



## Cabinet

**Wednesday, 13 March 2019 at 6.00 pm**

**Room 6 - Capswood, Oxford Road, Denham**

### A G E N D A

Item

8. Policy Advisory Group Minutes (available in supplement pack) *(Pages 3 - 16)*

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| Customer Services and Business Support | 4 March 2019     |
| Healthy Communities                    | 28 February 2019 |
| Planning and Economic Development      | 7 March 2019     |

**Note:** All reports will be updated orally at the meeting if appropriate and may be supplemented by additional reports at the Chairman's discretion.

#### **Membership: Cabinet**

Councillors: N Naylor  
J Read  
B Gibbs  
P Hogan  
D Smith  
L Sullivan

**Date of next meeting – Wednesday, 26 June 2019**

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**CUSTOMER SERVICES AND BUSINESS SUPPORT POLICY ADVISORY GROUP**

**Meeting - 4 March 2019**

Present: D Smith (Chairman)  
R Reed and D Saunders

Also Present: R Bagge

Apologies for absence: M Bezzant and T Egleton

**31. MINUTES**

The minutes of the Customer Services and Business Support PAG held on 19 November 2018 were approved.

**32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**33. PROGRESS ON IT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

The Head of Business Support updated Members on the ICT Strategy. She informed Members that a full report had been submitted to the Joint Committee on 13 February 2019 which sought agreement to approve the initiation of the projects to move the Councils ICT desktop services and infrastructure estate to Microsoft's Azure Cloud and to use PowerOn , through the CCS G-Cloud framework to provide professional services to deliver these cloud migration projects. In her update, Members noted that contracts were being drafted with PowerOn and they were liaising with Microsoft regarding licenses.

Following a question from a Member it was agreed that a written report would be submitted to the next meeting of the PAG providing an update on the IT Strategy and the Head of Business Support confirmed that there was no additional funding on the ICT Strategy. The Head of Business Support reported that they had to move forward with these projects as the Council would be out of compliance in January 2020 if these changes were not implemented.

A Member queried the IT Strategy and the Customer Experience Strategy in relation to the transition to a new Unitary District Council. Both Customer Services and IT were working with their colleagues at the County and District Councils on a number of work streams and looking at different options. Any proposals would be considered by a joint meeting of the Chief Executives and would be discussed by the Shadow Executive once it had formed, if required. The Head of Customer Services clarified that no solution had been agreed yet for customers but confirmed that South Bucks

District Council was not spending any additional funding on the Customer Experience Strategy.

In relation to the IT Strategy the Head of Business Support reported that Wycombe District Council were taking the same approach to their IT Strategy as Chiltern and South Bucks and that the approach at Bucks County Council was also very similar. Aylesbury Vale District Council have had a Cloud Strategy for several years. She was having weekly meetings with the other Buckinghamshire Authorities Heads of IT on work streams for the Unitary District Council.

34. **EXEMPT INFORMATION**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the following item(s) of business is not for publication to the press or public on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

35. **BAD DEBT WRITE-OFFS**

The PAG received a report on the write-off of debts, which were non recoverable due to insolvency action. Members noted that some businesses faced problems following a revised valuation being received from the Valuation Office. The Council would put recovery action in place with a Liability Order being granted by the court. Following this if liquidators were appointed, the account would be apportioned and a Proof of Debt submitted. With individual debt, attempts would also be made to recover debt and Enforcement Agents would be used. Debt was not recoverable once an Individual Voluntary Arrangement had been entered into. Since the service had come back in-house from November 2018, new arrangements had been put in place to monitor debt.

Having considered the advice of the PAG the Portfolio Holder **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that the position regarding the debts listed be noted and for Cabinet to authorise these to be written off on the Council's books.

36. **APPLICATION FOR HARDSHIP RELIEF FROM BUSINESS RATES**

The PAG considered an application for rate relief on hardship grounds. Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 gave the Council power to reduce or remit the payment of non-domestic rates by granting hardship relief to provide assistance to businesses that were suffering unexpected hardship arising from circumstances beyond the businesses control. When granting rate relief on the grounds of hardship consideration was given to whether the ratepayer would sustain hardship if the Council failed to grant relief and whether it was reasonable to grant relief having regard to the interests of persons subject to the Council Tax.

Members considered the application and commented that all businesses needed to make provision for their first year of operation and therefore considered that it was not reasonable to grant hardship relief in this instance, particularly as it was a commercial venture which did not significantly benefit the community. Reference was made to considering if the business could obtain any other reliefs.

Having considered the advice of the PAG the Portfolio Holder **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that relief should not be awarded for this organisation in this instance.

The meeting terminated at 6.25 pm

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## HEALTHY COMMUNITIES POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting - 28 February 2019

Present: P Hogan (Chairman)  
Dr W Matthews and D Pepler

Apologies absence: for D Anthony, P Bastiman and M Bezzant

### 91. MINUTES

The minutes of the Healthy Communities PAG held on 21 November 2018 were approved.

### 92. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

### 93. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS

There were no reports from Members.

### 94. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES UPDATE REPORT

The PAG received an update report from the Head of Healthy Communities, which was delivered on his behalf by the Housing Manager, which covered the ongoing work within the service. In particular the following points were noted:-

- Housing allocations – there had been an even spread of lettings over 2018. The extra 40 housing units at Taplow had meant that waiting time performance had improved.
- Homelessness – there were 43 people in temporary accommodation in January 2019. The number of clients specifically in nightly booked accommodation was a 57% reduction on the equivalent number in temporary accommodation 12 months before. This reduction had been achieved despite the decommissioning of the eight former Gerrards Cross Police Houses which were fully vacated in December 2019.
- Housing standards – the extension to the HMO Licensing came into effect from October 2018. To date 15 new licences have been issued for previously unlicensed HMOs that now fell within the new extended HMO definition. Reference was also made to the new pilot for Handy Helpers Scheme to help deliver minor repairs, adaptations and help with day to day tasks to elderly and vulnerable residents in partnership with other District Councils. The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act would come into force from 20 March 2019 which would require all social and private landlords in England to ensure that a property was fit for human habitation at the beginning and through the

duration of the tenancy. If a home does not meet the standard tenants would have the right to take legal action.

Members passed on their congratulations to staff for their work on homelessness and reducing nightly accommodation costs. A Member asked a question about how this Council compared to other Councils. The Housing Manager reported that the direction of travel on the private sector leasing scheme was good but that it was difficult to compare benchmarking information at the moment because of the introduction of the new Homelessness Reduction Act. Some Council's had seen an upturn in applications but it was still too early to say whether this would lead to an increase in the use of temporary accommodation. A review of the impact of the new Act would be undertaken after 12 months.

Members then asked about the impact of the changes in relation to Universal Credit. This had currently not directly impacted on homelessness although some clients in nightly booked temporary accommodation had faced problems with meeting day to day living costs due to reduced Universal Credit awards. L&Q were providing advice to people about how to claim for Universal Credit and to ensure that they get the money they should be due. Information could also be obtained from the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Officers would monitor the situation as it could take some time to see any impact from the legislative changes.

The Housing Manager reported that L&Q had development projects for small plots of land, however this had been impacted by the slow down in the property market. A Member referred to a possible development in her area and the Housing Manager reported that he would discuss this with L&Q.

In answer to a question it was noted that the extension to HMO Licensing related to all social and private landlords. The property would have to meet the standard of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. If the landlord refused to fix any hazards in the property then enforcement action could be taken. However, hazards would not cover issues such as the property being damp, but this was also covered by the Act. Further clarity was being sought over the procedures under this legislation in terms of who carried out assessments. A further question was asked about support to tenants who wanted to take legal action. Advice could be obtained through the normal channels such as Citizen Advice Bureau and also some legal firms were offering advice on a no win no fee basis.

Members referred to the Bath Road Depot and noted that this project had been slightly delayed but was now scheduled for April/May. Regular liaison meetings were taking place with both the builder and the Registered Provider who would be leasing the units from the Council.

There were 40 flats for affordable rent and 20 for shared ownership at Mill Lane Taplow. A Member asked how many units had gone to people over 55 and the Housing Manager reported that he would investigate this.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

95. **BUCKS HOME CHOICE ALLOCATION POLICY**

The PAG received a report on the revised Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy which sought authority from Cabinet and Council on its adoption. The PAG had received a previous report in October 2018 and since then a consultation had taken place on the proposed revisions. The majority of respondents to the consultation were in favour of the proposed revisions with the exception of the proposal that same sex siblings should be expected to share a bedroom until the older child reached the age of 21. Legal advice was also being sought on people with a record of anti-social behaviour and how this should be approached.

Following a question Members noted that as some housing providers did not allow siblings to share rooms at this age the draft policy had been lowered to 18. The policy would be reviewed after six months by a Practitioner's Group. However, if there were any urgent issues relating to the Policy these would be addressed quickly.

Having considered the advice of the PAG the Portfolio Holder **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet that the revised Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy be approved and that the Head of Healthy Communities be delegated authority to make any final amendments and to agree and adopt the final version of the revised Policy in consultation with the Healthy Communities Portfolio Holder (subject to Aylesbury Vale Chiltern and Wycombe District Councils also adopting the revised policy).

96. **AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONTRIBUTIONS UPDATE**

The PAG received an update on the position of the Affordable Housing Contributions received by the Council and how they had been utilised. The funds spent to date (£7,976,324) have delivered affordable housing via a range of schemes since 2011 which were listed in the report. Further committed funds of £1,322,122 were currently delivering new temporary accommodation initiatives. Of the total funding, £797 remained uncommitted as these funds were insufficient to support any further initiatives at this time. Members congratulated officers on the use of these funds to help secure affordable housing for residents.

A Member referred to the downsizing scheme and the Housing Manager reported that this scheme had now been brought to a close as there had not been much demand.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

97. **IVER AIR QUALITY ACTION PLANNING - UPDATE**

The PAG was provided with a brief update on the way in which the Air Quality Action Plan for Iver was being developed, the initial source apportionment work that had now been completed and the impact of the new National Clean Air Strategy 2019. Members noted that before opening out the process to other parties, an officer group was looking at existing procedures relating to the new action plan. One of the key steps in developing an action plan was to undertake work on the source apportionment assessment. The two main issues were:-

- The main source of nitrogen dioxide on both Thorney Mill Lane North and South were HGVs
- The main local sources of nitrogen dioxide on Iver High Street were HGVs and Diesel Cars.

A project plan was attached to the report and work was being undertaken with Public Health on this area. There were also opportunities to engage with local schools and residents and working with other partners to try and improve the flow of traffic, consider available options for limiting polluting vehicles, the routing of freight, associated signage improvements, the influence of parking enforcement and the promotion of green travel plans. The Environmental Health Manager also reported on other work on air quality including national and regional projects and the Clean Air Strategy 2019, where there was a focus on the reduction of national emission of pollutants that would in turn reduce background levels e.g cleaner vehicles and smoke control.

A Member asked whether there was an ability to influence plans at regional or national level and whether data sources could be broken down further. It was noted that there was significant Government data available on regional and national issues.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

98. **WORLD WAR ONE COMMEMORATION GRANTS SCHEME**

The PAG was given an overview of the World War One small grants scheme and the projects awarded funding to commemorate this landmark year from the Active Communities Officer. There were seven local projects across the District where £1,250 funding was given. In accordance with the Council's Community and Wellbeing Plan projects were evaluated against a range of criteria including facilitating community participation, linking with young people and working in partnership with others. Members noted that the funding for this project was sourced internally from within the existing Community and Leisure team budget.

Members thanked officers for their work on the Scheme and reported that it had been well received.

The meeting terminated at 7.00 pm

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## **PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY ADVISORY GROUP**

**Meeting - 7 March 2019**

Present: J Read (Chairman)  
G Hollis, M Lewis and G Sandy

Apologies for absence: J Jordan

### **127. MINUTES**

The minutes of the Planning and Economic Development PAG held on 29 November 2019 were approved.

### **128. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **129. UPDATES FROM MEMBERS/ SENIOR OFFICERS ON CURRENT ISSUES**

It was proposed to progress the introduction of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and a further PAG meeting had been set up for 4 April 2019.

The Local Plan consultation was due to begin in May/June. The Members would be notified of the dates through the Members Bulletin.

Training for Town and Parish Council Members and Clerks had been arranged for 12 March on Planning – Development Management and Enforcement.

### **130. FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND**

Central government had made a fund of £675 million available to regenerate High Streets across the UK. Up to £25 million could be claimed but bids of £5-£10 million were expected. Expressions of interest had to be submitted by 22 March 2019 which gave only 2 weeks' notice.

### **131. PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FEES**

As part of creating an exemplary planning service, it was proposed to improve the Pre-application planning advice service. This was a service that developers wanted, it was helpful to them to more fully understand our policies and processes. It would also improve the quality of applications coming forward and improve the Council's performance figures. To staff the service adequately, it would be necessary to charge fees that fully cover the costs. The report compared charges with neighbouring Councils' and fees within the joint service.

It was proposed to increase fees by 20% and streamline the charges across the joint service. This would fund the extra resources needed to adequately staff the service. Members were concerned that if developers had paid for the service, they would automatically expect that their application would be passed at planning committee but were reassured that it would be made clear to the applicant that this was not certain to lead to permission granted.

Members agreed to the following recommendation:

The PAG was asked to advise the Portfolio Holder and Head of Planning and Economic Development on the following recommendation:

**RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. That the Head of Planning and Economic Development adopt the revised fee structure and in particular to: -**
  - A) amalgamate/streamline the two current charging schedules into one, set fee based structure. Such a fee structure is consistent with those operated by the majority of Local Planning Authorities, and**
  - B) introduce a 20% minimum increase across the board on all fees payable for pre-application advice, and**
  - C) streamline the current fee charging categories relating to different forms of commercial development, such that they relate to one non-residential/ commercial category (based on proposed floor space divisions), and**
  - D) introduce a new Pre-application category in respect of the use of bespoke Planning Performance Agreements (PPA's): this would be applicable when dealing with large scale development proposals in respect of schemes comprising 50+ dwellings and non-residential floor space over 2, 000m2), and**
  - E) A corollary of the above would also address the current shared service deficiency in not having a consistent charging schedule, and therefore not recovering the full costs, of providing pre-application advice in respect of proposals relating to Listed Buildings.**

**132. PLANNING SERVICE UPDATE**

The appendix set out the key actions being undertaken and the last column the latest position. Much improvement had been made since last year; IT systems had started to work together and vWorkspace challenges overcome, staff turnover had been a problem but now there were new teams in place. The focus now was on refining best practises across the services. It was confirmed that there were now approximately 80

Officers in the service. With regard to the enforcement backlog, it was acknowledged that the Interim Officer had done a great deal to address this. It was noted that there was no statutory obligation to do enforcement but it was important to residents.

Members asked for easier access to the Enforcement Team and it was advised that it should be quicker now to get an email reply. Members were asked to include the case reference number when they contacted the team.

It was **RESOLVED** the report be noted.

**133. EXEMPT INFORMATION**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the following item(s) of business is not for publication to the press or public on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

**134. HS2 PROJECT REPORT**

The project was still currently at Stage One as notice to proceed had been delayed until the autumn. A programme of work with details had been requested from the contractors but this had still not been received. Any information provided would be shared in the Members Bulletin.

The Colne Valley Regional Park Panel (CVRPP) had received an allocation of a fund of £3 million to offset the impacts of HS2 and an update on those projects was listed in the table on page 18.

A community forum was planned to inform the community of progress on the project but was not well attended previously. This time it would be advertised in the local press on the website.

The Colne Valley Viaduct Design Schedule 19 pre application discussion had commenced but the Council had requested details of the landscaping plan and the commitment by HS2 to provide the landscape and noise mitigation has become an issue. The Council has said that it was critical in its view that landscape commitment be secured at the same time otherwise determination of the Schedule 17 would be very difficult.

An update on the funding of the HS2 team noted that time for Officers could be recharged for the next 12 months with the exception of community engagement that would be paid for by the existing contingency reserves.

It was **RESOLVED** that Members note the report and progress made on the project including the financial implications contained in the report and that they will be met in 2019/20 from reserves of each authority for these purposes.

The meeting terminated at 7.02 pm