

# Council Minutes

Date: 6 October 2014

Time: 6.30 - 7.48 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillor L M Clarke OBE (In the Chair)

Councillors Mrs J A Adey, K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, D A Anson MBE, M C Appleyard, D H G Barnes, I Bates, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, A D Collingwood, R B Colomb, R Farmer, M A Foster, R Gaffney, J Gibbs, S Graham, A R Green, G C Hall, M Hanif, C B Harriss, A E Hill, M Hussain JP, D A Johncock, Mrs G A Jones, M E Knight, S P Lacey, Mrs W J Mallen, Miss S Manir, N B Marshall, H L McCarthy, I L McEnnis, R Metcalfe, Mrs M L Neudecker, B E Pearce, B R Pollock JP, J L Richards OBE, J A Savage, R J Scott, C Shafique MBE, A Slater, T Snaith, Mrs J E Teesdale, A Turner, P R Turner, Ms J D Wassell, D M Watson and Ms K S Wood.

Also in Attendance: Honorary Aldermen P Cartwright, E H Collins and Mrs P Priestley.

## 35 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Honorary Aldermen: J M Blanksby, D A E Cox, Mrs K M Peatey MBE and R C Pushman. Councillors: M Angell, W J Bendyshe-Brown, D J Carroll, C A Ditta, A Hussain JP, Maz Hussain, Mrs J D Langley, Ms P L Lee, J A Malliff, Mrs D V E Morgan, S F Parker, D A C Shakespeare OBE and R Wilson.

## 36 MINUTES

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 28 July 2014 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

## 37 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D Barnes declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 (question 7/8) regarding the Airpark. This was due to the fact that his son was employed by Heli Air.

## 38 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

### (a) London Trip

The Chairman announced that she had been delighted to have been presented to Princess Anne, along with one of the Princes of Qatar.

### (b) Kop Hill Run

It was reported that the Chairman had attended this event, and had felt that it should become a county, if not a national wide event. Congratulations were expressed to all involved in organising the event.

(c) **Sean Kelly / Aidon Ferguson**

Members were informed that last Friday the Chairman had met with author Sean Kelly who had written a book on US bases around London, and with Historian Aidon Ferguson.

Wycombe Abbey School had showed the small group around the bunker situated within their grounds. This had been followed by a visit to RAF Daws Hill.

## 39 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

a. **Question from Mr D Roberts to the Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainability**

“Do you feel that the provision of homes for the thousands of people currently on the waiting list is being put at risk by opposition to any development of the reserved sites?”

**Response from Councillor N Marshall (Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainability)**

“The issue of the development of the reserve sites is a very sensitive one and I can sympathise with the concerns expressed by local people. However there is a pressing need to deliver housing both because of the national requirements on the Council to maintain a 5 year housing land supply but also, as you point out, the large number of people on the Council’s housing register who need affordable homes to live in. Development of housing on the reserve sites would provide a proportion of affordable housing, some of which I expect would benefit those on the housing register.

However, the decision about whether or not to release the reserve sites for development is one that will be taken at a Special Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> of October and that decision must be taken as to the interests of the district as a whole, so at this point in time I am afraid I am unable to answer your question.”

**Supplementary Question**

“People are frustrated that they cannot get onto the property ladder. Affordable housing is required. What reassurance can the Cabinet Member provide that a good proportion of new housing will be affordable and preferably for local people?”

**Supplementary Response**

“We recognise the need, and will try our utmost to deliver. We have a number of ideas in mind and will have to see how they develop.

**Brief Adjournment**

At this point during the meeting a fire drill took place. The meeting adjourned and reconvened shortly afterwards.

## **40 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

### **a. Question from Councillor B Pollock to the Leader of the Council**

“On the 20 October at 6.30pm the Cabinet will be making some vital decisions about the future of the Reserved Sites in Wycombe District. Can the Leader confirm that any decisions the Cabinet make will then come to the Full Council for confirmation so that all members will have the opportunity to vote on these highly important and far reaching decisions?”

### **Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor R Scott**

“The criteria for decision-making is laid down in the Council’s Constitution. The Constitution clearly states that the approval of non-statutory plans are a reserved matter for Cabinet (set out at Part 2B - 1), and hence, does not require full Council approval. The reserve sites constitute a non-statutory matter.

It is also important to remember that this is not a change in policy as the reserve sites have been identified for that purpose for a long time.

I am acutely aware of the amount of public interest and debate and I am therefore minded to allow members to speak at Cabinet for a maximum of 1 minute each, so we can hear all views. My Cabinet will also be receiving the feedback from the extensive public engagement that has happened over the summer in respect of the reserve sites issue. Cabinet will therefore have the benefit of both local Members and public input, as well as the views of the Local Plan Task and Finish Group, before it takes a decision on this important matter.

Cabinet will meet in open session to consider this issue on 20 October, with the public and press able to attend. This is an important decision for the future of the District and I can assure you the Cabinet will have regard to all relevant matters in coming to its decision.”

### **Supplementary Question**

“Let me quote the constitution back to you. Section 2 paragraph 4 states that the role of a Councillor is to be the ultimate decision maker, and that a Councillor will effectively represent his/her ward and constituents.

How is it that this can only be a Cabinet decision?”

### **Supplementary Response**

“This has not been a policy change, we have continued with the existing one. There have been extensive public consultations on the matter, and everyone can have a further opportunity to speak on 20<sup>th</sup> October.”

### **b. Question from Councillor A Turner to the Leader of the Council**

“Whilst Wycombe District Council continues to promote many millions of pounds of investment into High Wycombe, loudly trumpeting its core strategy of regenerating town centres (£60M of inward investment in the Hughenden Quarter alone) Princes Risborough faces the closure of its information/tourist centre, which will be replaced with a small counter tucked away in a corner of the library. Key services such as housing and benefit enquiries are to be axed. By removing this minimal (though very public) support for the Town, what kind of message do you believe that sends out? "We'll spend millions on regenerating Wycombe, but all Risborough is going to get is thousands more houses?"

### **Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor R Scott**

“I make no apology for being proud about our achievements on economic development and regeneration across the District, helping to grow our economy and create jobs for local people. It is important to note that many of these projects are for benefit district wide, including Princes Risborough. Princes Risborough also has its own local facilities, for example the Council's leisure facilities at Risborough Springs, so the point you are making doesn't ring true to me.

The recent review of Information Centres was undertaken in direct response to a recommendation from the Budget Task and Finish Group. We remain in a period of austerity and declining funding and have to carefully consider whether we can continue to provide discretionary services in the same way. By working in partnership with the County Council I am very pleased that we can continue to offer visitor information services to residents across the District, and not have to stop providing this service. We have secured prominent locations in both Risborough and Marlow libraries and are able to continue to provide the vast majority of current services in a prominent and already well visited location.

Princes Risborough will continue to have a local information service, plus of course continuing access to the all the range of district council services, albeit in a different way.

Indeed, the information centre in High Wycombe was transferred into the town centre library in the Eden Centre and continues to offer an excellent service.”

### **Supplementary Question**

“Whilst the Cabinet and Officers were drawing up plans to close the information/tourist centre in Princes Risborough neither the Town Council nor the two Independent Ward Members were consulted or even informed. The Conservative Ward Member for The Risboroughs stated last week that he had known for months and the he had been holding behind the scenes discussions. Clearly this would appear to bring into question “officer impartiality” and unacceptable political preference.

Will the Leader agree to an urgent cross party investigation into this issue?”

### **Supplementary Response**

“There will not be a closure. I cannot speak on behalf of the Councillor to which you refer, and am in no way considering a cross party investigation.”

#### **c. Question from Councillor M Knight to the Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainability**

“The reserved sites for housing development which are to be brought to Cabinet later this month for approval are predominantly on the east side of High Wycombe. The effect of these combined developments will have an impact greater than just the immediate site specific impacts. Would you support the idea of a comprehensive east Wycombe strategy looking at the bigger picture across that side of town such as housing mix, environmental issues, economic development and urban infrastructure?”

#### **Response from the Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainability, Councillor N Marshall**

“Development of the reserve sites will raise some strategic issues that will need to be looked at on a wider basis than just the individual sites. These issues relate primarily to infrastructure provision. That is why, if the Special Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> October decides to release the sites for development, we will set up a High Wycombe Round Table group to consider the wider infrastructure impacts and potential solutions in relation to the development of the 4 reserve sites around High Wycombe. This work will need to be pulled together into an infrastructure package, related to the impact of development.

Issues of housing mix, environmental issues, and economic development all have a wider context within which we should consider them – e.g. issues of housing need (providing the right type of housing), the need for economic development to provide jobs, and local and national environmental constraints that may apply - but I am not convinced that we need a specific strategy for them. These issues would need to be carefully considered as part of the preparation of development briefs for the sites, should the Cabinet decide to release the sites for development. Local liaison groups would be established together with opportunities for wider local community engagement that would input into the preparation of those development briefs.”

#### **Supplementary Question**

“I am glad we have considered the impact of multiple developments across the town on our infrastructure. However this should have happened at an earlier stage prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> of October Cabinet meeting. The proposed developments will have a massive impact across East Wycombe. Would it not have been better to consider this before making a decision on releasing the reserved sites?”

#### **Supplementary Response**

“In an ideal world the infrastructure capacity would have been considered earlier and before the issue of reserved sites. However the needs assessment changed during consultations on the local plan issues. But I do understand your point.”

**d. Question from Councillor G Hall to the Cabinet Member for Environment**

“The introduction of the new ANPR system has proven controversial, I believe it is a big ask to expect a local population many of whom are uncomfortable with technology to embrace and understand fully how the system operates without them receiving hefty penalties by way of fines. It is also apparent that the technology in some instances is not reading and recognising car number plates creating queues and confusion at machines. Furthermore frustration has apparently lead in some instances to a decreased footfall in some businesses.

As a reasonable local authority what is WDC doing to alleviate the situation, are penalties and fines being wavered and are we working with the customers and businesses to make sure the whole project runs far more smoothly than it has so far?”

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Mrs J E Teesdale**

“The ANPR project has been a large and complex project spanning the installation of the system across 19 car parks within the District. As with all new technology, it can take time for people to get used to the change but in most cases customers find it easy to use after a few occasions. For this reason, we had a roll out plan to enable us to have officers in each the car parks for 2 weeks from the ‘go live’ date so that they could assist the customers with how the machines work and answer questions. In some car parks we have extended that time period.

There were queues at times even with the old system, but experience has shown that after a couple of weeks these reduce as people get used to the new system. The original trial sites of Railway Place and Easton street are working fine as are the other sites started in May of this year.

With respect to parking ‘fines’ (charges) there is no automated ticket issue The camera controlled system collates all parking stays and payments at the end of each day. Any stays without correct payment are forwarded to back office team for manual review prior to a Standard Charge being issued. During the initial period of the new system we have been more lenient with regard to incorrect payments being made as we do understand that the system needs to bed in and customers need to become familiar with the way it operates. We have tried to develop a more customer friendly approach by supporting customers. There are a variety of payments systems available to customers to help them manage their parking payments

Optimistically, we would hope that everyone pays so that no tickets have to be issued!

Sometimes a number plate is not recognised and this may be due to the position of bolts on the number plate, font type/style, very dirty plates etc. when customers go to the payment kiosks, payment can be made at the machine by either selecting the image ‘if available’ or just by using the registration number. Full instructions are on the machine and either way time taken to pay is minimal.

We have had some difficulties where drivers drive in the wrong lanes (drive in exits or drive out entry lanes).“

### **Supplementary Question**

“The problem seems unique to just this one car park and seems to be because of the shared entrance and exit and people’s number plates not being read by the cameras if drivers enter across the middle leading to confusion and queues at the machines.

M&S reveals that footfall or actual customer visits are down by 1000 per week. This is a staggering figure and I can assure you that although commercially sensitive it is a genuine statistic from the store. The whole town centre has also been quiet since the introduction of ANPR and the Fire Station has been forced to put up notices to stop the displaced shoppers from parking on its forecourt.”

### **Supplementary Response**

“In the locations where problems have been encountered, we are installing special kerbs for vehicle lane control to encourage drivers to drive correctly. This will help to improve the capture rate. We are reviewing signage in the car parks to try to make things as clear as possible.

Once the new system is bedded in, one of our objectives is to work with local businesses on potential promotions and marketing exercises. Currently we are working with Sainsburys and the Swan on developments but will expand on this in due course. We want to continue to work with businesses, and understand the problems that are being encountered.”

NB - It was agreed that a copy of the initial response from Cllr Teesdale be sent to all Members for information.

### **e. Question from Councillor R Metcalfe to the Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainability**

“The National Policy Planning Framework definition of sustainable development includes 3 roles for planning: economic, social and environmental. The ingredients within 'a social role' include meeting the development need; creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services, that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being.

In the interest of sustainable development and recognising the importance of the social role within it, what areas have already been, and what areas will be, designated as Local Green Spaces, as part of the WDC Local Plan, and how does the Council see these Local Green Spaces assisting with delivering sustainable development out to 2031?”

### **Response from the Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainability, Councillor N Marshall**

“Thank you for your highly relevant question. Green spaces within our towns and villages are very important in ensuring that we secure sustainable development in our district, and particularly so at this time when there is

significant pressure for new development and a national requirement to significantly increasing housing delivery.

I am pleased to say that we have already done much to protect our valued green spaces through our existing plans. The current Local Plan (adopted in 2004) identifies and protects 207 different green spaces across the District totalling 342 hectares (or around 840 acres) of land. Following a major review of our green spaces the Delivery and Site Allocations Plan which was adopted last year significantly expanded the protection we are giving to green spaces to 376 sites totalling 717 hectares (around 1,770 acres).

Looking ahead we have some major challenges about meeting our need for housing and jobs. The Local Plan, and shorter term decisions in relation to the reserve sites, will have to address this. However where development is necessary it will be very important to incorporate the right type and amount of quality open space into those developments to ensure that they are sustainable and create quality living environments. The New Local Plan will need to provide the right type of protection for these areas.”

#### **Supplementary Question**

“I very much support the Council’s Local Plan and the work of the Cabinet and Officers in this regard.

Could you please clarify whether any of the 207 green spaces have been designated as Local Green spaces, as per para 56 of the NPPF. I feel that this should be integrated into the social aspect of development planning.”

#### **Supplementary Response**

“I will be happy to provide you with a written response with regards to this.”

#### **f. Question from Councillor R Colomb to the Cabinet Member for Environment**

“Has your Waste Team established the life expectancy of the wheelie bins issued to householders? If a wheelie bin fails, and some of our black/grey bins have been in use for nearly 15 years, who bears the cost of replacement?”

#### **Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Mrs J E Teesdale**

“It is expected that a wheelie bin should last between 14 and 20 years depending on usage. In some local authorities, however, wheelie bins which were delivered in the early 1990s are still in good working order, so 14 to 20 years may be an underestimate.

If a bin breaks due to wear and tear this will be replaced by the Council free of charge to the residents if the broken bin is available to be swapped for the new one. Bins lids, wheels etc can be fixed if the main part of the bin is in good working order. The Council will pay for the cost of the new bins.“



**No supplementary question was asked.**

**g. Question from Councillor T Snaith to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Regeneration**

“Can the Cabinet Member advise what this Council is doing to support businesses on the Airpark? What more could we be doing to assist these businesses to grow and employ more local people?”

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Regeneration, Councillor A Green**

“There are four principal flying related businesses which are subtenants at the Airpark: Air Part Supplies (aircraft parts), Personal Plane Services (aircraft restoration), Air Training Services (aircraft maintenance), Helicopter Services (helicopter flight training)

The Council is in regular contact with these businesses as well as the Gliding Club.

In addition, there is the head lessee – Airways Aero Association, now owned by Heli Air a fifth major sub-tenant (Helicopter Services), which operates the Airpark.

The Local Plan Review proposes two options for new development at the Airpark. The Council is in discussion with one of the above sub-tenants, who wishes to expand. However discussions with AAA on developing new or improved premises for the current tenants or to attract businesses to the Airpark, have stalled.

This is because AAA have instigated a statutory process for lease renewal whereas the Council’s aim had been for a negotiated settlement. Until the lease renewal position with AAA has been resolved, there is nothing immediate that the Council can do to achieve certainty for businesses at the Airpark.”

**Supplementary Question**

“We have lost approximately 12000 jobs in the last 10 years, many in the field of manufacturing and engineering. Members need to visit this site to understand its importance within the local economy and the opportunities it provides for local people.”

**Supplementary Response**

“We are fully aware of the businesses at the Airpark. We have the desire to help them expand. As stated before, the head lessee wishes to go through a legal process for lease renewal. Whilst the Council is in legal dispute it would be highly inappropriate to make any contact with such a company. I urge you not to make any such contact with the head lessee, until this situation is resolved.”

**h. Question from Councillor B Pearce to the Leader of the Council**

“Does the Leader of the Council agree with me, that Wycombe Air Park is a place of excellence and has establishments employing highly skilled and trained work forces? This should be encouraged in every way.

Do you think the Air Park should remain operational as it is now?”

**Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor R Scott**

“Councillor Green has already answered much of your question in his response. I am aware that there are a number of businesses on the Airpark involved in aero-engineering, which add to the diversity of the local economy.

The Council is aiming to secure their future by resolving the renewal of the head lease to the Airpark operator.

The Local Plan Review proposes options for the future of the Airpark, the outcome of which is awaited.”

**Supplementary Question**

“Do you believe that the infrastructure cannot take any more development in the vicinity of the Airpark?”

**Supplementary Response**

“It is a very good site, and further discussions will ensue once the legal matter is resolved.

The Chairman announced that all remaining unanswered questions 9, 10, 11 and 12 would receive a written reply within 10 days, and be appended to the minutes of the meeting.”

**41 PETITION**

A petition was received from Councillor Snaith on behalf of Councillor Ms Lee which read as follows:-

“We the undersigned strongly object to ANY development on our beautiful Gomm Valley. Development of any kind within the valley would have a significant adverse impact upon the landscape, biodiversity and heritage asset. The visual impact would damage the iconic landscape forever and would break the separation of Tylers Green from High Wycombe. We petition Wycombe District Council not to release Gomm Valley as a development site, following the formal public consultation and to protect the site in its current form for future generations.”

The Chairman received the petition and commented, that it would be validated against the Council’s petition scheme. Members would be informed outside of the meeting as to how the petition would be administered once the validation had taken place.

**42 CABINET**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 22 September 2014 be received and the recommendations as set out at minute numbers 33 and 39 be approved and adopted.

#### **43 IMPROVEMENT & REVIEW COMMISSION**

The Chairman rose to present the minutes, and highlighted the developments that had taken place since the urgent health care motion had been considered by Full Council.

##### **Minute 14 – Urgent Health Care in Wycombe District Council**

A Member felt that the public listening event scheduled for 15 October had been insufficiently advertised bearing in mind the importance of the subject matter.

The Chairman of the Committee responded by confirming that he took a great personal interest in this issue and that it had been very widely advertised.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement & Review Commission held on 15 September be received.

#### **44 AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Councillor J L Richards OBE rose to present the minutes in his capacity of Chairman of the Audit Committee meeting held on 25 September 2014. It was suggested that the Committee's work programme be circulated to all Members.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 25 September 2014 be received and the recommendation as set out at minute number 16 be approved and adopted.

#### **45 HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE**

##### **Minute 16 – Community Infrastructure Levy Association**

Members expressed their concern over amount spent in conducting a feasibility study. The question was raised as to whether this could be carried out internally within the organisation.

It was reported that it was most likely that the amount spent would be under the maximum budget allocated for this work. Moreover, even if the work was to be carried out internally there would be a charge to the Town Committee.

##### **Minute 20 – Cemetery Site Options Appraisal**

A Member asked what element of consultation there had been regarding proposed cemetery sites. It was confirmed that the most appropriate time to consult would be when the Council had established which sites were indeed available.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the High Wycombe Town Committee held on 16 September be received.

**46 PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 2 July, 30 July and 27 August be received.

**47 QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 11.2**

There were none.

**48 COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS/CHANGES**

The following changes to Committee Membership were noted in accordance with Standing Order 18(9).

Councillor J A Adey replaced Councillor D A C Shakespeare OBE as full Member of the Standards Committee

Councillor D A C Shakespeare OBE had become a Standing Deputy on the Standards Committee

Councillor J L Richards OBE had become a Standing Deputy on the Standards Committee

Councillor M L Neudecker had become a Standing Deputy on the Standards Committee

**49 URGENT ACTION TAKEN BY CABINET OR INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER**

The individual decisions published since the last meeting of the Council were noted.

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Chairman

**The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:**

Ian Hunt	- Democratic Services Manager
Iram Malik	- Democratic Services Officer
Karen Satterford	- Chief Executive