



Gloucestershire

COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of meeting of the Cabinet

Held on WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH 2019

**PETER BUNGARD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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

CABINET MINUTES	Gloucestershire County Council
13 March 2019	

Present:

Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Leader of the Council
Cllr Ray Theodoulou	Finance and Change
Cllr Richard Boyles	Children and Young People
Cllr Tim Harman	Public Health and Communities
Cllr Nigel Moor	Fire, Planning and Infrastructure
Cllr Vernon Smith	Highways and Flood
Cllr Lynden Stowe	Economy, Skills and Growth
Cllr Roger Wilson	Adult Social Care Commissioning

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cabinet Member Cllr Dave Norman (Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Parking and Libraries) and Cllr Kathy Williams (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care (Delivery)).

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2019 were confirmed and agreed as a correct record of that meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

4. Questions at Cabinet Meetings

A total of 12 (member) questions were submitted for consideration prior to the meeting.

Please refer to the link below to view the responses to the questions: -

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<http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/documents/b15143/Member%20Questions%20and%20Answers%20-%202013%20March%202019%20Wednesday%2013-Mar-2019%2010.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=9>

If unable to access the document at the link above, please go to the link below and select the 'Cabinet Questions and Answers' PDF document at the top of the web page: -

<http://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=117&MId=9225&Ver=4>

The following supplementary questions were asked at the meeting.

Question 1: Cllr Colin Hay

Agenda item 5: Financial Monitoring Report

Children and Families (Point 20)

Cllr Hay asked the cabinet member to provide budget details on the funding spent on delivering the council's youth support services over the past 10 years.

Response by: Cllr Richard Boyles (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

Cllr Boyles explained the difficulty in providing this information but agreed to speak with officers to answer the question more fully.

Question 2: Cllr Colin Hay

Agenda item 5: Financial Monitoring Report

Children and Families (Point 24)

In response to the comment that other authorities were experiencing the same recruitment and retention difficulties as Gloucestershire, Cllr Hay asked if this meant there was no agreement on the setting the salaries of permanent social worker staff and if the cabinet member could foresee a change in this position before 20 March 2019.

Response by: Cllr Richard Boyles (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

Cllr Boyles confirmed there was an agreement and that the salaries of this and other authorities were constantly scanned and would be taken back to the South West Recruitment and Retention Group meeting on 20 March 2019. Other factors would be considered, not just pay, in the council's approach to supporting social workers. The council would also be developing its own bespoke Academy to build on the work of the South West cohort.

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Question 3: Cllr Colin Hay

Agenda item 5: Financial Monitoring Report

Children and Families (Point 27)

Cllr Hay asked what advice had been given to the Schools Forum by council officers?

Response by: Cllr Richard Boyles (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

Cllr Boyles confirmed that the advice to the Schools Forum was on public record and could be viewed in the minutes for that meeting.

Question 4: Cllr Colin Hay

Agenda item 5: Financial Monitoring Report

Children and Families (Point 27)

Cllr Hay questioned the advice given at the Schools Forum meeting and asked if the cabinet member thought the recommendation to change from 'one in 75' to '1 in 40' would damage education standards and if the change had been agreed by all schools?

Response by: Cllr Richard Boyles (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

Cllr Boyles confirmed that the council had consulted with all schools and that the change to 1 in 40 had been approved by the Schools Forum. He explained that the council continued to try to support the most exceptional schools in the county. Acknowledging the difficulties changes in funding presented to schools the cabinet member reaffirmed the council's lobbying of MP's and officers lobbying of government to obtain the best deal for Gloucestershire Schools.

Question 6: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson

Agenda item 7: Cost Pressures and Continued Support for Subsidised Public Transport Contracts

Cllr Hodgkinson referred to the £1m reduction in the council's funding of public transport since 2015 and asked how the cabinet member felt personally about the reduction?

Response by: Cllr Nigel Moor (Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning)

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Cllr Moor referred to the council's £223k investment in public transport provision and acknowledged the impact of inflation on funding. The council remained proactive at looking at the subsidy policy and continued to work with public transport providers to maintain services.

Question 7: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson

Agenda item 7: Cost Pressures and Continued Support for Subsidised Public Transport Contracts

Referring to reduced funding towards public transport during the past 5 years, Cllr Hodgkinson questioned whether the cabinet member (with responsibility for climate change) considered the provision of local bus services a critical tool in reducing the county's carbon omissions?

Response by: Cllr Nigel Moor (Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning)

Cllr Moor clarified that investment in public transport provision was one of the tools at work at the county council in addressing the impact of climate change. The council also continued to look at the non-met areas of the county and was pleased with the county's reduction in carbon emissions. Cllr Moor also referred to the significant growth in public transport provision in the Cheltenham area.

Question 8: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson

Agenda item 7: Cost Pressures and Continued Support for Subsidised Public Transport Contracts

Cllr Hodgkinson referred to the year on year population increase of Gloucestershire over the past 4 years and questioned whether the number of people using public transport was in correlation to the reduction in funding?

Response by: Cllr Nigel Moor (Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning)

Cllr Moor explained that there was a whole sector of social factors that needed to be taken into consideration. It was, however, reassuring to see the increase in the number of people using public transport in Cheltenham.

Question 9: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson

Agenda item 7: Cost Pressures and Continued Support for Subsidised Public Transport Contracts

Cllr Hodgkinson questioned the future of the reduced bus service from Northleach to Bourton and the impact on the community.

Response by: Cllr Nigel Moor (Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning)

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Cllr Moor confirmed that Section 106 contributions had been used to retain the Northleach to Bourton service and that the council continued to work with the service provider to support this investment. A decision on the future of the bus service had yet to be made but every effort would be made to retain a regular service.

Question 10: Cllr Paul Hodgkinson

Agenda item 7: Cost Pressures and Continued Support for Subsidised Public Transport Contracts

Cllr Hodgkinson expressed concern about the impact the decision to reduce services was having on the number of passengers reliant on the service. Cllr Hodgkinson described the relationship as a 'catch 22 situation' and asked what the cabinet member was going to do to prevent the number of passengers using public transport declining due to reduced service provision.

Response by: Cllr Nigel Moor (Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning)

Cllr Moor felt this was an exaggeration of the position and that the issues to be considered were operational issues. The council continued to look at such issues and had commissioned work to improve the situation. One area of work the council was focussing on was investing in community transport provision to fill any gaps in commercial service delivery.

Question 12: Cllr Lesley Williams

Agenda item 7: Cost Pressures and Continued Support for Subsidised Public Transport Contracts

Cllr Williams enquired about the decision to appoint TAS Consultancy to undertake a review of bus service provision in Gloucestershire. Cllr Williams also asked why the council had not commissioned local universities to undertake the review.

Response by: Cllr Nigel Moor (Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning)

Cllr Moor advised members that TAS Consultancy was very experienced in this area of work and in working with commercial operators. The review would provide real insight into bus service provision for Gloucestershire. Reflecting on the reduction in the number of bus companies operating across the county or willing to compete with large company operators, Cllr Moor stated this would be an area to be considered by the work undertaken during the review.

5. Financial Monitoring Report 2018-19

Cllr Ray Theodoulou, Cabinet Member for Finance and Change, gave an update on the year forecast for the Council's Revenue and Capital Budgets 2018-19 for the year ending 31 March 2019. The update was based on actual figures to the end of

January 2019 and forecast outturn calculations to the end of the 2018-19 financial year.

Forecasting a year end deficit of £400k, Cllr Theodoulou confirmed this had been an improvement on the previous month, where the forecast had been £500k. Advising members of a number of significant drawn downs and transfers proposed to offset in-year variances against budget, Cllr Theodoulou explained that the proposals were required to address some of the ongoing challenges this and other councils continued to experience.

Members were advised that, delivery of Adult Care Services had resulted in a balanced year end budget, upheld from the transfer of funds from a variety of funding allocations and reserves. Adult Care Service reserves stood at £4.5m.

The Children and Families Budget continued to deteriorate, with a forecast year end deficit of £8.61m, (after transfers of £2.6m). Additional grant funding of £1.35m, (announced in December 2018 to support children with special educational needs), plus ongoing discussions with the Schools Forum to bring the Dedicated Schools Grant into balance, would attempt to alleviate some of financial pressures in this area. The Dedicated Schools Grant currently reported a net overspend of £1.54m.

Urgent efforts were being made to respond to the increasing number of children in care and to contain and reduce the costs of external placements.

Cllr Theodoulou reported underspends in other areas and funds held in allocated budgets (£1.5m), which would enable the council to manage the deficit within the forecast revenue account. Looking forward, the challenges to the Adult and Children's Budgets continued to present difficulties in meeting projected budget forecasts whilst maintaining good levels of service.

Savings in the revenue account were reported at £12.8m against a planned target of £18.6m, (68% achievement against target).

The Capital Account was reported as being in a healthy position, showing an in-year slippage of £1.2m (approximately 1.5% of the annual programme).

Cllr Theodoulou referred to the detailed recommendations included within the report, including the transfer movements proposed at recommendations 5 to 8.

Having considered all of the information, including known proposals, alternative options and reasons for recommendations, Cabinet noted the report and,

RESOLVED to:

1. Note the forecast revenue year end position as at the end of January 2019 for the 2018/19 financial year of a net £0.406 million overspend. This represents a £0.551 million improvement on the previous position reported to Cabinet on 30 January 2019;

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2. Approve the drawing down of £0.43 million from the Vulnerable People's Reserve to Children's Services to offset significant in-year variances on external placement budgets;

3. Note the forecast overspend in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) of £5.19 million in 2018/19, which reduces to £1.54 million after adjusting for the £2.3 million of uncommitted DSG balances brought forward and the £1.35 million additional funds announced in December 2018 to support children with special educational needs; and also endorses on-going discussions with the Schools Forum to agree actions to bring DSG back into balance;

4. Note the forecast capital year end position as at the end of January 2019 of £98.350 million against the current budget of £100.001 million – in year slippage of £1.651 million;

5. Approve the addition of £0.045 million to the Children & Families Capital Budget funded by a revenue contribution;

6. Approve the addition of £1.187 million to the Highway Capital Budget funded from a variety of sources as outlined in the body of the decision report;

7. Approve the addition of £0.004 million to the Waste Capital programme funded by a revenue receipt; and

8. Approve the reduction of £0.019 million contribution to the AMPS capital budget as detailed in the body of the published decision report.

6. Dynamic Purchasing System - Children and Young People

Cllr Richard Boyles, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, sought approval of a new partnership arrangement with West Sussex County Council to allow Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) to participate in the West Sussex Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for the commissioning of day and residential education placements for children and young people with additional needs. The current contract was due to expire on 31 March 2019.

Cllr Boyles informed members that the West Sussex DPS had been developed using knowledge and experience gathered over the previous five years. He reported that the council had utilised a DPS with West Sussex Council since March 2014, an arrangement that had benefited the council by allowing it to shape the market and enable providers to diversify and amend offers on the framework in response to need.

The new DPS agreement involved eight councils, with a proposal to run for an initial 3-year period, with the option to extend for a further period of not more than 4 years. The total forecast spend, (should the contract be extended to the full 4 year period), was anticipated at £100 million.

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Cllr Boyles confirmed that the council had developed a Sufficiency Strategy to run alongside the agreement. Built into the proposal were 12 monthly annual reviews; (to advise Cabinet of progress).

Drawing attention to the due regard statement accompanying the decision, Cllr Boyles proposed Cabinet approve Option A of the proposed options. Having considered all of the information, including known proposals, alternative options and reasons for recommendations, Cabinet noted the report and,

RESOLVED to: -

1. Authorise the Director of Education to execute a Partnership Agreement with West Sussex County Council (WSCC) under which Gloucestershire County Council shall be entitled to join WSCC's Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for Children's Placements and Other Support Services (CPOSS) for the purpose of commissioning day and residential education placements for children and young people (0-25) with additional needs. The proposed Partnership Agreement shall continue for an initial period of 3 years commencing 1st April 2019 and include an option to extend such term by a further period of not more than 4 years (expiring no later than 31st March 2026);

2. Authorise the Head of Services for Children with Additional Needs:

(a) To utilise the West Sussex County Council CPOSS DPS in order to commission and award contracts thereunder for the delivery of day and residential education placements for Children and Young People (0-25) with additional needs as offering the Council best value for money for delivery of the services in accordance with the DPS requirements the period described in paragraph 1.

(b) To report back to Cabinet at the end of each 12-month period throughout the period described in Paragraph 1 above in order to provide details of the aggregate value of contracts awarded using the West Sussex County Council CPOSS DPS in that period and cumulatively together with authority to enter into higher value individual contracts over £500K to be awarded within the subsequent 12-month period.

7. Cost pressures and Continued Support for Subsidised Public Transport Contracts

Cllr Nigel Moor, Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning, sought to delegate authority to the Lead Commissioner for Community Infrastructure to review, procure and award the council's transport contracts. The decision included the proposal to review public transport cost increases and inflation, bus subsidies and the competitiveness of the local bus market.

Cllr Moor referred to the questions asked earlier in the meeting and stated how he shared members' concerns about ongoing cost pressures relating to public transport.

Cllr Moor confirmed that the council currently spent £3 million a year on public transport services for people living in less populated areas to access essential services such as; travelling to work; school; shops or health appointments. Such services would not otherwise be provided commercially due to them serving less populated and rural areas or operating at quieter times of the day, including weekends.

Cllr Moor stated that during the past year, the council had witnessed contract tender prices incurring increases averaging 35%. To continue to support communities dependent on public transport, it had been agreed at the council budget meeting in February 2019 to invest an extra £223,000 in the public transport budget for 2019/20 to offset some of the increase. Investment had also been made in providing external support to review the council's contracting processes and better understand pressures from a bus operator perspective.

Referring to the due regard statement relating to the decision, Cllr Moor drew attention to the high proportion of older and disabled users of subsidised bus services and stated that it was important that they were not socially or economically excluded by any changes that might be considered. He confirmed it was his intention to consult with these sectors of the community, along with other bus users and listen carefully to their views before considering any changes.

To provide public transport to those in most need, Cllr Moor explained it would be necessary to review the council's subsidy policies and to consider the performance of bus routes, whilst ensuring the council stayed within budget. Should any changes to bus routes or policy be considered, officers would be required to make recommendations to Cllr Moor (as the appropriate lead cabinet member) or to Cabinet to make the decision.

Responding to a question asked earlier in the meeting, Cllr Moor advised that he did not think the proposed review of services was best suited to local universities, but that it would be better undertaken by a company selected as specialist consultants "at the pulse of the business market". In considering the wide range of issues that would need to be considered, it was important to have the ability to challenge.

Leader of the Council, Cllr Mark Hawthorne, believed there had not been a huge reduction in the number of bus services the council provided. Any changes had been made in an attempt to reduce duplicate commercial services running in parallel with community operated services. It was noted that there had been a good response to the services provided by the community transport services team, for which the Leader and the Cllr Moor conveyed their appreciation.

Responding to the suggestion that the council engage with district councils on the issue was noted.

Having considered all of the information, including known proposals, alternative options and reasons for the recommendations, Cabinet noted the report and,

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RESOLVED to: -

Delegate authority to the Lead Commissioner for Community Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment & Planning to

- 1) Review, consult, procure and award, where necessary, transport contracts; and*
- 2) Review mechanisms for contract inflation, bus subsidies and the competitiveness of the local bus market, and report back with recommendations.*

8. Schedule of Proposed Disposals

Cllr Ray Theodoulou, Cabinet Member for Finance and Change, asked Cabinet to approve two proposed Schedule of Disposals: -

- i. Sites not yet disposed of but surplus to requirements - Appendix A (Exempt information)
- ii. New proposals recommended by the Property Board as being surplus to requirements - Appendix B (Exempt information)

Approval of the schedules and declaration of the sites as surplus to requirement were proposed to deliver Meeting the Challenge 3 capital receipt targets. (The council's Asset Management and Property Services are currently working towards achieving a three year Meeting the Challenge 3 capital receipt target of £33 million for the period 2018/19 to 2020/21).

Capital receipts received and sales agreed at the time of the meeting for 2018/19 totalled £7.978 million.

Having considered all of the information, including known proposals and the reasons for the recommendations, Cabinet noted the report and, in line with the council's Policy for the Disposal of Property:

RESOLVED in line with the Policy for the Disposal of Property, to:

- 1) Confirm that those sites described at Appendix A (Exempt) and had previously been declared surplus by Cabinet in January 2018, (and not yet disposed of), continue to be declared surplus to requirements; and*
- 2) Declare the sites listed on the proposed Schedule of Disposals Appendix B (Exempt) surplus to the Council's land and property requirements,*

and in relation to both of these schedules, delegate authority to the Head of Property Services to dispose of the sites in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Change.

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Prior to the discussion, members were advised that, should Cabinet wish to discuss the contents of the exempt information reported at Appendix A and Appendix B of the decision report, consideration would need to be given as 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.

Cabinet agreed to consider the item without reference to the exempt information.

Announcement from Cllr Ray Theodoulou

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Change, Cllr Ray Theodoulou, announced he would be standing down from the council's Cabinet in May 2019.

Having completed 14 years in post, Cllr Theodoulou is the longest serving cabinet member, having taken on the role in 2005. Cllr Theodoulou was first elected in 2001 and will continue to represent the people of East Cotswolds as their local county councillor, and to chair the Pensions Committee.

Cabinet Member Cllr Lynden Stowe will take on responsibility for the council's finances from May 2019. A new Deputy Leader to be announced at a later date.

Leader of the Council, Cllr Mark Hawthorne, and Cabinet colleagues, thanked Cllr Theodoulou for his commitment and dedication to his role as cabinet member.

Leader of Council

Meeting concluded at 10.35 am