

## **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting of the Buckinghamshire County Council convened and held on Thursday 23 November 2017 in The Oculus, AVDC, Gatehouse Way, Aylesbury, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 12.45 pm.

### **PRESENT**

Mrs P Birchley in the Chair;

Mr R Bagge, Ms J Blake, Mr S Bowles, Mr N Brown, Mr T Butcher, Mr D Carroll, Mr W Chapple OBE, Mr J Chilver, Mr C Clare, Mr A Collingwood, Mrs A Cranmer, Mrs I Darby, Mr C Ditta, Mr C Etholen, Mr M Farrow, Mrs B Gibbs, Ms N Glover, Mr C Harriss, Mr D Hayday, Lin Hazell, Mr A Hussain, Mr M Hussain, Mr N Hussain, Mr P Irwin, Mr R Khan, Mr S Lambert, Mrs W Mallen, Mr D Martin, Mr P Martin, Mr R Reed, Mr B Roberts, Mr D Shakespeare OBE, Mr M Shaw, Mrs J Teesdale, Mr M Tett, Ms J Ward, Julia Wassell, Mr W Whyte, Mr G Williams and Ms K Wood

### **DIGNITARIES AND OTHERS PRESENT**

Sir H Aubrey-Fletcher, Mr P Kara, Mrs C Aston, Mrs M Clayton, Mrs A Davies, Mr P Lawrence, Mrs V Letheren, 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 D Dhillon, Ms A Macpherson, Mrs L Sullivan, Mr D Watson, Ms A Wight, Mrs M Aston and Mr K Ross MBE DL

### **1 HONORARY ALDERMEN**

The Chairman confirmed the appointment of three Honorary Aldermen – Mrs Margaret Aston, Mrs Avril Davies and Mrs Valerie Letheren. The Lord Lieutenant presented Mrs Davies and Mrs Letheren with a commemorative certificate. It was noted that Mrs Aston had been unable to attend due to illness.

### **2 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

### **3 PETITIONS**

Mr Collingwood presented a petition of 7417 signatures on behalf of Marlow residents and surrounding villages requesting that the proposals to introduce paid parking in the town should be withdrawn.

Mr Niknam Hussain presented a petition on behalf of Ashmead School in Aylesbury. Parents were asking for assistance in ensuring safety on the approach to school by reinstating zigzags and other lining in the area.

## **4 COMMUNICATIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Bendyshe-Brown, Mrs Clarke OBE, Mr Dhillon, Mrs Macpherson, Mrs Sullivan, Mr Watson, Mrs Wight and Mr Ross MBE DL.

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Anita Cranmer, the new Member for Beaconsfield following a recent by-election. It was also reported that Mr Bendyshe-Brown had written to the Chairman to advise that he was receiving treatment and hoped to be back at meetings in the near future. He extended thanks to all Members and Officers for their support.

The Chairman reported on a number of recent visits – please see the full list appended to the minutes.

## **5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

## **6 BUCKS YOUTH VOICE**

The Chairman welcomed Miss Grace Allen and Miss Eve Clayton of Bucks Youth Voice to the meeting. Miss Allen and Miss Clayton gave a presentation on the work of the Bucks Youth Voice Steering Group and a recent event held in the Waterside Theatre, Aylesbury where 70 young people attended to share ideas and to question a panel of professionals, which included the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Public Health.

During the presentation and in response to subsequent Member questions the following main points were noted:

- Bucks Youth Voice is an important mechanism for bringing together young people and professionals across Bucks and provides an opportunity for young people to have their voices heard.
- At their event in November, seven workshops were held covering issues such as Safety, Mental Health and Resilience, Post 16 opportunities and Employability, Activities and Leisure, PSHE and Life Skills and Involvement in Decision Making.
- Mental Health and Resilience was an issue of particular importance to young people who felt that support needed to be more readily available to them if they experienced difficulties and that there should be a variety of options in terms of the type of support that was offered. It was important that young people knew where to find help and what services were available.
- It was also noted that young people felt discriminated against in the areas of employment, apprenticeships and housing.
- Young people were happy to give their views, but would like to receive better feedback from professionals as to how their suggestions and opinions have influenced decision making or service delivery.
- A steering group based in Wycombe would be meeting from December. Wycombe District Council, in association with Wycombe Youth Action, was also establishing a Youth Council, where young people would be setting the agenda.
- Mr N Brown, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Public Health reported that the Youth Voice event had been a valuable opportunity to liaise

with young people, who engaged well and asked intelligent questions of the professionals panel. He had already passed on their concerns around Mental Health to NHS colleagues when he attended a Health Summit event.

- Mr P Irwin, Member for Waddesdon advised that he was keen to establish a youth club in Waddesdon and suggested that he might come to Waddesdon School to discuss with students what facilities and activities they might like to see there.
- In response to a question about how best to engage with young people, Miss Allen and Miss Clayton said the Council should reach out via schools and also perhaps have a website where young people could give their views. They were encouraged that the Council wants to hear from young people.
- In response to a question regarding encouraging girls into politics, Miss Clayton commented that she knew lots of her friends were interested in politics and were keen to get involved. She believed that people of all genders, races and background should be encouraged to do so.

The Chairman thanked Miss Allen and Miss Clayton for attending the meeting and wished them every success for the future.

## **7 ANNUAL PRESENTATION FROM THE CHIEF CONSTABLE**

The Chairman welcomed the Chief Constable Francis Habgood to the meeting. Apologies were noted from the Police and Crime Commissioner, Antony Stansfeld.

The Chief Constable gave a presentation which included a short video highlighting some of the achievements of Thames Valley Police (TVP) over the past year. The following main points were made:

- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) had recently inspected TVP. The inspection focussed on efficiency and understanding demand and TVP had been graded Outstanding, one of only two forces in the UK to achieve this. (Durham being the other)
- Summer 2017 had been a tough period, with terrorist incidents in London and Manchester. In the previous three years there had been 13 significant terror plots nationally, compared to 12 significant plots in seven months in 2017. This represented a step change. Police had responded well to the incidents in London, due to effective training and bravery of officers involved. In the aftermath of these incidents, communities were reassured by seeing armed officers on patrol.
- TVP had also been dealing with significant crime incidents locally, with four murders in the first two weeks of June. There had been an increase in both 999 and 101 calls – 999 calls continued to be higher than normal, although 101 calls had now reduced.
- Nationally some recorded crimes were increasing, but overall crime was reducing. There had been an increase in sex offences, burglaries and more complex crime. However TVP was in the bottom third of all forces for burglary and violent crime was also very low.
- Budget pressures remained. TVP received a cash flat settlement of £390million per year from Government but with inflation and increased demand, difficult decisions had to be made.
- Partnership working was going very well, for example, the Safe Hub in Aylesbury, where partners were working together to support individuals who placed a high demand on the Police and other services was seeing results. The

- Early Help Panel also tried to break cycles of issues within families.
- TVP were also working closely with Bucks Fire and Rescue service. The Fire Service supported TVP in looking for missing persons and there were also plans to co-locate in some areas.
  - The Aylesbury Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was now well-established and working well. Workload remained high, but staff morale was good and it was proving to be the most effective MASH in the Thames Valley.
  - Community working was also a priority for TVP. The Chief Constable was committed to neighbourhood policing and whilst numbers were down, problem solving teams could be drafted in to tackle more difficult issues in an area. Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) were important in supporting communities.
  - TVP were also doing lots of work on Hidden Harm, trying to encourage reporting of modern slavery and child sexual exploitation (CSE), as well as domestic violence.

In response to Members' questions the following points were made:

- In response to a question regarding historical cases of CSE, the Chief Constable commented that it was important to support people who come forward and that cases for investigation had to be prioritised, especially if children could still be at risk currently. More resources would be assigned to this in 2018.
- Issues had been experienced with call waiting times for the 101 service. The Chief Constable explained that this was due to an increase in demand for both 999 and 101 calls, both of which were handled through the same call centre. 999 calls must be answered within 10 seconds and the vast majority of 101 calls were answered within 2 minutes. In 2018, a new system would be introduced to allow non urgent reporting to be done online, where updates could also be posted to reduce call volumes.
- There had been an increase in rough sleepers in Wycombe. A multi-agency approach was needed to address this as enforcement was not always the best option. It was important to understand and address the root causes.
- On the whole, burglary had significantly reduced in recent years, possibly due to a decline in the market for second hand electrical goods. However there have been some trends in burglaries this year – when the weather was hot in the summer there were opportunistic burglaries, Asian households had been targeted for gold and travelling criminals have come in to the Thames Valley from across the world.
- A Member raised concerns about implications for crime associated with the construction of HS2. The Chief Constable explained that a team was being set up, co-ordinated by the British Transport Police due to the geography of the line. His concern was more about dealing with protests, than crime as well as possible disruption on transport routes.
- Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) which were active and effective would still be supported by TVP. In areas where NAGs had been disbanded, the Police would look to liaise with the community in another way.
- A Member asked what was being done to tackle anti-social behaviour by youths on dirt bikes in Wycombe. The Chief Constable agreed to come back with a response to the Member.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Constable for attending the meeting and asked for the Council's thanks to be passed on to all TVP officers in recognition of their work and

dedication.

## **8 TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

The Deputy Cabinet Member for Resources, Mr G Williams, introduced the Treasury Management report.

In response to a Member's question, the Deputy Cabinet Member explained that investments in commercial properties were yielding a 6.5% return and this was a good way for the Council to supplement its income. A rigorous process was in place before any such investment was undertaken.

A Member asked if, in light of the economic position, the Council would always be able to negotiate a better deal on Lender Option Borrower Option (LOBOs) loans, rather than the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). In response the Deputy Cabinet Member commented that LOBOs were fashionable 10 years ago and whilst a decision had been taken to try and manage these out of the blend of the Council's debt, the Council would take advantage of rate offers in the short term. In a period of low interest rates the LOBOs had been effective, but PWLB would be the cheapest way of borrowing in future and the Council aimed to retire the LOBOs.

### **RESOLVED**

**Council agreed the Treasury Management Update report and the Prudential Indicators for 2017/18 to 2020/21.**

## **9 SELECT COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN'S UPDATE**

The Select Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen presented the reports. Mr B Roberts, Chairman of the Health and Adult Social Care Committee reported that Members had recently visited Wycombe Hospital and he thanked Lesley, Carol and Rose who showed them round.

Mr D Carroll, Chairmen of the Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee, thanked Mr S Lambert for agreeing to chair the Modern Slavery Inquiry and noted that the Committee would consider the Growth agenda at future meetings.

The Cabinet Member for Children Services thanked Members of the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee for their recent visits to social care teams.

## **10 CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS**

### **Leader**

In response to Members' questions the following points were made:

- The Leader was proud of Buckinghamshire's pioneering businesses in fields such as life sciences, automotive engineering and creative industries. He would be working closely with the Local Economic Partnership in developing an Industrial Strategy and was also looking forward to the Buckinghamshire Brexit Summit in December.
- Members were reminded that a full review of the Council's budget position was undertaken each quarter at Cabinet. In summary, the latest Cabinet report

showed that the Children's Services and Adult Social Care budgets would be overspent by £800k and £1.4m respectively, but this would be counterbalanced by an underspend on contingency, therefore an total underspend of £3m was anticipated at year end.

### **Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transportation**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transportation reminded Members that the annual appeal for gifts for Looked After Children was underway and any gifts donated by local residents or community groups could be handed in to the Buckinghamshire Suite for safekeeping. It was noted that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council would also be taking a number of Looked After Children to the pantomime in both Aylesbury and Wycombe.

In response to Members' questions the following points were made:

- Members could take advantage of a Speed Awareness campaign tailored to their own divisions, which would be launched shortly.
- It was agreed that the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transportation would ensure that Members would receive the programme for the next phase of work funded by the DfT Pothole scheme. This programme would run up to 18<sup>th</sup> December.
- Members also requested a copy of the schedule of works for the next phase of road resurfacing, highlighting that it would be useful for discussions around next year's programme to be held as early as possible.
- Government was still committed to delivering East/West Rail. Work on the western section was due to begin in 2018, with a completion date of 2023.
- A number of Members were complimentary about recent resurfacing work which had been undertaken in their divisions. However some Members raised issues with the quality of work. The Cabinet Member commented that on the whole the quality of Transport for Buckinghamshire's work had improved, but he would investigate individual issues on behalf of those Members who had concerns.
- Two Members asked the Cabinet Member for assistance in resolving ongoing issues with faulty rising bollards in their divisions. It was noted that a capital bid had been submitted in order to replace faulty bollards.
- An road safety issue was raised regarding a risky junction on the A413 near Great Missenden. The Cabinet Member advised that he would ask the road safety team to investigate concerns and report back to him.

### **Cabinet Member for Resources**

In response to Members' questions the following points were made:

- The Cabinet Member was congratulated on his recent Digital Champion award and was asked when he would be able to share future plans for digital transformation at the Council. Members were advised that a pipeline of further digital projects was being developed and would be shared in due course. In addition some further updates to the Council's website were planned.
- The Cabinet Member agreed to provide information on the number of vacant posts across the Council excluding Children's and Adult Social Workers. It was suggested that the Council could consider removing these vacant posts altogether in order to relieve budget pressures.
- Concern was raised about the Council's pension fund investing in fossil fuel companies. The pension fund was about to transfer its investments into the

Brunel Pension Partnership and the Cabinet Member was a member of the Oversight Board. He would therefore have the opportunity to engage in an ethical investments policy discussion with other members going forward. It was noted that the Council has a strong performance in energy reduction measures.

- The Apprenticeship Fund was used to support both new apprenticeships – the Council had made good progress on its target of 63 for the year – and also enrolling existing staff onto apprenticeship training.
- The news that the National Social Work Student and Newly Qualified Social Workers Conference would be held in Buckinghamshire in 2018 was welcomed.

### **Cabinet Member for Community Engagement & Public Health**

The Cabinet Member asked that a message of support and well wishes from the Council should be passed to Mr Bendyshe-Brown.

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

- It had been announced that Britain could no longer host the City of Culture in 2023, which Milton Keynes had been planning to bid for. It was suggested that the Cabinet Member might contact Milton Keynes Council to discuss whether it would be appropriate to undertake a joint initiative to shine a light on the culture of Buckinghamshire in 2023 instead. The Cabinet Member confirmed that this news was hot off the press and this suggestion would be considered.
- In response to a question regarding insurers asking people if they have been tested for HIV, the Cabinet Member advised that this was not an issue for the Council and noted that people with other issues, such as diabetes, could also face similar feelings of discrimination.

### **Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment**

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

- An Air Quality Workshop was to be held with partners at Green Park on 19<sup>th</sup> February. (Post meeting note: Date now changed to 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018). Whilst Buckinghamshire was below the national average in terms of air quality where was still more to be done and the Cabinet Member was actively working on this.
- A Member suggested that it would be helpful, following a public consultation, if any subsequent changes to the final decision as a result of the consultation could be stated explicitly, to ensure that people could see that the consultation was genuine and that their views have been taken into account. The Cabinet Member confirmed that he did not view consultation as a tick box exercise and genuinely wanted to hear people's views.

### **Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

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

- A Member asked if a report could be prepared for Members to explain how the £500,000 budget savings in respect of SEND will be achieved. The Cabinet Member advised that a timetable for changes in this area would hopefully be available in the new few weeks.
- A Member thanked the Cabinet Member for attending the recent opening of an Adult Learning Centre in Quarrendon.

## **Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

The Cabinet Member introduced his report and highlighted the following key points:

- A minor typographical error in his report in the middle of P79 – it should read 'post natal and ante natal support'. Members were reminded that a decision on the Early Help review had been postponed to the 8<sup>th</sup> January Cabinet meeting.
- Ofsted was currently reviewing Children's Services and Inspectors would be on site for another week.
- A section of his report showcased the achievements of some Looked After Children. The Council currently had 470 Looked After Children.

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

- No decision had been taken on the new Early Help model. The decision had been deferred to the 8<sup>th</sup> January Cabinet to enable the Cabinet Member and officers the opportunity to listen to the views of residents and charitable organisations involved.
- The current model for Children's Centres was not adequately targeting the most vulnerable in our communities. Proposed locations for hubs were predicated on areas of deprivation and currently a lot of activities were delivered in the community, for example, in parish or church halls. The aim of the Early Help model was to offer wrap around care to the most vulnerable families by offering co-ordinated services, rather than expecting them to navigate their way through a confusing multi-agency system of support.
- A Member reported that his community had been proactive in coming forward to ask if they could take over the operation of their local Children's Centre. Other Members commented that this option was not always available in more deprived areas.
- In response to a question regarding the impact that the Cabinet Member had had on his portfolio to date, he commented that whilst he had only been in post for six months, he hoped that positive changes he had seen in areas such as the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), transitions to Adult Services and the revitalised Corporate Parenting Panel would have led to better outcomes for Looked After Children. It was hoped that Ofsted would also recognise these improvements.

## **Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing**

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing highlighted the item on the Walled Garden in Missenden in her report and encouraged Member's to visit.

In response to a question following up on an action from September's Council meeting, the Cabinet Member advised that she had not yet contacted Aylesbury Town Council and the Dementia Friendly Alliance about their drive to make Aylesbury a dementia friendly town, but she would do this.

## **11 NOTICES OF MOTION**

The Chairman advised that a Motion to Council: Supporting Women Councillors had been received from Mr S Lambert and also an amendment to the Motion, proposed by Mr M Tett.



Mr S Lambert proposed the motion and made the following main points:

- The Fawcett Society had undertaken cross party research with evidence from female councillors across the country with a view to answering the question 'Does Local Government work for Women?'
- A key theme of the report was how to get more women into politics – this required actions from political parties and also local authorities in promoting being a councillor to women and other minority groups. It was noted that there had been a significant increase in the number of female MPs but this had not been reflected in local government.
- In the private sector, research had demonstrated that more diverse teams perform more effectively and it was important that the Council should be representative of the population as a whole.
- It was natural to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities and to encourage more women into politics it would be helpful to remove structural barriers, for example, paternity leave.
- At Buckinghamshire County Council there was only one female Cabinet Member, no female Select Committee Chairmen and only one of the four Statutory Committees was chaired by a woman.
- However the Council did have strong female role models in its senior management team and this motion was designed to enable women to achieve and believe that they can.
- Whilst the Council may not particularly have a problem with sexism or sexual harassment, it was important to have clear policies in place to deal with this.

Mr Lambert concluded by commenting that this was an opportunity for the Council to lead the way in supporting women councillors.

The Chairman noted that Mr Tett, proposer of the amendment to the motion had waived his right to speak in favour of Lin Hazell, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing. Lin Hazell made the following main points:

- In the majority group, 37% of Members were female and this was 14% in the opposition group. Also over 10% of County Councillors were from a Black or Minority Ethnic background, therefore the Council was already diverse.
- Lin Hazell had not come across anyone who had felt they were unable to stand as a councillor or who had felt blocked in any way by male colleagues. She did not believe that there was an issue in Bucks but the recommendations of the Fawcett Society report should be considered by political parties and also perhaps the Member Development Working Group.

The Chairman invited Members to debate the motion and the following main points were made:

- The Leader commented that whilst the Fawcett Society report was very interesting, the original motion implied that we had an issue in Bucks, which he did not believe to be the case. He did not agree with the idea of quotas to increase representation for women or any group. Finally as noted previously the Council had a number of senior female officers including the Chief Executive, providing evidence that the Council was not discriminatory.
- There was no need for positive discrimination as women had progressed. It was noted that half the District Council Leaders were women and they had achieved these positions on merit, not because of their gender.
- Female Members wanted to earn their place on merit, not because of positive discrimination although it was recognised that women should be encouraged to

play a part in public life and women councillors could act as role models, especially for younger people.

- In addition to women, it was important to encourage people from all backgrounds to consider standing as a local councillor.
- This was an issue of psychological aspiration for women. The debate should not focus on whether the Council had an issue currently, it was about standing up and ensuring that there would not be any problems in the future.
- A significant proportion of Members disagreed with the idea of quotas for candidate selection. In reply, Mr S Lambert commented that he had not mentioned quotas in the original motion as he agreed that all Councillors should be chosen on merit. He believed that the proposed amendment to the motion was a lost opportunity to make a valuable change for the future.
- A Member commented that she had hung on to her seat for twenty years despite changing her party political allegiances in that time and she paid tribute to the new Honorary Aldermen, who had also been long serving female members of the Council.

#### **RESOLUTION**

**The amendment as set out on the Council papers was voted upon by a show of hands. This was carried.**

A short debate on the amended motion then took place.

#### **RESOLUTION**

**The proposed motion as amended was voted upon by a show of hands. This was carried unanimously.**

#### **12 CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS TAKEN - INFORMATION ONLY**

The information was noted.

#### **13 EVENTS AND INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS - INFORMATION ONLY**

The information was noted.

#### **14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018, 9.30am at The Oculus, Aylesbury.

**CHAIRMAN**