

CABINET

16 OCTOBER 2018

PRESENT: Councillor A Macpherson (Leader) (for part of the meeting); Councillors S Bowles (Deputy Leader), P Irwin, H Mordue, C Paternoster, Sir Beville Stanier Bt, P Strachan, J Ward and M Winn.

Councillor Bowles (Deputy Leader) in the Chair

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of 12 September, 2018, be approved as a correct record.

2. NEW HOMES BONUS REPORT

Cabinet received a report on the recommendations of the New Homes Bonus Panel of 12 September, 2018, as set out in full on the Council's website. By way of reminder, the Council had in December, 2012, approved the allocation of a share of New Homes Bonus to Town/Parish Councils for projects designed to alleviate the impacts of growth on local communities. A budget of £2,045,679 was available for allocation in the latest application round.

A total of 13 expressions of interest had been received resulting in 12 formal applications as set out on the Appendix to the Cabinet report. The total project costs were £6,428,084 and the total of the grants sought was £2,485,675. The Panel had recommended grant funding totalling £2,045,009, leaving a balance of £607 to be carried over into any future grants round. It was however noted that as no decision had yet been reached by Government in relation to the future of local government in Bucks, new applications were not currently being invited.

RESOLVED –

That the recommendations of the New Homes Bonus Panel, as set out in detail in the Cabinet report, be approved and adopted.

NOTE: Councillors Strachan, Mrs Paternoster, Bowles and Sir Beville Stanier each declared a personal interest in the above item as District Council Ward Members in whose area some of the Parish projects were situated.

3. EMPTY HOMES POLICY

In Aylesbury Vale there were 239 private homes which were unoccupied from a total housing stock of 78,850 (as at April, 2017). This represented 0.3% of the housing stock. There were broadly two types of empty residential properties – transactional empty properties which were generally empty for six months, usually due to tenancy or ownership changes, and long term empty properties. The vast majority of all empty properties were empty for less than six months.

Empty properties could have a negative impact on the lives of people in the vicinity as they could be a magnet for anti-social behaviour. Tackling empty properties not only helped provide additional much needed homes, but also contributed to the improvement of the local environment. An empty homes policy which suggested a proactive

approach to helping and supporting owners to bring empty properties back into use. A copy of the proposed policy was appended to the Cabinet report which could be viewed on the Council's web site.

The policy allowed a flexible and graduated approach to bringing empty homes back into use and included offering incentives to landlords to help them do this before considering more formal measures. The policy would also ensure that the best possible use could be made of the funding available to return empty homes back into full use.

RESOLVED –

That the Empty Homes Policy appended to the Cabinet report, be approved and adopted.

4. CONCESSIONARY TRANSPORT REVIEW

In 2011, Bucks County Council replaced AVDC as the Travel Concession Authority (TCA). That same year AVDC and the County Council entered into an agreement which allowed AVDC to operate a discretionary travel token scheme on the County's behalf. Research showed that AVDC was one of only a few local authorities that operated a concessionary travel arrangement.

The discretionary concessionary taxi token scheme was an alternative option for people who qualified for a free bus pass but could not make use of bus services. There were currently 116 people registered onto the scheme for 2018. The scheme was fully funded by AVDC with a budget of £33,400 per annum. The tokens were sourced from an external specialist company. Qualifying individuals were able to apply for up to £90 worth of tokens per annum which they could spend with a participating taxi firm for essential journeys. The tokens could be used to fully or partly fund a journey up to the cost of £15. The taxi firm then had to exchange the tokens for payment through the specialist company that had provided the tokens.

There had been a steep decline in the number of participating taxi operators involved in the scheme (from 21 in 2011 to 5 in 2017). The primary reason was that the scheme had become financially unviable for them as the minimum value of the tokens they could exchange was £100 and the number of journeys being made was not high enough to make the scheme worthwhile from a business perspective. This was an optional arrangement and taxi operators could choose not to participate.

For these reasons the operation of scheme had been reviewed as follows:-

- Community transport schemes within the Vale had been mapped.
- A survey of current users.
- Consultation with the Transport Hub (run by Community Impact Bucks).
- National research on older people and transport needs.
- Conversations with community and statutory partners.
- A general review of the scheme as currently operated.
- Research of other options in other parts of the County.

- Commissioning Community Impact Bucks to signpost existing users to alternative provision.

The results of this research were appended to the Cabinet report and could be viewed on the Council's website.

Two options had been identified. The first was to cease the current scheme altogether. Discretionary transport provision was not a statutory District Council function. To work with other partners to ascertain whether some form of alternative provision could be made, perhaps utilising pump priming funding using the current budgetary provision. It might well be possible that the Local Area Forums might wish to become involved on a match funding basis.

The matter had been considered by the Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee which had expressed a preference for the second option, although the Committee had indicated that if this was not feasible then the current scheme should be ceased.

RESOLVED –

That some of the current funding, to be determined as part of the budget setting process, be retained for a time limited period for the purpose of providing pump priming funding (not revenue costs) for new or existing community transport schemes, with the process and criteria being decided upon the outcome of discussions with other partners.

NOTE: Councillor Irwin, who is involved with an existing community transport scheme declared a personal interest in the above item.

5. CAR PARKING STRATEGY

Cabinet considered a report also submitted to the Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee, and summarised in the Minutes of that Committee of 11 September and available to view on the Council's website concerning a car parking strategy for Aylesbury Town Centre. The draft Strategy was appended to the Cabinet report and could also be viewed on the Council's website. The Scrutiny Committee had made a number of comments, primarily in relation to phasing of some of the recommendations. Cabinet accepted the Committee's suggestions.

The strategy would be used not only to inform the Council's investment decisions relating to car parking, but also to provide information for the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan. The brief for the study resulting in the production of the strategy had been developed in consultation with Bucks County Council to ensure that all parking issues related to the town centre. The strategy set out how AVDC could work with key stakeholders to deliver integrated, innovative, sustainable and financially affordable service provision that met the needs of residents, visitors, local communities and businesses, whilst also encouraging sustainable modes of travel. The study leading to the production of the strategy had been produced by ARUPS.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the phasing of those items referred to in the Cabinet report, recommended by the Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee be approved.
- (2) That the proposed metrics set out on page 50 of Appendix 2 to the Cabinet report, taking account of the feedback from the Scrutiny Committee that the metric to measure customer satisfaction should not be introduced until after the improvements had been carried out, be agreed.

- (3) That Council be recommended to approve and adopt:-
- (a) The Car Parking Strategy set out in Appendix 2 to the Cabinet report.
 - (b) The phase one and two recommendations set out in Appendix 3 of the Cabinet report, and in particular:-
 - The recommendation (SM1) to set up a joint delivery board with Bucks County Council to oversee the delivery of the Strategy.
 - The proposed capital investment of approximately £400K (estimate by ARUPS), to upgrade the payment options (OM6).
- (4) That Council be asked to note that there might be a further request for capital expenditure to upgrade payment equipment in AVDC car parks in other towns, once the draft strategies for parking in Buckingham, Wendover and Winslow had been received.

NOTE: Councillor Mrs Macpherson in the Chair from this point onwards.

6. TO REVISE THE CHILTERN'S CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE CONSTITUTION

Consideration was given to a report suggesting revisions to the Chilterns Crematorium Joint Committee Constitution to take account of new crematorium being constructed in Birtton and which was due to open in Spring, 2019. The opportunity had also been taken to incorporate provisions in relation to the disposal of assets and sharing of surpluses on dissolution, which were not covered in the current Constitution. A copy of the Constitution showing the proposed changes was appended to the Cabinet report.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the revised Constitution of Chilterns Crematorium Joint Committee be approved and adopted, subject to the agreement of the other constituent authorities.
- (2) That the Lead Legal and Monitoring Officer, after consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, be given delegated authority to make any minor amendments that might be necessary.

NOTE: Councillors Mrs Ward and Mordue each declared a prejudicial interest in the above item as the Council's representatives on the Joint Committee and left the meeting whilst this matter was discussed.

7. CONSULTATION ON CLOSURE OF HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRES

Cabinet considered a report on proposals developed by Buckinghamshire County Council in relation to household waste recycling centres. The report could be viewed on the Council's website, but in summary were as follows:-

A: Proposals already approved by BCC

- Reduce the number of opening days at the Aylesbury (Rabans Lane), Burnham and Chesham sites, from 7 days a week down to 5
- Introduce charges at all sites for some types of waste
- Close down completely one site, perhaps two sites

- Consider charging residents from outside Bucks for disposing of all waste types at County sites, or preventing them using the sites altogether.

B: Areas of proposals open to consultation

- Whether to close one site or two
- The preferred option for one site to close would be Bledlow
- The preferred option for two sites to close would be Bledlow and Burnham
- Which two weekdays it would be better to close Aylesbury (Rabans Lane), Burnham and Chesham sites
- Whether to charge residents from outside Buckinghamshire for using County Sites, stop them using the sites altogether or continue to allow the same access as Bucks residents.

Cabinet felt that as a joint financing partner of the Bucks Waste Partnership it was most unfortunate that this forum had not been used early on to help shape BCC's options and proposals, share the learning of the research and have an opportunity to discuss the impact of the proposals on AVDC as a Waste Collection Authority in Buckinghamshire.

Officers had had to approach the proposals not fully understanding the potential or unforeseen implications to AVDC's waste collection services. Furthermore the approach to consultation taken by BCC in this matter undermined the potential to work collaboratively through already established partnership routes, which had led to AVDC not having the opportunity to help shape or influence BCC decisions, which would ultimately impact on the Vale's local communities, which all parties had a shared interest in.

Savings Potential: It was clear that opportunities to achieve efficiencies and savings for all councils was paramount. Although it was unclear what consideration and assessment had been made of the full quantum of costs versus savings, when considering the entirety of the waste services (from collection to disposal). For example if there was an increase in fly tipping as a result of day closures, this would add to AVDC's requirement to collect the waste at an increase in cost to AVDC. AVDC needed to understand what assessment BCC had made of the total cost to the tax payer as a result of closing sites and levying charges.

Charging Customers for specific waste types such as rubble, plasterboard, soil etc: BCC had presented introducing charges to customers at HRC's as a fait accompli. However AVDC had not been provided any analysis or assurance around the impact on household waste collections. Cabinet felt that It was reasonable to expect that small amounts of waste such as soil or rubble that previously would have been taken to HRC's would now be diverted to household waste bins. This waste would then enter the general waste stream and result in potential collection issues (overloaded bins/H&S issues etc). Ultimately this waste was then sent to EfW.

Growth and Improvements: From the evidence presented it was not clear what consideration BCC had given to the major growth in the district in the coming years particularly in and around Aylesbury when looking at the closure of Rabans Lane on specific days. The saving related to this particular aspect of the proposal had not been modelled against growth. Buckingham HRC was well used and had previously been identified as a site that required improvements. Again the analysis undertaken had not looked at opportunities to reinvest in other sites.

RESOLVED –

That officers be instructed to prepare a formal response after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Waste and Licensing to be sent to Buckinghamshire County Council along the lines of the dialogue included in the Cabinet report and in particular:-

- Expressing concern that the constituent authorities making up the Bucks Waste Partnership have not had an opportunity to view the analyses of the research leading up to the County Council's proposals.
- Expressing concern that the proposals appear to have no regard for the significant growth of the District which would require the retention of adequate facilities for the disposal of both general and recycling waste.
- Expressing concern that the strong possibility of the proposals leading to an increase in the incidence of fly tipping which would result in additional removal and disposal costs to waste collection authorities within the County have not been properly factored into the proposals.