

Cabinet

Tuesday, 22nd December, 2020
4.00 - 5.15 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Rowena Hay (Leader of the Council), Victoria Atherstone (Cabinet Member Economy and Development), Flo Clucas (Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles), Peter Jeffries (Cabinet Member Housing), Steve Jordan (Cabinet Member Finance and Assets), Andrew McKinlay (Cabinet Member Cyber and Safety) and Max Wilkinson (Cabinet Member Climate and Communities)
Also in attendance:	Gareth Edmundson, Sarah Farooqi, Paul Jones, Judy Hibbert, Stafford Cruse, Abi Marshall, Becky Conway

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs. Coleman and Hegenbarth.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meetings held on 17th November and 1st December 2020 were approved and signed as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

There were none.

5. LOCAL RESTRICTIONS SUPPORT GRANT (OPEN) SCHEME

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets presented the report, noting that it would be implemented immediately once approved in order to get the funding out to those who needed it.

Following the second national lockdown beginning on 2nd December 2020, the government had provided a series of support measures. The first of these was the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) scheme, which allocated support to businesses that paid business rates and were required to close by law. This funding totalled £15,220 for the period 2nd December to 19th December, which was intended to be 80% of the total requirement and could be topped up at a later date.

The second scheme was the Local Restrictions Grant (Open) scheme, which was aimed at businesses that were able to open but were severely impacted by the tier restrictions. As an open scheme, the exact eligibility criteria was up to

the council to determine. The council was allocated £300,037 for the same two-week period.

The Christmas Support Statement was also announced on 1st December as a one-off payment for pubs that derived less than 50% of their income from food sales. For this, the council had been allocated £44,800.

He noted that the schemes all applied across both tier 2 and 3, meaning that the rules would remain the same if Cheltenham were to move up to tier 3. He acknowledged a degree of uncertainty about what would happen next, and thanked officers and colleagues for their hard work.

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles asked whether the amounts granted to businesses would be taxed. The Executive Director Finance and Assets clarified that they were considered taxable income, so they would be taxed if they were above the relevant threshold, but noted that they were substituting for normal income and likely amounted to less than would normally be generated.

The Leader of the Council praised the work of the Revenues & Benefits team throughout the pandemic.

The Leader moved to a vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. The Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) 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 Restrictions Support Grant (Open) Scheme, and to the Executive Director Finance and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets, to consider and determine any reviews requested in respect of such decisions;**
- 3. The Head of Revenues and Benefits be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets, to make changes to the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) Scheme in line with any changes made by Government, or, as required to ensure the successful operation of the scheme;**
- 4. The Executive Director Finance and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets to add any further category of businesses as eligible for the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) Scheme, if required;**
- 5. The Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Addendum scheme be noted, and authority be delegated to the Head of Revenues and Benefits to take decisions relating to applications;**
- 6. The Christmas Support Payment scheme be noted, and authority be delegated to the Head of Revenues and Benefits to take decisions relating to applications.**

- 6. PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF FREEHOLD INTEREST OF 4 LEDMORE ROAD**
The Cabinet Member Housing presented the report, noting that it formed part of the flexible asset disposal strategy passed by full Council in November. The principle of the disposal had already been approved, so this report focused on the specifics.

The Leader moved to a vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The marketing and disposal of the property for best consideration and upon such other terms as are deemed appropriate be delegated to the Head of Property & Asset Management, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets;

2. The Head of Property & Asset Management be authorised, in consultation with the Borough Solicitor, to prepare and conclude the necessary documentation to reflect the terms negotiated.

- 7. PROPERTY DISPOSAL - HORSE & GROOM**

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets presented the report, which related to the disposal of an asset potentially worth around £250,000. The Leader of the Council added that the item had been discussed in detail by the Asset Management Working Group.

The Leader moved to a vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED THAT:

1. Authority be delegated to the Head of Property & Asset Management, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance & Assets, in respect of the marketing and disposal of the property for best consideration, and upon such other terms as he considers appropriate;

2. The Borough Solicitor be authorised, in consultation with the Head of Property & Asset Management, to prepare and conclude the necessary documentation to reflect the terms negotiated.

- 8. BETTER CARE FUNDING - CREATION OF TWO NEW OLDER PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY HUBS WITHIN CBC SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEMES**

The Cabinet Member Housing presented the report, which sought to revamp community spaces within sheltered housing schemes as part of a county-wide partnership. Similar revamps had been done before in other areas of the town, and had been very well received, with benefits for local tenants and the wider community. He added that Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) had bid for funding on the council's behalf and had been successful.

The Cabinet Member Economy and Development praised the report as an opportunity to improve community health and wellbeing. The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles added that it fit with the work she was doing with the Cheltenham Dementia Alliance, particularly with regard to getting older people active and exercising.

The Leader of the Council added that she had one of these community hubs in her ward and it made a genuine difference, with positive interaction between residents, communities and especially between different generations.

The Leader moved to a vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. Works be authorised to be carried out on the communal areas of above-mentioned sheltered housing schemes, with a view to creating two new community hubs as detailed in Section 2.1.**

9. CHELTENHAM ECONOMIC RECOVERY TASK FORCE - BUSINESS PLAN

The Cabinet Member Economy and Development presented the report, noting that the Covid pandemic was naturally affecting the resilience of the town centre, with consequences both for jobs and for the stability of local businesses and cultural activities.

She explained that the Cheltenham Economic Recovery Task Force (CERTF) was created in response to the pandemic, with members representing borough officers, local businesses, the voluntary and community sectors and elected cabinet members, all of whom were involved in producing the Business Plan. Members shared expertise across a wide range of business disciplines and industry sectors to create a vision for inclusive economic growth in Cheltenham, drawing together commitments to maintain long-term economic, social, cultural and environmental growth. These included supporting all of Cheltenham's high streets and retail parks; re-imagining the town centre as a place for people and social experiences; supporting local business resilience; jobs and skills development; helping communities to help themselves; adapting to the growing digitisation of work; driving forward sustainability goals, re-establishing consumer trust and promoting inward investment.

She outlined the programme of activities developed in order to guide the task force over the next 18 months. These focused on nine key priorities, namely the town centre; cyber; inward investment; local business resilience and jobs; green growth, sustainability and environment; the visitor economy; skills and education; funding opportunities; and the lobbying of government and key stakeholders. She noted that it was also a living document, which could be amended to account for changes in priority as part of the Covid recovery.

She encouraged residents to visit the 'We're Moving to Cheltenham' website to view the plan, and thanked task force members for their work.

The Cabinet Member Climate and Communities welcomed the report, suggesting that it was particularly important to support the town centre as a community hub, and that people needed to be put first throughout. He was also pleased that task force members had particular expertise on climate issues, which were a recurring thread in the plan.

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles stressed the need to prioritise culture, and asked that parts of the report be amended to ensure that these considerations were not forgotten. The Cabinet Member Economy and

Development responded that she was happy to do this, and would liaise with officers to amend the report.

The Leader moved to a vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. The Cheltenham Economic Recovery Business Plan be endorsed;**
- 2. The Director of Planning reports on the outcomes of the Business Plan to Overview and Scrutiny as part of the reporting on the Recovery Strategy as agreed by Cabinet on 7th July 2020.**

10. REVIEW OF UNREASONABLE CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR POLICY

In the absence of the Cabinet Member Corporate Services, the Leader of the Council presented the report, explaining that the updated policy provided clearer guidance on dealing with persistent and unfair complaints. The last review took place more than 10 years ago, and it needed updating to reflect the latest advice from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, and to account for changing topics like social media. She emphasised the importance of being transparent about internal processes, and thanked Judy Hibbert for her work in putting the report together.

The Leader moved to a vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. The updated draft Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy be adopted;**
- 2. Authority be delegated to the Customer Services Manager, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, to undertake and implement any future updates to this policy.**

11. KIOSK OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PARKS

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets presented the report, praising Cheltenham's parks and gardens as a shining light of the Covid crisis. The increased footfall in parks was a real positive, and this proposal sought to build on that and provide a better service, boost the struggling hospitality sector and deliver extra income. In each case, there would be a pilot to test the waters and uncover any issues, some of which had been in place since October. He cited the Hatherley Park site as a particular success, and the report recommended putting in place a 3-year lease after the completion of the tender process in March 2021.

He added that the proposals had been opened for consultation with the local community, compiled in Appendix 3. He noted that there had been 19 objections, though some of these objected to greater use of the park in general rather than the kiosks specifically. Over 600 comments in support were received from residents, as well as support from local councillors. Pilots were being brought in in other areas, including Leckhampton Hill, the Burrows and the Beeches, while Brizen and Swindon Village were being considered too. He praised the project as a win for the whole community, and hoped it could be put in place by March.

The Cabinet Member Housing added that Cheltenham's parks were jewels in its crown, and that it was good to see people using them more recently. He added that he lived close to one of the kiosks and had seen its positive social and economic effects first-hand.

The Cabinet Member Economy and Development praised the proposal as a fantastic opportunity to support business resilience and help vendors gain experience. The Leader of the Council echoed this, adding that the kiosks were helping to create a safe, social space at a time when this was needed more than ever.

The Leader moved to a vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. The objections to the S123 Notices be considered;**
- 2. Subject to consideration of the objections, authority be delegated to the Executive Director Finance and Assets to:
 - a) secure vendors for the opportunities 2 - 4 via public advertisement and with a view to the commencement of the new agreements on 1st March 2021;**
 - b) offer trial periods (not longer than 9 months) for sites 5 and 6 on appropriate temporary legal agreements, at these locations subject to the consultation and due diligence work being completed;****
- 3. That for those opportunities listed that there is not a requirement to come back to a Cabinet meeting to conclude the lettings, and that the Executive Director Finance and Assets or appropriately delegated officer allows completion via an Officer Decision Notice in consultation with Cabinet Members Finance & Assets and Clean & Green Environment.**

12. GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL - INTERIM BUDGET PROPOSALS 2021/22 FOR CONSULTATION

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets presented the report, thanking the Leader for her work on the topic as the previous Cabinet Member Finance, and for the Executive Director Finance and Assets for drawing the proposals together. He added that consultation would begin immediately after the meeting and run until 27th January.

He outlined the key points of the proposals, particularly the theme of recovery, which included endorsing the previously agreed £1.5m boost for Golden Valley in order to support jobs and affordable housing. Carbon neutral goals were also being supported with an extra £75,000 in the base budget and a bid for the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. The result of the bid will be clear in January, but could bring in up to £4m funding for decarbonisation. He also noted that it was supporting apprenticeships with an allocation of £75,000 for four apprenticeships starting next September aimed at 18-24 year olds. Finally, he clarified that it was a one-year settlement, in order to account various uncertain factors and moving targets, such as business rates and overall local government funding

The Cabinet Member Cyber and Safety praised it as a positive budget with a long-term commitment to the future of the town, including commitments to 4,000 homes and 7,000 jobs.

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles endorsed the focus on apprenticeships, suggesting that it was more important than ever to offer opportunities to young people.

The Cabinet Member Climate and Communities emphasised the importance of building resources for climate change and carbon neutral projects into the budget. He suggested that people would look back on this time and see that the council continued to seek ambitious, positive projects rather than taking the easy option of cuts.

The Leader of the Council noted that it was all about priorities, and while the November budget made the necessary difficult choices, there were no cuts to services at all in these proposals.

The Leader moved to a vote, where it was unanimously:

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 £219.08 for the year 2021/22 based on a band D property (an increase of 2.34% or £5.00 a year for a Band D property);**
- 2. The detailed schedule of target savings at Appendix 3 be noted;**
- 3. The growth proposals at Appendix 4 and outlined in section 4, be approved for consultation;**
- 4. The proposed capital programme at Appendix 6, as outlined in Section 7, be approved;**
- 5. Authority be delegated to the Executive Director Finance and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, 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 by 27th January 2021.**

13. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - REVISED FORECAST 2020/21 AND INTERIM BUDGET PROPOSALS 2021/22 FOR CONSULTATION

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets presented the report, thanking Stafford Cruse (Cheltenham Borough Homes) and CBH in general for their help in drawing it together. Despite some inevitable delays due to Covid, the council's investment program continued, with the net consequence being an increased surplus of £203k.

Looking forward to 2021/22, he noted that the rent rise was proposed at 1.5%, which was less than expected due to relatively low inflation. He emphasised that £9m was being invested in existing properties, including improving heating, fire protection and disability adaptations, while £15m was allocated towards new builds.

He added that the consultation process would get underway shortly after the meeting, and would run until the 29th January.

The Cabinet Member Housing praised the officers working behind the scenes. The Cabinet Member Climate and Communities highlighted the climate change section, which focused on retrofitting properties, and said he was pleased to see families moving into new properties in time for Christmas.

The Leader of the Council agreed that the focus on sustainability commitments was a positive, citing the installation of bat boxes and bird boxes as an example of the small things that made a real difference that private developers would not do. She also praised the overall £180m commitment to housebuilding.

The Leader moved to a vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. The revised HRA forecast for 2020/21 be noted;**
- 2. The interim HRA budget proposals for 2021/22 (shown at Appendix 2) be approved for consultation, including a proposed rent increase of 1.5% and changes to other rents and charges as detailed within the report;**
- 3. The proposed HRA capital programme for 2021/22, as shown at Appendix 3, be approved;**
- 4. Authority be delegated to the Executive Director Finance and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance and Assets, 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 29th January 2021.**

14. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Member Housing reported that he had taken a Cabinet Member Decision to alleviate a particular example of antisocial behaviour. The Cabinet Member Economy and Development reported that she had taken a decision relating to the European Regional Development Fund. The Cabinet Member Climate and Communities reported that he had made a decision that, at the time of the meeting, remained exempt, but would be announced in due course.

The Cabinet Member Economy and Development reported that she was focusing on skills development, and was looking forward to taking this forward in 2021.

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles reported on the progress of the Local Dementia Alliance, which had recently added a further four organisations to its ranks. She had also recently viewed the exhibition of children's work at the Queen's Hotel, and recommended it to members. She added that she was working with the Big Local on their forward plan, which included the creation of a community hub, which would hopefully come to Cabinet in the near future. In general, she was delighted to see people and communities coming together to ensure that no family went hungry during a difficult year, and thanked members and officers for their role in this. The Cabinet Member Housing echoed this, stressing that it had been a huge volunteer effort.

The Cabinet Member Finance and Assets reported that he had taken an urgent decision to refurbish the first floor southern area of the Municipal Offices. He added that the county council had agreed the package of investment in the airport company, which CBC had previously done at its last full Council meeting.

The Cabinet Member Climate and Communities reported that he had recently visited Norton Park Primary School to help plant trees, while Rowanfield School had also planted 400 trees on their land. These were positive schemes and it was wonderful to see children getting involved. He added that Cheltenham Zero conferences would take place in the New Year, and emphasised the need for partnership and cooperation if they were to achieve their carbon neutral goals.

The Leader of the Council noted that it was the last meeting of the year, as well as her first as Leader. She acknowledged that communities had suffered a lot this year, and that it was a shame that many people would not be able to see their loved ones for Christmas. It was a testing time for the town, but she was proud to represent it. She thanked all CBC officers for their hard work throughout the year, and wished everyone a merry Christmas.

Chairman