



# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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## COUNCIL

21 July 2022

7.00 - 9.44 pm

### Council Chamber

#### Minutes

#### Membership

##### **Councillor Steve Robinson (Chair)**

Councillor Beki Aldam  
 Councillor Paula Baker  
 Councillor Martin Baxendale  
 Councillor Natalie Bennett  
 Councillor Catherine Braun  
 Councillor Chris Brine  
 Councillor Martin Brown  
 Councillor Doina Cornell  
 Councillor Gordon Craig  
 Councillor Kate Crews  
 Councillor Laurie Davies  
 Councillor Stephen Davies  
 Councillor Katrina Davis  
 Councillor Christopher Evans  
 Councillor Helen Fenton  
 Councillor Colin Fryer  
 Councillor Lindsey Green  
 Councillor Jessie Hoskin  
 Councillor Nicholas Housden  
 Councillor Nick Hurst  
 Councillor Steve Hynd  
 Councillor Jason Bullingham  
 Councillor Victoria Gray  
 Councillor Dave Mossman  
 Councillor Nigel Prenter

\*Absent

##### **Councillor Trevor Hall (Vice-Chair)**

Councillor George James  
 Councillor Julie Job  
 Councillor Christopher Jockel  
 Councillor John Jones  
 Councillor Norman Kay  
 Councillor Robin Drury-Layfield  
 Councillor Jenny Miles  
 Councillor Loraine Patrick  
 Councillor Martin Percy  
 Councillor Keith Pearson  
 Councillor Mattie Ross  
 Councillor Lucas Schoemaker  
 Councillor Ashley Smith  
 Councillor Nigel Studdert-Kennedy  
 Councillor Haydn Sutton  
 Councillor Brian Tipper  
 Councillor Ken Tucker  
 Councillor Chloe Turner  
 Councillor Tricia Watson  
 Councillor Rich Wilsher

* Councillor Jonathan Edmunds	*
* Councillor Haydn Jones	*
* Councillor Gill Oxley	*
* Councillor Mark Ryder	*

#### Officers in Attendance

Chief Executive  
 Corporate Director (Monitoring Officer)  
 Strategic Director of Resources

Head of Property Services  
 Senior Democratic Services & Elections  
 Officer

#### Others in Attendance

Kim Hawkins (IRP Panel Member)

Claire Hughes

The Chair confirmed that due to the public interest in the Motion regarding the former Ship Inn site this item would be brought forward on the agenda and would be taken after Item 3. Furthermore the 'Our Service Standards' would also be brought forward.

The Chief Executive was invited to make a brief announcement where it was advised that she had received the resignation of the Leader of Council. The changes to Political Balance as a result of the new Political Group would be discussed under Agenda Item 4.

**CL.012**      **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Edmunds, Gray, Haydn Jones, Mossman, Oxley, Prenter and Ryder.

**CL.013**      **Declaration of Interests**

There were none.

**CL.014**      **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2022 were approved as a correct record.

**CL.015**      **Notice of Motions**

**CL.016**      **Motion regarding the Former Ship Inn Site, Stonehouse, is proposed by Councillor Nick Housden and seconded by Councillor Stephen Davies**

Councillor Housden introduced the Motion regarding the former Ship Inn site and explored the history of the site from 1997 to present day. He advised that:

- The site had been purchased in 1997 to allow for the widening of the road, work which had begun in 1999.
- Following the completion of the work, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) applied for planning permission twice however this was rejected and upheld on appeal.
- In 2005 GCC agreed to transfer Capel Mill, Wallbridge and the Ship Inn Site to the British Waterways.
- In 2013 the Strategy and Resources Committee considered the disposal of the site.
- In December 2015 the decision was made to transfer the site to the Housing Revenue Account.
- In May 2017 a proposal for 10 dwellings was considered and a public consultation held, the scheme was revised in 2018 to 9 dwellings.
- In 2018 a planning application was taken to Development Control Committee but was refused.
- Over £54,000 had been spent on the site over the last 10 years.
- The site had been inactive since 1997, the Motion was not aimed at following one direction but instead asked Officers to begin to explore the feasibility of other options.

Councillor Ross introduced her amendment to the Motion which included a paragraph regarding ensuring that value is received through housing or an appropriate valued receipt. The amendment proposed carried on from Paragraph 5 of the original Motion as below:

'6. That there is a requirement to ensure value is received from the Council's property assets, and as the site sits in the Housing Revenue Account this needs to be either

through housing or an appropriately valued receipt. Decisions upon the site should be taken by the Housing Committee.

**Therefore, this Council resolves to:**

Request the Head of Property Services to report to Housing Committee by the end of Spring 2023 on options for a suitable use for the former Ship Inn site in Stonehouse that:

1. Considers non-housing uses
2. Builds upon the District Council's Canal Strategy and this Council's previous consultations for all its canalside sites in this area and, in light of the Stonehouse Town Council survey, continues to engage with the community and other stakeholders in exploring potential future uses for the site
3. Invests any value from the site, if the site is not used for council housing, into affordable housing in the local area.'

Councillor Ross advised that they should consider non housing uses for the site provided that any value was used for social housing. Councillor Brine seconded the amendment.

Councillor Housden advised that he was happy to accept the changes to the resolution however he would not be able to accept the inclusion of paragraph 6 as he did not believe it was relevant to the decision. Councillor Ross advised that they wanted to ensure that any assets from this site remained in the HRA and with the tenants of Stroud. Councillor Brine advised that the income from the site needed to be used to develop houses in the district.

Councillor Schoemaker stated that he was content that paragraph 3 in the resolution included enough of a guarantee that any value from the site would be used to build affordable housing and therefore paragraph 6 could be removed.

Councillor Ross confirmed that she would agree to remove paragraph 6 from the amendment. Councillor Brine was unable to second the revised amendment however Councillor Schoemaker agreed to second the revised amendment which would follow on from Paragraph 5 of the original Motion as below:

**'Therefore, this Council resolves to:**

Request the Head of Property Services to report to Housing Committee by the end of Spring 2023 on options for a suitable use for the former Ship Inn site in Stonehouse that:

1. Considers non-housing uses
2. Builds upon the District Council's Canal Strategy and this Council's previous consultations for all its canalside sites in this area and, in light of the Stonehouse Town Council survey, continues to engage with the community and other stakeholders in exploring potential future uses for the site
3. Invests any value from the site, if the site is not used for council housing, into affordable housing in the local area.'

On being put to the vote the amendment was agreed.

Councillor Davies stated that if housing was possible on the site it would have been built by now and that the Motion did not force the Council in one direction, they had worked with the Chief Executive and Strategic Director of Resources in order to ensure that the Motion was not prescriptive.

Councillor Ross advised that they had explored other options and that a lot of work had been put into the site.

On being put to the Vote, the Motion was carried.

- RESOLVED To Note**
1. The former Ship Inn site is a canal-side piece of land adjacent to the A419 in Stonehouse.
  2. The former pub (The Ship Inn) was demolished in 1997. Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) had planning permission refused for a pupil referral centre (2001) and then in 2002 GCC had planning refused for residential development by Stroud District Council (SDC) upheld after appeal.
  3. In 2005, in response to Cotswold Canals request for additional financial support with the Canal Restoration, GCC donated this piece of land along with two others, as part of the County's agreement to contribute land which would benefit the Cotswold Canals project.
  4. In 2016 this council took the decision to sell the Ship Inn site from the General Fund to the HRA, with the resulting receipt being used on the canal project In 2018 the plan for 9 dwellings (down from initial plans of 10) were discussed at an SDC DCC meeting and after much discussion, councillors voted against the development and the application was withdrawn.
  5. Having watched the failed attempts to acquire planning permission twice on this site, Stonehouse Town Council in October 2021 conducted a survey, asking for residents' views on the site. The response rate from residents was substantial, in total 598 people from all over the town took part in the survey (all verified by officers) which equates to 9% of Stonehouse residents over working age. The overwhelming majority, 91%, did not want to see council-built housing on the site; with 95% wanting to see community facilities. A small minority wanted both. Stonehouse Town Council is now seeking further engagement with SDC.

**RESOLVED** To request the Head of Property Services to report to Housing Committee by the end of Spring 2023 on options for a suitable use for the former Ship Inn site in Stonehouse that:

1. Considers non-housing uses
2. Builds upon the District Council's Canal Strategy and this Council's previous consultations for all its canalside sites in this area and, in light of the Stonehouse Town Council survey, continues to engage with the community and other stakeholders in exploring potential future uses for the site
3. Invests any value from the site, if the site is not used for council housing, into affordable housing in the local area.

## **CL.017      APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND POSITIONS**

The Chair confirmed that Members had been provided with a hardcopy of the appendix for this item which highlighted the changes to Committee allocations or Political Groups in red. It was confirmed that a new Political Group called the Community Independents had been formed and that the Group Leader was Councillor Cornell.

Councillor Catherine Braun was nominated for the position of Leader of Council.  
Councillor Natalie Bennett was nominated for the position of Deputy Leader of Council.

**RESOLVED That Councillor Catherine Braun be elected Leader of Council and that Councillor Natalie Bennett be elected Deputy Leader of Council for the Civic Year 2022-23.**

The changes to committee allocations and positions were agreed as set out below:  
Audit and Standards Committee (9 Members)

**Councillor Nigel Studdert-Kennedy (Chair)**

**Councillor Martin Percy (Vice-Chair)**

Councillor Paula Baker

Councillor Stephen Davies

Councillor Nick Hurst

Community Services and Licensing Committee (12 Members)

**Councillor Chris Brine (Chair)**

**Councillor Beki Aldam (Vice-Chair)**

Councillor Gordon Craig

Councillor Kate Crews

Councillor Jonathan Edmunds

Councillor Trevor Hall

Councillor Norman Kay

Councillor Keith Pearson

Councillor Steve Robinson

Councillor Rich Wilsher

Councillor Jessie Hoskin

Councillor Julie Job

Councillor John Jones

Councillor Gill Oxley

Councillor Nigel Prenter

Councillor Ken Tucker

Development Control Committee (12 Members)

**Councillor Martin Baxendale (Chair)**

**Councillor Helen Fenton (Vice-Chair)**

Councillor Chris Brine

Councillor Martin Brown

Councillor Jason Bullingham

Councillor Victoria Gray

Environment Committee (13 Members)

Councillor Haydn Jones

Councillor Jenny Miles

Councillor Loraine Patrick

Councillor Mark Ryder

Councillor Lucas Schoemaker

Councillor Ashley Smith

**Councillor Chloe Turner (Chair)**

**Councillor Robin Drury-Layfield (Vice-Chair)**

Councillor Martin Brown

Councillor Chris Evans

Councillor George James

Councillor Haydn Jones

Councillor Norman Kay

Councillor David Mossman

Councillor Steve Robinson

Councillor Ashley Smith

Councillor Haydn Sutton

Councillor Brian Tipper

Councillor Tricia Watson

Housing Committee (12 Members)

**Councillor Mattie Ross (Chair)**

**Councillor Lucas Schoemaker (Vice-Chair)**

Councillor Paula Baker

Councillor Laurie Davies

Councillor Trina Davis

Councillor Colin Fryer

Councillor Lindsey Green

Councillor Nick Housden

Councillor Steve Hynd

Councillor Christopher Jockel

Councillor Jenny Miles

Councillor Loraine Patrick

Strategy and Resources Committee (13 Members)

**Councillor Catherine Braun (Chair)**

**Councillor Natalie Bennett (Vice Chair)**

Councillor Chris Brine

Councillor Gordon Craig

Councillor Doina Cornell

Councillor Stephen Davies

Councillor Nick Housden

Councillor Nick Hurst

Councillor Martin Percy

Councillor Keith Pearson

Councillor Mattie Ross

Councillor Ken Tucker

Councillor Chloe Turner

Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Gloucestershire)

Councillor Helen Fenton (Lead)

Councillor Natalie Bennett (Substitute)

Police and Crime Panel (Gloucestershire)

Councillor Martin Percy (Lead)

Councillor Chris Brine (Substitute)

Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Chloe Turner (Lead)

Councillor Ashley Smith (Substitute)

Appointment of three Mental Health Champions

Councillors Victoria Gray, Jenny Miles and Tricia Watson

Appointment of five Members to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group

Councillors Natalie Bennett, Robin Drury-Layfield, Jonathan Edmunds, Norman Kay, and Gill Oxley.

Appointment of two Military Covenant Champions

Lorraine Patrick and Chair of Council

Appointment to Standards Sub Committee

Chair of Audit and Standards Committee

Vice-Chair of Audit and Standards Committee

Chair of Constitution Working Group (Cllr Keith Pearson)

Parish Council Representative (Muriel Bullock)

Independent Person (Phyllida Pyper)

Deputy Parish Council Representative (Steve Ponting)

Deputy Independent Persons (John Acton and Adrian Stratton)

**RESOLVED To approve the changes to committee membership and positions as set out in the report and appendix.**

**CL.018      Announcements**

The Chair made the following announcements:

- The Council had recently learnt of the death of Mike Beale the Councils Senior Developer. The Chair offered condolences to his family and colleagues and confirmed that the flag would be flown at half-mast at Ebley Mill as a mark of respect and appreciation for his contribution to the work of the Council.

- All Members had received a copy of the Inspired Cookbook from Stroud Women's Refuge which was the Council's charity of the year. Members were encouraged to use the book to raise awareness of the Refuge and any funds raised could be donated.
- Congratulations were offered to Councillor Housden on the birth of his daughter and Jenna Day (Senior Democratic Services and Elections Officer) for her upcoming wedding.

The outgoing Leader of Council was asked to speak following her resignation. She stated that she had been appointed as Leader of Council in January 2018 and had been proud to put the interests of the people of the District first. She confirmed that she had submitted her resignation earlier that afternoon and was as a consequence of leaving the Labour Party. She further confirmed that her group was in total support of Councillor Braun and Bennett as Leader and Deputy Leader and that they supported the progressive values of the current administration and the delivery of the Council Plan. She offered thanks to everyone who had contacted her in support during the last few weeks.

Councillor Braun, Davies and Tucker all offered their support and best wishes to Councillor Cornell and welcomed Councillor Braun into the role.

#### **CL.019      Public Question Time**

There were none.

#### **CL.020      Our Service Standards**

The Chair confirmed that this item had been brought forward on the Agenda. Councillor Brine introduced the report and confirmed that the Service Standards had been considered by a cross-party working group and had been discussed at Committees. He advised that 10 days would be the maximum response time and that they hoped to achieve lower response times. He asked Members to report any responses that were longer than 10 days to help them monitor progress.

Proposed by Councillor Brine and seconded by Councillor Aldam.

Councillor Aldam thanked Officers and Members who had worked on the document as it would help to ensure that Residents received the help they needed when they contacted the Council.

Councillor Kay advised that they had worked hard to ensure the document was easily comprehensible and available to the public. He offered his thanks to the Community Access and Engagement Manager for working to produce the document.

On being put to the Vote the Motion was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED To endorse the decision made by the Community Services and Licensing Committee to:**

- a) Adopt 'Our Service Standards'**
- b) Report performance data annually to Audit and Standards Committee and Community Services and Licensing Committee; and**
- c) Approve any future amendments to the standards at Community Services and Licensing Committee and amend the terms of reference of the Community Services and Licensing committee in**

**Article 8 of the Constitution accordingly.**

**CL.021      Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel**

The Chair introduced Kim Hawkins a member of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to introduce their report and recommendations. Kim Hawkins highlighted the following:

- The purpose of the IRP was to review Members Allowances to ensure they were fit for purpose and reduce any financial barriers to being an elected Member.
- The last full review of the Stroud District Council's Members' Allowance Scheme took place in 2016, a review of the Members ICT allowance had taken place in 2021.
- A survey had been sent to all Members seeking feedback on the current scheme of allowances. 22 responses had been received and interviews were then held with 11 Members from each Political Group including members in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA).
- All recommendations made by the panel were based on the feedback received from Councillors and the consideration of other issues.

It was confirmed that the Panel wished to put in a robust structure of allowances that recognised:

- The heavy responsibilities and workload that Stroud District Councillors undertook;
- The difficulty and sensitivity for Councillors in managing challenging service delivery;
- The community's growing expectations of its Councillors; and
- The potential financial barrier to people from all sectors standing for the Council.

Kim Hawkins advised that the IRP had made a total of 30 recommendations which have been summarised on page 17 of the document pack. She proceeded to highlight some of the key recommendations of the panel including:

- The Basic Allowance for 2022/23 to be set at £5,976 with an incremental increase of £250 per year for the next three years and that the annual pay award would not be applied during this period.
- Special Responsibility Allowances to be set as a percentage of the Basic Allowance and the SRA's of the Audit and Standards and Development Control Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs to be brought in line with the SRA's of the policy committee Chairs.
- The role of the Deputy Leader to be formally recognised in the Scheme of Allowances and that the allowance for this position should be robust enough to represent the strategic nature of the role.
- Every Group Leader to receive a governance allowance plus another remuneration that was dependent on the size of the group.
- Asked that Council put in place an agreed Member Champion framework to ensure greater understanding of the role of the Member Champion.
- Updates made to the dependent care expenses
- Updates made to the list of approved duties
- The IRP will carry out a light touch review on an annual basis.

Councillor Pearson proposed an amendment due to the delay in the IRP carrying out the review which was originally due in 2020 and had been postponed due to the Covid Pandemic:

'Council RESOLVES:



- a) To consider the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel and approve the recommendations summarised in section 4 of this report, and set out in full in the Panel's report (Appendix A), **(subject to the amendment set out in b) below); and**
- b) To agree to make alternative provision for the Members' Scheme of Allowances taking into account the Independent Remuneration Panel's report **subject to the following amendment to Recommendation 1, 2 and 3 of the Panel's report:**

Recommendation 1:

That the Basic Allowance for 2022/23 **be set at £6,108** with effect 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

***This is an increase of £382, part of which is the £250 uplift to be applied for 2022/23 and the additional £132 is the £250 uplift that would have been applied in 2021/22 had the review not been delayed, minus the annual pay award of £118 that Members have already received.***

Recommendation 2:

That the Basic Allowance be developed incrementally **as shown in the table below:**

- **2022/23 - £5,726 + £132 (2021/22 uplift) + £250 (2022/23 uplift) = £6,108**
- **2023/24 - £6,108 + £250 = £6,358**
- **2024/25 - £6,358 + £250 = £6,608**

Recommendation 3:

That if, in **2024/25**, there is a significant shortfall for councillors in what they would have been awarded had the staff increases been applied instead, the Panel be given an opportunity to recommend that any shortfall be made up in that year.'

Councillor Pearson asked if the IRP were in support of his amendment. Kim Hawkins confirmed that the Panel had considered the amendment and accepted that if the review had been held earlier the recommendations would have been implemented in 2020/21 and therefore they supported the amendment proposed.

Councillor Watson seconded the amendment.

Councillor Cornell asked for any references to Stroud Council to be amended to Stroud District Council to avoid confusion.

On being put to the vote the amendment was carried.

Councillor Watson advised that the objective of the review was to ensure that the scheme was fit for purpose and to reduce financial barriers for elected Members. She stated that the scheme needed to be changed further to remove financial barriers and to ensure that they could attract the diverse range of candidates needed to meet the needs of a modern council and represent the electorate.

Councillor Hynd highlighted the removal of the cap on allowances for Dependent Carers and welcomed the changes and echoed Councillor Watson's comments.

On being put to the Vote, the Motion was carried.

**RESOLVED a) To consider the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel and approve the recommendations summarised in section 4 of this report, and set out in full in the Panel's report (Appendix A),**

- (subject to the amendment set out in b) below); and
- b) To agree to make alternative provision for the Members' Scheme of Allowances taking into account the Independent Remuneration Panel's report subject to the following amendment to Recommendation 1, 2 and 3 of the Panel's report:

**Recommendation 1:**

That the Basic Allowance for 2022/23 be set at £6,108 with effect 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

This is an increase of £382, part of which is the £250 uplift to be applied for 2022/23 and the additional £132 is the £250 uplift that would have been applied in 2021/22 had the review not been delayed, minus the annual pay award of £118 that Members have already received.

**Recommendation 2:**

That the Basic Allowance be developed incrementally as shown in the table below:

– 2022/23 - £5,726 + £132 (2021/22 uplift) + £250 (2022/23 uplift)  
= £6,108

– 2023/24 - £6,108 + £250 = £6,358

– 2024/25 - £6,358 + £250 = £6,608

**Recommendation 3:**

That if, in 2024/25, there is a significant shortfall for councillors in what they would have been awarded had the staff increases been applied instead, the Panel be given an opportunity to recommend that any shortfall be made up in that year.

**CL.022 Appointment of a Monitoring Officer**

The Chief Executive introduced the report and confirmed that the role of Monitoring Officer would be shared with Cheltenham Borough Council. The final interviews had been held on 11 July 2022 and the panel unanimously agreed to offer the role to Claire Hughes. The Chief Executive offered her thanks to Stephen Taylor for carrying out the role during the interim period.

In response to Councillor Studder-Kennedy the Chief Executive confirmed that the new Monitoring Officer would be working for Stroud District Council for more hours than the current Monitoring Officer.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Green.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

- RESOLVED**
- a) That Claire Hughes be designated Monitoring Officer for the Council in accordance with section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 with effect from the date of their employment commencing with the Council
- b) That the Chief Executive be authorised to sign a secondment agreement to second Claire Hughes for half of their employed time to Cheltenham Borough Council representing the shared monitoring officer arrangement.

**CL.023**      **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

The Leader of Council invited the Strategic Director of Resources to introduce the report. He advised that the report gave the background of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which had been launched in April. He confirmed that the bid was non-competitive however they needed to submit an investment plan by 1 August 2022 in order to show how they would meet the priority areas of the UKSPF. They had tried to ensure that engagement had been undertaken with partners across the whole of the District including the Local Enterprise Partnership, the County Council, Parish and Town Councils and Charities. He further advised that they did not need to commit to which projects would receive the funding however in section 4 they had set out provisionally which of the three priority themes the funding would be used for.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Turner.

Councillor Turner confirmed that she was pleased to see the level of engagement that they had managed to find time for with very tight timescales.

Councillor Davies offered his thanks to Officers for putting it together and hoped that they were successful in securing government funding.

Councillor Braun confirmed that there had been a lot of interest in the fund and that it would be an opportunity to support communities, local businesses and help support people through the cost-of-living crisis.

On being put to the Vote the motion was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED To:**

- a) Approve the development of the UKSPF Investment Plan**
- b) Approve the next steps and outlined plan prior to submission of the plan**
- c) In consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader, agree to the Strategic Director of Resources making minor amendments to the plan as required and then submitting the UKSPF Investment Plan bid by August 1st 2022.**

**CL.024**      **Acquisition of Land at Bath Place, Stroud**

The Leader, Councillor Braun, introduced Councillor Cornell to present the report. Councillor Cornell confirmed that the report had been discussed during an exempt session at Strategy and Resources Committee but had been published in the public domain for the Council meeting. She highlighted the following key points:

- The purchase of the site had been included as part the Levelling Up Fund bid.
- Planning permission had been granted for 47 2-bedroom flats and a small amount of retail space, however it had not yet been brought forward for development.
- Newland homes acquired the site in 2017.
- Officers approached Newland Homes regarding the site following a review of Brownfield sites in the District.
- Section 3 set out the due diligence that had been carried out on the site.
- If the Levelling Up bid was unsuccessful officers would seek alternative funding, there were currently funding streams available for Brownfield sites.

- The site gave the Council the opportunity to deliver additional social, economic and environmental benefits.
- A new capital budget was required for the purchase of the site, Strategy and Resources had recommended to Council that this was agreed.

In response to questions received from Members the following answers were given:

- The Council was in a position to fund the site, if they did not receive the funding required they would look to borrow the necessary funds and costs would need to be recovered from sales from the site. It had not yet been decided if this would need to be internal or external borrowing.
- The reports referred to in paragraph 3.1 of the report had been viewed by officers and reviewed by independent consultants who had been instructed to look at the site and all of the information. Officers were aware that the site posed challenges but solutions were available.
- The scale of affordable housing had not yet been agreed but the Council currently aimed for 30% on most sites. Officers would look at what level of affordable housing could be achieved whilst ensuring the scheme was still viable.
- Any offer made for the site was subject to contract.

Proposed by Councillor Cornell and seconded by Councillor Braun.

Councillor Cornell thanked the officers for the work completed in raising awareness of Brownfield sites. She stated it was a great central site and hoped they would win the levelling up bid.

Councillor Pearson stated that he was sceptical about the site and raised concerns due to his knowledge of previous landslips and the difficulties with building the banks of the canal in this area.

Councillor Hurst expressed concerns regarding the short timescale to agree to purchase the site and the stability of the land, he stated that the site had been through at least 3 different ownerships and none of those developers had brought the site forward for development. He confirmed that he would not be able to vote for the proposal and stated that if the Levelling Up Bid was not granted the council may need to fund this using its own resources.

Councillor Hall supported the recommendation as it would result in affordable housing, he asked for a commitment to be made that at least 30% of the site would be used for social housing.

Councillor Turner stated that the site needed to be developed for the people of Stroud and would be following the advice of officers through the process. The site had potential to add to the social housing stock and to enhance the wider area.

Councillor Patrick asked why they would only consider putting 30% social housing on the site if they owned it.

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy stated that they were in danger of going through the same process that they did with Brimscombe Port in finding a developer for the site.

On being put to the Vote, the Motion was carried.

- RESOLVED I. That the Council purchases the site shown at Appendix A to this report and delegates authority to the Head of Property Services to take all necessary steps and undertake necessary procedures, including entering into any legal documents for, and associated with, the purchase of the site as may be required to complete the purchase.**
- II. That a budget of £1.535million is added to the Council's Capital Programme for the brownfield site acquisition.**

**CL.025 ANNUAL REPORT ON TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2021/2022**

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy, Chair of Audit and Standards Committee, introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- The table in paragraph 4 showed a net debt position of £33,064m
- Paragraph 5 highlighted the importance of security, liquidity and yield in placing investments. Ethical considerations would be advised on the near future.
- Paragraph 10 showed the increase of internal borrowing.
- Page 106 included the external borrowing lenders.
- Highlighted the interested earned in paragraph 15.
- The Council has an investment risk reserve of £310k to cover any fall in value of the long term funds
- The treasury advisors had produced an economic report included on page 117
- Report showed a successful year for treasury management.

Proposed by Councillor Studdert-Kennedy and seconded by Councillor Pearson.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED To approve the treasury management activity annual report for 2021/2022 and the actual Prudential Indicators as recommended by Audit and Standards Committee**

**CL.026 Audit and Standards Committee Annual Report 2021/22**

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy, Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee, introduced the report and confirmed that the role of the Committee was to oversee and assess the internal control governance and risk management environment and instruct Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of those arrangements. Reports on planning and planning enforcement had been requested by the Committee in addition to the normal work programme and he acknowledged the work undertaken by Officers and Internal Audit to produce these reports. The reports provided a good foundation and progress would be followed up. He confirmed that work was ongoing to procure a new system which would allow Members to directly access the risk management system. Councillor Studdert-Kennedy conveyed his thanks to all the Members of the Committee and the officers at Stroud District Council and within internal Audit for their work over the past year.

Proposed by Councillor Studdert-Kennedy and seconded by Councillor Davies.

Councillors Davies and Kay thanked Councillor Studdert-Kennedy for his Chairing of the Committee.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED To approve the Annual Report of the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee 2021/22 as recommended by Audit and Standards Committee.**

### **CL.027      Member Questions**

Member questions were submitted by Councillor John Jones. The answers to the questions and supplementary questions asked were published on the Councils website [here](#) and listed below:

#### Question 1

Earlier this year, planning permission was given at Development Control Committee to develop 286 acres of land in Moreton Valence and Whitminster Parishes for a Solar Farm. This follows permission previously given to develop a Solar Farm of 118 acres in Longney Parish a couple of years earlier. There is already built and in operation a Solar Farm in the village of Cambridge, a short distance away. In addition, plans have been submitted for another Solar Farm of 153 acres in Arlingham Parish, and yet another application for an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinion for a Solar Farm of 185 acres in Frampton on Severn Parish, recently confirmed as needed. All of these sites are within a 10-kilometre radius of each other in the Severn Vale, not including some other, smaller sites operating in close proximity in the District. If all of these proposals come to fruition in the near future, it will mean that around 850 acres of good productive agricultural will be lost for a long time for badly needed food production, which I understand to be a key driver in this Council's ongoing strategy. This is not brash, stony limestone land that is found in the Cotswolds, it is fertile, lowland land that has maintained farming families for generations over many centuries for all types of farming.

What Policies does this Administration propose to put in place to prevent the complete saturation of the Severn Vale in the District, between the A38 road and the River Severn, by Solar Farm development, when other options could be available?

#### Response

It is both national policy and local policy to support the generation of energy increasingly from renewable sources.

Our Local Plan (adopted by Council in November 2015) states that: "the Council will support proposals that maximise the generation of energy from renewable or low carbon sources, provided that the installation would not have significant adverse impact (either alone or cumulatively) and includes an impact statement that demonstrates the following factors: 1. The impact of the scheme, together with any cumulative impact (including associated transmission lines, buildings and access roads), on landscape character, visual amenity, water quality and flood risk, historic features and biodiversity." (Local Plan, Delivery Policy ES2, officer emphasis in bold).

Individual decisions on planning applications are thereby made by the local planning authority having regard to the cumulative impact of proposals on the local area and detailed assessment of impacts are carried out through the planning process to meet EIA regulations and national and local planning policy.

National planning practice guidance encourages the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value. Whilst national policy does not prevent the use of agricultural land for large scale solar farms, the guidance states that the proposed use of agricultural land needs to be shown to be necessary and that poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land.

The Council's emerging Local Plan now includes a policy to avoid the unacceptable loss of healthy soils to development, particularly the best and most versatile agricultural land, where practicable, and this will be a material consideration in future planning decisions when the Plan is adopted.

Both national and local policy promote the diversification of farming businesses to support the local economy, provided that the new use supports farming activities on the rest of the farm. Farming families retain the ability to choose whether or not to investigate the potential for solar on their farms.

#### Supplementary Question 1

In the applications for these Solar Farms, the developers all state that the land involved is of poor quality, being rated Grade 3b or below, apart from a few small exceptions. In a recent Parliamentary session, the Environment Minister stated that Grade 3b land is included as Best and Most Versatile, along with 3a and above, and has been since 2016. Are there any measures in place whereby this Council can make its own assessment of land quality, perhaps carrying out its own assessment and not simply rely on figures produced by applicants?

#### Response

Provisional agricultural land classification maps were published by the former Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF), now the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), in the 1980s at a 1:250,000 scale (quarter inch to the mile) and Defra has made them available digitally on their MAGIC website within the landscape section of its interactive maps. Where the presence of best and most versatile land may be a material planning consideration but no soil survey reports are available, appropriately qualified soil consultants should carry out site surveys to confirm soil quality. These can be employed either by the local planning authority or by site promoters. Guidance on how to undertake the surveys is available from Government websites and Natural England will check on the methodology used by consultants through their statutory consultee role, to ensure a robust approach is taken.

#### Question 2

In recent years, many square metres of industrial land in this District have been developed for warehousing and distribution purposes, for office space and light industrial units. On a recent tour of the District, I could not find many, in fact hardly any roofs of these new buildings with Solar Panels on them, all of the new buildings close to Junction 12 of the M5 being a particular point of note. Using these roofs, and those of similar places, would surely be a better option than covering green fields with Solar arrays, and go a considerable way to achieving this Council's objective of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

What measures do this Council propose to put in place to use these hundreds of square metres of roof space, together with brownfield sites that become available, along with all new industrial buildings proposed to be built in the District, to utilize Solar Power

production, so that even more productive agricultural land is not lost to acres of Solar Panel arrays?

### Response

The new emerging Local Plan includes policies to require the design of new development to reduce carbon to net zero. For industrial buildings, the use of solar panels will be an important opportunity to meet these requirements.

Some existing permissions do provide for solar panels to be fitted to industrial buildings. For example, at Quedgeley East, adjacent to M5J12, the industrial buildings have been designed with a roof structure and associated steelwork to accommodate solar PVs to ensure maximum flexibility for future provision if required. The units are targeting an EPC 'A' Rating and BREEAM Excellent. However, large scale solar panels on prominent industrial buildings may have a more significant landscape impact than at other locations and so it is important that proposals are considered on a case-by-case basis and with regard to cumulative impact, in the same way as solar farms.

The adopted Local Plan promotes the use of appropriately located brownfield to achieve its strategic objective relating to climate change and environmental limits. There may be opportunities for solar farms on brownfield sites, particularly in rural areas. However, the priority for brownfield sites in urban areas is to meet the housing and employment needs of local people, reducing the need to convert greenfield sites into permanent built development. Solar farms are normally temporary structures and planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use.

### Supplementary Question 2

In some recent planning applications, developers have been encouraged or even told to install electric vehicle charging points in each new property they build. What reassurances can be given that developers of large industrial buildings will have the same opportunities given to use roofs of those buildings for Solar Panel installation, thereby reducing the need to cover vast areas of green fields, which could also desecrate the landscape, the ecology and biodiversity within it?

### Response

The roll out of electric charging points is being led through building regulations and the emerging Draft Local Plan includes additional requirements. Progress towards net zero carbon reduction from built developments and the use of renewable energy technologies is somewhat different, as it is both national and local policy not to insist upon the use of certain technologies, but to allow applicants to utilise the most appropriate technologies available, provided that the overall impact meets building regulations and the emerging Draft Local Plan net zero requirements. Whilst the Council can encourage solar panel installation at preapplication stages, it is not possible to insist upon it, over and above other technologies.

The meeting closed at 9.44 pm

Chair