

Council Minutes

Date: 9 October 2017

Time: 6.30 - 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Miss S Brown (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs J A Adey, Mrs S Adoh, K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, M C Appleyard, M Asif, D H G Barnes, S Broadbent, H Bull, D J Carroll, M Clarke, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, A D Collingwood, M P Davy, R Farmer, R Gaffney, S Graham, A R Green, G C Hall, M Harris, C B Harriss, M A Hashmi, A E Hill, A Hussain, M Hussain, M Hussain JP, D A Johncock, M E Knight, D Knights, Mrs J D Langley, A Lee, Mrs W J Mallen, N B Marshall, H L McCarthy, I L McEnnis, R Newman, Ms C J Oliver, B E Pearce, G Peart, S K Raja, R Raja, S Saddique, R J Scott, N J B Teesdale, Mrs J E Teesdale, A Turner, P R Turner, Ms J D Wassell, D M Watson, C Whitehead, L Wood and Ms K S Wood.

Also present: Honorary Aldermen: M Blanksby, P Cartwright and Mrs P Priestley.

31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Honorary Aldermen: E Collins, M Oram, Mrs K M Peatey and R Pushman. Councillors: Ms A Baughan, C Etholen, M Hanif, Mrs G A Jones, D A C Shakespeare (OBE) and R Wilson.

32 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 17 July and of Special Council held on 5 September 2017 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the inclusion of Honorary Alderman R Pushman in the list of those present on 17 July.

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that she had undertaken many engagements since the last ordinary meeting of the Council, but did not intend to list each one. Instead she highlighted the following:

- (a) Queens Awards

The Chairman gave mention to the number of Queen`s Awards being received within the district, which was the equivalent of an individual receiving an MBE. This award had recently been presented to `Drugfam` a charity supporting families with an addiction.

(b) Wycombe Sound

The Chairman expressed her delight over Wycombe Sound having been presented with The Gold Station of the Year Award.

(c) Wycombe Homeless Connection

Members were informed that Wycombe Homeless Connection had recently celebrated its 10th Anniversary and had had many success stories during this time.

35 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question from Mr R B Colomb to the Cabinet Member for Environment

“Earlier this year, travellers gained access to the old Sports Centre site at Handy Cross and managed in two weeks to deposit a great deal of rubbish on it.

Would the Cabinet Member please advise the tonnage of rubbish deposited, whether any asbestos was present and the cost to the Council of removing it and cleaning up the site?”

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

“The total amount of waste removed from Handy Cross Hub was 210 tons, of which 155 tons had to be sorted, (plus 28 fridges, 18 mattresses and some asbestos cement; the latter being the subject of specialist disposal).

The cost was. £41,000, plus approx. £2,000 for additional site security. BCC did recover evidence of where some of the waste originated and have sought to levy charges”

Supplementary Question

“If 210 tonnes or 70 truckloads came into the site how could we have not prevented the trucks getting into the site in the first place. What steps will you take in the future to prevent the re occurrence of such activity in order to protect the taxpayers of this district?”

Supplementary Response

“This matter comes under Estates, and they should be able to clarify how many trucks did come in. Also we have asked for help with this but they simply break in, and once they do it is very difficult to remove them.”

36 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

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

“The Local Plan, as recently approved by the cabinet, identifies parcels of land which may be developed to provide much needed housing in the District. The plan may well be OK as a ‘stand-alone’ development, but there is no provision for improving existing inadequate infrastructure of roads, schools or GP surgeries; as although it is understood that new development will need to make provision to meet the needs of the new residents, the plan makes it clear that existing deficits or problems will not be made good.

In the circumstances, does the Leader agree that without addressing the existing problems the new development will only put more pressure on already choking roads, school places and make the lives of the residents of WDC more stressful?”

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

“I am of course aware of the concerns of residents over infrastructure and the pressure new development can put on it. We have put great importance in the Local Plan of ensuring that infrastructure improvements that will benefit both existing and new residents will be put in place alongside the new housing. ‘Improving Strategic Connections’ and ‘Facilitating local infrastructure’ are two of the eight overarching strategic objectives identified for the Plan.

Site specific policies in the Plan and the accompanying Infrastructure Delivery Plan set out detailed plans for infrastructure investment. An Infrastructure Topic Paper will be published as part of the consultation on the Local Plan which provides a summary of the challenges and response to them.

We have worked closely with the relevant infrastructure providers to identify what is needed both now and in the future. These will include plans to improve roads, to make bus use, walking and cycling more attractive, new and expanded schools, and doctor surgeries, as well as new open space and sports facilities. I would expect all these improvements to benefit existing as well as new residents.”

Supplementary Question

“I am pleased to have these clarifications but find it hard to understand what kind of disjointed development this plan is going to deliver if, in the plan’s words, historic deficiencies are not to be tackled.

Do you not agree that having this development as a stand-alone project, it is akin to having a brand new car parked in a dilapidated forecourt, with little access to get on to the main road?”

Supplementary Response

“No I don’t agree with you. I am surprised by the question you put forward as you have been fully involved in the Local Plan discussions.”

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

“Buckinghamshire County Council are currently consulting on plans to close 14 Children’s Centres in our District. This comes after several years of services reductions and cuts to these facilities. These centres offer vital support to some of the most vulnerable young families in our District. The consultation ends on October 16th.

Is Wycombe District Council making a formal representation to the consultation?”

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

“The County Council set out the reasons for the current consultation in the report to its Cabinet meeting in July 2017. In August 2014, Ofsted noted that there were a wide range of Early Help services across Buckinghamshire but they were insufficiently co-ordinated. Since then, BCC has undertaken substantial improvements to the co-ordination of services for the most vulnerable children and families. Currently most BCC Early Help services are focused on a particular age group, a single issue or one approach. Feedback from children and families as well as local and national research has consistently shown that this is not the best approach to improve outcomes and build resilience.

Open access or poorly targeted services are not well used by those who need them most. In many cases the user base is too narrow, and there is strong evidence that overall the right children and families are not receiving the right help, early enough to make a difference. Analysis of current Children Centre service users by ACORN group shows that a disproportionate group (43%) fall within the more affluent categories (1 & 2); with only 29% falling within the bottom disadvantaged categories (4 & 5).

BCC started consultation with stakeholders in November 2016 and County-level Partnership Boards, which are attended by a variety of officers and Members, were consulted on the principle of reviewing Early Help. District representatives understood BCC’s need to offer improved, better targeted services within its budget,. The proposed model was not available then and Members are welcome to respond to the consultation as it is an online one and can only really be completed on an individual basis.”

Supplementary Question

“Yes I agree that services are more connected, but the massive change impacts on Children’s Centres and young carers. Please could you clarify whether you believe that having less centres will improve the impact of services?”

Supplementary Response

“Yes I agree that many of the individual services delivered are highly valued by their users. However we understand the County Council’s need to manage its finances responsibly and target its services to the most vulnerable who need help.

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

“I note the second part of section 1d to Policy CP7 in the draft local plan states and I quote 'investigating the strategic case for a 'London rail bypass' that links East West Rail and Cross Rail via High Wycombe and Bourne End.' Has the portfolio holder, planning department or any appropriate member or officer enquired of the appropriate Central Government Department, Agency or Authority or the Office of Rail and Road about the practicability of reinstating around five level crossings over A roads and significant commuter routes?”

Response from Councillor D Johncock (Cabinet Member for Planning)

“Thank you for the question and I appreciate the interest you have in this topic as you asked a question back in April on this subject too. Also one at the last Cabinet meeting.

Officers are working closely with the relevant agencies on this project including Network Rail and indeed one of their senior engineers attended a walk along the old alignment with officers back in June. You are quite right to say that times have moved on since the old rail line between HW and BE was last in service. If the alignment were to be reused, the intention of all parties, including Network Rail, would be to minimise or, if possible, completely avoid new level crossings. These issues and the scope for potential engineering solutions were identified by the representative of Network Rail.

If I may take the opportunity to provide an update on progress: being aware of the very real technical and cost challenges, and the potential impact on residents, before we consider detailed engineering issues by way of next steps, and informed by the expert advice of Network Rail and others, we are progressing a study to assess the strategic case and the potential economic benefits in order to judge to whether more detailed technical work should proceed to consider design and cost challenges in more detail. This study will be concluded next spring and I will ensure that Members are kept informed of progress.”

Supplementary Question

“It would be reasonable to assume that the study would be into the reopening of the permanent way between High Wycombe and Bourne End. The study ITT states that the potential to restore the link in full or in part using the old railway alignment should be reviewed. Please explain why a blight notice should not be placed on those properties which are likely to be impacted by the investigation as to the reinstatement of the High Wycombe to Bourne End rail line to link East West Rail with CrossRail for heavy rail passenger traffic and potentially a substantial quantity of freight at night?”

Supplementary Response

“Quite simply we have not yet reached the point where we can make the decision as to whether or not to proceed. It is only then that we would consider the need for what you suggest.”

(d)Question from Councillor R Scott to the Leader of the Council

“One of the Leader's key priorities is Housing; could she please update full council on progress made so far?”

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

“There have been a number of exciting developments in housing in the district recently with more due to come to fruition in the coming months/years. Some of these matters will become more widely known as and when they obtain approval from respective levels of government, be they here at WDC, or with our colleagues at DCLG and/or the Homes and Community Agency.

The largest schemes on Council owned land comprise:

- Redevelopment of Collins House, in partnership with Housing Solutions, as 52 rented apartments for young people. Legals and planning consent are close to completion.
- Development of land at Ashwells, for c.102 new homes. A planning application will be submitted shortly.

These developments will follow on from the Council facilitated Hughenden Quarter, comprising 260 new ‘independent supported living’ apartments and a 70 bed care home.

Other housing sites in the pipeline, involving Council owned land, include Abbey Barn North and the former Bassetsbury Allotments.

Applications have been made for two Homes and Communities Agency/DCLG grant funds to help us deliver additional housing on our land and to unlock development on other sites.

In August, I was pleased to hear that we have been shortlisted for the Government’s Accelerated Construction Fund for three sites, on which we aim to provide around 500 homes, including affordable housing. We await the final outcome of our application in December 2017.

The second of the two grant funds, the Housing Infrastructure Fund, is aimed at “ambitious local authorities who want to step up their plans for growth and make a meaningful difference to overall housing supply by 2021”

I can confirm that officers have recently submitted an application for two sites which could enable up to 3,200 homes to be delivered in Princes Risborough and Abbey Barn.

These schemes do not take into account any housing schemes that officers in Planning are facilitating by grant of Planning Permission on non-Council owned sites for example at the former gas works site in Lilly’s Walk.

In the meantime, we have invested £1m of our S106 Developer Contribution funds on new affordable housing in Stokenchurch, in partnership with the Buckinghamshire Housing Association, bringing 8 additional units into the social housing stock in the district in perpetuity. Officers are also currently working with Registered Providers to invest the remaining [£1m] of s106 funds for more affordable homes potentially in the district.

The Council is also working on plans to improve / enlarge its provision of temporary accommodation for the homeless. I expect to be able to make an announcement on this following November Cabinet.

Alongside all of these plans, officers are preparing for 2 major changes of legislation in housing, The Homelessness Reduction Act which is due to be enacted next April and the proposed extension of HMO licensing of which we are awaiting for an announcement from the Minister later this year.”

There was no supplementary question.

(e Question from Councillor B Pearce to the Leader of the Council

“Does the leader agree with me, that covering the High Wycombe Swan logo Crest in the front of this building with a banner is basically disloyal, disrespectful and an insult to the town of High Wycombe.

I have mentioned this to colleagues at the Council but they have said it has to go in the middle to look aesthetically correct. However, do you agree with me that any banners should be offset so that it does not cover the High Wycombe town logo?

All you can see of it at the moment is the Swan peering over the top of the Wycombe lotto banner.”

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

“We’ve had planning consent since 2009 permitting us to hang a banner on the front of the council building. If members do not wish to use this site we can look for alternatives within the Town. We use this site because we own it and feel that it is a location that catches the eye. It has the potential to save the council money as it would avoid the need to pay for other sites within High Wycombe. The most recent banner on display has been promoting Wycombe Lotto, a weekly online lottery created by the council to support local causes in the Wycombe district. (tickets for the lottery are only £1 per week, with 60% going to local good causes and prizes of up to £25,000.)

Banners are temporary and are used to promote the council’s topical campaigns or those of our partner organisation which have been funded or are supported by the council. They are rarely up for longer than six weeks at a time and there are ‘rest’ periods when there is no banner on display.

Supplementary Question

“Is there a possibility that the banner can go off centre so that it doesn’t cover the logo of High Wycombe Town.”

Supplementary Response

“This is the first complaint we have received in the last 8 years. We have no intention of causing offence and it can be looked at should Members wish to.

(f) Question from Councillor A Hashmi to the Leader of the Council

“Is the Cabinet member, with responsibility for council employees, aware that there is a clear lack of Black and Minority Ethnic People in the top ranks of the Council?”

What steps are being taken to make the employees of WDC more reflective of the population this council serves?”

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

“I will respond to this in my capacity of Chairman of the JNC Committee. The Council has a long established aim of achieving a workforce that is in balance in terms of reflecting the composition of the local community. 19% of the Wycombe District population is made up of people from ethnic minority communities and 50% women. The figures come from the 2011 census.

At the end of 2016/2017 18% of the Council’s workforce were black and ethnic minority staff. 62% of the Council’s staff are female. 8% of the Council’s workforce are people with disabilities.

63% of senior managers (the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service) are female. No senior management post is held by black and ethnic minority staff.

Recruitment & selection, staff turnover rates and learning & development activities are consistent and generally in proportion with the Council’s gender, ethnicity and age composition.

3.6% of top 5% local government earners are made up of staff from black & ethnic minority backgrounds, according to the Local Government Workforce Survey.

At March 2017 there were no black or ethnic minority staff within the top 5% of earners at WDC. However this rises to 6.5% when posts held by Interim Managers are included. 9% of senior posts are held by people from black & ethnic minority backgrounds.

WDC’s workforce profile is consistent with that of the wider local government sector.

Actions being taken include: -

- Continuing to regularly monitor the workforce, recruitment & selection outcomes, turnover etc.
- Conducting Equality Impact Assessments for HR policies & procedures

- Achieving the “disability confident award”
- Equalities training for new and existing employees
- Holding an annual equality & diversity awareness event.
- Introduced mentoring scheme to support career development
- Approved Qualification Scheme to support the development of professional qualifications.
- Recruitment and selection training for those involved in recruiting new staff.”

There was no supplementary question.

(g)Question from Councillor K Ahmed to the Leader of the Council

“Bucks County Council propose to replace all its children’s centres and other support for children and young people with a programme to be run from 9 “hubs”. The staff of the “hubs” will interview vulnerable children, young people and their families in the families’ homes, local cafes and libraries.

[One of the 10 children’s centres located within the Wycombe district is in Disraeli, my ward. Another is in the leaders ward.]

At the same time, BCC is cutting the budget for these services by £3.3 million. More savings will come from selling or leasing the buildings currently used by the children’s centres. All this to be implemented by next spring.

These proposals will put our vulnerable children and young people even more at risk from abuse, neglect, and ill health.

These proposals are ill-considered and unprofessional.

Does the Leader agree that the proposals to discuss sensitive issues like disabilities, contraception, or criminal activity in a public places is a flagrant disregard for the right of privacy for our vulnerable children and young people?”

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

“Of course I would agree that it is inappropriate to discuss highly sensitive, personal matters in cafes but the Early Help consultation being run by BCC proposes a range of possible options. The coffee shop example given says informal settings can be preferred by families that BCC has worked with, who feel more able to have an open and honest conversation in a relaxed environment, creating a better relationship between the individual and the worker.

In any case there will be nine Early Help bases, located in the areas where Early Help is needed the most. The Early Help bases will provide targeted support. Families will be invited to activities or one to one support and these bases will be used to offer group sessions such as parenting courses and partner led sessions (for example, breastfeeding support run by health visitors) for those who need this support. Other group sessions may be run in other community settings, such as schools or village halls, depending on the demand.

It is clear that the proposed Early Help Model offers a range of solutions and that the coffee shop is an example of one way of accessing one service if the service user prefers it.”

Supplementary Question

“These proposals are based on the belief that resident should take responsibility for meeting their own needs. It’s ridiculous to expect a 5 year old in trouble to be able to do so. They want people to be aspirational and not dependent, which I find disgraceful given the circumstances in which people may find themselves in.

Supplementary Response

“I think the expectation is for the parents of the 5 year old to be responsible for their own needs. In terms of discussing sensitive issues in public, as I made it clear to you in my original answer, a wide variety of settings and solutions have been offered. Coffee shops are not the only offering.”

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

“Since housing and social housing in particular, is an important concern for a lot of people, mainly due to the policies of the Tory government, young people in particular are unable to have a foot on the housing ladder.

Would the Cabinet member for Housing like to tell us how many homes have been added to the local housing stock by red Kite, since it inherited the 6,000 homes from WDC in 2012? “

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

“I don’t agree with you in your first paragraph, and as Cllr Graham is no doubt aware, Red Kite are neither owned, managed nor governed by Wycombe District Council as such, we have no control over their development programme. They have provided at least 9 additional homes as part of their sheltered housing bedsit and warden accommodation conversion programme.”

Supplementary Question

“I want to ask whether you believe this is a good policy, whereby you are making many young people homeless. Does the Cabinet Member not feel that the Council and Red Kite have a responsibility to build much needed homes?”

Supplementary Response

“The District Council have no control over how Red Kite conducts its business. Other housing providers have provided around 460 additional affordable homes in the district since the stock transfer to Red Kite took place in December 2011.” I would like to point out that there is a Housing Seminar scheduled to take place on 31 October, and I would encourage as many Members as possible to attend.

Questions 9-11 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.

37 PETITIONS

No petitions were received by the deadline of 5pm on Monday 2 October 2017

38 CABINET

Minute 24 – New Wycombe District Local plan, Little Marlow Lakes Country Park

A Member expressed her delight over the delivery of the country park, and felt that this was long overdue. She felt that this would become the `Jewel in the crown` of the area.

Councillor M Appleyard wished to have his opposition recorded to the Local Plan with respect to Bourne End.

Minute 29 – Digital First

A Member requested that I.T implementation be successfully made available to Councillors prior to extending the programme.

In response, it was acknowledged that some initial teething problems had occurred and that they were being worked upon as quickly as possible.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Cabinet held on 18 September 2017 be received and the recommendations as set out at minute numbers 24, 32, 33 and 34 be approved and adopted.

39 IMPROVEMENT & REVIEW COMMISSION

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement & Review Commission held on 13 September 2017 be received.

40 AUDIT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 21 September 2017 be received and the

recommendation as set out at minute number 20 be approved and adopted.

41 HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE

Minute 14- Public Spaces Protection Order Consultation Update

A Member requested further information with regard to the proposed gates at a cost of £3,500 and its recommendation to Cabinet. She was informed that this was a matter for determination by the relevant Cabinet Member and not for the High Wycombe Town Committee.

Minute 15 – Town Centre Masterplan Consultation

A Member expressed her concern over the presentation which had taken place as it lacked much information and detail, in particular regarding the issue of informal crossings. She enquired as to whether a further presentation was likely to be conducted, covering relevant issues.

The Chairman of the Committee stated that he shared her concerns over the proposals, and he very much hoped that another presentation would take place, although from his experience the Town Committee`s requests and suggestions were often ignored.

Another Member questioned the intentions of the County Council with regard to the Taxi rank on the high street. It was hoped that this matter would also be addressed at a future presentation.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the High Wycombe Town Committee held on 3 October 2017 be received.

42 JNC STAFFING MATTERS COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the JNC Staffing Matters Committee held on 18 and 28 September be received, and the recommendation as set out at minute number 23 be approved and adopted.

43 PERSONNEL & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Special meeting of the Personnel & Development Committee held on 4 October 2017 be received and the recommendation as set out at minute numbers 21 and 23 be approved and adopted.

44 PLANNING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 28 June, 26 July and 23 August be received.

45 REGULATORY & APPEALS COMMITTEE

In the absence of the Chairman the Vice Chairman of the Committee Councillor Mrs L Clarke rose to present the minutes of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory & Appeals Committee held on 24 July 2017 be received.

46 QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 11.2

There were none

47 COMMITTEE CHANGES/APPOINTMENTS

The following change made to the membership of an outside body in accordance with Standing Order 18(9) as set out in the summons was noted.

Councillor Z Ahmed was replaced by Councillor D Carroll to serve on the Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe Joint Waste Collection Committee until May 2018.

48 URGENT ACTION TAKEN BY CABINET OR INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER

The individual decisions published since the last ordinary meeting of the Council held on 17 July 2017, as set out in the summons were noted.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Karen Satterford - Chief Executive
Iram Malik - Democratic Services