

Improvement and Review Commission Minutes

Date: 12 June 2019

Time: 7.00 - 8.20 pm

PRESENT: Councillor R Gaffney (in the Chair)

Councillors K Ahmed, M C Appleyard, A D Collingwood, M E Knight, Mrs W J Mallen, N B Marshall, H L McCarthy, S K Raja, R Raja, D A C Shakespeare OBE and R Wilson,

1. CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman, Councillor Gaffney, welcomed the Cabinet Member for Community to the meeting and offered congratulations on his recent award of the BEM (British Empire Medal) for services to the community in the Queen's Birthday Honours for 2019. The Cabinet Member thanked the Commission and stated that he had accepted the award on behalf of all people undertaking voluntary work in the local community and he would proudly wear the medal on civic occasions.

The Chairman also welcomed Councillor Collingwood as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for 19/20. The Chairman noted that this would be a challenging year for the Council and outlined his 12 point plan for the coming year. He confirmed that a special meeting of the Commission would be organised to consider the upcoming Cabinet Member responses to the Remaking River Wye Task and Finish Group recommendations.

In reference to the 12 point plan the Chairman noted that regarding the anticipation of call-ins from the Opposition it was hoped that members could work together to avoid possible call-ins.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H Bull, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, A Hill, M Hussain JP and J Savage.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Regarding Minute 41, the Vice-Chairman confirmed that all comments made at the meeting regarding the development of the Local Industrial Strategy had been provided to the LEP Board. It had also been highlighted to the LEP Board that

'distinct economic assets' should include other assets in the county not just the 'superstar' assets outlined in the draft documents.

Regarding Minute 42, an update on the Parking Task and Finish Group would be provided at the meeting.

The Commission also agreed that Chairman of the Waste Task and Finish Group Chairman would be Councillor Roger Wilson, with Vice-Chairman Councillor John Savage.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Improvement and Review Commission held on 13 March 2019 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

5. CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY - UPDATE ON STREET WARDENS

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Community, Deputy Cabinet Member for Community and Head of Housing, Environment and Community Services.

The Cabinet Member provided the Commission with an update regarding the appointment of the Community Wardens. The Commission noted that three full time wardens were in post and would begin patrols on 27 June following completion of various training modules. These training sessions would include First Aid, Conflict Management, Safeguarding and CCTV/SIA. Uniforms and equipment was in place and the Wardens would report directly to the Anti-Social Behaviour Team Leader.

The Warden's patrol would include known areas with anti-social behaviour, begging, street drinking and drugs. It was noted that the aim for the wardens was not to arrest perpetrators but to provide support and signposting to the right partners to enable rehabilitation. The Wardens would have powers under the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to issue fixed penalty notices and arrests would only be made if there was no other choice. The Cabinet Member confirmed that an application had been approved for Wardens to be provided with powers under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) to help them with their role.

The Cabinet Member informed the Commission that One Recovery Bucks, an organisation that supported people affected by drugs and alcohol in Buckinghamshire, had an office based in High Wycombe and Wardens would be able to refer people to the service. It was noted that One Recover Bucks had obtained funding for their own warden who would also be available to support the area.

The Cabinet Member for Community confirmed that this long term plan was a positive step to help start the process of recovery for people in need and reduce begging for drugs and alcohol. He noted that beggars usually had addiction problems and support for addicts was the long term plan.

It was also noted that the Community Safety Partnership would now meet quarterly and the new Chairman would be Superintendent Kevin Brown.

Regarding a query that not all beggars were addicts, the Cabinet Member reported that surveys and a regular reports were undertaken by the Anti-Social Behaviour Team Leader and it was found that the majority of beggars all had addiction problems. It was rare to see non addicted people begging in the area.

It was agreed that a written report would be provided to the Commission in 6 to 9 months' time to review the projects objectives.

In response to a query it was noted that Fixed Penalty Notices could be issued under the Public Spaces Protection Order. Monitoring was undertaken and the number of people begging was reported. Street Wardens would feedback on a regular basis and this would be reported to Cabinet Members.

It was noted that One Recovery Bucks currently had 900 people registered and was a countywide charity. It was recommended to visit their hub to see the work being undertaken. Regarding gambling addiction this was not known to be an issue with people living on the streets however the Cabinet Member would investigate if this was an issue that One Recovery Bucks could help with.

Regarding beggars knocking on doors it was reported that Wycombe Homeless Connection did not have a waiting list at the moment and money would not be required to access these services.

In response to a query the Cabinet Member reported that Thames Valley Police representatives attended the CSSG meetings and the Group had been informed that police recruitment had been difficult but was improving.

Regarding operations the street wardens were able to operate alone and would be equipped with body cameras and phones however some areas would require two wardens. The current plan was for three full-time wardens and following reviews then further funding would be sought if this number needed to be increased.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member, Deputy Cabinet Member and Head of Housing, Environment and Community for the update.

6. UPDATE ON THE PARKING TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Vice-Chairman of the Parking Task and Finish Group, Councillor Alex Collingwood provided the Commission with an update.

It was reported that the Parking TFG had met to consider the Park and Ride, capacity, technology and electronic signage. The bus service and timetabling to the Park and Ride was under review and a robust response had been provided to Bucks County Council for consideration.

The next meeting would be held on 17 June to consider commuter parking and draft recommendations were also being considered. The recommendations were

scheduled to be brought to the IRC meeting in September 19 and forwarded to Cabinet immediately for consideration.

It was commented that parking at Wycombe Hospital had become an issue and people were now parking in Morrisons car park.

The Commission thanked the Vice-Chairman for the update.

7. COMMISSION'S WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Commission considered the work programme report along with the Cabinet Forward Plan and Commission Work Programme.

The Chairman noted that currently the following task and finish groups were being considered –

River Wye TFG
Parking TFG
Waste Contract TFG
Budget TGG.

Regarding the River Wye TFG it was noted that work had been completed by the Task and Finish Group members and officers, and the recommendations were currently with the Cabinet Members for a response. The Chairman of the Commission requested that a special meeting of the Commission be arranged to consider the responses of Cabinet and invitees should include Cabinet Members and the Head of Finance and Commercial so issues can be discussed.

It was also noted that an urgent meeting may be required regarding the adoption of the Local Plan.

Support was offered to the Chairman of the Audit Committee regarding the recent issues in relation to the external auditors. The Chairman of the Audit Committee confirmed that he would report directly to Council and any matters requiring action would be undertaken by the Audit Committee.

The Chairman confirmed that new Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities recently published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government had been circulated to the Commission.

The Commission also offered their thanks to the Democratic Services officer for her work and congratulated the Head of Democratic, Legal and Policy for her appointment as Monitoring Officer for the Shadow Authority.

8. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

There were no Councillor Calls for Action.

9. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS

There were no Supplementary items.

10. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

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