

Council Minutes

Date: 3 April 2017

Time: 6.30 - 7.27 pm

PRESENT: Councillor M Hussain JP (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs J A Adey, K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, M C Appleyard, D H G Barnes, Ms A Baughan, Miss S Brown, H Bull, D J Carroll, M Clarke, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, A D Collingwood, M P Davy, C Etholen, R Farmer, R Gaffney, S Graham, A R Green, G C Hall, M Hanif, C B Harriss, M A Hashmi, A E Hill, A Hussain, M Hussain, D A Johncock, M E Knight, D Knights, A Lee, N B Marshall, H L McCarthy, I L McEnnis, R Newman, Ms C J Oliver, B E Pearce, S K Raja, R Raja, J A Savage, R J Scott, D A C Shakespeare OBE, N J B Teesdale, Mrs J E Teesdale, 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 Alderman J M Blanksby.

83 MINUTE'S SILENCE

A 1 minute silence was observed to pay respects to the victims of the Westminster terror attack.

84 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Honorary Aldermen: M Oram, Mrs K M Peatey MBE and Mrs P Priestley. Councillors: M Asif, S Broadbent, M Harris, G Peart and S Saddique.

85 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 23 February 2017 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

86 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

87 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prior to making his announcements with regard to his activities since the last meeting of the Council, the Chairman made a brief statement in relation to the terrorist attack in Westminster on 22 March 2017.

The Chairman also went on to inform Members that Paul Shackley (Corporate Director) would be leaving the Council in early May to take up a new post as Chief Executive at Rushmoor Borough Council in Hampshire. The Chairman took the opportunity to congratulate him, wish him well in his new post and thank him for all his hard work and service to the Council.

The Chairman then went on to report on some of the activities he had undertaken since the last meeting of the Council in February.

- (a) The Chairman reported that a tree had been planted at Rye Park in recognition of our district volunteers. The official opening ceremony would take place later in the month.
- (b) Members were informed of the very well attended Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes armed forces Day 2017 Ticket Launch which had taken place at the Aylesbury Waterside Theatre on 17 March.
- (c) The Chairman informed Members of the Hughenden Gardens Foundation Stone Ceremony held on 22 March.

88 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question from Mr M Foyle-York to the Leader of the Council

“In the WDC Unitary Authority proposal, mental health was not given adequate coverage.

Can this council promise myself and the rest of the public that they will give issues surrounding mental health as much attention as physical health, especially when so many of our services would be up in the air with a switch to a unitary model?”

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

“You may have seen that the District submission (and indeed the County submission) said very little about Adult Social Care generally including Mental Health. We in the District Councils are very much aware of the negative impact that uncertainty can have on vulnerable people. We want to reassure service users that we will seek to maintain the current delivery until there has been a careful review of the impact of any proposed change on any individual service users.

It is precisely because we recognise the very specific and different needs of those who suffer with mental illness alongside other vulnerable service users that we have not set out our proposals in detail, I can however assure you that if a southern unitary Council was taken forward I will ensure that the needs of users of mental health services both collectively and individually will be given careful consideration as proposals are developed.”

There was no supplementary question.

89 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

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

“Wycombe District Council seems fond of paying consultants for consultancies and feasibility studies, which range from commissioning the report for a two unitary authority option for Buckinghamshire, (with the WDC share of the cost being £25K) to the consultations about the new cemetery in Hazlemere and now the proposed £100K for a feasibility study about the establishment of a heavy rail line between High Wycombe and Bourne End.

Would the Leader like to tell us how much has been spent by WDC on consultations and feasibility studies in the last two years and how many such exercises cost more than £5,000?”

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

“Councillor Raja, Thank you for your question. I share your desire to ensure that public money is used wisely and I can assure you that I have no fondness for paying out money at all but if we are to continue to deliver the amount of very successful projects that we do it is necessary to make use of external expertise which we do not employ. And whilst you may know what you mean by ‘consultation’ or ‘feasibility’ these are terms which are used broadly to include a great many things. (Consultancy can include barristers for legal advice, interim appointments, architects and designers on capital projects and public consultation exercises. The same is true of feasibility work we can say how much was spent on specific projects but feasibility just means working out if something can be done.) To try and provide a helpful response officers have gathered capital spend on feasibility which we can send you as a written answer. If this is not what you had in mind you will need to define exactly what it is that you are after.”

Supplementary Question

“For the sake of transparency would it be possible to publish the number of studies taking place on the WDC website, giving reasons for it and the conclusions reached?”

Supplementary Response

“As I said previously, you will need to define what you mean so that we can correctly identify it. However you need to be aware that some of the information may be commercially sensitive, and so may not always be possible to publish it.”

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

“Five years on from the transfer of the District's housing to Red Kite would you consider the move to be a success and in particular what do you think the benefits have been for the wider community?”

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

“This is a difficult question to answer as it's subjective. We would say that there has been a positive benefit from Red Kite in the following ways:

- They have carried out much needed improvements to social housing homes and estates that would not have been possible had the transfer not taken place.
- They have employed local companies and services to help deliver these improvements, thereby benefitting the local economy.
- They are looking at building new homes and thereby creating new social housing for those that need it.
- They have held job fairs and other community activities as well as training courses for tenants along with a myriad of community work with tenants, residents and leaseholders.
- They have created jobs in the district as they have grown.
- They manage the housing stock in the district effectively providing us with access to much needed social housing.

Supplementary Question

“I would agree with you that Red Kite has done much good work. However, across High Wycombe, particularly in Micklefield, Bowerdean, Totteridge and Castlefield, there are parks and play areas which are now becoming more un-kept as each year goes by.

What powers does WDC now have to ensure that good quality amenity spaces are provided to residents?”

Supplementary Response

“The management of these spaces now falls on Red Kite, so you will need to address your question to them.”

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

“The Bucks Free Press on 15 March 2017 ran a story on a consultation on the feasibility of reopening the High Wycombe to Bourne End branch line for heavy rail. It indicates that this consultation will cost £100k to be paid for in two equal tranches from CIL monies in this and the next year. What steps have been or are to be taken before committing to spend £100k of CIL money to ensure that the appropriate authorities are content with the reinstatement of level crossings across the A4155 Cores End Road and the A4155 Station Road?”

Response from Councillor D Johncock (Cabinet Member for Planning)

“The article in question relates to the recent Cabinet decision to allocate CIL and Section 106 funding to a range of infrastructure projects. One of these projects is to take a fresh look at the economic case and feasibility of reconnecting rail services between High Wycombe to Bourne End as part of the national rail network, given improvements elsewhere on the rail network such as East West Rail, Crossrail and the proposed western rail access to Heathrow, responding to growth in demand for rail travel is essential.

Not only could the re-establishment of this rail link benefit longer distance travellers but, in addition, could help locally with providing an alternative form of travel to the car. We know that we suffer congestion on many of our roads in and around High Wycombe and we know we have to plan for considerable development within the district. Given the potential benefits between Bourne End and High Wycombe, it would be very short-sighted of us not to explore this possibility once and for all.

Network Rail, Great Western Railway, Bucks County Council and other partners are aware of the intention to undertake this feasibility study and have indicated their support in engaging with us on a project brief before any consultants would be appointed.

It is anticipated that early on any study would consider high level issues including whether there are any technical 'showstoppers'. If at any stage the conclusion is reached that there are no reasonable prospects for a reinstatement then the project can be brought to a close, and any unused funds will be available for other purposes. Alongside this technical feasibility the intention of the study will be to assess whether and under what circumstances the economic case may 'stack up' for a return of the railway, including the benefits that this link would have for the district, the region, and for the wider rail network."

Supplementary Question

"Will the Cabinet Member justify the expenditure of £100k of CIL monies on a National Infrastructure Programme? This money should instead be spent on the betterment of the local infrastructure to improve services for the majority in the district, not on a link between East West Rail and Cross Rail which is at least a regional if not a national infrastructure matter as indicated in your response to my first question.

It is not without reason that CIL is an abbreviation for Community Infrastructure Levy and not Country Infrastructure Levy."

Supplementary Response

"The proposed plan will bring a great deal of local benefits so why should we not contribute. The cost of a feasibility study would amount to millions, but if the work is match funded we will all see the benefits."

(d) Question from Councillor B Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Environment

"I am assuming the reason why the ANPR system at Wycombe District Council's car parks had to be abandoned was because the DVLA would not pass on the relevant information of car ownership to the Council.

Do you agree with me this seems to be a very peculiar state of affairs when information cannot be passed onto local authorities which are responsible and accountable, but can be passed on to unscrupulous and ruthless car park operators?"

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

"The recent changes that we have made to the payment system, by introducing pay and display in the majority of our car parks, are due to restrictions on the Council in terms of accessing ownership details of vehicles

We are disappointed that we've had to make these changes from ANPR to pay and display as we feel that ANPR provides our customers with a more flexible way of paying for their parking and is a modern and innovative system used by both the private and public sector. We have had feedback from customers that they feel this

is a retrograde step, particularly in light of the fact that privately owned and run car parks can use ANPR and can obtain keeper details.

We do intend to pass on the comments that we have received from customers to the government, as we feel that local authorities are not being treated fairly and our customers are being disadvantaged.”

Supplementary Question

“Some car parks don’t have coin machines in them. There are some very unscrupulous car park operators who operate the car park, for example at Ryemead.”

Supplementary Response

“I cannot answer for people at the location you mention but all our machines were replaced when we switched to ANPR. Please let me have a list of where there are no machines and I will investigate further. The new machines are also designed to accept the new £1 coin.”

(e) Question from Councillor Mrs L Clarke OBE to the Cabinet Member for Environment

“Litter is becoming more and more an unsightly problem both in the town and on the kerbside, not to mention fly tipping.

Can we be told whether the contract for litter collection has been changed as it appears this is not as thorough as it once was?

There appears to a general lack of care and pride into the District’s surroundings.”

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

“Our contract with Serco requires them to maintain acceptable levels of cleansing across all streets. The contract has not been changed - street cleansing is carried out at the frequencies which should ensure that standards are achieved and maintained. There are some differences between the response times and frequency of cleansing in locations such as town centres. Our contractors are also required to provide a flexible service to respond to changing needs and if we get regular problems with litter, this will be removed more frequently as required.

Unfortunately some areas suffer more from littering, and the negative impacts of fly tipping.

To help with this, we are working closely with other agencies, housing providers and Transport for Bucks to improve the co-ordination of litter collection and other cleansing activity across the District, with the aim of improving our local environment.

This year we will continue working with residents, schools, community groups and local business to organise "The Great British Spring Clean" across the Wycombe District (and Chiltern). Supporting this type of activity is an important part of our plans to encourage people to take more responsibility for their neighbourhoods.

If there are areas or roads that you feel are particularly littered, please let me or the team know"

Supplementary Question

"If that is the case then the contract is either deficient or the monitoring and enforcement of the contract is not being undertaken. What will you be doing to make sure that the District is litter free and that we do a spring clean?"

If you do not have a response I am content with a written response to be sent to all Councillors. Also I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the gardening team over the sterling work they have done with the flower beds."

Supplementary Response

"Yes I can certainly write to all Councillors with a response. However I can confirm that nothing has changed in the way we manage the contract. Unfortunately people do not care as they once used to making it a much harder job for our cleansing team. I feel that we need to educate people in how to "Keep Britain tidy." Nevertheless I will do all I can. Please let me know if there are particular areas that are worrying you in this respect."

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

"When WDC sold off the housing stock to Red Kite we were assured that Castlefield Regeneration Project was a top priority. This project has been delayed with one setback after another with no sign of any real progress in the near future.

Is this a failure on the part of Red Kite, and what is WDC doing to ensure that this much needed housing project does take off, to address the serious housing problems in the town?"

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

“Planning discussions have been ongoing for the past two years, during which time the estate had been fully decanted. Works to redevelop the Castlefield estate have commenced. We are now progressing to timetable through the pre planning application process, accommodating recommendations where practical from WDC planners.

A full design team is in place and currently is working to deliver a planning application during the first quarter of 2017. A master plan has been produced for the whole project and whilst there has been some slippage we are trying to get back on track.”

Supplementary Question

“Is the slippage just another sign of lax agreements with Red Kite where the tenants suffer?”

Supplementary Response

“No it is just down to circumstances. The process of the purchase of the homes held under leasehold took a little longer than expected.”

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

“The Cabinet recently allocated £100,000 to make a final assessment of the feasibility of the Bourne End to High Wycombe rail link. I assume that this was in consultation with Bucks County Council Officers who are working on a cycle route.

Please inform us of how the £100,000 will be spent and whether it could include a cycleway from London Road to Wycombe Railway station in the meantime?”

Response from Councillor D Johncock (Cabinet Member for Planning)

“Yes Bucks County Council officers are aware that we will be undertaking this study and we will be liaising with them on the brief. We are also working with County officers on the creation a new walking and cycling route along the old railway line. We have allocated £150,000 S106 funding previously towards this. The walking/cycling route is a shorter term deliverable compared to the prospects of re-use for a railway line. In the event that a railway is to be re-introduced I would anticipate that alternative provision for example alongside would be incorporated in the new plans for walking/cycling.

The likely difference in timescales for the 2 projects means both are worth considering and it is hoped that the re-use for walking and cycling will become possible in the short term at least in part of the route.

The £100,000 is programmed to be spent over two years. A detailed programme will be developed. A study of this nature is a significant piece of work and it would

be unlikely there would be any significant surplus funding remaining. Also as the funds have not been approved for a cycleway then they cannot be used for this purpose.”

Supplementary Question

“Can you confirm that we will have a rail link between Bourne End to High Wycombe over the next 10 years, and will we have a walking and cycling route from London Road to Wycombe railway station in order to reduce congestion?”

Supplementary Response

“The idea of a cycleway has not been supported for a number of reasons. As in my previous discussions with you have not asked High Wycombe Town Committee to find the CIL monies for the purpose.”

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

“According to a recent study, NHS cuts were responsible for 30,000 excess deaths in 2015 an unprecedented rise in mortality. But despite these shocking statistics it is reported that the service has been asked to make another £22.bn worth in cuts.

Can the Cabinet Member tell me how many of these excess deaths in 2015 were reported for High Wycombe; and if any, whether the excess deaths in Wycombe were around the national average?”

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

“The study you refer to was a speculative article in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine that the Department of Health has robustly refuted (their comments are at the bottom in case useful). This was one of several possible explanations that the researchers considered.

A spokesperson for the DoH dismissed the reports saying variation in excess death rates was normal. “This report is a triumph of personal bias over research for two reasons” they said. “Every year there is a significant variation in reported excess deaths, and in the year following this study they fell by nearly 20000 undermining any link between pressure on the NHS and the number of deaths. Moreover to blame an increase in a single year on cuts to the NHS budget is arithmetically impossible given that the budget rose by almost £15 billion between 2009/10 and 2014/15.

In 2015 there were 1,300 registered deaths in the District, averaging 7.4 per thousand. The death rate nationally is 9.3 per thousand. Additionally there was no significant local spike in death rates from 2014 to 2015 – there were 60 more deaths but the District’s population rose by over 1,000.”

There was no supplementary question.

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

“Thames Water has been fined a record £20m after pumping 1.9 billion litres of untreated sewage into the River Thames. This follows spills in 2013 and 2014, resulting in the deaths of countless fish and birds.

The Cabinet Member will be aware that Judge Francis Sheridan in Aylesbury Crown Court was compelled to observe that it was a "shocking and disgraceful state of affairs" and that the scale of the problem was such that it must have been known up the chain of command. Will the Cabinet Member tell us whether or not the stretch of the river passing through WDC has recovered from this environmental disaster and in the light of this can she reassure us whether the sewage infrastructure at Little Marlow will be able to cope with the proposed additional housing proposed in Wycombe, Bourne End and Wooburn Green?"

Response from Councillor D Johncock (Cabinet Member for Planning)

"Your query regarding whether the river has recovered fully is not one that either my cabinet colleagues or myself are qualified to answer and is probably better directed to the Environment Agency. However, Thames Water must pass strict water quality consents for the Environment Agency to grant them a licence which they continue to do. You can therefore draw your own conclusion from that fact.

However, we are aware that in 2014, after these incidents, Thames Water undertook an extensive refurbishment programme to overcome performance issues at the Little Marlow Works. I also note that the environment agency have reported that 'Thames Water continues to improve their management of the site and that the operations at Little Marlow Sewage Treatment Works are under better control'.

We do work closely with Thames Water to ensure they are aware of levels and timing of housing and employment growth so that they can ensure that sufficient capacity at the Little Marlow Works is maintained and to meet their water quality consents.

Thames Water have informed us during the work on the new Local Plan that a capacity upgrade will be required at Little Marlow Works during their next business plan period from 2020 to 2025. Consultation on their next business plan will take place from next year."

Supplementary Question

“Do you work closely with the Environmental Agency to ensure conditions are met?”

Supplementary Response

“Indeed we do especially with regards to the new Local Plan. However it is not our job to maintain water quality you will have to take those questions to the Environment Agency.”

Question 10 was 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.

90 PETITIONS

Councillor D Knights on behalf of the Risborough Area Residents Association had given notice that a petition would be handed in and Linda Cannon Clegg Chairman of the Association presented the petition and addressed the meeting.

In accordance with Standing Order 9.1 the contents of the petition was summarised.

The Leader of the Council also made a statement in relation to the lodging of the petition by RARA and to the expansion of Princes Risborough. She stated that in preparing the plan for Princes Risborough the Council wished to ensure that local people had a voice and were heard. As such a Steering Group was established chaired by the town council with representatives from local groups including RARA. Working closely together a common goal had been established of achieving the best possible outcomes for local people from the expansion of the town.

The Leader went on to clarify that the proposed plan was for up to 2755 new homes of which up to 2500 would be in the expansion area. The plan included precise infrastructure requirements to address the needs of the new and existing residents. The requirements included a new link road to relieve pressure on the A4010 the building of 2 new primary schools and expansion of secondary school places and new sporting facilities and improved connections between the expansion area and the existing town.

The Leader went on to acknowledge that the petition demonstrated how deeply and passionately the residents cared about where they lived.

It was agreed that the petition would be validated against the Council's Petition Scheme. Members and the lead petitioners would be informed outside of the meeting how the petition would be administered following the validation process.

91 CABINET

Minute 80 –HWTC Referral- Community Infrastructure Levy

Cllr A R Green clarified that although the resolution of Cabinet was correct, it had not been the original recommendations of the HWTC that had been referred to the Cabinet, which were subsequently changed.

Minute 84 – Major Projects Programme Review

Cllr A Collingwood sought reassurance that the Cabinet would work closely with ward Members to ensure that the plans would benefit everyone as a whole.

The Leader answered in the affirmative.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 March 2017 be received and the recommendations as set out at minute numbers 82 and 84 be approved and adopted.

92 IMPROVEMENT & REVIEW COMMISSION

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Improvement & Review Commission held on 1 March 2017 be received.

93 AUDIT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 23 March 2017 be received.

94 HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the High Wycombe Town Committee held on 7 March 2017 be received.

95 PERSONNEL & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

In the absence of the Chairman of the Committee Councillor G Hall rose to present the minutes of the meeting

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel & Development Committee held on 15 March 2017 be received and the recommendation as set out at minute number 14 be approved and adopted.

96 PLANNING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 15 February 2017 be received.

97 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

This item was withdrawn

98 QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 11.2

There were none

99 COMMITTEE CHANGES/APPOINTMENTS

The following changes made to Committee membership in accordance with Standing Order 18(9) as set out in the summons were noted.

Planning Committee

Councillor L Wood was replaced by Councillor S Raja to serve as a full Member of the Planning Committee.

Councillor S Raja was replaced by Councillor L Wood to serve as a Standing Deputy on the Planning Committee.

100 URGENT ACTION TAKEN BY CABINET OR INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER

The individual decision published since the last ordinary meeting of the Council held on 23 February 2017, as set out in the summons was noted.

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	- Senior Democratic Services Officer