the approval of a recommendation to deliver fixed power infrastructure for future events. This would provide a sustainable solution, producing less noise and air pollution. Work is ongoing to understand the technical and practical issues of doing this, including understanding the capacity of the national grid network, topography, tree root protection, listed building restrictions and more.

The council needs to engage professional engineers to provide a viable specification for this work, and has been liaising with a number of providers, but the timelines for the project to be delivered mean that there is no time to undergo the full tender process or identify and appoint through a framework. It is therefore recommended that a waiver is applied to appoint a preferred supplier to mount full delivery of the project. He assured Members that, following the design spec and procurement process to appoint a supplier for the build work, a full business case would be brought back for approval.

Members welcomed the report, and made the following points:

- the power supply will be a great benefit to the town, not only reducing the need for generators for the ice rink, but for all other activities in the Imperial Gardens;
- removing the need for diesel generators, which pollute homes and the local environment, is a good enough reason in itself to approve the recommendation;
- this is an exciting proposal, as the ice rink and all other events in Imperial Gardens are so important to residents, visitors, and the economy of the park. It is good that these can be carried on in a more sustainable way.

A Member asked if it is the intention to extend this infrastructure initiative beyond Imperial Gardens to Montpellier Gardens in due course. The Cabinet Member for

Finance and Assets confirmed that this is the aspiration, following learning from the current project.

RESOLVED THAT:

- **the direct appointment of the supplier to undertake the project work on a fixed power supply up to and including RIBA Stage 5 is approved, subject to a business case for the capital work being approved by Cabinet and Full Council (if required).**

8 Briefing from Cabinet Members

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities was sad to report that Charles Welsh, executive Head Teacher of Oakwood and Gardners Lane Primary Schools, is retiring, not only from work but also from his role as Chair of the Communities Partnership and as a huge champion of No Child Left Behind. She said it had been her great privilege to work with him over the last few years, describing him as a man like no other who gives, listens and cares about children and their families, and gave formal thanks through the Cabinet for everything he has done for his community and Cheltenham . She wished him well for the future, adding that he would be welcomed back if he would like to stay involved.

9 Cabinet Member decisions since last meeting

The Cabinet Member for Housing reported on a decision to appoint a consultant to lead and advise on the redevelopment of the former Monkscroft School.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency had taken a decision to offer the second significant Green New deal loan to Cheltenham Town Football Club, saying an exciting press launch would follow.