

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

27 NOVEMBER 2018

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>

**PRESENT:** Councillor S Renshell (Chairman); Councillors J Brandis (Vice-Chairman), B Adams, C Adams, A Bond, S Bowles, B Chapple OBE, A Christensen, A Cole, S Cole, M Collins, P Cooper, B Everitt, P Fealey, B Foster, M Hawkett, T Hunter-Watts, T Hussain, P Irwin, S Jenkins, R Khan, R King, S Lambert, A Macpherson, T Mills, L Monger, H Mordue, S Morgan, R Newcombe, C Paternoster, C Poll, G Powell, M Rand, B Russel, Sir Beville Stanier Bt, P Strachan, R Stuchbury, D Town, A Waite, J Ward, W Whyte and M Winn.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors M Bateman, J Blake, N Blake, J Bloom, C Branston, S Chapple, J Chilver, N Glover, A Harrison, A Huxley, S Jarvis, G Moore, W Raja, S Raven, M Smith and M Stamp.

## 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. COUNCILLOR MICHAEL EDMONDS

Prior to the commencement of the formal business of the meeting all those present stood in silent tribute to the memory of Councillor Michael Edmonds who had sadly passed away recently. Councillor Edmonds had been the Member of the Council for the Stone Ward from 1975 to 1987, the Long Crendon Ward from 2003 to 2011, and the Haddenham and Stone Ward since 2011. He had also been the Deputy Leader of the Council from 2007 to 2013 and the Chairman of the Strategic Development Management Committee since its formation in 2014.

### 2. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 24 October, 2018, be approved as a correct record.

### 3. SINGLE UNITARY DISTRICT COUNCIL

The special meeting had been called due to the need to comply with a request for comment from the Secretary of State on a number of limited issues regarding the drafting of the Orders for the creation of a Single Unitary District Council for the area by the deadline of 30 November 2019.

At the Council meeting on 16 January, 2017, it had been agreed to submit a bid to the Secretary of State to deliver a two unitary model for the County. In September 2016 the County Council had submitted a case for a single unitary model. The background to the bids was contained in the reports to those previous Council meetings. At the Council

meeting of 21 March, 2018, following a 'minded to' decision from the Secretary of State, the Council had agreed to make further representations supporting the District Councils' bid.

On 1 November, 2018, the Secretary of State had announced his final decision regarding Modernising Local Government in Buckinghamshire (HCWS1058) and had concluding that "the right course of action was to establish a new single unitary district council for Buckinghamshire". The announcement information was included at appendices A and B to the Council supplementary agenda. Should the Secretary of State's announcement be implemented, this would mean:-

- All 5 principal councils in Buckinghamshire (Buckinghamshire County Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council, Wycombe District Council, Chiltern District Council, South Bucks District Council) would be abolished on 1 April 2020.
- the new council would come into being on 1 April 2020.
- Draft orders would be prepared and placed before Parliament in early 2019, which would set out the broad operating rules and arrangements for the new Council, and as part of which a Shadow Authority would be formed shortly after the Orders had been given Parliamentary consent.

A copy of the slides from the Members Briefing held on the 14 November were also included at Appendix C to the supplementary agenda, and provided further detail and background on the processes and changes that were likely to take place.

The Chief Executive and Leader have already been involved in meetings with representatives from the Department for Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), in particular regarding the drafting of the Orders. A number of important but discrete issues have already emerged where the Council's view was urgently required so that they could be taken into account in the drafting process.

Firstly, Council, Town and Parish Council elections were due to be held in May 2019. However, should this go ahead then Councillors would only be elected for one year until the new authority was formed in April 2020. The Secretary of State was seeking this Council's view on whether to delay this election cycle until May 2020, which would involve extending all Councillors current term for one year, at which point elections for the new Council will be held. This would also include Parish/Town Council elections. For information, the May 2019 District Council elections were likely to cost approximately £300,000 to run.

Secondly, the Council's view had been sought on the number of Councillors for the new Authority. These were required to be in multiples of 49 due to the way the transition arrangements work based upon County Divisions which would become the wards for the new Council. At the current time either 2 or 3 councillors per new ward were being considered (i.e. 98 or 147 councillors in total) by the Secretary of State. Information on the current County Council divisions was detailed at Appendix D.

Members were informed that the current five councils have some 236 councillor seats in total. The Council has previously expressed concerns regarding local connections for communities and the strength of voice for residents under a single unitary model. In addition, the Secretary of State had drawn attention to this issue in his announcement (Appendix A) which had stated "*some have questioned whether such a structure [single unitary] might weaken local democratic engagement at the most local level. To help reassure any who might be concerned on this, I intend to speak with the five councils to determine whether I should modify the proposal before implementing it, in relation to councillor numbers, perhaps providing for three-member electoral wards*".

Whatever the number chosen it was understood that it is likely that during the first cycle of the new Council the Boundary Commission for England would review the arrangements in any case. However, this would be an issue for the new Council.

The Leader of the Council informed Members that they would be kept informed and up to date on the progress made in the creation of single new unitary District Council through informal meetings, briefings, updates and where necessary formal reports and decision making.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Macpherson and seconded by Councillor Poll:-

- (1) That Council note the Secretary of State's decision in favour of a Single Unitary District Council for Buckinghamshire issued on the 1 Nov 2018 (Appendices A and B).
- (2) That Council support the delaying of the 2019 May elections for one cycle so that the next election would take place to the new council in May 2020, which will also impact on Town and Parish Council elections.
- (3) That Council support the suggested modification to the proposal from 2 to 3 member wards for the new council from 2020 (meaning 147 members for the new council) on the understanding that the Boundary Commission for England was likely to review this in the first term.
- (4) That the wording of the representations to be made to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government in response to the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) and the proposed content of the Structural Change Orders on single tier arrangements for Buckinghamshire be delegated to the Chief Executive in agreement with the Leader.

It was thereupon proposed by Councillor Christensen and seconded by Councillor Lambert, that the recommendations should be voted on separately at the end of the debate. This was put to the meeting and declared to be LOST.

It was thereupon proposed by Councillor Monger and seconded by Councillor Lambert, that Recommendation 3 be replaced with the following:

“That this Council recognises the concern expressed by the Secretary of State with regard to democratic engagement but, rather than increase the costs of representation by 50%, support the original proposal of two members per ward and call for these to be elected by the Alternative Member system or a comparable system of proportional representation to be agreed in discussion with the Secretary of State.”

Following debate, the amendment was put to the meeting and declared to be LOST.

It was thereupon proposed by Councillor Lambert and seconded by Councillor Monger that Recommendation 4 be amended so that the Chief Executive would consult with Group Leaders rather than just the Leader before responding to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government. With the agreement of the Leader, the proposer and seconder of the amendment and of Council, the amendment wording was incorporated into the Leader's proposal.

Following debate, the original motion as amended was then put to the meeting and declared to be CARRIED. It was therefore,

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Council note the Secretary of State's decision in favour of a Single Unitary District Council for Buckinghamshire issued on the 1 Nov 2018 (Appendices A and B).
- (2) That Council support the delaying of the 2019 May elections for one cycle so that the next election would take place to the new council in May 2020, which will also impact on Town and Parish Council elections.
- (3) That Council support the suggested modification to the proposal from 2 to 3 member wards for the new council from 2020 (meaning 147 members for the new council) on the understanding that the Boundary Commission for England was likely to review this in the first term.
- (4) That the wording of the representations to be made to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government in response to the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) and the proposed content of the Structural Change Orders on single tier arrangements for Buckinghamshire be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with Group Leaders.