

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the Buckinghamshire County Council convened and held on Thursday 25 April 2019 in The Oculus, AVDC, Gatehouse Way Aylesbury, commencing at 9.32 am and concluding at 12.22 pm.

PRESENT

Ms N Glover in the Chair;

Mr M Appleyard, Mr R Bagge, Mrs P Birchley, Mr S Bowles, Mr N Brown, Mr T Butcher, Mr D Carroll, Mr W Chapple OBE, Mr J Chilver, Mr A Christensen, Mr C Clare, Mrs L Clarke OBE, Mr A Collingwood, Mrs A Cranmer, Mrs I Darby, Mr D Dhillon, Mrs B Gibbs, Mr C Harriss, Mr D Hayday, Ms L Hazell, Mr A Hussain, 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 B Roberts, Mr M Shaw, Mrs L Sullivan, Mrs J Teesdale, Mr M Tett, Ms J Ward, Julia Wassell, Mr D Watson, Ms A Wight, Mr G Williams and Ms K Wood

DIGNITARIES AND OTHERS PRESENT

Sir H Aubrey-Fletcher, Mrs M Aston, Mr M Colston, Mr P Lawrence, Mrs G Miscampbell OBE DL, Mr R Pushman and Mrs J Upton MBE

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr W Bendyshe-Brown, Ms J Blake, Mr C Etholen, Mr P Martin, Mr R Reed, Mr D Shakespeare OBE, Mr W Whyte, Mrs A Davies, Mrs V Letheren and Mr K Ross MBE DL

1 MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2019 were **AGREED** as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

2 PETITIONS

There were none.

3 COMMUNICATIONS

Apologies were received from: Mr Appleyard, Mr Bendyshe-Brown, Mr Etholen, Mr Peter Martin, Mr Shakespeare, Mr Reed and Mr Whyte and Hon Aldermen Mr Ross, Mrs Letheren and Mrs Davies

The Chairman highlighted the recent Buckinghamshire County Council Workplace Hero Awards. The Chairman's update and winners appended to the minutes.

The Chairman also reported on a number of events since the last meeting and highlighted the following in particular:

- The Chairman thanked all colleagues involved in the Christmas present appeal.
- The recent Chesham Community Event
- The opening of The Exchange in Aylesbury town centre which was well attended.
- The British Legion Cadets Awards held at the Oculus, The Gateway.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5 SELECT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The Chairman introduced the Annual Report of the Select Committees and asked the Chairman of each committee if they had anything to add to the report.

Health and Adult Social Care

Mr B Roberts thanked the committee for their hard work and colleagues in Democratic Services for their support. Mr Roberts stated that he wanted to ensure that the excellent scrutiny work carried out by the County Council was carried forward into the new authority.

In response to how the public could be more involved in the HASC Select Committee, Mr Roberts stated that a number of approaches had been tested and he welcomed ideas from Members on how this could be improved.

Children's Social Care and Learning

Mr D Dhillon thanked Members of the committee, Democratic Services and officers for their support. He also mentioned the complex areas within the committee's remit that would need to be highlighted moving forward into the new authority. Mr Dhillon highlighted that there were now two primary school governors on the committee.

Transport, Environment and Communities

Mr D Carroll thanked the team for their work and highlighted the volume of work the committee had got through and looked to future work which included HS2 attending to discuss community engagement.

Finance, Performance and Resources

Mr D Watson thanked members for their continued commitment and support. Mr Watson highlighted recent progress on recommendations made by the committee which included how the public could have an increased view on how money was spent. Mr Watson also highlighted the unique opportunity ahead in becoming a unitary authority.

Mrs Clarke thanked colleagues in Democratic Services for their administration of all four select committees.

RESOLVED: Council NOTED the Annual Report of the Select Committees.

6 PROPORTIONALITY REPORT

The Chairman advised that a revised report had been published as a supplement.

Council considered the report and recommendations.

RESOLVED: Council CONFIRMED the political balance in the distribution of seats across Committees be as set out in Tables 1 and 2 in the supplement report, to accord with the rules on proportionality.

7 CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS

Leader

Mr M Tett highlighted the following updates:

- The Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid was essential to provide infrastructure upfront to accommodate housing growth.
- The bid was submitted in February/ March 2019 and a result was expected by summer. An evaluation of the report would now not be given until June which would result in a delay in announcement.
- Mr Tett had written to Homes England to draw attention to the fact that the funding was essential.

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

- A formal welcome was given to Ms Julia Upton, MBE as the new High Sherriff for Buckinghamshire.
- The structural change order for the unitary council had been laid but not yet made as it still had to be debated and agreed by the House of Commons and House of Lords.
- The councils had entered into an agreement collectively for a proposal that all Members would work within the parameters set down by government in the structural change order. Two meetings had taken place, one of which agreed a spend protocol around new expenditure.
- Mr Tett expressed concerns that the authority was about to enter into a 10 year+ waste contract just before the formation of the unitary organisation.
- Although concerns were expressed over financial pressures due to the high figure of elected Members in the new authority, it was hoped that this would encourage diversity in the election of new Members.
- The Shadow Authority would come into effect when it was passed through parliament.
- Buckinghamshire County Council(BCC) recognised the need for a bypass for the Ivers and the Aylesbury area to provide for a link around Aylesbury to accommodate the high levels of traffic caused by high housing growth. This supported the argument for the importance of HIF. BCC would champion that the bypass be dualled from the beginning as opposed to a single carriage way.

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transportation

Mr M Shaw highlighted the following updates:

- A new contracts manager for Ringway Jacobs had been recruited. Ms Louise McCann would be joining the organisation from Northamptonshire County Council.
- A Modern United Nations debate would take place at The Oculus the following day. This would include 150 young people and would be on the topic of extremism.

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

- Regular meetings were being held with HS2 who were being pushed to disclose

information on HS2 traffic numbers.

- Mr Shaw had accepted an invitation to visit the south of the county and view the newly implemented parking sensors following Mr A Collingwood's disappointment in the system.
- In response to concerns raised on damage to footways caused by utility companies, residents were encouraged to contact BCC to report damages so that licenses could be checked.
- Reassurance was given that outstanding road schemes from the previous year would be reinstated and delivered.
- Mr Shaw gave apologies to Mr Lambert and Ms Glover for distress caused to residents due to the rising bollards in their divisions. The bollards had been vandalised and were overly sensitive causing them to malfunction. Ongoing issues had been reported and raised multiple times via Fix My Street and select committee. Mr Shaw had raised the issue with Ringway Jacobs and was awaiting a response. This response would be shared with Mr Lambert to pass on to parish councils and residents.

ACTION: Mr Shaw

- Mr Shaw would also confirm if faulty lamps in Coldharbour were due to an electrical malfunction or if they were broken down.
- In response to praise over how well Fix My Street was working, Mr Shaw highlighted that it had been nominated for a national award. It was also highlighted that newly recruited Depot Manager, Ms Rosie Taylor, had been nominated for a national award as the only female depot manager in the country.

Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment

Mr B Chapple had no further updates to add to the report. In response to Member questions, Mr Chapple highlighted the following:

- Mr A Collingwood felt that the Environment Agency (EA) had not delivered on their promise for the flood elevation scheme in Marlow. They needed to return and complete the work properly so the field could be opened and used by children. Mr Collingwood would email Mr Chapple so that the issue could be escalated to the EA.

ACTION: Mr Collingwood

- Thanks was given to Mr Chapple for help provided with responding to residents who were dissatisfied with the changes to the household waste recycling centers, but it was highlighted that residents struggled to understand how the administration costs would not outweigh the revenue gain.
- Julia Wassell would email Mr Chapple regarding resident concerns over a footpath which had the potential to disrupt local wildlife. The County Local Wildlife Officer would get in touch with Julia to advise on this.

ACTION: Julia Wassell

- The decision to implement the charges in the household waste recycling centres had not been easily made, but failure to do so would have resulted in the closure of more sites.
- Mr Chapple highlighted that flytipping would be kept under review and closely monitored. Most cases of flytipping were executed by commercial companies as opposed to law abiding residents. In response to concerns of Members and residents that the newly implemented charges would result in an increase in flytipping, Mr Chapple assured Members that it was very unlikely that there would be a direct correlation between the two.

- A meeting would take place the following week to confirm the charges of the recycling centres. The charges would be tweaked if necessary.
- There was funding in the capital programme to make improvements to Rabans Lane to accommodate increased traffic caused by the recycling centres.
- An issue regarding Aylesbury Town Council being turned away from the recycling centre had been resolved.
- The staff onsite at the recycling centres were trusted, but measures to monitor best practise were in place to ensure that staff were not exploiting residents in return for cash payment. Cash payments were not accepted on the site.
- Members praised the efforts of flytipping staff in the organisation.
- It was felt that harsher punishments on flytippers such as points on licenses and the seizing of vehicles would see a reduction in the offence. Mr Chapple highlighted that flytipping is currently the responsibility of the County Council in partnership with the District Councils and that most people realised the negative impact that having a criminal record could have on their lives. Mr Chapple would include this the next time he writes to the Secretary of State.

ACTION: Mr Chapple

- Letters of exception would be given to town/ parish councils and charities who had taken part in a clean-up of the area.

Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Public Health

Mr N Brown highlighted the following updates:

- A successful event held to educate people on the negative effects of domestic abuse.
- The benefits of the Street Associations project. This had been taken up to a national level.
- Thanks was given to Mr P Irwin for his radio broadcast on mental health.

In response to Member questions, Mr Brown highlighted the following:

- Work on Marlow Library was an ongoing project. Updates would be given when possible following the move into unitary.
- In relation to the EU settlement scheme, library staff would be given support to help members of the public with the home office process. An update would be provided to Mr Christensen on what work was being done.
- In response to concerns raised over vulnerable young people joining gangs, Mr Brown highlighted that the government had failed to make youth service a legal requirement. Lack of funding had resulted in a struggle to keep some youth clubs running. PCC had gained funding that had been targeted towards the prevention of knife crime and gangs. This was in the process of being developed.

Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Mr G Williams, Deputy Cabinet Member highlighted the following updates:

- The service was hoping to host a children in care celebration event in August. Potential sponsors were being sought..

In response to Member questions, Mr Williams highlighted the following:

- In response to concerns over the recruitment and retention of social workers it

was highlighted that positive changes were being made, with an increasing confidence across the manager ranks. Members were asked to spread the word of the benefits of working for Buckinghamshire County Council.

- Thanks were given to Members for their support of the opening of the new children's home which had been rated as "good" by Ofsted.
- The pressures of an increased demand on the service while experiencing budget cuts were highlighted.

Cabinet Member for Resources

Mr J Chilver highlighted the following updates:

- Congratulations were given to all winners of the "Workplace Heroes" awards.

In response to Member questions, Mr Chilver highlighted the following:

- Praise was given over the selection of an appropriate land contractor and sub-contractor and how the concerns of residents had been taken on and addressed.
- There had been no further update on the previous contribution by charities for Seeley's House. A response from the Legal team was being chased.
- There had been a delay in works on the Old Wycombe Library due to asbestos but it was hoped that staff would be able to move in later in the year.
- Members were pleased with the renovations to the former police station in Aylesbury, with a Japanese restaurant due to open in May 2019.
- Praise and thanks was given to IT and Democratic Services for the changes in IT access for Members. Clarification was needed of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) statement. Mr Chilver would consult officers and report back on this.

ACTION: Mr Chilver

- Regeneration plans for the Old County Offices were high on the property agenda. There were plans to convert these into 50 town centre apartments which would be a great contribution to the regeneration of the town centre. The building plans had been through two changes and there had been delays from the planning authority.

Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

Ms L Hazell highlighted the following updates:

- The Better Lives transformation programme had been shortlisted in the MJ awards.

In response to Member questions, Ms Hazell highlighted the following:

- Members would be engaged in the planning phase of the short breaks consultation where possible.
- Three organisations had expressed an interest in taking over the space of Thrift Farm. This was being worked through.
- Thanks were given to senior managers and teams for providing effective and immediate assistance for two specific local families.

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Ms A Cranmer, Deputy Cabinet Member, highlighted the following updates:

- Bucks Learning Trust (BLT) had ceased trading in March. All school improvement services were taken in house.
- A new school had opened in Berryfields with 76 students and 720 projected. A teacher recruited at the school, Ms C Imbriano had been nominated for outstanding new teacher of the year.
- 91.5% of children in the county attended schools rated as “good” or “outstanding” by Ofsted which was above the national average.

In response to Member questions, Ms Cranmer highlighted the following:

- A reorganisation of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) department would help to address the problem of outstanding SEN assessments.
- More praise of local schools was needed, regular updates could be included in local newsletters.
- Interactions with schools were taking place to address the closure of Burnham Academy by E Act. This had caused a lot of distress to pupils and parents.
- The goal for the department was to have 100% of children enrolled in “good” or “outstanding” schools. There was still a lot of work to do especially in urban areas.

8 NOTICES OF MOTION

The Chairman advised that a Motion to Council: “Enabling works for HS2 in Buckinghamshire” had been received from Mr Clare.

Mr Clare proposed the motion and highlighted his main points (appended to the minutes).

Mrs Macpherson seconded the motion and highlighted her main points to Council (appended to the minutes).

Mr Tett, Leader highlighted the following points:

- The long and proud record held by the Council in opposition to HS2. The Council had been at the forefront of campaigning and had actively lobbied for mitigations since the bill had been passed. Mr Tett stated that HS2 were woefully short with those mitigations
- The business case was flawed and the money could be better spent on improvements to existing commuter routes, high speed broadband and west to east connectivity.
- Mr Tett urged the Government to stop HS2 now and not to press ahead with a flawed business case.
- Mr Tett looked forward in anticipation of the motion being passed and writing to the Secretaries of State on this dual strategy that impacted not only transport but also the environment.
- Dame Cheryl Gillan MP on the anticipated passing of the motion would also write to the Secretaries of State in support.
- Building on the success of the motion going through the district councils, Mr Tett stated that they spoke as one council to stop HS2 and urged Members to support the motion.

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Lambert, highlighted the following points:

- Mr Lambert rose to support the motion.
- Following the announcement of HS2 in 2010 there had been immediate opposition due to the environmental impact.
- People's property, the impact on local wildlife and the damage to historic woodland had not been taken into account. Concerns were expressed over the effect on climate change and habitats.
- Dame C Gillan, MP had been a champion against HS2 throughout the campaign and had spoken regularly in parliament.
- Aylesbury MP, Mr David Lidington had formed a committee to vote against HS2 every step of the way, but had not followed through with this.
- Progression of transport lines needed to be made, but HS2 was not using modern technology to do this and was not the right approach,
- Birmingham would gain a lot of benefits from HS2 and had spent millions of pounds on upgrading the infrastructure of the city centre to accommodate the project. It was suggested that the full environmental impact was not understood.
- Mr Lambert wanted the motion to be amended to include all MPs in Buckinghamshire and not just the government.
- Mr Lambert thanked the HS2 BCC Officers for the work they had done.

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

- The business case for HS2 was not strong.
- The concerns of residents had not been taken into account by HS2.
- HS2 would have a serious impact on the environment, local wildlife and habitats.
- The project should be discontinued, and funding should be used to improve the existing railway lines.
- Money would be better invested in providing relief roads in Iver and around Aylesbury. This would relieve congestion and improve air quality.
- There was no economic case for HS2 with a cost of £150 billion.
- The damage to the environment and costs of HS2 outweighed the benefits.
- There had been cases of residents experiencing severe distress over HS2 who had decided to move out of Buckinghamshire because of it.
- Members and residents should unite together to stop the project.
- The resolution should be passed unanimously.

The Chairman put forward the following Motion to Council:

This Council proposes that the Leader should write to Government to request that all enabling works for HS2 in Buckinghamshire should be paused until the Notice to Proceed to main works contractors has been approved. As required by the Department of Transport, Notice to Proceed should not be given until management capability, affordability of contracts and robustness of revised business case have all been proven. We see no reason why the County should suffer significant disruption and long term environmental destruction until detailed design and cost has been approved. We also ask that HS2 Ltd significantly improves the effectiveness of its community engagement with those impacted by the line.

RESOLVED: The proposed Motion was voted upon by a show of hands. This was

carried unanimously.

9 CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS TAKEN - INFORMATION ONLY

RESOLVED: Cabinet NOTED the report.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

23 May 2019.

CHAIRMAN

Workplace Hero Awards

Tuesday 26th March 2019

“Any council knows that their staff are their biggest asset and we certainly have a wonderful passionate, committed and skilled workforce.

The awards stretched right across the council recognising the collective and individual efforts and achievements of staff at the County Council. It was truly inspiring to listen to all the nominations and their dedication and commitment.

Examples of the stories we heard are; firstly the team from the Hillcrest Day Centre, for adults with learning disabilities, were nominated for their actions in January when a snow downfall caused 20 clients to be stuck in the centre due to gridlocked roads. The team stayed late into the evening, ensuring the clients were safe and warm, kept up to date and even walking to the local Tesco to buy food and drink to keep them all going, as well as thinking about any emergency medication.

Secondly, Vanessa Rolfe and Lisa Gardner from Resources and Children’s Services for their caring and responsive actions when faced with a medical emergency. Vanessa and Lisa were at a meeting when a DWP staff member fell, knocked her head and become unconscious, a condition which quickly worsened when she stopped breathing. Thanks to Vanessa calling an ambulance and Lisa performing CPR, the individual made a full recovery.

I’d like to mention a special recognition award. In June last year, several members of our youth offending service, in particular Robert and Aman, intervened when a young man was stabbed near to their office. With an extraordinary presence of mind they administered immediate first aid and stayed with the young man who was losing significant amounts of blood, reassuring him all the time. They then worked with the emergency services and accompanied him to hospital. The result of their actions was that they helped to save his life.

I wanted to take the opportunity to highlight some of the winners from those Awards. The Team of the Year Awards went to the Steeples’ Residential Home Team, nominated for their hard work in getting from inadequate to good in the recent Ofsted inspection. To turn this around in six months showed extraordinary teamwork. By implementing the improvements recommended by Ofsted, the team have been able to provide a high quality of placements for some of the county's most vulnerable young people, and children in the home report feeling happier and safer. This kind of change in such a short time is very hard to achieve.

The Manager of the Year went to Cynthia Tapping who manages the Stoke Mandeville Hospital Team. She has been described as a kind, caring and compassionate manager who supports her team to the highest level. Cynthia has been at the forefront of much of the work in the integration of health and social care. She has trialled new ways of working and continually looks for better ways of doing

things. Cynthia often sacrifices her own personal time, putting herself forward for weekend working so the team is fully supported.

And the Employee of the Year award went to Marco Dias who has shown a huge amount of initiative in driving forward a highly successful programme of work to support the council and the county in preparation for Brexit. Thanks to his efforts the council has received national recognition for best practice in Brexit planning and we have been able to be proactive in providing information to help our local residents, businesses and other stakeholders to prepare.

There were so many nominations too – it made it so difficult to judge winners. We have great people who do truly great work”

Motion to Council on 25 April, to be proposed by Cllr Charlie Clare

'This Council proposes that the Leader should write to Government to request that all enabling works for HS2 in Buckinghamshire should be paused until the Notice to Proceed to main works contractors has been approved. As required by the Department of Transport, Notice to Proceed should not be given until management capability, affordability of contracts and robustness of revised business case have all been proven. We see no reason why the County should suffer significant disruption and long term environmental destruction until detailed design and cost has been approved. We also ask that HS2 Ltd significantly improves the effectiveness of its community engagement with those impacted by the line'.

HS2 is not a done deal. The plans that have been made public so far - and that were used to gain Parliamentary Assent for the scheme in 2013 - are little more than educated guesses.

But although HS2 doesn't not have permission to be built, our County is already being irreversibly damaged and that I hope that destruction can be stopped.

For three years, Effiage Kier, the designated contractors for the line through Buckinghamshire, have been working on detailed designs and – most importantly costings – for the actual building of HS2 through our county.

Before HS2 has permission to build anything, they have to take these designs to the Government, along with

- Affordability of contracts i.e. The Cost
- Proof of Management Capability
- And a Revised Business Case.

This process is known as 'Notice to Proceed' and until it has been granted the HS2 scheme is no more than a Government proposal, for which they have asked for a quote. There are no costs, there is no accepted design, there is no proof of a viable business case. HS2 does not have permission to be built.

Day by day more and more doubt is thrown onto the affordability and the business case for HS2. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Liz Truss has made it very clear that there are significant doubts about this project.

HS2 have postponed providing the information required for Notice to Proceed – one can only assume because the numbers don't add up yet - until the end of the year and I think that is fair to summarise that currently the project's

costs are escalating out of control and they are desperate to find a way to make it affordable.

So HS2 is far from being a done deal. Yet, Buckinghamshire is already suffering huge environmental damage and massive disruption for residents.

Although HS2 does not have permission to start building the line, they do have permission for 'enabling works' under the HS2 Bill. Enabling works allow contractors to clear the way for future construction...but HS2 is pushing the boundaries of this remit, into destroying our countryside.

Currently from the very south to the very north of the country there is disruption and damage being caused by HS2 under 'Enabling Works'. A quick tally of works listed on the HS2 community website indicates that there are around 80 such schemes throughout Buckinghamshire.

Many of these works bring irreversible damage to our environment and will leave the Country scarred for generations. There are many examples, but perhaps the most sever is at Steeple Claydon.

This 'de-veg' plans to remove 500 acres of historic Countryside, kilometres of hedgerow, over 75 acres of woodlands and more than 100 mature Oak Trees. The Oaks are generations old, some surely over a century old and as such irreplaceable. HS2 plan to rip out our rural heritage, despite not having shown the community or the government what they plan to build in their place. Nor have they shown the treasury how much it will cost.

These irreplaceable Oak trees could be removed at any point – indeed new machinery has moved onto the site since Easter – and with just a few hours work – HS2 will change our countryside irreversibly.

HS2 is cutting a swathe through Buckinghamshire, right now, for an infrastructure project which might well never be built.

This motion seeks to defend our county, our countryside and our residents from the devastation which HS2 will inflict on us...Damage done, before the Government has even seen what it is buying and how much it will cost!

Before I finish I would just like to say a quick word about HS2's community engagement and why this motion calls for it to be improved.

At Steeple Claydon in late February this year, HS2 gave Landowners only three weeks' notice that contractors were coming on their land to sterilise it from any wildlife.

That this is being done in Nesting Season is unforgivable, but just as awful is the way the news was broken to landowners and the community.

That community made its feelings clear in a petition calling for the CEO Mark Thurston to engage with the community and mitigate the de-veg. 2500 people signed hard copies in just three working days. Over 4 weeks later residents have had no response! Indeed, I can share with you that had I not pointed out – last week - that they should, HS2 had no plan to respond to that petition at all.

In the Community Engagement Statement, Mark Thurston, says that

“The legacy of HS2 will be judged on how the communities up and down the route feel they have been treated by us and our contractors. For me as Chief Executive this legacy is as important as our ability to deliver the railway safely, on time and to budget”

... he goes on to say...

“and where we make mistakes, learning from these will help us to constantly improve our engagement approach.”

Mark Thurston's callous disregard of our residents and his complete lack of response to residents' petition give us just a glimpse of how HS2 plans to treat Buckinghamshire.

We cannot expect our residents to put up with this treatment for a project that has not yet been costed, designed or justified in anyway.

This motion calls for our Government to halt all engagement works until they have granted Notice to Proceed. HS2 have postponed making their business case until December 2019. It is simply wrong that they should continue to destroy our County and disrupt our residents' lives when this project has proven future at all.

Angela Macpherson

“Thank you madam chairman I rise to second Charlie Clare’s notice of motion. Everything we’ve heard reflects the level of concern dismay, anger and frankly the anxiety and depression many of our residents that are affected by this vanity project are experiencing

I welcome the opportunity to second this motion.

Now that the enabling works have started in earnest along the track we’re seeing at first hand the illogical and questionable way that HS2 are proceeding. As you’ve heard in my own ward around Calvert, devegation of large areas of land is taking place as we speak, hedgerows ripped out and all this in bird nesting season at extortionate cost. I heard last evening that the dodgers hall lodge is threatened with compulsory purchase in June for enabling works again premature.

At grass roots level we are doing everything we can to halt the process at the very least until after nesting season and achieve a delay to protect our wildlife.

Residents and councillors are actively campaigning to achieve this. A petition of over 2500 signatures has been presented to HS2 head office (but have had no response) national and local media are highlighting our efforts and I have written to both of our MPs and the CEO of HS2

We now hear that there is a six month delay to the Notice to Proceed to release the next tranche of funding taking us to the end of the year. So surely it makes sense to at the very least postpone this local environmental destruction until that point.

Encouragingly there is renewed debate in government circles about the viability of the scheme with huge question marks over the spiralling costs and the already shaky business case,. Liz Truss is asking for a zero based capital review and ex treasury minister Lord Macpherson is on record saying HS2 would fail a cost benefit analysis and warns the technology is likely to be outdated by the time it becomes fully operational!
We can but hope that government will come to its senses and recognise priorities of far greater national importance.

The specific point in this notice of motion about improved engagement is critical

Let’s look at HS2’s published community commitments:

I Quote:

Our aspiration is to be a good neighbour every single day by respecting the people and communities we impact and being sensitive to their needs earning our social licence to operate.

In order to build the railway we must earn the trust and credibility to do so. We need to demonstrate that we understand local concerns and that we have taken all reasonable steps to address issues that have been raised whilst continually looking to lessen the impacts of the project.

Come on HS2 that is not what our communities are experiencing

Whilst I recognise that our representations may fall on deaf or disinterested ears, I firmly believe we must keep on helping our residents and communities the best we can.

So I second this motion”.

