

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Buckinghamshire County Council convened and held on Thursday 19 November 2015 in The Oculus, AVDC, Gatehouse Way, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF, commencing at 9.30 am and concluding at 1.05 pm.

PRESENT

Mr W Chapple OBE in the Chair;

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

DIGNITARIES AND OTHERS PRESENT

Sir H Aubrey-Fletcher, Mrs F Skelton DL, Mrs M Clayton, Mr P Lawrence, Mrs G Miscampbell OBE DL, Mr R Pushman, Mr F Habgood, Mr A Stansfeld, Miss A Bahl, Miss G Costa, Miss L Gonsalves and Mr A Nicholls (Amersham & Wycombe College)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P Hardy, Mr D Hayday, Mr A Stevens, Mr B Allen and Mr K Ross MBE DL

1 MINUTES

The minutes of Council held on Thursday 17 September 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

2 PETITIONS

Mr A Huxley presented two petitions, the first relating to drivers using Rabans Lane/Meredith Drive/ Dickens Way to avoid queuing, and the second to Jackson Road both in the HP19 area of Aylesbury. Mr Huxley reported that additional information being gathered through Mobile Vehicle Activated Signs (MVAS) would be added to the petitions shortly.

3 COMMUNICATIONS

Apologies for the meeting were received from Mr P Hardy, Mr D Hayday, Mr A Stevens, and Aldermen Mr K Ross and Mr B Allen.

A minute's silence was held for the victims of recent atrocities across the world

including in Paris. The Chairman informed Members that a Book of Condolences had been opened for staff and public to sign, which would be sent to the Mayor of Paris.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 YOUTH DEMOCRACY

Miss L Gonsalves and Miss A Bahl from the Youth Parliament, and Mr A Nicholls and Miss G Costa from Amersham & Wycombe College were welcomed to the meeting.

Miss Gonsalves informed Council about her role in the UK Youth Parliament, the benefits she had gained and the importance of the Youth Parliament in giving all young people a voice.

Miss Bahl explained why she was standing for the Youth Parliament and how she wanted to inspire others to become involved in solving issues.

Mr Nicholls thanked the Councillors who had attended the Local Democracy event at Amersham & Wycombe College and said that as a result he had a much better awareness both of how democracy worked and the challenging role of a local Councillor. These views were echoed by Miss Costa who added that the session had provided an insight into benefits of the taxation system in the UK.

The following points were raised by Members:

- Mr N Brown, Mr P Iwin, Mrs J Teesdale and Mrs V Letheren who had attended the College session all commented on the value of the event
- The presenters' views were sought on the voting age, the Syrian crisis, women in politics, managing the Council's budget and the issue of an ageing population

The presenters were thanked for their presentation and invited to return to a future meeting.

6 PRESENTATIONS BY THE THAMES VALLEY POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER AND THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

Mr A Stansfeld, Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner and Mr F Habgood, Chief Constable for the Thames Valley, were welcomed to the meeting. (The presentations made have been added to the Council's website: <https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=107&MId=6365&Ver=4>)

In his presentation to Council, Mr Stansfeld brought Members' attention to the reductions in crime figures; savings and performance improvements; uncertainty of future funding; internet based crime; and support for victims.

Mr Habgood made his presentation, particularly highlighting the Force's PEEL grading; where there had been changes in levels of crime; activity related to the visible presence of police; and funding challenges. Mr Habgood also explained about key areas of work including:

- Work being done to develop the most appropriate response to incidents
- Raising awareness and address issues of child sexual exploitation
- Tackling organised crime in partnership with other Forces and agencies
- Developing better communications including the increased use of social media

The following responses were made by Mr Habgood to questions raised:

- Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) were a vital element of neighbourhood policing, although with future funding constraints numbers will have to be reduced. Opportunities for part-funding were welcomed
- Prevention remained a fundamental objective of policing
- Social media was enabling the Force to raise visibility of justice in relation to rural crime but that more needed to be done
- Traditional levels of estate were no longer needed as fewer crimes were reported at stations and officers no longer needed to use desk-based technology, although the symbolism of police buildings was acknowledged
- Constables were trained to work to degree level and employment routes should remain open for those without degrees on entry

Mr Stansfeld provided the following responses to questions:

- Advertising on vehicles and uniforms could lead to legal challenge and would not provide significant income
- The unsustainability of some police forces in light of funding cuts was likely to lead to merging of forces in future. Centralised regional based services could develop, enabling forces to focus on local level neighbourhood policing

The Chairman thanked Mr Stansfeld and Mr Habgood for their presentations and offered Members to submit any unasked questions for written response.

7 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT

Mr J Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources, presented the report to Council and moved the Recommendation.

RESOLVED

The Council noted the treasury and investment borrowing performance and the monitoring against Prudential Indicators.

8 SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT

Mrs V Letheren, Chairman of the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee informed Council that the Committee's Inquiry Report into CSE had been well received by the Buckinghamshire Children's Safeguarding Board.

Mr B Roberts, Chairman of the Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee, informed Members that the Committee's Rent-in-Advance report had been presented to Cabinet on 9 November and thanked all involved.

Mrs A Macpherson, Chairman of the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee, drew Members' attention to the Committee's agenda and highlighted attendance of the Chief Executive of the Hospitals Trust at the next meeting.

Mr D Carroll, Chairman of the Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee, thanked members of the public for their engagement with the Committee's Flooding Inquiry, whose report would be presented to Cabinet on 7 December.

In response to questions:

- Mrs Macpherson confirmed that she was unable to attend the forthcoming meeting in Buckingham regarding Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire Strategic Health Services, but that she would shortly be attending a joint Bedfordshire meeting on the same subject, with more information being made available at the Select Committee's meeting in February.
- Mrs Letheren explained that the Select Committee had focussed on the Children's Services Improvement Plan in 2015 but that items for the future work programme, including school improvement, would be considered at its next meeting on 17 November.

9 CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS

9a. Leader of the Council

In response to questions, Mr M Tett, Leader of the Council, explained that although the reorganisation of services into Business Units had only been implemented recently, it was enabling a stronger focus on efficiencies both within and between Business Units.

In relation to the purpose of the Economic Heartland Alliance, Mr Tett reiterated that the arrangement enabled neighbouring Transport Authorities to develop a single voice in promoting the strategic transport needs of the area.

The issue of venues was raised and Mr Tett explained that the budget freeze included cessation of spend on external venues, which needed ideally to be applied to both Member and officer meetings.

Concern was expressed regarding the current financial position and in particular the robustness of financial planning in light of assurances given during Budget Scrutiny in January 2015. Mr Tett reminded Members that the financial challenges facing the Council were being faced by many other County Councils across the country. Mr Tett said that demand on services, growth in costs and competition for placements had all increased at a higher rate than expected, and that the Government needed to recognise the pressures on Councils with demand led caring responsibilities in considering its financial settlement.

Mr Tett was thanked for his work on HS2 and asked about how the anticipated impact resulting from construction could be resolved. Mr Tett acknowledged the challenge and that agreement to mitigations were still being actively sought.

Council was informed of the work being done by communities across Buckinghamshire to send aid to refugees. Mr Tett welcomed the opportunity to visit the hub in Cressex and stressed the importance of solutions being found to both the conflict in Syria and to resulting issues in other areas.

In relation to a question about the timing being right for reconsideration of unitary status, Mr Tett reminded Members that although, in his opinion, the financial model for two tier government was unsustainable, there was at present neither a local consensus

nor a process available to progress an agreed alternative approach. In the absence of this Mr Tett stressed the importance of Councils working together to deliver quality services at the lowest cost to residents.

9b. Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing

In response to a question raised, Mr M Appleyard, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing, provided assurance that the processes within Adult Social Care services were being managed effectively.

The issue of budget resilience was raised. Mr Appleyard explained that the ability to reduce costs for residential care, by which he included all areas where the Council provided homes for people, was very limited and although residential homes were being built in the county, the Council was in competition for places with London Boroughs and with self-funders. Mr Appleyard confirmed that non-residential services would need to deliver savings, including areas of prevention activity but that investments to make longer-term savings, such as use of technology, would still be considered. Mr Appleyard reiterated the need for the Government to understand the pressures on local authorities across the country.

The issue of fees and charges was raised. Mr Appleyard explained that some areas of demand had been unforeseen and that work continued to be done to address budget pressures.

A question was asked about whether the Council could influence Bucks Care to ensure best use of the Day Opportunities Centre in Buckingham. In response, Mr Appleyard agreed with concerns about the levels of activity at the newly opened Centres and that the service was working with providers to address this issue.

9c. Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Mr Z Mohammed, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, thanked staff involved in the recent Ofsted inspection of Adult Learning.

Mr Mohammed was asked about attainment outcomes for less well-off families and for Looked After Children (LAC). Mr Mohammed explained that results for LAC were variable due to the small cohort of children but that results were currently approximately 10-12% higher than the national average. In relation to less well-off families, Mr Mohammed confirmed that work was being done to understand the reasons and with the Bucks Learning Trust to improve outcomes. Mr Mohammed stressed that the issue of educational underperformance and referred to a Times Educational Supplement article headlined that no quick fix was available.

Mr Mohammed made the following responses to questions raised:

- The service was currently developing an improvement plan to address issues around the quality of services to schools from the Bucks Learning Trust
- Roughly equal numbers of children commuted to schools across county borders
- An issue around specific admissions arrangements for a school in High Wycombe would be addressed after the meeting
- Information to help parents around securing school places was available on the Council's website, through digital media and through schools
- The BLT worked with schools to ensure bullying policies were in place and issues addressed

- The extension of grammar schools was an issue for schools themselves but the Council's support for the grammar school system would continue

Mr Mohammed was thanked for his attendance at a recent public meeting in Wendover in relation to a local schools issue.

9d. Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Ms L Hazell, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, agreed to follow up a question regarding numbers and costs relating to Qualified Social Workers and to ensure a copy of the formal letter following the recent Peer Review would be circulated to all involved once finalised.

In relation to the portfolio budget, Ms Hazell confirmed that pressures had increased considerably since Budget Scrutiny in January but that savings would be made where possible.

The issue of retention of social workers was raised. Ms Hazell confirmed that turnover was a concern and that work was taking place to understand and address the causes.

In relation to children's mental health services in the community, Ms Hazell assured Members that although there were waiting lists, the services continued to be provided.

9e. Cabinet Member for Resources

Mr J Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources, was asked about the reorganisation of the Council and whether savings were being made as a result. Mr Chilver replied that, although at an early stage, he was confident savings would be delivered.

Mr Chilver was thanked for his work on the Bucks Sports & Social Club.

In relation to an earlier option to sell the site of the Day Opportunities Centre in Buckingham, Mr Chilver explained that the decision to retain the building was to enable the best outcome for residents and the community.

In response to a question, Mr Phillips, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Public Health, agreed to investigate the annual cost of Freedom of Information requests to the organisation.

Printing of Council agendas and empty Council-owned property were raised as potential money-saving areas to be considered. Mr Chilver confirmed that reductions in printing were being considered and that a comprehensive review of all property holdings was taking place to maximise income to the Council.

In relation to capital programme slippage, Mr Chilver informed Council that the slippage currently indicated was significantly lower than in previous years and that the new project management gateway process would result in further reductions.

The implementation of the Council's reorganisation, Future Shape, was questioned and Mr Chilver confirmed that a review of the implementation would be taking place.

9f. Cabinet Member for Transportation

Mr M Shaw, Cabinet Member for Transportation, informed Council that the first strategic transport meeting for the Heartland Alliance would take place in the New

Year.

Mr Shaw thanked Mrs J Howlett for her continued work to publicise safer driving and to Mr D Martin, Mr D Carroll, Mr S Lambert and Mrs L Clarke for divisional visits. Mr Shaw also thanked all staff who had been working to keep the highways safe during the recent severe weather conditions.

In response to questions, Mr Shaw:

- Agreed to look into the issue of a Traffic Regulation Order in relation to Chamberlain Road, Aylesbury
- Acknowledged the request to repair potholes at a specific point on the A355 between Amersham and Beaconsfield. Mr A Busby confirmed that this was already on the plan for the local area and would be discussed at the next capital asset meeting.
- Assured Members that school holidays would be taken into account in future consultations, but that consultation on the Local Transport Plan 4 had received twice the number of responses than its predecessor
- Recognised that additional resources would improve the volume of gully cleansing but that any extension of the current programme was not possible at present
- Agreed to write to Chiltern Railways to express concerns and ask for a review of the new timetable introduced in October
- Confirmed that there was no budget capacity for crossings at this time but that each issue would be considered as it arose
- Agreed to visit East Wycombe

Mr Shaw and officers were thanked for the following:

- The road improvements made through the capital maintenance programme
- The Safe Drive, Stay Alive event at Wycombe Swan theatre
- The completion of lines at the Buckingham roundabout
- The Stars scheme for schools
- Resolving a complex local issue and visiting High Wycombe high street

In answer to a question raised about HS2 and roads issues, Mr M Tett explained that there was no ready solution to potential disruption arising from the construction of HS2 but that options were being proposed.

9g. Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment

Mr W Whyte, Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment thanked residents for their patience during the steam blow-testing phase for the Energy from Waste plant.

Mr Whyte brought Council's attention to the ¼ megawatt of energy expected to be generated by the solar photovoltaic systems project, highlighting that this was lower than expected due to the limitations of the national grid in the north of the county. Mr Whyte also mentioned the success of the Aston Clinton flood prevention scheme and of some of the environmental assurances sought in relation to HS2, particularly regarding Rights of Way.

Members who attended the Minerals and Waste Plan review were thanked and Council informed that public consultation on the Plan would take place in 2016.

In response to a question about miscommunications around budget challenges raised at a recent District Council meeting, Mr Whyte confirmed that he had arranged a meeting with the relevant Chief Executive. Mr Whyte emphasised the importance of effective working of the Joint Waste Committee in two tier areas and highlighted the need for more public education around waste as a commodity.

In relation to HS2 and flood management, Mr Whyte confirmed that the Flood Management Plan was in the final stages of development and that particular issues could still be included. Thanks were given to the officers who had delivered flood training on the Willows Estate.

Concerns were raised about the potential impact of non-essential expenditure freeze on the work of the Planning and Environment portfolio. Mr Whyte explained that services would be challenged through the next budget review to explore where efficiencies could be made or work delivered differently.

The speed of clearing flytipping was questioned. In response, Mr Whyte informed Members that the Council was rigorous in its response to deliver successful prosecutions and longer-term savings.

A request was made for the Council to lobby Highways England for quicker erection of noise barriers and use of photovoltaic cells. Mr Whyte agreed to look into this area.

The Country Parks teams were thanked for their work.

9h. Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Public Health

Mr M Phillips brought Council's attention to the health checks programme, a Public Health initiative for 40-70 year olds. Mr Phillips also congratulated the Kingswood GP Surgery in High Wycombe named as GP Practice of the Year in the NHS Health Check Conference in Nottinghamshire.

In response to a question about the continuation of LAF funded consultations on Mobile Vehicle Activated Signs (MVAS) in relation to the freeze on non-essential spend, Mr Phillips agreed to clarify the situation. Mr Phillips also agreed to investigate the non-attendance of an expected officer at the recent LAF meeting.

Concern was raised about the delivery of the LAF review. Mr Phillips confirmed that the review would report by March 2016.

10 NOTICES OF MOTION

Motion 1: Annual Training Event for Councillors on Child Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting

The following Motion was proposed by Mr P Irwin and seconded by Mr R Stuchbury and Mr P Gomm:

"This County Council resolves to organise an annual training event for all County Councillors on child safeguarding as well as corporate parenting; and that all County Councillors commit to attending this training annually."

Mr Irwin explained that the Motion arose from the recent work of the Select Committee

and was needed to inform and support Councillors in their corporate parenting and community leadership roles.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Ms L Hazell expressed her support for the Motion, indicating that it would further embed the Safeguarding Board training programme. Ms Hazell reminded Members of their responsibility and duty of care for all children within the county.

During debate Members expressed their support for the Motion, reiterating the importance of understanding and raising the profile of children's safeguarding.

The Motion was formally seconded by Mr R Stuchbury.

RESOLVED

That an annual training event for all County Councillors on child safeguarding and corporate parenting is organised and that all County Councillors are committed to attending this training annually.

Motion 2: Local Area Forums (LAFs)

The following Motion was proposed by Mr P Gomm:

"This Council resolves that all Local Area Forum activity (including all meetings/officer support and grant provision) is suspended until after the 2017 County Council elections.

Instead, we suggest that any future grant funding distributed by the LAFs is incorporated into the existing Community Leader's Fund scheme so that each local Member is able to continue to support community initiatives. The funding transferred should be evenly distributed to all Councillors. This action will save the Council at least half a million pounds per year."

In moving the Motion, Mr Gomm expressed his concerns about the length of time taken to deliver a review of LAFs, the resource invested in LAF activity, and questioned whether there were better ways to deliver outcomes in local areas.

Mr Tett explained that all areas of spend were currently being reviewed and assured Members that the LAF review would be concluded shortly. Mr Tett expressed his concern about the alternative proposals in the Motion.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- That staff involved did not solely support LAFs
- That the Community Leaders Fund was not an appropriate mechanism for allocation of LAF funds
- That a more considered approach to the issue of LAFs and LAF funding needed to be taken to ensure a sustainable model for the future
- That LAFs provided an opportunity for local, democratic engagement with Parishes, which many valued
- That the current model did not work effectively in all areas

The issue of whether the Motion was political or not was debated.

The Motion was seconded by Mr A Huxley who explained that in agreeing the Motion, engagement with Parishes could continue through the Local Member.

RESOLVED

The Motion was defeated by a majority vote.

Motion 3: A41 Friarage Road – Aylesbury – Central Reservation

Mr C Adams proposed the following Motion in relation to the central reservation between the County Council offices and Morrisons supermarket in Aylesbury:

“This County Council resolves that the Cabinet Member for Transportation takes urgent action to enter into negotiations with Aylesbury Town Council so that they can take over the maintenance of this area under a devolved services agreement.”

In moving the Motion, Mr C Adams explained that the Town Council wanted to enter into an agreement in order to improve the appearance of this section of highway. Mr Adams reported that to date the Town Council had been unable to engage the County Council in discussions.

In debate, the following points were made:

- That the Cabinet Member should have been approached in the first instance and a Notice of Motion raised only if a solution could not be reached
- That the Cabinet Member welcomed discussions with the Town Council and Local Member on this issue
- That the Local Member supported the substance of the Motion and requested a meeting with the Cabinet Member

RESOLVED

The Motion was defeated by a majority vote.

11 CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS TAKEN - INFORMATION ONLY

The Cabinet Member Decisions Taken report was noted.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

18 February 2016 at 9.30am.

CHAIRMAN