

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF THE AYLESBURY VALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

This meeting was webcast. To view the detailed discussions that took place please see the webcast which can be found at:

<http://www.aylesburyvaledc.publici.tv/core/portal/home>

6 DECEMBER 2017

PRESENT: Councillor S Renshell (Chairman); Councillors J Brandis (Vice-Chairman), B Adams, C Adams, M Bateman, J Blake, N Blake, J Bloom, A Bond, B Chapple OBE, S Chapple, J Chilver, A Christensen, A Cole, P Cooper, B Everitt, B Foster, N Glover, A Harrison, M Hawke, T Hunter-Watts, A Huxley, P Irwin, S Jarvis, S Jenkins, R Khan, S Lambert, A Macpherson, T Mills, L Monger, G Moore, H Mordue, S Morgan, R Newcombe, C Paternoster, G Powell, M Rand, B Russel, M Stamp, Sir Beville Stanier Bt, P Strachan, R Stuchbury, D Town, A Waite and J Ward.

APOLOGIES: Councillors S Bowles, C Branston, S Cole, M Collins, M Edmonds, P Fealey, K Hewson, T Hussain, R King, C Poll, E Sims, M Smith, W Whyte and M Winn.

WEBCASTING

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Chairman reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the internet and be capable of repeated viewing.

Members of the audience who did not wish to be on camera were invited to move to a marked area at the side of the chamber.

1. MR B STOPPS

Prior to the commencement of the formal business of the meeting all those present stood in silent tribute to Mr B Stopps, a Member of the Council for the Buckingham North Ward from 1976 to 1983, who had sadly passed away recently.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 18 October, 2017, be approved as a correct record.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

4. PETITIONS/DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)

There were none.

5. PRESENTATIONS BY THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF THAMES VALLEY POLICE AND THE THAMES VALLEY POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Members welcomed Francis Habgood QPM, Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, who was accompanied by Tim Metcalfe, Aylesbury Vale LPA Commander. Mr Anthony

Stansfeld, Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner, was unable to attend and had given his apologies in advance of the meeting.

The Chief Constable introduced a short video on policing in the Thames Valley, after which he gave a presentation during which the following main points were noted:-

- The Thames Valley Police (TVP) had recently been inspected by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and been graded as outstanding in terms of its ability to make the most of its available resources.
- That the TVP's resources were continuing to be stretched, e.g. the number of terrorist attacks that were being averted was continuing to increase year-on-year, there had been 4 murders in the TV area in June, and there had been a 12% increase across the country in calls to the '999' and '101' numbers.
- TVP was committed to working together with communities and other agencies to make communities safer, and would continue to transform and innovate to meet policing needs now and in the future. The police were working with the public and communities to build resilience.
- TVP was an emergency service that kept people safe and brought offenders to justice. There had been a reduction in rural burglaries, although some of these offenders were likely to have moved and be operating in towns. One particular operation (Torby) had focussed on crime and issues occurring on the border area between the TVP and the Bedfordshire Police.
- Police were focussing on preventing crime, stopping exploitation and reducing demand. They were also developing proactive responses to identified threats.
- Information was provided on how the police were responding to "County lines" issues, which was a situation whereby gangs used children as young as 12 to traffic drugs in rural towns and cities, using dedicated mobile phones or "lines".
- The Chief Constable emphasised his commitment to neighbourhood policing, advising that each community would have a named contact for their area. In addition, the Police would work with partners in multi-agency problem solving.
- Police were working to build stronger, more resilient communities. This was being done through various multi-agency groups, Safe hubs set up in towns and the use of Special Constables as a part of rural crime teams.
- The Police would continue to use powers such as Community Protection Notices (CPN) to prevent unreasonable behaviour and Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO) to require offenders to participate in particular specified acts, e.g. attendance at a course to reduce behaviour or to treat drug addiction, and would also continue to use Restorative Justice.
- Police would continue to invest in technology including a new website, Thames Valley Alert app, Cyber Crime Investigation and 'Protect Your World' which were simple tips for people on how to avoid being targeted by cyber crime.
- TVP had a skilled and trusted workforce and was looking to see how best use could be made of the apprenticeship levy.
- TVP would be looking to improve the response to hate crime and the targeting of vulnerable people.
- Overall, Aylesbury Vale remained a very safe place to live and work.

The Chief Constable and Aylesbury Vale LPA Commander then responded to various comments/questions from individual Members on a range of issues, including:-

- that while communities could part fund PCSOs in their area, it would not be possible to part fund a police officer dedicated to working in a particular area as the police had to be responsive to issues happening in other areas. It was explained that PCSOs were best placed to engage with communities and could ask for additional support, if this was required.

- that enforcement action was rarely the best response to homelessness issues. Neighbourhood Policing teams worked with partners to alleviate homelessness issues and treated all people with fairness and respect, regardless of their circumstances.
- that people could report issues to the police by phone or by signing up to the TV alerts. While the TVP would receive more money through the precept as housing numbers and the population increased, this would also place additional strains on the TVP's limited resources.
- that it would be for the Police and Crime Commissioner to deal with issues such as lobbying the Home Office regarding resources for Neighbourhood Policing, while the Chief Constable was responsible for operational policing.
- that the police would look at how they could make better use of social media such as Facebook to assist with local policing.
- that a new operating model had been introduced in Aylesbury Town Centre, particularly of an evening and at weekends, to assist in responding to issues such as ASB and other matters. An operation had run proactively in the Town Centre and 4 arrests had been made in the last 2 nights.

Members commented that where orders were in place, i.e. PSPOs, it was important that they were properly enforced.

- that the TVP was fully committed to working to preventing abuse and had recently run a 'Hidden Harm' campaign to raise awareness of abuse across the Thames Valley. This covered a wide range of issues including modern slavery, child abuse, honour based abuse, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, domestic abuse and hate crime. It would also be helpful for local authorities to train their staff to recognise the signs of abuse, particularly given their work within communities.
- that the police would look to include information on County "lines" and preventing abuse in the briefings given to Local Area Forums.
- information was provided on some of the work that was being done to combat cyber crime, including where this was targeting vulnerable people.
- that additional staff members had been recruited to assist with CCTV monitoring, including of the Aylesbury Town Centre. Work was also progressing on consolidating all CCTV monitoring for Bucks and MK into a single facility.

In conclusion, the Chairman and Members expressed their sincere thanks to the Chief Constable and the Aylesbury Vale LPA Commander for the opportunity to engage in a frank and informative exchange of views.

6. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

One written question had been submitted by Members during October-November 2017. Written questions and the answers could be accessed at <http://democracy.aylesburyvale.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=441>.

7. NEW NOTICE OF MOTION: COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

The following had been submitted by Councillor Christensen and seconded by Councillor Mrs Harrison. (This was proposed amended slightly from that circulated with the Council Agenda and the changes are shown in emboldened type):-

“This Council recognises that with the withdrawal of Government grant we need to explore commercial opportunities which could offer revenue streams and create a sustainable financial future.

This Council notes that it has entered into the commercial environment with Aylesbury Vale Broadband, IncGen, Vale Commerce and LimeCart to date, with varying degrees of success.

However in each of these cases, corporate oversight and scrutiny of these ventures has been limited which many Members are deeply concerned about. In addition there have been conflicts of interest for Directors/ Cabinet Members and their places on the boards. They have had to meet their Directorship responsibility to the commercial venture and that of the Council. Similarly the Cabinet Members have been unable to answer questions to Members of this Council, citing commercial sensitivities.

Therefore this Council resolves to address the growing gap in executive oversight and scrutiny with open and transparent use of taxpayer’s money by;

1. **Recognising the inherent conflict of interests that exist when establishing companies with Council money and commits itself to full disclosure of all commercial matters to Members.**
2. Undertaking a detailed external audit of Aylesbury Vale Broadband Limited. The audit shall;
 - a. Commence no later than 1 Calendar month from the sale of AVB or by the 31st of January 2018 whichever is the sooner.
 - b. The Audit should report no more than 3 months after commencement
 - c. The report will be published in full and in public.
 - d. Be conducted by a qualified individual appointed by the Chief Executive but with the express agreement of all Group Leaders.
 - e. Include, but not be limited to, a review of the management of the business including the performance of the management team, delivery of services to target villages, performance against business plans, and the use of capital.
 - f. **The Audit Committee should make recommendations to Council in relation to the effectiveness of the scrutiny process taking account of the lessons learnt from the AVB inquiry.**
 - g. **Review the oversight provided by Cabinet Members and officers while acting as Board Members of Aylesbury Vale Broadband Ltd.**

In accordance with Council Procedure rules, the Chairman had agreed that the Motion should be dealt with at this meeting. Councillor Christensen explained briefly the rationale behind the Motion after which it was opened up to debate.

It was thereupon proposed by the Leader of the Council (Councillor N Blake) and seconded by Councillor Irwin:-

“That the Motion be amended as follows:-

- “(1) That this Council will honour the commitment given by the Leader of the Council at the General Purposes Committee to review the position culminating in the decision to sell AVB and introduce a suitable mechanism for keeping all Members of the Council informed of the Council’s commercial activities.
- (2) That the Audit Committee be tasked with a detailed audit of the operation of AVB, as far as practicable within the timescales set out within the original Motion and to keep as much information as is possible in the public domain.
- (3) That the audit of AVB be undertaken by the Council’s externalised internal audit team (BDO) as they have experience of the governance of company structures.
- (4) That a brief for carrying out the review of AVB be agreed by Group Leaders, the Council’s Head of Internal Audit, a representative from BDO and the Chairman of the Audit Committee, with Group Leaders receiving a draft of the report prior to its submission to the Audit Committee, any such meetings involving Group Leaders to be chaired by the Deputy Leader of the Council.
- (5) That any meeting of the Audit Committee convened to consider the report findings be open to all members of the Council to attend and at the discretion of the Audit Committee Chairman, to participate in the discussions (although they would not be able to vote).
- (6) That insofar as the other commercial undertakings of the Council are concerned, reports on their activities be brought forward at regular intervals to the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

Upon being put to the vote the amendment was declared to be CARRIED, and became the substantive Motion.

It was thereupon proposed by Councillor Lambert and seconded by Councillor Stuchbury:-

“That the substantive Motion be amended by the insertion as appropriate, of paragraphs (a), (b) and (g) of the original Motion.”

Upon being put to the meeting, the above amendment was declared to be LOST.

It was therefore

RESOLVED -

That the (substantive) Motion proposed by Councillor N Blake, as set out in (1) to (6) above, be approved and adopted.

NOTE: Councillor Mrs J Blake declared a personal interest in the above item as a Director of AVB.

8. NEW NOTICE OF MOTION: SUPPORTING WOMEN COUNCILLORS

The following had been submitted by Councillor Lambert and seconded by Councillor Christensen:-

“This Council recognises the important work undertaken by The Fawcett Society in preparing the report ‘Does Local Government work for women?’, published in July 2017, as part of the Women in Local Government Commission, and acknowledges its findings over the barriers still faced by women in Local Government.

<https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/does-local-government-work-for-women-final-report-of-the-local-government-commission>

This Council acknowledges that research from across the private sector routinely demonstrates that more diverse teams, including teams with a more even share of women perform more effectively than teams which are homogenous; and that more inclusive Councils containing a more representative set of voices are better equipped to represent the population as a whole.

This Council is supportive of the report’s recommendations that local authorities should seek to:

- support parent and carers in councils by introducing a formal maternity, paternity and adoption policy for councillors, and ensuring care costs are covered;
- tackle sexism by setting out acceptable behaviour standards for councillors and driving cultural change;
- make our Council more diverse by breaking down barriers faced by under-represented groups;
- Support women’s progression within the Council by proactively seeking out women councillors for leadership roles.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- Ask officers to prepare a report for the relevant Cabinet Member on the adequacy of support available to Women Members when affected by barriers outlined in the Fawcett Society report.
- Ask the Monitoring Officer to review the current code of conduct to ensure incidences of harassment and discrimination are dealt with, with appropriate force, and for a report to be provided to the General Purposes Committee on any proposed changes to the Council’s Constitution to put forward to full Council.
- Ask the officers to draft a proposed policy on a formal maternity, paternity and adoption policy for Councillors for consideration by the General Purposes Committee, as well as for consideration by the Independent Remuneration Panel in regard to changes to any possible change in allowances.
- Ask the Returning Officer to consider what actions can be taken to encourage women to stand for election, and to report back to Full Council.”

In accordance with Council Procedure rules, the Chairman had agreed that the Motion should be dealt with at this meeting. Councillor Lambert explained briefly the rationale behind the Motion after which it was opened up to debate.

After having confirmed that she was in agreement of the general principles behind the Motion, it was thereupon proposed by the Deputy Leader of the Council (Councillor Mrs Macpherson) and seconded by Councillor Mrs Glover, that the Motion be amended as follows:-

“That this Council:-

- (1) Confirms its commitment to encouraging candidates for Council office from all sections of the community, including the protected characteristics specified in the Equality Act, 2010.
- (2) Asks the Returning Officer to continue to work towards the promotion of candidacy at elections having regard to best practice and advice from the Electoral Commission.
- (3) Confirms that any incident of inappropriate sexual behaviour is not acceptable and that any such occurrence will be treated seriously, with appropriate sanctions being applied in accordance with the Council’s Code of Conduct.
- (4) Asks all existing Councillors affiliated to a political party to stress to those parties the importance of actively promoting candidacy from individuals from all backgrounds.
- (5) Asks officers to continue to consider and implement processes and policies designed to assist Members in the performance of their duties across the political spectrum of the Council, having regard to the specific needs of all Councillors.
- (6) Asks officers to continue to explore the establishment of an Equalities Support Group comprising Councillors and employees in order to raise the profile of equality within Aylesbury Vale.

Upon being put to the vote the amendment was declared to be CARRIED. It was then put to the meeting as the substantive Motion and CARRIED.

9. QUESTION TIME

Members had the opportunity to ask questions of individual Cabinet Members and Committee Chairmen about issues affecting their portfolios/Committee activities:-

- (a) **Section 106 Agreements** (Councillor Stuchbury) – the Cabinet Member for Growth Strategy informed Members that if any Parish/Town Councils had comments that they wished AVDC to take into account in deciding planning applications that it was important that these views were submitted during the public consultation period.
- (b) **Adoption of Roads / new Open Space** (Councillor Stuchbury) – the Cabinet Member for Growth Strategy informed Members that the County Council would not adopt new roads until they were fit for purpose. The District Council was not able to take on the maintenance of all open spaces and would be responsive to Town / Parish Councils who might wish to take on these responsibilities.
- (c) **Aqua Vale** (Councillor Christensen) – in response to a question regarding cleanliness and maintenance issues, the Cabinet Member for Civic Amenities informed Members that she had visited Aqua Vale on 3 occasions recently and found that significant improvements had been made over the last 12 months to service areas including cleaning, maintenance and staffing levels.

Representatives from Everyone Active, who managed the Council’s leisure centres, had attended and had positive discussions with the Finance and Services Scrutiny Committee on 28 November 2017

- (d) **Modernising Local Government in Buckinghamshire** (Councillor Lambert) – the Leader of the Council informed Members that Councils were still waiting for the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government’s decision regarding the two unitary proposals for Buckinghamshire.
- (e) **Lifts at Waitrose car park, Exchange Street** (Councillor Lambert) – the Cabinet Member for Civic Amenities gave an undertaking to visit the lifts with the Member, regarding concerns on the lifts’ cleanliness.
- (f) **Business Rates Retention** (Councillor Lambert) – the Leader of the Council gave an undertaking to provide Members with information on the circumstances that had led to Buckinghamshire not submitting a proposal to be a pilot area for 2018/19 for the business rates retention trial.
- (g) **Recruitment** (Councillor Harrison) – the Cabinet Member for Growth Strategy informed Members that in line with the Council’s vision to be more commercially focussed, the recruitment of staff placed a greater emphasis on behaviours than on skills.
- (h) **Parish Liaison Officers** (Councillor Newcombe) – the Cabinet Member for Growth Strategy gave an undertaking to provide Members with information on the role and job descriptions for PLOs, to assist Councillors in disseminating this information wider in local communities.
- (i) **Aylesbury Garden Town Board** (Councillor Monger) – the Leader of the Council gave an undertaking to provide all Members with information on the makeup of the Aylesbury Garden Town Board.