

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Buckinghamshire County Council convened and held on Thursday 16 April 2015 in The Oculus, AVDC, Gatehouse Way, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF, commencing at 9.30 am and concluding at 11.56 am.

PRESENT

Mr Z Mohammed in the Chair;

Mr B Adams, Mr C Adams, Mr M Appleyard, Mr W Bendyshe-Brown, Mrs P Birchley, Ms J Blake, Mr N Brown, Mr A Busby, Mr T Butcher, Mr D Carroll, Mr W Chapple OBE, Mr J Chilver, Mrs L Clarke OBE, Mrs A Davies, Mr D Dhillon, Mr C Ditta, Mr T Egleton, Mr C Etholen, Ms N Glover, Mr P Gomm, Mr P Hardy, Mr D Hayday, Lin Hazell, Mr A Huxley, Mr P Irwin, Mr S Lambert, Mrs V Letheren, Ms A Macpherson, Mr D Martin, Mr M Phillips, Mr R Reed, Mr B Roberts, Mr D Schofield, Mr R Scott, Mr D Shakespeare OBE, Mr M Shaw, Mr A Stevens, Mr R Stuchbury, Ms J Teesdale, Mr M Tett, Ms R Vigor-Hedderly, Julia Wassell, Mr D Watson, Mr W Whyte and Ms K Wood

ALDERMEN PRESENT

Mr P Lawrence, Mrs G Miscampbell OBE DL, Mrs M Clayton and Mr R Pushman

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs M Aston, Mr R Khan, Mrs W Mallen, Mr K Ross MBE DL, Mr M Colston and Mrs F Skelton DL

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2015 were agreed subject to the following amendments:

- In the conclusion section in the second group of bullet points, the third bullet was amended to read "42 pence per week extra is not too much to support vulnerable children and adults"
- In the same section, under the third bullet from the end the word 'morale' should read 'moral'
- In relation to the vote on the amendment, Mr P Gomm and Mr D Hayday abstained
- Under item 8, in the first line of the first bullet point, 'Independent' was misspelt.

2 PETITIONS

Mrs V Letheren presented a petition of 424 signatures for a 20mh speed limit on Arniston Ave, Bowerdean Road in High Wycombe.

3 COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman advised Members of a Civic Service taking place on Sunday 19th April at 3pm in Princes Risborough.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Julia Wassell declared an interest as newly appointed Ambassador to the British Association of Social Workers.

5 REPORT ON COMMITTEE PROPORTIONALITY

Council received the report on Committee Proportionality.

RESOLVED

That the distribution of seats across Committees be as set out in Table 3 and Table 4, to accord with the rules on proportionality. This will come into effect immediately following the close of the full Council meeting.

6 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEES 2014/15

The Chairmen of the Council's Select Committees presented their Annual Report for 2014/15.

The Chairman of the Education, Skills and Children's Services Select Committee, Mrs V Letheren thanked her Committee members for the commitment and high attendance during the year. Key highlights for the Committee included work on the Ofsted improvement plan, which will be on-going, and the Cyber Safety Inquiry, which had received good coverage in the press. The recommendations from the Inquiry had all been accepted by Cabinet and a conference would be held in the future. The importance of the public having confidence in the Select Committee's scrutiny of the issues was acknowledged.

Mr W Whyte, Chairman of the Environment, Transport and Localities Select Committee thanked members of his Committee for the work done during year. Highlights for the Committee included:

- an Inquiry into public transport, the recommendations of which it was hoped would be adopted by the Council's new Business Unit;
- the Section 106 Inquiry report which was to be presented to Cabinet in May;
- monitoring of the Transport for Bucks contract (following the Committee's Inquiry in 13/14), which was generally positive in most respects but which would need an ongoing overview to ensure value for money; and
- challenge to the Library Service to ensure plans for the future were suitably ambitious.

Mr Whyte reported that the future programme would be wide ranging and full and include, in answer to a question, consideration of Section 278 works (works on the highways undertaken by other parties but with approval of the Council) which was expected to be in the summer.

The Chairman of the Finance, Performance & Resources Committee, Mr B Roberts, thanked his Committee members for their hard work and commitment during the year and the Committee's officer support team. Highlights for this Committee included budget scrutiny in January for which an update would be received in July; an Inquiry

into Emergency Crisis Support, for a second phase would be starting in April; a discussion around hot school meals provision in schools & monitoring the development of the Future Shape programme.

Mrs A Macpherson, Chairman of the Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee (HASC) brought the Council's attention to an amendment needed in the report to reflect the fact that Julia Wassell had been replaced by Mrs A Davies in November 2014. The presentation of the Membership would also be amended in response to concerns raised by Ms J Teasdale.

In 2014/15 the Committee undertook an Inquiry into General Practice services, led by the Committee's Vice Chairman, Mr R Reed. The Committee had received responses to its concerns and was currently waiting for implementation of recommendations by the NHS.

Mrs Macpherson thanked the Committee's support officer, Mr James Povey for his work, the Members of the Committee including District Councillors, and the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing for her contributions. Going forward, Mrs Macpherson highlighted the need for the Committee to focus more on Adult Social Care, whilst still keeping an oversight of the NHS. Future Committee work would include consideration of the 15 min domiciliary care visits, the public health budget, Bucks Care and the provision for people with learning disabilities in relation to the Winterbourne View Report.

In answer to a question, Mrs Macpherson confirmed that the Committee would continue to be responsive to NHS Consultations including those relating to services on the borders of the county such as Milton Keynes.

The report was noted.

7 CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS AND QUESTIONS

A LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader, Mr M Tett, informed Members of a potential change to the May Council debate in light of the clash of dates with the Government Select Committee's site visits to Buckinghamshire for HS2.

A discussion was had about the county's broadband project and the Leader reminded Council that the forthcoming Member Briefing on the subject would provide an opportunity for Members to speak with the project team.

In relation to a question regarding doorstep queries around the Council's position on unitary status, the Leader reminded Members that the Council had not to date debated the issue, but recognised the importance of ensuring residents having access to independently evaluated choices. In addition, the Leader clarified that the tri-counties work was independent of this debate and was a response to the Government's focus on devolution for metropolitan areas.

Mr P Gomm thanked the Leader and officers for their work relating to his recent transfer of political allegiance.

In relation to Children's Services, the commitment of the Leader and Chief Executive, and the involvement of the Select Committee were acknowledged as helping to drive improvements in Children's Services and relationships with key partners.

B DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & SKILLS

Concerns were raised about the level of the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, underachievement in some ethnic minority groups and the percentage of children in schools which are not good or outstanding according to Ofsted. The Deputy Leader, Mr M Appleyard, reported that although the gap was particularly large in Buckinghamshire because of the extremely high level of attainment at the top end, much innovative work was being done in schools to address this complex issue. The importance of early years was highlighted, with Buckinghamshire's improvement in the provision of early years for 2 year olds, acknowledged by the Government Minister.

In relation to questions around school place planning, Council was informed that planning for additional places in schools was done on a block basis, of either 30 places for an additional form of entry or 15 places for a half form. In addition, site limitations and quality of education were taken into account when planning for additional places in schools. Council heard that, in planning terms, 700 houses produce one form of entry in a primary school and that over the past 5-6 years the Council has built approximately 90 forms of entry across the county. The Council is working with schools which have expressed an interest in growth and is looking at the possible funding challenges from Government in this area. In particular relation to Wycombe, the Deputy Leader reported that whilst some secondary schools were not willing to consider growth, there were enough to cope with the immediate future. Planning is taking place to consider how to accommodate the peak in pupil numbers forecast in the next 3-5 years.

C CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The reappportionment of local priorities funding was welcomed, particularly in relation to the Greater Aylesbury Local Forum area.

The issue of domestic violence was discussed and the success of the Council's campaign in late 2014 to raise awareness and increase reporting domestic violence was acknowledged. Concerns were raised about the potential unmet need in this area and although resources were limited, it was recognised that raising awareness helps issues to be better addressed.

In response to a request for information about domestic violence and in particular in relation to Broken Rainbow (same sex domestic violence awareness) & men affected by domestic violence, the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Mr M Phillips, agreed to send a report to Members.

The potential community use of Buckingham library was raised, with concerns about the speed of the project. Mr Phillips reported that a meeting was planned to discuss this issue with Town Clerk in Buckingham and would give a written answer regarding the project.

Concerns were raised in relation to District Council contributions to Local Area Forum budgets, an area being looked at by the Cabinet Member, and about the response from Transport for Bucks on potential projects with quotes not being accurate and delivery speed an issue.

D CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH & WELLBEING

Mrs P Birchley, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing, reported on the successful opening of the Buckingham Day Opportunities Centre on 10th April and thanked the local members for their presence as part of the 100 attendees. It was hoped that the new Centre would also be used by community. The Chesham Day Opportunities Centre will open on 27th April to service users, with a preview on 20th April. The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing informed Council that those consulted for their views at the outset of the programme of change were positive about the response of the Council and the resulting changes. Members of the Council echoed the comments and it was hoped that more promotion of the Buckingham Centre would be undertaken and cost quotes standardised.

In response to a concern about the image given by comments in the Cabinet Member's report of High Wycombe in relation to legal highs, Mrs Birchley accepted that other areas of the county may also need to be addressed. Council was told that the service had been talking at length with Steve Baker MP, part of the Government Committee looking at this issue, to ensure the views of the county were being heard.

The implications of the Care Act were discussed. Council heard that Buckinghamshire County Council was instrumental in setting up a consortium with other authorities to look at the financial sustainability of the Care Act and remained at the forefront of discussions with government. Future funding remains unclear.

In relation to the new rights to assessments, the Council is currently writing to service users, with notices planned for GP surgeries and libraries. In addition, information is available on the website and via the Council's InTouch service. The pressures on the workforce were acknowledged.

Three areas of Buckinghamshire will be piloting dementia friendly communities and the service was encouraged to increase engagement with local members and the business communities in the areas concerned.

E CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

In relation to a question about the HS2 construction route, Mrs L Clarke, Cabinet Member for Planning & Environment reported that the Council was working hard to address the issues throughout the county. The County Council had been actively campaigning on behalf of all residents, and in particular three public meetings had been held in the Calvert area to discuss the improvements residents would like made. A Master Plan was being worked on for this area.

The Cabinet Member reported that visits to the Energy from Waste plant were available for Councillors and assured the Council that recyclables would not be burned in the plant. In relation to comments regarding the environmental impact

of the plant, it was pointed out that for 50-60 years the site had been a waste pit and before that a brickworks. Council was reminded of the significant benefits of the Energy from Waste plant which would provide energy for 30,000 homes, or 150,000 fridges.

With regard to Country Parks, it was agreed that increase use by local residents, particularly from the north of the county, would be welcomed.

The Council's recent energy switching initiative was applauded and following its success, Council heard that a second scheme was planned for the end of 2015. Other energy initiatives were highlighted including the possibility of residual heat projects and the installation of biomass boilers in schools and at Green Park.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the service had been in contact with the North Yorks Leader regarding their approach to recycling sites and although it may not be suitable for Buckinghamshire, thanked the Mr B Adams for the contact.

In relation to plans for gravel works in Hedgerley, the Cabinet Member confirmed that the issue and views of local people would be carefully considered.

F CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE & RESOURCES

The new Head of Legal Services, Mr H Peart was introduced to the Council.

In response to a question about the number of social work vacancies at the Council, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services assured Council that all critical posts for children's services were covered and would remain so (see Appendix document for statistics).

The issue of payment for staff parking was raised and a written response promised to Mr R Stuchbury.

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, Mr P Hardy, agreed with concerns raised about the condition of the NALGO Centre near Stoke Mandeville and that options were being considered. In addition, the views of Members were being sought on the refurbishment of the Mezzanine Rooms at County Hall.

G CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The issue of improvements in Children's Services was raised, with particular concerns about the work being done to ensure maintenance of staff morale. Council heard that a recent one-day Ofsted visit had recognised an increase in morale and a much improved service. The Council was assured that unallocated cases would not happen again. Recruitment of senior posts was nearly complete and increased benefits for staff were being applied across the board, not just for new recruits. It was recognised that improvements in Children's services would take time and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Ms L Hazell confirmed that once the embargo was lifted, all Members would be kept informed of changes in a timely manner.

It was also acknowledged that the issue of placements outside Buckinghamshire

could only be solved with more in-county foster carers and the Cabinet Member confirmed that the recruitment was ongoing, with four more information sessions planned: on 16th April at The Hub in High Wycombe, on 23rd April at the Aylesbury Opportunities Centre in Aylesbury, on 30th April at the Buckingham Opportunities Centre in Buckingham, and on 5 May at Chesham Town Council in Chesham. The ultimate reward of foster caring, despite the fear and hard work, was recognised. The Cabinet Member would provide a written response regarding visit statistics.

H CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORTATION

The Cabinet Member for Transportation, Mrs R Vigor-Hedderley, thanked the Members and officers for their support over the past year.

Issues were raised about signage on current repairs, the use of the jet-patcher to fill potholes, and street lighting, with Members assured that their issues would be responded to by the officers concerned. In relation to a question, it was not possible for the Council to repair potholes in private roads, but that there may be a case for adoption of roads once brought up to standard.

The recent initiative around parish agreements was discussed and the Cabinet Member acknowledged discontent regarding the preparation of local members regarding the scheme. It was noted that Buckingham was developing a social enterprise approach similar to the Stewkley model and that the hub approach taken in Princes Risborough was delivering excellent results.

In response to concerns regarding the transport contract, the Cabinet Member informed Council that in 2014/15 work had taken place to develop the intelligent client, and although there was still a long way to go, the contractor was now being held to account. The Council now has its own in-house inspectors and monthly reports, and the £10m capital maintenance programme being delivering in 2015/16 would provide the opportunity to benchmark, ensure value for money and evaluate alternative products. Council was assured that the Select Committee would additionally keep a focus on the contract.

I CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS TAKEN - INFORMATION ONLY

8 NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no notices of motion.

CHAIRMAN