

Cabinet

Tuesday, 26th July, 2011
6.00 - 7.52 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Steve Jordan (Leader of the Council), John Rawson (Cabinet Member Built Environment), Klara Sudbury (Cabinet Member Housing and Safety), Andrew McKinlay (Cabinet Member Sport and Culture), John Webster (Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development), Roger Whyborn (Cabinet Member Sustainability) and Colin Hay (Cabinet Member Corporate Services)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Sudbury declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 (Community Pride Scheme 2011 – approval of bids) as a member of the Sue Ryder Support Group.

Councillor Jordan declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 (Community Pride Scheme 2011 – approval of bids) as a member of a YMCA group.

Councillor Webster declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 (Community Pride Scheme 2011 – approval of bids) as a member of the Jenner Gardens group.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on the 21 June 2011 had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 21 June 2011 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

The following response was given to the public question received.

1.	Question from Mary Nelson to the Cabinet Member Sustainability/Leader
	Does the Cabinet Leader, or Cabinet Member for Sustainability, not agree that long term and continual degradation of the gardens through Festival use should merit an entry on the Risk Assessment chart, as being a recognised risk to the <u>reputation of Cheltenham</u> , which would be observed by visitors to the town, who come throughout the year, and not

	just for the Festivals, especially when the management remedy given for garden damage in the Risk Assessment states that “hard surfacing” is then to be the ‘solution’ ?
	<p>Response from the Cabinet Member Sustainability – Councillor Roger Whyborn</p> <p>I am happy for reputational risk to be included in the risk table for the project. The reference to hard standing in the risk assessment is to specific limited areas associated with loading and unloading of lorries and not to general hard standing for tents, which has not been pursued due to lack of popular support.</p>

5. STRATEGY FOR THE USE OF IMPERIAL AND MONTPELLIER GARDENS

The Cabinet Member Sustainability introduced the report as circulated with the agenda, which presented to Cabinet the results of the consultation process for the design proposals for Imperial Gardens.

Proposals for the redesign had been subject to a great deal of debate through various channels. The public consultation resulted in submissions from individuals, stakeholders and groups and the proposals had been considered by two overview and scrutiny committees (Economy & Business Improvement and Environment), as well as at Council. Whilst a small number of alternatives were proposed, criticism was constructive and predominantly public reaction had been favourable with a number of commendations for the design, for which he paid tribute to Officers. Having taken heed of reservations about maintenance, he gave assurances that land use agreements for all users would clearly define user responsibilities in relation to reinstatement. Festivals were restricted to a maximum number of days tentage and charges would apply where this elapsed. It had become clear that it would not be possible to meet the full aspirations for infrastructure in Montpellier Gardens, specifically regards the electricity. He was minded that the Friends of Imperial Square and Gardens take forward the reinstatement of railings to Imperial Gardens, but this was subject to a number of caveats (planning permission, etc).

The Leader confirmed that the decision was a key decision.

The Cabinet Member Built Environment endorsed the Cabinet Member Sustainability’s commendation of the designs produced by Officers and praised all stakeholders (The Civic Society, Cheltenham in Bloom, etc) and members of the public who contributed to the consultation. The design aimed to accommodate the requirements of Cheltenham Festivals, whilst mitigating any resulting damage to the gardens and he envisaged a reduction in damage as a direct result of the proposals. At the same time as retaining Cheltenham Festivals in the town centre it was also tremendously important to preserve the gardens, the colourful setting of Imperial Gardens and the cherished open space of Montpellier Gardens.

The Leader concurred that the current arrangements were not sustainable. He congratulated the Cabinet Member Sustainability and all others involved, in achieving a positive conclusion – yet the work was still to be done.

RESOLVED that:

1. **Authority be delegated to the Director Operations in consultation with the Cabinet Member, Sustainability and the Council Leader, to go forward with a tendering process to undertake the first phase of the proposed works in Imperial Gardens**
2. **Tentage designs for Montpellier gardens be restricted to approximately 4700M2, (excluding walkways and gazebos) and authority be delegated to the Director Operations in consultation with the Cabinet Member, Sustainability to agree the exact figure.**
3. **At the same time, authority be delegated to the Director (Operations) in consultation with the Cabinet Member, Sustainability and the Council Leader to go forward with a tendering process for infrastructure in Montpellier Gardens.**
4. **Authority be delegated to the Director Operations in consultation with the Cabinet Member, Sustainability and the Council Leader, to submit the relevant sections of the scheme for planning approval and listed building consent.**
5. **The final decision to go ahead with works in Imperial Gardens and Montpellier Gardens are to be referred back to Cabinet for decision on the 18th October 2011 in time for completion of works over the winter 2011/2.**

6. GO PROGRAMME - SHARED SERVICE DELIVERY

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services introduced the report as circulated with the agenda, which was the culmination of a great deal of work and would see the Section 151 Officer delegated authority, in consultation with the relevant Executive Director and Cabinet Member Corporate Services to enter the final agreement.

The GO Programme, shared service delivery for Finance, Procurement, Human Resources and Payroll services would bring together Cheltenham Borough Council, Cotswold District Council, Forest of Dean District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Cheltenham Borough Homes, to build resilience. This approach was unique and had attracted interest from across the country, others would not be precluded from joining in the future and these would not necessarily need to be based in or around Gloucestershire borders.

The GO programme had been a huge undertaking for all involved but with a shared purpose of providing an excellent service with lesser costs, Officers had come together to achieve the end goal.

Cotswold District Council and the Forest of Dean District Council had expressed an interest in being the lead authority (employing council) for the partnership and after consideration, CDC was successful.

The Economy & Business Improvement overview and scrutiny committee were kept informed of changes throughout the process and raised no concerns at their recent meeting when endorsing the recommendations for approval by Cabinet. Members, across all parties, had recognised the significant budget savings the delivery arrangements of the GO programme would deliver.

The Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development supported the report and potential to form an independent company in the future. The GO programme would see 33 employees transferred from Cheltenham Borough Council to Cotswold District Council providing added resilience to CBC. He welcomed the increased savings that had arisen (£500k) and envisaged that future success would attract interest from other authorities.

The Leader highlighted that whilst this innovative and interesting programme may not be the subject of mass public interest, it was in fact assisting the Council in funding the work to Imperial and Montpellier Gardens and would generate further savings in the future.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The revised GO Shared Services business case and appendices which reflect the provision of advisory and transactional services that will be delivered from GO Shared Services and which are expected to deliver an annual saving of £285k to Cheltenham Borough Council from 1 April 2013 be approved.**
- 2. Its Finance, Procurement, HR and Payroll services (including the transfer of staff under TUPE) as set out in this report be delegated to Cotswold District Council (CDC in accordance with s101 Local Government Act 1972 and s19 and s20 Local Government Act 2000.**
- 3. Authority be delegated to the s151 Officer in consultation with the relevant Executive Director and Cabinet Member Corporate Services to enter into the following agreements on terms approved by the Borough Solicitor, subject to all GO partner councils entering into similar relevant agreements at the same juncture:**
 - a. Revised GO Programme collaboration agreement**
 - b. Agreement under s101 Local Government Act 1972 and s19 and s20 Local Government Act 2000 with Cotswold District Council (CDC) in respect of Finance, Procurement, HR and Payroll services as set out in this report.**
- 4. The Cabinet Member Corporate Services be nominated as the elected member representative to the GO Shared Services Joint Monitoring and Liaison Group (JMLG.)**
- 5. Authority be delegated to the s151 Officer in consultation with the relevant Executive Director and Cabinet Member Corporate Services to enter into an agreement with Cotswold District Council (CDC) and Cheltenham Borough Homes Limited (CBH Ltd) under the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 for the provision of transactional services to CBH Ltd on terms approved by the Borough Solicitor.**

7. BUILT ENVIRONMENT COMMISSIONING - UPDATE ON ANALYSIS AND SCOPE

The Cabinet Member Built Environment introduced the report as circulated with the agenda, which was not unduly detailed as there were no specific proposals given the initial stage of the review.

The review presented an opportunity to ask the question “what do we want our built environment services to achieve” and to date the review had involved consideration of current service delivery and its effectiveness. Other delivery models were available to the council, outsourcing was not popular amongst councillors, but there were examples elsewhere in the country where services had been outsourced. There were also examples of where decision making had been devolved to other public sector bodies such as parish councils, though there was an issue locally that not all areas within Cheltenham were parished and shared-services with other authorities was another option.

A benchmarking exercise against similar authorities elsewhere was being undertaken to establish the cost effectiveness of the service. Consideration of finances was however, hindered by the Government proposal that councils may be able to set their own planning fees to more closely reflect the costs of running the service. The legislation and finer detail was yet to be finalised and the hope was that this would be announced as soon as possible in order that it could be considered as part of the review.

There had been a significant amount of engagement so far but the next steps included engaging local partners and stakeholders, etc, which would include workshops funded through English Heritage funding. This would allow for review of the direction of travel, priorities for further work and outcomes.

The Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development summarised the scope of the review and suggested that the inclusion of housing enforcement would facilitate synergy. The Leader agreed.

RESOLVED that;

- 1. There be engagement with local partners and stakeholders, including the voluntary and community sector, parish councils, Local Strategic Partnership, Business partnership, Civic Society, Architects Panel, developers and users of the services within scope to bring them up to date with the review so far on the direction of travel, priorities for further work and emerging outcomes.**
- 2. There be engagement with other providers to understand more fully the opportunities for different delivery models and where the market may need to be developed in the longer term.**
- 3. Cabinet receive a further report on 26 September 2011 setting out the findings from the above and a draft action plan.**

8. LEISURE AND CULTURE COMMISSIONING STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member Sport and Culture introduced the report as circulated with the agenda. The report, not dissimilar to the Built Environment report, though the review of Leisure and Culture was somewhat more advanced, was succinct despite a great deal of background work.

He summarised what the review encompassed and explained that the Playhouse Theatre, Everyman Theatre and Gardens Gallery did not fall within the scope of the review.

Cheltenham Borough Council faced significant financial constraints which forced the need to fundamentally review and assess priorities. Leisure and culture was important to Cheltenham and the council committed considerable resources to the service, but leisure services were non-statutory and therefore a priority for review. Members were clear that protecting front line services was a priority and in order to safeguard the leisure services they had to be efficient.

To date the review had focussed upon the current service provision and had concluded that there was scope to deliver services more efficiently. An immediate benefit of this process was that a number of recommendations within the report equated to a saving of £160k next year and ultimately this sum would be significantly greater in the long term. Having concentrated on considering the current delivery arrangements, it was now time to engage more widely with local partners and key stakeholders and equally important to take account of other strategic plans.

The Art Gallery and Museum would take a higher priority than it ordinarily would have over other areas of the service (Town Hall, etc) in order to take advantage of the opportunity that its closure offered. This would allow implementation of any changes upon its reopening in 2013.

The report had been endorsed by members of the cross party Cabinet Member working group and been considered by the Social and Community overview and scrutiny committee with no resulting input to the report.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services referred to recommendations 12 and 13. He was satisfied that members were engaged and taking a fresh look at service delivery, the process was working and some innovations were already paying dividends.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. Support the proposal that the review team engages with local partners and stakeholders, including the voluntary and community sector, Local Strategic Partnership and Health and Well-Being Partnership to; (a) bring them up to date with the review, (b) outline the priorities for further work and (c) consult on the currently proposed outcomes for leisure and culture reporting back to Cabinet on the above by October 2011.**
- 2. Acknowledge that in the development of a joint strategic cultural plan for Cheltenham there should be alignment between the outcomes commissioned through this review and the conclusions of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Festivals Working Group.**
- 3. Approve the commencement of an option appraisal of the alternative delivery arrangements for the Art Gallery and Museum (AG&M), as compared to the status quo, and by April 2012, a business case be presented recommending the most appropriate option that:**
 - Delivers the outcomes and measures of success required by the Heritage Lottery Fund;**
 - Meets the requirements of the HLF special conditions;**

- Creates an opportunity to secure wider economic and creative growth as well as the regeneration potential that a cultural quarter presents for the town; and
 - Reduces the ongoing AG&M operational subsidy (based on an appropriate business case).
4. Endorse the approach that as part of the above AG&M appraisal process the review team engages with all relevant partners and stakeholders to ensure that options and outcomes are fully identified, assessed and consulted upon.
 5. Approve, subject to agreement through the budget and Bridging the Gap processes, proposals to generate additional Town Hall revenue of £10K (2012-13).
 6. Approve proposals for the review team to commence testing the outcomes for the Town Hall and Pittville Pump Room with other commercially operated public facilities, recognising the need to balance commercial aspects with its community role and report back to Cabinet by April 2012.
 7. Depending on the outcome of (6) above, investigate the potential to develop a strategy for capital investment in the venues and in particular the commercial feasibility of improving conference facilities at the Town Hall.
 8. Approve, subject to agreement through the budget and Bridging the Gap processes, savings arising from Leisure@ of £140K (2012-13) and a further £64K (2013-14).
 9. Endorse the approach that by December 2011, service providers will have explored how, within a difficult financial framework, Leisure@ and Sport, Play and Healthy Lifestyles can deliver outcomes and provide more mutual support for each other.
 10. Endorse the approach that the review team commences discussions with the Local Strategic Partnership and the NHS with a view to being best placed to act as a provider of choice for health commissioners locally for physiotherapy and activity based patient treatment pathways
 11. Endorse the proposal that an assessment of other alternative delivery arrangements for Leisure@ and Sport, Play and Healthy Lifestyles is an ambition for the future with the AG&M work taking a priority.
 12. Endorse the proposal that Leisure@ service providers continue to pursue additional savings/income opportunities so that operational subsidy will be reduced to a minimum over the medium term.
 13. Endorse the proposal that the review team, together with the Cabinet Member Working Group, starts the process of building knowledge and understanding of alternative delivery arrangements for leisure outcomes through visits and discussions with other providers and commissioners, with the objective to defining next steps by May 2012.

9. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Leader introduced the report which summarised how the council had performed last year in regard to the published milestones, performance indicators and outcomes set out in the 2010-2015 corporate strategy. The results set out represented a good performance against the milestones and the now reduced number of indicators. He highlighted the fact that it was an exception report and therefore by its nature focussed on any targets which had been missed. The report had been considered by the Economy and Business Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee and they had welcomed the improved format of the report and the level of performance.

Commenting on the targets that had been missed, he advised that waste was a key priority for the council and he hoped that the roll-out of the new waste systems would improve performance going forward. Sickness absence was an issue and new processes had been introduced to improve performance.

RESOLVED that the Performance Review for 2010/11 be approved.

10. COMMUNITY PRIDE SCHEME 2011 - APPROVAL OF BIDS

The Leader introduced the report. As part of the 2011-12 budget, the council agreed to set aside £30,000 for the community pride scheme with the aspiration that the funding be used to enable "big society" initiatives such as promoting volunteering or voluntary initiatives.

A panel comprising the Leader of the Council, Cllr. Anne Regan, Angela Gilbert from Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action, Andrew Sherbourne Principal Accounting Technician and Richard Gibson, Policy and Partnerships Manager met on Wednesday 6th July to evaluate the 35 applications and make recommendations to Cabinet. He thanked the panel for their work.

As the scheme had been oversubscribed, the panel had to apply the criteria quite strictly to what were all worthy bids. Referring to the results set out in appendix 1, he indicated that the bid from Cheltenham Connect had been rejected by the panel. Although the council was supportive of the work of the organisation, the bid did not meet the criteria because of a lack of clarity over the area to be targeted at this time.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services referred to the bid from Oakley Residents Association for improvements to the road blocks in Humber and Mersey Roads. The road blocks had been put in to address the boy racer problem and although successful in that aim, they unsightly for local people and gave the impression that it was a problem neighbourhood. With the introduction of the environmental improvements scheme from the New Homes Bonus, it may be more appropriate for the residents to apply to this scheme for funding. This would then free up funding for Cheltenham Connect. Cheltenham Connect had attended a recent meeting of the neighbourhood partnership and had generated a lot of interest in their work and excitement that it could potentially be replicated in the Oakley ward.

The Leader proposed that Cabinet should delegate authority to officers in consultation with himself to determine the allocation of any underspends from the allocated funds.

Other Cabinet members welcomed the funding which would be an asset to local communities and hoped that the funding could continue in future years. Although a relatively small amount of money, it funded a range of schemes, promoted diversity and enabled these local initiatives to lever in funding from other sources.

RESOLVED that

- 1. The list of projects to be funded from community pride funds as set out in appendix 1 be approved.**
- 2. Authority be delegated to the Policy and Partnerships Manager in consultation with the Leader to determine the allocation of any under spends from the allocated funds.**

11. COMMISSIONING SUPPORT FOR VCS PROVIDERS OF YOUTH ACTIVITIES

The Cabinet Member Housing and Safety introduced the report. Gloucestershire County Council had agreed to invest £50k in each of the six Gloucestershire districts in 2011-12 in positive activities for young people, to be delivered by voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations. She explained that the report was seeking Cabinet approval for a commissioning brief that will set out how the funding will be allocated in Cheltenham. The report also provided an update on the progress of the commissioning exercise undertaken to allocate the one-off sum of £50k from Cheltenham Borough Council to support the sustainable development of additional capacity and expertise within VCS providers of community-based youth work.

The Cabinet Member updated members on the outcomes of the meeting held on the 5th July. She had joined elected members from the Social and Community O&S committee subgroup and the Chair of the Cheltenham Children and Young Peoples Partnership to hold a question and answer session with the three organisations submitting bids. They had concluded that at this stage the County Community Projects (CCP) was the strongest bid which would be in the best position to support the wide range of abilities across the current providers. CCP was also proposing to provide their own funding beyond year one to sustain a part-time worker post.

The Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development said that the success of the funding would be measured by how many volunteers received effective training and the role of a steering group to correctly allocate the funding would be critical. Although he acknowledged the budget crisis faced by both this council and the County Council, he stressed that this initiative only partially filled a gap resulting from the decision by the County Council to cut large parts of the youth services provision.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services supported the view that this initiative was mitigation for the loss of some really valuable youth services and it was unfortunate that these were cut immediately without looking to see how things could have been done differently. Youth Services was a priority issue for the North Gloucestershire police whose policy was to engage and deter young people.

The Leader advised that Cheltenham was the only district in Gloucestershire to match the funding from the County Council and this was indicative of the importance that the council gave to youth services.

RESOLVED that;

- 1. The commissioning brief to allocate the county council's funding as set out in appendix 2 be approved.**
- 2. The borough council's sum of £50k (subject to contract) be allocated to County Community Projects.**
- 3. Authority be delegated to the Director of Commissioning to enter into any necessary documentation in consultation with the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer.**

12. NEW HOMES BONUS - BIDDING CRITERIA FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND

The Leader introduced the report which provided details of the proposals for administering 'New Homes Bonus' funding which was recently allocated by Council to support environmental improvements and promote Cheltenham. It was his personal view that investment in events was critical to Cheltenham as a festivals town and this initiative would provide pump priming for these events. Referring to the application guidance, he indicated that this had been borrowed from another authority. In his view there should be flexibility on the maximum grant of £20K and the criteria to increase the number of new residents was not relevant to Cheltenham and should be deleted.

The Cabinet Member Built Environment welcomed the environmental improvements fund which was needed to maintain the local environment. He advised that it would cover green improvements as well as built environment work and therefore he would be working closely with the Cabinet Member Sustainability when considering the bids.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. Approval for bidding and governance arrangements in relation to the two identified funds set up by Council, which are being resourced using the New Homes Bonus allocation for 2011-12 be delegated as follows:-**
- 2. The Environmental Improvements fund to be subject to a bidding process by internal Council departments only, with bids prioritised by a member panel drawn from the Cabinet and comprising the Council Leader and Cabinet Members for Built Environment and Sustainability;**
- 3. Environment Overview and Scrutiny committee to be requested to look at the prioritised bids for the Environmental Improvements fund and provide feedback to Cabinet prior to allocations being agreed;**
- 4. In respect of the Promoting Cheltenham fund, a panel, including external business and cross-party member representation and the appropriate Cabinet portfolio holders for Economic Development and Culture and Finance, will be established to sign off the bidding**

criteria (see draft at Appendix B) and advise Cabinet on allocations and appropriate performance monitoring arrangements.

13. PARKING SYSTEMS BUSINESS CASE

The Cabinet Member Built Environment introduced the report which set out the business case relating to the proposed replacement and upgrading of parking systems at the Regent Arcade multi-storey car park. He explained that a procurement exercise had already commenced in view of the tight timescales but this was subject to a Cabinet decision at this meeting.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The business case attached at Appendix A (supported by financial details contained in exempt Appendix B) be approved**
- 2. Authority be delegated to the Director Built Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Built Environment and Chief Finance Officer, to procure the new parking system.**

14. BATH TERRACE TOILETS

The Cabinet Member Built Environment introduced the report which set out a proposal for leasing the Bath Road Car Park toilets to the Bath Road Traders Association (BRTA) for three years. This would allow the BRTA to manage the cleaning, opening and closing of the toilets thereby keeping them open following the Council's previous decision to close them. He said this was a very positive move and got the local community involved in managing their own environment. It was now necessary to formalise the agreement and the matter had come to Cabinet for a decision because the lease was being offered at less than best consideration, in that it was proposed that a rent should not be charged. The Cabinet Member Sustainability welcomed the proposal and thought it was a good initiative to be encouraged. It was not sustainable for councils to do everything in the future and it may be that others can provide some services better than the council.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The building shown edged red on the attached plan be let to the Bath Road Traders Association**
- 2. Authority be delegated to the Head of Property and Asset Management in consultation with the Head of Legal Services, to agree the terms of the lease and conclude the letting**

15. STANTON ROOMS CHARLTON KINGS TOILETS

The Cabinet Member Built Environment introduced the report which set out a proposal for leasing the Stanton Rooms and Church Piece public toilets to Charlton Kings Parish Council (CKPC). This would allow CKPC to take over the provision of public toilet facilities and to allow them to operate the Stanton Rooms as a community facility. He praised the CKPC for the positive way they had engaged with the council on this matter.

RESOLVED that:

1. **The buildings shown edged red on the attached plan be let to Charlton Kings Parish Council**
2. **Authority be delegated to the Head of Property and Asset Management in consultation with the Head of Legal Services, to agree the terms of the lease, to undertake the proposed works, providing the Head of Property considers the costs to be reasonable, and subsequently conclude the letting.**

16. MONTPELLIER LODGE - PROPOSED DISPOSAL

The Cabinet Member Built Environment introduced the report regarding the proposed disposal of the freehold interest on Montpellier Lodge in Montpellier Gardens. Prior to any decision being made on the bids received, consideration must first be given by Cabinet to all written objections to the proposed disposal of the premises. This is due to the property being situated on land classed as public open space. The objections received were set out in the report.

He explained that the Asset Management Working Group had given the matter careful consideration. The best bid was for a bistro type restaurant. There would be a capital receipt from the sale as well as savings on future maintenance costs. Although it was sad to be losing the building, he considered it was far better to find a potential owner with an intended usage which would give the building a new lease of life.

Referring to the objections received, these had been looked at carefully. The consultation had been primarily concerned with the loss of public open space and therefore some of the objections raised had not been relevant. He understood why some people were keen to retain the building in the public sector but in his view this proposal would give the building a better future rather than lying empty.

The Leader added that although the building was technically part of the park, it had always been a park keeper's cottage.

RESOLVED that after considering all the relevant objections received:

- 1 **The freehold of Montpellier Lodge should be disposed to the preferred purchaser as identified in Appendix 2, (Exempt information not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3, part (1), schedule (12A) Local Government Act 1972), subject to that purchaser obtaining all necessary planning and licensing consents.**
- 2 **Authority be delegated to the Head of Property and Asset Management in consultation with the Head of Legal Services, to agree the terms of the disposal to the preferred purchaser and conclude the sale.**
- 3 **In the event of a sale not proceeding to the preferred purchaser, authority be delegated to the Head of Property and Asset Management in consultation with the head of Legal Services to negotiate with the under bidders and conclude a sale.**
- 4 **To repay to the Heritage Lottery Fund the grant funding attributable to monies spent on the subject premises in 2004, if requested to do so by the Trustees of the Fund**

17. ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services introduced the report which set out the options for the Municipal Offices. The starting point would be to assess the needs of the workforce acknowledging the need for flexibility and the ability to be in a position to make use of modern ICT facilities. The next step would be to look at the options available for satisfying these needs. Options for the Municipal Offices would also be looked at. The council would not want to make major investment in the current building if there was the potential of moving out in the future and hence the need for a time frame for the review to be established. He acknowledged the importance of the council offices being in a town centre location, where it was easy for local people to engage with the council, and he would not want to see this facility lost. The option of purpose-built offices had already been ruled out. He explained that he would position the exempt appendix as an outlines options paper and he was seeking Cabinet approval for exploring the options in more detail. In order to make these points clear he proposed a number of amendments to the recommendations which were circulated.

It was noted that the covering report should refer to Appendix 2 – the exempt appendix rather than Appendix 1 which was the risk assessment. Appendix 2 was exempt because of the financial information it contained and the comments on other buildings in the town.

The Cabinet Member Sustainability felt the 12 to 18 months timescale was appropriate and in the meantime the council should be looking at exploring the options for freeing up some of the unused space either vertically or horizontally. He felt it was right that the option of a purpose-built office had been ruled out at this stage as there was already a huge amount of empty office space in the town which could be adapted for council use.

The Cabinet Member Sport and Culture welcomed the revised recommendation which noted that the details in the exempt appendix were purely indicative. In his view the appendix was flawed and should not have been presented with the report. Any accommodation strategy must start from an assessment of the current position and a review of how the existing offices could be made fit for purpose. It was important that there were no preconceived ideas at this stage.

The Cabinet Member Housing and Safety had similar reservations about the exempt appendix and felt it was important to be impartial at this stage. She reminded members that Civic Pride had set out to improve the space behind the building and their plans may be restricted if the council remains in the offices. Therefore this should be a key consideration. She also suggested that the public would expect capital savings as well as ongoing maintenance savings if the council was to dispose of the building and move into a cheaper alternative. She felt a clear vision was needed for the alternative uses of the building and she questioned whether the basement and ground floor of the offices would lend themselves to a boutique hotel/retail usage.

The Cabinet Member Built Environment suggested that the public had viewed the suggestion of purpose-built offices in North Place as a vanity project. The suggested review of the accommodation strategy was a necessity particularly in view of the unused parts of the current offices. There were links to the town

centre regeneration but they were not key drivers as the review should be driven by the accommodation needs of the council.

The Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development was keen to stress that the exempt appendix presented was not an accommodation strategy but purely a preliminary options report giving additional information. He wished to make it clear that in supporting the recommendations, the Cabinet was not supporting any conclusions in the exempt appendix.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services could not accept that the exempt appendix was flawed and any figures could be qualified but were high-level at this stage. Any capital savings could only be considered once more details were known and alternative uses of the building should be driven by the market.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The Head of Property and Asset Management be provided with a remit:**
 - a. to engage in dialogue with owners or agents of suitable town centre office buildings**
 - b. to explore in more detail the feasibility of relocating to a suitable town centre alternative.**
 - c. To consider the option of reducing the space taken up by Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) in the Municipal Offices by exploring vertical separation of the Municipal Offices.**
 - d. To explore the possibility of CBC building on the back of the current Municipal Offices**
- 2. It be noted that all the details in the exempt appendix are purely indicative so can give no preferred option at this stage**
- 3. Any future CBC offices will remain in the town centre**
- 4. Any move out of the current offices will only happen if it saves money**
- 5. CBC will not move out to its own purpose-built office**
- 6. A report be brought back to Cabinet in 12 – 18 months upon the conclusion of the review.**

18. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

None

19. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXEMPT BUSINESS

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 100A(4) Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business as it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be

transacted or the nature of the proceedings, if members of the public are present there will be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 and 7A, Part 1, Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, namely:

Paragraph 3; Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

20. REGENT ARCADE LEASE RE-GEAR

The Cabinet Member Built Environment introduced the report which set out proposals for restructuring and simplifying the existing leasehold interests and rental provisions on the arcade.

The recommendations were agreed.

21. A WAIVER REPORT ON THE APPOINTMENT OF A PROJECT MANAGER FOR THE AG&M DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

This item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

Councillor Steve Jordan
Chairman