



Buckinghamshire Council

Communities & Localism Select Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES & LOCALISM SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4 OCTOBER 2023 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 10.03 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.42 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT

S Barrett, P Drayton, G Hollis, C Oliver, N Rana, G Smith, L Smith BEM and J Chhokar

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

R Stuchbury, K Sutherland, A Hussain, W Morgan-Brown and G Springer

Agenda Item

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Bowles, Knight, Mahon, Stannard and Waite.

A temporary Chairman was elected for the meeting – Cllrs Catherine Oliver and Greg Smith were both proposed and seconded and following a vote, Cllr Oliver took the chair.

The Chairman welcomed two new members to the Committee, Cllr Nabeela Rana and Cllr Jaspal Chhokar.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th June 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

5 COMMUNITY BOARD REVIEW - 12 MONTH UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Arif Hussain, Cabinet Member for Communities and Wendy Morgan-Brown, Head of Partnerships and Communities to the meeting. The Cabinet Member reminded the Select Committee that its report to Cabinet in May 2022 included 11 recommendations and following an update on progress presented to Committee in February, this was the final update on the implementation of those recommendations. Alongside the

Select Committee report there had also been proposals from a Cabinet Member Task and Finish Group and the internal service review which had contributed to some significant changes in how Community Boards operated.

The Cabinet Member highlighted three recommendations in particular – Recommendation 5 was for a proactive communications strategy for Community Boards. A strategy had been agreed by January 2023 and since then all Community Board Managers had received social media training to enable them to promote the activity of their Board and all Community Boards have seen an increase in followers as a result.

Recommendation 7 was related to Highways schemes and considering an alternative mechanism for their delivery. Following the introduction of a new highways contractor in April 2023, a new six step process had been established to help to identify realistically deliverable schemes and a highways handbook had been created to provide cost information for the most commonly requested solutions. A review of schemes that had been submitted but not begun had been undertaken and now approved schemes were moving forward for delivery by March 2024.

Recommendation 10 was to establish a mechanism to evaluate projects which had received Community Board funding. A new evaluation form was now in place, which enabled reflection on whether the aims of a project had been delivered effectively. 60 evaluation forms have been distributed to date, with 8 already completed and Community Board Managers would be following up on each of the projects and reporting back to the Cabinet Member and Community Board Chairmen every quarter. The evaluations would also be used to inform the annual Community Board report to Council.

The Cabinet Member also reported that a further review of the Community Boards would shortly be undertaken in light of the electoral boundary changes which would come into effect in 2025.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for providing this overview and invited Members' questions. In response to questions and during subsequent discussions, the following main points were noted:

- The Highways Handbook included suggested solutions for local road safety issues.
- A Member congratulated the team on increased levels of community engagement. He gave an example of a recent Community Board meeting which was very well-attended by residents who were supportive of 20mph speed limits but the Chairman was reluctant to discuss the pros and cons of the issue and kept repeating the Council's policy on 20mph limits – was this an example of proper engagement? In response, the Cabinet Member explained that the Community Boards were there to engage with local people but also had to support the priorities and policies of the Council and sometimes there were limits to what could be delivered.
- There was concern around the cost of highways schemes that could be a drain on Community Board resources. 51 schemes were reported to be progressing and officers were confident that they would all be funded. A Member expressed the view that highways schemes still caused frustration for Community Boards and it could be beneficial to deal with them separately.
- A Member asked a question regarding how the benefits of Community Boards were being analysed centrally. For example, were all geographical areas or different demographic groups within an individual Community Board receiving a fair share of funding. Wendy Morgan-Brown commented that each Community Board should be working to deliver the priorities that had been agreed locally. Community Board

Managers had access to public health data and community safety data which could also be used to inform their priorities. Whilst accepting this point, the Member suggested that it was important for this to be monitored to ensure that priorities addressed the locally identified needs and were delivered effectively.

- The Cabinet Member was asked about his vision for the Community Boards, as there was concern that the review considering the impact of electoral boundary changes could see some Community Boards being amalgamated and further funding reductions. In response, Cllr Hussain explained that he was a strong advocate for the Community Boards as the local face of Buckinghamshire Council and wanted them to continue for the longer term. He also praised the Communities team for all their hard work in supporting the Community Boards.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Communities and Wendy Morgan-Brown for attending the meeting and asked that the Select Committee be kept up to date on the outcome of the Community Board review.

6 CCTV - UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT OF A CCTV STRATEGY

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Arif Hussin, Cabinet Member for Communities and Gideon Springer, Head of Community Safety to the meeting.

Cllr Hussain gave a brief overview, making the following points:

- Buckinghamshire Council had inherited several different CCTV systems from the five former councils which covered public spaces and council buildings.
- Some of these systems were 10-15 years old and would need to be replaced
- A draft had been developed for the CCTV Strategy 2023 to 2028 to cover the whole county.

Gideon Springer gave a presentation detailing the strategy with the following key points:

- Buckinghamshire Council was committed to helping the police prevent and detect crime and disorder and give residents a greater feeling of safety.
- There had been a wide consultation on the aims and principles for the strategy, with the key aims being increasing the safety of the public, prevention of anti-social behaviour and prevention of violence against women and girls.
- The majority of CCTV in public spaces was controlled by local authorities and had led to a 13% reduction in crime.
- A CCTV Advisory Group would be established to monitor all CCTV development work and performance. This will include Members, the police and other stakeholders including the Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership Board.
- There were 222 cameras in public spaces and car parks in Buckinghamshire.
- There were fixed and temporary CCTV cameras which could help with traffic management. Cameras were most effective when placed in town centres.
- From 1st October 2023 a single control room would be established at High Wycombe.
- Provision of CCTV was not a statutory duty for the Council. A to £3-3.5 million pound investment was proposed for CCTV over the next three to four years, with the funding focussed on key towns, such as Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham.
- The Council was compliant with the Surveillance Commissioner's code of practice.
- The success of the CCTV system would be measured by a number of means, including the audit of incident logs, the number of arrests made and the use of data images to investigate and prosecute perpetrators.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hussain and Gideon Springer for providing this overview and invited Members' questions. In response to questions and during subsequent discussions, the following main points were noted:

In response to a Member's question about a map showing areas covered by CCTV, Gideon Springer explained that a map exists in the control room. Members would be invited to visit the control room on a given date

Action: Gideon Springer

- In response to a point made by a Member on the definition of high harm crimes, Gideon Springer agreed that this was a political term but noted that Members would be included in the CCTV oversight group. He also noted that the council would retain control of the CCTV cameras but allow the police to have access.
- A Member suggested that the use of emojis and facial images could be useful in alerting the public to the presence of CCTV and Gideon Springer advised that the effectiveness of different styles of signs was being considered.
- A Member commented that £3.5 million was a lot of money and raised concerns from the local community that CCTV is often welcomed by the police as it reduces the need for visible police presence. Gideon Springer agreed that £3.5 million was a large sum but said that from his 30-year experience as a police officer, he knew that many prosecutions and convictions would not happen without CCTV evidence. He also noted that CCTV was a significant tool in town centres and surveys showed that CCTV can help women to feel safer and it can deter potential criminals.
- Gideon Springer confirmed that the committee would be updated on progress. A Member expressed a particular wish for progress to be reported as CCTV provision is a non-statutory service.
- A Member asked if the current location of CCTV cameras would be reviewed as some cameras have obstacles such as trees in the way. Gideon Springer replied that an oversight group would review the location of all CCTV cameras. The group would also consider the location of mobile cameras and check all existing cameras were working. Mobile cameras have been very effective against fly tipping when used in a targeted way. However, there is a finite budget for cameras and he hoped that other agencies might help to fund them. It was also important that the siting of new cameras should be lawful and necessary. The right of residents to privacy must also be taken into account.
- It was noted that existing cameras were mainly in the three main towns, although some town and parish councils also had some cameras which were monitored in the control room. They would need to upgrade their equipment and make a contribution to monitoring costs in future. Any new town or parish councils that might want to invest in CCTV could discuss their plans with Buckinghamshire Council to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hussain and Gideon Springer for this update on CCTV and noted that the Select Committee would receive progress reports in future.

7 SERIOUS VIOLENCE STRATEGY

Cllr Hussain gave a brief introduction, explaining that local authorities now had a duty to develop a Serious Violence Strategy. The strategy would cover the period 2023 to 2026.

Gideon Springer, Head of Community Safety made the following points:

- The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 created a duty for local authorities and other specified bodies to create a Serious Violence Strategy.
- Buckinghamshire Council formed a group to develop the strategy. This was chaired by

- the Head of Children's Services as serious violent crime often involved young people.
- In consultation with key groups including Community Safety, Children's Service and the Youth Offending Service, five priority areas were identified:
 1. Raising awareness of serious violence
 2. Supporting early intervention for vulnerable young people at the highest risk of involvement with serious violence
 3. Creating awareness of serious violence amongst the Safer Bucks Board
 4. Supporting offenders released from custody who are most at risk of re-offending
 5. Proactive responses where serious violence takes place using a People Groups Places approach
 - The strategy was in the late stage of development and would go forward to Cabinet for sign off in December 2023 and then shared with the Home Office in January 2024. Partners were working on an Action Plan that would sit beneath the strategy.

The Chairman thanked Gideon Springer for providing this overview and invited Members' questions. In response to questions and during subsequent discussions, the following main points were noted:

- Cllr Robin Stuchbury attended the meeting and asked the following question - Your report states that there has been a 43% increase in reported rapes and a 36% increase in reported sexual assaults, with 2783 offences, including domestic abuse reported between 2018 and 2023. In 2016, the Children's Select Committee of Buckinghamshire County Council, of which I was a member, undertook a review on Child Sexual Exploitation and one of the strong recommendations from that report was improved information sharing between agencies such as the Council, Police, Health and Education. As a result the MASH was set up to offer a multi-agency response to include specialist CSE social workers. The specific numbers of sexual offences against young people is not stated. Please can you provide specific figures on these types of offences and provide assurance that the issue of child sexual exploitation has been carefully considered as part of this new strategy, as it is important that our most vulnerable young people are protected.
- Cllr Hussain thanked Cllr Stuchbury for his question and reported that 1568 young people had been the victims of sexual assault over the five year period. The strategy had been put together in consultation with Children's Services, Youth Offending, Probation, Police and Health partners and had children at the heart of it. Four of the five principles were focussed on children and young people as they could be victims and perpetrators. Child sexual exploitation was part of this, as young people who perpetrate serious violence were often being exploited.
- A Member asked to what extent the increase in crime rates in Bucks was due to online sexual offences. He also queried how the strategy would tackle with the fact that victims and perpetrators of serious violent crime were predominantly men. Gideon Springer explained that online crime does not always meet the definition of serious violent crime. Online crime was a significant problem. Community safety teams go into schools to educate students on how to stay safe online, online grooming and radicalisation.
- The Serious Violence Strategy focussed on the fact that young men are the main victims and perpetrators of serious violence whilst acknowledging that young women were increasingly involved. There was a culture of carrying knives amongst some young people across the country. It was important to educate all young people about knife crime and the police and partners were piloting the use of tools to identify young people who might be vulnerable to getting drawn into violence.
- A Member commented that young men were being targeted by distorted views of

masculinity. Gideon Springer reassured Members that schools had developed anti-misogyny tools and would continue to use them. It was also noted that young men need positive male role models and youth mentoring could be useful, but resourcing this was a challenge as the Serious Violence Strategy didn't attract any additional funding.

- In response to a Member's question about the suicide epidemic amongst young men, Gideon Springer stated that this is not part of the Serious Violence Strategy but is being dealt with by other efforts.
- A Member asked about the robustness and timeliness of data on serious violence and it was reported that community safety were informed of all serious violence incidents immediately and also used anecdotal insight from youth workers and other partners to inform their action plan.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hussain and Gideon Springer for attending the meeting and providing this useful update on the Serious Violence Strategy.

8 WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Manager reported on the progress of the Digital Exclusion review group. An initial scene setting meeting had been held with Council officers in Customer and Digital and Members would be meeting with Adult Learning shortly. It was hoped that the review group would also visit Adult Learning Centres to speak to some learners directly about their experience.

9 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

22nd November 2023 at 10.00am