



Buckinghamshire Council

High Wycombe Town Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 23 JANUARY 2024 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 7.55 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

S Raja, T Green, A Baughan, D Hayday, A Hussain, Maz Hussain, Majid Hussain, M Hussain OBE JP, J Wassell, S Guy, K Bates, I Hussain, A Alam, M Ayub and N Thomas

OFFICERS PRESENT

IF Mugari, D Harvey, M Dickman, L Francis, M Pottle, J Caprio, J Mowbray and I Malik.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Wood, Knight, Clarke, Turner, O Hayday, Rana and Smith.

2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting held on 21 November 2023 be confirmed as a true record.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received

4 MAINTENANCE OF FOOTPATHS

A briefing note on the Rights of Way operations had been submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

5 TREE PLANTING

Members received a verbal update report on the planting of two Tiny Forests in Booker and Totteridge Recreation Grounds. Funding had been secured and the Council was working in close collaboration with Earthwatch who would be planting on the sites.

It was reported that the forests would consist of approximately 600 trees and shrubs and would create diverse pockets of wild natural spaces, which would require very little maintenance. In addition, Members were informed that Earthwatch would be looking to involving local community members and be recruiting volunteers who could help with general maintenance in the early years.

It was envisaged that the work would commence after the school half term break.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

6 SUNDAY BURIAL PROVISION UPDATE

The Presenting Officer provided an update with regards to the provision of a 7 day burial service. It was reported that further to the written update provided prior to March last year no progress had been made with the implementation of the Medical Examiner Scheme. Therefore, the Council was not currently in a position to legally be able to provide short notice Sunday burials.

Members expressed frustration over the longstanding issue of the unavailability of Sunday burial provision and felt that such a service was provided within other local authority areas. One Member requested that officers explore whether receipt of the necessary documentation on a Saturday would enable a Sunday burial.

The relevant Officer agreed to bring forward a report to the next meeting which would explore the issues raised, and the prospect of Sunday burials, but it was emphasised that it would necessitate funding from the Committee itself. This proposal was not recommended by the officer but ultimately the Committee would need to decide as to whether it would be a good use of taxpayers` money should it proceed down the Sunday burials route.

RESOLVED: That a report on the Sunday burials provision along with costings and information on neighbouring authorities be submitted at the forthcoming March meeting.

7 CGR VERBAL UPDATE

Councillor Green updated Members on the latest information regards the Community Governance Review. It was reported that the Standards & General Purposes Committee had agreed a number of recommendations relating to communication and timescales.

A consultation would run between the dates of **12** February and 7 April following which the draft proposals would be considered in July. This would be followed by a second consultation, if appropriate, on the draft proposals running between July - October, with the final recommendations being considered and published in December. Final implementation of any changes would meet the timeframe specified in the final recommendations

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

8 SPECIAL EXPENSES

The Presenting Officer expressed her thanks to the Members and officers of the Budget Sub-Group who had met to finalise the detailed information within the 2024/25 special expenses draft budget. Approval of the recommendations by this Committee would be referred to Cabinet

and then to Full Council for its endorsement.

The key points and recommendations within the report were outlined by the Presenting Officer and following consideration of these it was accepted and agreed that the first out of three possible options be recommended to Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That option 1 be recommended to Cabinet and Full Council for endorsement and adoption.

Option 1: An increase of £0.88 (4.98%) to Band D tax for HWTC to £18.54 would raise £ 446,060.72 in precept which would cover 85% of the net budgeted expenditure for 2024/25 and, combined with the forecast interest receipt of £31,888, would result in a drawdown from reserve of £45,680 to cover a shortfall in precept. This option would result in a reserve balance lower than the recommended £150,000 for future years only from 2035/36 (assuming precept remained the same throughout the period and there were no further pressures on the budget from next year onwards).

9 WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was submitted for consideration

RESOLVED: that the work programme be noted.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 26 MARCH 2024

RESOLVED: That the next meeting be held on Tuesday 26 March 2024 7pm in the Council Chamber QVR offices.

11 CEMETERY MAINTENANCE

A Member raised the matter of a blocked drain at the cemetery which caused some flooding in one of the graves. There were also issues with a padlocked tap and slippery surfaces in the bad weather which were the cause of some concern. Members were reassured that the issues had either been resolved or were being looked into.

Another matter addressed was that of a spare emergency key for Penn Road Cemetery. The Chairman informed Members that should anyone's car be locked in out of hours they should contact their local councillor who would contact the Chairman.