



Buckinghamshire Council

High Wycombe Town Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 18 JANUARY 2022 IN COUNCIL CHAMBER QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD HIGH WYCOMBE, COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 9.50 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

A Alam, M Ayub, K Bates, A Baughan, L Clarke OBE, T Green, S Guy, O Hayday, A Hussain, I Hussain, M Hussain, M Hussain, M Hussain JP, M Knight, S Raja, N Rana, M Smith, N Thomas, P Turner and J Wassell

OFFICERS PRESENT

N Adkins, M Dickman, C Gray, N Graham, J Hancox, D Harvey, I Malik, A Rahim and A Sherwood.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Ms K Wood and D Hayday

2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the High Wycombe Town Committee held on 23 November 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

4 ONE CAN TRUST (PRESENTATION)

A detailed presentation by Mr Graham Peart was conducted on the One Can Food Bank Trust, and a handout was tabled. The information presented included the average number of food parcels distributed per week and the numbers that had received support over the past 12 months. Members were also informed that December had been very busy and had seen a significant increase in the number of new referrals. In total 108 new referrals had received compared with 67 in September.

Members unanimously agreed the work of the Trust was of tremendous value and the work carried out by Mr Peart who had been involved with this provision for over 7 years had brought stability at a very challenging time. In addition, provision had now been extended beyond food provision to providing assistance with other issues and signposting, helping people to form

connections and to become more self- sufficient.

Another Member enquired as to how the Trust could be helped to reach people that did not have English as their first language. It was confirmed that this indeed was a difficult task and that further work needed to be undertaken to reach those groups.

RESOLVED: That Mr Peart be thanked for all his hard work and for the informative presentation.

5 PENN ROAD AND HIGH WYCOMBE CEMETERY

A report was submitted on the proposed burial arrangements and fees and charges for the Penn Road Cemetery and the proposed fees and charges for the cemetery at High Wycombe. Members were asked to consider the specific details regarding proposed burial arrangements for the new Penn Road Cemetery, which was scheduled for opening on 4 April 2022.

The report stated that following input from the burial sub group the Council had carried out a consultation with key stakeholders and partners to ascertain their views on the core proposed arrangements for the cemetery. The responses for the consultation which were considered up until 24 December 2021 were attached at appendix 2 to the report. The nature of questions asked during the consultation attached at Appendix 1, had focused on such issues as consecrated ground, scattering of ashes, vault/chamber burials, shroud burials and burial plots for cremated remains.

As part of the work undertaken by the burial sub group a review exercise was carried out of the current fees and charges in neighbouring authority areas, as attached at (Appendix 4) to the report. It was proposed that the burial fees should be increased in 2022/23 to cover the increased costs incurred by the service following the recent award of the grounds and maintenance contract for the Wycombe area. It was further proposed that the weekend short notice burial service not be provided due to staffing pressures, but that current model for Saturday short notice service remain in place within the proposed 2022/23 fees and charges. It was emphasised that this would be subject to there being no change to the existing cut off times for standby.

The report requested that Members agree to all the recommendations as set out within the report and that the extension of the standby end time for short notice Saturday burials be rejected, along with the provision of a short notice Sunday burial service for both cemeteries at Penn Road and High Wycombe.

Members deliberated the recommendations before them and a lengthy debate followed.

A number of Members queried the reason as to why parts of Buckinghamshire such as Chesham, Aylesbury and Amersham offered a Sunday burial service but that High Wycombe could not in spite of the large Muslim community residing there. The presenting officer stated that those particular areas were Town Council operated and that they worked on different costings. It was also confirmed by the Presenting Officer that whilst offering the service was not deemed to be good value for money in respect of the small numbers requesting weekend burials, it was a decision for the Committee as to whether they wished to subsidise the Sunday service at £30,000 per annum. In addition, it was emphasised that the regulatory services did not normally operate a weekend service but that officers would keep a watching brief and report any changes to the current system.

Many other Members spoke on the need for the Council to honour the needs of all sections of

the community in terms of the services that were provided, and as such a Sunday service should exist regardless of the cost. It was suggested that the scope for working in partnership with other agencies should be explored in order to provide a single shared cover thereby reducing the cost of the operation.

Another question raised was whether the Council could offer some degree of flexibility in terms of offering the service in the summer. The Member was informed that the Sub Group could explore and review the matter further within the first 6 months of the new cemetery opening. Members were also informed that in terms of the depth of concrete chambers, officers would work in collaboration with the sub group to ensure that the deepest depth possible could be offered.

A Member proposed that the decision on the matter of a Sunday burial service be deferred pending further investigation and consideration by the Cemeteries Sub Group which would reconvene with additional Members. The findings would be brought back to the next meeting of the High Wycombe Town Committee scheduled for March.

RESOLVED: That

- (i) proposed burial arrangements for the Penn Road Cemetery as set out within the report be agreed
- (ii) The provision of an extension of the standby end time for short notice Saturday burial services be further considered by the newly formed Cemeteries Sub Group and reported back to the High Wycombe Town Committee at the next meeting.
- (iii) The Cemeteries Sub Group reconvene to consider the provision of a Sunday Burial service at the Penn Road and High Wycombe Cemeteries and the associated costings.

6 HIGH WYCOMBE TRANSPORT STRATEGY AND LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

A report was considered which stated that work on the development of the draft 2050 Transport Strategy and the draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure had commenced and had been developed in parallel to ensure close alignment and synergy. The draft versions of the two plans had subsequently been produced and shared with local members for their consideration. It was anticipated that these would now be progressed to public consultation which it was hoped that the Town Committee would support.

In summary the 2050 Transport Strategy outlined a vision for the future ambition of the town's transport system. In total it proposed a total of 26 interventions for the High Wycombe area which could be taken forward for future funding applications and delivery. This would also feed into the forthcoming Buckinghamshire Local Transport Plan 5 and Local Plan. The draft Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan aimed to make these activities as accessible and attractive as possible for all ages backgrounds and abilities. In essence the draft Plan outlined a future walking and cycling network and a prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements.

A Member highlighted that he felt that the plans did not cover some specific issues such as resident parking standards and that Member's views had not been taken into account on the matter of e-scooters. He also had some concerns regarding the extent to which walking and cycling would improve air quality within High Wycombe due to the hilly terrain. As such it was difficult for him to support the recommendations whilst the report was in its current form. The

Presenting Officer explained that the proposals in the draft reports were derived from multiple options being explored and developed with Members which sought to achieve the economic and environmental outcomes that Members were aiming for.

Members acknowledged that they had been invited to or attended workshops on the draft proposals.

In discussing the report before them one Member stated that he would be accepting the recommendations based on the fact that he did not wish to run the risk of losing the funding and the opportunities for improvement that this would create. However, the Committee did wish to meet with the Presenting Officer in the evening after the consultation period, and then for the redraft to be submitted to the Committee for further discussion at a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That;

- (i) The draft 2050 transport Strategy and the draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan be noted,
- (ii) Public consultation on the draft plans be supported,
- (iii) An evening meeting after the consultation be held for Members to consider the public consultation response, and the draft report be considered at a future meeting of this Committee.

7 STREET WARDENS UPDATE

An update on the Street Wardens was provided for information and a short presentation conducted by the Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities.

The report stated that the wardens were part of the wider community safety team managed by a Street Warden manager. Members were informed that their role was to complete high visibility patrol with in the town centre to deter crime and anti- social behaviour, working in close collaboration with TVP and other partner agencies.

The report highlighted the benefits of such a service, but also emphasised the risk factors currently affecting the service for example the lack of long term funding, short term temporary employment contracts and the increased demand from other agencies to support festivals, and campaigns. The success of the service within High Wycombe had also led to calls for similar schemes in Aylesbury which had been established through Community Board funding. Similar requests had been received from other Community Board areas and discussions were currently underway to determine how this could be established.

Members were informed that there was a proposal to provide street wardens with Community Safety Accredited powers within the next few months. This would extend their current remit to allow them to undertake additional enforcement duties as approved by the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police.

Members were informed that a further 2 years of funding had been approved by Bucks Council to extend the Wardens Scheme until 2025.

A Member stated that he wished to see the wardens being offered permanent contracts and he

expressed his thanks to them for all the work they had undertaken so far. This desire to see permanent contracts in place for the Street Wardens was confirmed by all Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- (i) the report be noted
- (ii) A request be submitted for the contracts of Street Wardens to be made permanent.

8 SPECIAL EXPENSES BUDGET 2022/23

The Special Expenses Draft Budget for 2022/23 was presented for consideration. This had recently been discussed by the Budget Sub Group, which had made a number of proposed amendments to the draft budget. These amendments had been incorporated within the overall figures and approval was now requested. The draft budget would subsequently be referred to the Cabinet, and then to Full Council for its endorsement.

A summary of the draft budget was outlined in table 1 with additional details attached at (Appendix A). The proposed fees and charges were attached at (Appendix B) to the report.

Members from the Sub Group confirmed to the Committee that they had reviewed the proposed budget information in some detail with officers.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET that,

- (i) the draft budget by expense line for 2022/23 (Appendix A) be approved and it be noted that these figures now take account of the impact of the new grounds maintenance contract starting 1st January 2022, proposed fees and charges (which have been reviewed and considered with respect to competitiveness) and the council tax base.
- (ii) A 3% increase in Fees & Charges in line with September 2021 RPI be approved. For cemetery fees, a full fee review was undertaken.
- (iii) the Council Tax base and the precept as set out in the paper be approved. The Council Tax Base is set at Band D equivalent for 2022/23 with respect to Special Expenses for the unparished area of High Wycombe Town.
- (iv) the Council Tax Base for Band D equivalent for 2022/23 has increased by 520.8 to 23,526.25 properties for HWTC be noted.
- (v) Option 2 to Cabinet for setting 2022/23 precept for the unparished area of High Wycombe Town at £16.82 (Band D equivalent) be approved. This option cover up to 93% of the net budgeted expenditure for 2022/23 minimises a drawdown on reserve to cover expenditure and would help HWTC move to financial sustainability.
- (vi) the use of up to £100,000 of the HWTC working balance to cover potential High Wycombe cemetery improvement capital costs associated with health and safety and other legal requirements be approved. This spend was subject to a capital business case being prepared and submitted for recommendation to the Council capital programme.

9 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That,

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) All Saints Churchyard be added to the programme for consideration.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place on 8 March 2022 at the QVR offices.