

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Buckinghamshire County Council convened and held on Thursday 26 July 2018 in Oculus, commencing at 9.30 am and concluding at 11.40 am.

PRESENT

Ms N Glover in the Chair;

Mr M Appleyard, Mr R Bagge, Mr W Bendyshe-Brown, Mrs P Birchley, 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, Mrs L Clarke OBE, Mrs A Cranmer, Mrs I Darby, Mr D Dhillon, Mr C Etholen, Mr M Farrow, Mrs B Gibbs, Mr C Harriss, Mr D Hayday, Lin Hazell, Mr M Hussain, Mr N Hussain, Mr P Irwin, Mr S Lambert, Ms A Macpherson, Mrs W Mallen, Mr D Martin, Mr R Reed, Mr B Roberts, Mr D Shakespeare OBE, Mr M Shaw, Mrs L Sullivan, Mrs J Teesdale, Mr M Tett, Ms J Ward, Mr D Watson, Mr W Whyte, Ms A Wight and Ms K Wood

DIGNITARIES AND OTHERS PRESENT

Ms R Farwell

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Collingwood, Mr C Ditta, Mr A Hussain, Mr R Khan, Mr P Martin, Julia Wassell, Mr G Williams, Mr B Allen, Mrs M Clayton, Mr P Lawrence and Mr K Ross MBE DL

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

2 PETITIONS

Mrs Ward presented a petition on behalf of residents of Oakfield, objecting to the proposed closure of access to the A41 at the Bedgrove junction. The petition was handed to the Chief Executive.

3 COMMUNICATIONS

Minute's Silence:

The Chairman opened Council with a minute's silence to pay respect to three remarkable Buckinghamshire gentlemen who had sadly passed away; Lord Carrington, Lord Cottesloe and ex-County Councillor Frank Sweatman.

Written Questions:

The Chairman advised Members that responses to written questions had been published online.

Chairman's Report:

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

- Since being appointed as Chairman of Council, she had attended or been represented at 33 events across the county and beyond over the last 69 days.
- One of the highlights was to lead a small party of County Councillors on a trip to Belgium where they visited several World War One battlefield sites and cemeteries, a trip funded at their own expense. The Chairman shared photos of the trip.
- The Chairman was honoured to be able to lay a wreath at both the Menin Gate and the Tyne Cot Memorial at a commemoration ceremony for former Buckinghamshire County Council Weights and Measures Officer Lance Corporal Arthur Ormerod who was killed in the battle of Menin Road on 20 September 1917.
- She had also hosted a number of events which included two receptions for volunteers who supported the work of the County Council, a small dinner party for her two charities and an Investiture Ceremony where recipients of the British Empire Medal were presented with their awards by the Lord-Lieutenant.
- On 18 July the Chairman and the Chief Executive hosted a special ceremony for 11 Council staff members ranging from a school caretaker to a reablement worker. They were presented with framed certificate to mark their 25 years' service at the Council.

The Chairman thanked Members for their support with events, in particular, the Vice Chairman for attending the Royal Air Force High Wycombe procession Honours Awards ceremony last week.

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.

RESOLVED

Council AGREED the Treasury Management Annual Report and Prudential Indicators for 2017/18.

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 CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS

Leader

The Leader provided updates on recent announcements made at the end of the Parliamentary session, these included:

- Government would be looking into the issue of reduced revenue funding to local councils. There would be a sum of money to mitigate the impact of this, although it was not yet clear what this would mean for the County Council. The Leader had asked the Director of Finance and Procurement to look into this further.
- Government would be running a further pilot on business rates retention. The previous pilot enabled retention of 100% of business rate growth but this would now be reduced to 75%. The Leader hoped that the County and Districts would be able to successfully work together to achieve the best outcome for Buckinghamshire.
- Publication of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The impact of this for Buckinghamshire as an area of high house prices was that the county had significantly increased housing targets. This would impact on the county in terms of housing growth and the associated infrastructure needs and councils could be penalised if developers did not complete houses that they had planning permission to build.

In response to Member questions, the Leader highlighted the following:

- The Leader continued to lobby Government to rationalise the variety of funding streams available to support growth and infrastructure, as this would assist local authorities with longer term financial planning.
- The County Council's green belt policy was to protect and maintain green belt unless in extreme circumstances. The Leader would continue to maintain that protection. The new NPPF allowed councils to release green belt if there was no other option.
- There was no conclusion from Government on local government reorganisation and no information given on expected timings of this announcement.
- An announcement confirming the route of the Expressway was still pending.
- In response to a question around the A4010 the Leader highlighted that England's Economic Heartland were required to consider the "major road network", which are major 'A' roads and bring forward proposals on how these will link with the Expressway. There could also be a requirement to then develop housing along the improved major road network.
- In response to concerns about keeping roads moving with HS2 construction, the Leader confirmed that HS2 were not yet starting construction, but they were undertaking ground investigations. The only quasi construction works was adjacent to the M25 near Denham, which was to construct access roads and compounds. Ground investigation works along the A413 were underway currently but this would be temporary. There was a dedicated team of officers working hard to look at how the impacts of this would be mitigated.
- In terms of Brexit, the County Council had never taken a definitive stance on Brexit. Government wanted a negotiated withdrawal agreement and trade agreement, and if successful, there would be no need for stockpiling. However, Government were right to be cautious in working out contingency plans for a 'no deal' situation. The County Council was working closely with businesses and had run a summit last year in High Wycombe and there was another planned with neighbouring areas which would consider the action required of businesses and the council collectively. This would take place at a time when negotiations

on future trade agreements were clearer.

Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Transportation

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transportation welcomed Mrs Clarke OBE back after a period of ill health. He also welcomed Mrs Bennion back after recovering from an accident.

He paid tribute to Transport for Buckinghamshire staff for their hard work in resurfacing the county's roads in exceptionally hot weather conditions.

In response to Member questions, he highlighted the following:

- That the Freight Strategy recently adopted had been applauded by other counties. He confirmed that he was aware of the problems of parking for HGVs and assured Members that he would investigate this.
- In response, to a question about resurfacing local roads, one which was publicly owned and one which was private, Mr Shaw advised that residents across Buckinghamshire would not be happy if the Council spent money on repairing private residential roads. However, he confirmed that he would be happy to work with the local Member to arrange for the work to be done, if the residents wanted to pay for TfB to undertake the repair work, whilst repairing public highways in the local area.
- Assurance was given that work on installing rising bollards in Mr Lambert's division would be completed on time and the Cabinet Member would also confirm delivery timescales for A418 junction improvements.
- County Council looked forward to working more closely with AVDC on parking surveys and other opportunities to collaborate.
- In response to a question on the issue of weeds and gully clearing, the Cabinet Member confirmed that the small budget of £125,000 for this year was under pressure, but discussions were taking place with TfB about how to tackle this next year.
- The Cabinet Member was thanked for his support in Bryant's Bottom which had experienced significant flooding issues. The Cabinet Member confirmed that he would ensure that agreed timeframes for drainage works in the village were met.

Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Public Health

The Cabinet Member added the following points:

- Work on the Aylesbury Library refurbishment would commence on 9 August. The temporary library in the study centre would open on 14 August before the new library opened fully in November.
- Members should visit the Archives, which had recently been awarded accredited status by the National Archives.
- He reminded Members and the public of how to look after themselves and others in the current heat and encouraged people to look out for our vulnerable residents.

In response to Member questions, the Cabinet Member highlighted the following points:

- Public Health checks in Chesham would be continuing.

- In relation to a question on protecting our vulnerable residents in the event of a Brexit no deal, the Leader confirmed that this was a national policy issue and that fundamentally guidance would be needed from Government, in terms of what actions should be taken to protect the vulnerable, and the council would always follow guidance given.

Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment

In response to Member questions, the Cabinet Member highlighted the following:

- It was noted that the Chiltern Conservation Board had agreed to lobby Government for the Chilterns to be recognised as a National Park, rather than an Area of Outstanding Beauty and the Cabinet Member was asked if the council would support this. The Cabinet Member explained that he would be looking into the pros and cons of this proposal.
- Waste was a significant issue at present, the council had a 99% satisfaction rate from residents in this area. The council had an excellent record in dealing with fly tipping and had a zero tolerance policy on this. The council had successfully prosecuted 1:38 people fly tipping, compared to a national average of 1:638.
- The Leader added that the council had also been very successful in enforcing on the spot fines for fly tipping. Publicity campaigns encouraged people to report fly tipping incidents quickly so that evidence could be gathered to identify offenders. The LGA were also lobbying for manufacturers to reduce wrapping on products to minimise waste.
- Identifying orphaned land was important to Mr Chapple and he was happy to work with the District, Town and Parish Councils to identify small pockets of orphaned land and ensure they were looked after. However, he highlighted that this would also need the cooperation of private owners.
- Country parks staff were congratulated and recognised for their excellent work. Members were reminded that the county's country parks were renowned and also cost neutral. Mr Chapple thanked all the volunteers who worked in the parks and in maintaining rights of way.

Cabinet Member for Resources

In response to Member questions, the Cabinet Member highlighted the following:

- Misuse of blue badges was responded to appropriately and penalties were issued. Misuse of disabled spaces was an issue in Buckinghamshire with the level of incidents being equitable to what you would expect in a London borough. Mr Shaw added that there was a zero tolerance to misuse of disabled parking spaces.
- Recent IT issues had been stabilised. The council was in the process of developing a new technology strategy and ensuring that IT systems were resilient was fundamental to this. A new Director of Technology had been recruited and would be starting in the autumn.
- There were challenges in delivering the apprenticeship levy programme as there were restrictions on how the levy could be spent and schools were facing particular issues. The council was liaising with schools to encourage them to use the levy, and had used the schools levy through the council's corporate levy which helped use funds that would otherwise have been lost back to the government.
- Mr Chilver confirmed that he would be mindful of moving services online and

would ensure that those less able to access online services would still be able to access help and support. Libraries have resources to support residents in getting online.

Cabinet Member for Children's Services

The Cabinet Member drew attention to the Commissioner's report and the link to the report in his written update. He told Members that he was pleased that it was a positive report that endorsed the direction of travel the service were taking on the improvement programme.

Members were also reminded of the ongoing fostering and adoption information sessions. The next one would be taking place on 15 August 2018 in Buckingham and further details were on the website.

In response to Member questions the Cabinet Member, highlighted the following:

- The continuing support from wider Members to ensure that children and families in Buckinghamshire received a good service.
- It was confirmed that there would not be any closures of children's centres this year. In addition there were no changes to the public health services delivered through children's centres. Pre- consultation planning would continue over the summer and a public consultation would take place in October. Further information on the programme and timescales could be found on the website.
- It was confirmed that the Council had received Ofsted registration of the second children's home in Aylesbury and children would be moving into that imminently. Investment for next three homes had been agreed. The next new home would be in Aylesbury and options for a home in the Wycombe area for two remaining sites were being considered. The programme was continuing at pace to improve the number of placements within the county.
- The Chairman regretted issues with current homes in Aylesbury Vale but these were not council-run homes, therefore the County Council was limited in what it could do, other than working with local partners to help address issues where possible.
- The council's agency rate for social work staff was now in line with the national level, it was recognised this would fluctuate. The Cabinet Member monitored this closely.
- It was acknowledged by the senior team that there were still some issues with the quality of social care practice and work was taking place with front line teams to address these issues, ensuring that social workers are clear about what good looks like and should look like in Buckinghamshire. They were working at the grassroots level to support and coach teams to do better and improve this area. The Cabinet Member was reassured that progress was being made.
- Another Ofsted monitoring visit had taken place and the outcome of that would be communicated in the next week.
- The need for continued support for front line managers was acknowledged. The work and support put in place for social workers had improved, and there were various continuous development programmes taking place, including monthly masterclass sessions to enhance newly qualified and junior members of staff to improve expertise and knowledge.
- The Cabinet Member would check the status of the children's centre in Walton

Court.

Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

The Cabinet Member added:

- To date there had been 128 responses on the draft Short Breaks Strategy consultation and six events had been held to gain feedback from service users.
- It was acknowledged that certain areas of the social care workforce still face recruitment issues, in regards to senior social workers and occupational therapists.
- A Dementia conference would be held on 28 September in Aylesbury.

In responses to Member questions, the Cabinet Member highlighted the following:

- In relation to adult social care funding in the government Green Paper and the impact of the forecast funding gap for Buckinghamshire, the Cabinet Member agreed to look into what the funding gap would be in Buckinghamshire and a written response would be provided.

ACTION: Ms HAZEL

- The Cabinet Member agreed to meet Mr Lambert and colleagues at the town council to discuss their work on 'dementia friends' and how the council could help promote this.

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

The Cabinet Member added:

- That getting early years work right was imperative. Buckinghamshire had the best performance in terms of providing places for children who qualify for places at early years settings
- The council had a good Ofsted record of school inspections but recognised areas where the service needs to be alert.
- Outstanding schools were rarely inspected. If a head teacher changed, there was a possibility that standards could change. The council had a team working with all schools to prepare for future Ofsted inspections to ensure they could approach this with confidence.
- There was a programme in place for school places and it was confirmed that there would be sufficient secondary school places.
- Members were reminded that they were all corporate parents and should ensure that children in care were looked after, listened to and that their aspirations for the future were heard.

In response to Member questions, the Cabinet Member highlighted the following:

- The Cabinet Member was part of the Local Enterprise Partnership team which leads on the skills agenda in liaison with businesses. In the last few years, things had moved on at a great pace. Collaboration between schools and businesses had improved significantly.
- It was confirmed that there were no plans for changes to home to school transport provision this year. Budgetary pressures did mean that some changes

would be needed in future and Members would be briefed once options had been developed, but nothing would change prior to September 2019.

- It was acknowledged and understood that there were issues with some public bus services serving some schools, that had increased prices and reduced services. The Cabinet Member confirmed that he was aware and more consideration was needed about the viability of public bus services, particularly in rural areas.
- The service was looking at the criteria for SEN support. The council needed to look carefully at the whole picture around criteria as Buckinghamshire was currently supporting SEN children who would not qualify for this in other local authorities.
- The 'side by side' project was focussed on improving standards within schools. This project identified high quality teachers to spend time with schools that were struggling. The project had been running for nine months but it was too early to evaluate the impact.
- Information at a recent debate at Buckingham University illustrated the difficulty of changing the educational attainment gap between people in deprived areas and those in more affluent areas. This gap had not changed in five years. The 'side by side' project was the approach the council was adopting to try to change this. It was recognised that this would take a lot of time and effort and was a problem experienced by every local authority. Officers were working hard to try to break the mould and improve outcomes for children.
- The Chairman agreed to provide Mr Farrow with the plans for four schools that had recently been judged as "required improvement".

ACTION: MR APPLEYARD

- A Member thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for stepping in to assist parents when a public bus service in her area was withdrawn at short notice. The Cabinet Member reiterated that he would be carefully considering the risks of moving more toward public transport services providing home to school transport, as opposed to commissioning our own home to school transport.

8 SELECT COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Select Committee Chairman presented their reports.

Mr Watson, Chairman of the Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee, highlighted that the Committee's upcoming Inquiry would be led by himself.

Mr Dhillon, Chairman of the Children's Select Committee, informed Members that he would be presenting the Committee's Inquiry report and recommendations on reducing permanent exclusions from schools in Buckinghamshire, to Cabinet in September. He highlighted that this was a national issue.

Mr Dhillon thanked Mrs Hawkswood, Members of the Inquiry group, Service Officers, Head Teachers and all other contributors to the Inquiry for their help and support.

Mr Roberts, Chairman for the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee highlighted that he had been contacted by interested press in relation to the Committee's Childhood Obesity Inquiry, another national issue.

The following Member questions were asked:

- Ms Clarke asked what the council was doing about exclusions from the schools in Buckinghamshire. Mr Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education said he would provide a short paper to all Members to update on this.

ACTION: Mr APPLEYARD

- Ms Macpherson highlighted that there were concerns about the Children's Mental Health Service and suggested that the relevant Select Committee consider this topic within their work programme. Mr Roberts confirmed that it was on the radar for the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee and he would consider how and when to include this within their work programme.

Council NOTED the Select committee report.

9 NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no notices of motion.

10 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT EVENTS - INFORMATION ONLY

Information was noted.

11 CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS TAKEN - INFORMATION ONLY

Information was noted.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 20 September 2018 at 09:30am at the Oculus.

CHAIRMAN

