

Improvement and Review Commission Minutes

Date: 14 March 2018

Time: 7.00 - 8.12 pm

PRESENT: Councillor R Gaffney (in the Chair)

Councillors K Ahmed, M C Appleyard, Miss S Brown, H Bull, M E Knight, Mrs W J Mallen, R Newman, Ms C J Oliver, J A Savage, C Whitehead and R Wilson, M Hanif and H L McCarthy

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Mrs L M Clarke OBE, C Etholen, A E Hill and R Raja

42. CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed all Members to the Committee meeting.

He noted that a briefing note had been previously circulated to all members regarding Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The Chairman confirmed that Cllr Julia Langley Cabinet Member for Housing did not need to attend the meeting as this information had been sufficient. A copy of the briefing note would be circulated with the minutes of the meeting for information.

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

44. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement and Review Commission held on 10 January 2018 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

45. UPDATE AND DISCUSSION ON THE BUDGET TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Vice-Chairman of the Budget Task and Finish Group, Councillor Alex Collingwood, provided an update on the second phase meeting of the group.

It was reported that due to the timing of the budget that it had not been possible to bring the phase two recommendations to the Commission. These had been reported directly to Cabinet at its meeting on 5 February.

The Vice Chairman of the Budget Task and Finish Group explained that the Group had considered freezing Council Tax however future risks had also been measured.

It was acknowledged that Council Tax would need to be increased to consider the longer term view.

The Chairman of the Commission noted that discussion would be undertaken regarding the timing of the production of the draft budget.

46. UPDATE ON THE RIVER WYE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Hugh McCarthy provided an update on the status of the Remaking the River Wye Task and Finish Group.

It was reported that the cost of the project would be high however there was the opportunity to obtain external funding from DEFRA to help restore the river. Regarding the environmental impact it was noted that the culverts stopped fish from moving further up the river and being recolonised with fish. If undertaken then remaking the river would be part of the Phase seven masterplan.

An economic assessment was currently being considered and the outcome was expected to delay the final report. This was now expected to be presented to Cabinet in September/October. There was also joint working being undertaken with the Revive the Wye group and the High Wycombe Society to gauge public opinion.

Members made a number of points and received clarification on queries which included the following:

- Establishing the river through the town centre could make amends for previously made planning decisions.
- The District Council would not be undertaking a consultation at this time. However it was noted that it was important to gauge public opinion and an independent group would provide the best approach in this matter.
- It was suggested to use builder sponsorship to help finance the project as done in other towns. It was noted that Sheffield had provided a good example of what could be done to create positive change.
- It would be difficult to balance the economic benefits to justify the expected high financial costs.
- A report would be provided to the Commission in advance of Cabinet so that members could consider the report and provide feedback on the recommendations.
- Pro bono work from the team at Sheffield City Council was being investigated and it was suggested that an officer from Sheffield could provide a presentation to the Commission.
- The existing culverts were now past their 25 year life expectancy and there would be a need to future proof the scheme.

- The River Wye was an important chalk stream and home to brown trout.

The Chairman of the Commission confirmed that the final report from the Remaking the River Wye Task and Finish Group would be brought to the Commission in advance of Cabinet.

47. COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME & CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Chris Whitehead provided an update on the status of the Policing Task and Finish Group. There had so far been two meetings and it was agreed that the brief was to question, 'Is there a problem with anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the district and if so what can we do about it?'

The following points were noted:

- Statistics were required but these had been difficult to obtain.
- At the past two meeting problems had been discussed with Community Service officers at WDC, Environmental Health, and James Boulton from Wycombe Homeless Connection.
- Future meetings would be attended by Superintendent Kevin Brown, Stan Jones Chair of Neighbourhood Action Groups and Red Kite.
- There had been difficulty in contacting the Chief Constable.
- ASB was a broad topic and included various different and complex issues. Due to these complex problems other agencies would be involved. However the Chairman of the TFG noted that this was one of the weaknesses of the system as not all the agencies provided joined up working and no one was ultimately responsible.
- Due to the different agencies involved it was noted that some recommendations may be directed to external bodies.

Councillor Whitehead confirmed that the final report would be presented to the Commission in June or September.

In response to a query it was reported that the TFG were liaising with officers and the Community Safety Partnership arrangements would be considered as part of the investigations and monitoring. Some members of the Commission were concerned at the lack of policing on the streets and the effect on crime and ASB. Councillor Whitehead explained that the TFG were only considering ASB and other problems with crime could be considered another time. It was suggested that the Police Crime Commissioner also be invited to a future meeting, however Councillor Whitehead explained that the Group were speaking to operational officers at this time. It was suggested that there could be a correlation between ASB and mental health issues and Councillor Matt Knight offered to attend a meeting to discuss this aspect if required.

It was noted that the definition of ASB needed to be defined and who was ultimately responsible. Also the Wycombe District Council ASB Policy would need to be actively monitored. It was reported that the level of policing and resource issues would need to be considered as part of the Groups investigations.

The Chairman of the Commission noted that the Task and Finish Group had been undertaken as a result of the Motion at Full Council. He suggested that the Chief Constable and Police Crime Commissioner be invited to attend a TFG meeting. He thanked Councillor Whitehead, the Group and the officers for all their work so far.

48. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

There were no Councillor Calls for Action.

49. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS

There were no supplementary items.

50. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

51. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Chairman thanked all the Members, especially his Vice Chairman (Cllr Collingwood) and the officers, for their invaluable support and contribution during the Council year. He confirmed that he and Cllr Collingwood would be standing for election as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Commission respectively for another term of office.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Jemma Durkan	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Catherine Whitehead	- Head of Democratic, Legal & Policy.