



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the Cabinet

Held on Wednesday 30 September 2015

**PETER BUNGARD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

CABINET MINUTES	Gloucestershire County Council
30 September 2015	

PRESENT

Cllr Mark Hawthorne	- Leader of Council
Cllr Ray Theodoulou	- Cabinet Member for Finance and Change
Cllr Dorcas Binns	- Older People
Cllr Andrew Gravells	- Public Health and Communities
Cllr Paul McLain	- Children & Young People and Strategic Commissioning
Cllr Kathy Williams	- Long-term Care
Cllr Will Windsor-Clive	- Fire, Planning and Infrastructure

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Vernon Smith, Cabinet Member for Highways and Flood.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2015 were agreed and signed as an accurate record of that meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

4. Questions at Cabinet Meetings

Please refer to the following link to view the responses to the public and member questions submitted for consideration at the meeting.

<http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/documents/b11184/Cabinet%20Questions%20and%20Responses%20Wednesday%2030-Sep-2015%2010.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=9>

A total of 31 member questions were submitted for consideration, for which the following supplementary questions were asked at the meeting. No public supplementary questions were asked at the meeting.

Question 1: Cllr Jeremy Hilton

Is it not the case that the incinerator project has been 'high risk' ever since you signed the contract before obtaining planning permission?

Response by: Cllr Ray Theodoulou - Cabinet Member for Finance and Change

Yes. As a major project, with major setbacks throughout the various stages of the contract, the project remains high risk.

Question 2: Cllr Jeremy Hilton

Could you please provide me with a written breakdown of the additional costs that have been incurred because of the delay in obtaining planning permission? Could the costs to Stroud District Council appear as separate costs.

Response by: Cllr Ray Theodoulou - Cabinet Member for Finance and Change

The costs are not yet available - I will make them available when they are produced.

Question 3: Cllr Jeremy Hilton

If the incinerator is operational by 2019, when will Hempsted Tip stop taking waste for landfill? Hempsted Tip is poorly managed and heavily congested – when will Gloucester get a new recycling centre? Waste disposal at Hempsted is in chaos and unsafe.

Response by: Cllr Ray Theodoulou - Cabinet Member for Finance and Change

I agree – it's a mess. The council is looking to closed Hempsted Tip. I don't know the date of closure, but will write to you when the information is available..

Question 4: Cllr Jeremy Hilton

This is not additional revenue raising powers - business rates are set by government. Don't you agree, real devolution can only come about if this council obtains new tax revenue powers?

Response by: Cllr Mark Hawthorne – Leader of Council

Business rates is a complex issue – there are winners and losers. This is a complicated debate, nationally. A business rates uplift results from increased economic activity. If we invest, we should see the benefits of business rates investment at a local level.

Question 5: Cllr Jeremy Hilton

Thank you for your answer. I agree with you and shall hold you to this. But, will you buckle under pressure from Whitehall? Say no, no, no.

Response by: Cllr Mark Hawthorne – Leader of Council

Absolutely, I will say no. Other council leaders agree, an elected mayor model is not appropriate for Gloucestershire. I do not believe Martin Surl will gain any favours from stating the opposite.

Question 6: Cllr Jeremy Hilton

The creation of a new level of bureaucracy in a combined authority seems incredible, especially when much of what is included in the bids could be done already. Would it not be more beneficial, much simpler to devolve additional powers to Gloucestershire County Council? Would it be better to have a simpler line of responsibility?

Response by: Cllr Mark Hawthorne – Leader of Council

I believe my colleagues in Cheltenham might disagree with this. I think Cllr Hilton may have misunderstood what is meant by a combined authority. A combined authority could be described as a vehicle that can pass down powers to Gloucestershire, and we can pass on to others, locally it doesn't just stop here. This is not just a Conservative Party solution... it was introduced during the last parliament with the support of Liberal Democrats.

Question 7: Cllr Jeremy Hilton

Gloucestershire's Police and Crime Commissioner has expressed an interest in taking over the fire service. Have you told him in no uncertain terms that the answer is no?

Response by: Cllr Mark Hawthorne – Leader of Council

Yes.

Question 8: Cllr Jeremy Hilton

The proposals currently being consulted on could allow for a hostile takeover of the fire service by the Police Crime Commissioner. Could you please ensure our submission has total support, with 100 per cent by in from all parties, and sign off by full council? I believe it would be far stronger if all groups signed off the submission.

Response by: Cllr Will Windsor Clive – Cabinet Member for Fire, Planning and Infrastructure

Open to all, I urge everyone to respond to the consultation document. It has been suggested many times that all parties meet with the Chief Fire Officer to discuss our

response. We both agree with our feelings on this issue, but I don't feel it requires full council sign off. I will, however, speak to the Leader about this suggestion.

Question 9: Cllr Jeremy Hilton

It is alarming that the overspend in adult services is snowballing, now at £7.1 million, and not the £3.4 million reported in July 2015. What are you doing to bring your budget back into balance?

Response by: Cllr Ray Theodoulou - Cabinet Member for Finance and Change

Providing care for elderly and young people is a difficult and complex issue. Adult care, in part, needs to be reviewed by the government, for which we are awaiting government proposals. It is a very difficult task, but we are working as hard as we can. We can't guarantee this position will change, but we will try our best to reduce some of the costs to the council and, at the same time, provide the services required.

Question 10: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson

Can you clarify what is happening in respect of the Air Balloon road traffic improvements/A417 Missing Link? We have been told work will commence in 2020. However, according to the LEP, (Local Enterprise Partnership), Highways England have not identified a date in its current programme of works. This appears to be a contradiction, resulting in much confusion. When, and how, will we see the published detailed timetable of works for the A417 Missing Link Solution?

Response by: Cllr Will Windsor Clive – Cabinet Member for Fire, Planning and Infrastructure

This is a very complex project. Nothing has changed since 2014. I will, however, get you a timetable of works of when the decisions are due to be made. As a major project, there is always a danger of slippage with the planning process.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne – Leader of Council clarified that the statement made by the LEP was different to the statement that had been made at a meeting involving the six Gloucestershire MP's, Highways England and the Secretary of State, where it had been confirmed the works on the A417 Missing Link Solution was expected to commence in 2020.

Question 11: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson

Highways England state that it is committed to working with Gloucestershire County Council to investigate 'whether' a deliverable to the problems on the A417 Missing Link can be found. This leaves the door open for the government to make no commitment. What will you do to ensure the government commits to the A417 Missing Link Solution.

Response by: Cllr Will Windsor Clive – Cabinet Member for Fire, Planning and Infrastructure

The leader and I will be lobbying at all stages. Highways England has to explore all options before making a commitment. We are fairly confident Highways England will make a commitment, but only when it has explored all options.

Question 12: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson

The results of the summer Cotswold bus service consultation in July were shared at the end of the consultation. As a local member, I have not seen the results, nor has the public seen them. Is this acceptable?

Response by: Cllr Will Windsor Clive – Cabinet Member for Fire, Planning and Infrastructure

The consultation refers to changes to commercial bus services – not those subsidised by Gloucestershire County Council. I did not make the decision. The consultation report has been published - I will send a copy to you.

Question 13: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson

You state you did not make a decision – why not? Why did you not feel it incumbent for you to make a final decision? Surely you should have challenged this?

Response by: Cllr Will Windsor Clive – Cabinet Member for Fire, Planning and Infrastructure

The decision relates to commercial changes by Stagecoach – not us. If this is your view, you are welcome to lobby Stagecoach.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne: Leader of Council confirmed that the council did not make this decision. He informed members that he had contacted Stagecoach personally and continued to lobby on the matter.

Question 14: Cllr Lesley Williams

Part of me is concerned Post 16 students will be able to maintain their education, but without financial support. Could you please keep me informed how many students require discretionary subsidised support – I would like as much information on this issue as possible.

Response by: Cllr Paul McLain - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Strategic Commissioning

Yes.

Questions 18 and 19: Cllr Lesley Williams

Could you please keep me informed about the performance of these areas?

Response by: Cllr Dorcas Binns - Cabinet Member for Older People

Yes.

Question 20: Cllr Lesley Williams

I am pleased to see a change in the new national living wage. Could you keep me informed on how this will affect the council?

Response by: Cllr Ray Theodoulou - Cabinet Member for Finance and Change

Yes.

Questions 22 to 24: Cllr Paul McMahon

I look forward to the outcomes of the consultation.

Question 28: Cllr Jeremy Hilton

Do you think it is right, when we have made substantial savings over the last few years, to be asked to make further cuts of between 25 and 40 per cent? I think this is too much. What are you going to do to lobby government to avoid making savings of this amount.

Response by: Cllr Mark Hawthorne: Leader of Council

We continue to work with the LGA, (Local Government Association) and County Council Network to highlight demand pressures, particularly those in adult social care and child protection. At the moment, we don't know what cuts will need to be made. We will have to wait until the Government's Comprehensive Spending announcement in November before we can make a decision.

Question 29: Cllr Jeremy Hilton

Surely you have ideas on how you are going to make £16 million worth of savings? Could you share this information with us today and where we are going to make the savings from to allow us to scrutinise the information.

Response by: Cllr Mark Hawthorne: Leader of Council

It would be non-sensical to publish a budget prior to knowing the financial settlement for Gloucestershire. This is a very complex process and would be extremely premature to make any announcements at this stage. This is ultimately a decision for council, for which processes are in place to consult with group leaders and scrutiny committees. I will await to hear what the Liberal Democrat alternative budget will be.

Question 30: Cllr Jeremy Hilton

Do you agree the national living wage should be classified as a new burden on local government, and that this council should be fully compensated by central government for this impact?

Response by: Cllr Mark Hawthorne: Leader of Council

Yes – and this is the LGA's (Local Government Association) position. We expect the mechanism to be agreed as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Question 31: Cllr Jeremy Hilton

Are you considering to freeze the council tax rate for 2015/16?

Response by: Cllr Mark Hawthorne: Leader of Council

This is a matter for full council – the council tax freeze grant will be considered by council in February 2016. I will be interested to hear the Liberal Democrat response.

During the meeting Cllr Paul McMahon expressed disappointment at not receiving responses to some of the questions asked at cabinet meetings. Cllr Mark Hawthorne suggested circulating outstanding supplementary questions to cabinet members after the meeting, with a deadline on when the responses should be provided.

5. Post 16 Home to School Transport for Young People Accessing Mainstream Education

Cllr Paul McLain, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Strategic Commissioning sought approval to consult on removing automatic discretionary financial assistance towards providing travel support for Post 16 Students accessing mainstream education.

Cllr McLain informed members that the council currently offered a financial subsidy for home to school transport, but that the number of eligible young people applying for the subsidy was falling, with only 3 per cent (389) of post 16 students receiving subsidised transport assistance.

If approved, the consultation to run from 12 October 2015 to 15 January 2016. The results of the consultation, and ultimate cabinet decision, (with or without amendment), to be phased in from September 2016, allowing those already in receipt of support to remain unaffected. The proposed change will bring Gloucestershire in line with other neighbouring authorities.

Cllr McLain stated that the proposal was not anticipated to impact on Post 16 young people with special educational needs and disabilities, as the council had already agreed to revise the approach for this group by personalising travel arrangements to meet individual need through the Education, Health and Care Plan.

The consultation to consider whether there could be an impact on access to education for any other students, and explore how this could be mitigated in light of the consultation feedback.

Having considered all of the information in the published report, the reasons for the recommendations, and the published due regard statement,

CABINET RESOLVED to:

Consult on the proposal to revise the Post 16 Home to School Travel Assistance Policy for students accessing mainstream education, as set out in Paragraph 3 of the published report.

6. Strategic Performance Monitoring Report 2015/16 - Quarter 1

Cabinet considered a strategic overview of the council's performance during the first quarter of the 2015/16 financial year.

In presenting the report, Leader of Council, Cllr Mark Hawthorne invited individual cabinet members to comment on their areas of responsibility.

Cllr Andrew Gravells, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities, informed the meeting that 'Stoptober' had begun on 1 October 2015. He also spoke about the council's commitment to the Gloucestershire Stop Smoking Service, (operated by Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust on the council's behalf). Elaborating on the huge contribution giving up smoking can make towards improving an individual's health and wellbeing, Cllr Gravells outlined some of the county's achievements in helping people give up smoking, including the success of the multi award winning 'Stop Smoking Shop' in Gloucester, recognised as being one of the most successful in the UK to stop smoking, with an outstanding 81 per cent four week quit rate, (30 per cent higher than the national average). Cllr Gravells urged all members to support the work of the Gloucestershire Stop Smoking Service.

Having considered all of the information, including known proposals and reasons for the recommendations,

CABINET RESOLVED to:

- 1) Endorse the performance report*
- 2) Note the progress made in tracking council priority outcomes, and*
- 3) Support the actions being taken to address any areas of concern.*

7. Council Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (2016/17 to 2018/19)

Cllr Ray Theodoulou, Cabinet Member for Finance and Change, outlined the proposals from which the council intended to review the Council Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2016/17 to 2018/19.

Cllr Theodoulou informed members that the current forecast stated that the total non ring fenced funding available in 2016/17 would facilitate a budget level in the order of £379.08 million, some £16 million lower in cash terms than the 2015/16 budget. In addition to addressing funding reductions, the MTFS and detailed annual budgets would also need to fund unavoidable cost increases, with a current forecast of £15 million required in 2016/17 for additional unavoidable cost increases, such as contractual inflation, pay inflation, changes in the national insurance system, demand costs relating to the care and protection of vulnerable children and adults, and increased waste tonnages.

The overall savings requirement, (excluding any additional unfunded costs relating to the national living wage), that would be required to balance the budget over the three year period from 2016/17 to 2018/19 was currently forecast in the order of £81 million.

The Draft Financial Settlement, MTFS and Council Strategy Report will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting in December, with a detailed review of the budget proposals in January 2016.

Having considered all of the information in the published report, including the reasons for the recommendations, Cabinet,

RESOLVED to: -

Agree the proposed process for reviewing and developing the Council Strategy and the three year Medium Term Financial Strategy covering the period 2016/17 to 2018/19.

8. Financial Monitoring Report 2015/16

Cllr Ray Theodoulou, Cabinet Member for Finance and Change, gave an update on the council's key financial issues, including the year-end forecast for the council's 2015/16 Revenue and Capital Budgets.

Cllr Theodoulou informed members that the current forecast of the year end revenue position, based on actual expenditure at the end of July 2015, and forecasts made in August 2015, reported an overspend of £3.8 million, 0.9 per cent of the net budget. The key areas of over-spend related to Adult Services, with a forecast over-spend of £3.8 million (2.5 per cent of the budget), and Children and Families with a forecast over-spend of £2.8 million (2.8 per cent of the budget). Another major issue to impact on the budget overspend, and not yet reflected in the forecast, will be the impact of the introduction of the national living wage.

The capital budget position reported a small forecast underspend.

Having considered all of the information in the published report, including the reasons for the recommendations, Cabinet,

RESOLVED to: -

- 1) *Note the forecast revenue year end position as at the end of July 2015 for the 2015/16 financial year of a net £3.8 million overspend, and the mitigating actions being taken.*
- 2) *Note the forecast capital year end position of a small underspend of £50,000 for 2015/16, and the actions being taken to arrive at this position.*
- 3) *Agree the following changes to the capital programme: -*
 - *A new capital scheme to provide 2 additional classrooms at Mickleton Primary School, financed from £0.42 million of Section 106 developer contributions;*
 - *A new capital scheme for £25,000 to provide the Fire and Rescue Service with key equipment, to be funded from capital receipts;*
 - *A new capital scheme for the Quayside Project, to be fully funded from £4.13 million of Growth Hub Capital Grant;*
 - *A new capital scheme to invest in capital works to the Rural Estate in 2015/16 totalling £0.55 million, all of which will be funded from capital receipts.*
- 4) *Note the update regarding the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool.*

9. Schedule of Disposals

Councillor Ray Theodoulou, Cabinet Member for Finance and Change, sought to approve the proposed Schedule of Disposals put forward to meet the council's 'Meeting the Challenge' 2 Capital Receipt Target of £50 million, covering the period 2015/16 to 2017/18.

In line with the Policy for the Disposal of Property, and having considered all of the information, including known proposals and reasons for the recommendations,

CABINET RESOLVED to: -

- 1) *Confirm that those sites described at Appendix A (Exempt), and which had previously been declared surplus to requirement by Cabinet in February 2015, and not yet disposed of, continued to be declared surplus to requirements, and*
- 2) *Declare that the sites listed on the proposed Schedule of Disposals at Appendix B (Exempt), were surplus to the Council's land and property requirements, and*

In relation to both schedules,

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

- 3) *Delegate authority to the Property Strategy Lead to dispose of these sites in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Change.*

Members were advised that, had Cabinet wished to discuss the contents of the exempt information at the meeting, (Appendices A and B), consideration would have had to have been given to whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting in accordance with Regulation 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

No references were made to the exempt information relating to this item.

Leader of Council

Meeting concluded at 11.05 am