

# Improvement and Review Commission Minutes

Date: 5 February 2020

Time: 7.00 - 8.30 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillor R Gaffney (in the Chair)

Councillors K Ahmed, H Bull, A D Collingwood, M E Knight, Mrs W J Mallen, H L McCarthy, S K Raja, R Raja and R Wilson

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs L M Clarke OBE, A E Hill, M Hussain JP, N B Marshall, Ms C J Oliver and J A Savage

**Also present:** Councillor Graham Peart – Cabinet Member for Community

## 27. CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman thanked the members for their attendance and welcomed the Cabinet Member for Community, Councillor Graham Peart for attending the meeting.

The Chairman noted that this would be the last meeting of the Improvement and Review Commission for Wycombe District Council.

## 28. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2019 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

## 29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

## 30. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Community, Councillor Graham Peart, Community Safety Manager, Sarah McBrearty, Anti-Social Behaviour Team Leader, Nick Adkins, and Head of Housing, Environment and Community Services, Nigel Dicker.

The Cabinet Member explained that Sarah had a great knowledge of working on Prevent and Nick understood issues regarding High Wycombe town centre. He explained that the street warden project had been a result of a motion to council

regarding policing in the town centre, and following that members had approved finance for the street warden's project.

Sarah provided an update on the work of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). She explained that Kevin Brown was the chairman of the strategic group had met every three months. Following the Anti-Social Behaviour Task and Finish Group a more operational CSP had been created with Graham Hadley as the Chairman with a wider group of stakeholders. A CSP Action Plan had been created and the CSP now meet every six weeks. Projects such as dealing with knife crime had been highlighted and a plan for funding to deal with the issue had been coordinated through the CSP. Following the creation of the unitary council on 1 April the CSP Board would be a strategic county wide operational group. It was noted that there was still a need for a local group for High Wycombe to monitor and deal with key issues in the area.

Nick provided a presentation on the work of the street wardens and the benefits to the town centre. Members were informed of the training the wardens had received which included Safeguarding, Emergency First Aid, Conflict Management, CCTV (SIA Licence) and Radio Communications. The wardens performed high visibility patrols in the town centre to deter crime and tackle anti-social behaviour. It was noted that the wardens mainly dealt with begging and street drinking. However, they could also provide Emergency First Aid e.g. CPR and Naloxone which helped individuals to recover from a drug overdose.

Nick noted that the wardens had a good rapport with people in the town centre and had built relationships that enable them to move on beggars. They supported the police and sometimes provided evidence for the police to support enforcement. It was noted that Frogmore had improved and there had been an overall reduction in begging and street drinking. The wardens regularly dealt with Safeguarding issues and had provided first aid, helped with searching for missing persons and submitted referrals to the Multi-Agency Hub (MASH). Also partnership working had included local businesses and security staff to deter shoplifting, and referring vulnerable people to the Safeguarding Hub. It was noted that the street wardens had provided a positive impact on the town centre.

The Chairman thanked Nick for the presentation and the good work. He noted that Wycombe District Council was the only authority in the county to do this project.

In response to member questions the following points were noted:

- The wardens have powers to enforce the Public Spaces Protection Order but do not currently have any further formal powers. However an application had been submitted to an accreditation scheme to provide additional powers.
- Begging was a national problem it was noted that the wardens build a rapport with people on the street and were often on first name terms.
- A rough sleepers count was undertaken on an annual basis.
- Continued work was to be undertaken with mental health agencies.
- Funding was currently in place for 3 wardens and resources would have to be considered if wardens were required outside the town centre.

- Regarding begging outside Lloyds Bank work was being undertaken partner agencies to deal with the problem. The Wardens work closely with a One Recovery Bucks outreach worker to engage with beggars.
- A member noted that wardens were often doing the job of the police and there were concerns regarding the lack of community policing.
- Regarding protection wardens were provided with stab vests and had emergency support via radio if required. It was noted that protection was rarely needed due to the rapport the wardens had built up with people in the town centre.
- The wardens did not usually patrol on a Sunday and on Saturdays there was usually only one on duty.
- Fines were used as a deterrent and this was usually enough to make people disperse from an area.
- It was noted that aggressive begging was when people are directly approached by a beggar. It was a problem and some beggars had convincing stories; it was advised not to give beggars money.
- Work had been undertaken in the Desborough Road area regarding safeguarding and a drop-in night to engage with young girls had taken place.
- Promotion of the Victims First Willow Project that supported victims of forms of exploitation had taken place.
- Regarding Child Sexual Exploitation it was noted that spot checks of hotels and test purchases were undertaken, and officers worked with the police.
- Work on community resilience regarding crime and victims of crime included a Safe Places scheme and dementia awareness.
- Work regarding Neighbourhood Watch linked into a Street Association scheme run by the County Council.
- Details regarding the Neighbourhood Watch Co-Ordinator would be shared if required who were able to provide advice regarding fraud crime. It was noted that some criminals were very organised regarding fraud and theft. The council, police and business worked together and regularly discussed this matter to share information.

The Cabinet Member for Community noted that officers had worked to mitigate the anti-social behaviour issues in the town centre however not all the problems could be solved. He was proud of what had been achieved and the work that had been undertaken to deal with the issues in the town centre.

The Vice-Chairman noted that the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee had made 33 recommendations to the Shadow Executive with regards to the budget for the new unitary council. One of the recommendations was that the street wardens scheme be extended and a formal proposal would be made the Shadow Executive regarding this matter.

It was noted that Aylesbury Vale DC were also interested in the scheme and it would be a much bigger project across the county.

The Head of Housing, Environment and Communities noted that the case had been made for further funding and congratulated the wardens and officers for all the work that had been undertaken.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Members, Sarah and Nick for the information and noted the good work over the last 18 months.

### **31. IMPROVEMENT & REVIEW COMMISSION ACHIEVEMENTS**

The Committee received a report which provided information on the work undertaken by the Improvement and Review Commission since its inception in 2005. The Chairman was astonished at all the achievements and commented on how worthwhile the work of scrutiny had been at the council.

One member raised concern that previous call-ins had not been successful and there had been difficulty in scrutinising Cabinet decisions. It was noted that since 2005 the Commission had called-in 21 Cabinet decisions and one had been successful regarding the football stadium.

Members noted the work of the Task and Finish Groups and that Cabinet had taken on board recommendations from TFGs. However some Members were concerned that the Commission was an advisory group.

The Chairman noted the work of the Commission had been cross party with all members being offered the opportunity to be involved. It was also noted that the Commission had been independent and there had been a good relationship with Leaders and Cabinet Members.

The Chairman hoped that the good work would continue in the new unitary authority.

### **32. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL - SCRUTINY DISCUSSION**

It was noted that the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Collingwood was also the Chairman for the Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee. He confirmed that 33 recommendations had been put to the Shadow Executive from the Shadow Budget Task and Finish Group. It was noted that year one of the budget was robust however year two and three required some further examination.

It was expected that the new unitary council would be made up of six various scrutiny committees. There was concern about the effectiveness of how effective these Committees would be under the new system.

### **33. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION**

There were no Councillor Calls for Action.

### **34. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEMS**

There were no supplementary items.

### **35. URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

### **36. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS**

The Chairman provided the Commission with an Ode he had written.

In 2005 the I&R Commission was born  
We now enter and move onto a new dawn.  
It has been a long, but enjoyable ride  
But we leave with our heads held high, and with pride.  
21 Call-ins was my biggest hate  
But at least it caused a great deal of debate.  
To all those of you that have taken part  
I thank you from the bottom of my heart.  
A special personal thanks to Alex C  
Whom has always supported me.  
Now that we are now all done  
Aylesbury here we come.  
When we are long and gone  
For me memories will last long.  
For the last time I thank you all and good night.

Councillor Ron Gaffney

The Chairman thanked all the Improvement and Review Commission members for all their input, help and assistance over the years. Also all the Cabinet Members that had attended the Commission from time to time. He also thanked Jemma for keeping him on the "straight and narrow" – but a special thanks to his vice Chairman, Alex Collingwood. He thought that they made a great team together.

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Chairman

#### **The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:**

Nigel Dicker	- Head of Housing, Environment & Community Services
Jemma Durkan	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Sarah McBrearty	- Community Safety Manager
Nick Adkins	- Anti-Social Behaviour Team Leader