WYCOMBE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Minutes

Date: 16 April 2018

Time: 6.30 - 8.44 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Miss S Brown (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs J A Adey, K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, D H G Barnes, Ms A Baughan, S Broadbent, H Bull, D J Carroll, M Clarke, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, A D Collingwood, C Etholen, R Farmer, S Graham, A R Green, G C Hall, M Hanif, M Harris, C B Harriss, M A Hashmi, A E Hill, A Hussain, M Hussain JP, D A Johncock, Mrs G A Jones, M E Knight, D Knights, Mrs J D Langley, A Lee, Mrs W J Mallen, N B Marshall, H L McCarthy, I L McEnnis, R Newman, Ms C J Oliver, B E Pearce, S K Raja, R Raja, J A Savage, 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: P Cartwright, Mrs P Priestley and R Pushman.

20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Honorary Aldermen: M Oram and Mrs K M Peatey. Councillors: S Adoh, M Asif, R Gaffney, Maz Hussain, G Peart, S Saddique and R Wilson.

21 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22 February 2018 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

23 CHAIRMAN`S ANNOUNCEMENT

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) Chiltern Ranger Scrub Bash

This had taken place on 23 February, and had been the source of much fun helping to tidy up by cutting and removing unwanted shrubs.

(b) Church Service Chesham

The Chairman had attended the BCC church service to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the RAF. This was followed by a parade, and was also attended by Mayors, Chairmen, High Sheriffs, and the RAF.

24 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(a)Question from Mr R B Colomb to the Leader of the Council

"In light of the Secretary of State indicating that he is minded to approve a single Unitary Authority for Buckinghamshire, I would assume that the Leader has had a considerable number of meetings with the other District Council Leaders, who all support the twin Unitary Authorities approach as a more effective option since the Secretary of State's announcement. Have they agreed to appoint professional expertise to put the case to the Secretary of State and also devised a plan to galvanise local taxpayers to lobby the Secretary of State in support of the twin approach during the consultation period, which I believe ends on 26 May 2018"?

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

"Yes, we have. Just to clarify the consultation actually ends on 25 May.

We have put in place an approach which fights this decision on a number of fronts. One is to raise public awareness about the decision and to highlight the serious consequences for communities across Buckinghamshire who will lose representation and in return could see further Council tax rises at both parish and unitary level.

We are also challenging the basis of the decision; the secretary of state has not set out the reasons for his decision and we have written requesting an explanation. We do not believe that the representation period should start until we have been provided with this information.

For example the Minister says that there is local support for a single unitary but that is simply not evidenced – four out of the five councils support two; more parish councils support two; more residents support two. In fact the only area where the majority support a single unitary is MPs. I would therefore urge as many residents as possible to write to their MP and let them know how residents of Buckinghamshire feel and help them to see how damaging it will be if this decision is allowed to go ahead.

Residents in this area know what kind of service they have received from the County Council. They know that Ofsted has judged the services to our vulnerable children to be inadequate not once but twice; that the roads in this County have been allowed to deteriorate to a dangerous level; that the cost of providing adult social care has been allowed to spiral out of control and they have no faith that a

single new council forced to operate across the wrong geography and to work against the communities it seeks to serve will be any different

We urge residents in Wycombe District not to remain silent and accept this but to speak out and make their voice heard."

Supplementary Question

"It would be helpful to High Wycombe residents if you could send more information regarding services, and the likely financial effects of the single unitary Council. In other words, in an unparished town there will be a requirement to establish a Town Council, to which there will be a significant cost.

I feel if they are provided with the necessary information it will make lobbying more effective."

Supplementary Response

"We are sending leaflets to all households in the southern districts of Buckinghamshire which contains the information on all business cases and also with relevant links to WDC and the County. So in answer to your question, we are in the process of doing just that."

25 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

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

"The initial decision of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for the future of Buckinghamshire under a unitary system of local government is potentially devastating for WDC residents.

Is the leader of the Council happy with her own inept and weak advocacy of a two unitary option for Bucks?"

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

"I'm sorry but I must have missed the letters the Labour group has had published in the Bucks Free Press advocating two options; the public meetings and the invitations to stakeholders; the publicity of any kind from the opposition denouncing this decision and I have not been copied into the representations your group has made to the Minister. My group, is talking to government and we are working with the District Councils Network, and talking to other authorities who are also affected. We are talking to the press, to local stakeholders and are communicating with our community through published and social media. You can use this situation to waste time and snipe at me or you can follow my example and that of my group and do everything we can to fight this, and get the right decision that our residents deserve."

Supplementary Question

"The Leader cannot absolve herself from taking responsibility for this debacle. You did your best but it was not good enough, so you should consider your position and resign letting another leadership team take us further."

Supplementary Response

"No need to do that, I am happy with the way this has been led and am satisfied we are doing our utmost to fight this."

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

"This is what some residents of the Wycombe District said to me about the recent increase in Council Tax.

"Increase in Council Tax but decrease in services. How is that fair?"

"I personally would rather a 1% increase every year than a 6% rise out of the blue."

"I have big increases this year on my bill. I am a single mother who works but struggle to pay and have fallen behind year in year out. Yet again I'm going to fall behind and they will charge me more. I will never be free."

As Leader of the tax collecting authority how would you respond to these comments?"

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

"Thank you Cllr Knight for your question.

As you know as the billing authority we act on behalf of the County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Fire and Rescue Authority, Parish Councils and the District Council.

The charge for the services delivered by the District Council only makes up 8% of a typical bill for High Wycombe Town residents. The largest charge is set by the County Council at 76% of the bill, the Police and Crime Commissioner precept is

11% of the bill and the amount for the Fire and Rescue Authority is 4%. The remaining 1% is for the Charter Trustees and HWTC.

Over the last 7 years the Wycombe charge has increased by only £10, compared to the increase of £213.30 by Bucks County Council over the same period.

I am pleased to say that with prudent financial management Wycombe DC's charge of £182.14 for a band D property is the lowest in Bucks and one of the lowest in the country.

I would remind you of the following points made by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources in his budget speech in February. There are no reductions in front line services planned, we are continuing to invest in the District to remain economically strong and vibrant, we continue to develop and improve on line access to council services and we are planning to deliver a sustainable future for many years to come.

The Council supports residents in greatest need through its Council Tax Reduction scheme, which currently helps 7,600 residents by reducing the amount of council tax they have to pay. There are currently no plans to change the support we give to these residents and if in future any changes are proposed then these will be consulted on with local residents. In addition to this in the last financial year an extra £60,000 in discretionary payments were made to provide additional support to 50 residents.

When approached by customers whose income takes them outside this scheme, but are finding it difficult to meet the cost, our officers are working with them to come to an arrangement to pay. Last year we helped 12,000 customers by spreading instalments over 12 months as opposed to the traditional 10 to reduce their monthly expenditure. We also work closely with CAB to support those in need of extra help.

Supplementary Question

"I would like to place on record my appreciation to the Benefits team who do much to support people in difficulty. It would be helpful if residents` lives were made easier if billing was made clearer, and they were also informed of the support that is available. Can we better inform our residents?"

Supplementary Response

"I can look into that. I agree that the information can be confusing, and so will see if the information can be presented differently to make it easier to understand."

c)Question from Councillor M Hanif to the Leader of the Council

"In December 2016 several social care services, including Bucks Care, were brought back in house, after the County Council said it "lost confidence" in the care provider.

Bucks County Council has now been accused of “not learning lessons” after it announced plans to cancel its contract with Bucks Learning Trust and bring the service back into the council offices.

I’m sure members here will agree with me that things in this local authority are not that squeaky clean either. Can the members be reassured that we have learned lessons from some of our ill-conceived practices and safeguards are now in place to avoid the misuse of public funds?”

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

“You are right that the County Council has had to bring back in house a number of outsourced services which have failed to deliver the savings and service that were promised. That has not been the experience of this Council. I have previously outlined our successes in response to a previous question from Councillor Knight and I say again

We have had significant success in outsourcing for example our Leisure Service arrangements have achieved a significant increase in the number of people using Leisure facilities which makes a real difference to people’s health and life expectancy. There are also high levels of customer satisfaction with that service. There is a long list of successful arrangements such as Chiltern Rangers and Sports Development which have expanded since they have been outsourced to create jobs and provide more services. Outsourcing is not always a bad thing but it must be done with the goal of providing improved and enhanced services rather than just as a money saving exercise.”

Supplementary Question

“Can you give examples of the poor decisions that have been made and the safeguards that have been put into place?”

Supplementary Response

“ No I can`t. We haven’t made any poor decisions.”

(d)Question from Councillor Abdullah Hashmi to the Cabinet Member for Youth & External Partnerships

“In 2015 the Leader made a big point of appointing a dedicated Cabinet Member for Youth, can we be told as to what this appointment has achieved in improving youth provision or addressing issues faced by the young & unemployed in the District?”

Response from Councillor D Carroll (Cabinet Member for Youth & External Partnerships)

When I was appointed to the role I was informed that it was a very interesting role, but that there was no extra money available to carry out the job in hand. I can

summarise for you the actions that have been taken since taking up this appointment.

Youth Action Plan

- Captures and monitors youth provision across all council service areas and is refreshed/ presented to SMB and LSB quarterly.

Wycombe Youth Services Partnership

- Forum and action meetings held 3 times a year.
- Over 50 members from organisations in and around the district.

Youth Council

- New Wycombe Youth Council project led by Wycombe Youth Action who are currently engaging with Schools. First meeting to be held in June.

Youth Safety

- Committed to develop a jointly funded initiative with Thames Valley Police to ensure young people have a voice on their concerns about crime and their safety within the District.

Mentoring Project

It is hoped that this will steer young people away from a life of crime and bring into employment.

- £60,000 budget in18/19 budget for a project to provide 1-2-1 mentoring for at risk young people who may be on the fringes of gangs, criminal activity or ASB.

Bucks Fire and Rescue

The Cabinet Member emphasised the apprenticeships scheme which was considered to be invaluable. And felt that the Council was going forward in the right way.

- Agreed a partnership approach to align with the mentoring project, to build on the BFRS's highly commended training with young people.

Supplementary Question

"I`m not aware of any improvements which have been made to the youth in Wycombe. Whatever happened to the Youth Council and what has it achieved?"

Supplementary Response

"It takes time to set this up and ensure that you put the right people into place to represent young people."

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

"There has been a real escalation in our Ward of dog fouling on pavements and green areas as well as open gardens.

The Penalty Notices, though a good idea are difficult to administer without proof.

The Dog Warden is extremely hard working and always responds quickly to requests to visit the area and phone calls.

With summer on its way, this situation will get worse and poses a risk to children and vulnerable people's health and is generally really unpleasant.

What can be done about this situation as it is a District wide problem?"

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

"The Dog Warden service does indeed continue to receive some complaints about dog fouling and it appears a number of recalcitrant dog owners fail to heed the health education message to pick up after their dog. The Dog Warden responds to all complaints and can informally contact any dog owners that are thought not to picking up after their dog, either personally or by letter. The Dog Warden can also erect either permanent signs to raise awareness in a particular area or larger temporary signs again to raise awareness.

The Council has made Orders that make it an offence to fail to pick up after a dog in most public places in the district. Failure to comply with this requirement can lead to a £50 fixed penalty notice or court proceedings where the maximum fine is £1,000. A fixed penalty notice can only be issued when the Council has sufficient evidence to do this. Whilst the Dog Warden does routinely patrol the district, either our priority areas or in response to complaints these are obviously limited in time and catching offenders is difficult. Fouling often takes place in areas that are not overlooked or in times of darkness.

The Dog Warden service can serve fixed penalty notices based on the evidence of any individual and in the past these have been issued on the basis of evidence from members of the public. All they need to do is complete a witness statement form that our Officers can assist with. We do require the address of the person who has failed to comply with the requirements which is not usually a problem if they are a neighbour but we can also trace owners through car registration details if they are seen using a vehicle.

The Council has run a number of health education campaigns over the years to try and increase compliance with the legislation and to ensure a clean environment for all and these are supplemented by national campaigns run by others. The Council still offers free poop scoops at its tourist information centres to encourage and assist owners in picking up their dog waste. We encourage members of the public to make complaints about dog fouling to the Dog Warden service so these can either be followed up informally or if the public are prepared to give evidence these will be followed up formally. If the situation is very bad then a request to the Waste Team to clean up can also me be made. People are urged to be vigilant."

Supplementary Question

This is useful information. Please could you ask the education campaigner to make contact with me, as I would like to pass on the information through the library?"

Supplementary Response

"Yes of course."

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

"During the recent Great British Springtime litter picking events, large areas of litter were cleared around East Wycombe.

It was apparent that some of these areas would benefit from having a litter bin in the vicinity.

Could the Cabinet Member advise myself and residents of the process for obtaining these bins?"

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

"Please contact the waste team directly if you want extra bins or if there are areas that you think would benefit from having a litter bin installed. We will then look into the request, which will include monitoring the cleanliness of the area, looking at the current frequency of litter picking and the location of any other litter bins in the area. There is often a fine balance between increasing the amount of street furniture and ensuring that residents have facilities for disposing of their litter, in busy locations such as near shop frontages for example but we are always happy to look into suggestions."

Supplementary Question

"I have just used £450 of my ward budget to purchase one. The cost of bins is enormous and some are damaged or taken away. We need to prioritise where they are placed and I am happy to provide suggestions as to where these should go."

Supplementary Response

"Yes, let me know of specific locations and I will look into the matter."

(g)Question from Councillor S Graham to the Leader of the Council

"In view of the fact that we are going to have a unitary system of local government. Would the Leader accept that it is high time for a feasibility study about the formation of a Town Council with the necessary powers to deliver the essential services to the local residents?"

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

“If there is a change to single tier government then it will be up to the new Council to decide whether or not to carry out a Community Governance Review. But Councillor Graham should seek advice about the difference between a ‘minded to’ announcement and a decision. We are yet to see what the decision of the Minister will be. Right now my focus is on ensuring we achieve the best outcome for all our residents not just those in High Wycombe and for that we need to ensure that the Minister makes the right decision.”

Supplementary Question

“Would you be prepared to support a town council for High Wycombe regardless of whether or not we were a unitary council?”

Supplementary Response

“I would be keen to protect the history and preserve this town. However it will be up to the new board appointed by the new unitary council to decide on the matter.”

(h)Question from Councillor K Ahmed to the Cabinet Member for Housing

“It was reported in the Bucks Free Press and read out in the budget report at last council that Wycombe District Council was recently awarded £273,000 to tackle homelessness.

It was stated that this would be split into payments of £40,000 each year for the next three years.

This comes to £120,000, for the three years; to help us understand would you please say how the £120,000 is to be spent and what is to happen to the balance?”

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

"You are correct WDC has received funding. I am pleased that our conservative government has recognised the requirement of the funding, acknowledging the work that has to be done to prevent and relieve homelessness.

The funding will be used to fund an additional post in the housing options team to continue with the excellent work so far to prevent and relieve homelessness and also to meet our new duties as per the homelessness reduction act which will create a lot of admin work for officers and responsibilities for applicants.

It is also vital that we continue with our prevention and relief work. The additional funding payable annually is being used to employ additional officers in the service to increase our prevention and relief work, as well as to help single people access housing in partnership with Wycombe rent deposit guarantee scheme."

Supplementary Question

"I am pleased that more officers will be employed in this field, but I haven't spotted any adverts on the website.

Supplementary Response

"The funding is ring fenced for homeless prevention and cannot be used for other purposed any unspent balance will be carried forward to further years.

Yes homelessness is a problem in Wycombe but is well managed and again with the exceptional work of the officers numbers are small when compared nationally. We certainly do a great deal to help and this is reflected in the numbers.

I urge Members to attend a seminar on Wednesday on the Homelessness Reduction Act which will provide an insight into the complexities of the Act and an update on HMO`s. I will ensure that slides are sent to those who cannot attend and am happy to arrange a meeting with myself and Brian if necessary."

(i)Question from Councillor M Hanif to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration

"Last year travellers left mountains of rubbish on former sports centre site of Marlow Hill and WDC had to fork out £41000 to remove tonnes of waste.

We read this week that travellers have moved a bit upmarket this year and they have set up camp opposite an upmarket Marlow health club. I'm sure the members would like to know what lessons were learned from previous incidents and the safeguards that were put in place as a result to avoid waste of more public funds in the clear up operations"

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor S Broadbent (Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Regeneration).

"I confirm the Council undertook a vacant sites inspection before Easter (when the risk of travellers incursion is high), to ensure their security, as far as is possible. The Globe Park incident was not comparable to the Handy X Hub flying tipping saga. The Council's development partner, Travelodge, had been instructed to make the site secure, pending their redevelopment, but failed to make it sufficiently defensible (complicated by a shared access road). They will pick up costs, which in this instance look to be relatively small scale, the travellers having now moved on to another site under private ownership."

Supplementary Question

"What was the total cost of clearing up after travellers in last year?"

Supplementary Response

"I don`t have the figures to hand on the cost of waste removal clearance. However I would like to give mention to the survey monkey link in order to respond to consultations is: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/NW6G3YD. Reference sites to find out more can be viewed at https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-review-powers-to-deal-with-unauthorised-caravan-sites https://www.hcegroup.co.uk/2018/04/09/traveller-consultation/"

Questions 10-11 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.

26 PETITIONS

No petitions were received by the deadline of Monday 9 April 2018.

27 MODERNISING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A report was submitted which requested that delegated power be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader over the wording of the representations to be made to Government regarding the `minded to` decision on modernising Local Government. The report also sought agreement for a contribution of funds to be allocated towards awareness raising amongst interested parties regards the opportunity to make representations. In addition it was proposed that a member group on MLG be re-established to oversee the processes above.

The proposed decision for consideration before Council had also been considered at the Special Cabinet meeting immediately prior to this meeting where Members had approved the proposals detailed within the report.

The Leader rose to present the item, and commenced by providing a brief summary of the background. She stated that on 12 March the Secretary of State had announced his “minded to” decision to replace the existing 5 councils in Bucks with a single county wide unitary subject to parliamentary approval. This decision she emphasised was not set in stone, and that the 4 district councils in Bucks were making the strongest possible representations against this decision, prior to 25 May whereby interested parties could make further representations to the Secretary of State.

The Leader went on to explain that she wished to secure the best possible outcomes for the residents of the district, and that in collaboration with the other 3 district councils concerned had jointly procured legal advice regarding the published decision. She also emphasised that the legal advice had made it clear that the Council had a responsibility to ensure that residents and others were aware of the opportunity to make representations. For this purpose, she was seeking to allocate some resources from the Contingency Fund and she also referred to the leaflet that had been distributed to all households in the southern districts of Buckinghamshire. Residents in the northern district of Buckinghamshire would receive the leaflet electronically.

In her closing remarks she gave mention to the fact that the Government`s proposals would give rise to the biggest change in Local Government in Bucks for over 40 years which would affect the way that local services were provided for residents. It was vital therefore that residents, businesses, public services organisations, community and voluntary groups and charities were made aware of the consequences and given the opportunity until 25 May to put forward their view to the Government. She reiterated that the 4 District Councils did not believe that a single county unitary was in the best interests of those affected.

The Leader subsequently opened up the debate to Members. A number of points were raised.

One Member rose to express the view that the County`s proposals would create local hubs replicating the current system but lacking the democracy, and disregarding the current track record of accountability. As such he did not consider this a good way forward, and strongly supported the Leader`s comments/arguments.
In addition, comments were made during the debate about how the Minister’s proposal for a single unitary was not in accordance with localism, and that 2 unitary councils for Buckinghamshire would provide better services, be more ‘localised’, giving the community a greater say on how services could be run, and be the best results for the residents of Wycombe. It was highlighted that this Council had previously agreed that the 2 unitary model was the correct decision, and that the Council should do everything it could to communicate that message into the community to ensure as many representations are made to that effect as possible the point was also made that there was indeed consensus, in that the 4 District

Councils were all in agreement that the 2 unitary model was the way to go, and that it was the County who were not in agreement. It was emphasised that the rationale and the reasoning of the Minister's 'minded to' decision should therefore be questioned and challenged in great detail.

Another Member stated that whilst he supported the 2 unitary approach providing accessibility and accountability the amount already spent was appalling, and that services should not be bought in but resolved in house.

In sharp contrast to the views previously put forward, another Member considered that a single unitary super council would deliver services most effectively massively increasing efficiency and also providing the economies of scale benefiting all concerned and saving millions of pounds of taxpayer`s money during a time of severe financial pressure.

Further comments made suggested that the 2 unitary approach would prove the best option for residents, the economy and for the future prosperity of the district. Therefore there was a need to get the public on side thereby creating the opportunity and possibility to having the "minded to" decision changed.

Following some considerable debate it was

RESOLVED: That

(i) the wording of the representations to be made to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government in relation to his 'minded to' decision on single tier arrangements for Buckinghamshire be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader;

(ii) an allocation from the corporate contingency as reasonably necessary be made to contribute towards the four District Councils duty to raise awareness amongst residents and organisations in the District about the opportunity to make representations; and

(iii) a Member group on Modernising Local Government be re-established to act as a consultative body on the wording of representations and awareness raising activity.

28 CABINET

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12 March 2018 be received, and the recommendations as set out at minute number 76 be approved and adopted.

29 CABINET

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16 April be received, and the recommendations as set out at minute number 86 be approved and adopted.

30 STANDARDS COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 20 March 2018 be received.

31 IMPROVEMENT & REVIEW COMMISSION

In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice- Chairman of the Committee rose to present the minutes.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement & Review Commission held on 14 March 2018 be received.

32 JNC STAFFING MATTERS COMMITTEE

It was noted that minute number 28 was a 'resolved' item and not 'recommended' as had been set out.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the JNC Staffing matters Committee held on 22 February 2018 be received.

33 LICENSING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 28 March 2018 be received.

34 PERSONNEL & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel & Development Committee held on 5 March 2018 be received.

35 PLANNING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 14 February and 7 March be received.

36 ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER - DELEGATION OF POWERS

A report was considered which requested that the Head of Democratic, Legal & Policy Services and the Democratic Services Manager be appointed Deputy Electoral Registration officers and that the constitution be updated accordingly.

The report stated that currently the responsibilities for the discharge of duties relating to the registration of electors lay with the Chief Executive in her capacity of Electoral Registration Officer (ERO). However recent guidance issued by the Electoral Commission had suggested that the ERO should ensure that deputy arrangements were put into place in the event that they were unable to act personally in certain circumstances.

> **RESOLVED:** That the Head of Democratic, Legal & Policy Services and the Democratic Services Manager be appointed Deputy Electoral Registration Officers and the Constitution be updated accordingly.

37 NOTICE OF MOTION

The following notice of motion was submitted and proposed by Councillor Mrs L M Clarke (OBE) and seconded by Councillor Miss K Wood.

"**This Council agrees that the High Wycombe Town Committee can be granted delegated powers to take decisions in relation to non-executive matters where those delegations are approved by Council; and that the attendance of the Leader of the Council or the Deputy Leader, in their absence, be welcomed at meetings of the High Wycombe Town Committee where any executive decision is proposed."**

In proposing and seconding the motion both Members wished to reserve their right to speak until they had heard the rest of the debate from amongst the floor. Members of the Council gave their views and opinions relating to the motion under consideration.

Some felt that this was a step in the right direction, contributing to an increase of power and authority of the High Wycombe Town Committee. Other Members felt that this was too little too late, and questioned both the timing and the motives behind the proposals. The motion was also criticised for having been brought forward to council without first consulting with the residents concerned, thereby affording them the opportunity to express how they wished to be governed.

In seconding the motion, the Leader stated that she had been very conscious of the issues surrounding the role of the Committee and had sought ways of how this could be improved. She explained about the timing of the planned changes, and that it would have been considered earlier within the proposed constitutional review, but that this had been subsequently put on hold in the light of the Secretary of State`s announcement on Modernising Local government.
Councillor Mrs L M Clarke (OBE) following the comments addressed the Council, and stated that she was pleased to propose the motion and acknowledged that the Leader was now taking a personal interest in the

workings of the Town Committee. She reminded Members as to the objective of the motion, which in essence was to formalise the powers of the Committee, primarily through the provision of non-executive powers similar to that of a town council, and a voice of residents of an unparished area. In addition it would make the executive aware of precept calculations. It was emphasised that the motion would also help to protect the charter Mayor`s position.

The proposer closed her comments by stating that she commended that the Town Committee continue with the proposed powers for deciding non- executive matters as its members gave exceptional value for money to the residents of the area. She reminded Members that the establishment of a town or parish council would be a costly affair for residents, putting up the precepts considerably.

Following summing up by the proposer of the motion, and upon it being put to the vote, the Chairman declared the Motion carried as a result of more than half of those Members present voting in favour of the Motion.

RESOLVED: That

"This Council agrees that the High Wycombe Town Committee can be granted delegated powers to take decisions in relation to non-executive matters where those delegations are approved by Council; and that the attendance of the Leader of the Council or the Deputy Leader, in their absence, be welcomed at meetings of the High Wycombe Town Committee where any executive decision is proposed."

38 QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 11.2

There were none.

39 COMMITTEE CHANGES/APPOINTMENTS

This item was withdrawn.

40 URGENT ACTION TAKEN BY CABINET OR INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER

The urgent action taken by Cabinet or individual Cabinet Member as set out in the summons was noted.

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Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Ian Hunt	-	Democratic Services Manager
Iram Malik	-	Democratic Services Officer
Karen Satterford	-	Chief Executive