

High Wycombe Town Committee Minutes

Date: 23 January 2018

Time: 7.00 - 9.05 pm

PRESENT: Councillor A R Green (in the Chair)

Councillors K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, M Asif, Ms A Baughan, H Bull, M Clarke, R Farmer, S Graham, A E Hill, M Hussain JP, A Hussain, M E Knight, B E Pearce, R Raja, S K Raja, N J B Teesdale and Ms J D Wassell.

Also present: Chief Inspector Hadley (Thames Valley Police).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs L M Clarke OBE, M P Davy, M Hanif, M A Hashmi and M Hussain.

29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lesley Clarke, Matthew Davy, Mohammed Hanif, Muhammad Abdullah Hashmi and Maz Hussain.

30 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman declared for information that relation to Item 6 (Special Expenses Budget 2018/2019), he was Chairman of the Twinning Association who received a grant.

He remained in the meeting during the discussion and took full part in the discussion.

31 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 21 November 2017 be agreed as a correct record subject to the following change:

Annual Fees and Charges Review – to read ‘Councillor A Hussain, seconded by Councillor M Hussain, proposed that the Saturday one-off burial fee should remain at £263.57, but that the proposed increases be implemented for the other areas.’

32 POLICING UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Chief Inspector Hadley of the Thames Valley Police to the meeting and invited him to provide the Committee with an update on policing matters within the town.

Chief Inspector Hadley informed the Committee that his colleague, Inspector Robinson (the Town Inspector), had intended to attend to accompany him to the meeting but had to give her apologies on the day.

Chief Inspector Hadley presented the performance data / crime statistics and reported that domestic burglary had risen by 13% (23% in the Thames Valley) and violence excluding domestic violence in the town had increased by 6% (fourth lowest trend). It was noted that whilst there had been no increases in grievous bodily harm there had been an increase in violent crime and knife crime was down 5% on previous years. The Committee was informed that the Police were doing a lot of campaigning, locally and nationally, on hate crime which was currently at 19%. It was noted that with regard to the force restructure High Wycombe was now fully migrated to the operating model and had seen an increase of 14 new recruits. With regard to neighbourhood policing and problem solving it was noted that the Police were trying to increase the use of social media, neighbourhood action groups and world café groups (community engagement, World Café was an example of such). It was noted that the first closure orders had been used in the town as a result of drug users causing anti-social behaviour.

Chief Inspector Hadley went on to explain that the Police were looking at the issue of begging in the town centre and were working alongside Wycombe District Council to look at individuals profiles. The Committee was informed that the Police could use Section 34/35 powers when it came to tackling anti-social behaviour which had to date been used on 58 occasions. It was noted that the Police had issued 6 tickets related to the Public Space Protection Orders to date which had resulted in one arrest.

Chief Inspector Hadley explained that in order to be pro-active there were numerous plain clothed operations underway. On one operation 114 opportunities when people had found themselves to be vulnerable were rectified. The Committee was informed that there had been very few licensing breaches in the town which had not been the case a year ago. It was noted that 'Operation Rowlock' had resulted in 5 men being sentenced to 18 years in prison after they had been found to be dealing drugs in High Wycombe. Members were informed that Police Cadets were increasingly being used in public operations such as 'Operation Grotto' at Christmas time.

The Committee was informed that Chief Inspector Hadley was unable to confirm whether crime in High Wycombe on the whole had increased or decreased. It was noted that whilst Chief Inspector Hadley had the crime statistics split by categories rather than by town but would seek to make the town statistics available upon request.

In discussion Members were informed of the following:

- That the Community and Diversity Officer was a permanent appointment who brought a lot of experience from Yorkshire.
- That the Commissioner was personally committed to retaining the mounted police which were seen as an extremely valuable resource that helped increase public engagement. It was noted that this was currently under review and the options were either to leave them as they were, to make reductions in both the officers and horses or to do away with the section altogether.
- That anti-social behaviour Section 34/35 powers worked via a triage system which was ran out of the Police control centre that looked at threat, risk & harm. It was noted that an initial response would take place if needed and if deemed suitable a neighbourhood officer would allocate an appointment to the victim. Members were informed that some appointments were within an hour (if needed), some were same day and some took place next day. Members were informed that the Police shared information / issues with partners (e.g. lighting issues).
- That Chief Inspector Hadley informed Members that his officers had been through a period of significant change and that he was pleased with the overall performance of his officers. It was noted that national media was not always pro-Police but Chief Inspector Hadley assured Members that there was always internal debates taking place about who should carry tasers, whether a lone officer should be out in a car on patrol on their own, etc.
- Chief Inspector Hadley assured Councillor Rafiq Raja that intelligence would look into the incidents he had referred to regarding a specific family in High Wycombe who were being targeted by a drug dealing person / business based in the High Wycombe area. It was noted that the Police needed to ensure safeguarding was taking place.
- That with regard to the plan for Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) the Police were looking into using virtual NAGs and social media. It was noted that the Police were still engaged with making NAGs LPA wide and were also working with Wycombe Wanderers to launch a Youth Group. Members were informed that once the new command team were in place by the 01 March 2018 it would be advertised in the Bucks Free Press.
- Members informed Chief Inspector Hadley that the NAG Police representative for the Terriers and Amersham Hill ward had not turned up to a NAG meeting on the 22 January 2018. It was requested that going forward the NAG Police representative inform the meeting organisers whether they were or were not planning to attend as members of the public often attended.
- Chief Inspector Hadley confirmed that he would like to see environmental audits undertaken in neighbourhoods. Members highlighted the Frogmore area as an area of particular concern to them and Chief Inspector Hadley assured them he would let his colleagues know an environmental audit had been requested in that location.
- That a force intelligence hub and a bureau looked into the use of closure orders nationally.
- That there was some correlation between offenders released from prison and the 13% increase in domestic burglary. It was noted that the Police were alerted to relevant prison releases and that they were able to take measures if felt necessary.

- That the Police tailored a plan to incidents reported as they were not always hate crime. Members were informed that the Police liaised with partnerships and schools if an incident occurred in a school and that they preferred to educate young offenders as ignorance was often to blame. It was noted that the Police often joined in various campaigns to help raise public awareness of hate crime.
- Members informed Chief Inspector Hadley they would be disappointed if the mounted Police were to disband as they felt their presence reassured locals particularly when incidents had taken place.
- Chief Inspector Hadley informed Members that they had a specific department which dealt with domestic abuse. With regard to support strategies it was noted that the Police had a positive intervention policy in place. Chief Inspector Hadley explained that the Police had invested a lot of provision in to support strategies with regard to domestic abuse, were working with women's groups and had a Community Safety Plan in place. Members were informed that the earlier the Police were able to intervene and give advice the better.
- Members were assured by Chief Inspector Hadley that information about domestic abuse incidents that could be shared were shared with partners such as midwives, etc.
- Chief Inspector Hadley was informed that the Micklefield ward had organised a couple of events to help raise awareness about domestic abuse.
- Chief Inspector Hadley informed Members that by working in partnership and sharing information at the regular Prevent Board meetings and via Safeguarding helped to tackle domestic violence and ASB. Members were informed that Chief Inspector Hadley hoped to be able to hold specific Community Partnership meetings to help streamline the process. It was noted that one of his PCSO's had been recruited as the ASB Officer which he believed would help with regard to partnership working.
- Chief Inspector Hadley informed Members that no cuts had been made to the 101 service and that the contact service was imminent which would deal with the initial 101 calls from the public, prioritising urgent calls. Members were informed that Chief Inspector Hadley had been unaware of the delay in 101 calls being answered as they should be diverted if unanswered after a certain amount of time.
- Chief Inspector Hadley assured Members that officers in the Response Team did receive comprehensive briefings which included the PCSO's. It was noted that whilst the Response Team did not directly deal with drinking prohibition orders they were aware of them. Members were informed that the Desborough Road area was the responsibility of the Neighbourhood teams which were not fully resourced at present.
- Chief Inspector Hadley informed Members that the Police did have a priority in 'Big Society' that had morphed into community resilience. It was noted that the Police had people, usually graduates that worked with them for two or three years to develop their public service knowledge. With regard to what could be done to help support the Police, Members were informed that technology assistance would be welcomed as it would allow people to be empowered to call about small issues as well as big issues. Chief Inspector Hadley confirmed that he did have posters available that could be put up to help attract volunteers to the Police which he could provide to Members upon request.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Hadley for attending the meeting and updating Members, which was echoed by the Committee.

33 VERBAL UPDATE ON THE DESBOROUGH ROAD REDEVELOPMENT

The Chairman welcomed the Major Projects and Estates Executive to the meeting and invited him to provide the Committee with an update on the Desborough Road re-development.

The Major Projects and Estates Executive informed Members that he had a detailed plan of the area which was undergoing massive re-development. It was noted that at the town end of the redevelopment a couple of hundred residential apartments were going to be built and that at the Green Street end of the re-development discussions were still underway regarding the redevelopment of the Leigh Street factories which could potentially create 200+ new apartments.

The Major Projects and Estates Executive went onto explain that the Wycombe District Council (WDC) were currently on the first phase of Baker Street (Aldi) and that a 30 unit small workspace scheme would start in June. Members were informed that planning permission had been granted this week on Collins House at the bottom of Bridge Street.

The Major Projects and Estates Executive informed Members that changes had already been seen with the relocation to Dovecot MSCP of temporary long-term stay car park in Baker Street. It was noted that there would be 90 minutes free parking at the Aldi site which would have 92 spaces and that 26 Pay & Display spaces had been kept back for patients of Riverside Surgery.

Members were informed that the WDC had looked at the possibility of adding decking at East Richardson Street car park but it would be an extremely expensive solution which could attract anti-social behaviour.

The Major Projects and Estates Executive informed Members that the proposed new temporary accommodation development on Desborough car park would displace 46 spaces. It was noted that the lost spaces could largely be replaced in the last phase of the Baker Street redevelopment (on the old Grant & Stone site).

In discussion Members were informed of the following:

- That issues with the Westbourne Street / Desborough Road highway area should be raised with the Highways Authority.
- With regard to the proposed new temporary accommodation on Desborough Road car park, it was hoped that the introduction of ANPR gateways and CCTV should help reduce criminal activities in that area.
- The suggestion that the Saunderton Lodge facility, which was felt not to be fit for purpose, should be located elsewhere be raised with the Housing team. It was noted that the drugs and prostitution issues in that area should be raised with the Police. Members felt that these schemes should be looked at holistically.

- Members expressed concern that the social housing on the old Bingo site at the west end of Desborough Road had not been developed. Members asked if any pressure could be applied to request that the site be tidied up as it was felt to be an eye sore. The Major Projects and Estates Executive suggested that Members raised their concerns through the Chairman or to the Chief Executive. (The Major Projects and Estates Executive informed Members that it was not part of his role to negotiate with third party developers which was part of the role of the Planning team).
- The Major Projects and Estates Executive stated that he had found the changes made to the road layout (Bridge Street) encouraged drivers to slow down and have good manners.
- The Major Projects and Estates Executive informed Members that some retail was still planned for the Central Square site.
- Members were informed that 'drive thru' proposal was still under discussion.
- The Major Projects and Estates Executive informed Members that he had received some strong interest in the Cressex Island site.
- Members were informed that if Aldi was to open later this year 300 metres from Lidl it was likely to help alleviate the parking issues currently experienced at Lidl.

The Chairman thanked the Major Projects and Estates Executive for attending the meeting and giving a very full update.

34 SPECIAL EXPENSES BUDGET 2018/2019

The Committee welcomed Julia Turner, Senior Accountant, to the meeting who explained that the report set out the proposed budget for 2018/19 for Special Expenses and the impact on the precept. It was noted that the details of the estimates for 2018/19 were attached at Appendix A.

Members were informed that the Council Tax precept was based on the tax base calculated in terms of Band D equivalent properties. The tax base for 2018/19 was 22,670 (21,971 in 2017/18). The increase in properties meant that the precept for the unparished area of High Wycombe would increase by £12,117 if the Band D tax for Special Expenses was left unchanged, amounting to a total precept of £388,107 in 2018/19.

The Senior Accountant informed Members that there was a reoccurring date error within the report which should read 31 March 2019 rather than 31 March 2018 and these references could be found in paragraphs 2, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

The Senior Accountant explained that the Queensway Cemetery Phase 1 fees had been approved in October which could be found on page 7 of the agenda.

The Committee were referred to the three options for setting precept listed on page 5 of the agenda in sections 13, 14 & 15. The Senior Accountant requested that Members bear in mind the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) work and Phase 2 & 3 of Queensway Cemetery.

In discussion Members questioned where the bus shelters the Council had paid towards, via special expenses, were located and also who was responsible for footway lighting in private roads. The Senior Accountant responded by stating that she was unable to answer both those questions but would ask Community & Facilities Management for a response.

It was questioned why the Committee would want to fund BIDCO to tackle ASB. The Senior Accountant responded by explaining that she had been advised the Committee may work with BIDCO in the future which she would investigate further.

Members questioned why 'maintenance to grounds' with regard to High Wycombe Cemetery for 2016/17 equated to £8,529 and had then been budgeted for £21,900 for 2017/18 and again in 2018/19. The Senior Accountant responded by stating that she was unable to answer the question and would need to talk to Community Officers who contract the work and set the level of the budget she would find out and get back to the Committee Member.

Members questioned how the rates with regard to High Wycombe Cemetery were worked out. The Senior Accountant responded by stating that business rates would be calculated on the building(s) at the cemetery she would contact Revenues and Benefits and get back to the Committee Member.

It was raised that the balances for 2016/17 to 2018/19 had practically halved and it was questioned what a normal reserve balance was. The Senior Accountant responded by stating that the minimum level of reserves was £150k but the level of reserves would depend on the Committee's future spending aspirations. It was noted that the Senior Accountant believed a 5-Year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was needed which was something she planned to work on over the summer. Members stated that the Committee would welcome a 5-Year MTFP.

The Chairman responded to a question on match-funding by explaining that if Members wished to help improve / repair community facilities they could do so by applying for available grants (up to £10k).

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the current level of Band D tax for Special Expenses be left unchanged.

35 HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE - FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's draft work programme looking ahead to November 2018 was presented for review.

Members requested that an informal working group be established to look at the High Wycombe Town Market. It was requested that the Clerk email the Committee to request volunteers for the working group and set up a scoping meeting if enough interest was received.

RESOLVED: That the forward work programme be noted and an informal working group to discuss the High Wycombe Town Market be

established, with the group reporting back to the Town Committee in due course.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Tanya Brown	- Democratic Services Officer
Charles Brocklehurst	- Major Projects and Estates Executive
Ian Hunt	- Democratic Services Manager
Julia Turner	- Senior Accountant