

Council Minutes

Date: 5 October 2015

Time: 6.30 - 8.25 pm

PRESENT: Councillor I L McEnnis (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs J A Adey, K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, M C Appleyard, M Asif, D H G Barnes, Ms A Baughan, S Broadbent, Miss S Brown, D J Carroll, M Clarke, A D Collingwood, C Etholen, R Farmer, R Gaffney, S Graham, A R Green, G C Hall, M Hanif, M Harris, M A Hashmi, A E Hill, A Hussain, M Hussain, M Hussain JP, D A Johncock, Mrs G A Jones, M E Knight, D Knights, Mrs J D Langley, A Lee, Mrs W J Mallen, H L McCarthy, Ms C J Oliver, B E Pearce, G Peart, S K Raja, R Raja, S Saddique, R J Scott, D A C Shakespeare OBE, N J B Teesdale, Mrs J E Teesdale, P R Turner, Ms J D Wassell, D M Watson, C Whitehead, R Wilson, L Wood and Ms K S Wood

Also Present: Honorary Aldermen M Blanksby, E H Collins and P Cartwright

38 WELCOME

The Chairman of the Council formally welcomed Mr Paul Shackley the new Corporate Director, who had replaced Ian Westgate following his recent retirement.

In accordance with Standing order 7.2(a) the Chairman reported that he proposed to vary the order of business as set out in the agenda, by bringing forward the petition item to be taken after the Public Questions as he was aware that a petition was to be handed in to the meeting by a member of the public.

39 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Honorary Aldermen M Oram, Mrs K M Peatey MBE, Mrs P Priestley and R C Pushman. Councillors: Mrs S Adoh, H Bull, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, M P Davy, N B Marshall, R Newman, J A Savage and A Turner.

40 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 27 July 2015, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the word 'hospital' being amended to read 'hostel' on page 16 of the minutes under the Improvement & Review Commission heading.

41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

42 CHAIRMAN`S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman listed and reported on some of his activities since the last meeting of the Council:

(i) Letter to the Queen

The Chairman reported that he had sent a letter to the Queen congratulating her on being the longest reigning monarch. A letter of acknowledgement and thanks had been received in return from the Chief Clerk to the Queen.

(ii) Letter to David Emmett

Members were informed that a letter had been despatched on behalf of the Council to David Emmett, on the death of his wife. David was a member of the Rural Forum and also the brother of the late Roger Emmett who served as a Member of the Council.

(iii) Battle of Britain

The Chairman had attended the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, which included a soloist from the Marlow Cadet Squadron and a flypast of a spitfire over the RAFA Club.

(iv) Opening of Peace Garden

The Vice- Chairman had attended the opening of the Peace garden on 1 October. This was based on the Quaker Burial ground. The garden was dedicated to peaceful living and to remembering the impact of war.

(v) Chairman`s Civic Service

Members were reminded regarding the Civic Service which was due to take place on Sunday 11 October 2015 at 3pm at St Mary`s church, Princes Risborough. All Members were encouraged to attend.

43 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(a) Question from Mr T Snaith to the Leader of the Council

“As a result of the Conservative Government austerity measures we are hearing about National and Local charities and support organisations which are getting into difficulties and closing.

In High Wycombe this Conservative cabinet has a record of abdicating responsibility to its partners and charities, however often without the necessary funding.

We have seen this conservative council successively cut funding to these organisations over many years. This has been happening even before we were

faced with the problems being created today. This council expects its partners and charities to pick up the fallout from the cutbacks.

Do you agree it's time to say no to austerity in High Wycombe?"

To deliver this what more can this Council do to step forward and support its partners and the charity sector through these difficult times?

Response from Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council)

"Thank you for your question. This is a difficult financial time for us all and we've welcomed the responsible attitude taken by our valued partners in the voluntary sector, which has seen a number of mergers as services are maintained while management and premises are rationalised. The creation of Community Impact Bucks is just one example.

Charitable giving has reduced but we sadly are not in a position to plug this gap. We have however maintained funding to essential local services, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, which continues to deliver much needed services to hard pressed residents. We have provided grants to new charities such as Wycombe Homeless Connection and, where we have made reductions and have been flexible and provided as much notice as we can.

The austerity measures in place to which you refer were brought about by the coalition government, which you were a part of. Are you suggesting that your Party was wrong? In May the Conservative manifesto brought about a landslide victory, whereby we gained many more seats. Locally this was down to the devotion of freezing taxes and maximising returns on our investments.

Are you claiming that the public does not understand the issues? There will be no end to the prudent management of our finances, and we will continue to achieve without the imposition of arbitrary tax increases or reducing spending on essential services"

Supplementary Question

"The people of Wycombe have demonstrated their generosity over the years with donations of land and other items having been made. Many of these assets have been sold off in ways that were not in the spirit in which they were given.

Will the Leader look into the value of the assets and then use the funds in order to assist charities needing help due to the austerity period?"

Supplementary Response

"We prudently manage all our finances to provide the best services to the residents. We will continue to operate in this way to the best of our ability".

Welcoming Refugees

The petition read as follows:

“A petition asking Wycombe District Council to offer to home 50 refugee families to the Wycombe area.”

A letter was also circulated by the lead petitioner at the meeting.

The petition was submitted by Dr Stephanie Rybak who outlined the contents of the petition and confirmed it contained 575 signatories.

The Chairman thanked Dr Rybak for her petition and commented that it would now be validated against the provisions of the Council’s Petition scheme to determine how it would be taken forward.

The Lead petitioner and all Members of the Council would be informed of the way forward after the validation process had been completed.

45 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

(a) Question from Councillor R Raja to the Leader of the Council

“The Household Voter Registration system was replaced by the Individual Electoral Registration system in 2014. Under the previous system the "head of the household" was required to register all residents of the household who were eligible. Under the Individual Electoral Registration individuals are required to register themselves, as well as provide their National Insurance Number and date of birth on the application form.

Would the Leader of the Council tell us as to what percentage of eligible voters have registered so far and whether the new voter registration requirements are acting as a barrier to registration? And what action is the council taking or proposing to take to encourage eligible voters to register so that they can exercise their democratic right to vote?”

This question was withdrawn as the work fell within the remit of the Chief Executive’s role, in her personal capacity of Electoral Registration Officer.

(b) Question from Councillor M Knight to the Leader of the Council

“Over the last year there have been a number of violent attacks in Wycombe involving knives. Nationally the carrying of knives is reported to be on the rise and in the past successful amnesties have been held in Wycombe, although the most recent one appears to have been back in 2006.

High Wycombe is generally a peaceful and friendly place to live, and I acknowledge the hard work that agencies have put in to improve public safety, particularly in the town centre through the Purple Flag award. However, would the leader of the

Council join with me in calling on Thames Valley Police to have another widespread knife and gun amnesty, in the light of recent incidents?”

Response from Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council)

“Wycombe is a safe place to live, work, socialise and visit, and crime levels are very low for such a large area. While violent crime has increased a little locally this follows on from a significant decrease in crime over recent years. Most violent crimes do not involve knives and gun crime is very, very low. We understand that the small number of recent knife assaults are not connected and that people have been arrested and charged by the Police. In these circumstances a knife and gun amnesty would seem to offer very little benefit and may actually make people feel the District is less safe than it is.

Supplementary Question

“Yes I agree that Wycombe is a safe place to live, but prevention is important to keep crime at low levels. Much has been spent on CCTV but it has not been a sufficient deterrent in recent incidents.

What alternative measures to an amnesty would the Council be prepared to support to help improve public safety?”

Supplementary Response

“I am aware that currently the police undertake targeted work in schools, and make use of rights to stop and search regularly. We work with the police through the Community Partnership, and we will continue to endeavour to do the best for our residents.”

(c) Question from Councillor B Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Community

“Does the Member agree with me that it would be far more beneficial to keep the close circuit television response centre within Wycombe District, as it is at the moment. Do you agree with me that it would be more beneficial to keep this operation local, not just because of the problems with vandalism and antisocial behaviour but also the threat of terrorism that we must all be vigilant against?”

Response from Councillor Mrs J Adey (Cabinet Member for Community)

“Thank you for your question. There are many successful examples of partners providing CCTV monitoring services for others. We ourselves have provided monitoring services over the years for cameras in Burnham, Amersham, Chesham and Beaconsfield. In turn we employ staff who travel some distance to work here and are by no means local. The idea that one cannot provide an effective service unless one works in High Wycombe is to under-appreciate how very good the technology is. Operators use online mapping and data recording systems to provide an excellent service across a wide geographic area and spend all their time at work watching the streets of our towns so that we can walk them safely.

We have explored for a number of years ways to maintain effective CCTV monitoring of our town centres while reducing its cost, in common with almost all our neighbours. I expect to be able to bring forward a report that meets both these priorities very soon.”

Supplementary Question

“But would you not agree that local knowledge is important, and as such it would be the best option to keep the response centre within the district?”

Supplementary Response

“As I said, a future report on this issue providing we can get the final costing in time, will explain how we can meet priorities, and provide an effective CCTV service to the town at a reasonable price.”

(d) Question from Councillor S Graham to the Cabinet Member for Housing

“It is my understanding that WDC transferred about 6000 homes to Red Kite in December 2011 and at the time, it was promised that the Council would hold accurate and up-to date information on the delivery and performance of Red Kite against the promises made to Council tenants.

Would the Cabinet Member for Housing please tell us as to how many quarterly monitoring meetings have been held with Red Kite, and when they took place? (The quarterly meetings were laid down in the contract between Red Kite and WDC).

Could you also tell me where ex- Council tenants can find the reports of the monitoring meetings so they can see if the promises made to them by WDC have been kept?”

Response from Councillor Mrs J Langley (Cabinet Member for Housing)

“I am pleased to say that Red Kite is making good progress, but there are bound to be some people who are dissatisfied. The Leader and I met with the Chief Executive and Chairman of Red Kite recently and will meet again in December.

The Council is not involved in the day to day running but we do track their progress in a number of ways. Performance data is available to Members which details the promised and commitments as at May 2015. The one promise marked as at risk by Red Kite was relating to the Castlefield Regeneration project which is likely to be on going.

Supplementary Question

“Given the current shortages and length of the housing waiting list do you consider it was still correct to hand over the housing stock to Red Kite?”

Supplementary Response

“Yes I do. Work has improved due to the change in contractors, but some tenants may not want improvements due to the upheaval. Residents can contact Red Kite direct in the case of any complaints. Alternatively I am happy to meet with your residents that are having issues.”

(e) Question from Councillor Ms A Baughan to the Cabinet Member for Community

“I recently attended the excellent and informative evening session at Cressex School with regards to child sexual exploitation. There is a multi-disciplinary panel working to educate and inform parents, those working with young people and young people themselves. It is something we all should be aware of in our community. I would ask how Wycombe District Council can further contribute to this work?”

Response from Councillor Mrs J Adey (Cabinet Member for Community)

“The sexual exploitation of children is absolutely unacceptable and we are committed to considerable partnership work with our colleagues in other agencies to tackle this. Officers participate actively in the Bucks Children’s Safeguarding Board’s work to prevent CSE, we chaired the first CSE Raising Awareness Group and continue to participate in it. We have liaised with all secondary schools in the county to arrange for Chelsea’s Choice to be delivered again this year so that our young people are alert to the danger of being groomed, and these sessions started last week.

As you know CSE Awareness Raising events have taken place across the county, and the Board is considering arranging one in Marlow too. This Council, Thames Valley Police and Barnados are also working with local providers, such as hotels, which can unwittingly become venues for CSE, to raise awareness and offer training. We are also participating in a Serious Case Review on past reported cases of CSE so that we can learn all relevant lessons and improve what we do.

As a member of Thames Valley’s Police and Crime Panel, I see regular reports on CSE and receive updates from the Police and Crime Commissioner. I can assure you that I am completely committed to making sure the Council does all that is within its power to prevent CSE.”

There was no supplementary question.

(f) Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Leader of the Council

“Can we be told what involvement Wycombe District Council will be having in the future redevelopment of the Wycombe General Hospital site?”

There is always a good deal of speculation about this and it would be helpful to know the official position.”

Response from Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council)

“It is common knowledge – and has been for many years – that the Hospital would like to vacate the ‘tower’ building as it is not an efficient building for modern clinical practice. Over recent months the Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust has been considering a range of different options for redevelopment across its whole estate – including whether and if so how to vacate the ‘tower’. However, the Trust has not yet reached a formal decision.

Information has been shared informally by the NHS with officers of the Council, but prior to any formal decision being made by the Trust, it would be inappropriate to share this, because – to answer your question directly – until the Trust has made a decision there is no ‘official position’ and any other observation would only be speculation.

However, having said that, it is important that I clarify one point. Your question could suggest that there are proposals for the wholesale redevelopment of the hospital site. I just want to be clear there has been no discussion of this. The plans all include the main part of the hospital to remain on the site with services which meet the area demographics and clinical strategies of the Trust and CCG’s.

In terms of Council involvement, as you would expect, the Council is working closely with the Hospital, both because of its critical role at the heart of our community, and because of its location so close to the town centre. We are working with the Hospital to ensure that the options that it brings forward help to facilitate both the vision the NHS Trust has for the site and health care facilities at the Hospital, and at the same time, ensuring it fits with our emerging vision of the town centre – of which the current works to Westbourne Street are the first tangible steps.”

Supplementary Question

“I would like to draw your attention to the agenda for the NHS Trust meeting, where the issue of developing a business case and implementing it by March 2016 will be considered.

Supplementary Response

No response was given as no question was asked.

(g) Question from Councillor B Pearce to the Leader of the Council

“Does the Leader agree with me that it is very disturbing to hear of calls and rumours for various parishes within the town of High Wycombe. Do you agree with me that this would be absolutely disastrous for the town and it would be much better to have a Town Council than individual parishes and it would be a good idea to look into the possibility of having a Town Council? Do you agree with me that it would be the lesser of 2 evils?”

Response from Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council)

“Thank you for your question and this is an issue that comes up at frequent intervals. I would advise you not to listen to rumours and therefore welcome this opportunity to put the facts into this debate.

Wycombe District Council has the duty and responsibility to undertake any community governance review in respect of all or part of the un-parished area of High Wycombe.

The decision to undertake a community governance review by the Council can happen in one of two ways.

One way is if we receive a valid public petition, with the requisite number of signatures, specifying the area subject to the community governance review with a proposed recommendation for review, e.g. the creation of a Town Council. The District Council is then **required** to carry out a review.

The other way is for the District Council itself deciding to conduct the review. This would require a case to be made and considered by the Council’s Regulatory and Appeals Committee. This decision is solely at the **discretion** of the District Council.

At this time, we have not received a petition, nor has any formal request been submitted to ask the Council to conduct such a review. As no review is currently being proposed, it is not relevant or appropriate for me to comment on what may or may not happen in the future.

Oh, and by the way, I don’t accept your view of parish councils as being the lesser of two evils as all the parish councils I have been involved with do an enormous amount of good work.”

Supplementary Question

“I am not trying to belittle Parish Councils I just think it would be disastrous for the town of High Wycombe to have individual parishes. We have already lost West Wycombe.”

Supplementary Response”

“The town is well served by the High Wycombe Town Committee, and there would have to be a very compelling case for a Town Parish.”

(h) Question from Councillor M Knight to the Cabinet Member for Housing

“Do you agree with me that it is essential for the Cabinet member, and indeed all Councillors, to have access to the latest figures for housing need in the district?

Do you also agree that given the number of our residents who are struggling with housing this information is in the public interest and should be regularly published?”

Response from Councillor Mrs J Langley (Cabinet Member for Housing)

“Of course I think it is essential for all Members regardless of whether they are in the Cabinet or not. Housing register numbers are available on request should Members wish to be informed as to how many households are registered and have been accepted by Bucks Home Choice.

Properties are advertised weekly and applicants have access to a wide variety of information about the process via the external website, Bucks Home Choice.

I should point out that for varying reasons that the housing register is not always accurate. Some people do not use the register so it is not always a good sample”.

Supplementary Question

“It is of concern that the information is not easily accessible. We must ensure that planning of new developments example reserve sites, is needs not target driven by central government.

Would you agree that having the numbers to hand of those in need of housing readily available is important. Do you have the numbers now of those with housing needs within the district?”

Supplementary Response

“I do not have the figures to hand, but I would encourage those with housing needs to join the register. Officers are working on a newsletter for applicants to provide information regarding waiting times and affordable housing options, all of which will help residents to be well informed. Information can be obtained from the Housing Service Manager.”

(i) Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Cabinet Member for Planning

“Would it be possible for more care to be taken of Wycombe's Ancient Monument, the Hospital of St John the Baptist 1180 AD. This ancient hospital needs better signposting, information boards and landscape maintenance. Would you agree?”

Response from Councillor D Johncock (Cabinet Member for Planning)

“The ruins are a prominent heritage asset – they are grade 2 listed – and of course they contribute to High Wycombe’s character and strong sense of place. I understand that the ruins are in private ownership and as such of course the responsibility for maintenance rests with the landowner. I must confess that I am not aware of any particular issues regards maintenance or information, however if there are any particular concerns these can be looked at.”

Supplementary Question

“They are in a scruffy condition. The best part of it is the night time illumination. The information board is illegible, and all it does is illuminate the scruffiness.”

Supplementary Response

“No supplementary response was given in relation to the comment made, as no question was asked.

(j) Question from Councillor M Knight to the Cabinet Member for Community

“What is the Council doing to tackle the growing number of Signal Crayfish, particularly in The Dyke on the Rye in High Wycombe?”

Response from Councillor Mrs J Adey (Cabinet Member for Community)

“We allow people who get the appropriate licence to fish in the Dyke for crayfish with certain restrictions. We also allow people to trap them if they have the appropriate license from the Environment Agency, though we are not able to allow traps to be left unattended as the Dyke receives so many visitors and there is a risk of injury to people and other species. For information even the most intensive trapping programmes have been unsuccessful in eradicating Signal Crayfish. An Environment Agency study into the eradication of alien crayfish populations concluded that only habitat destruction and biocides are effective. Both methods have extensive environmental implications and are unacceptable options for the Dyke.”

Supplementary Question

“I am glad to see that this has been noted by the Council as an issue. There is an institution called the National Institution of Crayfish Trappers, which seeks to control the non -crayfish population by trapping them and serving up as a local delicacy.

Is this something the Council should be promoting, and encouraging entrepreneurs to do?”

Supplementary Response

“By all means you can get a license and catch them. I would suggest eating the fish with lemon mayonnaise.”

(k) Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Leader of the Council

“Would the Leader agree that the work done locally to raise funds and provide essential items to refugees highlights the generosity and hard work of Wycombe people?”

These items and funds are supporting people in Calais, Greece, Syria and elsewhere and this is vital work with the winter approaching.”

Response from Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council)

“Within Wycombe District we have a proud tradition of helping others and the generosity of local people, both here in our District and across the Country, has

been shown once again with this humanitarian crisis. This outpouring of support is welcome and, going forward, will need to be co-ordinated nationally to ensure we provide effective support. For example, the Home Office has recently clarified that at this point, there is no expectation that the Syrian scheme will require members of the public to offer rooms in their houses. In the meantime, residents making other offers of help can be directed to the [Government's response website](#) or the Red Cross for further information"

No supplementary question was asked.

(I) Question from Councillor M Knight to the Leader of the Council

"Would the Leader of the Council agree that the redesign and recent re-opening of the Quaker Peace Garden in High Wycombe has been a great success and all those involved should be congratulated?"

Response from Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council)

"Yes, I wholeheartedly agree. With the recent 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain and now Armistice Day fast approaching, it is a fitting time to open a garden which symbolises peace. The garden was originally opened in 1986 on the site of a Quaker burial ground. We contacted the Quakers about our plans to give Railway Place a refresh and the Council's Community team has worked very hard in partnership with the Quakers to redesign the garden to tie in with the centenary of the First World War.

Andy Sherwood has been a prominent person in this project, and has done a lot of good work with them.

As conscientious objectors, Quakers did not bear arms but they served on the battlefield during the first and second world wars, providing vital welfare support and the Friends Ambulance Service. I know the Quakers have worked tirelessly – both locally and internationally – to counter the causes of war, to help bring about a resolution to conflict and to support their communities in times of crisis, and the Peace Garden is a symbol of that important work. I am delighted to thank the Quakers and everyone who has worked to make the garden a reality. I am sure that in the coming years it will remain a place of peace and tranquillity in our ever noisier, faster and hectic world."

Supplementary Question

"Historically High Wycombe has a long affiliation to and association with the Armed Forces. Would you support the idea of a network of the Peace Gardens across the town in other small green spaces, providing more places of peace and tranquillity?"

Supplementary Response

"It is an idea certainly worth looking into."

Minute 32 – Potential Expansion of Princes Risborough and CIL Receipts

A Member enquired as to whether the decision to allocate 25% CIL funding to Princes Risborough Town Council to assist in its expansion, following the production of an area action plan, could also be applied to High Wycombe Town Committee.

He was informed that this was not applicable in the case of High Wycombe Town Committee as it was not a Town or Parish Council.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21 September 2015 be received and the recommendations as set out at minute numbers 29 and 31 be approved and adopted.

(Minute number 27 – Cabinet Recommendation on the Motion submitted to Council on Monday 27 July 2015 was taken under agenda item 13 – Motions)

47 IMPROVEMENT AND REVIEW COMMISSION

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement and Review Commission held on 16 September 2015 be received.

48 AUDIT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 24 September 2015 be received and the recommendation as set out at minute number 18 be approved and adopted.

49 HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the High Wycombe Town Committee held on 15 September 2015 be received.

50 PLANNING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 1 July, 29 July and 26 August 2015 be received.

51 MOTIONS

a) Response to Motion Received at Council on 27 July 2015

The following motion was referred from the last Council meeting to Cabinet, which considered the Motion at their meeting held on 21 September. Full Council was invited to consider Cabinet's

recommendation for refusal and to debate the motion.

“This Council supports the view that the release of the Reserve Sites presents a golden opportunity to substantially meet the current and future social housing needs of our district. In addition to the focus on infrastructure it is essential that another strand of work is added to identify the scale of the need for social housing and ensure that any new development is maximised to ensure the need is met. Wycombe District Council should take the lead in organising a multi-agency housing summit to be held in the autumn of 2015 to identify and discuss the needs, challenges and opportunities for housing provision in the Wycombe District.”

The proposer of the motion said that whilst she welcomed the appointment of a designated Cabinet Member for Housing, she had decided to re-submit her motion. The acute shortage of housing for people particularly with disabilities was re-emphasised, insisting that there should be local homes for local people. She believed that the reserved sites had the capacity to relieve the crisis.

She highlighted the point that a housing summit would be required to help give residents on the waiting list a voice, and as Members were not represented on the Housing Forum, they could not influence or participate in its decision making.

In addition, Cllr Ms J Wassell stated that whilst she appreciated the time allocated by officers and the Cabinet, she could not understand why so many strands of work regarding the Reserve Sites had no group(s) to scrutinise its work relating to plans for the type and need for affordable housing.

The Leader of the Council rose to respond to the proposer of the motion, who reiterated her belief that everyone deserved a place they could call home. Her passion for the issue had led her to re-establish a housing portfolio Cabinet Member.

She emphasised however that she felt that the existing policies in place to provide affordable housing from new developments including the reserve sites were sufficient to meet needs. Engagement with appropriate groups and delivery agencies ensured that these needs were kept up to date. As such the Leader believed that it was unnecessary to set up yet another forum which would detract from the good work already being done. Therefore a summit was not considered to be necessary.

Cllr Johncock Cabinet Member for Planning was also asked to comment on the proposals. He stated that given the level of extensive activity the Council already undertook with regard to affordable housing, it would be both inappropriate and unnecessary to hold a housing summit. This activity to which he referred included ensuring that the information regarding affordable housing needs was kept up to date, regular dialogue with key

agencies through Wycombe Housing Forum and dialogue through other planning and housing activities, including on-going engagement on the new local plan.

Cllr Langley Cabinet Member for Housing reiterated and reinforced the points raised by Cllr Johncock.

Another Member commented in disagreement stressing that the responses given demonstrated how powerless Wycombe District Council was in meeting the needs of its residents, who often resided in poor conditions. The Member expressed strongly the view that if the reserved sites were to be developed it should be needs led not target led. He also felt that that much of the focus needed to be upon the villages in which the needs were most acute.

A number of other Members also contributed to both sides of the discussion.

In summing up the proposer of the motion thanked all Members for their contribution to the debate, and hoped for the Council's support for the motion.

Upon being put to a vote it was,

RESOLVED: That the motion be rejected.

b) NOTICE OF MOTION

The following Notice of Motion was submitted by Councillor K Ahmed and seconded by Councillor R Raja

“In light of the Syrian refugee crisis and announcement by government to take 20,000 refugees between now and 2020, this Council resolves to take a minimum of 200 refugees in the first batch of 10,000 that will be in over the next few months”.

In proposing the motion, Cllr K Ahmed stated that he felt he was not proposing but seconding a motion on behalf of the residents of Wycombe, who wished to demonstrate their belief in British values of kindness and compassion by wanting to help those in dire need.

He went onto emphasise that 200 refugees or 50 families was a modest response from a wealthy nation. He felt that the response from the Leader in this regard had been unhelpful who whilst recognising the need had stated that the role that Wycombe District Council would play was as yet undefined, and as such could not commit to numbers.

The seconder of the motion, Cllr R Raja also rose to speak echoing the sentiments expressed by the proposer of the motion. He emphasised the importance of action, stating that this was the biggest humanitarian crisis

facing the world since the second world war.

He went onto stress that many refugees were highly educated and skilled and would be a benefit to our society, just as previous generations of refugees in this country had been.

The Leader rose to comment on the issues, sincerely expressing her view that she and all Councillors recognised that this was indeed a crisis on a huge scale in the middle east. She stated that to do nothing would be wrong, and that it would have to be a joint effort in providing the necessary assistance.

She stated that the Council supported the Government's work in providing aid to millions of refugees in their camps, and to housing 20,000 of the most vulnerable in the UK. In addition she wished to work closely with Bucks CC as the majority of the responsibility for supporting refugees locally fell within the remit of their services. In the early stages of trying to determine what could be achieved she therefore did not want to put forward a minimum or maximum cap on the number of families that could be taken in.

She also went on to explain that the first year of the cost of taking in the refugees would be funded by the Government , via its National Foreign Aid Budget but that the remaining four years would be taxpayer funded, all of which had to be taken into account. In addition the refugees would need to be placed ahead of those already on the housing waiting lists placing extra strain and burden on the already stretched services.

The Leader announced that there were far too many issues of importance to consider in her attempt to formulate an adequate and co-ordinated response to this crisis. As such she proposed that the matter be referred to Cabinet for further deliberations.

This was duly seconded by Cllr D Barnes.

In accordance with Standing Order **12.6**, the Chairman ruled that this motion should be referred to Cabinet without further discussion.

In accordance with Standing Order **12.7**, Cabinet would report back to the next Council meeting on 14 December by way of a report & recommendation on the motion on whether or not to adopt it, or give any such other advice as was appropriate.

52 QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 11.2

There were none

53 URGENT ACTION TAKEN BY CABINET OR INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER

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

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Ian Hunt	- Democratic Services Manager
Iram Malik	- Democratic Services Officer
Karen Satterford	- Chief Executive
Paul Shackley	- Corporate Director