

Council Minutes

Date: 19 August 2019

Time: 6.30 - 7.45 pm

PRESENT: Councillor P R Turner (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs S Adoh, K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, M Asif, D H G Barnes, Miss S Brown, M Clarke, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, A D Collingwood, C Etholen, R Farmer, R Gaffney, S Graham, G C Hall, M Hanif, C B Harriss, A E Hill, M Hussain, M Hussain JP, D A Johncock, M E Knight, D Knights, A Lee, Mrs W J Mallen, I L McEnnis, Ms C J Oliver, B E Pearce, G Peart, S K Raja, R Raja, S Saddique, J A Savage, R J Scott, D A C Shakespeare OBE, N J B Teesdale, Mrs J E Teesdale, A Turner, Ms J D Wassell, D M Watson, C Whitehead, R Wilson and L Wood & Honorary Alderman P Cartwright.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs J A Adey, M C Appleyard, Ms A Baughan, D J Carroll, M P Davy, A R Green, M A Hashmi, Mrs J D Langley, N B Marshall, H L McCarthy and Ms K S Wood & Honorary Aldermen Mrs K Peatey and Mrs P Priestley.

31 MINUTE SILENCE FOR HONORARY ALDERMAN TED COLLINS

The Meeting was opened by the Chairman with a minutes silence in respect of the death of Honorary Alderman Ted Collins over the previous weekend.

Honorary Alderman Collins had served on the Council from 1987 to 2003, he had been Leader of the Labour Group from 1991 to 2003 with breaks in 92-93 to serve as Mayor of High Wycombe and 98-99 to serve as Chairman of Council.

Ex Councillor Collins had been one of the Leaders of Council who served during the Labour / Liberal Democrat administration of 1995 – 99.

The Chairman invited Councillor Rafiq Raja (Leader of the Labour Group) to say a few words; he emphasised Alderman Collins commitment to Wycombe District alongside his down to earth approach and his compassionate nature. He had shown similar commitment as a Public Sector Trade Union official, a long-term School Governor at Castlefield and in his involvement with the Dahlia Society of which he had at one time been president.

Current Mayor of High Wycombe Councillor Maz Hussain then spoke, though not a contemporary of Ted Collins, he had of late developed a sadly short friendship with him. On a visit in his Mayoral role to Shelburne Lodge Care Home he had met Ted and when the Wycombe District Council connection had been established Councillor Hussain had invited Ted and his family back to the Parlour and Council Chamber for a visit. Councillor Hussain had also visited him more recently.

32 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 15 July 2019 be confirmed as true records and signed by the Chairman.

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34 CABINET

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of 19 August 2019 be received, and the recommendation as set out at minute number 14 be approved and adopted.

The recommendation at Minute 16 was taken under the Adoption of the Wycombe District Local Plan 2013-2033 item below.

35 ADOPTION OF THE WYCOMBE DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN 2013-2033

Deputy Leader of the Council; Councillor D Barnes (in the absence of Councillor Ms K Wood – Leader of the Council) opened this item referring the matter to his Cabinet colleague Councillor D Johncock (Cabinet Member for Planning) who as he outlined had lived with the development of the Plan for the last 5 years.

Councillor Johncock explained that the matter before Councillors represented the culmination of a long 5 year process; a plan that would deliver quality, sustainable development for the District for the next 15 years.

Thousands of people had inputted into the process, there had been much hard work with partners, particularly the other Buckinghamshire Authorities with the like of the Green Belt review. This co-operation has resulted in Aylesbury's agreement to take Wycombe's unmet need in respect of housing.

The Plan would hold the District in good stead, as it moved towards the new Unitary Authority the next spring. The development of the Plan had involved difficult decisions as to where development should be allowed.

He strongly believed that the Council had found a fair and objective compromise which had certainly stood up to detailed scrutiny. He made a number of points including:

- The draft had been completed in 2017 and fundamentally this had not been subject to any major changes by the Inspector (Ms Nicola Gulley);

- In-depth scrutiny of the Plan by developers, local community groups and individuals had occurred;
- The Inspector's suggested changes to the Draft had been publicly consulted on;
- The then Final Plan had been deemed 'sound' subject to a number of changes as outlined in the Cabinet report earlier that evening;
- The Plan had been assessed as compliant with the requirements of the relevant legislation;
- The Plan would shape the future of the District though the District authority would no longer exist, the Plan would not 'fall away' in April next year but would be adhered to by the new Buckinghamshire Council;
- A vast number of officers had contributed to the Plan's development, particularly the Planning Policy Team, and much as no single officer should be singled out, Ian Manktelow (Strategic Planning Manager) with his gentle, high effective, patient input was to be highly commended;

Members had before them two choices, to adopt the Plan with changes or Not to adopt. By law no further amendments could be made.

Wycombe needed the Plan to manage development that was acceptable. If not adopted, planning decisions would be made in reference to the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) which had a presumption in favour of sustainable development and would put the Council and its successor in a weak position.

Councillor Johncock urged Members to accept the Inspector's modifications and adopt the Plan as in the Cabinet report.

Members made a number of points and received clarification from the Cabinet Member for Planning as follows:

- It was confirmed that the housing numbers had been fully scrutinised;
- The need for appropriate infrastructure in respect of development was emphasised by a considerable number of Members; in response the Cabinet Member emphasised the inclusion of the robust Infrastructure Delivery Plan Report as part of the evidence supporting the Plan and the mechanisms in place to collect the applicable contributions from developers;
- The Ward Members for Chiltern Rise pointed out their objection to the Plan in respect of a specific site where 10 units were permissible with considerable blight to properties and permanent inconvenience to nearby residents;
- A Ryemead Member outlined his hope that the Plan would provide protection from over development of the Gomm Valley site, current numbers discussed were quite sufficient;

- The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Saunderton Molins site was still on the agenda for development, but the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Green Belt designations restricted the numbers of units;
- Members were reminded that infrastructure needs did not just mean the only too apparent road issues, but water, sewerage, utilities, GP and NHS provision, schools etc.;
- A Member emphasised that without the adoption of the Plan the proposed 10 units at Chiltern Rise ward would increase, no Plan would be an invitation to developers to over develop;
- The Cabinet Member confirmed that there was a requirement to review the Plan on a five year cycle; the likes of Heathrow expansion, East West Rail and Crossrail would all have considerable influence on that review, that would be undertaken by the new Buckinghamshire Council;
- Members questioned the definition of ‘affordable’ along with the complexities of the change to the common policy of quoting required percentages in units rather than floor space, which looked worse but was not necessarily so;
- The tie in with the LEP’s (Local Enterprise Partnership) strategies and Wycombe District’s own economic strategy and forthcoming regeneration strategy was noted; and
- The concerns of the residents of Princes Risborough for the almost doubling of their town planned was noted alongside many residents understanding that the Plan provide a means of controlling and influencing that development to end up with a Town that they liked.

The Deputy Leader thanked Councillor Johncock for his presentation along with his responses and clarification. Thousands of hours of consultation had occurred, much as he appreciated the eloquent impassioned speeches by Members re developments in their own wards, the Council was not able to ‘cherry pick’, if the Plan was turned down, the District was very much open to overdevelopment.

The Cabinet Member, his predecessor in the role (Councillor Marshall) and his Deputy; Councillor Alan Turner were thanked for their immense input.

The recommendation was then put to the vote.

RESOLVED: That the Inspector’s main modifications be accepted and the Wycombe District Local Plan, as set out in Appendix B of the Cabinet Report of 19 August 2019, be adopted.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

- Peter Druce - Democratic Services
- John East - Acting Chief Executive
- Ian Hunt - Democratic Services Manager