

Council Minutes

Date: 14 December 2015

Time: 6.30 - 8.40 pm

PRESENT: Councillor I L McEnnis (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs J A Adey, Mrs S Adoh, K Ahmed, M Asif, D H G Barnes, Ms A Baughan, S Broadbent, Miss S Brown, H Bull, D J Carroll, M Clarke, A D Collingwood, M P Davy, C Etholen, R Gaffney, S Graham, A R Green, G C Hall, M Hanif, M Harris, A E Hill, 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, N B Marshall, H L McCarthy, R Newman, Ms C J Oliver, B E Pearce, G Peart, S K Raja, R Raja, J A Savage, R J Scott, D A C Shakespeare OBE, A Turner, 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, P Cartwright, B Jennings, Mrs P Priestley and R Pushman.

54 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Honorary Aldermen E H Collins, M Oram and Mrs K M Peatey MBE. Councillors: Z Ahmed, M C Appleyard, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, R Farmer, M A Hashmi, C Harriss, A Hussain, S Saddique, Mrs J Teesdale and N Teesdale.

55 ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman announced a change to the order of the business within the agenda by bringing forward the Motion at agenda item 18, which would now be taken immediately after the public question.

56 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 5 October 2015, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the addition of members of 332 (HW) Squadron Air Training Corps listed as those present, under the Chairman`s announcement item 42(iii).

57 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

58 CHAIRMAN`S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman listed and reported upon some of the activities since the last meeting of the Council. A total number of 38 activities had been undertaken, 7 of which had been attended by the Vice- Chairman of the Council. The events included:

- i) Sir Steve Redgrave Bursary Event held on 7 October
- ii) St John`s Ambulance Annual Review and Presentation of Awards on 8 October
- iii) Armed Forces Community Covenant Conference on 4 November in London
- iv) Wreath Laying at the War Memorial on 11 November
- v) Re opening of Wycombe Museum on 2 December
- vi) Wendy Guy Funeral Service. (Wife of Ex Cllr Steve Guy). The Chairman had sent a letter of condolence on the Council`s behalf.
- vii) Festive Post Office Delivery Office Visit.

59 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(a) Question from Dr S Rybak to the Leader of the Council

“The Cabinet briefing paper on refugees states that discussions are on-going between Wycombe District Council and the South East Strategic Migration Partnership, Buckinghamshire County Council and other agencies. The paper also stresses repeatedly the need for consultation and collaboration with the Home Office, the NHS, the Department for Work and Pensions, Thames Valley Police and voluntary and statutory agencies covering education, social care, benefits, counselling and translation.

Please would you tell us what substantive work on preparing a refugee resettlement strategy WDC has carried out with each of these bodies and what progress has been made in the ten weeks since the last Council meeting?”

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

“We have been working tirelessly on this matter. The Government has recently clarified the funding that is available for the Syrian refugees beyond the first year. Officers are working with colleagues within Buckinghamshire and are currently working through the financial model which is not straightforward. The Government would prefer a countywide approach which is also being discussed with partners.”

No supplementary question was asked.

60 MOTION

The following motion was referred from the last Council meeting to Cabinet.

In accordance with Standing Order 12.7 Cabinet reported back to Council by way of a recommendation, which stated that the motion should be submitted to Council for debate and further consideration. The Chairman set out the order of the debate in accordance with Standing order 14.20.

The Motion was proposed by Councillor K Ahmed and seconded by Councillor R Raja.

“In the light of the Syrian refugee crisis and announcement by the 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 the matter of acceptance of at least 200 refugees in the district was not a party political matter but one of humanity. He emphasised that a quarter of a million innocent people had been killed in Syria to date in the last four or so years, the equivalent of a Paris massacre every day. Furthermore those who had fled to refugee camps were dying from hunger, from blizzards and disease. He stressed that neighbouring host countries could not cope and that it was now our turn to offer refuge and as a matter of urgency.

Councillor Ahmed went on to say that since the last meeting of Council, the Leader had received a letter from Richard Harrington, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State to urge the Council to play its part, and to set out the funding arrangements for a 5 year time period. Letters of support had also been received from religious leaders, in mosques, churches and synagogues.

The seconder of the Motion, Councillor R Raja reserved his right to speak until later in the debate.

The Leader of the Council responded by saying that she supported Government initiatives in place to help alleviate the suffering being endured by the Syrians. The Council was working with the appropriate agencies, for example the County Council, Health Authority and the Police.

The Leader went onto explain that although she fully appreciated that this was a humanitarian crisis on a massive scale, she also understood the extent of the services that would be required. She explained that it would be unfair on those homeless within Wycombe who had been on the waiting list for many years in some cases, to be informed that they had now been placed behind refugee families. She stated that the Council was working hard to reduce the numbers on the waiting lists but that this would take time. In the meantime her responsibility had to be to existing residents and on that basis she could not support the motion.

Councillor A R Green rose to speak, echoing the sentiment expressed by the Leader of the Council. He stated that this issue was an important and emotive one, which needed to be handled in a non- emotive way. He stated that the barbarities being inflicted in North Africa by ISIS were appalling and he was glad that the Government had stepped up its efforts against them in the region. He highlighted that the United Nations were working to alleviate some of the issues. He stated that here in Wycombe housing was in short supply even in comparison to other Authorities. In 2014, he stated only 2% of the housing stock was vacant, as compared to over 4% in places such as Durham and in some places in the north of England. It was important to find places to take in refugees which provided the best possible future. He felt that other places were better placed to provide the facilities required.

Several other Members also spoke in agreement with the Leader and Councillor Green. These included Councillors Savage, Shakespeare and Councillor Mrs J Langley.

Other Members rose to speak in support of the motion emphasising that there were indeed some practical problems, but that these practicalities could be overcome. The needs to be fulfilled related not just to housing and Wycombe could provide so much more support with its close proximity to London and Oxford, with the generous donations received from community organisations. Wycombe was one of the wealthiest Councils in the country, and this country one of the wealthiest nations in the world. There was the ability Members stated, to provide a creative and innovative solution.

Councillor R Raja seconder of the motion welcomed the large number of people in the public gallery and stated that this represented the general mood in the community. He stated that the Council needed to offer generous and humanitarian help and support to the Syrians. The Government was offering resettlement costs to Local Authorities, yet there had been total silence by this Council on the matter for over 10 weeks. He stated that the Council needed to accept the urgency of the situation and to apply human rights principles to those fleeing from war zones. Other less wealthy Councils had already accepted refugees. Other European countries such as Germany had taken in over 1 million refugees and Sweden over 30,000. It was critical and vital that the Council too played its part and acted with extreme urgency.

In summing up Councillor Ahmed stated that Labour Councils around the country recognised the urgency of the situation. He re- emphasised that churches, mosques and synagogues had spoken publicly making clear that they wished to welcome refugees to Wycombe.

In his closing remarks, he thanked all those who had lobbied and campaigned and provided Councils with relevant information, so constructively and so passionately.

The motion was then put to a recorded vote.

In accordance with subsection (7) of the Council's Standing Order 16 (Voting) the voting of the Members in respect of the motion was recorded as follows:

In favour of the motion

Councillors: K Ahmed, M Asif, Ms A Baughan, S Graham, M Hanif, M E Knight, R Raja, and Ms J D Wassell.

Against the motion

Councillors: Mrs J A Adey, Mrs S Adoh, D Barnes, S Broadbent, Miss S Brown, H Bull, D Carroll, M Clarke, A Collingwood, M Davy, C Etholen, R Gaffney, A Green, G Hall, M Harris, A Hill, Maz Hussain, D Johncock, Mrs G Jones, D Knights, Mrs J Langley, T Lee, Mrs W Mallen, N Marshall, H McCarthy, R Newman, Ms C Oliver, B Pearce, G Peart, J Savage, R Scott, D Shakespeare OBE, A Turner, P Turner, D Watson, C Whitehead, R Wilson, Miss K Wood and L Wood.

Abstentions

Councillors: M Hussain JP and I McEnnis.

In favour – 8

Against – 39

Abstentions – 2

(Councillor S K Raja was not present in the meeting when the above vote was taken.)

61 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

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

“How is that in a prosperous town like High Wycombe we have above average levels of child poverty in Micklefield, Bowerdean, Disraeli and Castlefield where from a quarter to a third of the children live in poverty.

Would the leader agree that this is a serious concern for WDC and if so what action is being proposed to alleviate officially defined child poverty in High Wycombe?”

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

“Bucks County Council lead on this work and have developed a Child Poverty Strategy. The Council participates fully in relevant partnership work to tackle child poverty locally. We play an active role by:

- referring relevant families to Families First and Resilience for intensive support

- actively participating in wellbeing and health projects in deprived neighbourhoods such as Active Bucks, community organising, and return to work projects
- funding a Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme and providing grants to advice organisations such as CAB
- working with partners on a wide variety of initiatives such as the Credit Union, debt awareness advice, workshops for young people on managing money
- and many others.

Supplementary Question

“Could you give an indication of when child poverty is to be eradicated and what is the timescale for this.

Supplementary Response

“It is Bucks CC that lead on this so it is not for me to say. You are welcome to contact the Authority yourself, or I can put you in touch with the officer concerned.”

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

“Could you give an update on the latest figures on assessed housing need in the district and outline the council's strategy for ensuring that this need is met?”

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

“I am not ducking the question, though directed to myself as the Cabinet Member for Housing, it does, I feel, relate directly to the local plan and the Housing, Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) of which Planning are taking the lead.

As housing need numbers are located and provided in the HEDNA with the local plan being devised to meet this need.

I would like to refer the matter to my colleague Cllr Johncock the Cabinet Member for Planning and ask him to supply you with a written response on these figures in due course, as the HEDNA Assessment work progresses. I will at the same time ensure you have a written response to your supplementary question also this evening.”

Supplementary Question

“Over the past few months I have been inundated with requests for support with Housing and in particular I am having a lot of contact from people who are losing private tenancies. Having looked back I can't see that there has been any significant investment in social or affordable housing over the past 40 years.

Do you agree with me that Wycombe District is in a serious housing crisis and that urgent, decisive and proactive action must be taken now to resolve it? ”

Supplementary Response

It was noted that a written response would be provided to this question by the Cabinet Member for Planning in addition to providing the answer to the initial question.

(c) Question from Councillor M Clarke to the Cabinet Member for Planning

“How many new dwellings have current permission to be built and have not been completed?”

Could the answer identify the numbers by parish, including the un-parished areas?”

Response from Councillor D Johncock (Cabinet Member for Planning)

“As at 31st March 2015, there were 1,929 permissions outstanding, ie either under construction or not yet started. Of these, 1404 are in the High Wycombe unparished area with the remaining 525 split between the parishes. I don't propose to go through every one of these. **A detailed breakdown will be provided and attached to the minutes of this meeting, allowing Members to view figures for their own wards.**

At this point, I need to make clear that these numbers are for individual plots rather than whole sites and so they may look rather large. So, to put these figures into perspective, there would be more than 400 permissions for the Daws Hill site alone.

1929 outstanding permissions should be seen as a healthy sign that house building in the District is again on the rise. The stock of permissions over the last few years had fallen away as applications dropped off and scheme densities reduced post-recession. In 2012 the 'not yet started' figure was only 740 units compared to 1797 in 2009, ie the effects of the recession had not quite kicked in by that point.

Looking at why these applications have not been completed, one has to remember that permission lasts for 3 years so that 1929 is a rolling stock of permissions. Some of the permissions will be Outlines, so in need of a further detailed permission to start work. A small amount may merely be valuation exercises; this may well be the case with some of the Prior Notification Sites eg. office to residential automatically permitted by prior notification, which are counted here as permissions.

Some will have conditions to sign off, particularly on the larger sites and in some cases they are awaiting the particular builder they want to use (on the principle the good ones are usually busy), or a house builder themselves may be lining up permissions to ensure they have continuity of work. Some may not be able to access finance until they have a permission secured. And, of course, some may include units which are simply still under construction”.

Supplementary Question

“This shows that all recent permissions are in the Wycombe, Marlow, Princes Risborough and Bourne End areas. The burden of additional housing is borne by the main towns in the District. Villages have not had the development of new housing. How can the Portfolio holder ensure the burden of additional housing put upon Wycombe by the Government is shared equally amongst the residents of villages, not just on towns with reserved sites?”

Supplementary Response

“The Council has a district wide strategy to focus development in town centre locations, with an emphasis on the re use of previously developed sites. However it does not mean that villages should not be expected to help meet our housing needs, as this will help long term sustainability, and provide the much needed affordable housing in country areas.

We support the Government’s scheme to encourage the development of homes in these areas, and we are currently undertaking a review of the Green Belt to help identify relevant sites.

In response to your concern regarding so much future development taking place in High Wycombe, we are looking to double the current size of Princes Risborough by building up to 2,500 new homes there. The high demand for more housing within the town demonstrates that people would like to live here.

(d) Question from Councillor M Hanif to the Cabinet Member for Planning

On Saturday 28th October I had an opportunity to join the Nightsafe team and walk in the town centre. In Pauls Row the new pedestrianized area appears to have improved the look of the area, nevertheless I came away with a few public safety concerns. The pedestrianized area is accessed both by pedestrians and motor vehicles. During our walk unsafe pedestrian and driver behaviour was observed. Some members of the public felt that some control of vehicular traffic is required either through better signage or by installing some bollards.

Can you please reassure the members that appropriate measures to improve Health and Safety in the Town Centre are being considered before an accident takes place? What improvements can we expect?

Response from Councillor D Johncock (Cabinet Member for Planning)

The Pauls Row Improvement Scheme aimed

- To strike a better balance in favour of pedestrians and those with disabilities,
- To create a more attractive and welcoming gateway to the town centre; and

- To support business investment and the vibrancy of the Town Centre.

The shared space approach was considered – in part - to reflect and formalise the way in which the space was already being used, whilst improving safety by putting in place measures to influence careful and courteous driver behaviour, and reducing barriers to pedestrian movement, particularly for those less able. This pedestrian-centred approach sends a clear signal to drivers that they are guests in the space and should behave accordingly, drive more slowly, and typically give way to pedestrians when they are within the space. The scheme also included improvements to lighting and high contrast surfaces to further enhance safety.

Prior to construction the scheme was subjected to a Stage 1 and 2 Road Safety Audit, and Design Risk Assessment, and issues arising were addressed through further detailed design and construction.

The scheme deliberately did not include bollards. Sometimes features intended to improve safety can have the opposite effect as they can give drivers the false impression that pedestrians are 'restricted' to "their" space behind the bollards and it's okay to drive fast in the 'road' space.

Average vehicle speeds through Pauls Row are less than 10 MPH, reducing the likelihood of both conflict between users, or subsequent injury.

A post construction appraisal will be undertaken in the first half of 2016 in accordance with the DDA & Equality 2010 Access Audit Report, and any issues arising will be addressed. In this context officers would like to understand the nature and specifics of the unsafe pedestrian and driver behaviour that you observed Cllr Hanif and I am asking officers to get in touch to learn more.

There was no supplementary question.

(e) Question from Councillor S K Raja to the Cabinet Member for Youth

"Following the demise of Skidz earlier this year, could the Cabinet Member for Youth provide an update to members on the provision of motor vehicle courses in our District for the existing and prospective students, in particular those with special requirements?"

Response from Councillor R Newman (Cabinet Member for Youth)

"Despite the demise of the charity Skidz earlier this year, Amersham and Wycombe College have picked up the baton and are delivering the Skidz programme of motor vehicle courses – guaranteeing that the young people of our district continue to have access to a broad range of courses and skills training. I am grateful for the work the college has done to continue to deliver and indeed improve the provision of these courses, in particular the renovation of the former Skidz site. Their website shows that they offer both Level 1 and Level 2 diplomas in light vehicle maintenance. The council will continue to work closely with the district's further education providers to ensure our young people have the opportunities they deserve to get on in life."

There was no supplementary question

(f) Question from Councillor M Asif to the Cabinet Member for Community

“At a recent Cabinet meeting it was resolved that the new cemetery at Queensway was to have £20,000 allocated from the Special Expenses reserves, to fund the necessary feasibility work.

Would the cabinet member say what the feasibility study involves and why does it cost so much?”

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

“The High Wycombe Town Committee (which Cllr Asif is a member of) recommended to Cabinet in June 2015 that £20k be allocated to the feasibility work necessary for a new cemetery at Queensway. The report detailed the associated works as a full geological survey, estimated to cost £12k and costed design and access studies at £8k. The survey has been completed and design work is now being commissioned. At present we expect to underspend the £20k budget by c£8k, which is very good news. The Town Committee will be able to allocate this extra funding to other projects it may have for the benefit of High Wycombe’s residents.”

There was no supplementary question

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

“I am often asked by members of the public why there is a housing shortage when so many buildings are so obviously unused. Could you let me know if there is a strategy for the use of empty buildings and whether all possible sites have been identified for current and future housing needs?”

Response from Councillor D Johncock (Cabinet Member for Planning)

“The Council has a district wide strategy to focus development in town centre locations, with an emphasis on the re-use of previously developed sites. These planning principles are set out in Policy CS 2 of the Core Strategy. Between 2014-15 75% (319) of the total net dwellings completed (423) were in High Wycombe, of these 99% were on previously developed land. On a district wide basis 97% (412) of new homes were completed on previously developed land. The policy direction for the reuse of previously developed sites has shown to have a very positive impact with only 3% of last year’s development on Green Field sites. While the increase in housing numbers means that greenfield sites will in the future be part of the mix, the focus on brownfield will remain, and will still be a substantial part of our housing supply.

Specifically for underutilised employment sites, the Council has recently reviewed employment sites which are no longer considered feasible for employment and have a potential for alternative uses. This has resulted in a number of employment

sites being released for housing. These sites are identified in the 21 October 2015 Cabinet report. Employment sites not considered to be suitable for alternative uses have been safeguarded for employment use to ensure there is a sufficient supply of employment land as well as housing in the future.

It should also be noted that the redevelopment of offices to housing is likely to increase in the next few years due to the new General Permitted Development Order which came into force on the 15th April 2015. This allows for prior notification applications which permit office buildings to be used for the provision of housing without the need to apply for planning permission.

Supplementary Question

“There is some excellent work being done to provide housing on brownfield sites when they arise. A couple with disability have rung me to say they have the prospect of a move and are happy about it.

Please inform me if more housing is to be developed on the Hughenden quarter in view of the change of location of the new day centre? Also what is the proposed use for the Ski slope and are there any new windfall sites?”

Supplementary Response

“With regard to whether all possible sites have been identified for future housing needs, a draft Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) has recently been published in October this year, showing a total capacity for approximately 9,000 dwellings. This assesses all the potential sites for housing and employment in the district. I am sure that Cllr Wassell will find that the sites she has identified as sitting empty will be identified in this study. If not, she is welcome to provide information on them, and we will consider if they should be included. For a site to be identified for future housing supply it must be considered suitable and available, as such the landowner or developer must identify the site to be available for it to be counted in the future supply.

The Council is thus taking an active role in ensuring that brownfield sites are recycled into housing wherever this can be achieved without damaging our ability to ensure an on-going supply of jobs. I might add that the Council cannot demand that a land owner brings forward a site, should they choose not to develop it.”

(h) Question from Councillor R Raja to the Cabinet Member for Community

“Would the Cabinet Member for Communities agree that increasing levels of obesity are a serious threat to the overall health of the District and puts extra strain on the already tight budget of the NHS.

Therefore, now that the new Leisure Centre is about to come on stream, what actions does she recommend to encourage middle aged people to become physically active?

And would she agree that serious discounts and special recruitment drives may be appropriate in getting the District on the road to long term fitness?”

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

“Whilst there is never room for complacency I am pleased to report that Public Health England data only classes 19.4% of Wycombe residents as inactive compared to 25.4% inactive residents in the South East and 27.7% nationally. To further reduce this figure there are several initiatives in place or imminent, including:

- The Wycombe Leisure Card which is free to residents and offers a 30% discount on all activities at all three leisure centres
- Our operator, Places for People Leisure, have an active outreach programme, working with local sports clubs, Wycombe Wanderers football club, schools and BNU to stimulate grass roots physical activity for a wide range of sports including badminton, squash, 5-a-side football, hockey and gymnastics.
- The Sports Development Service has started Go-Tri, Veterans Football and Disc Golf projects this year.
- Bucks CC’s Public Health team leads work on Physical Activity, Healthy Eating as part of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and runs a number of local initiatives such as Active Bucks.
- And, of course, we are investing significantly in new facilities. Having revived Wycombe Rye Lido in partnership with Fusion we have the new Wycombe Leisure Centre about to open, which demonstrates our commitment to improving our services for people of all ages. The Centre includes a larger sports hall, swimming pool and health and fitness suite as well as completely new facilities such as the climbing wall and Splashpad. I am confident that the Centre will generate increased participation in sports and physical activity

However we are not resting on our laurels and also have early work underway to improve our services at Court Garden and Risborough Springs so all residents can have ready access to high quality sports and physical activity opportunities.”

There was no supplementary question.

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

“Recently there has been a thread on social media about the state of the stairwells and lift in the Wycombe Swan car park. I have noticed myself that these are often unpleasant and smelly. Could you give any reason why this important car park has such difficulties with cleansing issues?”

Response from Mrs W Mallen (Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment) in the absence of Cllr Mrs J Teesdale (Cabinet Member for Environment)

“We are aware of concerns about the cleanliness of the Swan car park and officers and our contractors are working hard to maintain a good level of cleaning. Some additional deep cleaning has been carried out on the stairwells and landings to improve the condition. This is in addition to the normal daily clean.

We know that on some nights there are people sleeping rough in the car park. The cleansing teams are working to reduce the impact this has on car park users. The housing team is continually working to reach out to people who are sleeping rough to try to offer them help and alternatives.

The Council is working hard with our partners in the voluntary sector in trying to assist anyone unfortunate enough to have to sleep rough. We also jointly fund a Bucks wide outreach service for rough sleepers, with access to emergency beds and services to assist people into accommodation. The Outreach service regularly visits the car parks and tries to assist those sleeping there.

Members of the public can report concerns they may have about anyone sleeping rough to the Streetlink service who will pass this on to our outreach service-streetlink can be contacted via 0300 500 0914.”

Supplementary Question

“I find it preposterous that you proclaim that the smell is due to rough sleepers. The unpleasantness is not caused by the homeless, the cleaning process is not being carried out effectively, or at all.

I challenge you to take on a team of young people, to provide them with a mop and bucket and to carry out the work that the Council contractors cannot do.”

Supplementary Response

“This is a much more serious problem which requires more than a mop and bucket. This work requires specialist chemicals and machinery.

I will ask the relevant officers to upgrade the cleaning activity and hopefully you will see improvements shortly.”

62 PETITIONS

No petitions were received by the deadline of Monday 7 December.

63 CABINET

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16 November 2015 be received, and the recommendations as set out at minute numbers 43 and 48 be approved and adopted.

(Minute number 41 Cabinet recommendation on the Motion submitted to Council on 5 October was taken under (Motions) agenda item 18.

64 CABINET

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Special Cabinet meeting held on 14 December 2015, be received and the recommendations as set out in minute number 56 be approved and adopted.

65 IMPROVEMENT & REVIEW COMMISSION

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement & Review Commission held on 11 November 2015 be received

66 AUDIT COMMITTEE

In the absence of the Chairman Councillor Peart rose to present the minutes. He took the opportunity to elaborate on some of the main issues that were discussed at the meeting, many of which were on going and would be reported upon further at the next Audit Committee meeting.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 19 November 2015 be received.

67 HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE

Minute 23 – Review of Cemetery Fees and Charges 2016/17

The Chairman of the Committee clarified that the proposed increase relating to Saturday burials amounted to an additional £143.57 to take account of standby costs. It was noted that this item was a recommendation to Cabinet.

Another Member queried this stating that there would have to be an assumption that last year's figures would be the same as the current year. It was confirmed by the Chairman that this was a reasonable assumption to make and that costs could be reviewed should the numbers be vastly different in the ensuing year.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the High Wycombe Town Committee held on 24 November 2015 be received.

68 LICENSING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 12 November 2015 be received and the recommendation as set out at minute number 10 be approved and adopted.

69 PLANNING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 23 September and 21 October 2015 be received.

70 PERSONNEL & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel & Development Committee held on 30 November 2015 be received and the recommendations as set out at minute numbers 50 and 51 be approved and adopted.

71 REGULATORY & APPEALS COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory & Appeals Committee held on 2 November 2015 be received and the recommendations as set out at minute number 10 be approved and adopted.

72 SPECIAL REGULATORY & APPEALS COMMITTEE

Minute 15 – Questions at Council and Petitions Scheme

A Member raised an objection to the recommendation relating to the deadline for questions to be submitted to Council. She believed that an increase from 3 to 5 days made it more difficult for opposition Members to hold the ruling party to account. In addition she stated that the proposed amendment to Standing Orders relating to asking of a question within a 6 month period also obstructed the democratic process as it prevented the request for constant updated information on a particular subject matter.

The Member concerned also believed that the change in the Petition Scheme would mean that a very important petition, affecting a small number of people could not now be lodged.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Special meeting of the Regulatory & Appeals Committee held on 7 December be received and the recommendations as set out at minute number 15 be approved and adopted.

73 STANDARDS COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 13 October 2015 be received, and the recommendations as set out at minute number 12 be approved and adopted.

74 OUTSIDE BODIES/COMMITTEE CHANGES

The following changes made to Outside Bodies as set out in the summons were noted.

Wrights Meadow Board of Trustees – Cllr M Clarke was appointed to serve as WDC representative.

Shopmobility Management Committee – Cllr A Hill replaced Cllr Mrs J Teesdale

Wycombe Almshouse Trust – Cllr Baughan replaced Cllr A Hill.

75 QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 11.2

In accordance with Standing Order 11.2, the following question and answer was circulated in writing to all Members of the Council at the meeting, and would be included in the Minutes of the meeting. No discussion took place.

Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Regeneration

“I would be grateful for a further update about the future use of the Old Library, Queen Victoria Road and the Reggie Goves Centre. I am aware that I asked about this a few months ago, however I am asking in the hope there is some further progress?”

Written response from Councillor R Wilson (Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Regeneration)

The Old Library is BCC property. We would suggest contacting Buckinghamshire County Council direct for an indication of their plans regarding the building.

In respect of the Reggie Goves Building I can inform you that it is in solicitors' hands with an Agreement for Lease close to completion, for letting to a large

restaurant, aimed at strengthening the evening/night time offer of the cluster of pubs and restaurants in Paul's Row.

RESOLVED: That the above question and answer be noted.

76 URGENT ACTIONS

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

77 REFRESHMENTS

The Chairman took the opportunity to wish the whole Council a very Happy Christmas and New Year. In the spirit of the occasion the Chairman and Vice Chairman invited everyone present to join them for festive refreshments including red and white wine, orange juice and mince pies at the close of the meeting.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

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