

Cabinet

Thursday, 14th May, 2020
6.00 - 7.15 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:	

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 the 3rd March were approved and signed as a correct record.

The Leader of the Council added some personal comments about the current crisis. He thanked everyone both nationally and locally who was helping the council get through this difficult time, and praised key workers, especially those in health and social care. He thanked everyone present and the wider council staff for their work, along with partner organisations, parishes, charities and volunteers.

4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

There were none.

5. COVID-19 RECOVERY STRATEGY

The Leader of the Council introduced the report, and emphasised the importance of a local 'new deal' for Cheltenham to help create a clear framework setting out how the council could ensure that Cheltenham is an even better place to live, work and visit after Covid-19. Local and national partners would be consulted on this plan for their views and commitment. He thanked Darren Knight, Executive Director People and Change, for his contribution to the report on this topic, and praised the collective and sustained effort of organisations and individuals across Cheltenham at this time. He stressed the need to capture and maintain the good things happening now, such as community support, community spirit and significant increases in walking and

cycling. Conversely, he noted that public transport had naturally suffered due to government advice on social distancing, but would continue to be extremely important in the future.

The Leader added that CBC intended to continue working on its major projects, including Golden Valley, Cyber Central and Phase 2 of the High Street upgrade. He highlighted the importance of the council's affordable homes program, working alongside CBH. CBC must continue to work closely with its county council and district council colleagues. He praised the Cheltenham Development Task Force, which has been successful in recent years partly due to its flexible public-private approach. The task force now needs to be reformatted and refocused to aid the recovery effort.

He acknowledged that the uncertainty surrounding finance was unavoidable. A total of £1.2m has been received from central government, but when compared to the approximate loss of a million pounds a month due to loss of income and associated costs, it was clear that this did not solve the problem.

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles added that discussions with colleagues in Europe indicated that Cheltenham was ahead of the game in terms of working proactively to ensure recovery. She added that the future of young people in the town was a key priority, and programs to support house building and youth employment would ensure that progress was maintained over time.

The Cabinet Member Finance stressed the need to work alongside central government to seize opportunities to rebuild and avoid a further period of austerity. She added that the strategy took into account the need for tailored responses to particular crises, such as the possibility of fast-tracking infrastructure projects to aid recovery and create jobs. The recovery environment could offer an opportunity to renew and reset services, and could lead to a reconsideration of how the council's investments were prioritised, in order to support innovation. It was worth being ambitious, but without the support of central government there would be hard choices to make.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services praised the strategy's consideration of the council's carbon neutral Cheltenham commitment, noting that it would be easy to treat it as a luxury when things were going well, rather than as a cornerstone of future development. He praised the use of smart-working capabilities to ensure the council remains effective and responsive.

The Cabinet Member Housing endorsed the strategy and noted how quickly the situation had changed enormously, but praised the proactive and positive steps towards recovery. The council's core priorities have not changed, but the environment in which they must approach them certainly has.

The Cabinet Member Development and Safety emphasised that the strategy is a living document, with the Cyber Central section in particular referring to work that is currently taking place. Covid-19 remained a serious threat, but it also offered an opportunity to restart Cheltenham's economy in a different way, with different mindsets.

The Leader of the Council thanked Members for their contributions, and stressed the importance of climate change being a theme throughout the strategy.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. The extraordinary collective and sustained effort of organisations, communities and individuals across Cheltenham to respond to Covid-19 be recognised;**
- 2. The Covid-19 Recovery Strategy in Appendix A be noted;**
- 3. Any changes to the draft strategy be recommended;**
- 4. It be recommended that a consultation is undertaken with key local and national partners on the Draft Recovery Plan, and that a final strategy is brought back to a future Cabinet Meeting for formal agreement.**

6. APPROVAL FOR AN EASEMENT AND DISPOSAL FOR AN ELECTRICITY CABLE TO BE CONTAINED UNDERGROUND IN IMPERIAL GARDENS

The Cabinet Member Finance reminded members that full planning permission was approved for the refurbishment of Quadrangle in July 2019, as part of the council's goal to improve and revitalise the town centre for the benefit of local people. She explained that the current cables serving the Quad were under the footpath leading to the gardens, and needed to be raised and relocated.

The Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment indicated his support for the report, and added that he had found it encouraging to see work continue in Imperial Gardens despite the difficult circumstances. The Leader of the Council added that this was an exciting and positive development.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. Authority be delegated to the Head of Property in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to dispose of the land required by Western Power upon such terms as he considers necessary or desirable to protect the Council's interests;**
- 2. The Borough Solicitor be authorised to conclude such documents reflecting the agreement reached by the Head of property as she considers appropriate.**

7. APPROVAL OF THE INTERIM EVENTS STRATEGY FOR CHELTENHAM

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles introduced the report, emphasising the 'interim' part of the strategy and acknowledging that it was likely to evolve over time. The key development at this point was a new process for booking events through the council.

The Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment added that he thought the report illustrated what a strong position the council would be in after this crisis, citing the high number of events Cheltenham hosts and the wide variety of venues in which to hold them.

The Cabinet Member Finance welcomed the report's clarity and her optimism that the number of events per year was likely to return to a high mark after this crisis.

The Cabinet Member Housing praised the positive economic effects of Cheltenham's events program, which had generated around £162m since 2018,

and the importance of events as a key part of Cheltenham's appeal to visitors and identity.

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles thanked Members for their contributions, and added that she hoped the report could act as a springboard for future success, and advised that dialogue continue with cultural and commercial partners.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. The Interim Events Strategy be endorsed, including the vision, principles and objectives of the Strategy;**
- 2. The Director of Planning be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Healthy Lifestyles, to deliver the implementation of a new event booking and management process;**
- 3. The Director of Planning be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to develop a business case for capital investment to aid the delivery of this events strategy in relation to events infrastructure;**
- 4. The Event Manager be authorised to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the land use planning strategy for events in Cheltenham, the findings of which will be brought back to Cabinet for consideration.**

8. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles drew members' attention to the briefing note 'Food Distribution & Community Resilience Report', which illustrated how the town had come together during this crisis. She acknowledged that there are gaps in terms of what could be provided, but stressed that the council would continue to build and reinforce a mutually supportive network to fill these. She expressed her gratitude to all those who have given their time and energy to support others during this pandemic. The council continued to work closely with its partners.

She added that although the council was unable to carry out its full planned VE day celebration, it worked with primary schools to encourage primary school children to speak to their grandparents about their experiences, which would be gathered and displayed online in the near future. She suggested that this kind of innovative thinking formed part of how the council could ensure a cultural renaissance in the town when things eventually returned to normal.

The Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment sought to explain the current situation with waste and recycling in particular. The council had worked closely with Ubico to ensure personal safety for workers, and had managed to maintain kerbside service almost entirely, thanks to strong decision-making by CBC officers, Ubico, and the hard work of crews themselves. The public had been very understanding about the need to keep workers safe while also keeping essential services resilient. In terms of parks and gardens, the relevant teams have worked hard to ensure that all parks were still open and well-maintained even in this crisis. The continuing maintenance of Cheltenham's parks was a deliberate strategy, seeking to support people doing their essential exercise.

He added that perhaps the most important part of his portfolio was the cemetery and crematorium, and it was vital that people were able to visit memorials and gravesides during this extremely difficult time. He acknowledged that difficult decisions had to be made regarding the size of gatherings allowed, and stressed that although he regretted how many friends and family members have been unable to attend funerals and memorial services, this decision was made with public safety and service resilience in mind.

The Cabinet Member Finance thanked staff members for their hard work, specifically citing the efforts of the revenues & benefits team. Cheltenham was the first town in the county, and one of the first in the country, to distribute funding for business grants. 230 businesses were supported at a cost of £3.9m before the government funding was even received. As of 13th May, of the £24m that the council has received, £20.2m has been paid out to some 1,615 qualifying businesses. This equated to 91% of the businesses initially identified as vulnerable. CBC acted proactively and was now leading the next phase of the discretionary grants scheme.

She praised the council's commercial strategy, with its diversity of investments paying off in a time of uncertainty and instability. CBC was also the first council to make a submission to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding the real financial impact of this crisis. She clarified that this submission was not a plea for a bailout, but rather a clear message about the council's ambitions, and a way to work together with central government to support local solutions. She added that despite the Covid-19 crisis, life goes on, and so does the work of the council. For example, the new industrial units at Enterprise Way are nearly ready, as are the refurbishment works at the Municipal Offices. She also reported that the council continued to remain in touch with its commercial and cultural partners, with more to come in the coming weeks.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services echoed the praise for council staff for their willingness to adapt to unusual circumstances. He particularly praised the redeployment of many staff members to the Gloucestershire Community Help Hub, which had reached out to around 900 residents and delivered over 700 food parcels to date.

The Cabinet Member Housing noted that the measure of a society was how it treats its poorest members, and expressed his pride at how officers had helped to protect and house homeless people in the town, putting themselves at risk to aid those more vulnerable. He thanked Cheltenham Borough Homes for their willingness to go virtual in order to maintain their supporting role.

The Cabinet Member Development and Safety outlined some of the ways in which the council had responded to Covid-19 under his portfolio, such as making car parks safe for key workers, and the way that the Planning and Licensing departments have worked to maintain a high level of service. The situation regarding Cyber Central and Golden Valley continued to develop, and remained of considerable importance. He emphasised that Cheltenham has not been paralysed, and work continued in order to deliver for residents.

The Leader of the Council added his praise for the programs supporting vulnerable local people, which included the resilience fund allocation of

£100,000, which was shared equally between the borough council and county council. He emphasised the importance of regular county-wide briefings and work between councils, and reiterated the need to ‘capture’ and maintain the positive consequences of the crisis, as well as the lessons that can be taken forward. He also stressed that much of the council’s role had been to interpret what the government was saying, and how best to apply that locally.

He noted that the Local Plan and the West Cheltenham Supplementary Planning Document were due to be considered at an Extraordinary Council meeting on the 22nd April. These items remained of significant importance, and were now scheduled to be discussed by Council in June instead.

9. CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS SINCE LAST MEETING

Decision	Cabinet Member	Date	Link
To approve the joining of Stroud District Council's legal services with One Legal; to note the delegation of Stroud District Council's legal service functions and the transfer of staff to Tewkesbury Borough Council as host authority	Rowena Hay (Finance)	12 th March 2020	https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1342
To authorise the use of approximately 6 Cheltenham Borough Council properties to assist the council in rehousing in the region of 24 refugees during 2020/21.	Peter Jeffries (Housing)	13 th March 2020	https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1341
Land Adjoining 456 High Street	Rowena Hay (Finance)	1 st April 2020 (effective from 10 th April 2020)	https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1348

Approval of the Publica Group Ltd Business Plan 2020-22	Steve Jordan (Leader)	7 th April 2020	https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1351
Ubico Shareholder Decision 2020/21 Business Plan	Steve Jordan (Leader)	12 th April 2020	https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1356
Commercial Gas Contract	Rowena Hay (Finance)	29 th April 2020	https://democracy.cheltenham.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1354

Chairman