

Council Minutes

Date: 11 April 2016

Time: 6.30 - 7.40 pm

PRESENT: Councillor I L McEnnis (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs J A Adey, Mrs S Adoh, K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, M C Appleyard, M Asif, D H G Barnes, Ms A Baughan, S Broadbent, Miss S Brown, H Bull, D J Carroll, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, A D Collingwood, M P Davy, C Etholen, R Farmer, S Graham, A R Green, G C Hall, M Hanif, M Harris, M A Hashmi, A E Hill, M Hussain, M Hussain JP, D A Johncock, M E Knight, D Knights, Mrs J D Langley, A Lee, N B Marshall, H L McCarthy, R Newman, 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, R Wilson, L Wood and Ms K S Wood.

Also Present: Honorary Aldermen: B Jennings, Mrs P Priestley and R Pushman

97 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Honorary Aldermen: M Blanksby, P Cartwright, M Oram and Mrs K M Peatey (MBE). Councillors: M Clarke, C Etholen, R Gaffney, C Harriss, A Hussain, Mrs G Jones, Mrs W Mallen, J Savage, A Turner, and C Whitehead.

98 MINUTES

Councillor J Johncock rose to make a statement referring to minute 82 of the previous minutes. He stated that whilst the minute had been recorded correctly, he had subsequently become aware that his response to the question asked by Dr Derrick had not been so. Having been asked why the Council had not inspected the playground, he explained that in his original response he had stated that the safety report had confirmed that the play equipment was safe and met the required standard, when in fact the report had not specified this but had stated that there were some moderate risks.

In seeking to clarify the paragraph concerned he took the opportunity to table a revised version of the response which read as follows.

However a safety report relating to the play equipment had not been provided to the Council as required by the section 106 Agreement. Following a request by officers, the developer commissioned a safety report that identified some moderate risks. Works have now been carried out and a new safety report has been provided confirming the moderate risk previously identified has been overcome.

RESOLVED: That subject to the amendment above the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 25 February

2016 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

99 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

100 CHAIRMAN`S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported upon some of the activities he had undertaken since the last meeting of the Council had taken place.

- (i) 28 February – Marlow Town Mayor`s Civic Service
- (ii) 2 March – Royal visit for Sports Centre Opening
- (iii) 5 March – Wycombe Orpheus Male Voice Choir
- (iv) 13 March - High Wycombe Mayor`s Civic Service at the Mosque
- (v) 30 March - WDC Chairman`s Annual Reception
- (vi) 9 April – High Wycombe District Scouts and Guides Gang Show 2016.

101 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(a) Question from Mr J Hoggett to the Leader of the Council

“What steps is the Council taking to tackle the saddening and humbling issue of homelessness in our district?”

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

“May I suggest referring you to our 5 year homelessness strategy and action plan on our website, as these contain full details of our actions and progress relating to homelessness in our district?”

The action plan is reported on a quarterly basis to our peers in the various agencies across the district and bi annually to our Wycombe Housing Forum which includes our Cabinet Member. We have had positive feedback on our actions and progress thus far and will update the action plan after year end when figures can be collated.

You can log onto our website regarding each specific action and target. I can make it available to you if require by sending you a link to the Council`s Homelessness Strategy as featured on the Council`s website.

Supplementary Question

“On the cabinet's recommendation to the council, dated the 5th October 2015, Councillor Langley said that homelessness was rising in the district and nationally. Will she, at least in part, accept that this is down to the government's failed housing policy and it's continued austerity agenda and how, in this current climate, does she intend to take out her 5 year plan.

Supplementary Response

“I would like to comment on what we are doing rather than what the Government is doing in this regard.

The homelessness strategy has several key areas with different actions related to them including, but not limited to the following headings:

- Deliver sufficient, appropriate temporary accommodation- this includes trying to reduce/cease the use of bed and breakfast accommodation and upgrade Saunderton Lodge to improve the accommodation
- Improve access to and increase use of the Private Rented Sector- this includes Closer working with private sector landlords – to increase access to private rented sector housing;
- Tackle Rough Sleeping- this includes the funding of an assertive outreach team to assist rough sleepers- funding has recently been extended for 2016/17
- Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy Review- we review the policy annually to ensure it is meeting the needs of those in need.
- Address the Impacts of Welfare Reforms
- Reviewing Joint Working and Protocols- including a protocol with the County Council re 16/17 year olds.
- Deliver affordable settled accommodation- this includes work with Registered Providers to develop additional affordable / social housing”

102 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

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

“Will the Leader agree that the EDL is an extreme racist organisation and its sole purpose in coming to High Wycombe on Saturday, 9 April, was to stir up racist hatred against Muslims and to blame whole communities for the criminal activities of a few bad apples. Would she also tell us whether she is satisfied with the measures taken by WDC and the Police to contain this racist onslaught on our peaceful town and whether she agrees that racist organisations like the EDL have to be shown that they are not welcome in High Wycombe?”

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

“Following Saturday’s very successful Thames Valley Police operation I am pleased to provide an update.

The demonstrations held in High Wycombe on Saturday concluded without disorder and resulted in minimal disruption to the communities of High Wycombe. In total there were approximately 300 people from various groups who took part in the demonstrations. A considerable number of police officers were visible during the demonstrations as part of a comprehensive policing operation.

Four arrests were made in total in connection with it. Three people were arrested on suspicion of public order offences and one person was arrested on suspicion of criminal damage.

The success of the operation was, in no small part, down to the excellent partnership work before and during the event between the police, the council, other agencies and representatives of our communities. Those who were present held a peaceful protest and police officers liaised closely with them to help to facilitate this.

We are proud that people who live in High Wycombe work together to create a peaceful and harmonious town. At no time do we want any group or individual trying to jeopardise that.

Neither the council nor the police have the power to ban public assemblies, like the demonstrations at the weekend. The police do, however, have a legal duty to facilitate peaceful protest.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Thames Valley Police and neighbouring forces for keeping everyone who was in High Wycombe on Saturday safe. In addition, I would also like to thank everyone who lives and works in the town for their patience and co-operation during the demonstrations.”

Supplementary Question

“That is a very reassuring answer. Having been in the town, I was pleased to note that there were no untoward incidents. It was also pleasing to note that the number of EDL demonstrators was outweighed by the number of anti EDL protestors, who behaved with commendable discipline to show that the EDL were not welcome in High Wycombe.

Would you not agree with me however, that it would be better for the EDL to have been allocated a field outside of the Town boundaries, to hold such demonstrations so as not to disrupt the public’s usual routine in a busy area on a Saturday.

Supplementary Response

“It is unfortunate that the light shone on High Wycombe that day, but we have a great deal to be proud of and I believe that all of our numerous achievements will outshine this isolated incident that took place on Saturday.”

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

“In the past few weeks a number of public figures, including the outgoing CEO of Bucks County Council have been making the case in favour of a Unitary Authority for Buckinghamshire.

Would the Leader outline her views on Unitary Authority and agree with me that in this time of austerity the financial case in favour is now compelling, even more so than in 2007?”

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

“The issue of unitary government for Buckinghamshire is not a new one. Yet despite all the talk over a long period of time, there has not once been a compelling case which has been made in the best interests of the people that matter most in this, the council taxpayers and residents and businesses in Wycombe district.

Many different proposals for unitary government in Bucks have been mooted and so far there is no consensus. There would need to be a significant amount of detailed work undertaken before a view could be formed and so it is important to keep an open mind and not prejudge the outcome.

While I don't want to enter into a debate on the unitary issue right now, what I will say on the matter is that the main driver for reorganisation seems to be a financial one, the need for one or many organisations to help plug a black hole in another. What seems to have been lost in translation, however, is that any restructuring towards a unitary would create an entirely new council. It's not simply a case of one organisation taking on the responsibilities of another. Experience from elsewhere in the country has demonstrated that reorganisations inevitably take longer than predicted, are more expensive to deliver than first thought, which ultimately makes finding financial savings problematic. At a time when significant sums of money have already been slashed off local government budgets, is a costly reorganisation really the best way forward? What matters to me is that services are provided for the residents, businesses and visitors of the Wycombe district at an affordable price and this is something that we are doing through joint working.

We are fortunate at Wycombe that, as a result of years of sound financial management, we have a sustainable future, which was shared at the last Cabinet meeting when we discussed and approved our medium-term financial plan. Wycombe District Council continues to perform strongly and has a clear strategy to deliver our ambitious plans. We would therefore look very carefully at any proposals that come forward to ensure that any change delivers the same or improved levels of service to Wycombe District residents and businesses and that our taxpayers are not financially worse-off or subsidise other parts of the County. We would be looking to see that any change was affordable and represent value for money. So far, no proposals have emerged that satisfy these criteria and provides a compelling case for change.

We continue to monitor the situation and, if an opportunity presents itself that we consider is in the best interests of the Council's taxpayers, residents and businesses, then I will of course wish to pursue that at that time. I remain to be convinced that any proposals made so far are in the best interests of Wycombe District Council taxpayers locally.”

Supplementary Question

“I feel that there is a compelling case for Council Tax payers in being able to receive a more streamlined and accessible service, with everything in one place which would be better than the current system, which can be messy.

I believe that the final decision should be put to the Council Tax payers to see what they want. Not wait for other authorities to decide. Do you agree that there should be some form of consultation or referendum for local people regarding this?"

Supplementary Response

"There are different proposals for unitary government in Buckinghamshire, and no consensus, so it is important to keep an open mind and not prejudge the issue. There would need to be a significant amount of detailed work undertaken before a view could be formed.

The most recent discussions were last summer when all the Councils, working with the Bucks Local Enterprise Partnership, discussed the benefits of putting forward further devolution proposals to Government. As you know, we did not collectively in Buckinghamshire put forward any further proposals at that time, in common with many other areas in the Country, as the local benefits were not clear. There is of course the Strategic Alliance cross-County devolution proposal that is with Government for consideration, which involves our District, so we are already part of a wider devolution bid. The Government continues to negotiate devolution deals and the first of such deals in two-tier County areas was announced in the recent Budget, so we continue to monitor the situation. Personally, I think nationally the debate is moving on towards looking at the most appropriate arrangements for devolution locally to the public sector, including the Health Sector, rather than the more narrow local government unitary re-organisation debate."

© Question from Councillor B Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Planning

"Like myself, and many residents in Booker and Cressex, I am sure you welcome the new Costco store coming to Cressex island in High Wycombe. I believe this would be a great asset to the town.

However there is much concern regarding the traffic and parking. I saw a presentation at the Holiday Inn last year, indicating customers would gain entry into Costco's car park from a mini roundabout in Crest Road and the existing road that runs alongside the YMCA.

Do you not agree with me that it would be better to have a 4 point roundabout constructed where the existing mini roundabout leads into Asda and also a slip road from John Hall Way.

I realise this is a Highways and County Council issue but I am sure you'll agree with me that WDC could make this a condition of the planning application?"

Response from Councillor D Johncock (Cabinet Member for Planning)

"Naturally we all welcome investment in the town and I'm sure all of us would like to see Cressex Island put to the most productive use. On the issue of whether this is Costco or some other use, I have to keep an open mind as this is currently the subject of a planning application and it would therefore be inappropriate for me as a member of the Planning committee to comment at this early stage.

What I can say is that the County Highway Authority has been consulted on the application and they will provide their professional advice in due course. However, until I have seen the County Highway Authority's recommendations, I am clearly unable to form a view on whether the proposed highway layout is acceptable or not, and in any event this is a matter for the planning committee to determine rather than me as Executive Member.

It is worth remembering at this stage that it is the Council's role in the first instance to determine the application put before them and reach a view on whether or not it is acceptable or unacceptable. To that end, we consult widely and welcome comments from residents and local community groups as well as local Ward Members. I would therefore advise that you submit your comments on-line using public access to ensure that they are taken into account as part of the determination process."

Supplementary Question

"I am glad you welcome the new Costco store on Cressex Island. I have written to the Highways Authority, who said that responsibility for the matter lay with Costco.

Do you agree with me that it is in fact down to the Planning Authority and Highways not just Costco.

Supplementary Response

"Yes it is down to us as the Planning Authority and will make a decision as to what is right or not."

(d) Question from Councillor M Davy to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Regeneration

"Having visited the new sport centre, and had many residents acknowledge how brilliant it has been for people of all ages in our community, I think WDC can be very proud of providing such a contemporary facility for our whole district.

Can the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration give the Council and the public an update about the progress of the demolition of the old sport centre and a timetable for future works on the hotel and others in the Handy Cross Hub?"

Response from Councillor R Wilson (Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Regeneration).

"Everyone involved should be thanked for their hard work.

Demolition of the old sports centre has commenced. It will take around three months to clear the site. It is gradually disappearing. Commercial property agents – Savills – are appointed to market the commercial development sites. Negotiations are already underway with a major owner-occupier approximately half of the Phase

3 offices. Soft market testing has indicated several 3*+ hotel brands keen on the site. The remainder of Phase 3 (including the hotel) and the Phase 4 (old sports centre site) are about to be actively marketed for investor/developers, and hope to get a lot of money for it. So we are hopeful that we will see further development commencing this forthcoming financial year. In the meantime, the Council will be progressing Phase 5 proposed day nursery/medicentre site, as a direct development.”

Supplementary Question

“I look forward to seeing the works progress throughout the coming months. Can you give me an estimate for the amount of new jobs that will be created when the work has been completed.

I am certain that not only will this benefit the town`s residents, but will demonstrate how WDC is taking an active role in facilitating a reduction in unemployment in our district.”

Supplementary Response

“I do not have the precise figures but approximately 200 jobs will be created from Waitrose, 100 from the Sports Centre, 300-500 due to the offices and approximately 100-200 from the hotels. These are my best guesses. Employment will result as will trade increases which will ultimately trickle down.”

(e) Question from Councillor K Ahmed to the Cabinet Member for Environment

“Recently an investigation carried out by the BFP revealed a major flaw with our car park ANPR system. The council's response failed to give an explanation as to why the BFP reporter managed to avoid any standard charge notice being sent to him even after failing to pay on three separate occasions. Would the responsible cabinet member please explain why this failure could have occurred?”

Response from Councillor Mrs J Teesdale (Cabinet Member for Environment)

“I will leave it to others to judge the actions of the Bucks Free Press. In our subsequent statement to the press, which was printed in full by the paper, we made it very clear that the Council does not endorse the deliberate misuse of public car parks and would strongly discourage motorists from doing so. I am pleased to report that the vast majority of people expect to pay, and do pay to leave their vehicles in a secure public car park.”

Supplementary Question

“A recent BFP investigation revealed a flaw in the ANPR system. Why did WDC not provide an explanation as to why a BFP reporter managed to avoid any standard charge notice being issued despite failing to pay on three separate occasions.”

Over 1.3 million of taxpayer`s money has been spent and wasted on such a system, which had no chance of working from the outset. Will the responsible Cabinet Member do the honourable thing and resign?”

Supplementary Response

“No I will not. I am confident regarding the information I have given you and will keep the situation monitored. All I can say to you at this point is just wait and see until the end of the year.

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

“Under the Infrastructure levy Funding Strategy some fifteen projects have been earmarked for High Wycombe. Can the Cabinet Member for this responsibility provide a time scale for the completion of these putative projects. What for example are the factors which will expedite or hinder the timely completion of these projects?”

In accordance with Standing order 11.3(g), as the member asking the question was not present at the meeting at the time the question was to be put, the question was treated as withdrawn.

(g) Question from Councillor M A Hashmi to the Cabinet Member for Environment

“Many roads and service roads in particular, are blighted by fly tipping and general accumulation of rubbish. In Bowerdean Ward a service road behind Rowan Avenue has heaps of soil, accumulated rubbish and large articles of rubbish left by either uncaring local residents or more likely the result of fly-tipping.

What is the Council's strategy to tackle fly tipping, what actions is the Council taking, (such as placing signs asking people not to fly tip) to combat this social menace? Moreover, how many people have been prosecuted for fly tipping in High Wycombe, over the last year?”

Response from Mrs J Teesdale (Cabinet Member for Environment)

“The service road that you have referred to in your question is in the ownership of Red Kite and they deal with fly tipping on their land. The Staff at Red Kite regularly check on their estates and service roads and get any fly tipping cleared by their contractor. If they find out who has carried out the fly tipping, they will follow this up. Signs have been erected in ‘hot spots’.

Staff have been working with the joint waste team to consider ways of dealing with fly tipping, including the use of cameras.

With respect to Rowan Avenue, Red Kite are arranging for a litter pick and to tidy up overgrown vegetation on the service road. They are not responsible for rubbish or rubble in gardens which have access to the service road but will follow this up with tenants if it is causing a nuisance or is an eyesore.

Where Red Kite officers or officers within the Joint Waste Team find evidence in fly tipped waste which identifies the source of that waste, or where witnesses report waste being dumped, County Council Enforcement Officers will investigate and consider whether there is a viable case to pursue for prosecution. The following figures provide information in the number of convictions within the Wycombe District area over the last three years:

2013/14	12	(60 county-wide)
2014/15	14	(54 county-wide)
2015/16	10	(46 county-wide)

Convictions are sometimes delayed due to court and other factors relating to the defendant and county Enforcement Officers anticipate a rise in convictions rather than the apparent fall that these county-wide figures may suggest.

Regarding the specific area in question, the Enforcement Team will include it within their programme to consider deployment of surveillance cameras there, but will not be able to confirm if and when camera(s) are actually installed in this location, for obvious reasons. The Enforcement Team are aware of that area, but had not received any fly tipping reports recently. However, they will visit and install signage (see attached) which advises 'would be' fly-tippers, that surveillance operates in that area."

Supplementary Question

"Many roads and footpaths in Bowerdean are in need of repairs and resurfacing. Fly tipping in these areas makes Bowerdean look grubby tacky and untidy, and create an environment for mice.

Can we ask for a concerted effort from WDC to improve this state of affairs?"

Supplementary Response

"Responsibility for this matter lies with Red Kite not WDC. Speak to the WDC representatives serving on the Red Kite Board, who regularly attend Board meetings. We have allowed this question to be asked but you should have gone to them directly for advice."

(h) Question from Councillor S Graham to the Cabinet Member for Community

"During the consultation process about the new Wycombe sports centre, the developers had given an undertaking that the centre could be used for dances, weddings and other large gatherings.

However I am now told that high heel shoes and drinks are not allowed in the halls and that it would cost £30,000 for a special cover to protect the floor for any of the above activities to take place at the centre.

Can you tell me who took the decision not to honour the commitment made by the developers during the consultation process to provide a place at the centre for large gatherings and when was this undertaking revoked?"

Response from Mrs J Adey (Cabinet Member for Community)

"Thank you for asking me about our outstanding new Wycombe Leisure Centre, which provides a wide range of sporting opportunities for local residents. The sports hall can be used for large events such as major sporting matches, where the public can use spectator seating areas. It has already proved invaluable as a marshalling area for the many hundreds of swimmers attending the National level swimming gala in March. Upstairs Studios 3 and 4 may be used for functions of up to 134 people including seminars, children's parties and lunches, as was the case on the day of the Centre's formal opening.

However in optimising the detailed design for sports some of the many initial ancillary options could not be taken forward. The initial conceptual view from the architects included using the sports hall and the adjacent second hall for large events such as exhibitions, conferences and banquets. However as the design was refined sports use has been prioritised as this is the key purpose of Wycombe Leisure Centre. This has meant:

- installing a modern high specification sprung wooden hall floor ideal for a range of sports; however this will be damaged by high heels and liquid spillages
- the second hall is a dedicated Bowls Hall, which cannot be readily made multi-functional
- a store room now houses the new bleacher seating, which means it cannot be used as an access corridor
- a narrow external access route to the side of the sports hall due to the security fencing needed by Waitrose, which limits the ability to temporarily locate catering facilities externally alongside the hall

I have received significant positive feedback from users of the new Centre and Places for People Leisure report much higher levels of usage. Our decision to replace the Centre and invest in sport and physical activity for our residents is proving to be very well placed."

Supplementary Question

Thank you but you have not answered the question. People make all sorts of promises when seeking approval and then not honouring those commitments. How can developers be held to account and forced to honour the promised made during the consultation process. What was promised was not delivered.

Is this something the Council can tighten up on?"

Supplementary Response

“No firm undertaking was given. The design continued to be refined and the venue has simply become unsuitable for large gatherings.”

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

“Would the Leader update us on the finances of the Hughenden Quarter and the current expenditure by the Council on the project? A resident has asked me to obtain this information.”

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

“The Council acquired the site in 2008 to secure its regeneration and to create a new ‘green corridor’ to Hughenden Park/facilitate BNU’s student village. Since that time, approximately £4.3m has been invested by the Council on demolition (0.5m sq.ft. of heavy industrial buildings), remediation, new spine road and Hughenden Avenue junction and the green corridor, which takes up approximately one third of the main site in terms of land area and new utilities serving the development sites.

The Council will receive capital receipts from three disposals totalling c. £8m plus Community Infrastructure Levy, New Homes Bonus and Council Tax/Business Rates. The District will gain by having an 260 unit ‘independent supported living village’ provided by the Extra Care Charitable Trust, together with a second phase 70 bed care home provided by the Royal Star & Garter charity. When completed, the development of Hughenden Quarter will bring this site back to life, close to High Wycombe’s town centre and open up the Hughenden Stream to public access. There will be 172 affordable units, comprising 120 shared ownership units and 52 affordable rented units. All of the additional housing provided through the ECCT and RSG schemes will help to release other housing to the market.

Overall, the site will provide purpose-built residential accommodation for around 750 people including students and older residents. The third phase is planned as a new family restaurant/ pub. The Council is retaining the ‘Upper Site’ for letting.”

Supplementary Question

“Do you feel that the right balance of provision has been met in the Hughenden Quarter? Other schemes were suggested there and it is scarce land, being near the Town Centre.”

Supplementary Response

“I do believe that Hughenden quarter is providing good quality affordable housing, and caters for various age groups. The capital receipts are being used to help fund the Council’s Major Projects Programme, which provides a range of schemes contributing to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the District, including affordable housing. The Community Infrastructure levy is applied in accordance with the Council’s policy, including schemes from a number of different agencies, such as Bucks County Council for Education and transport schemes. The range of schemes being funded can be found in the Cabinet agenda dated 16 November 2015. New Homes Bonus and Council Tax income is being used to

support the Council's overall revenue budget to continue to provide essential services and reduce the pressure on Council Tax."

Questions 10 - 16 were not put as the 30 Minutes time period had expired. In accordance with Standing Orders, a written reply would be sent to the questioner by the appropriate Member within 10 working days, and would also be appended to the Minutes of the meeting.

103 PETITIONS

No petitions were received prior to the deadline of 5pm on Monday 4 April 2016.

104 CABINET

Minute 79 – Local Plan Timetable & Budget

A Member voiced her concern over the lack of awareness over the progress and contents of the Local Plan. The Member questioned whether there was a possibility that further awareness could be raised as to the publication of the Plan in 2017 and the current timetable.

She was informed that the Plan was well advertised, but that this would be reviewed to establish whether there was a lack of knowledge in this area of work.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7 March 2016 be received

105 IMPROVEMENT & REVIEW COMMISSION

The Vice Chairman of the Committee rose to present the minutes of the last meeting.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement & Review Commission held on 9 March 2016 be received

106 AUDIT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 3 March 2016 be received.

107 HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE

Minute 40 – Update on the Market

A Member commented that she had been saddened to see Colin Baker's published column in the BFP, which had portrayed High Wycombe in a poor light and singled out Little Market House. She stated that she felt that the area was overshadowed by the Guild Hall and as such little Market House needed to be resold and

remarketed and that she had been impressed by suggestions relating to this by the Major Projects and Estates Executive.

The Chairman of the Committee agreed that Mr Baker's comments on the High street had been somewhat inaccurate, and that occupancy in the shops was high, with only one long term vacancy. He stated that he was confident that the stores present did meet the requirements of those in the town. He too welcomed the proposals put forward by the Major Projects and Estates Executive which would help to bring back the building into practical commercial use.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the High Wycombe Town Committee held on 1 March 2016 be received.

108 PERSONNEL & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel & Development Committee held on 9 March 2016 be received.

109 PLANNING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 20 January, 17 February and 16 March be received.

110 REGULATORY & APPEALS COMMITTEE

The Vice Chairman rose to present the minutes of the previous meeting. She proposed an amendment to the minutes following the resolution of a query raised by Cllr Broadbent on the Contract Standing Orders. The query had related to ensuring that the opportunity to win contracts worth less than £10 000 was not restricted to a small pool of repeat contractors and that as such opportunities should be advertised. It was agreed that the following wording be inserted into the Contract Standing Orders relating to this point, that they adopted.

“Where opportunities are not advertised, in order to ensure that value for money is achieved, the requirement for competitive award will remain, also Officers will be required to ensure variety in the selection of bidders approached over time. In addition, the Council will conduct a regular spend analysis to identify purchase patterns and opportunities to achieve additional savings.”

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory & Appeals Committee held on 2 March 2016 be received and the recommendation as set out at minute number 20 be approved and adopted, subject to the amendment in recommendation (i) that the Contract Standing orders be adopted with the insertion of the following wording. “Where opportunities are not advertised, in order to ensure that value for money is achieved, the

requirement for competitive award will remain. Also officers will be required to ensure variety in the selection of bidders approached over time. In addition, the Council will conduct a regular spend analysis to identify purchase patterns and opportunities to achieve additional savings.”

111 QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 11.2

There were none.

112 URGENT ACTION TAKEN BY CABINET OR INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER

The individual decision published since the last meeting of the Council held on 25 February 2016 as set out in the summons was noted.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

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

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Minute Item 102

COUNCIL

Monday 11 April 2016

Agenda Item 6

Questions from Members

Unanswered Questions – Responses sent subsequent to Meeting

10. Question from Councillor M Asif to the Cabinet Member for Housing

How much is the rent for a two bedroomed flat in Castlefield

- a) in social housing
- b) in affordable housing and
- c) in commercial housing in the private sector?

How much is the rent for a two bedroomed flat in Castlefield

- a) in social housing - **the weekly rent depending on Registered Provider is between £101-108**
- b) in affordable housing - **No flats have become available at affordable rent in the Castlefield area. Affordable rents for two bedroom flats in the district are between £134 -£182 per week depending on location within High Wycombe**
- c) in commercial housing in the private sector? - **we do not keep specific data however current market prices for two bedrooms flats are between £196 – £208 per week within High Wycombe.**

11. Question from Councillor K Ahmed to the Cabinet Member for Housing

When will Wycombe's housing waiting list be significantly reduced and WDC not need to help families and individuals who are homeless, or at risk of being made homeless?

I cannot predict when the waiting list for housing in the District will be significantly reduced, as demand for housing and for housing assistance is dependent on a large number of factors.

As you are aware a New Local Plan is being devised to assist in meeting housing need, and I am confident that this work alongside the excellent work being carried out by Officer's at WDC, plus that of all the agencies will continue for those that require assistance for as long as it is needed.

As to the second part of your question: WDC no longer being needed to help families and individuals who are homeless, or at risk of being made homeless?

If I had a 'Crystal Ball' I could possibly be in a better position to answer this question.

It is evident looking at the last Census that the Population is increasing and I cannot foresee a time when homelessness will be eradicated in the UK.

12. Question from Councillor R Raja to the Leader of the Council

Now that the racist EDL has paid High Wycombe a visit will WDC be undertaking an impact assessment on the disruption caused to local businesses and the travelling public by the unwelcome visitors numbering from 150 to 200? Secondly, would she advise us in due course as to the cost of policing the march by the racist EDL and how much of this cost will have to be borne by WDC?

English law permits the expression of free speech and the police have a legal duty to facilitate peaceful protest. On Saturday we worked closely with the police and partners to minimise disruption. There is no requirement for an impact assessment and, mindful of the need to manage the associated work within existing resources, we have concentrated on supporting the police and our partners. We have asked Thames Valley Police for the information you request about costs.

13. Question from Councillor B Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Planning

Why is it that Red Kite have to obtain planning permission to knock down some existing garages to rebuild them because they are in an unstable condition. These garages once belonged to Wycombe District Council?

Anything which falls within the definition of “development” as set out in the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) requires planning permission.

In this case the construction of new garage blocks is “development” and so requires express planning permission, no matter who owns the site.

14. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Leader of the Council

Could the Leader kindly provide to members a map of all land transferred to Red Kite Housing Association? I am sure that the Leader can appreciate how time consuming it is for members to have to locate ownership on a case by case basis.

Thank you for your question in respect of the availability of a map regarding the land transferred to Red Kite Housing Association. This information is available to all staff as a layer of the Wycombe District Council i-Share GIS system featured on WySpace the internal intranet.

Unfortunately this information is not available to the public via the website due to commercial confidentiality and data protection issues.

This system can easily be extended to members interested in accessing it, but they would need to log onto the network at the Queen Victoria site to do so. If any member is interested in doing so, I can put them in touch with the appropriate ICT officer.

Unfortunately the system cannot be provided via the members extranet as this is not compatible.

Property Services officers have also indicated that they are, as always, quite happy to confirm, whether or not any property or piece of land was featured on this list /layer regarding sites transferred to Red Kite Housing Association. Any member is quite welcome to ring them with such queries.

15. Question from Councillor R Raja to the Leader of the Council

Does the Leader agree with the statement made by the out-going Chief Executive of Bucks County Council that the existing 2- tier system of district and county councils is not fit for purpose and too expensive and that Bucks should move to a unitary system?

I would refer you to the answer I gave earlier to substantially the same question asked by Councillor Matt Knight (No 2.) (Full wording to appear in the minutes to be published by 25/4/16.

16. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Leader of the Council

Does the Leader think that Wycombe District Council will become more dependent on income generating schemes in future? This is becoming more of a topic in local authority publications due to the reduced settlement from Central Government. If so does she feel this is an opportunity to consult our talented and entrepreneurial Wycombe residents?

Yes, I agree with you that we will need to continue to generate income, although that is nothing new for Wycombe. We continue to rise to the financial challenges we have and my Cabinet, at its meeting on 7 March received and approved the Council's medium-term financial strategy. In summary, this is currently projecting that by 2019/20 we will have an annual projected deficit of £1.9m, which is why we are pursuing an approach to raise additional revenue from the use of our assets. This approach is detailed in the Council's Corporate Plan, approved by Council in December, which includes a work stream to generate new revenue streams for the Council on the basis that we will be free of Government rate support grant funding by 2019.

We have a strong track record of developing schemes, based on local consultation, to ensure they are successfully delivered and have clear plans in place and are working hard to achieve our target by 2019. We welcome good ideas from whatever source they come, including residents and entrepreneurs, to ensure the schemes we bring forward help to ensure our District continues to flourish and grow, as well as providing an additional income stream to the Council.

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