

CABINET	<i>Gloucestershire County Council</i>
12 June 2024	
Minutes	

PRESENT

MEMBERSHIP:

Cllr Stephen Davies	- Cabinet Member for Children's SafeGuarding and Early Years
Cllr David Gray	- Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning
Cllr Philip Robinson	- Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport
Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	- Leader of Council
Cllr Carole Allaway-Martin	- Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Commissioning
Cllr Lynden Stowe	- Cabinet Member for Finance and Change
Cllr Stephan Fifield	- Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Delivery

**Cllr Stephen Davies
attended the meeting
via teams**

Apologies: Cllr Dave Norman MBE and Cllr Dom Morris

1. Apologies

See above.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 15 May 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

4. Questions at Cabinet Meetings

4 Public questions had been received. Supplementary questions were asked on the following:

Question 1 – David Redgewell asked whether there was a protocol with district councils to make sure they understood the role of kassel kerbs?

Cllr Philip Robinson replied that there wasn't a strict protocol, but he was happy to link up with the relevant district councils to raise it on the individual's behalf.

Question 2 – David Redgewell raised concerns on whether bus stop markings would be put back (referring specifically to Priors Road) after highways work was completed and that leaflets providing highways and transport information be joined up.

Cllr Philip Robinson replied that he was welcomed opportunities to 'join things up'. He reiterated that all the bus stops would be fully remarked.

Question 3 – David Redgewell asked whether the County Council had the capacity in the department or could use western gateway to work up the development of Stroud Railway Station scheme?

Cllr Philip Robinson replied that the written answer detailed there was no County Council budget for railway stations, but there was a budget for strategic matters and there was capacity in that regard.

Question 4 – David Redgewell asked whether the Council was trying to recover money through criminal proceedings for people who damaged transport infrastructure?

Cllr Philip Robinson replied that at the last full council meeting he had made an assurance to set up a meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner. He had started to set that in motion and he suggested discussing the issue at that meeting.

6 Member questions had been received. No supplementary questions were asked.

5. Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report

5.1 Cllr Lynden Stowe updated Cabinet on the Council's outturn expenditure for 2023/24, and sought approval for changes to the Capital Programme in 2023/24 and future years. He reported on the Council's performance and risk during Quarter 4 of 2023/24

5.2 It was explained that the final position at the end of 2023/24 was an underspend of £10.045 million – which included £4.410 million of additional electricity income generated from the energy from waste facility. He thanked staff in the Council for keeping an eye on expenditure. The report recommended that the underspend should be transferred to General Reserves at the year end with £4.410 million released during 2024/25 to fund additional expenditure on Highways and to address any financial risks that

arise during the year. Those recommendations would enhance the level of reserves, giving flexibility to support future budgetary pressures and also allow urgent pressures to be addressed during the current financial year as they arise.

- 5.3 A summary of reserves was set out in Section C of the report. Details of all reserve movements in 2023/24 were shown in the table in annex 2 of the report. The balance of General Reserves at 1st April 2023 was £17.749 million and this increased to £22.339 million at 31st March 2024. The Cabinet report recommended that the underspend of £10.045 million less the earmarked allocation of £4.410 million will be used to increase General Reserves. This would increase the balance to £27.974 million which represented 4.5% of the 2024/25 net revenue budget.
- 5.4 The overall revenue position masked a number of significant variances. The main area of revenue overspend during the year continued to be Children and Families. The main overspends in this Directorate related to external placements, disability services and section 17 / discretionary payments. This overspend was offset by a number of major underspends / additional income relating to the energy from waste facility, additional investment income and lower than forecast capital financing costs.
- 5.5 Cabinet noted the risk and performance information in the report. Particularly highlighting progress made in reducing emissions from public transport with the introduction of fifty-eight zero emissions buses. They also reflected that in the first half of the year a high number of SEND related complaints been upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman, although there had been a significant reduction in the later part of the year.
- 5.6 There was a discussion around the long-term thinking and planning within the budget. In particular, around providing resources to support the children's budget, including the timeliness of EHCP assessments, as well as investing in roads and ensuring balance by keeping a close eye on reserves. Members noted the Energy from Waste facility and the income generated through that.
- 5.7 The Cabinet Member outlined the recommendations in detail.

Having considered all of the information, Cabinet noted the report and

RESOLVED to:

1) Note the 2023/2024 revenue budget underspend of £10.045 million, inclusive of £4.410 million arising from additional electricity income generated by the Energy from Waste (EfW) facility (paragraph 14)

2) Approve that the £10.045 million underspend is transferred to General Reserves at the year end with £4.410 million from this reserve released in

2024/25 to fund:

- An allocation of £2 million for highways projects to cover £500k to maintain 8 Find and Fix gangs throughout the year, £500k for refreshing lining across the network, £300k to fund Cheltenham Spa access ramp, £200k for further vegetation cutting gangs to improve safety on the network, £200k towards maintaining footways in our town centres, £100k increase to the schools safety programme, £100k to refresh crossings across the network and £100k to deliver the Merrywalks bus station resurfacing.
- An allocation of £2.41 million to address financial risks arising within the current year's budget including, but not limited to, the cost of children's placements, additional expenditure required to support the forthcoming CQC inspection and the introduction of the Procurement Act.

3) Note other technical reserve movements for 2023/24 as set out in annex 2.

4) Note the Council's £1.420 million share of the estimated 2023/24 surplus generated by the Gloucestershire Business Rate Pool and agrees to transfer this surplus to the Business Rates reserve. Included in this surplus is £780k ring fenced to the Strategic Economic Development Fund.

5) Note delivery of the £15.891 million of savings against a target of £21.101 million in 2023/24 or 75.31%. This shortfall is funded within the reported outturn position.

6) Note the capital outturn position for 2023/24 of £136.059 million against a budget of £161.319 million or 84%, giving an in-year slippage of £25.260 million.

7) Approve an increase of £11.763 million in the Capital Programme and additional reallocation of capital funds as detailed in section H of the report.

8) Consider this report of the Council's performance and risks and identifies any areas of concern requiring further analysis, assurance or action.

6. Childcare Reforms Capital and Delivery Grants

- 6.1 Cllr Stephen Davies sought Cabinet approval to accept and receive the Childcare Delivery Grant funding from the Department for Education and also to delegate authority to the Director of Education to distribute it amongst local childcare providers in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services
- 6.2 Under the Childcare Act, Local Authorities were required to ensure that, so far as was reasonable, there was sufficient children provision to enable parents to access their entitlement of early education and childcare, providing opportunity to undertake employment or employment related training.

6.3 In the government's 2023 Spring Budget, the Chancellor announced a series of reforms to childcare. Those were extensions to the existing sufficiency duty. There were two elements to the announcements.

- expansion of the existing early years entitlement
- the wraparound childcare programme

With that came Capital funding of £1,175,969 (80% for EY expansion, 20% for Wraparound childcare) and delivery funding - £4,266,300 (wraparound childcare only)

6.4 30 hours of funded childcare for children over the age of nine months would be introduced in incremental phases with qualifying working parents. From September 2025, all working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3-years-old could access up to 30 hours funded childcare per week.

6.5 The government's ambition was that by 2026 all parents and carers of primary school-aged children, who need it, would be able to access term time childcare in their local area from 8am-6pm

6.6 The funding was allocated to the Council to create additional places and ensure existing places were available for the hours that were required to meet current demand. The council would work with and fund primary schools and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers, including childminders, to introduce or expand before- and after-school childcare provision in their area where there was a gap in availability.

6.7 It was difficult to predict how many parents would take up the offer, and therefore to ensure enough places were available was a challenge. The Early Years and childcare service were working closely with providers and parents to understand demand and subsequently to create additional capacity, using the grant funding available.

Having considered all of the information, Cabinet noted the report and

RESOLVED to:

1. Approve the acceptance and receipt of:

a) £4,266,300 in Wraparound Childcare Delivery Grant funding from the Department for Education pursuant to the terms of a Section 31 Grant agreement and associated Memorandum of Understanding; and

b) £1,175,969 in Childcare Reforms Local Authority Capital Funding from the Department for Education pursuant to the terms of a Section 31 grant agreement and associated Memorandum of Understanding, for the purpose of increasing early years and wraparound childcare provision as set out in

the Government Childcare Reforms described in the main body of this report

2. Delegate authority to the Director of Education in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Early Years to:

a) Allocate the said Wraparound Childcare Delivery Grant by means of grants to schools and out of school providers that demonstrate a need for additional childcare places and a business model that is sustainable until the end of the grant funding period (on the basis set out in paragraphs 33 to 42 of this report) over a 2-year period (FYs 2023-2026) in accordance with the above-mentioned Childcare Reforms, in order to expand existing and/or develop new out of school provision;

b) Allocate the said Childcare Reforms Local Authority Capital Funding by means of grants to schools and out of school providers that demonstrate a need for additional early years childcare places and operate a business model that will be sustainable after the end of the grant funding period (as set out in paragraphs 34 to 43 of this report). Such allocations to be granted to schools and out of school providers in the proportions set out in the DfE Capital Grant LA award letter, over a 2-year period (FYs 2023-2026) in order to expand existing, and/or develop new, Early Years and Out of School wraparound childcare provision.

The proposed grants to schools and out of school providers meet the requirements of the UK Subsidy Control Regime.

The Capital and Delivery grant is to be allocated and monitored as set out in paragraphs 33 – 42 of this report.

7. Early Years Special Education Needs (SEN) Centre procurement

7.1 Cllr Stephen Davies sought Cabinet approval to increase the current level of funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant for the purpose of funding the commissioning of Early Years Special Education Needs (SEN) centres for a period of up to 5 years.

The Early Years SEN centres would deliver the provision of early education and assessment and intervention for children with SEN as set out in this report.

7.2 This related to £440,000 per year high needs funding for the purpose of funding the commissioning of 2 early years special educational needs centres. (£220,000 per year per centre, for a 3-year period.) The total estimated value of the proposed 3-year year contract for the provision was £1,320,000. If the council elected to exercise its 2-year extension option thereunder, the total estimated contract value is £2,200,000.

7.3 The proposed contract for the supply of Early Years SEN Centres would replace the current contract, which was due to end in August 2024. The

proposed new contact would support the Council's Childcare Sufficiency Duty, ensuring sufficient, quality early education and childcare provision for children with SEN. Investment in the procurement would support the early identification and provision of appropriate support for young children with SEND, enhancing the opportunity for them to transition effectively into mainstream education in line with the council's Inclusion Strategy 2022-25. This would reduce pressure on the school sector specialist placements and as a consequence reduce the High Needs block overspend.

- 7.4 Due to the additional support and funding available to mainstream Early Years (EY) settings, most children accessed their EY education entitlement in a local setting. Some children had complex needs that mean they are unable to access their EY entitlement and/or a multi-agency assessment in a mainstream setting. The current EY SEN centre pilot had achieved its intended objectives, with 80% of children transitioning to mainstream school. This was important for children's outcomes and reducing pressure on high-cost specialist placements and the need for out of county in non-maintained or independent special schools at higher cost.

The additional funding required to support the continuation and expansion of the procured provision would be delivered by the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). DSG was £45.7m in deficit by the end of the 2023/24 financial year with the in-year High Needs deficit being £18.5 million.

Having considered all of the information, Cabinet noted the report and

RESOLVED to:

1. Approves the allocation of £440,000 per year high needs funding for the purpose of funding the commissioning of early years special educational needs centres as described in Recommendation 2.
2. Delegates authority to the Director of Education, in consultation with Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Early Years, to:
 - a) Conduct a competitive procurement process in respect of a contract for the supply of early years special educational needs centres in Gloucester city and Cheltenham/Tewkesbury locality. The proposed contract shall continue for an initial period of 3 years and include an option to extend its term for a further period of not more than 2 years.
 - b) Award such contract to the preferred tenderer; and
 - c) Determine whether to exercise the option to extend the term of the said contract on its third anniversary.

8. Community and Accommodation Based Support: two-year option to extend existing contracts

- 8.1 Cllr Stephan Fifield sought Cabinet approval to exercise the final 2-year option to extend the term of the council's existing Community and Accommodation Based Support (CABS) contracts described in Appendix 1, following the expiry of their initial 3-year term and the first 2-year extension term on 31st March 2025.
- 8.2 CABS services operated within a broader partnership of Local Authority Housing Services, Mental Health Services, Drug and Alcohol Services, Social Services and Health Services that worked together to intervene as early as possible to prevent further risk of harm and escalation of need for individuals in vulnerable circumstances (including care leavers). CABS services offered good value for money and achieved positive outcomes for some of the county's most vulnerable residents. They helped to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping by giving people the skills and resilience to manage challenges in their lives and maintain or access accommodation. This in turn helped avoid further pressure on statutory services.
- 8.3 The total maximum value of the proposed 2-year extension to the term of the contracts was £13.2M which would be funded from within existing budgets.

Having considered all of the information, Cabinet noted the report and

RESOLVED to:

Approve the final 2-year extension to the term of the council's call-off contracts described in Appendix 1 hereto under the council's Multi Provider Pseudo Framework Agreement for the provision of Community and Accommodation Based Support Services for Homelessness and People in Vulnerable Circumstances that was awarded pursuant to a decision by Cabinet dated 30th January 2019. Such extensions shall commence on 1st April 2025 and be effected in accordance with the extension option provisions of such call-off contracts.

Provider and contract details are outlined in Appendix 1 to this report.

9. Community and Adult Skills Programmes 2024 – 2025

- 9.1 Cllr Philip Robinson sought Cabinet approval to:
1. Run a competitive procurement process using a bespoke 2-year framework for the provision of adult learning services and then to award call off contract(s) of varying lengths up to a maximum of 12 months, depending on the type of courses or piece of work, for the 2024 – 2025 academic year.

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

2. Enter into the funding agreement with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for the purpose of funding the delivery of Community Learning and the Adult Skills Programme during the 2024 -2025 academic year.

- 9.2 Without the Education and Skills Funding Agency funding, the Adult Learning Direct Delivery Service (Adult Education in Gloucestershire) would not be able to continue to deliver Adult Education in Gloucestershire in the 2024 - 2025 academic year or procure the delivery of such services from the third-party providers. The combined aggregate value of the Call-Off Contracts described in the recommendations in the cabinet report should not exceed £4000,000.00. The costs of the Adult Education contracts would be met from the ESFA grant, totalling £2,859,085 for the 2024 – 2025 academic year.

Having considered all of the information, Cabinet noted the report and

RESOLVED to:

Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment, and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport to:

1. Enter into a funding agreement with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) under which the council has received ESFA funding for the purpose of delivering Community Learning and Adult Skills Programmes during the 2024 – 2025 academic year (1st August 2024 to 31st July 2025).

2. Conduct a mini-competition process, under each of the following Lots of the council's bespoke Community and Adult Skills Framework Agreement, in respect of 5 call-off contracts for the supply of adult learning:

- First Steps
- Employability
- Adults with Learning Disabilities and/or Difficulties (ALDD)
- Steps into Work (Supported Internships)
- Local Flex (Responding to identified/emerging local need)

Each call-off contract shall continue for a period of 12 months or less, according to the type of courses or pieces of work required in the 2024 – 2025 academic year.

3. Award each Call-Off Contract to the preferred tenderer.

10. Solar PV Installations using Salix Finance Loan

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

- 10.1 Cllr David Gray sought Cabinet approval for a £1,000,000 two phase programme for the delivery of photovoltaic solar panels across the GCC estate.
- 10.2 The Salix fund was designed to assist local authorities in reducing their energy consumption and associated emission. The programme would be delivered in two phases. Phase 1 would deliver solar panels on 11 identified council owned properties, with an estimated value of £550K. The initial 11 sites would save nearly 100 tonnes of CO₂e annually.
- 10.3 Phase 2 had an estimated value of £450K and would included the design and delivery of PV panels on further sites subject to the business case demonstrating return on investment.
- 10.4 The total value of the project funding required was £1,000,000. £500k interest free loan arrangement with Salix and £500K from GCC Invest to Save fund. £500K of Salix match funding would be repaid by means of agreed fixed repayments over a 10-year period. The £500K Invest to Save fund would be repaid in parallel from the remaining annual savings thereafter.
- 10.5 It was noted that under a separate solar project GCC was investing an additional £2 million to install solar panels on maintained schools across the county.

Having considered all of the information, Cabinet noted the report and

RESOLVED to:

1. Approve the use of £550k for the purpose of part funding the contract(s) described in Recommendation 3(b) relating to the design, supply and installation of photovoltaic solar panels at the following eleven GCC- owned properties during the initial phase of the programme described in paragraph 2 of this report (the "PV Panel Programme"):

- a. Quedgeley Library, Gloucester
- b. Lydney Library
- c. Newent Library
- d. Whaddon Youth Centre, Cheltenham
- e. Cheltenham Library
- f. Hesters Way Library, Cheltenham
- g. Oakwood Children's Centre, Cheltenham
- h. Gloucestershire Heritage Hub, Gloucester
- i. Coroners Court, Gloucester
- j. Tewkesbury Youth Support Centre
- k. The Vibe, Coney Hill, Gloucester

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

2. Approve the use of £450k for the purpose of funding a further phase of the PV Panel Programme under the contract(s) described in Recommendation 3(b).

3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning and the Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member for Finance and Change to:

a. Approve business cases for the design, supply, and installation of Solar PV panels (with or without battery storage), as part of the second phase of the PV Panel Programme, provided the total value of such works does not exceed £450k and that the works are in line with the council's and Salix's (i.e., the loan provider's) approved Return on Investment and best value obligations.

b. Conduct a competitive procurement process in respect of contract(s) for the design, supply and installation of solar PV panels (with or without battery storage) under both phases of the PV Panel Programme

c. Awards such contract(s) to the preferred tenderer.

11. Exempt Minutes

Cabinet agreed to consider the minutes without debate and without moving into exempt session.

The exempt minutes of the meeting on 15 May 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

Leader of Council

Meeting concluded at 10.40 am