

COUNCIL MEETING**14 April 2016****7.00 pm – 9.10 pm****Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud****3****Minutes****Membership:**

Liz Ashton	P	Colin Fryer	P	Mark Rees**	A
Martin Baxendale	P	Chas Fellows	P	Lesley Reeves	P
Dorcas Binns	A	Paul Hemming	P	Steve Robinson	P
Tim Boxall	P	Nick Hurst	A	Mattie Ross	P
Rowland Blackwell	P	Julie Job	A	Emma Sims	P
Chris Brine	P	Haydn Jones	P	Nigel Studdert-Kennedy	P
Miranda Clifton	P	John Jones	P	Haydn Sutton	P
Nigel Cooper	P	Stephen Lydon	P	Brian Tipper	P
June Cordwell	P	John Marjoram	P	Chas Townley	P
Doina Cornell	P	Russell Miles	A	Ken Tucker	P
Gordon Craig	P	Stephen Moore	P	Geoff Wheeler	P
Kevin Cranston	A	Dave Mossman	P	Martin Whiteside	P
Karon Cross	A	Keith Pearson	P	Rhiannon Wigzell	P
Stephen Davies	P	Elizabeth Peters	P	Tim Williams	P
Paul Denney	P	Simon Pickering	P	Tom Williams	P
Julie Douglass	P	Gary Powell*	P	Penny Wride	P
Jonathan Edmunds	P	Nigel Prenter	P	Debbie Young	P

** = Chair of Council * = Vice Chair of Council P = Present A = Absent

Officers Present

Chief Executive	Legal Services Manager and
Strategic Heads (Finance and Business Services), (Customer Services), (Development Services) and (Tenant and Corporate Services)	Monitoring Officer
	Principal Estates Surveyor
	Public Space Manager
	Democratic Services Officer

CL.058 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dorcas Binns, Karon Cross, Kevin Cranston, Nick Hurst, Julie Job, Russell Miles and Mark Rees.

CL.059 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

CL.060 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2016 are confirmed and signed as a correct record having amended minute CL.039 that Councillor Chas Townley worked for South Gloucestershire Council.

CL.061 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair

District Councillors in attendance at the meeting not seeking re-election were given the opportunity to reflect on their terms of office. Other members paid tribute to their hard work, dedication and contribution in decision making over the years.

A small civic reception would be held in late May/early June to thank those members not seeking re-election.

The Leader

An update on devolution was provided. The next Leadership Gloucestershire meeting was due to be held in two weeks when a devolution proposal would be discussed.

Chief Executive

Following the demise of Cotswold Volunteers (merged with Stroud Volunteer and Community Action in 2015), one of the Trustees, Les Haines had written to the Council thanking Councillors and staff for their support. Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) had been approached about the continuation of 'ring and ride' services and Members would be kept informed.

CL.062 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were none.

CL.063 **FOURTH REPORT OF THE CONSTITUTION REVIEW WORKING GROUP**

Councillor Keith Pearson outlined the above report confirming that the two key issues were the future format and information contained within budget reports and also the filling of committee vacancies. It was confirmed that background papers would be available on financial reports if requested.

On being put to the vote the Motion was unanimously CARRIED.

RESOLVED On the recommendation of the Constitution Working Group, that:

- 1. Committee budget monitoring reports for 2016/17 be reviewed taking account of paragraphs 9 to 11 of the report; and**

2. **The Constitution be amended to permit committee vacancies to be filled immediately as outlined in paragraph 12 of the report.**

CL.064 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES: REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (IRP)

The Leader outlined the above report that had been deferred from the last Council meeting. He also proposed an amendment to the decision box of the report, to read "To amend the Members' Allowances Scheme from 2016/17 to set:

- (i) The Leader's SRA as £10,000;
- (ii) Other SRAs according to the IRP recommendations in proportion to the Leader's SRA;
- (iii) A SRA for all group leaders with 5 or more members;

Provided that if there is not a devolution deal for Gloucestershire the allowances set out in the 2015/16 scheme shall re-apply."

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Chris Brine. The Leader answered Members' questions regarding the report.

Councillor Chas Townley asked for a further amendment, that the Dependants' Carers' Allowance be set at the living wage level used by the Living Wage Foundation rather than the national living wage. This amendment was seconded by Councillor John Marjoram and agreed by Members.

On being put to the vote the Motion was unanimously CARRIED.

RESOLVED To amend the Members' Allowances Scheme from 2016/17 as recommended by the IRP subject to the following variations which set:

- (i) **The Leader's SRA as £10,000;**
- (ii) **Other SRA's according to the IRP recommendations in proportion to the Leader's;**
- (iii) **A SRA for all group leaders with 5 or more members; and**
- (iv) **The Dependents' Carers' Allowance be set at the living wage level used by the Living Wage Foundation.**

Provided that if there is not a devolution deal for Gloucestershire the allowances set out in the 2015/16 scheme shall re-apply.

CL.065 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

a. Audit and Standards Committee – 5 April 2016: Annual Report 2015/16

Councillor Nigel Studdert-Kennedy, Chair of Committee outlined the above report drawing Members' attention to paragraphs 3, 4, 13 and 16.

RESOLVED To approve the Annual Report.

On being put to the vote the Motion was unanimously CARRIED.

b. Strategy and Resources Committee – 7 April 2016: Revised Procurement and Contract Management Strategy

The Leader of Council outlined the background to the above report and the key drivers for the change to the strategy.

A debate ensued and on being put to the vote the Motion was unanimously CARRIED.

RESOLVED To approve the revised Procurement Contract Management Strategy.

c. Strategy and Resources Committee – 7 April 2016: Business Units, Littlecombe, Dursley

The Leader outlined the above report to develop one acre of land to build up to 15 business units. A viable business case had been put forward and discussions had already taken place with St Modwen. It was important that the design of these units was flexible to enable the units to be expanded or reduced in size.

On being put to the vote the Motion was unanimously CARRIED.

- RESOLVED 1. To delegate to the Head of Asset Management, in consultation with the Chief Executive, Strategic Head (Finance and Business Services) and the Chair of Strategy and Resources, the authority to procure the construction and acquisition of the freehold of new business units at Littlecombe, Dursley on the best terms available.**
- 2. To delegate to the Strategic Head (Finance and Business Services)**
- a. authority to amend the Capital Programme and the Capital Financing Requirement for 2016/17 as set out in the Treasury Management Strategy, and**
 - b. authority to finance the proposed scheme as appropriate and depending on market conditions.**

d. Strategy and Resources Committee – 7 April 2016: Waste Recyclate Tenders

The Leader outlined the above report; and because of the current decrease in the value of recyclable materials moved an amendment to the decision box of the report to read “To review options for the disposal of recyclable waste materials and approve a revised budget to enable a contract to be awarded for the Council’s waste recyclate.” The amendment was seconded by Councillor Steve Lydon. The low price of oil was a determining factor in the price for recyclate and prices varied. He reported that other local authorities have faced the same dilemma.

Following debate and on being put to the vote the Motion was unanimously CARRIED.

RESOLVED To review options for the disposal of recyclable waste materials and approve a revised budget to enable a contract to be awarded for the Council’s waste recyclate.

CL.066 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

Councillor Emma Sims (whose questions were, with the agreement of the Chairman, taken on her behalf by Councillor Keith Pearson) asked the following questions of Councillor Simon Pickering, Chair of Environment Committee, who also provided additional information by way of background to the answers.

Question 1: I would like to ask Stroud District to become part of the green energy future. The ambition is to enable homes and businesses to be part of a sustainable solution to climate change. Would Stroud District Council investigate what a council owned company could bring over and above the services offered by the big six and what barriers there are to the creation of such a company?

Answer: Yes, the opportunities presented by creating a council owned energy company can be revisited.

Question 2: I understand that the set up cost of such a company can be prohibitive. However, could it be that now opportunities may exist for working with other Gloucestershire councils and with existing small energy companies?

Answer: The opportunities for collaboration between Gloucestershire Councils and small energy companies can be explored.

Question 3: In addition to opportunities in 'not for profit', retail sales could the Council look at opportunities for significant generation, particularly where there is a connection with existing council functions, such as waste collections?

Answer: Opportunities to generate more can be considered.

Supplementary Question: If the research goes ahead can the Council engage with local communities?

Answer: Yes, the policy is committed to engaging with local communities and was discussed at the last meeting of Environment Committee.

Councillor Debbie Young asked the following questions of Councillor Simon Pickering, Chair of Environment Committee.

Question 1: Have you yet come up with a solution for those people who want to use the new green waste service but are unable to access it due to where they live?

Answer: GCC as waste disposal authority, have for years been strongly encouraging Stroud to divert its garden waste from landfill and as such implement a service that is more sustainable. This has been reasonably easy for the main part as most residents can benefit from the new wheeled bin service. Due to access difficulties however, a proportion of the district's residents are unable to use this service. Acknowledging this problem, the Council has tried to design an alternative that would be safe to operate, aligns itself with the treatment facility's requirements and is affordable to the end users. The original solution was wax coated bags has meet with some concern with the county council and we are working with them on this to come up with a

solution. Unfortunately, we are not yet in a position to determine the length of time this will take.

Supplementary Question: Have you consulted with the Parish Councils to see how they can contribute to this solution?

Answer: Clearly there is an opportunity for Parish Councils to take the opportunity to pursue this further.

Question 2: How many people have objected to the change from weekly to fortnightly collection of black bin waste?

Answer: As part of the Officer and cross party Member Task and Finish Group's work over the past two years, feedback was sought from a representative sample of the district's residents of whether they would be willing to move to a two weekly collection of their non recyclable waste if the council would commit to a food waste collection service. 58% of respondents agreed with the move to a two weekly collection of non recyclable waste.

Since the Council's announcement of the new service, comments made to both the council's Customer Service and Public Spaces Teams have been more positive than negative and were mostly mentioned as an incidental/side issue, not a direct one; specific comments about the change have not been recorded – anecdotally, the number of queries in relation to the service change has been low.

Feedback from parish council meetings and road show events to the Public Space Team has been very positive with most people stating that they welcome the change as it should encourage more residents to recycle.

Supplementary Question: Will the tenants receive a reduction in their Council Tax because they are receiving a reduction in their waste service?

Answer: No, there is no reduction in household waste and people are encouraged to recycle. The service has been increased not reduced.

Question 3: Who will police the new system and how will people be assisted to follow the new rules?

Answer: The Council have a combined budget of £100,000, 50% of which is contributed by GCC, to provide high quality communications for the delivery of the project through a very detailed communications plan. This will inform residents of the need to separate their waste further and restrict waste going to landfill.

Help and support will be provided during the roll out of the new service through general and specific advice offered through the council's website and phone lines. Some enquiries will necessitate a home visit either by council officers or by its contractor, 'Ubico', both in the lead up to and beyond the new service commencement date.

From an operational perspective, it is crucial that the contractor only collects well separated and uncontaminated recycled material. A system will be

adopted similar to the Council's existing recycling service where the contractor needs to advise individual residents of the need for further separation. The resident will be supported through this process with a home visit if required.

Supplementary Question: How will breaches be identified within communal areas?

Answer: As set out in the Policy dated September 2015, the Council's officers will have a consistent approach. Tenant Services will be part of it and keen to work in communal areas with tenants and will also engage with local ward members. Community recycling will be encouraged as a way forward.

Councillor Nigel Cooper asked the following question of Councillor Chris Brine, Chair of Licensing and Community Services Committee.

Question: What checks have been carried out over the last two years to ensure that licensed taxi and private hire drivers are complying with the byelaws, and when?

Answer: Checks over past 2 years include:

- Licensing Officers inspect all taxis at Stroud District Council Offices on new application, transfer or change of vehicle. Inspections include condition of vehicle and checking the taxi plate, badge, meter and roof sign to make sure all comply.
- All taxis have an annual inspection at one of our authorised garages (every 6 months for vehicles over 5 years old). The garage checks safety, condition of vehicle, plate, meter etc.
- Officers make periodic visits to the taxi ranks in Stroud to do adhoc checks of badges, plates etc. In 2014 visits were made in April, August, September and November and December. In 2015 there were visits in March, May and August. There have been no visits between September 2015 and January 2016 due to the fact that during this period the Licensing Team was down to only 2 members of staff and there was not capacity to do rank visits. We have now filled the Licensing Officer post and we visited the rank on 23 February 2016.

Supplementary Question: A constituent has told me that he had used local taxis on several occasions and the driver had not been wearing his badge, surely this was a matter of public safety and security.

Answer: If a taxi driver is in breach of any condition this must be reported to the Licensing Team for them to take action. We have the power to take away a licence, but we need strong evidence to prove this breach.

Councillor Nigel Cooper asked the following question of Councillor Simon Pickering, Chair of Environment Committee.

Question: Three bags for residual waste will not be enough for some households. What consideration has been given to this and what arrangements will be put in place for those households?

Answer: This was considered at Environment Committee on 17th September 2015 and set out in section B 5.

Householders with five or more family members living at a single property and will, if requested, be given increased capacity for their waste provided they can prove they are fully utilising the council's recycling services.

If the individual resident is provided with plastic refuse sacks, they will receive one extra sack per fortnight – the standard number of refuse sacks issued to sack properties will be three per fortnight.

Should the resident initially be provided with a 140 Litre wheeled bin, they will receive additional capacity of one sack per fortnight; wheeled bin users offered the extra capacity will be able to place their additional council issued refuse sack alongside the wheeled bin for collection.

The Council will, on request, further support residents experiencing significant difficulties with medical waste.

Supplementary Question: Concern that not enough consideration had been given to young families and older people; we should ensure that proper consideration is given.

Answer: These issues had been discussed at great length by the Task and Finish Group and Environment Committee. A sensitive approach would be taken by officers and operators. GCC has in operation a 'real nappy project' to encourage mothers not to use disposable nappies.

Councillor Nigel Cooper asked the following question of Councillor Geoff Wheeler, Leader of Council.

Question: In item 8 d) Council is made aware of a £1.6m black hole in the Council's finances. Budgetary cuts will be necessary. What cuts to services would he support?

Answer: The £1.6 million referred to is based on an extrapolation over 4 years of the loss estimated at current costs over a full year. That loss is due to the cost of recycling steel cans, mixed glass and mixed plastic, the latter as a consequence of the drop in oil prices. If oil prices recover the situation will change.

There is no black hole. The administration's sound financial management over the last four years means the Council is in a good place to manage the situation.

However rather than hoping for an oil price recovery I would look for ways to mitigate the current and future costs of recycling before exploring other measures.

Supplementary Question: With a budget deficit, does the Leader accept that there are difficult times ahead financially and the possible increase in Council Tax of 5½%. What are your thoughts for the new Leader?

Answer: Other Councils have made massive cuts. This Council has received the highest ever satisfaction ratings from businesses and residents for which the Administration are proud. Services should be maintained. Income could be increased in the future by making wise investments, eg at Littlecombe. I suggest that we ask the community what services they want to maintain.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Chair of Council