



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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COUNCIL

Thursday, 16 February 2023

7.00 - 9.54 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 Jason Bullingham
 Councillor Doina Cornell
 * Councillor Gordon Craig
 Councillor Kate Crews
 Councillor Laurie Davies
 Councillor Stephen Davies
 Councillor Katrina Davis
 Councillor Jonathan Edmunds
 Councillor Christopher Evans
 Councillor Helen Fenton
 Councillor Colin Fryer
 Councillor Lindsey Green
 * Councillor Victoria Gray
 * Councillor Jessie Hoskin
 Councillor Trevor Hall
 * Councillor Nicholas Housden
 Councillor Nick Hurst
 Councillor Steve Hynd
 * Absent

Councillor Norman Kay (Vice-Chair)

Councillor George James
 Councillor Julie Job
 * Councillor Christopher Jockel
 Councillor John Jones
 Councillor Haydn Jones
 Councillor Robin Drury-Layfield
 Councillor Jenny Miles
 * Councillor Dave Mossman
 Councillor Gill Oxley
 Councillor Loraine Patrick
 Councillor Martin Percy
 * Councillor Keith Pearson
 * Councillor Nigel Prenter
 Councillor Mattie Ross
 Councillor Mark Ryder
 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

Officers in Attendance

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

Head of Property Services
 Building Programmes Manager

Others in Attendance

Ian Mather, Consultant Engineer

CL.054

Apologies

Council
 Thursday, 16 February 2023

Subject to approval at
 next meeting

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Baker, Brine, Brown, Bullingham, Craig, Gray, Hoskin, Housden, Jockel, Mossman, Pearson, Prenter, Smith and Watson.

CL.055 **Declaration of Interests**

There were none.

CL.056 **Minutes**

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December were approved as a correct record.

CL.057 **Announcements**

The Chair asked everyone to join him for a minute silence to remember two previous Councillors, Sue Reed and Barbara Tait. Councillors John Jones, Studdert-Kennedy, Ross, Braun and Kay paid tribute to both Sue Reed and Barbara Tait and offered condolences to their friends and families.

The Chair encouraged all Members to attend Councillor tours of Ebley Mill that had been arranged.

The Leader, Councillor Braun, provided an update regarding the recent Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge progress review. The final visit had taken place on the 17 January and the report covered the progress that had been made on the identified actions. The Leader thanked Officers and Councillors for their hard work.

Councillor Davies announced that he had stepped down as Leader of the Conservative Group and they would be looking to elect a new Leader shortly.

CL.058 **Public Question Time**

There were none.

CL.059 **Member Questions**

There were none.

Recommendations from Strategy and Resources Committee

CL.060 **The Fair Pay and Senior Pay Policy Statement 2022/23**

The Leader, Councillor Braun, introduced the report and explained that the Council was required under section 38 of Localism Act 2011 to have a pay policy statement in place for each financial year, she highlighted the following key areas:

- The lowest paid employees were on the apprentice grade.
- The highest paid employee was a grade 12.
- The ratio between the highest and lowest paid employees was calculated at 1:10 which was within the Government guidelines.
- The current remuneration levels for staff.
- The Council utilised spot salaries, there were no bonuses, annual increments or performance related payments.

- There had been a slight increase in the head count from the previous year due to vacant posts being filled.
- The change to the National Living Wage had been applied earlier than necessary in December to support staff during the Cost of Living Crisis.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

Councillor Bennett commended the report.

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

RESOLVED That this statement was approved.

CL.061 Council Tax Support Scheme

The Leader, Councillor Braun, introduced the report and explained that this was to set the Council Tax Support Scheme for the coming financial year and to establish how Council Tax support would be administered for working age people. She highlighted the following:

- Since 2013 the Council had adopted the Governments Default Scheme.
- The Council intended to continue this in order to support more vulnerable residents.
- Administrative changes were made to the scheme last year to reduce the burden on the Revenue and Benefits Team therefore, income changes of £10 and under would not require reassessment.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

Councillors Bennett, Kay, Stephen Davies and Hynd commended the team for their report.

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

FOR: 37 Votes

Councillors

Beki Aldam

Martin Baxendale

Natalie Bennett

Catherine Braun

Doina Cornell

Kate Crews

Laurie Davies

Stephen Davies

Trina Davis

Robin Drury-Layfield

Jonathan Edmunds

Christopher Evans

Helen Fenton

Colin Fryer

Lindsey Green

Trevor Hall

Nick Hurst

Steve Hynd

George James

Julie Job

Haydn Jones

John Jones

Norman Kay

Jenny Miles

Gill Oxley

Lorraine Patrick

Martin Pearcy

Steve Robinson

Mattie Ross

Mark Ryder

Lucas Schoemaker

Nigel Studdert-Kennedy

Haydn Sutton

Brian Tipper

Ken Tucker

Chloe Turner

Rich Wilsher

AGAINST: 0 Votes

ABSTENTIONS: 0 Votes

RESOLVED To adopt the scheme for 2023/24.

CL.062 Council Tax Support Fund

The Leader, Councillor Braun, introduced the report and explained that:

- In December the Government announced an additional £100m of funding for Local Authorities to support vulnerable households already in receipt of Council Tax support.
- Stroud District Council was allocated £148,746 for 2023-2024.
- The discount would apply to current claimants who had an outstanding council tax liability for the 2023-24 financial year.
- This scheme was similar to the Council Hardship Scheme which was administered during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- There were no requirements for any recipient of Council Tax Support to make a separate claim under this scheme, as part of the billing process in March, all eligible residents would be assessed and the discounts applied automatically.
- A local approach could be established to utilise any remaining funding to further support those in need.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

Councillor Davies commended the support from Central Government and Stroud District Council for distributing the funding in a fair and sensible way.

Councillors Kay and Bennett expressed their support.

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

RESOLVED To:

- a) **Adopt and implement the scheme for 2023/24**
- b) **Delegate to the Strategic Director of Resources the ability to make minor changes to the scheme to ensure funding is used effectively.**

CL.063 Stroud District Council Capital Strategy

The Leader, Councillor Braun, introduced the report and explained that this was an annual requirement for the prudential code. She gave a brief overview of the Capital Strategy and highlighted the main changes which included:

- In the Principals of the Capital Strategy found on page 40. Item 3 had been amended to include 'will not' in the heading.
- The Priorities of the Council Plan were set out on page 42.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

In response to Councillor Studdert-Kennedy, the Strategic Director of Resources confirmed that the change of wording on page 40 was in regard to purchasing Capital Assets. It meant that Stroud District Council would not purchase assets solely for a commercial return.

Councillors Bennett and Braun commended the report and encouraged other Members to support it.

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

RESOLVED to approve the Capital Strategy at Appendix A

CL.064 General Fund Budget 2023/24, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Plan

The Leader, Councillor Braun, introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- The financial settlement had been agreed by parliament and was detailed in section 2.1 of the report, found on page 61 of the reports pack. The settlement for 2023/24 had been used to stabilise the financial position of the Council and provide new investment into the Council's priorities.
- Managing the impact of high inflation had formed an integral part of the budget setting process which was still above 10% and added to cost pressures. The increase in costs due to inflation were not covered by the financial settlement and were detailed in paragraphs 3.19 – 3.31 of the report.
- There was a proposed increase of 2.99% for Council Tax which was detailed in Appendix I on page 183 of the report.
- Page 65 detailed the current non-ringfenced grants which included an additional Funding Guarantee Grant to increase all Councils' Core Spending Power by a minimum of 3%.
- Paragraphs 3.2 – 3.18 of the report explained the changes to Budgets for 2023/24 which included the 2022/23 pay award, planning for the 2023/24 pay award and increases to the Ubico contract.
- There was an assumed budget gap of £3m at the end of the Medium-Term Financial Plan however the position of this, which was largely influenced by estimates of the future funding reform, were currently unknown.
- Section 5 of the report on page 75 highlighted the additional funding that had been allocated and highlighted that allowance had been made to accommodate the replacement of the Ubico fleet.
- Section 6 detailed the report from the Section 151 Officer to confirm that the estimates were robust and that the reserves were adequate.

The Strategic Director of Resources gave the following answers in response to questions from Members:

- Paragraph 3.20 on page 68 of the report stated that the council must pick up 40% of any additional costs incurred for homelessness or a long term disability placement. It was confirmed that these costs would need to come from the General Fund Budget.
- The decarbonisation of Stratford Park and the Museum in the Park was still considered viable with the current cost increases. This was detailed in the report at agenda item 9 for consideration during the meeting.
- Paragraph 3.41 detailed the additional funding for 15 houses for households fleeing conflict in Ukraine and Afghanistan. These 15 houses would be purchased in addition to any current housing stock and would therefore not have an impact on families currently on the waiting list. They would form part of the Councils housing stock after the period of use for refugees.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

Councillors Turner, Cornell, Drury-Layfield, Bennett and Braun commended the report were pleased that the Councils priorities were still being invested in despite the difficult budget.

Councillor Davies echoed the comments regarding the difficult budget and thanked Central Government for the support.

After being put to a vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

FOR: 37 Votes

Councillors

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Beki Aldam | Colin Fryer | Martin Pearcy |
| Martin Baxendale | Lindsey Green | Steve Robinson |
| Natalie Bennett | Trevor Hall | Mattie Ross |
| Catherine Braun | Nick Hurst | Mark Ryder |
| Doina Cornell | Steve Hynd | Lucas Schoemaker |
| Kate Crews | George James | Nigel Studdert-Kennedy |
| Laurie Davies | Julie Job | Haydn Sutton |
| Stephen Davies | Haydn Jones | Brian Tipper |
| Trina Davis | John Jones | Ken Tucker |
| Robin Drury-Layfield | Norman Kay | Chloe Turner |
| Jonathan Edmunds | Jenny Miles | Rich Wilsher |
| Christopher Evans | Gill Oxley | |
| Helen Fenton | Lorraine Patrick | |

AGAINST: 0 Votes

ABSTENTIONS: 0 Votes

RESOLVED To:

- a) **Approve the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan as set out in Appendices A-D**
- b) **Increase the council tax by 2.99% to £229.17 at Band D, an increase of less than 13p per week for the services provided by Stroud District Council;**
- c) **Note the uncertainty around the impact of changes to future local government funding**
- d) **Approve the Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix E**
- e) **Approve the planned changes to the reserves as set out in Section 4 of the report and Appendix F**
- f) **Approve the fees and charges policy and list of Council fees and charges as set out in Appendices G and H**

In addition to the recommendations from the Strategy and Resources

- g) **To approve the Council Tax Charges for the District as set out in Appendix I.**

CL.065 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ESTIMATES - REVISED 2022/23 AND ORIGINAL 2023/24 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2022/23 - 2026/27

Councillor Ross, Chair of Housing Committee, introduced the report and informed Council that the financial position had worsened since the previous year. She highlighted the following key points:

- Table 1 on page 195 detailed the changes to the budget from 2022/23.
- Rents were proposed to be increased by the 7% limit set by Central Government which was lower than the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1% which would have been 11.1%.
- New tenancies were not limited to 7% and it was recommended that these were increased by 11.1%.

- Shared Ownership Rents were now proposed to be capped at the 7% increase in line with social rents instead of the 13.1% discussed at Housing Committee.
- There were five Independent Living schemes that had district heating systems, a cap had been introduced to protect tenants from the increase in costs in the short term. Changes in gas prices would be reviewed during the year, and if necessary, a revised charge would be applied in year.
- Independent Living (IL) - Proposed costs had again been capped at the residential rate and IL tenants were eligible for housing benefits and universal credit to support with costs.
- Garage rents were set to rise by 7%.
- A new Tenancy Support Fund was proposed to support tenants with increased costs and £200k had been set aside for this.
- Additional budget may be requested in year to support the ongoing works with Damp and Mould in Council Homes.
- The New Build and Development programme budget had been realigned, this would result in an increase in the budget and would effect the viability of some schemes.
- Proposed increase to the acquisitions budget in line with the Local Authority Housing Fund.
- Section 8 detailed the transfers to and from earmarked reserves and whilst the budget had been balanced for 2023/24 and 2024/25, the balances were lower than recommended. There would be a full review of the housing service scheduled to take place in 2023/24.

In response to Councillor Davies, Councillor Ross explained that since the tragic incident of the death of a toddler due to the property conditions, Central Government had required all social housing providers to investigate damp and mould issues as a matter of urgency. Stroud District Council (SDC) had already begun looking into this. It was thought that the cost-of-living crisis had had an adverse effect on damp and mould cases due to the financial difficulties associated with heating homes.

Proposed by Councillor Ross and seconded by Councillor Schoemaker.

Councillors Studdert-Kennedy and Kay thanked Councillor Ross and Officers for the report.

Councillor Davies thanked Central Government for their contributions and the rent cap. He requested that if there were damp and mould issues within the district, this should be highlighted to Councillors and deeper analysis should be completed to understand whether it was due to lifestyle choices or building inadequacy. He concluded by stating that he would be supporting the budget.

Councillor Aldam paid tribute to the toddler who had passed away as mentioned earlier in the meeting and debated the generosity of contributions received from Central Government in comparison with the rising food bank figures in the District.

Councillor Schoemaker echoed Councillor Aldam's comments.

Councillor Ross commended the Officers for the report and expressed her support for the councils housing stock.

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

FOR: 37 Votes

Councillors

Beki Aldam
 Martin Baxendale
 Natalie Bennett
 Catherine Braun
 Doina Cornell
 Kate Crews
 Laurie Davies
 Stephen Davies
 Trina Davis
 Robin Drury-Layfield
 Jonathan Edmunds
 Christopher Evans
 Helen Fenton

Colin Fryer
 Lindsey Green
 Trevor Hall
 Nick Hurst
 Steve Hynd
 George James
 Julie Job
 Haydn Jones
 John Jones
 Norman Kay
 Jenny Miles
 Gill Oxley
 Loraine Patrick

Martin Percy
 Steve Robinson
 Mattie Ross
 Mark Ryder
 Lucas Schoemaker
 Nigel Studdert-Kennedy
 Haydn Sutton
 Brian Tipper
 Ken Tucker
 Chloe Turner
 Rich Wilsher

AGAINST: 0 Votes

ABSTENTIONS: 0 Votes

RESOLVED That:

- a) **The revised HRA revenue budget for 2022/23 and original budget 2023/24 are approved**
- b) **The movement to and from HRA balances and capital reserves as detailed in Appendix B and section 9 are approved**
- c) **That from 1 April 2023:**
 - i. **Social rents and affordable rents are increased by 7%, in line with national rent guidance**
 - ii. **Garage rents are increased by 7%**
 - iii. **Landlord service charges are increased by 7%, except Independent Living Scheme charges and district heating charges which are increased as set out in Appendix A**
 - iv. **Shared ownership rents are increased by 7%**
- d) **That the HRA Capital Programme for 2022/23 to 2026/27, as detailed in Appendix C, be included in the Council's Capital Programme.**

Recommendations from Audit and Standards Committee**CL.066 Unified Code of Conduct**

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy, Chair of Audit and Standards Committee, introduced the report and explained that Gloucestershire Monitoring Officers had worked together to create a unified Code of Conduct that would apply across all levels of government. He further explained that 16 Parish Councils had already adopted the code and asked Councillors to do the same.

The Corporate Director (Monitoring Officer) confirmed that many District Councillors were also members of a Town or Parish Council and the unified code would help to maintain the same standard across all tiers of local government.

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

Councillor Davies welcomed the Unified Code of Conduct and encouraged Parish and Town Councils to adopt the new Unified Code.

Councillors Percy and Studdert-Kennedy echoed the comments above.

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

RESOLVED to adopt the unified code of conduct.

CL.067 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY STATEMENT 2023/24

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

- The council held a training event for Members in early February presented by LINK services, the councils treasury advisors.
- The councils capital plans and plans to repay debt through Minimum Revenue Position (MRP) led to a forecast of borrowing for the councils capital financing requirement. Table 6 on page 237 of the document pack detailed the changes of internal borrowing up to 2025/26.
- The liability benchmark on page 235 of the document pack was a new prudential indicator for this report. Comparisons with the Housing Revenue Account liability benchmark could be found at appendix F to the report.
- The treasury investments had performed well over the last 12 months as interest rates had risen.

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

Councillor Turner thanked the Officers for the report and commended the Ethical Investment Policy. She highlighted the recent climate commitment roll backs from BP and Shell and urged the council to engage with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and the Brunel pension partnership to cease pursuing any further engagement and move to divest as soon as possible.

Councillor Percy echoed Councillor Turners comments.

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

RESOLVES To:

- a) adopt the prudential indicators and limits for 2023/24 to 2025/26;
- b) approve the Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24, and the treasury prudential indicators;
- c) approve the Investment Strategy 2023/24, and the detailed criteria for specified and non-specified investments; and
- d) approve the MRP Statement 2023/24
- e) approve the Ethical Investment Policy

The meeting was adjourned for a 10 minute break, during which, Councillor Wilsher left the meeting.

CL.068 Decarbonisation of Stratford Park Leisure Centre, the Museum in the Park, Stroud and The Pulse, Dursley

The Head of Property Services introduced the report and explained that the report was for the approval of heat pump installation at Stratford Park, The Museum in the Park and The Pulse. The current heating and ventilation plants had reached the end of their lifespan and therefore it was the right time to explore renewable energy sources. She highlighted the following key points:

- The Council had been successful in securing a grant of £4.69m from Salix, the delivery body for the governments public sector decarbonisation scheme. Further details of this could be found in section 3 of the report.
- Strategy and Resources Committee had recommended that council approve to fund 12% of the project which totalled £700k.
- Salix had estimated that this would save approximately 732 tonnes of carbon per annum.
- The project would also present an opportunity to provide the Museum with its own heating system separate from the Leisure Centre.
- There would be a period of closure whilst the works took place which would target the quieter periods for both the Museum and the Leisure Centre, the estimated loss of revenue was detailed in table 3 on page 268 of the reports pack.
- The main project risks were set out in section 7 of the report which could be found on page 270.
- It was hoped that a Member Champion from the Community Services and Licensing Committee would join the project board and provide update on the projects at future committee meetings.

The councils consultant engineer explained that the gas facilities at the sites would be capped off but not removed completely.

Members had the opportunity to ask technical questions of the Officers. In response to queries it was confirmed that:

- The current recommendation was for air-source heat pumps however as detailed in paragraph 2.5 of the report, they would look at tenders for both ground-source heat pumps and air-source heat pumps. The decision would need to be brought back to Council in order to agree a larger budget if they decided to choose ground-source heat pumps.
- The current heating and ventilation plants were at the end of their life which was why they needed to take action soon. It was also a requirement from Central Government that all buildings should be decarbonised by 2035.

Councillor Crews left the meeting.

In response to Councillor Cornell it was confirmed that tenders would be asked to use the Social Value Portal where they would be scored on things such as local suppliers.

Councillor Sutton debated the use of ground-sourced heat pumps and how they would work in an area such as Stratford Park which had multiple underground springs.

Proposed by Councillor Aldam and seconded by Councillor Hall.

Councillors Stephen Davies, Turner, Hurst, and Hall commended the report.

Councillor Aldam thanked Officers for the report.

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

RESOLVED To:

- a) Add the decarbonisation of Stratford Park Leisure Centre, the Museum in the Park, Stroud and The Pulse, Dursley, to the Capital Programme and
- b) Authorise the Head of Property Services, in consultation with the Chair of Strategy and Resources, Chair of Community Services and Licensing, and the Strategic Director of Resources to procure and award the contract for the works.

CL.069 Ubico Shareholder Decision

The Chief Executive, as the Ubico Shareholder Representative, introduced the report and explained that Forest of Dean District Council sought to extend their contract with Ubico to include waste, recycling and street cleaning services.

Proposed by Councillor Turner and seconded by Councillor Drury-Layfield.

Councillors Drury-Layfield and Turner commended the report.

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

RESOLVED To authorise the Chief Executive in her role as Ubico Shareholder representative to approve the variation of the Ubico Partnership's contract with Forest of Dean District Council to add delivery of their Waste, Recycling and Street Cleaning services from 2024.

CL.070 Continuation of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC)

The Chief Executive introduced the report and explained that they were asking for a further extension to the GEGJC whilst they finalised the details for its replacement.

In response to Councillor Kay, the Chief Executive confirmed that they were hoping to be able to bring a report back to Council in 6 months' time with a clear recommendation to move forward.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

Councillor Braun explained the importance of the committee and encouraged Members to support the extension.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was Carried Unanimously.

RESOLVED

- a) That the GEGJC will continue to operate from 31 March 2023 for a further temporary period as agreed at the GEGJC meeting on 9 February 2023, and
- b) To delegate authority to the Chief Executive to agree the length of the extension and complete the appropriate legal documentation to allow the Inter Authority Agreement to be extended beyond 31 March 2023.

CL.071 CIVIC TIMETABLE

The Civic Timetable was circulated as part of the reports pack.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Schoemaker.

Councillor Laurie Davies left the meeting.

After being put to a vote, the Motion was carried unanimously

RESOLVED To approve the Civic Timetable for 2023/2024.

The meeting closed at 9.54 pm

Chair