

High Wycombe Town Committee Minutes

Date: 15 January 2019

Time: 7.00 - 9.11 pm

PRESENT: Councillor M Clarke
(in the Chair)

Councillors K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, M Asif, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, R Farmer, S Graham, A R Green, M Hanif, 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:

Councillor D Barnes

Councillor D Watson

Melanie Williams – HWBIDCo

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Davy, M Hashmi, Maz Hussain and Miss K Wood.

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

During the item Councillor S Graham declared an interest item 5 (Special Expenses Budget 19/20) as the Chairman of the Hilltop Community Centre. Councillor Graham remained in the meeting during discussion.

29 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the High Wycombe Town Committee held on 13 November 2018 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30 HWBIDCO UPDATE

The Committee welcomed Melanie Williams, BID Manager for HWBIDCo, to the meeting.

Melanie explained that she had been in post for four months, and was responsible for delivery of the BID Business Plan and the management of HWBIDCo. She emphasised that HWBIDCo was an independent, not-for-profit partnership, representing the local business community within High Wycombe town centre. There were 250 BIDS in the UK and the HWBID had been renewed in 2017 for a further five years. The HWBIDCo Business Plan focusses on four areas: well

managed (cleaner, greener, security); busy (events, showcasing the town, media); thriving businesses (signposting / business support, parking) and well presented (represent the business voice). The following points with regards to these areas were noted:

- A new website had been launched and there were now 5,000 followers across social media channels.
- The aim was to have three large events across the year. Currently the main large events, Frogfest and the Christmas lights switch on, were very successful. Members were invited to provide any feedback or ideas for future events. There were also plans for smaller events to take place on a monthly basis to encourage people into the town centre.
- A Town Ranger was in post, this role supported the Safe and Secure vision for the town centre. It was noted that during December (eleven) street beggars had been moved on 700 times. Further areas around enforcement and visibility were being considered with increased enforcement powers for wardens being investigated.
- Members were invited to do a 'walkabout' group around the town centre.
- It was noted that there were some issues regarding anti-social behaviour and littering in the town centre.
- The HWBIDCo would be objecting to the planning application regarding temporary accommodation on the Desborough Road.
- There was a lack of free short term parking in the town centre and HWBIDCo were concerned at the effect this was having on businesses.
- BIDCo were tasked with the removal of unused telephone boxes in the area.

Members raised a number of points and received responses in respect of various questions. Main points were as follows:

- Dispersal of beggars did not solve the issue of street begging however HWBIDCo's priority was to protect businesses in the town centre. It was noted that charities would be working in partnership on this matter (Wycombe Street Support Partnership).
- Pparking was an issue in the town centre as there was very little free or short term parking. It was recognised that enforcement was an issue for the short stay parking on Frogmoor. HWBIDCo would like to pioneer schemes that were beneficial for High Wycombe.
- If more funding was available then HWBIDCo would use this for additional staff to help support businesses and improve the town centre, facilitate future events and employ more street wardens.
- It was suggested that the market should be provided with three years of subsidy to make it worthwhile for traders.
- HWBIDCo could consider bidding for the market contract once up for renewal but noted they were not market operators and this this could cause a conflict of interest as they represent the current arrangements. It was suggested that another option that could be explored, that had worked in other areas, was for the market traders themselves could take over the contract in the future.
- Farmers markets would require good footfall to make them viable.

The Committee thanked Melanie for her update.

31 SPECIAL EXPENSES BUDGET 19/20

Julia Turner, Senior Accountant presented a report which set out the details of the 2019/20 Special Expenses Budget and explained the Council Tax precept. Members noted that the estimated net cost of services for 2019/20 was estimated at £385k, this was a decrease of £35k from the previous year. Members also noted that properties had increased by 538 to 23,208, this would generate a Band D equivalent charge of £15.73.

Various options were provided for Members' consideration which presented the impact to the annual surplus/deficit and to working balances and how this impacted the maximum level the District Council could increase Council tax. It was noted that any increase in the Council Tax Band D for the unparished area of High Wycombe would impact on the Council's ability to levy the £5 increase permitted by Central Government.

During the discussion Members sought clarification on the recharging of management fees and it was explained that a new process was now in place at the Council so these were recorded in a different way. Members were concerned at the management fee cost for Community Grants and it was reported that this was due to officer time. There was also concern regarding the income from football as that this was no longer in the figures: it was reported that the grounds maintenance contractor received the income from football clubs. Members requested that further information regarding this matter be provided to the Committee. Regarding allotments the income was retained by the contractor and the software system was used to record information regarding graves and to take bookings. No information had been included regarding management fees for footway lighting and bus shelters. It was reported that historically there was no management charge for this small demand led budget and there had not been any expenditure in this area for a number of years. In response to a query it was noted that rounded figures were used in the accounting process.

Members considered the options outlined in the report. Councillor Mrs L Clarke, seconded by Councillor S Raja, proposed a reduction to the Band D Council Tax to £11.82. After being put to a vote this was agreed by the majority of the Committee and recommended to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That in respect of the Special Expenses Council Tax setting for 2019/20, a reduction to the Band D Council Tax to £11.82 be recommended.

32 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY - WORKING GROUP FINDINGS

Rub Nawaz, Principal Infrastructure Officer, presented a report outlining the recommendations of the CIL Working Group for recommendation to Cabinet.

It was reported that projects proposed included the Queensway Cemetery, East Wycombe walkway, River Wye Interpretation boards, Bull Lane service yard, local centres and parking pressures. It was anticipated that the CIL Local Allocation receipts for 2019/20 would be £336,000 and the proposed funding allocation recommendations totalled £246,000. This allowed for a £90,000 contingency for any further projects required.

Recommended to Cabinet that:

- i) The following schemes be allocated funding from the CIL 15% Local Allocation in 2019/20:

Project	Funding Allocated
1 - Queensway Cemetery	86,000
2 - East Wycombe Walkway	35,000
3 - River Wye Interpretation Boards (partial award only within town boundary supported)	10,000
4 - Bull Lane Service Yard (partial award)	15,000
5 - Additional Funds - Local Centres & Parking Pressures	100,000
Anticipated CIL Receipts 2019/20	336,000
Total Proposed Allocation	246,000

- ii) That the release of funding be delegated to the relevant Head of Service in consultation with the Head of Finance.
- iii) That Local Members be invited to lead on identifying the scope for external funding to contribute to low cost local shopping centre improvements and parking problem areas and any potential external funding.

33 REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR HIGH WYCOMBE

The Committee considered a report on visioning work to help inform the creation of a new Transport Strategy for the High Wycombe Urban area. Rosie Brake, Principal Planning Policy Officer, gave a detailed presentation and explained that the project was in the early stages. The aim was to align the Local Plan and the Economic Development strategy to enable delivery of the Council’s Corporate Plan priorities. Rosie explained that Wycombe District Council would be working in collaboration with Buckinghamshire County Council to develop the Transport Strategy and develop a shared vision. The Committee’s views were sought on the strategy and were asked how they would prefer to be consulted.

Members raised a number of points and received responses in respect of various questions. The main points were as follows:

- Consideration should be given to cheaper or free parking in the town centre. A memorandum of understanding has been agreed between BCC and WDC and this could be used to make the town better.
- Improvements should be made to improve the appearance of the town.

- Colleagues at BCC have agreed to undertake the project, providing £25,000 in this financial year and BCC is expected to commit a further £60,000 for work in FY 2019-20.
- A number of work streams would be coming together such as the LEP Industrial Strategy and Future High Street Fund.
- It was suggested that there should be public consultation and officers confirmed that this would be the case from the outset.
- Members were concerned at the current lack of public transport and frequency of buses. It was noted that the provision of public transport would be included in the strategy.
- The built up area around High Wycombe would be included and funding for schemes is expected to be drawn from a variety of sources.
- It was suggested that Taxi firms and drivers be consulted on the strategy.
- New technology could be used for parking enforcement in the future.
- Disability groups should be consulted.

The Committee thanked Rosie for her comprehensive presentation.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the preparation of the work for the Regeneration and Transport Strategy for High Wycombe be noted.
- ii) When required, that an extra meeting of the High Wycombe Town Committee be arranged to communicate the view of the Committee to officers to input the development of the vision and resulting strategies.

34 HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE - FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's draft work programme looking ahead to November 2019 was presented for review.

RESOLVED: That the forward work programme be noted.

35 CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman informed the group that an invite had been offered by William Reed to provide Members with a walk around the town centre.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

J Turner	Senior Accountant
J Durkan	Senior Democratic Services Officer
J Openshaw	District Solicitor
S Drummond	Community Services Manager
A Sherwood	Green Space Team Leader
R Nawaz	Principal Infrastructure Officer
S Barlow	Infrastructure & Projects Officer
R Brake	Principle Planning Policy Officer
J Ford	Economic Development Officer