

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Buckinghamshire County Council convened and held on Thursday 13 July 2017 in The Oculus, AVDC, Gatehouse Way, Aylesbury, commencing at 11.37 am and concluding at 12.57 pm.

PRESENT

Mrs P Birchley in the Chair;

Mr M Appleyard, Mr R Bagge, Ms J Blake, Mr N Brown, Mr T Butcher, Mr D Carroll, Mr W Chapple OBE, Mr J Chilver, Mr C Clare, Mr A Collingwood, Mrs I Darby, Mr D Dhillon, Mr C Ditta, Mr C Etholen, Mr M Farrow, Mrs B Gibbs, Ms N Glover, Mr D Hayday, Lin Hazell, Mr M Hussain, Mr N Hussain, Mr P Irwin, Mr R Khan, Mr S Lambert, Ms A Macpherson, Mrs W Mallen, Mr D Martin, Mr P Martin, Mr R Reed, Mr B Roberts, Mr D Shakespeare OBE, Mr M Shaw, Mrs L Sullivan, Mr M Tett, Mr A Walters MBE, Ms J Ward, Julia Wassell, Mr D Watson, Mr W Whyte, Ms A Wight and Mr G Williams

DIGNITARIES AND OTHERS PRESENT

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr W Bendyshe-Brown, Mrs L Clarke OBE, Mr A Hussain, Mrs J Teesdale, Ms K Wood, Sir H Aubrey-Fletcher, Mr P Kara, Mr M Colston and Mr D Polhill

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 18th May 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

2 PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

3 COMMUNICATIONS

Apologies were received from Sir H Aubrey-Fletcher, Mr P Kara, Mr D Polhill, Mr B Bendyshe-Brown, Mrs L Clarke OBE, Mr A Hussain, Mrs J Teesdale and Ms K Wood.

The Chairman reflected on the fact that, within the first month of becoming Chairman, the Council had observed a minute's silence on the steps of County Hall on 4 separate occasions because of events in London and Manchester. The Chairman thanked everyone for their support.

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

- The annual ceremonial pollarding of a tree in Burnham Beches by the Corporation of London, followed by lunch with the Lord Mayor of London.
- Armed Forces day on 17th June. The Chairman thanked the Civic and Ceremonial Team for their work in organising a successful event.
- The Bucks Business awards hosted by Bucks Business First.
- A visit to the ethnic art fair in Milton Keynes supported by the High Sheriff.
- An annual reception at RAF High Wycombe.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT

Mr J Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources, presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The average rate of return on investment was 1 percent, an increase on the previous year's rate of 0.68 percent.
- The investment position had changed with the purchase of the Energy from Waste Plant for £180m and new commercial property worth £40m. VAT of £36m on the Energy from Waste Plant was fully recovered.

Mr Chilver responded to Members' questions as follows:

- The Council was aware of the risks involved in purchasing commercial property and took advice from Carter Jonas, the Council's commercial property investment advisors. There were clear targets and thresholds that were complied with for new acquisitions.
- The maximum total of investments during the last year was around £170m with limits on the exposure to risk on investments.
- A more in depth answer to a question on "value at risk" would be provided after the meeting.

RESOLVED

Council AGREED the Treasury Management Annual Report and Prudential Indicators for 2016/17.

6 ANNUAL PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Mr M Tett, Leader of the Council, presented the report and confirmed that it had been agreed by the cross party Senior Appointments and Bucks Pay Award Committee.

RESOLVED

Council AGREED the Annual Pay Policy Statement.

7 STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT

Mr M Tett, Leader of the Council, presented the report and confirmed the following:

- The Strategic Plan was the main policy document for the County Council along with the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- The Strategic Plan was refreshed each year and Members were encouraged to attend annual workshops so that they could input into the plan and help shape policy.

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

- Although Ofsted inspection ratings across the County were generally very good, there were areas where improvements in ratings needed to be made, for example in Aylesbury and there was already focus on those areas needing improvement.
- The construction of new Children's Homes in the County was welcome in allowing children to be located near to their birth families.
- The Council had a clear priority to protect the most vulnerable in the County as well as provide opportunities for vulnerable residents to advance.
- It was important to plan for the longer term particularly in respect of infrastructure.
- It was more difficult to plan for the longer term financially given the uncertainty around support from central government and so the current four year financial plan was currently the most suitable forward view.
- The numbers of children getting their preferred school place were lower than in some other areas because of the selective education system in Buckinghamshire, whereby some children would not qualify for their first choice of school.
- The corporate underspend during 2016/17 was partly as a result of a one off change to accounting practice around the minimum revenue provision and would not be repeated in future years.

RESOLVED

Council AGREED the Strategic Plan.

8 CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS

8a: Leader of the Council.

In response to a question from a Member, the Leader of the Council Mr M Tett confirmed that he had contacted the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government asking for a meeting to discuss the growth agenda and funding for infrastructure.

8b: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transportation.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transportation Mr M Shaw confirmed that he had now been appointed Chairman of the East West Rail Consortium and was meeting the Secretary of State for Transport on Monday 17th July for discussions.

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

- The condition of roads in the County being used for the Tour of Britain Cycle Race would be fit for cycle racing.
- £300,000 additional budget had been allocated to gulley clearance and £200,000 for general maintenance. The schemes for gulley clearance were now in operation. Members would be consulted individually on general maintenance for their divisions. A figure on the amount of money spent specifically in the Chalfont Local Area Forum area would be provided after the meeting.
- The budget for footways last year was £1.5m and £1m for each subsequent year thereafter and a scheme of plane and patch maintenance was in operation to make footways safe for residents.
- It had been a difficult decision to close the rail crossing between Mandeville and Southcourt which was causing inconvenience to local residents, however after reviewing CCTV footage it was considered too dangerous to leave the crossing open.
- It was acknowledged there were delays in getting bollards repaired due to ageing technology and contractor issues but there was a focus on getting repairs done as soon as possible.
- Mr Shaw apologised for recent problems with the "Report It" website and "App" and a Members' mailbox had been set up during this period to manage enquiries efficiently.
- Local Area Technicians would have information on the repair plans for footways.
- The Jet Patching machine was used extensively across the County's roads but was more effective in rural rather than urban areas and not for use on high stress parts of the road network.
- A written response would be provided on the pay and display consultation.

8c: Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

Mr W Whyte, Cabinet Member for Children's Services asked Members to help publicise the Early Help review consultation that would start shortly.

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

- He had been impressed by the pace of improvement in Children's Services and would aim to make sure the pace was maintained.
- Further information about social workers' reasons for leaving would be obtained from service directors.
- The percentage of agency social workers had reduced and there was a continued focus on achieving permanent teams. Children's Services were working with University College Aylesbury Vale in helping develop social workers in house. The recruitment of social workers had not been frozen.
- Opportunities for Members to shadow Children's Services teams would be looked into.
- Members were encouraged to familiarise themselves with the new Corporate Parenting Strategy approved recently by Cabinet.

8d: Cabinet Member for Resources.

In response to questions from Members, Mr J Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources made the following points:

- The exact figure for the refurbishment of New County Offices would be provided after the meeting.
- The refurbishment of the mezzanine rooms and replacement of both lifts had been completed on time and on budget.
- The conversion of the Old County Offices to residential accommodation was expected to start later in 2017.
- The Council had a new recruitment website which went live last year.
- The cost to the Council of the Apprenticeship Levy was around £500,000.

8e: Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, Lin Hazell made the following points in response to Members' questions:

- She was very supportive of the Community Hub model of providing care support for local residents such as the one being piloted in Marlow.
- The Walled Garden project had been a good experience for those involved and it would be beneficial to develop further, although it was recognised that these projects were complex to set up.
- The Accountable Care System was a new way of streamlining partnership working around adult social care. Members would be kept up to date on developments.
- A written response would be provided on the Aylesbury Wellbeing Project.

8f: Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.

Mr M Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, clarified that the good grading for alternative education providers mentioned in the report was in respect of the Pace Centres and the Jigsaw School.

Responding to questions from Members, Mr Appleyard made the following points:

- The Council, through the Bucks Learning Trust (BLT), was working hard to improve the Ofsted ratings of secondary schools in Aylesbury and this was a continuing priority. There was an aim to develop and expand Teaching Schools, where those schools rated as outstanding would work with other schools that may be struggling.
- The Council was linking closely with the Local Enterprise Partnership Skills Board after recognising an increase in students having been to university coming back to live in Buckinghamshire.
- The University of Buckingham had received a gold award for technical excellence.
- It was recognised that the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers and looked after children and their peers was an issue and remained a priority.

8g: Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment.

In response to a Member question on air pollution, Mr B Chapple, Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment explained that air pollution in the County was taken very seriously and that as work on the infrastructure plan progressed, the aim would be to take cars out of town centres. More information about the location of pollution sensors would be provided after the meeting.

8h: Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Public Health.

Mr N Brown, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Public Health explained that as a result of a number of successful responses to scams, Trading Standards was keen to train further Scam Champions, particularly from across the South of the County.

In response to Members' questions, Mr Brown highlighted the following:

- The importance of joint working with partners in dealing with the issues of substance misuse.
- The joint Trading Standards Service was working well, with increased expertise where it was needed. It was stressed the importance of contacting Trading Standards at an early stage when issues arose.

9 NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no Notices of Motion.

10 CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS TAKEN - INFORMATION ONLY

The information was noted.

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

The information was noted.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 21st September 2017 at 9.30am in The Oculus, AVDC, Gatehouse Way, Aylesbury.

CHAIRMAN