

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

17 JULY 2019

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 J Brandis (Chairman); Councillors C Poll (Vice-Chairman), C Adams, A Bond, S Bowles, C Branston, B Chapple OBE, S Chapple, J Chilver, A Christensen, A Cole, S Cole, M Collins, P Cooper, B Everitt, N Glover, A Harrison, M Hawke, T Hussain, A Huxley, P Irwin, S Jenkins, S Lambert, D Lyons, A Macpherson, T Mills, G Moore, H Mordue, S Morgan, R Newcombe, C Paternoster, G Powell, W Raja, M Rand, S Renshell, B Russel, M Smith, M Stamp, Sir Beville Stanier Bt, P Strachan, R Stuchbury, D Town, A Waite, J Ward, W Whyte and M Winn

APOLOGIES: Councillors B Adams, M Bateman, J Blake, N Blake, J Bloom, P Fealey, B Foster, T Hunter-Watts, S Jarvis, R Khan, R King, L Monger and S Raven

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. MRS HANNELLY

Prior to the commencement of the formal business of the meeting, Members and officers present stood in silent tribute to the memory of former Councillor Mrs Pauline Hannelly who had passed away recently. Mrs Hannelly was an Honorary Alderman and had been a Member of the Council for 20 years, representing the Stewkley Ward between 1987 and 1995 and the Edlesborough Ward between 1995 and 2007.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 15 May, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Chairman of the Council

Charity Sky Dive

Members were reminded that the Chairman's nominated charity was NEST, a small local charity that provided support to families with young children. The Chairman invited the Vice-Chairman to make a short statement about a recent charity sky dive which he and his PA, Rebecca Henson had undertaken to raise funds for the Chairman's charity. The event had raised almost £1,500. All those who had made donations were thanked for their support.

Buckingham University

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman reported that on 29 June, 2019, he had attended the inaugural graduation of medical students at Buckingham University. 57 students had graduated at the University which was the first not for profit, independent and accredited medical school in the United Kingdom.

WizFizz Fest

The Chairman reported that some 27,000 people had attended this event which took place on 22 June, 2019. The event had been a great success, and in addition to promoting creative art, had contributed to ensuring a thriving local economy. The Chairman extended the Council's thanks to all those involved in the organisation of the event.

Chilterns Conservation Board

The Board's Annual Review for 2018/2019 had been circulated this evening to all Members of the Council. The Board had been established to ensure the conservation and protection of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Beauty. The Council contributed financially towards the activities of the Board. The Council's representative on the Board, Councillor Newcombe was invited by the Chairman to comment on the Annual Review and remind Members of the significance of its work in this part of the Vale.

(b) Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members

Climate Change (Leader of the Council)

Members' attention was drawn to the UN Inter-governmental report on Climate Change, and in particular the scientific evidence that suggested that only 12 years remained during which to limit the worst effects of global warming. The leader of the Council reported that she had asked officers to facilitate a debate at the next full meeting of the Council on the actions that AVDC was taking, and might be able to take in the future, to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Plastics in the Environment (Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure)

Members were advised that an Aylesbury Grammar School pupil, Ed Campbell, had recently addressed Cabinet informally on the work he was involved with, designed to promote and encourage a reduction in the use of non-biodegradable plastics which had scientifically been proven to cause serious harm to the natural environment. In view of the linkages between Ed's work and the subject referred to above, it was intended to invite him to the September Council meeting.

"Kids Clean Britain" (Cabinet Member for Economic Development)

It was reported that Members representing the Wendover and Halton Ward had recently met with a nine year old pupil of Wendover Junior School (Lola Wardrup) to learn about her initiative to promote a reduction in the amount of litter deposited in the local community. This would involve a litter picking day on 21 September. Lola had been afforded an opportunity to talk about her initiative on local radio as a means of promoting the event.

Green Flag Awards (Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure)

Aylesbury's Bedgrove and Vale Parks, along with Buckingham's Heartlands had again been recognised by the Green Flag Award Scheme as some of the very best kept open spaces in the UK. The Cabinet Member asked that the Council's thanks be extended to Chris Ashton (Parks and Open Spaces Officer) and the Council's Green Spaces Team for this achievement.

Development Management (Cabinet Member for Planning and Enforcement)

Members were advised of the on-going work in the area of development management to improve and enhance the customer offer. Progress had been made with a number of initiatives including the introduction of short form reports, work to increase the delegation opportunities for individual officers and improvements in customer information provision channels. The Planning Advisory Service had reviewed the service and had endorsed the actions implemented. The Planning Advisory Service had confirmed that the difficulties facing the Council in attracting planning officers was not unique and that because the Vale was a growth area, the exceptionally high numbers of planning applications made the improvement of the service particularly challenging. Nevertheless the Council would continue to explore every opportunity to enhance the service to customers.

4. PETITIONS/DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)

There were none.

5. WRITTEN QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

Members were reminded that written questions submitted since the last meeting of the Council could be viewed on the Council's website.

6. QUESTION TIME

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

(a) Oxford to Cambridge Expressway (Councillor Everitt)

The Leader of the Council confirmed that she was aware that both Milton Keynes Council and an Oxfordshire local authority had entered into a non disclosure agreement with Highways England in relation to the proposed route of the Expressway. The Leader indicated that neither she, or the Leader of Buckinghamshire County Council had been willing to enter into any such arrangement, given the serious concerns they had about the environmental impacts on the Vale.

(b) Household Recycling Centres (Councillor Lambert)

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure advised that there was no analytical information currently available to determine whether or not the changes made to the opening hours and the introduction of charges for certain types of waste had caused any increase in fly tipping.

(c) Fairford Leys Riverine Corridor (Councillor Lambert)

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources indicated that, as far as he was aware, the S106 monies would continue to be ring fenced after the transfer of

budgets to the new unitary authority, but that he would seek confirmation and write directly to Councillor Lambert.

(d) River Great Ouse, Buckingham (Councillor Mills)

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Health confirmed that further to recovery work undertaken by the Environment Agency after a chemical spill, approximately 25,000 fish had been released into the river. Work had been undertaken using S106 monies to improve flood defences and further work was being explored with Buckingham Town Council and other partners regarding the possible funding of warden schemes.

(e) Former Community Centre, Fairfax Crescent, Aylesbury (Councillor Mrs Morgan)

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Enforcement indicated that he would seek an update regarding the planning permissions granted for the redevelopment of the site and write directly to Councillor Mrs Morgan.

(f) Food Safety Inspections (Councillor Mrs Renshell)

The Cabinet Member for Waste and Licensing advised that there were around 1,500 food businesses within the Vale and that about 80% of these scored 4 or five out of five. Inspections were targeted at high risk and continually poor performing establishments. However all establishments were subject to inspection on a rolling basis.

(g) Council Tax and Business Rates Collection (Councillor Mrs Renshell)

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources advised that the authority continued to perform well and employed its own bailiffs which had resulted in the provision of a better customer service. The collection rate for Council Tax was 98.8% and for business rates, was 99.5%.

(h) Domestic Food Waste Collection (Councillor Huxley)

The Cabinet Member for Waste and Licensing advised that he thought that it should be possible to deal with queries about missed collections on the day they were received and that if Councillor Huxley provided him with details of the incident to which he was referring he would investigate and write directly to Councillor Huxley.

(i) Planning Enforcement (Councillor Huxley)

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Enforcement confirmed that Member updates had been paused for a variety of reasons, not least the need to improve the overall development management process (referred to earlier under announcements). It was however intended to re-instate the previous arrangements when practicable. He thought the suggestion regarding Members undertaking formal enforcement work was interesting but cautioned that there could be potential legal implications associated with any such activity.

(j) Westcott Enterprise Zone (Councillor Whyte)

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development confirmed that he was aware of the enormous existing and future potential economic benefits of developing rocket and satellite technology businesses at the site. He indicated that discussions had

taken place with the relevant LEP with a view to encouraging investment in these technologies.

(k) Traffic Congestion A41 Aylesbury (Councillor C Adams)

The Cabinet Member for strategic Planning and Infrastructure advised that whilst the site had been granted planning permission, which included a requirement for additional entry/egress arrangements at the site, the regulation of the highway works was the responsibility of the County Council as Highway Authority. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure (who was also the Deputy County Cabinet Member for Transportation) indicated that the developers, Taylor Wimpey had not undertaken any detailed discussions with the Highway Authority about the execution of the works which was regrettable. It was however hoped that the situation would be resolved satisfactorily in the very near future.

(l) Visual Appearance of key sites in Aylesbury (Councillor C Adams)

The Cabinet Member for Civic Amenities attempts to acquire the site occupied by QD at the bottom of Aylesbury High Street had met with no interest from the owners of the building. The sites opposite the Gateway Offices (Gatehouse Road) and at the former magistrates' court had been identified for future development, but the owners' intentions were currently unknown.

(m) Development Management Initiatives (Councillor Town)

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Enforcement confirmed that a recent initiative to focus efforts on overdue planning applications for a week (dedicated to this work only), had been a success, with 165 cases having been determined. It was indicated that a repeat of the exercise would be considered within the context of the other arrangements for improving the service referred to elsewhere in these Minutes.

(n) Aylesbury Vale Broadband (Councillor Christensen)

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources advised that the monies currently held in the escrow account could be drawn down reasonably soon. The Leader of the Council agreed that she would arrange a briefing for Group Leaders in the near future at which more detail would be given.

(o) Grass Cutting (Councillor Christensen)

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure confirmed that there had previously been discussions between AVDC, BCC and VAHT about grass cutting arrangements. He acknowledged that there still appeared to be some confusion about responsibility and frequency in relation to specific sites and that he would arrange further meetings with the parties concerned.

(p) Street Cleaning – Aylesbury Town Centre (Councillor Mrs Russel)

The Cabinet Member for Civic Amenities (and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure) advised that there were street cleaning teams in the town centre throughout the day from Monday to Sunday and that performance was monitored. It was confirmed that key areas were regularly pressure washed and that additional funding had been secured to purchase two new pieces of equipment to remove chewing gum from pavements.

(q) Climate Change (Councillor Stuchbury)

The Leader of the Council confirmed that Council would be debating this issue at the September Council meeting (as referred to elsewhere in these Minutes).

(r) Oxford to Cambridge Expressway (Councillor Stuchbury and Councillor Newcombe)

As referred to earlier during the meeting, the leader of the Council confirmed that a non disclosure agreement had not been entered into by AVDC with Highways England. The Council would be advised of the preferred route in the Autumn when publicly announced.

The Leader agreed to seek guidance as to whether or not the Freedom of Information legislation could be used to obtain information included in the non disclosure agreement, as also referred to earlier during the meeting.

(s) Social Housing Delivery (Councillor Powell)

The Cabinet Member for Communities advised that over 1,550 affordable homes had been delivered in the Vale between 2013 and 2018, which was an excellent performance. It was confirmed that affordable rented housing was charged at up to 80% of the market rent, whereas social rented housing was 50% to 60%. Discussions were on-going with Registered Housing Providers about the delivery of new social rented units, with the potential for up to 65 units being delivered.

(t) Audit of Accounts (Councillor Newcombe)

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources joined Councillor Newcombe in thanking the finance team who had had to change their work and leave plans to accommodate the late audit of the Council's accounts. This matter had been reported in detail to the Audit Committee who had expressed strong concerns about the delay in the external audit.

(u) HS2 (Councillor A Cole)

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure advised that initial efforts to seek a re-arranged meeting with HS2 had been unsuccessful, with no suitable dates being offered. Further efforts would be made to agree an evening date at which could be open for attendance by County, District and Parish Members.

7. TRACEY ALDWORTH

Members were advised that this was the last Council meeting to be attended by Tracey Aldworth, Director, before taking up her appointment as Deputy Chief Executive of Milton Keynes Council. Members thanked her for all her work for AVDC and wished her well for the future.