

Cabinet

Tuesday, 18th December, 2018
6.00 - 6.35 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)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

None.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 28 November 2018 were approved and signed as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

There were none.

5. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICES WITHIN THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

The Cabinet Member Housing introduced the report which outlined the culmination of a detailed review of CBC's grounds maintenance service on Housing Revenue Account land, provided by UBICO and managed by Cheltenham Borough Homes. The review was prompted by the need to provide a more accurate and equitable charging system for grounds maintenance coupled with a desire to address outstanding quality issues in the service provided by UBICO. The outcomes had been welcomed by tenants and officers. He made reference to the benchmarking data with regard to the quality of service standards at Appendix 2 and the anomalies which would be addressed as outlined in paragraph 3 of the report. He highlighted that those households facing an increase in their service charges would have them increased incrementally over a 3 year period to better enable them to adapt to the changes.

All changes had been discussed with tenants and would bring about a better quality of service.

RESOLVED THAT

1. **CBC enter into the deed of variation with UBICO for the delivery of these changes to the grounds maintenance services in the contract dated April 1st 2012 for grounds maintenance and other services (the contract identifies CBH as the managing agents). The changes to commence on April 1st 2019.**
2. **It be noted that any anomalies in current service provision (as detailed in Section 3 of this report) will be rectified, subject, where appropriate, to any financial approvals being first obtained from CBC.**
3. **Authority be delegated to the Managing Director Place & Growth, in consultation with the Borough Solicitor, to finalise the Deed of Variation to implement the objectives set out in this report. Also, authority be delegated to the Managing Director Place & Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment and the Cabinet Member Housing to make any subsequent changes to the Grounds Maintenance Services to be provided by UBICO provided that any such changes have no significant financial impact on either the General Fund or the HRA.**

6. COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNT FOR CARE LEAVERS

The Cabinet Member Finance introduced the report and explained that care leavers were considered to be a particularly vulnerable group for council tax debt. Care leavers were faced with a new set of potentially overwhelming responsibilities without family support and the wider support network that most other young people could rely on. She reported that all 6 district councils together with the County Council were working to provide a common council tax discount scheme. The latest information from the County Council suggested there were 14 Care Leavers living independently in the Cheltenham area who may be eligible for a discount. It was proposed that a 100 % discount would apply to 18-21 year olds living independently and 50% where they were living with others. The full eligibility criteria arrangements for administering the scheme were detailed in appendix 2.

Members supported the proposals. It was important that those young people believed that they were valued and recognised and the discount would provide some relief from the financial pressures they faced. Members welcomed the fact that there was unanimity of thinking across the county, initiated by CBC and this work could spread to other elements of children's services in the future.

RESOLVED THAT

1. **Care Leavers be determined as a class for the purpose of Section 13A(1)(c) of The Local Government Finance Act 1992**
2. **The Council Tax Discount Scheme for Care leavers in appendix 2 be approved, to be effective from 1st April 2019**

- 3. Decisions relating to the application of these reliefs be delegated to the Head of Revenues and Benefits and officers in the council tax team. In the case of a dispute an internal reconsideration is to be made by the Executive Director Finance and Assets.**

7. PROCUREMENT OF VEHICLES FOR THE DELIVERY OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES IN CHELTENHAM

The Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment introduced the report and explained that the redesigned recycling service launched in October 2017 enabled residents to recycle more materials at kerbside.

Whilst an increase in recycling was forecast as a result, the scale of the increase was not foreseen. This represented a success for the service, however additional resource was required and in early 2018 a spare recycling vehicle was hired from Cotswold District Council to provide additional recycling capacity to ensure all collections could be completed on the scheduled collection day.

The recycling service was currently operating without a spare vehicle which was causing difficulties in completing rounds particularly when more than one vehicle was off the road at any one time. To date a refuse vehicle had been used to collect recycling in the absence of a spare recycling vehicle, resulting in the need to collect mixed recycling materials in the vehicle which was then sorted into separate recycling materials when tipped. This method had caused negative public feedback.

To address the issue it was proposed that investments should be made from within existing capital budgets to purchase additional Romaquip recycling vehicles, the Romaquip vehicle on hire from Cotswold District Council and a new Romaquip recycling vehicle. This would maintain the existing service and provide operational resilience, resulting in a total fleet size of 13 vehicles. The Cabinet Member added that current household recycling performance was 53 % and this could develop further. He reported that in due course there would be consultation on a range of issues connected with environmental services including waste and recycling. He also added that it may be possible to operate weekly recycling services using the existing fleet, subject to a supporting business case.

Finally, the Cabinet Member wished to put on record his thanks to officers involved in bringing this proposal forward.

RESOLVED THAT

Cabinet approve the purchase of 2 Romaquip recycling vehicles funded from within existing capital budgets to maintain the existing service and provide operational resilience, resulting in a total fleet size of 13 vehicles:

- (1) The Romaquip recycling vehicle (currently in use by Cheltenham Borough Council) on hire from Cotswold District Council for the sum of £138,644.02;**
- (2) One new Romaquip recycling vehicle for the sum of £139,178.79, as**

a spare vehicle to avoid the need for mixed recycling collections when a recycling vehicle from the current fleet is out of service for any reason.

8. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT REVENUE AND CAPITAL-REVISED BUDGET 2018/19 AND INTERIM BUDGET PROPOSALS 2019/20 FOR CONSULTATION

The Cabinet Member Finance introduced the report and explained that there had been significant changes in Government Housing Policy during the year, most notably the abolition of the HRA debt cap. This, together with the certainty on rent policy until 2025, would have a positive impact on HRA resources enabling the Council to increase investment in new build and stock improvements.

Rents would again be reduced by 1% in April 2019 being the final year of the four year policy that commenced in April 2016 and would finish in March 2020. The Government had previously confirmed that rent policy would then revert back to the previous guidelines of allowing annual increases of up to CPI + 1% per annum for the following 5 years before a further review.

The Cabinet Member reported that the 30 year HRA Business Plan had been updated to reflect:-

- Anticipated revenue outturn for 2018/19.
- The current development programme for the period from April 2019 to March 2022 which would deliver 105 new build units at a total cost of £14.83m.
- Contingency budgets for market acquisitions and the purchase of new affordable units on sites where Section 106 planning agreements were in place.
- A refreshed assessment of the 30 year “need to spend” on existing stock for both capital and revenue expenditure. This included a new showers programme which had been identified as one of the most popular improvements requested during both the 2017 survey of tenants and residents and the voids review undertaken by the tenant services improvement panel

The Cabinet Member paid tribute to CBH’s balanced approach to this budget which meant it would still be able to maintain existing service levels, retain the decent homes standard, continue delivery of the major windows and doors replacement, complete the new build programme, and deliver the new showers programme.

She wished to put on record her thanks to CBH’s finance team for bringing forward this budget.

The Leader reiterated his thanks to CBH referring to the changing policy of rent increases and decreases which it had well managed. The abolition of the debt cap meant there would be more opportunities going forward.

RESOLVED THAT

1. The revised HRA forecast for 2018/19 be noted.
2. The interim HRA budget proposals for 2019/20 (shown at Appendix 2) be approved for consultation including a proposed rent decrease of 1% and changes to other rents and charges as detailed within the report.
3. The proposed HRA capital programme for 2019/20 as shown at Appendix 3 be approved.
4. Authority be delegated to the Executive Director Finance and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to determine and approve any additional material that may be needed to support the presentation of the interim budget proposals for consultation.
5. Consultation responses be sought by 31st January 2019.

9. GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL-INTERIM BUDGET PROPOSALS 2019/20 FOR CONSULTATION

The Cabinet Member Finance introduced the report and reminded Members that in February 2018 Members set a challenge to become an enterprising and commercially focused council working towards the objective of financial sustainability by the financial year 2021/22.

In response to the difficult national funding situation, the overriding financial strategy had been, and remained, to drive down the council's costs. The aim was to hold down council tax as far as possible, now and in the longer term, while also protecting frontline services from cuts which represented an immensely challenging task in the present climate.

The Cabinet Member explained that part of the drive towards financial sustainability included identifying new opportunities to generate income and investment in projects which provided good financial returns. The commercial strategy aligned closely with other key strategies including place-making, economic growth, digital transformation, workforce and skills development, investment and asset management. This had a combined message that Cheltenham Borough Council had entered a new era of business enterprise, growth and innovation. CBC wished to work with partners who shared our ambition and values and would continue to put the best interests of Cheltenham residents at the heart of everything undertaken.

The key mechanism for carrying out this strategy was the commercial strategy, which sought to bring service costs in line with available funding and sought additional forms of funding. The development of a new

crematoria, and the acquisition of 4 new commercial investment properties (Ellenborough House, Sainsbury's, Café Nero and 53-57 Rodney Road) had already resulted in over-achieving the new revenue income target. In addition, public realm investment across the town had attracted major new businesses such as John Lewis and Partners which has had a positive effect on both business rates income and vibrancy across the town.

The starting point for the 2019/20 budget has been a projected funding gap of £2.019m. Closing a gap of this size is a huge challenge for the council, but the challenge is being met by a proactive approach to identifying efficiencies and additional income. This work has already made significant progress towards closing the gap, having identified at this early stage potential efficiencies and additional income of £1.621k, leaving £398k to fund from reserves, assuming a 2.99% council tax increase is approved.

The Cabinet Member explained that the outcome of this budget had been based on a number of substantive consultations throughout the year and the public's views on the strategy for closing the financial gap created by cuts from central government was now sought.

The Cabinet Member gave thanks to the Executive Director Finance and Assets, Paul Jones, who had met with the Minister to lobby heavily for this authority on the significant difference the negative RSG and proposed changes to new homes bonus would have on Cheltenham. She was pleased to report that the provisional local government settlement proposed no changes to the new homes bonus next year and had provided some additional money for those councils in need. As a consequence, the council had an additional £190k to support the 2019/20 budget proposals.

Finally, she explained that the 2019/20 budget was the result of a great deal of activity and hard work throughout the year and she thanked all involved. She believed this budget would deliver for the residents of the town.

Members welcomed the proposals and paid tribute to the significant investment the council had made in the town which reflected the positive change in approach for the benefit of the town as a whole.

The Leader reminded Members that the budget would now go out for consultation and would be considered by Council in February.

RESOLVED THAT

- 1. The interim budget proposals be approved for consultation including a proposed council tax for the services provided by Cheltenham Borough Council of £209.08 for the year 2019/20 based on a band D property (an increase of 2.99%).**

2. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) projection, outlined in section 3 and Appendix 3 be noted.
3. The growth proposals, including one off initiatives at Appendix 4, be approved for consultation.
4. The proposed capital programme at Appendix 6, as outlined in Section 6 be approved.
5. Authority be delegated to the Executive Director Finance and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to determine and approve any additional material that may be needed to support the presentation of the interim budget proposals for public consultation which will include any changes arising from the provisional settlement.
6. Consultation responses be sought by 25th January 2019.

10. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles informed that there would be a “No Child Left Behind” summit in January 2019. She thanked those Members who had already indicated that they wished to be Children Champions.

On 3 January an all party group within Cheltenham would be meeting with representatives from the health trust to ensure facilities were maintained at Cheltenham General.

She reported that she had attended a recent OECD conference and Cheltenham had been recognised as an organisation investing in its residents in terms of housing. Cheltenham illustrated how local authorities could be entrepreneurial in their own right which generated better services for people. She wished to put on record her thanks to both housing and finance officers involved.

The Cabinet Member Development and Safety referred to the Car Parking Strategy implemented in March 2018. He informed that a review was underway regarding the charging regime for car parks to ensure it matched the objectives of the car parking strategy.

11. CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF CABINET

Cabinet Member	Decision	Link
Cabinet Member Housing	Affordable Housing Partnership Preferred Registered	https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1164

	Providers	
Leader	Appointment to Outside Bodies- Cllr Peter Jeffries- Hesters Way Partnership Mrs Helen Hooper- Pates Grammar School Foundation	https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1168
Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles	Cheltenham Film Festival	https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1167

Chairman