

Council Minutes

Date: 1 April 2019

Time: 6.30 - 8.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor A R Green (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs J A Adey, Mrs S Adoh, K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, M C Appleyard, M Asif, D H G Barnes, Ms A Baughan, S Broadbent, Miss S Brown, D J Carroll, M Clarke, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, A D Collingwood, C Etholen, R Farmer, R Gaffney, S Graham, G C Hall, M Harris, C B Harriss, A E Hill, A Hussain, M Hussain, M Hussain JP, D A Johncock, Mrs G A Jones, M E Knight, D Knights, Mrs J D Langley, A Lee, Mrs W J Mallen, N B Marshall, H L McCarthy, I L McEnnis, Ms C J Oliver, B E Pearce, G Peart, S K Raja, R Raja, S Saddique, J A Savage, 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 and Ms K S Wood

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M P Davy, M Hanif, M A Hashmi, R J Scott, C Whitehead, R Wilson and L Wood and Honorary Aldermen E Collins, Mrs K Peatey, Mrs P Priestley and R Pushman.

96 MINUTES SILENCE

The Chairman requested, and the meeting held a minute's silence in respect of a number of recent tragic events:

- The deaths of local young people: Libby Squire and Joel Langford
- The massacre of innocent worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand; and
- The victims of the Tram attacks in Utrecht, Netherlands.

97 FILMING OF THE MEETING

The Chairman announced that notification had been received that a member of the public wished to film the meeting and he outlined the principles around filming/recording in the meeting.

98 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21 February 2019 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman with an amendment agreed by the Meeting; in that under Minute 93 'Extension Works to Court Garden Leisure Complex – Procurement Process' third paragraph '**selling** competitive tenders' to be corrected to '**seeking**'.

99 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

100 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman updated the Meeting on his activities since the last Council meeting, he had:

- attended receptions at South Bucks and Chiltern District Councils;
- attended the evening with Ross Brawn (the Formula One Team Boss) in aid of the High Wycombe Mayor's appeal;
- met with the Toolshed-Bucks and Wycombe Youth Action organisations;
- attended the Change of Command event at RAF High Wycombe, welcoming in the new Station Commander;
- taken part in the HWBidCo street clean in the High Street last Friday ; and
- attended the Royal British Legion Cadets Awards event at Aylesbury.

101 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

a) Question from Honorary Alderman P Cartwright to the Cabinet Member for Community.

On Tuesday 26 February before 9 p.m. I and others were refused another drink in the Falcon P.H as they were closing on police advice because travellers were in town and there was possible disturbance. We left and were potentially at risk in the street if there were a disturbance.

Thames Valley Police deny responsibility and state that Town Centre CCTV were informed "who it appears made the decision via the PubWatch radio network requesting places to close".

I assume that the WDC Licensing Officers were informed.

To whom is Town Centre CCTV accountable?

Verbal reply given by Councillor G Peart (Cabinet Member for Community).

Thanks for your question, I am troubled that your time of conviviality in the Falcon was cut short!

The town centre CCTV is managed by Wycombe District Council. The Pub Watch radio system referred to is an open channel for all members of the scheme and is managed by HWBiDCo, our CCTV control room also have a handset and many of the communications are primarily responded to by our operators. However on the evening of 26 February, the Police have now confirmed that they were the ones that gave a message over the Pub Watch radio system advising that Butlers Public House were closing and recommending that other premises did so as well.

Supplementary Question

I am glad the Cabinet Member has clarified, I was surprised on 5 March when the Thames Valley Police Deputy Commander stated he had not advised us to close. Before the Police make such statements they should be more careful.

Should there not be a protocol in place, given that tragic events like those the Chairman has just referred to in Christchurch and Utrecht, could occur here?

Supplementary Response

There is a protocol, the CCTV operators do not have the power to close pubs. The CCTV is a useful channel if there is an issue, the protocol is used to distribute information in such events.

b) Question from Mr R Colomb to the Leader of the Council.

At the last Council Meeting Cllr Khalil Ahmed presented a petition requesting a Community Governance Review to ascertain whether a Town Council should be set up to cover the unparished area of Wycombe District. In his lengthy introduction he stated that he believed that a Town Council could be established and run at no extra expense to the taxpayer residents of High Wycombe and he severely criticised two senior Councillors who had been distributing leaflets setting out the likely costs by identifying the precepts charged by the existing Town Councils in Buckinghamshire, which are of course very considerably in excess of the modest charges of the High Wycombe Town Committee's Special Expenses.

Would you agree that Cllr Ahmed was disingenuous and misled the Council Meeting about the likely financial costs of a Town Council in High Wycombe to the hard pressed taxpayers?

Verbal reply given by Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council).

Thank you for your question Mr Colomb.

I believe that your question relates to assurances that were given by Councillor Ahmed at the last meeting of Council. I should make it clear that no decision has been made to establish a town council but if that is the outcome of the review and a council had to be established it is certainly true that a town council of the size of High Wycombe would require officer support and therefore would have some overheads. These costs would usually be met by a tax levy such as Council tax.

It is true that some revenue can be generated in other ways, particularly by the use of certain local assets. These assets however currently belong to this authority and will transfer to the new Buckinghamshire unitary. It will be a matter for the new Council as to whether it chooses to transfer those assets to a town council to offset the tax burden on local tax payers but if it does choose to do this it will require extra services to be taken on in return, which will in turn have their own cost.

It has to be recognised that with all Councils, and particularly those with the challenges of the range of services of the new Council which include social care,

there will be limited scope for relinquishing income. I certainly agree that an increase in taxes for local residents is almost certain backed up by the increases seen in other areas where this has happened such as Aylesbury, Kidderminster and Salisbury.

A consultation exercise will be undertaken later in the year as part of the review and this will provide information to residents which highlight potential financial implications of a town council. It will be a matter for residents to decide whether or not they wish to support the creation of a new town council.

In summary Mr Colomb, Yes I would agree with you that Cllr Ahmed was disingenuous and misled the Council Meeting.

Supplementary Question

Do you think that Councillor Ahmed should therefore make an apology to both the Chairman and Councillor Paul Turner?

Supplementary Response

Yes, he probably should.

c) Question from Mr R Hutton to the Cabinet Member for Environment

My question relates to the poor state of the High Street, High Wycombe.

The High Street is a prominent part of the town and sets the tone for the area, over the course of a long period of time it has become neglected. In particular, the black street furniture is in a worn and dirty state; some metal grilles around the trees are missing; the cobbles outside The Falcon public house and Little Market House are greasy; there is graffiti to some areas. Weeds and cigarette butts blight the base of the trees.

How does Wycombe District Council intend to remedy each of these issues?

Verbal reply given by Councillor Mrs J Adey (Cabinet Member for Environment).

The cleaning issues you raised have been reported to the Joint Waste Team for action and I am told that matters have been rectified as far as possible, including the removal of the small amount of graffiti and collection of trapped cigarette butts, in fact the areas where there had been graffiti were repainted last Friday.

The condition of the street furniture, such as the metal control boxes is not always within the control of the Council, but officers have been working with High Wycombe BidCo on arranging some trial coatings that are resistant to flyposting and graffiti. These coatings will also refresh the outward appearances of the boxes.

The Joint Waste Team has recently developed a town centre improvement plan and many of the ageing street litter bins have been replaced with modern and easy to

clean units. A programme of street washing was also carried out in mid-December, across most of the town centre area, including the market place.

However, it is clear that the market area will benefit from further work of this sort and jet washing in and around the area will be carried out early this month, in support of the town centre community clean ups, one of which took place last Friday and another is planned for Wednesday the 17th of April. These are being financed by Wycombe District Council from their community clean up grant funding and delivered by BidCo with Chiltern Rangers and Revive the Wye taking part. Hopefully many residents will join us on the 17th, even a small amount of time anyone can give will help us to improve the look of the town centre for all.

There was no supplementary question.

d) Question from Mr A Walker to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Regeneration.

Would the Council please explain the process by which any decisions concerning the occupation and ongoing use of the Brunel Shed in the forecourt of High Wycombe Station will be determined?

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

Thank you for your question.

The acquisition and redevelopment of the Brunel shed and its surroundings will be the heart of the regeneration of the “Eastern Quarter”, focusing on a new station area in front of High Wycombe station. Work on the business case for the Eastern Quarter Regeneration Programme is underway as previously stated. Acquisition of the shed is subject to a compulsory purchase process which is likely to take 18 months. Decisions will be taken as to its use by Council, following Cabinet recommendations in the normal way, once the process is complete and options have been provided by officers, architects and other consultants. Any expressions of interest in the shed will be logged and fed back to the redevelopment project team once it is fully established.

Supplementary Question

What criteria do you intend to use in this process?

Supplementary Response

The criteria to be used will be born out of regeneration aims and consultation. There are a range of stake-holders to consult: the Town Committee, local residents, the Town Centre Partnership, local businesses and ward members.

e) Question from Mr T Snaith to the Leader of the Council.

The Regulatory and Appeal Committee (R&A) agreed to the Community Governance Review (CGR) for High Wycombe unparished wards.

They proposed to ask for R&A members to work on the specification and Terms of reference.

Would it not be more sensible for those working on the terms of reference to be drawn from Town Members only?

Those who submitted the petitions, interested town community organisations, charities and businesses. People who are truly passionate and care about our town.

Verbal reply given by Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council).

Thank you for your question Mr Snaith. The responsibility for the conduct of Community Governance Review is delegated under the Council's constitution to our Regulation and Appeals Committee.

This committee's remit specifically deals with all CGR's as well as elections and a range of other matters. The members of this committee have experience and understanding of conducting these reviews wherever they occur in the District. The members of the working group are drawn from the members of the committee and include both members representing the town and those who do not. This provides a balanced membership.

The creation of a town council has an impact on the whole district. If it was to go ahead it would be the largest local council in the County and would be a very significant governance change within the district. It is therefore my view that this is a matter which is of interest to us all. I am however pleased to say that the majority of the members of the working group are members who represent the town and who therefore will be able to ensure that the views of those who represent the residents who will be most effective will have a significant say in how the review is conducted.

Supplementary Question

I am glad to hear there are some Town Members involved, but there are sceptics of the merits of a Town Council, we have heard you as Leader and the Chairman being disingenuous of the petition. Would you not agree that this is the case?

Supplementary Response

I don't agree, ultimately of course the final say will not sit with the working group however and will be determined by the members of the Shadow Executive.

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

Now that the bid to challenge the imposition of Cllr Tett Leader of Bucks County Council, as the leader of shadow unitary authority has been rejected, I assume that the Leader of the Council will say what the costs were of this futile exercise and that she would allow members at least the sight of the judgement.

Is she still minded to waste more of the public money on another irrelevant legal challenge whilst taking her place on the shadow executive under Cllr Tett?

Verbal reply given by Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council).

Thank you for your question Cllr Raja. The total cost of preparing the JR is around £15,000 and that is to be shared by 3 councils so the cost to this council of the preparation is likely to be around £5,000. The amount of officer time is fairly small as a junior barrister was used to prepare the pleadings. The judgement is a matter of public record. In Wycombe our Cabinet meeting debated the issue and there was support for taking legal action so our officers were asked to obtain legal advice. After we received advice, I consulted my colleagues before reaching a decision.

We felt very strongly that the proposed Order would not allow the District Councils to have very much say in how the new council was configured and although we have always supported a move to unitary we felt it was important that those providing local services in places like Wycombe District should have a say in the new Council. This was why we challenged the detail of the Order. Whilst the Judicial Review case was running, the Order was not laid and as a result some suggestions have been made which will ensure that the process is more democratic. We are very pleased with the way that MHCLG have responded to the concerns that we raised as part of the JR and although there is still no Order we are working with our County colleagues collaboratively to get on with the job of delivering the new council by working together as much as we can before the law is in place. I'm sorry that you do not feel that this was a worthwhile exercise. I don't share your view.

Supplementary Question.

Talking of democracy it is strange how the Town Committee Chairman is appointed by the Majority Group, Local Area Forum's are similar. £5K has been wasted. Does the Leader agree that any other Tory Leader of the Shadow Cabinet would be just as bad as Councillor Tett?

Supplementary Response.

I have made my position clear that I am content that the challenge we bought has served its purpose and that we are now working collaboratively with the County and government to deliver this new council.

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

Household waste collections are one of the most prominent services this council provides for residents, and one which impacts every resident in terms of the quality and convenience of the service offered.

As we look towards developing a new waste contract could you outline what opportunities you see to improve this service for the tax paying residents of the district?

Verbal reply given by Councillor Mrs J Adey (Cabinet Member for Environment).

The proposed new joint contract offers an opportunity to invest in technology and provide new refuse collection vehicles for the service, which will be state of the art, fuel efficient, quieter and more reliable. They will carry in-cab technology, including 360 degree cameras providing greater safety to all; that will allow them to receive communications regarding missed containers and also to capture information about conditions on the street and progress with work. This type of communication and recording technology will provide quicker rectification of any mistakes and also provide the customer service teams with up to date information on progress with collections. This can be particularly important when snow and ice, or traffic conditions disrupt our collection rounds.

Other proposals for street cleaning involve the option of combining weed spraying equipment with large sweeping machines to allow two jobs to be done at the same time, so improving efficiency and making weed control simpler.

Other improvements should arise from the proposed new contract and the procurement negotiations currently underway will hopefully drive out service efficiencies, economies of scale and service improvements for our residents.

Supplementary Question.

Thank you that is impressive about the technical improvements. But some residents are no longer having 'edge of property' collections. Health and Safety is cited. Refuse collectors are having to perform more work for less. Do you not agree that there is a deterioration of services as a result of savings?

Supplementary Response.

No that is not the case, there is no service deterioration. It is not a case of more work for less for operatives. If you have any particular issues or problems in your wards, please contact me with specific details so I can sort them.

c) Question from Councillor B Pearce to the Leader of the Council

In regards to the recent petition that was handed in at the last Full Council Meeting by Councillor Khalil Ahmed and member of the public, Trevor Snaith, requesting a Government review to look into a Town Council for High Wycombe (a petition which contained over 4,500 verified signatures) I am confident that you would agree with me that this is was a monumental task and a fantastic achievement.

However do you agree with me that a Town Council would be much more advantageous than to have individual Parishes around the town as has sometimes been referred to as, 'The Doughnut Ring'?

Verbal reply given by Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council).

Thank you for your question Cllr Pearce

Whilst I accept that the petition had a good number of signatures, it only represents a very small proportion of the number of residents in Wycombe, less than 10% so whether it is representative of all views we have yet to find out.

Personally, I don't have a set view on what governance arrangements are best for the unparished area of High Wycombe. That is why we have instigated a review and is what it will be looking at.

The review will, I know consider all options and recommendations and proposals drawn up and will be subject to public consultation before it is completed. I believe we should wait for the outcome of that and that it would be premature to express an opinion before that work has been done, even if I had one.

Supplementary Question.

If the Town Council was to go ahead, would it have a Shadow Board similar to that operating for the new Unitary Authority ahead of May 2020?

Supplementary Response.

I don't think so. But I will check that out and come back to you.

d) Question from Councillor M Clarke to the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources

Since the Lib Lab pact and more particularly since 2001 Wycombe District Council has had its finances prudently managed. This has led to substantial cash reserves. Some of these reserves are earmarked for projects starting in this financial year, however there will be some not insignificant unallocated cash reserves.

Will the Cabinet member please make clear the size of these free cash reserves both now and projected for the end of FY 19/20?

Verbal reply given by Councillor D Watson (Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources).

Thank you Cllr Clarke for your question.

The council is planning to invest in the District for the benefit of local residents and will be applying its reserves in investing in the schemes to support the economic development, regeneration and place shaping aspirations of this Council.

As you say WDC has benefitted from a decade or more of sound financial management and is thus in a good position when we consider the total reserves as it gives the council a number of options:-

- Major projects 19-20 is £61M funded by Capital grants, earmarked reserves, capital receipts and general reserves.
- 17-18 we had £74m reserves, 18-19 expected to be £63m, 19-20 expected at £30m.
- As to general reserves kept for 'unknown unknowns' CIPFA recommend 15% of net revenue budget which equals the £3.1m we have assigned.
- There are a number of economic risks that could lead to the earmarking of additional funds and their removal from the general fund whilst still leaving a prudent minimum balance. Looking at volatility in the property investment market could lead to moving 5% of annual investment property income into an earmarked reserve.

Supplementary Question.

There is to be £25m left, what steps are being taken to ensure that these uncommitted funds are used to the benefit of Wycombe District residents and not just handed over to the new authority with no guarantee of their expenditure in Wycombe District?

Supplementary Response.

There will be a large contingent of Wycombe District Council members elected onto the new authority, it will no doubt be their responsibility to influence to ensure these funds are spent so.

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

What valid reason, or indeed justification, does the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services have for the gross imbalance of parking charge increases across Wycombe District?

With some car parks in High Wycombe Town facing increases from 13% to a whopping 62.5%, Bourne End seeing an increase on their one car park of 59.8%, Princes Risborough on their two car parks alone of 39.8% and 44.2% respectively, yet the good people of Marlow's who have the lowest increase from 15.5% to a mere 30.1%. This appears to be both, not only, disproportionate but grossly unfair.

Verbal reply given by Councillor Mrs J Adey (Cabinet Member for Environment).

Parking charges have not increased in Wycombe District for more than a decade. The tariffs increases aim to harmonise charges across the district; some areas started from a very low level so in percentage terms their increases are higher. A more meaningful way to consider the new tariffs is in terms of cash prices where it is clear that these are highest in High Wycombe, lower in Marlow and lower still in Princes Risborough and Bourne End. The higher percentage change in High Wycombe relates to Easton Street where the Council was providing a much cheaper alternative to Chiltern Rail's car park, in a building which requires substantial investment or replacement in the medium term. Price increases will ensure that we can continue to invest in our car parks, and make the provision of new spaces viable in areas where this is found to be necessary.

Supplementary Question.

Would it not be more sensible to leave any increase until next year, the first year of the new authority?

The Town Centre ward I represent has many of these car parks where considerable increases are being imposed. Park and Ride is not an alternative to commuters north of the town. Whilst these commuters will be parking in residential areas as a result of these charge increases.

Supplementary Response.

No I do not feel it best to postpone these increases. We have to carry on with them this year.

f) Question from Councillor S Graham to the Leader of the Council

Would the Leader of the council like to give us a progress report on the works being carried out to improve the Wycombe High Street and the market, and when can residents of the Town expect to see the end result?

Verbal reply given by Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council).

Thank you for your question Cllr Graham. I'm not sure exactly what you are referring to, but I can tell you that the Council has recently completed resurfacing works to the paving under the Guildhall which has greatly improved this key asset to the town.

In partnership with Bucks County Council, the High Wycombe Masterplan Phase 5 works are due to finish at the end of April. Also underway are works to the rising bollards on the High St, again due to finish at the end of April. A bid is being made to central government for Future High Streets funding and it is hoped that this will enable further initiatives to be undertaken to benefit the town centre.

Supplementary Question.

Have any of the Members inspected the recent work carried out on the Guildhall it is rough and shabby.

Do you not agree that the High Street is in a shabby state?

Supplementary Response.

No I do not agree, there is lots of work going on, lots of work has been completed as I mentioned in my statement.

g) Question from Councillor Ms A Baughan to the Cabinet Member for Youth & External Partnerships

At a recent presentation to councillors from Wycombe Youth Action we heard about how there are many young people in our District who are experiencing difficulties with their mental health, poor body image and low confidence. This is resulting in an increase in issues such as self-harm, eating disorders and can also be linked into some young people choosing to associate with gangs or become involved in criminal activity. As a councillor and a parent this causes me a great deal of concern which I think we all share.

There have been cuts to children's and youth services in the past decade and these cuts are continuing to happen. As a local authority we will end up picking up the bill for many of the long term social and other issues caused by the problems which affect our young people. Do you agree with me that, regardless of the statutory duties we may have, we need to be responding by investing more resources in providing increased support for our young people now, to prevent a greater issue in the future?

Verbal reply given by Councillor D Carroll (Cabinet Member for Youth & External Partnerships).

Thank you for your question and for your interest in the services we provide for young people within the District. Youth services are actually part of the County Council's remit but this Council has been keen to ensure that we engage effectively with local young people and work with them to address their needs. I will pass this issue onto my Cabinet colleague Councillor Peart (Cabinet Member for Community) to bring up at the County Health & Wellbeing board on which he sits and represents Wycombe District.

I additionally make mention of our new Youth Council, and the councillors, who represent schools from across the District, in respect of Young People's services.
Supplementary Question.

Could you confirm that in respect of the long summer holidays you have numerous activities planned for young people and particularly in my Micklefield ward?

Supplementary Response.

Yes where such activities are planned and financed I will keep you updated.

h) Question from Councillor K Ahmed to the Leader of the Council

On 26th Sep 2018, there was a BFP article that read 'Shabby' planter that was damaged in crash could finally be repaired.

Your own cabinet member criticised the lack of action, the planter still remains in a state of disrepair well over a year later since it was originally damaged.

With all the other mess in and around area that you have caused since the town centre master plan was started. Can the residents of this town trust you and your cabinet to deliver what we need to make our great town something to be proud of?

Verbal reply given by Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council).

Thank you for your question Cllr Ahmed.

The Councils have been exploring the options for repairs to the planter. Whilst a repair would achieve a short term fix, works to repair or replace the planters require an overnight road closure and diversions whilst experience suggests that the planters would remain open to further damage. Hence we are considering options that would achieve a more enduring solution. My Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainability is meeting with the Cabinet Member and officers from Buckinghamshire County Council before the end of April to consider those options and I anticipate a decision will be made, for implementation after that.

Whilst I agree that this issue requires a solution I think that it is easy to forget the wider picture, that is the transformation that has taken place along the alternative route and on this approach into the town centre

It is already clear from the development taking place along the alternative route, that this project has been a catalyst for regeneration, with the Aldi and Centre Square developments being just two examples of projects that are bringing life to this area that has needed investment for some time.

The Gas works link will be complete by September whilst works at Queen Victoria Road and Easton Street will be completed by the end of May. I think that once these works are complete the benefits to the town will become increasingly clear.

Supplementary Question.

I've left photographs of the issues in Oxford Road on Members desks this evening. They show the problem with shared space areas, I have heard nothing but negative remarks from the public regards these areas. Do you not think the current Masterplan has all the makings of a 'disaster plan'?

Supplementary Response.

I can only think the Councillor has once again opened the wrong filing drawer labelled May 2020, as this question should be addressed to Buckinghamshire County Council.

Note question i) from Councillor M Asif to the Leader of the Council as featured below was withdrawn prior to the meeting.

Can the leader please tell us how much of taxpayers money in terms of officer time, resources and financial contribution was incurred trying to prepare for a judicial review against the government over the setup of the unitary authority which we now all know has been declined?

Questions 10 to 17 were not put as the 30 minutes time period had expired. In accordance with Standing Orders, a written reply would be sent to the questioner by the appropriate Member within 10 working days, and would also be appended to the minutes of the meeting.

103 PETITIONS

No petitions were received by the deadline of Monday 25 March 2018.

104 CABINET

Minute 91 – Transition to a new unitary council – Appointments to the Shadow Executive.

A Member queried the absence of opposition members from the line-up of the Shadow Executive Board, it was clarified that the Board was not a politically balanced body. All Members would have the opportunity to apply to serve on a Scrutiny body to scrutinise the Shadow Board's work in due course.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet 11 March 2019 be received, and the recommendations as set out at minute numbers 92 and 93 be approved and adopted.

105 PLANNING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee of 13 February 2019 be received.

106 AUDIT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee of 28 February 2019 be received, and the recommendation as set out at minute number 49 be approved and adopted.

107 HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE

Minute 40 – Supplementary Item – Community Projects Update

It was confirmed that the £109K budget mentioned in respect of these projects was from the Community Portfolio budget rather than High Wycombe Town Special Expenses.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the High Wycombe Town Committee of 5 March 2019 be received.

108 IMPROVEMENT & REVIEW COMMISSION

Minute 44 – Councillor Call for Action.

A Member queried the lack of ‘calls for action’ submitted under this provision. The Chairman of the Improvement & Review Commission responding that applications for issues to be scrutinised by the Commission were always welcomed for consideration for inclusion on the Commission’s Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement & Review Commission of 13 March 2019 be received.

109 REGULATORY & APPEALS COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Regulatory & Appeals Committee of 18 March 2019 be received, and the recommendation as set out at minute number 33 be approved and adopted.

110 NOTICES OF MOTION

To consider the following Notices of Motion submitted by the deadline.

The following Notice of Motion was submitted by Councillor K Ahmed and seconded by Councillor R Raja.

Wycombe District Council is proud of its diversity, which is a huge asset to our area. A substantial proportion of Wycombe’s residents are Muslim, over 14,000 according to the 2011 census, and they are an integral part of the

area's make-up, playing a huge role in all aspects of Wycombe district life. Wycombe district has a strong history of promoting cohesion and welcoming people from all over the world. Its residents have always united and supported each other in the fight against racism and discrimination in all its forms. This council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty, and with this in mind, to compliment this and further define our regard for an important but sometimes vulnerable community, I move that this Council welcomes, endorses and adopts the MEND definition of Islamophobia as follows:

“Islamophobia is a prejudice, aversion, hostility, or hatred towards Muslims and encompasses any distinction, exclusion, restriction, discrimination, or preference against Muslims that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”

Councillor Barnes proposed an amendment to the motion as follows:

Wycombe District Council is proud of the district's its diversity, which is a huge asset to our area. ~~A substantial proportion of Wycombe's residents are Muslim, over 14,000 according to the 2011 census, and they are an integral part of the area's make-up, playing a huge role in all aspects of Wycombe district life.~~

Wycombe district has a strong history of promoting cohesion and welcoming people from all over the world. Its residents have always united and supported each other in the fight against racism and discrimination in all its forms. This council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty, and with this in mind, ~~to compliment this and further define our regard for an important but sometimes vulnerable community, I move that this Council welcomes, endorses and adopts the MEND definition of Islamophobia as follows:~~

~~“Islamophobia is a prejudice, aversion, hostility, or hatred towards Muslims and encompasses any distinction, exclusion, restriction, discrimination, or preference against Muslims that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”~~

this Council confirms that it takes seriously its responsibility under the act and works to eliminate all forms of prejudice including religious discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as advancing equality of opportunity between persons regardless of their age; disability; gender; sexual orientation; race; religion or belief. We furthermore call on all the residents of the district to share and support these commitments.

Revised Motion as amended

Wycombe District Council is proud of the district's diversity, which is a huge asset to our area.

Wycombe district has a strong history of promoting cohesion and welcoming people from all over the world. Its residents have always united and supported each other in the fight against racism and discrimination in all its forms.

This council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty, and with this in mind this Council confirms that it takes seriously its responsibility under the act and works to eliminate all forms of prejudice including religious discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as advancing equality of opportunity between persons regardless of their age; disability; gender; sexual orientation; race; religion or belief. We furthermore call on all the residents of the district to share and support these commitments

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Saeed Saddique who remarked that the Council had to recognise and accept that unfortunately Islamophobia was prevalent and on the rise with anti-Muslim sentiments, with individuals and mosques being targeted. There was always a need to confront and condemn this wherever and however it appeared.

He added that Wycombe was a diverse and cohesive community which was an asset as well a great source of pride. It was both affirmative and positive that the Council were reinforcing and taking seriously the duty to not only to act against prejudices towards Islam but other religions too. Hate crime in any form, against any religion should not be tolerated and should be challenged accordingly.

Members discussed the amendment and made the following remarks and contributions to the debate:

- The amendment extending the Council's objection to prejudice against anyone, of which Muslims were undoubtedly an important group, was commendable;
- There was a fear that without a specific definition of Islamophobia as in the original motion, members of the Muslim community would feel more marginalised and left behind than ever;
- A Member outlined their confusion in respect of the original 'definition' motion in that the wording differed slightly from that adopted by Oxford City Council and promoted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British

Muslims. As a result the all-embracing amendment represented the best motion for the Council's adoption;

- A reported 60% increase in hate-crime since the Brexit referendum was noted, adoption of the amendment sent a strong signal of the Council's abhorrence of any form of discrimination, its inclusion of the nine protected categories was commendable;
- The original motion proposer Councillor K Ahmed explained that the APPG definition was far more wordy the original motion before the Council, which had represented a summarised usable definition;
- An ex-Leader of the Council recalled her experiences in 2006 when High Wycombe was at the centre of a security operation in respect of terrorism, it was in standing together as a united community supporting one another that Wycombe had coped with that challenging period;
- A Member expressed his fond memories of a childhood spent in a diverse playground, where prejudices had yet to develop (that being almost the exclusive preserve of adults), the amendment represented an opportunity to endorse and aspire to such a healthy and trusting environment again;
- A Member in supporting the original 'definition' motion remarked on the unhelpfulness of racial remarks made by national political figures, the definitions adoption represented a means of allaying fears within the Muslim community, provoked as a result of such remarks.

A Member asked that a recorded vote be taken in respect of the amendment under Standing Order 16.7. However this was not supported by the required seven Members.

The amendment was put to the vote and it was:

RESOLVED: That the amendment to the motion as proposed by Councillor D Barnes and seconded by Councillor S Saddique featured above be agreed.

The amended motion then became the substantive motion, to which Members made the following remarks:

- The adoption of the amended motion represented a statement in respect of the Council's rejection of discrimination, however it was important that this was converted into actions. Consideration of the status of European Citizens and their protection from discrimination as we entered a post-Brexit world was to be considered;
- The Chairman of the Improvement & Review Commission repeated his earlier encouragement of Member submissions of work programme items for the Commission, could not work on Equalities be amongst such; and

- A Member remarked that the debate had shown that all Members present held a similar view in the rejection of discrimination and racism.

The amended motion now the substantive motion was put to the vote and it was:

RESOLVED: That the amended motion as proposed by Councillor D Barnes and seconded by Councillor S Saddique featured above be agreed.

111 QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 11.2

There were no questions submitted under Standing Order 11.2

112 URGENT ACTION TAKEN BY CABINET OF INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER

The Individual Cabinet Member Decisions as set out in the summons were noted.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Peter Druce	- Democratic Services
Ian Hunt	- Democratic Services Manager
Karen Satterford	- Chief Executive