



Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 28 September 2021 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, HP19 8FF, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 11.00 am.

Members present

G Williams (Deputy Leader, in the chair), S Bowles, S Broadbent, J Chilver, A Cranmer, C Harriss, N Naylor and P Strachan.

Others in attendance

C Jackson (Deputy Cabinet Member for Public Health), A Cranmer (via MS Teams remotely), R Stuchbury and A Wheelhouse.

Apologies

A Macpherson and M Tett.

Agenda Item

1 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors A Macpherson and M Tett.

2 **Minutes**

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September, 2021, be approved as a correct record.

3 **Declarations of interest**

There were none.

4 **Hot Topics**

The following hot topics were reported:-

Cabinet Member for Communities

Cabinet were informed of three issues:

- The Council was working with the Thames Valley Police on their annual Community Safety survey that would be live for the next 4 weeks. The

survey would help the police and partners understand that the major concerns were relating to crime and antisocial behaviour.

- Community Boards – the next round of meetings were about to commence. Many of the Action Groups had been meeting to look at a wide range of issues and that work would be fed back to the Community Board meetings.
- Afghan re-settlement programme – the Council was grateful to partners for housing offers that had been received. Work was continuing with the Home Office to match families to Buckinghamshire. Thanks were also expressed to the community across Bucks, 144 offers of support had been received to date and the Crisis fund had reached £43,000.

Cabinet Member for Transport

Cabinet were provided with an update on the current availability of fuel predicament. While the overall impact on service provision by Transport for Bucks and for household refuse collections was minimal, the Council was still meeting twice daily to discuss emerging issues and provide assistance / mitigate impacts when and as problems arose. This included liaising with emergency services and the NHS. The Council had been made aware this morning of difficulties being experienced by 2 operators of school bus routes. Unfortunately, 9 routes were not running this morning including the 917 (Vale Travel) and Red Line services: 643, 655, 671, 814, 815, 850, 945 and 946. This had impacted a large number of pupils and urgent messages had been sent out to parents. The Council was working with the operators and schools in response to these transport issues, including trying to ensure sustainable supplies of fuel were obtained for school transport. Affected families and people were advised to check the bus alerts information on the Council's website that would be regularly updated throughout the day. Information would also be made available via social media channels.

Deputy Cabinet Member for Public Health

Cabinet were provided with an update on the roll out of Covid booster shots programme. The Government had released it's Winter Response Plan which would be managed through the primary care (GPs and pharmacies) and be coordinated through Clinical Commissioning Groups. Health and social care staff could already book their booster shots through the national booking site, and some hospital staff had already started to receive their shots. Boosters would soon be offered to eligible groups including the over 50s, care home residents and anyone over 16 who lived with someone who was immune-suppressed, a carer, or had a health condition that put them at high risk. As the Government had mandated that a minimum of 6 months was required between receiving the 2nd Covid shot and the booster shot, some people would not be able to receive the booster shot when they received their winter fly jab.

5 Question Time

Question from Councillor Robin Stuchbury to Councillor Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration

“Currently Buckinghamshire Council has a minimum target of 25% affordable housing in the VALP and the Council should be supporting neighbourhood plan aspirations for a higher percentage of 35%. These are testing times for the younger generation trying to get a foothold on the housing ladder or to be able to remain and work within Buckinghamshire and there is a real likelihood a large percentage may settle within the northern corridor through the Cambridge Arc. I genuinely seek an understanding of how Buckinghamshire Council will be able to meet demand for accommodation within the targets proposed in the recently adopted VALP and I should like to know what steps are going to be taken to maximise affordable housing within the area of the VALP, and also in the emerging Buckinghamshire plan.”

Response

“The VALP aims to secure a minimum of 25% affordable housing on sites of 11 dwellings or more or 0.3ha or more and we will implement this policy through our development management teams on sites at or above these thresholds. The VALP (paragraph 5.4) indicates that the total assessed need for affordable housing in the VALP area is 4,200 affordable homes or 20.4% of the total housing need for the area. Making an allowance for the fact that sites under 11 dwellings will not provide any affordable housing, a policy requiring 25% affordable housing on sites that are required to provide affordable housing should be sufficient to deliver the required total need.

It is important to note that developers will often challenge the level of affordable housing to be provided on viability grounds and the affordable housing policy in the VALP (Policy H1) sets out the Council’s position that we will need clear evidence on viability through an open book financial appraisal that is independently assessed. This will help ensure we can maximise the amount of affordable housing that is secured through implementation of the VALP policy.

In relation to neighbourhood plan aspirations, the Planning Inspector examining the VALP made clear that neighbourhood plans that set higher affordable housing percentage requirements would not be in conflict with the VALP policy of a minimum of 25%. He also made clear that the VALP would not override those neighbourhood plans that have already set a higher affordable housing requirement. For those neighbourhood planning groups considering setting higher requirements in future neighbourhood plans, it is important to highlight that they will need to provide evidence to justify their policy requirements. This will need to be robust enough to convince an independent examiner. As part of the Council’s duty to provide support on neighbourhood planning, officers will be able to provide some advice on this where necessary, but it will be for the neighbourhood planning groups to provide or commission the necessary evidence.

Looking ahead, the Council is commencing work on the preparation of the Buckinghamshire Local Plan and as part of this we will want to explore how to best deliver affordable housing across the whole of the county through the planning

system. Critical to this will be undertaking a viability assessment of the Plan's proposals to determine the most appropriate level of affordable housing on sites, having regard to other development costs including infrastructure requirements. At the same time we will need to update our housing needs assessments to understand both the scale and type of need for affordable housing going forward."

Question from Councillor Alison Wheelhouse to Councillor Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration

"In a fast evolving planning environment, given the recent proliferation of Permitted Development prior notification applications for:

- change of use from office user to residential use (Class O, now Class MA – Part 3, Schedule 2 Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) which permits change of use from Class E to C3).
- addition of storeys to existing buildings.
- new Class ZA.

Please will the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Leader ensure that Article 4 Directions be made as soon as possible in relation to Classes MA and ZA, and addition of storeys to existing buildings? While these types of development may be of benefit in the right circumstances, they should require full planning consent and should be capable of being called-in to planning committee, so that the community voice is heard in the planning system and the potential loss of commercial space is properly assessed."

Response

"The Council recognises the importance seeking to retain healthy, vibrant and viable town centres and to protect our primary shopping frontages and core shopping areas from inappropriate development. I have therefore already asked officers to commence initial work on an Article 4 Direction that seeks to achieve the correct level of control and protection from Class MA Permitted Development (Class E to Residential). A paper on this subject will be brought to Cabinet at its earliest opportunity proposing to impose an Article 4 Direction on a number of areas across our Council area.

In relation to Class ZA, I can confirm that we are also looking at the appropriateness of imposing Article 4 Directions restricting the use of other PD rights in our area including class ZA. Whilst we are conscious that as part of the protection of the Green Belt we need to ensure that we maximise the housing land supply on Brownfield sites in our area, we also need to strike the right balance in regards to restrictions on Permitted Development rights. We will however, be considering the use of Article 4 Directions to restrict other Permitted Development rights as appropriate."

6 Forward Plan (28 Day Notice)

Councillor Williams introduced the Forward Plan and commended it to all Members of the Council and the public, as a document that gave forewarning of exactly what Cabinet would be discussing at forthcoming meetings.

RESOLVED –

That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

7 Director of Public Health Annual Report 2021

Each year the Director of Public Health produced an annual report on the health of the population. This year the report focused on domestic violence and abuse. Key areas included how to recognise signs of domestic abuse and signposts on where to get help, who might be at greater risk of experiencing domestic abuse and when, including research on warning signs leading up to domestic homicides. It also covered what was known about interventions that contributed to reducing the risk and harms of domestic abuse and the need for more work to focus on preventing perpetrators from committing domestic abuse.

The report made recommendations based on the local situation for the new Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Board and a range of partners in Buckinghamshire to implement. The Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Board would be responsible for strategy development and development and oversight of an action plan which should include the responses to these recommendations. This would fall under the remit of the Communities portfolio.

The report had been written taking into account the views of a range of partners from Buckinghamshire Council, the NHS, Thames Valley Police, Women's Aid and the views of survivors of domestic abuse and service users who contributed to our needs assessment.

Ending domestic abuse was everyone's business and required a co-ordinated response from national government, local partners and the public. Tackling domestic abuse, and providing effective support services for victims as well as perpetrators was a national priority; the Domestic Abuse Bill 2021 had been passed by Parliament in April 2021. The Bill and its statutory requirements, such as the formation of a Domestic Abuse Board, would inform local actions.

The Cabinet report also contained information on the outcomes of the Director of Public Health annual report 2020 that had focussed on providing an overview of the health of the residents of the new unitary council for Buckinghamshire, the new Community Boards, the local Primary Care Networks and on Integrated Care Partnership and local residents. The 2020 report was being finalised when the UK was hit by the first wave of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and since then all public health efforts had been refocussed on responding to this. Public Health was now planning the recovery, while continuing to learn about the virus and its impacts on our communities. The recommendations in the 2020 report would continue to be implemented during the recovery phase of the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member for Communities informed Members that the Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Strategy and Needs Assessment was currently being consulted upon with partners. The Domestic Abuse Board would then consider it on 6 October, following which a Task and Finish Group would work to co-design the Strategy before it was reported back to Cabinet in November 2021.

Members also sought additional information on issues of concern stemming from the annual report including how people should report domestic abuse, how to improve reporting (with less than 1 in 5 instances were reported to the police), information on national/local support schemes and on emergency accommodation, on recruiting diversity into domestic abuse teams. Members were also informed that there was a lack of data on ethnicity and domestic abuse although national surveys had shown that a wide range of people were affected. There had also been an increase in domestic abuse cases during the pandemic lockdowns.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2021 be noted.**
- (2) That the recommendations within the Annual Report on Domestic Violence and Abuse, that were in addition to the statutory duties for support for people living in safe accommodation, be endorsed with a view to them informing the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board Strategy and Delivery Plan.**

8 Buckinghamshire County Deal Proposals

During 2020 through the Buckinghamshire Growth Board (comprising elected Members and representatives from health and business) the Council and its partners had developed proposals for a Recovery and Growth Deal building on the unique strengths, partnerships, and opportunities within the County. In November 2020 had Cabinet agreed the deal proposition and supported engagement with government with the aim of securing investment in the county.

In July 2021, the Prime Minister had set out his vision on how the government would level up the UK. As part of this he had announced plans to take a more flexible approach to devolution through the creation of new 'County Deals'. Expressions of interest were invited from upper tier local authorities interested in pursuing discussions with government to develop a County Deal.

To confirm the Buckinghamshire Council's intention to submit a bid the Leader of the Council had written to the Minister in August this year.

Although there was no template for an application, the Government had indicated that County Deals would be guided by some key principles. These were set out in a letter from the Secretary of State to Council Leaders, Chief Executives and Mayors in

July:

- Strong local leadership would be fundamental.
- County devolution should operate across a sensible economic geography of a suitable scale and one based on local identity, bringing local partners together and with powers exercised at the right level to make a difference for local communities.
- The nature and appropriateness of proposed governance structures would impact on the nature of the deal and the types of powers and flexibilities provided in a deal. Government would expect demonstrable improvements in governance, efficiency and local service join-up as part of the deal that supported the delivery of levelling up.
- Deals to include significant reform proposals, including ways to achieve greater financial efficiency, administrative streamlining and / or more joined up services in an area.

The Council's County Deal proposals was focused around our vision for Places, our High-tech sectors and Skills. More information on the proposals was detailed in the Cabinet report.

A number of Members spoke and were fully supportive of the County deal proposals, and for Buckinghamshire to be at the forefront of County deals with the Government.

RESOLVED –

That ongoing negotiations with central Government to secure a county deal for Buckinghamshire based on the priorities and proposals set out in the Council's Recovery and Growth Proposition be supported.

9 Oxford-Cambridge Arc Vision proposal response

The Oxford to Cambridge Arc had been conceived in 2017 as a nationally strategically significant knowledge-intensive economic region offering huge potential for future economic growth. The economic prospectus for the Arc had been launched in October 2020. Local authorities in Buckinghamshire had been party to local government discussions about the Arc up until August 2020 when Buckinghamshire Council withdrew its support for the Arc and left the Arc Leaders Group (along with the University and Local Enterprise Partnership) over concerns about the central imposition of housing targets and marginalisation of the views of individual councils.

Following the launch of the Oxford Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework policy paper in February 2021, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government launched the first of three proposed consultations in August 2021. This first consultation focussed on '*Creating a Vision for the Ox-Cam Arc*' and the proposed scope of the sustainability appraisal. The consultation aimed to support the Government in producing a vision for the Spatial Framework, and therefore, guide the area's future growth to 2050. Buckinghamshire was included in the consultation

content that made up the Arc geography.

The Cabinet report set out the context of the consultation and the proposed response from the Council. The draft response was attached to the Cabinet report.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the draft response to the Oxford Cambridge Arc consultation be agreed.**
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director for Planning, Growth and Sustainability, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to submit the final response to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, incorporating any further changes agreed at the Cabinet meeting.**

10 Wycombe Air Park

Cabinet received a report, as well as a confidential appendix (considered in private session) on 10 hectares (26 acres) of land that Buckinghamshire Council owned adjacent to Wycombe Airpark known as Area A/Southside, edged red on the plan in the public Cabinet report.

The report asked Cabinet to authorise the Service Director for Property & Assets to conclude negotiations, and heads of terms, exchange and complete a lease with the prospective tenant for:

- (i) Licence to occupy Area A land as shown on the plan contained in this report in accordance with the terms considered in the Part 2 report considered in the confidential part of this agenda.**
- (ii) Agreement to lease (subject to planning) and lease for Area A land contained in this report in accordance with the terms considered in the Part 2 report considered in the confidential part of this agenda.**

RESOLVED –

- (1) That authority be delegated to the Service Director for Property and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets, the Section 151 Officer and the Service Director for Legal and Democratic Services, to conclude conclude negotiations and heads of terms, agree contracts, exchange and complete on the lease of Area A land as shown on the plan contained in this report and adjacent to Wycombe Airpark as set out in this report and the confidential report containing the financial information considered at Part 2 of the agenda.**

- (2) **That authority be delegated to the Service Director for Property and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets, the Section 151 Officer and the Service Director for Legal and Democratic Services, to discontinue negotiations with the parties set out in confidential annex at Part 2 of this report for the disposal of Area A.**

11 Exclusion of the public (if required)

RESOLVED –

That pursuant to Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Minute No 12, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act as defined as follows:

Minute 12 – Wycombe Air Park

The item includes Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972) (The need to maintain the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure, because disclosure could prejudice the Council's position in any future process or negotiations).

12 Confidential Appendix for Wycombe Air Park

This item was undertaken in confidential session as part of Minute item 10 and details of the public discussion and the decisions taken are included within Minute number 10.

13 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 19 October 2021, at 10am.