



# Buckinghamshire Council

## High Wycombe Town Committee

### Minutes

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2023 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 9.03 PM**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

S Raja, T Green, A Baughan, L Clarke OBE, A Hussain, Maz Hussain, Majid Hussain, M Hussain JP, J Wassell, M Knight, S Guy, O Hayday, K Bates, I Hussain, A Alam, M Ayub, N Rana, M Smith, N Thomas, P Turner and K Wood

#### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Nick Graham, Fiorella Mugari, David Harvey, Linda Francis Martin Dickman, Iram Malik Lindsey Vallis, Hannah Joyce and James Loader.

#### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

John Shaw, Matt King, Edward Ellis-Butler, Penelope Tollitt, Robert Laycock and David O`Reilly.

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

No apologies for absence were received.

#### **2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

#### **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received

#### **4 1 MINUTE SILENCE**

Members observed a minute of silence in remembrance of Val Letheren and Julia Adey both of whom had sadly recently passed away.

In paying tribute to Val Letheren Councillor Green stated that she had served as Councillor of Wycombe District Council and on the Chartered Trustees for a period of 14 years, and as Mayor and Chairman of the Council between 1991-92. Furthermore she had devoted much of her time

and efforts to serving the people of High Wycombe.

Councillor Wood paid tribute to the much loved Julia Adey who had been elected as Councillor to Wycombe District Council in 2011, and had served as Cabinet Member for Community and for the Environment.

## **5 PRESENTATION - UPDATE ON E-SCOOTERS IN HIGH WYCOMBE (VERBAL REPORT)**

Hannah Joyce (Head of Transport, Strategy and Funding) and David O'Reilly (Chief Commercial Officer) (ECO Urban Scooters Limited/Zeus Scooters GmbH) were in attendance for the presentation.

Members received a presentation on the E- scooter trials within Buckinghamshire, which had commenced in October 2020 in the areas of High Wycombe, Aylesbury and Princes Risborough. It was highlighted that whilst this was due to end in November 2022, it had been extended up until May 2024. A government decision was awaited as to the future fate of E-Scooters, in terms of their legalisation.

The Presenting Officer elaborated on the usage of E-Scooters with the provision of data for the 3 areas and gave mention to the monitoring of the trials via the user survey. In addition, facts and figures were provided regards incidents and insurance claims during the trial period. It was confirmed that the original operator (Zipp Mobility had been replaced and was now operated by Zeus)

A Member asked If it was felt that E-scooters were sustainable as an alternative means of transport. It was highlighted that the 3 -wheel scooters were the future. Another Member expressed his dissatisfaction over the fact that the insurance only covered the vehicle and not the rider of it, hence it would be necessary to take a private prosecution against the rider, which he deemed to be unacceptable. The presenters emphasised the good safety record that was held and stated that the rider would be under third party insurance cover, which was in line with DfT guidelines. Furthermore, there was a requirement to be over 17 years of age and to be in possession of a drivers` licence.

A Member requested a link to the DfT report on E-scooters for information. [National evaluation of e-scooter trials \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101422/national-evaluation-of-e-scooter-trials.pdf)

RESOLVED: That

- (i) The presenters be thanked for their attendance
- (ii) The link to the DfT report on E- Scooters be noted.

## **6 HIGH WYCOMBE COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW (VERBAL REPORT)**

Members were provided with a background to the previous decision made by the Standards Committee within Wycombe District Council, to conduct a review on governance. Consideration of the matter had subsequently been deferred to the Unitary Council, which was now in a position to reconsider the matter as its own electoral review had now been completed.

As some considerable time had elapsed since the original proposals by Wycombe District

Council, it was agreed to commission a new review by the newly formed Standards Committee and to look at options for the unparished area of High Wycombe as part of it. For this purpose, a Governance Review Working Group had been established looking at 3 main areas.

- 1) Options of Community Governance in Wycombe (Terms of Reference)
- 2) How the proposals get consulted upon
- 3) Timeline (hope to undertake the substantive part of the review within 12months or thereabouts)

It was emphasised that given that the Town Committee had a role in determining and recommending matters that impacted upon Wycombe, it was likely that the working group would wish to take soundings from and involve this Committee during the consultation process in the appropriate ways.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

## **7 HIGH WYCOMBE BUS SERVICE CHANGES (VERBAL REPORT)**

A presentation was conducted by James Loader (Head of Public Transport) and Matt King (Arriva)

Mr Loader highlighted the Council's role in the provision of public transport. Members were informed that currently the Council had been allocated £2.6m of BSIP+ funding which partly replaced funding previously provided to local transport authorities and bus operators for the provision of support services in rural areas and market towns where there were gaps in service. In High Wycombe this was initially being used to preserve Sunday and evening services in the town, which were previously operated commercially and to instigate the reinstatement of a second bus per hour to Bowerdean Road and Arnison Avenue to High Wycombe Town Centre, Tylers Green and Penn.

Mr King presented additional background information on bus framework, catalysts for change in High Wycombe, the core principles of network design and the network planning cycle. Members were also provided with information regards network performance post changes and the challenges yet to be met in terms of service delivery, expansion and fleet investment.

A Member expressed her disappointment that there had been no consultation with customers prior to changing the bus routes, and expressed concern that people were not able to get to work and school on time. She also commented on the state of disrepair of some of the buses operated within the district.

The presenter explained that over the last 6 months 10 Euro 6 vehicles, with the cleanest diesel available had been injected into the current fleet. However, it was not commercially viable to fund electric vehicles. It was also confirmed that early morning journeys to Booker would be revisited but that the earliest opportunity to make service changes would be January 2024.

Another question was asked about the 33 bus and its decrease in frequency to every 20 minutes. In addition, there was some concern that the first bus was later in the morning and the last bus was now earlier which all appeared to chip away at the service provision on that route. It was mentioned that a better interface with the railway should be provided thereby providing much needed assistance to people who were attempting to travel from High Wycombe to London for an 8.30am start at work. Mr King explained that the frequency was suitable for the

demand in that area, but that the early and late journey times would indeed be revisited in January.

A member urged Arriva to consult with the intelligence on hand in the room amongst Members prior to making further service changes in the future, where possible. He was informed that when it was a commercial change the Council and Arriva were legally restricted from doing so, with provisions under the Transport Act 1985 specifying the role that the Council played in this process.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted and the presenters be thanked for their attendance.

## **8 PRESENTATION - CHILTERN RANGERS (VERBAL REPORT)**

A verbal report was presented providing a general update on the invaluable ongoing work of the Chiltern Rangers.

Mr Shaw gave mention to an important opportunity that had arisen with regards to a DEFRA pot of money administered by the national lottery. With a submission date of 26 October, it was hoped that a bid could be pulled together to make an application for 750K over 2 years with a maintenance of 100K over the following 5 years. The project was on the theme of saving species and creating bigger and better landscapes. The Council's help was requested in terms of match funding for the project.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted and Mr Shaw be thanked for his report

## **9 PRESENTATION - MARLOW FILM STUDIO - THE LOCAL POTENTIAL OF THE WEST LONDON CLUSTER**

A presentation was conducted by Penelope Tollitt and the Chief Executive of Marlow Film Studios. Members were informed that the Marlow Film Studio was one of the top 10 private investment projects in the UK and therefore it was appropriate that the Committee was kept informed about it. Support for this very big and bold project was encouraged and Members heard as to why film was so important to the world and how we needed to capitalise on that.

Towards the end of the presentation slides a member wished to initiate a motion in support of the planning permission for this project. However other Members felt that it was inappropriate to bring this to the Committee which did not presently have a planning consultation function. Members were also concerned that there could be a conflict of interest, as some of the Members serving on the committee also served on the planning committees of the Council. It was felt that the Member wishing to support the proposal for planning permission should instead write in on an individual basis expressing her support.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted and the presenters be thanked for their attendance.

## **10 PRESENTATION - CHILTERN SHOPPING CENTRE (VERBAL REPORT)**

Mr Ellis-Butler informed Members that there had been a steady decline in the Chiltern Shopping Centre with the tenants having already given notice of leaving for an alternative venue. Dandara Living had bought the site and were intending to construct 303 new apartments fully furnished on a rental basis only. He further elaborated on the future plans and how it was proposed to be managed on a day- to day basis.

It was highlighted that the pricing for the rentals had not yet been applied or finalised, but that they did not anticipate any affordable units, hence it was likely that the units would aim to accommodate anyone who was in receipt of an average national wage.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

## **11 SPECIAL EXPENSES**

Members were requested to consider and acknowledge the revenue forecast position for Quarter 1 for 2023/24 and the impact on working balances at year end for this Committee.

Members were informed that regards special expenses forecasting was to budget on quarter 1 though this was expected to change as the year progressed. Members were also requested to note that 4 grants had been approved so far in the current year totalling £3,696. Further detail on grant activity was provided at Appendix A to the report.

The current forecast anticipated that the working balances would be £656k and this projected balance was subject to the council's end of year accounting being audited and finalised.

A Member requested that the special expenses budget for the financial year 2024/25 be extended to cover more grass cutting and cutting of vegetation on footpaths. It was agreed that this would be further considered as part of the budget sub- group discussions scheduled for November 2023.

RESOLVED: That

- (i) the report be noted
- (ii) Grass cutting and cutting of vegetation on footpaths be considered at the Budget Sub- Group meeting scheduled for 22 November

## **12 WORK PROGRAMME**

RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted

## **13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED: That the next meeting of the High Wycombe Town committee take place on Tuesday 21 November 2023.