



Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 6 December 2022 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 10.45 am.

Members present

M Tett, Cllr A Macpherson, G Williams, S Bowles, S Broadbent, J Chilver, A Cranmer, C Harriss, P Strachan and M Winn

Others in attendance

P Martin and R Stuchbury

Agenda Item

1 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

2 Minutes

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Hot Topics

The following hot topics were discussed:-

Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services

Last week the Council hosted the green schools Dragons' Den challenge, where Waddesdon Church of England School won with their idea of installing 20 RE:GEN bikes in the school gym to generate renewable energy to enable savings of £17,000. Four schools took part including Waddesdon C of E School, The Grange, Buckingham School and John Colet. Students had the opportunity to work with local green businesses and discuss 'green careers' with council colleagues – from country parks to waste and recycling, and ecology to flood preparedness.

Cabinet Member for Transport

Free parking was being offered to residents over the Christmas period which hopefully would attract residents back to the high street.

<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-transport/parking/check-for-free-parking-over-the-christmas-period/>

The Council had already done a lot of gritting and temperatures were monitored daily to assess what maintenance was required. In relation to the cold snap expected shortly the Cabinet Member asked residents to drive carefully when winter conditions were expected.

Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration

Reference was made to a controversial planning application for Tralee Farm in Holmer Green, High Wycombe. The Planning Inspectorate had issued their decision following a planning appeal. Following the Public Inquiry in July which concluded at the end of September, the planning appeal was dismissed and the costs application by the appellant was also dismissed. Hopefully this would reinforce the premise that schemes submitted by landowners meet the requirements of planning policy and that developers would align their proposals to bring forward comprehensive development across the whole of the allocation.

Planning enforcement sat at the heart of the planning system and without it legislation would be meaningless. The Cabinet Member had read a report that many Councils considered themselves under staffed in this regard and have difficulty recruiting staff. This was not the case in Buckinghamshire who had a well-resourced team who were achieving good results to uphold the planning system. This Council was fourth outside the city of London authorities in terms of enforcement cases.

Cabinet Member for Communities

The Cabinet Member referred to the cost of living crisis and how Community Boards were supporting this with around 30 projects currently with Boards for consideration including various ideas such as food hampers, Christmas presents and supporting Christmas events. The Boards were working closely with the Helping Hands Team to maximise the benefits of these projects and would be seeking to continue the support into the New Year.

The Council had received the Silver Award for the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion – Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation. The TIDE Scheme measured the Council's performance and progress and this was an improvement on the Bronze award received last year.

Cabinet Member for Homelessness and Regulatory Services

On 1 December the Council started the Winter Warmth Programme for rough sleepers and units have been procured in Wycombe and Aylesbury to provide another option for rough sleeping during the winter period. There were 15 units in Wycombe and 4 in Aylesbury.

In relation to mould in any rented properties the Cabinet Member urged residents to contact their landlord if there were any issues and if no help was forthcoming to get in touch with environmental health. He also mentioned that he had a meeting about this issue this week with local housing associations.

Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure

The Chiltern Lifestyle Centre had been open one year and was going from strength to strength. The National Paralympic Heritage Trust would receive a tree from Buckingham Palace which would be installed at Stoke Mandeville Stadium. He also promoted the two pantomimes at Wycombe and Aylesbury theatres.

Leader

The Leader referred to the Inspire Bucks Programme where organisers were looking for toys for children from deprived areas and backgrounds such as Ukrainian children. He also referred to a Strategy being launched next week in relation to the Integrated Care System which addressed the way health and social care was provided across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and some of Berkshire.

<https://www.inspirebucks.charity/>

5 Question Time

The following response to the Cabinet question was noted:-

Question from Councillor Robin Stuchbury to Councillor Angela Macpherson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

“From October 2023, the Government will introduce a new £86,000 cap on the amount anyone in England will need to spend on their personal care over their lifetime. In addition, the upper capital limit (UCL), which is the point at which people becoming eligible to receive some financial support from the local authority, will be raised to £100,000 from the current £23,500. As a result, people with less than £100,000 of chargeable assets will never contribute more than 20%. I understand in introducing this change, the Government will need to introduce an amendment to the Care Act 2014 and the way people will be means tested which is subject to Parliamentary approval.

Under the Care Act 2014, charges must not reduce people's income below a certain amount but local authorities can allow people to keep more of their income if they wish. This amount is known as the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG). This would allow people receiving means tested support to keep more of their own income for those receiving care in their home and personal expenses allowances for care residence. It was indicated the cap will cover daily living costs for people in care homes and people will remain responsible for their daily living costs throughout their care journey, including after they reach the cap. These are very large changes to the way the local authority will work in a caring environment to support vulnerable adults. It is obvious that a large percentage of the councils funding is penultimately through the social care precept, which is and has grown close to 12% of the council tax Buckinghamshire Council collects.

As we enter the financial year 2023/2024 what is the financial planning in respect to these changes in legislation? The purchasing of four Wood Place care homes could be more financially challenging in the fiscal years, 23, 24,25, then they were

in the previous years of both the legacy County Council and the early years of Buckinghamshire Council. What modelling is being undertaken and is the ability of the council to collect increases in social care allowance/social care precept being considered by Cabinet or does Cabinet not agree with undertaking any rises in the social care precept due to their political stance? This is an important question due to the cost of living crisis many of our constituents find themselves in across a broad income spectrum within Buckinghamshire.”

RESPONSE from Councillor Macpherson

In its autumn budget statement on 17th November, the government announced that the social care charging reforms described in the question are now delayed by two years to October 2025.

As part of our preparation to implement the social care charging reforms, we modelled the likely number of residents that will benefit from the proposed changes. The government has always indicated that the cost of the changes would be fully funded but we believe that the cost has been underestimated. The postponement of the implementation date to 2025 provides both the Council and the government with more time to prepare for the financial impact of the reforms.

Also in the autumn budget statement, the government announced that councils could increase the social care precept by 2% (up from the current 1%). Buckinghamshire Council has this under consideration as part of its medium term financial planning to address the increasing cost of social care provision.

6 Forward Plan (28 Day Notice)

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

RESOLVED – That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

7 Select Committee Work Programme

The Leader introduced the Forward Plan and commended it to all Members of the Council and the public, as a document that gave forewarning of what Select Committees would be discussing at forthcoming meetings.

RESOLVED – That the Select Committee Work Programme be noted.

8 Aylesbury Link Roads, Housing Infrastructure Fund negotiation and South East Aylesbury Link Road Phase 1 and 2 - Project update, delivery and funding

Cabinet noted that in Aylesbury, the scale of development as set out in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) would result in cumulative impacts that required link roads spread across a range of sites and which were not readily deliverable by a single landowner or developer. For this reason and to address cash flow issues a wide-ranging package of infrastructure to support housing delivery and funded by

HIF was agreed. The scale of the link roads delivery and the need to coordinate multiple developers and other external funding was proving extremely challenging. Cost inflation, energy prices and unseen issues means that cost estimates have risen substantially over the past year, and there was now not enough funding to meet all infrastructure commitments.

The Council was engaged in negotiation with Homes England regarding reallocation and reprofile of HIF funding. This would also require agreement of DfT, DLUHC and The Treasury. The Council was in discussions with all parties. It should be noted that the funding sources proposed were all external and therefore this project did not require any further Buckinghamshire Council funding. The next link road to be delivered was the South East Aylesbury Link Road - a strategically important dual carriageway link road that would provide part of the link road network around Aylesbury. The project would provide a new route connecting the new Stoke Mandeville Relief Road, Lower Road, Wendover Road, and the new Southern Link Road in the Hampden Fields development. The road could be delivered if government departments agreed with the proposals that the council was putting forward.

The Leader reported that one of the issues facing Aylesbury Town was congestion which was due to local traffic and traffic passing through Aylesbury heading up to areas such as Bicester or Oxford. The Council had been developing a strategy on this for a number of years; sections of those roads had already come into effect such as Berryfields, Weedon Hill and Kingsbrook and further sections were being looked at near the Woodlands development along the A41 and Hampden Fields. This section today looked at the new road between the Wendover Road and new Stoke Mandeville Relief Road and was a key link road. It was a short piece of road but it was very complicated as it went over a railway and there were technical issues in relation to the embankment and also green planting and the environment needed to be taken into account. There would also be roundabouts at both ends of this road which would interface with HS2's work and the roads that they were required to provide. There were substantial financial issues and the costs had escalated dramatically over the last few years and this report was trying to regularise this situation. All this resulted in significant implications for the Council but it was the only way to deliver this important part of the relief road around Aylesbury. The Corporate Director for Planning, Growth and Sustainability reported that there was government funding to build these roads but this report was required to allow the Council to continue negotiations with the Government to spend this funding more flexibly.

Cabinet Members were in support of this proposal as this infrastructure was crucial to support current developments and future planned developments. Residents had regularly expressed concern about the congestion around Aylesbury. A Member commented on the 200% increase on steel prices; bitumen had also increased by 30% which reflected global rises in prices. Another Member complimented the work of officers on this project including the negotiations with Homes England and HS2. In response to a question about the need for infrastructure being built first before

houses the Corporate Director commented that this was the policy of the Council however, this piece of road was complicated with the number of landowners and developers involved. It was important to notify residents of the reasons for any roadworks which would add to the congestion.

RESOLVED

1. That the approach the Council is taking to negotiate with Homes England, HS2 and the Department for Transport to use external funding to help deliver the Aylesbury link roads be noted and endorsed, including negotiating extra flexibility of the £172m Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to ensure delivery continues.
2. That authority is delegated to the Corporate Director, Planning, Growth and Sustainability, in consultation with the Leader and the Section 151 Officer, to:
 - (a) finalise the budget for the project (and HIF programme), following further target cost considerations, and subsequently varying HIF financial contributions in conjunction with Homes England.
 - (b) agree the HS2 funding contract for the Bridge Assurance in Phase 1 of works.
 - (c) subject to recommendation (a) and (b) above, award contracts in 2023 for the phased construction of works, subject to the target cost and all other project related forecast costs being within the budget. This would commence with work on new junctions on Wendover Road and Lower Road. These contracts include detailed design fees, utilities costs, main construction contracts and land acquisition costs.
3. That the draft budget and release of funding for the delivery of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of SEALR to a combined value of £112.8m be approved. This is subject to the final budgets (which may increase or decrease as detailed in recommendation 2a.), agreements of request to vary HIF funding, and external funding. Details are set out in confidential Appendices B & C.

9 Exclusion of the public (if required)

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded for the following items as they were exempt by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 because they contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

10 Confidential appendix to Aylesbury Link Roads, HIF and SEALR

Cabinet noted the confidential appendices.

11 Date of next meeting

5 January 2023 at 10am