



High Wycombe Town Committee agenda

Date: Tuesday 26 March 2024
Time: 7.00 pm
Venue: Council Chamber QVRoad, High Wycombe

Membership:

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

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Agenda Item	Page No
1 APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence	
2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING To confirm the minutes of the last meeting held on 23 January 2023.	3 - 6

3	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest	
4	HIGH WYCOMBE MARKET UPDATE	7 - 12
5	THE CURVE BUILDING UPDATE James Smith / Ivana Stanisic	Verbal Report
6	PENN ROAD AND HIGH WYCOMBE CEMETERY SUNDAY AND BANK HOLIDAY BURIAL SERVICE	To Follow
7	COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW UPDATE	Verbal Report
8	SPECIAL EXPENSES QUARTER 3	13 - 18
9	WORK PROGRAMME	19 - 20
10	DATE OF NEXT MEETING 11 June 2024 (TBC)	

If you would like to attend a meeting, but need extra help to do so, for example because of a disability, please contact us as early as possible, so that we can try to put the right support in place.

For further information please contact: Iram Malik democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
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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.

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Report to High Wycombe Town Committee

Date: 26 March 2024

Title: **High Wycombe Market Update**

Author: Jacqueline Ford, Economic Development Manager,
Jacqueline.Ford@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Recommendations:

- i. **To note the review of Buckinghamshire Council-led Street Markets and how this has informed and shaped the current tender process for High Wycombe Market;**
- ii. **To note that tender specification includes new requirements to help diversify our market offer, emphasising the need for greater innovation and additional enlivenment opportunities to increase trader numbers, footfall and dwell time;**
- iii. **To support discussion at a future meeting to explore use of Special Expenses to sustain High Wycombe Market, as per the funding arrangement in place for Aylesbury Market.**

1. Executive summary

1.1 Buckinghamshire Council has oversight of five street markets that are delivered in different ways: High Wycombe (third party), Aylesbury and Winslow (in house) and Chesham and Amersham (run by the same trader cooperative). The contract for High Wycombe market is due for renewal by the end of the current financial year. Before proceeding with a procurement exercise the Economic Development Team carried out a review of all five Council-led Street markets to identify opportunities and best practice to evolve our general street markets. This identified an opportunity to jointly procure delivery for High Wycombe and Aylesbury markets, including new requirements to support enlivenment and economic development activity for start-ups and young people that will help increase vibrancy to our markets and boost trader numbers. This approach to enliven High Wycombe Market reflects and supports comments provided by High Wycombe Town Committee at previous meetings / engagement sessions and town centre stakeholders on their wishes and ambitions for the town's market.

2 Background

- 2.1 This paper is provided as an update on the Buckinghamshire-wide work that has been carried out by the Economic Development team on Council-lead general street markets and how this has shaped the current procurement exercise for High Wycombe market.
- 2.2 This paper does not set out what this will mean 'on the ground' for High Wycombe Market and a paper will be presented at a future meeting, post Market Operator (MO) appointment to set this out for the Committee.
- 2.3 Traditional street markets are part of the history and tradition of Buckinghamshire. Many exist through Charters from the Crown and, coupled with more specialist markets, they generate essential footfall for our towns and support the local economy, tourism, hospitality, and employment.
- 2.4 Buckinghamshire Council has direct responsibility for the traditional street markets in High Wycombe (managed by a third-party operator under contract), Aylesbury and Winslow (delivered in-house). The Council also provides oversight for the operations and delivery of the Amersham and Chesham markets to ensure they are running smoothly and in line with our regulations and wider strategic objectives. Amersham and Chesham are both run by the same trader cooperative. The markets delivery function sat in the Property Teams pre-Unitary and moved to the Economic Development Team at transition.
- 2.5 As old contracts near expiration, there is now a requirement to procure a new contract for High Wycombe Market ready for spring/summer 2024. Looking at our markets holistically has enabled an opportunity to include Aylesbury Market into the ask, to increase desirability for potential bidders to come forward, and offer synergies and efficiencies in delivery.
- 2.6 The costs of running Aylesbury Market are covered by Special Expenses and a future discussion on the potential for High Wycombe Special Expenses to be used in 2025/26 to support the town's market would be welcomed.

3 Main Report

Setting the direction for Buckinghamshire's general street markets post pandemic

- 3.1 At a national level (bar London), general street markets have been in decline for many years, and this has accelerated since the pandemic. Changes in consumer behaviour with the move to online shopping, out of town retail, coupled with the ageing demographic of both traders and users of traditional street markets is also a challenge and means we are not alone in looking at ways to evolve and future proof our local markets.
- 3.2 The best traditional street markets are increasingly seen as community hubs: bringing wider social value at the level of place, expanding the traditional offer with more

specialist markets, including artisanal, farmers' and street entertainment to attract more people to the market space and wider town centre. This was reflected in the engagement work undertaken by Quarterbridge and previously presented to this Committee. A delicate balance, however, needs to be maintained to not 'gentrify' too far as there is still a need to continue to provide community access to food.

3.3 The National Association of British Markets (NABMA) carried out a survey in 2022 that 241 markets replied to. It identified a series of challenges for traditional street markets and launched the 'Markets First' campaign in response to help knowledge share between and support operators in the market sector to make changes:

- I. Priority 1 - Attracting and retaining traders: survey showed only 8% of traders are under 40 and stall occupancy has reduced from 77% in 2019 to 72% in 2022. Trader numbers overall have reduced from 46k in 2009 to below 32k today. There is a need to promote opportunities trade and support traders to become established and thrive – and be able to compete with online.
- II. Priority 2 – Addressing the economic challenges of markets: only 40% of markets surveyed are operating with an annual surplus and more markets are operating at a loss and being subsidised. It is recognised that outdoor markets are not cash cows and investment may be required to become sustainable.
- III. Priority 3 – Demonstrating the wider value of markets: markets are excellent business incubators as well as providing access to essential affordable food and goods. They are places of social interaction and part of the heritage and identity of our towns. Evolving the use of space to bring in different players and offers is key. New legislation enables more events without planning consent which helps with animations.
- IV. Priority 4 – Professionalising market management: ensuring that people who operate the market are skilled and can effectively link and communicate with regeneration and partnership programmes in the towns – to champion and advocate for the trader space.
- V. Priority 5 – Improving relationships with traders: traditional family and specialist vendors are declining, and an understanding is needed of barriers to attract new and younger traders. Communication with traders is key and robust mechanisms are needed to support this.

Key principles

3.4 What is clear is that there is not a one size fits all approach to delivering markets: our town centres and communities are different, and the offer needs to reflect this. To help shape and inform future delivery of council-led markets in Buckinghamshire and to enhance their vibrancy and success a set of principles have been adopted:

- Given the financial climate, future markets in Buckinghamshire should be at least cost neutral to the Council.
- Smaller towns in the County should continue to deliver markets directly in their own way (e.g. via Town or Parish Councils).
- Given the link to Regeneration strategies, Buckinghamshire Council to continue to have direct involvement and influence in our larger towns (e.g. Aylesbury and High Wycombe)
- We will pursue an approach to market delivery that supports wider ambitions for enlivenment, festivals and events, special themed markets that creates vibrancy and economic growth;
- We will promote the use of our markets as seed beds for young entrepreneurs and creatives, supporting those with growth potential to grow into permanent units on our high streets through the Council’s regeneration ambitions for start-ups and independent businesses; and
- We will endeavour to ensure innovation, learning and best practice is shared for the benefit of all Buckinghamshire Markets going forward to build a brand that attract footfall.

4 Next steps

4.1 The procurement timeline for a joint contract to operate High Wycombe and Aylesbury Market is set out below:

Activity	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	→
Engagement with Procurement Team: Advert and ITT preparation / metric development							
Soft market testing with current operators to help shape thinking							
Formal ‘Request for Information’ process to help shape tender specification			17	13			
Open tender process: High Wycombe & Aylesbury					1-28		
Evaluation and interviews as required							
New operation begins: High Wycombe							May
Transition period to new operation begins: Aylesbury							→
Trader engagement							→
Wider local member / stakeholder engagement							→

- 4.2 The success of the High Wycombe market - and the wider market space as an animating focus for the town centre cannot be delivered by the Council and Market Operator (MO) in isolation and will not happen overnight. This will need to be supported by and require collaboration with stakeholders including, but not limited to, HWBIDCo, Buckinghamshire New University and Wycombe Arts Centre for example. The Community Board can also have a positive role to play.
- 4.3 The Economic Development Team will continue to liaise with stakeholder's post MO appointment to identify potential commercialisation opportunities in the market space and enlivenment that supports a vibrant and attractive market for all to visit and enjoy.
- 4.4 A paper will be presented at a future meeting of this Committee to set out the specific activities to evolve the High Wycombe Market offer.

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High Wycombe Town Committee Special Expenses Quarter 3 2023/24

Author: Tamsin Lloyd-James, Accountant

Responsible Person: Fiorella Mugari, Head of Finance - Communities

Date: 26 March 2024

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Introduction

Committee are asked to consider and acknowledge the Q3 forecast position for 2023/24. This report sets out the 2023/24 revenue forecast position and the impact on working balances at year end for High Wycombe Town Committee.

Special Expenses Q3 Forecast 2023/24

The net forecast outturn position for 2023/24 is £385k, with a favourable variance of £120k in the forecast. The table below provides the detail at activity level.

Activity Area	Analysis	2023/24 Budget	YTD Actuals	FY Forecast	Variance
		£	£	£	£
Footway Lighting	Exp	1,800	0	0	-1,800
	Inc	0	0	0	0
	Net Exp	1,800	0	0	-1,800
Cemeteries	Exp	501,110	239,080	433,598	-67,512
	Inc	-253,340	-179,944	-286,366	-33,026
	Net Exp	247,770	59,136	147,232	-100,538
Town Twinning	Exp	3,000	0	3,000	0
	Inc	0	0	0	0
	Net Exp	3,000	0	3,000	0
Community Grants	Exp	22,733	7,239	22,733	0
	Inc	0	0	0	0
	Net Exp	22,733	7,239	22,733	0
Recreation Grounds (Local)	Exp	164,811	96,804	146,811	-18,000
	Inc	0	0	0	0
	Net Exp	164,811	96,804	146,811	-18,000
Allotments	Exp	49,934	30,093	49,934	0
	Inc	-60	-50	-50	10
	Net Exp	49,874	30,043	49,884	10
War Memorial	Exp	3,000	0	3,000	0
	Inc	0	0	0	0
	Net Exp	3,000	0	3,000	0
Wycombe Events	Exp	12,000	12,000	12,000	0
	Inc	0	0	0	0
	Net Exp	12,000	12,000	12,000	0
TOTAL	Exp	758,388	385,216	671,076	-87,312
	Inc	-253,400	-179,994	-286,416	-33,016
	Net Exp	504,988	205,222	384,660	-120,328

Commentary on variances

Footway Lighting

With no expenditure at the end of Q3 and no works scheduled it is unlikely that we will spend anything on Footway Lighting this year.

Cemeteries

The underspend on expenditure in the cemeteries is primarily due to anticipated underspends in Grounds Maintenance due to low spend in reactive maintenance. There has also been a small saving in Business Rates that has helped with the overall position.

The forecast overachievement in income in a result of an increase in income from Muslim burial chambers. Although this income is showing above budget at Q3, these chambers are actually sold at cost and so will be used to help cover the cost of 100 additional chambers which have been ordered this financial year.

Recreation Grounds

Reduced spend on Grounds Maintenance is being forecast due to lower activity for reactive maintenance.

Allotments

There is a slight underachievement of income on Allotments due to VAT. The entire bill for maintenance of the easement is £60 and £10 of that is VAT, therefore only £50 is attributable to income.

Community Grants

The following grant applications have been approved so far this year:

Name	Quarter	Date	Amount
Wycombe Mind – The Festival of Wellbeing 2023 (partially awarded)	Q1	11/04/2023	£ 430.00
Micklefield Community Association – Coronation Rock, Family Fun Day	Q1	14/04/2023	£ 966.00
Lighthouse Cressex – Summer Holiday Programme	Q1	06/06/2023	£ 1,500.00
Wycombe Women’s Aid – Summer Playscheme	Q2	14/07/2023	£ 800.00
Wycombe Swan Theatre - Trafalgar Entertainment Trust – Wycombe Swan Youth Projects	Q3	12/12/2023	£ 1,493.00
	Q3 Total		£ 5,189.00
St Andrews Church – St Andrews Community Lunch Club	Q4	08/01/2024	£ 876.97
	Q4 Subtotal		£ 876.97

Details of all grants (included those that have been declined) can be found in Appendix A. At the time of reporting, there are no grants currently in the pipeline.

Impact on Working Balances

The impact of 2023/24 activities are given in the table below:

	£	£
Balance at 1st April 2023		-717,888
Revenue Expenditure Forecast	384,660	
Precept	-424,456	
Interest	-21,486	
Movement in reserves		-61,282
Balance c/f 31st March 2024		-779,170

The working balance as at March 2024 is £779k which is higher than the recommended minimum level of £150k. Please note that the year-end accounting for the council is not yet finalised, which includes these provisional figures. This amount is set aside as an earmarked reserve and therefore ring-fenced for HWTC.

Appendix A

2023/24 Community Support Grants

Organisations	Project/Event/Activity	Outcome	Requested	Awarded/Status	Date Awarded
Wycombe Mind	The Festival of Wellbeing 2023	Partially Awarded	£860.00	£430.00	11/04/2023
Micklefield Community Association	Coronation Rock - Family Fun Day	Awarded	£966.00	£966.00	14/04/2023
Wycombe Food Hub	Coronation Tea Party	Partially Awarded £269.90 - Withdrawn by applicant	£1,500.00	£0.00	05/05/2023
Lighthouse Cressex	Summer Holiday Programme	Awarded	£1,500.00	£1,500.00	06/06/2023
Wycombe Women's Aid	Summer Playscheme	Awarded	£800.00	£800.00	14/07/2023
Chiltern Hills Brass	Concert	Declined (did not apply in time for processing)	£1,000.00	£0.00	14/07/2023
Bucks Historic Building Trust	Feel Good Well-being and Art Sessions	Declined (did not meet criteria)	£1,500.00	£0.00	04/09/2023
St Andrews Church	St Andrews Comm. Lunch Club	Awarded	£876.97	£876.97	08/01/2024
Wycombe Swan Theatre - Trafalgar Ent. Trust	Wycombe Swan Youth Projects	Awarded	£1,493.00	£1,493.00	12/12/2023
Citizens Advice Bureau	Volunteer Recruitment Programme	Declined (funded same project last year)	£1,498.00	£0.00	12/21/2023
			Total Requested	Total Approved	
			£11,993.97	£6,065.97	

2023/24 Facilities Grants

Organisations	Project/Event/Activity	Outcome	Requested	Awarded/Status	Date Awarded
Hills Cafe	Community Toilet Refurbishment	Declined (did not meet criteria)	£2,400.00	£0.00	14/07/2023
			Total Requested	Total Approved	
			£2,400.00	£0.00	

**Not included in above figures is the Management Fee to Q3 of £2,050. This amount plus the amount of grants approved in Q3 of £5,189.00 equals the amount shown in the Q3 Forecast table within this report, £7,239.

Buckinghamshire Council
HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE
Work Programme – 2024/25

Title & Subject Matter	Meeting / Date to be taken	Contact Officer
Special Expenses Outturn	June	Fiorella Mugari
Wycombe CGR Update	June	TBC
Markets update	September	Jacqueline Ford
Special Expenses Quarter 1	September	Fiorella Mugari

Meeting contact officer: Iram Malik, 01494 421204, iram.malik@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
 Work Programme Updated: 2024

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