

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Buckinghamshire County Council convened and held on Thursday 22 September 2016 in The Oculus, AVDC Offices, Gatehouse Way, Aylesbury, commencing at 9.30 am and concluding at 12.52 pm.

PRESENT

Mrs V Letheren in the Chair;

Mr B Adams, Mr C Adams, Mr M Appleyard, Mrs M Aston, Mrs P Birchley, Ms J Blake, Mr N Brown, Mr A Busby, Mr T Butcher, Mr W Chapple OBE, 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 W Mallen, Mr D Martin, Mr Z Mohammed, 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, 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

Mr M Colston, Mr P Lawrence, Mrs G Miscampbell OBE DL, Mr D Polhill, Mr R Pushman and Mr J Thelwell

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr W Bendyshe-Brown, Mr D Carroll, Mr T Egleton, Mr P Hardy, Mr D Hayday, Ms A Macpherson, Mr M Phillips, Mrs M Soames DL, Sir H Aubrey-Fletcher, Mr B Allen and Mrs C Aston

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 14th July 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

2 PETITIONS

Mr B Roberts presented a petition on behalf of local residents for action to be taken to end all-day parking by non-residents in the area.

3 COMMUNICATIONS

Apologies were received from Mr B Bendyshe-Brown, Mr D Carroll, Mr T Egleton; Mr P Hardy; Mr D Hayday; Mrs A Macpherson; Mr M Phillips; Sir H Aubrey-Fletcher; Mrs M Soames; Mr B Allen and Mrs C Aston.

The Chairman reported on events attended since the last Council meeting, highlighting in particular:

- The visit of Princess Anne to the Home of Rest for Horses at Speen;
- The afternoon tea event for County Council staff held at the Council's Sports and Social Club;
- Commemoration of the Battle of Fromelle and a visit to the war graves of Buckinghamshire soldiers in France;
- Bucks County Show;
- Tea with the Lord Mayor of London at Mansion House for leaders of communities which funded the rebuilding of the city after the Great Fire;
- Lighting of the Paralympic flame;
- Celebration of Merchant Navy Day;
- The induction of Rabbi Charley Baginsky; and
- The Battle of Britain parade.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 REPORT OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY

Mr A Busby as Chairman and Mr J Thelwell as Chief Fire Officer of the Bucks and Milton Keynes Fire Authority, were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr Busby introduced the item and highlighted the progress made by the Authority over the past 4 years. Mr Busby informed Council of recent visits from Government to Aylesbury which had culminated in a half-day visit from Brandon Lewis MP, and the work being undertaken to share knowledge through the hosting of the combined Fire Authorities' Conference and showcase days. Council members were encouraged to watch the 'team fire HOSE' video (<http://bucksfire.gov.uk/news/pupils-do-their-families-and-school-proud-after-completing-course/>) which was the first of a number of youth initiatives undertaken over the past year.

Mr Busby thanked Mr Thelwell and his workforce for their flexibility and positive approach to change.

Mr Thelwell made a presentation to Council (*slides attached*), highlighting the following:

- The Authority had a mixed model of resourcing;
- There had been 49% reduction in the number of fire incidents between 2003/4 and 2014/15;
- In response to the Duty to Prevent, the Authority provided prevention advice within homes and schools across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes
- The reduction in traditional incidents meant that the projected increase in population would not necessarily require more fire engines
- The Authority was expecting a 57% drop in grant to 2020 which provided a driver for change
- The workforce had been invited to expand its role in the community and the

Authority's retirement profile was being used in reshaping the workforce for the future

- Local terms and conditions were being introduced which included responding to medical incidents and which were supported by 82% of staff
- Other changes included reducing the number of Councillors on the Authority
- Collaboration was a key focus and over half of all fire stations would be refurbished to enable sharing with the community and police
- Actions taken had not resulted in any redundancies, station closures or removal of fire engines
- Staff were congratulated for their engagement in the changes

In response to Members' questions, Mr Thelwell made the following points:

- The Authority had a unique programme of apprenticeships, with 22 apprentices currently in fire stations and 4 in back office services. Work was being undertaken to explore how apprenticeships for the on-call firefighter service could be delivered
- Discussions were taking place to amalgamate two fire stations on the edge of Milton Keynes, involving Great Holm, to improve the service by co-location of blue light services in a new building
- The reduction in fire incidents over the past decade could in part be attributed to lifestyle factors and foam-filled furniture regulations but was predominantly due to the prevention work undertaken by staff
- Staff were encouraged to identify and implement local initiatives which included the fitting of smoke detectors, and the junior fire setters and junior fire fit schemes
- The Authority had an excellent relationship with the South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) and its approach to working with other agencies focussed on the benefits that the Authority could bring
- The Urban Search and Rescue Team (USAR) was a nationally funded asset delivered locally from Aylesbury which had recently achieved Best Team, Best Team Leader and Best Medic at the UK Rescue Organisation awards

Mr Thelwell stated that the thoughts of the service were with the families of those who died at the Didcot power station incident.

Mr Thelwell agreed to respond to the communications sent by the Member for Ryemead & Micklefield and was asked to send the design document for the new Milton Keynes hub to Members.

In answer to a question raised regarding the potential oversight of Fire Authorities by Police and Crime Commissioners, Mr Busby commented that for the Thames Valley area, this was not currently under consideration.

Mr Thelwell and Mr Busby were thanked for their contribution.

(Mr R Khan joined the meeting during this item)

6 MODERNISING LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Mr M Tett introduced the item, highlighting the importance of the issue for Buckinghamshire. Mr Tett explained that although the local government structure may have been appropriate at the time of creation in 1974, the challenges facing the County and pace of change meant that a review was now needed. Council was reminded of the implications of demographic and growth projections.

Mr Tett summarised previous attempts to reconsider the structure of local government in Buckinghamshire: the unsuccessful Pathfinder initiative in 2007 costing approximately £2.5m; the work undertaken by Bucks Business First; and the Aylesbury Vale District Council business case for north and south Buckinghamshire unitary authorities. The officers who had worked on the current Business Case were thanked for their work, which Mr Tett explained, had looked at all options and had developed through discussions with stakeholders. Council was told that the Business Case had used DCLG criteria and had been independently verified by both Grant Thornton and LG Futures. Mr Tett stated that the report identified the creation of an entirely new Council based on county boundaries, which would draw on the heritage of the current County and District Councils.

Mr Tett highlighted the benefits of the Business Case including: the savings achievable in the first and in ongoing years; better planning for the growth agenda through a single body; a stronger voice on the national stage; and a better service for residents. In summary, Mr Tett explained that the approach proposed would provide effective devolution of power to communities and local people through the establishment of local development management bodies; the offer of devolving assets and services to Town and Parish Councils; the creation of hubs in towns and villages; and local community boards to deliver local services decided on by local Councillors.

Mr Tett reminded Council that if agreed, the Business Case would be submitted to DCLG for decision by the Secretary of State and urged Members to consider the best interests of the residents in voting on the proposal.

The proposal was seconded by Mrs N Glover.

In debate, the following points were made:

- There was a need to act strategically and modernise the current structure for the benefit of the county as a whole
- The potential savings, benefits of scale, and the strong voice for Buckinghamshire whilst retaining a community focus, were compelling arguments
- The public and businesses wanted the change to happen
- The Group Leaders of all parties were supportive of the motion and urged fellow Members to agree
- The County Council had proceeded with undue haste and that the debate should wait until the publication of the report commissioned from Deloitte by the four District Councils
- The current structure made a complex environment for officers and Members to navigate in many service areas and was even more challenging for residents. Having integrated planning, development and infrastructure made sense.
- The debate had been long-standing and it was important for Members to

- consider the issue as representatives of the residents of Buckinghamshire
- The Business Case provided assurance about the voice of local communities and the idea of community boards was welcomed
 - The importance of ensuring that any new authority would not replicate previous organisations, ensuring devolution included grandfather clauses to ensure appropriate use of powers and funding, and that the organisation had the authority to directly deliver all services including social care
 - Concerns were raised about the unparished area of High Wycombe and lack of consultation with local people therein; the lack of indicative costs of a new Town Council for the area; and the potential conflict of interest for Councillors representing that area
 - That County Councillors who were also District Councillors could vote for both proposals as the issue would be decided upon by the Secretary of State
 - A Member reflected a concern raised by Parish Councils in his area regarding sustainability of funding for devolved services
 - Concerns were raised about the transparency of the District Councils' approach, although Members were informed that the Deloitte report would be released shortly
 - The potential savings figures were questioned
 - Disappointment was expressed about the lack of discussion between the five Council Leaders
 - That if the previous bid had been supported, planned MTP savings would have already been achieved

A requested amendment made during the debate, to await the Deloitte report and if different to wait six weeks to negotiate a single proposal for DCLG, was refused by the Chairman in accordance with terms set out in the Council's Standing Orders.

Mrs Glover responded to the debate as seconder of the proposal, stating that the current environment provided an opportunity to rationalise the local government structure in Buckinghamshire. Mrs Glover highlighted the local involvement proposed through community boards and community hubs, and reiterated the challenges for residents in navigating the current system.

Mr Tett thanked Members for the quality of the debate and for the support from Leaders of the other parties represented. In response to the concerns posed during the debate, Mr Tett explained that:

- Direct consultation had not been made with the Wycombe Town Committee as it was a sub-Committee of the District Council, but that submissions from the Committee would have been welcomed
- In accordance with the principles of localism, the taking on of devolved powers would not be compulsory but would be an offer to Town and Parish Councils
- It was unlikely that any commissioned report would not fulfil the expectations of those who had commissioned the work and that the terms of reference for the County Council's commissioned work were included in the Cabinet report
- The District Council Leaders had been invited by letter on 11 May to work together with the County Council. This would have included looking at all viable options, but the offer had been declined. Following the meeting, Mr Tett would write again to Leaders to see if consensus could be reached around the proposal.

- The Business Case reflected the professional work undertaken and provided minimum estimates of savings, which had been independently verified.

A vote by show of hands was conducted, with 32 Councillors voting in favour, none voting against and 10 Councillors abstaining.

RESOLVED

The Council:

- 1. AGREED the draft Business Case at Appendix A; and**
- 2. AUTHORISED the Leader to approve minor amendments to the document as required and then to submit the business case to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for a decision**

7 SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT

The Chairmen of the Select Committees presented their report to Council.

Mr B Chapple, Chairman of the Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee informed Members of a special meeting of the Committee on 11th October to agree the report of the Income Generation Inquiry, prior to its presentation at Cabinet in November. Mr Chapple also thanked Chief Executive Rachael Shimmin for her attendance at the Committee meeting on 13th September.

The Chairman of the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee, Mr B Roberts, reported that the Sustainability and Transformation Plan, now called the 'NHS Plan', was likely to be an item on the next meeting.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Roberts confirmed that the October meeting would include an item on plans for Milton Keynes hospital trust changes and that questions from Members were welcomed. Mr Roberts also requested that issue for future meetings, such as podiatry, be forwarded to him and that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment would be included in the Committee's work programme. Mr Roberts confirmed that Julia Wassell's opposition to the Committee's 15-Minute Care Visits report would be recorded.

Mr D Dhillon, Chairman of the Children's Social Care & Learning Select Committee, informed Council of current evidence gathering for the Voice of the Child Inquiry, and that updates on past Inquiries into Narrowing the Gap and Child Sexual Exploitation, would be considered at the Committee's next meeting. Mr Dhillon thanked members of the Committee for their support and enthusiasm.

Mrs J Teesdale, Vice Chairman of the Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee, informed Members that the Committee's recent Inquiry report on Economic Development had been well received by the Cabinet and that the resultant Councillor Guide to Economic Development in Buckinghamshire was now available. Mrs Teesdale explained that at its next meeting, the Committee would be considering the Museum Trust, Trading Standards and Growth in the County.

8 CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS

8a. Leader of the Council

In response to Members' questions, Mr Tett made the following points:

- That in considering senior roles in local government and politics, appointment should be on merit rather than by application of gender quotas
- That the Council was offering to take 2 unaccompanied asylum seeker children per month

8b. Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

Mr M Appleyard made the following responses to questions from Members:

- The new approach to social care would take time to implement as it required a move away from the assessment-for-services model to a conversation-based style. Mr Appleyard assured Members that reports on progress would be brought to Council
- Mr Appleyard would follow up concerns raised with Ms Wassell outside of the meeting
- That work was taking place to ensure advocacy and support for vulnerable people, particularly those with learning difficulties, was ongoing

8c. Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Ms Hazell reported that the Ofsted letter had been published on the Council's website and in response to Members' questions made the following points:

- That the Looked After Children Strategy was part of the planning by which the Council could ensure all children and young people developed a good ethos on life
- That the Ofsted letter highlighted 12 positives and 7 less good, but that this had not been reflected in press coverage

Ms Hazell thanked all parties for their support.

8d. Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Public Health

Mrs M Aston, Deputy Cabinet Member, presented the report, highlighting the good joint work with Surrey on Trading Standards. In response to Members' questions Mrs Aston confirmed that an answer would be provided on the issue raised regarding community treatment orders, and that a Member Briefing would be arranged on the Healthy Child Programme.

8e. Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Responding to Members' questions, Mr Z Mohammed made the following points:

- That the local authority was taking an holistic approach to Children's Centres and an email from the Family Information and Child Services Programme had been circulated to Members. Mr Mohammed confirmed that Members would be

updated on progress.

- The local authority would continue to support grammar schools but was not currently in a position to respond to Government proposals as the extent of the Government's proposals were unclear at this stage
- Regarding the recent incident of objectionable wording being used in a school exam question, Mr Mohammed confirmed that quick action had been taken by the school and to address the issue. Mr Mohammed reiterated the Council's commitment to ensuring the interests of the LGBT community were safeguarded
- An acknowledgement of the work undertaken by officers to quickly organise school transportation for children accepted late by first choice schools
- The local Member would be informed of any changes to the timetable for the Wendover school expansion and that the submission of small housing developments posed challenges for the County Council in planning school places. Mr Mohammed confirmed that the County Council worked closely with District Councils in planning school places

8f. Cabinet Member for Transportation

Mr M Shaw, Cabinet Member for Transportation, thanked Ms T Stevens, Mr P Irwin, Mrs H Bennion and the Chairman for their support during his recovery from injury and made the following responses to Member questions:

- That two crossing patrollers were now employed in Bedgrove, Aylesbury and local Councillors Mr A Huxley and Mr P Gomm were training to provide backup support if needed. In addition, options for a crossing would be produced by the end of October
- A list of drainage schemes had been created and would be provided to Members as soon as possible
- In relation to road safety, Mr Shaw emphasised the importance of driving to the environment and the need for drivers to take responsibility for their driving style
- An acknowledgement of the success of work done in Oak Green and thanks to the team
- That the Blue Badge regime would be reviewed to ensure appropriate use
- That pressure was being applied to ensure the East-West Rail scheme was not unduly delayed, particularly given the planned growth for Buckinghamshire
- Mr Shaw would speak with the Member regarding street lighting issues
- That the issues faced by residents in Beaconsfield were understood, with action on Wattleton Road being taken by the end of October, consultations currently being drawn up for wider parking issues and sink hole issues being looked at currently
- Information on air quality would be provided to Council members by the Cabinet Member for Planning & Environment
- Work was taking place with neighbouring authorities to look at the issue of weight restrictions on roads and Mr Shaw acknowledged the effect on small rural communities
- In relation to gully cleaning, the service had reduced the number of gully cleaners to two as the third had regularly broken down. Mr Shaw explained that it was not possible to deliver more regular gully cleaning and that a schedule would be provided as soon as possible
- Transport for Bucks would be asked to contact the local Member to discuss the schedule for addressing road and pavement issues Ryemead & Micklefield

Division, High Wycombe

- A visit would be made to Elmhurst School to understand the crossing patrol requirements
- An investigation would be made into the bollard issues in Watermead, Aylesbury
- Progress on the Winslow-Buckingham cycleway and positive feedback from residents on the quality of work in Buckingham was welcomed.
- A plane and patch approach for footpaths was being considered for the 2017 programme

8g. Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment

Mr W Whyte, Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment, presented his report highlighting flytipping successes; support requested from Members in promoting the Energy Switch programme; the busiest summer on record for County Parks; the switch to winter hours for Household Recycling Centres from 1st October and the introduction of a digital permit scheme. Mr Whyte also thanked staff who were working on responses to Local Plans.

In response to questions and comments from Members, Mr Whyte made the following points:

- That the Scrutiny Review of Country Parks had been useful in developing the resource
- That issues about the small size of signage regarding illegal dumping would be discussed with officers
- The last of the three Energy Switch programmes in 2015/16 had had a poor take-up
- That information would be provided about how the emergency response to flooding would be managed in the Aylesbury West area. Mr Busby confirmed that contrary to a number of other authorities, the Bucks & Milton Keynes Fire Authority would continue responding to flooding incidents
- That other authorities were implementing different approaches to access to recycling centres and any potential impact on Buckinghamshire sites would be closely monitored.
- Work was ongoing to ensure the infrastructure requirements across all services were included in Local Plans and it was felt that the Council could usefully contribute to the Aylesbury Garden Town submission
- That a recent visit by the Chairman of the Thames Regional Flood & Coast Committee had been useful in highlighting the implications of growth in Buckinghamshire
- Mr Whyte thanked the Member for Ryemead & Micklefield for her work in tackling flytipping locally and confirmed that the prosecution naming and shaming policy was the right approach to be taking

8h. Cabinet Member for Resources

Mr J Chilver congratulated Mrs G Quinton who was identified by HR Magazine as one of the most influential HR practitioners for 2016.

In response to Members' questions, Mr Chilver agreed to respond directly to the Member regarding the issue of zero hours contracts and to provide a written response to the Member regarding the sale of Gypsy and Traveller sites.

Mrs Blake, Mr Busby, Mrs Clarke, Mr Schofield, Mr Shakespeare and Ms Vigor-Hedderly left during this item.

9 NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no Notices of Motion.

10 CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS TAKEN - INFORMATION ONLY

**11 INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS ON EVENTS AND MEMBER SERVICES -
INFORMATION ONLY**

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 24th November 2016 at 9.30am in the Oculus, Aylesbury Vale District Council offices.

CHAIRMAN