



Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 22 February 2024 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 3.00 pm and concluding at 4.25 pm.

Members present

S Broadbent, A Macpherson, T Broom, J Chilver, C Harriss, A Hussain, P Strachan, M Winn and J Jordan

Others in attendance

D Barnes, P Martin and R Stuchbury

Apologies

M Tett and A Cranmer

Agenda Item

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Tett, T Broom and A Cranmer. Councillor J Jordan Deputy Member for Environment was in attendance representing the Climate Change and Environment Portfolio.

2 Minutes

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 13 February 2024 be approved as a correct record.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Hot Topics

The following hot topics were discussed:-

Deputy Leader and the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

The Deputy Leader referred to the Council meeting on 21 February 2024 where the Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2026/27 and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28 had been agreed.

Cabinet Member for Transport

The Cabinet Member reported that due to a prolonged period of incessant rain throughout the late Autumn and Winter months, combined with freezing weather, there had been a significant deterioration in the condition of many roads across Buckinghamshire. There had been more than twice the emergency call outs this year with high ground water and river levels as well as the gully systems reaching full capacity. The crews had cleared 75,000 gullies since April last year. He emphasised that there was an out of hours service if there was an immediate flooding risk and details were on the council website.

<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/environment/flooding-and-flood-risk-management/>

From a resident perspective, one of the key measures of success was the condition of roads. The MTFP had already proposed a record level of expenditure upon repair and resurfacing of roads with the current £100m+ programme being extended into a further year in order to continue the 'member led' rolling maintenance programme. However as further action was required to address road maintenance the Council resolved to release £5m from the 'mitigating future financial risk' Reserve and added this to the 2024/2025 Revenue for Highways road maintenance.

Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment

The Cabinet Member reported that the Environment Agency had just issued a flood alert for the River Great Ouse and River Ray. She clarified that there were three levels; an alert, a warning and a severe warning. Buckinghamshire were on the bottom tier but further rain was expected over the next few days. The Council were doing what they could to mitigate any flood risks.

5 Question Time

Question from Councillor Robin Stuchbury to Councillor Steven Broadbent, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transport

I would be grateful for a further update from the Cabinet Member to the question I asked at Cabinet in November (link provided below) on drainage issues in Buckingham and children being splashed by oncoming vehicles. The areas that have not been resolved are London Road, Bourton Road and Gawcott Road Buckingham and I would like reassurance that these highway works will be completed shortly.

<https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=337&MId=18265&Ver=4>

RESPONSE from Councillor Broadbent

With three named storms already this year and intense rainfall falling onto already saturated ground across the county, our teams have been dealing with unprecedented call-outs for flooding and highways drainage related problems. So far, 2024 has seen us respond to 762 highways emergencies across the county, most of which are related to storms and flooding. As a result, there has been some disruption to our programme of planned highway drainage schemes.

In regards to these specific locations, a works order has been raised for London Road to clear the drainage ditches and we are prioritising our own in-house crew to complete this as soon as we can. Our team did undertake works on Bourton Road, near Badgers Way, but although partially completed some further works are required, specifically a new section of pipe needs to be installed.

The Gawcott Road drainage system requires a CCTV survey and high pressure jetting and this is currently programmed in for the end of March.

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 reports would be discussing at forthcoming meetings.

RESOLVED – That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

7 Parking Strategy

Due to the arrangements made under legacy authorities, the parking service had historically been delivered through a split operating model - Off Street enforcement was delivered in house; On Street was outsourced. Following a Better Buckinghamshire Service Review an integrated parking service had been created which provided a more effective delivery model and aligned to national standards where parking enforcement for on and off street was delivered by one Council.

As a pre-cursor to the formulation of this strategy an informal review of the Parking Service was undertaken by a Member Working Group at the request of the Cabinet Member for Transport. The purpose of the review was to assess what potential improvements could be made to better serve the residents of Buckinghamshire and to address legacy inconsistencies and outputs from the review have informed the development of this Strategy.

The proposals set out in the report, and in the draft Parking Strategy (Appendix A) set the strategic direction of travel for the service which would support the MTFP process and balance the Parking Account. The strategy would enable the Council to set out its aims and objectives for parking services, within the context of a rapidly changing industry, across Buckinghamshire and highlight the importance and value that parking services could provide for residents and local communities. Not least, to ensure the associated regulatory requirements were appropriately met for the Council, which included compliance, but also how the parking estate would be financially managed to assess car parks as an asset, along with how parking supported the Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5).

Alongside the Parking Strategy there was also a public consultation on on/off-street parking which closed on 18 February 2024. This outlined proposals to make changes to the current parking orders in the whole of the County. A future Leader decision would be made on the outcome of this public consultation. Parking was a key issue for residents and the Council for several reasons; it provided income for an already

stretched budget, it helped with enforcement of car parks and streets across the County included making the roads safer and in addition it helped with town centre regeneration and use of the Council's assets.

The Parking Strategy set out the vision for parking in Buckinghamshire across four themes: Technology & Innovation, Parking Charges, Enforcement, and Parking Assets which were detailed in the report. In terms of technology and innovation the Council were considering joining the National Parking Platform and removing the subsidy for Wycombe RingGo fees. The National Parking Platform (NPP) was a pilot supported and funded by the Department for Transport, which created a platform to provide a better service to customers and at a reduced cost to the Council. It also brought in an element of competition and pricing advantage but also meant that residents could choose their own preferred parking platform. Cameras could also be used to deliver change and there could also be electronic advertising of parking spaces available. In terms of enforcement a benchmarking exercise had been undertaken to assess current performance particularly now patterns of work were back to normal following the pandemic. Last year the team issued 32,000 Fixed Penalty Notices. Town/Parish Councils, and Town Committees could also have more control over the enforcement of an area, such as dedicated patrols including input into what locations were patrolled at which times and on what days, there was the option for the Town/Parish Councils, and Town Committees to fund the cost of a dedicated resource. This would provide the flexibility for extra resources. The Service area would also look to increase the number of Civil Enforcement Officers by a minimum of 10 FTE.

In terms of car park assets and Council owned land it was important that there was a plan to ensure that all the car parks in Buckinghamshire worked well together and also that this was the best use of a Council asset. A financial review of the car parks was underway to determine which ones were best serving the community and which ones were running at a loss. The outcome would determine whether to retain a car park, repurpose, devolve, or dispose of either in full or in part. Some parking bays would be used for EV charging.

The Council had a range of parking payment machines many of which were more than 10 years old. The current annual cost for servicing and repairs was £220k per annum with further expense incurred for cash collection and bank charges. Following COVID, there had been an increase in customers choosing to pay by phone – 79% who previously paid by cash were now using alternative payment methods. It was recommended to transition towards digital payment methods only over time. As machines reached the end of life, they should not be replaced like for like and the Council should continue to and increase promotion of cashless and ultimately digital payment methods. This would not only reduce the costs of delivering the service but would also provide more consistency for customers and reflects societal trends.

The Cabinet Member thanked the Deputy Cabinet Member for Project Delivery, Dominic Barnes for his hard work on the Strategy, including the previous Deputy Cabinet Member David King.

During discussion the following points were noted:-

- There was no requirement to consult on the Parking Strategy just changes to the on/off street parking including hours of control required consultation. The consultation took place from 23 January to 18 February 2024. The consultation included stakeholders, residents and town and parish councils.
- A question was asked about the new parking arrangements at Winslow Station as there were no ticket machines at the station and whether parking could be paid for at the same time as purchasing a train ticket. There would be digital methods of payment at Winslow Car Park. An operator for the train line had not yet been chosen so it was difficult to guarantee any payment method currently but they would raise this with them once chosen. Another Member commented that residents might try and park close to the station e.g Greyhound Lane rather than paying. The Cabinet Member for Transport reported that parking prices did influence behaviour in terms of choice but also so did convenience. New fees would be introduced and regularised across the County.
- If machines were not working this could be a loss of income to the Council. The Cabinet Member for Transport reported that the team were out daily repairing machines. When machines were near their end of life parts were very difficult to get hold of. With any new machines suppliers should be able to get machines back on line as soon as possible and they should all be digital/contactless in the future. Residents should still be able to pay on other machines or payment methods including RingGo if a machine was out of order so there should be no loss of income. Charges remained in effect even if a machine or one payment method was out of use. They could also do this via a smart phone or by ringing through to RingGo. Machines were very expensive to replace.
- Reference was made to free parking in order to help businesses in towns and what parish or town councils could do. The Cabinet Member for Transport reported that a number of car parks were free for one hour and there was a local agreement with town and parish councils to pay the fee. If the Town and Parish Council were still interested in this they should contact the Parking Services Team who would provide them with the likely cost and parameters of providing free parking. Bespoke agreements could also be put in place for one off days e.g market day. Any arrangement would need to be cost neutral for the Council. All car parks would have the same number of free days to ensure consistency. The Cabinet Member for Communities reported that this issue should be raised at Community Boards and local members should be kept updated.
- Parking recovery had taken time post-covid and it was important to wait until parking patterns had settled down before any reviews were undertaken.
- Some older residents might need some help in the use of parking apps.
- Reference was made to two problem parking areas; Kingsbury Square Aylesbury and Hampden House Car Park which suffered from anti social behaviour and would be a good example of where regeneration was

required. As a Chairman of a Community Board he was keen to use some of their funding for yellow lines near schools and to make sure they were enforced. Enforcement could only take place if restrictions were in place and the police could only enforce some restrictions e.g parking on verges. Parking teams carried out enforcement around schools regularly. With the new Moving Traffic Offences the Council could now enforce zig zag lines and also technology could be used for this area.

- Parking notifications could be used without incurring charges.

RESOLVED that Cabinet -

- 1. agree the Parking Strategy for Buckinghamshire which sets out the ambitions and vision for parking across Buckinghamshire.**
- 2. note the following which are in motion:**
 - a. Public consultation launched week commencing 15 January 2024 on the Traffic Regulation Order to make amendments to provide a more consistent customer experience by; removing unfunded free parking sessions, updating hours of control, including introducing hours and charges in preparation for the new Winslow Station Car Park, and making On-Street charging amendments.**
 - b. Actions to strengthen the in-house parking team and increase enforcement capacity to drive up parking compliance.**
 - c. In the process of joining the pilot of the National Parking Payment Platform – a pilot funded by the Department for Transport to increase flexibility to customers on how they choose to pay for parking and remove the subsidy for Wycombe RingGo fees.**
 - d. A review of our parking estate, which may result in disposal of non-profit making car parks.**
 - e. Preparation in the making to support transition to a digital strategy for payment for parking, as cash payment machines reach the end of life.**

8 The future of E-scooter and E-bike hire schemes in Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire Council hosted three of the national e-scooter trials (Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Princes Risborough). The Council introduced e-bikes to complement the trial schemes in Aylesbury and High Wycombe in July 2023. In the King's speech on 7th November 2023, it was announced that the government's e-scooter trial period would be extended by a further two years to 31st May 2026. No firm decision had been made by the Government regarding legalisation of e-scooters beyond this point, or beyond the geographic extent of the existing trial areas.

The Council's contract with Zipp Mobility, which operated the service at zero cost to the Council (aside from officer time), was currently set to conclude on 31st May 2024, in line with the former end of the Government's trial period. Options considered to continue, reduce the scope of, or cease the e-scooter and/or ebike hire offer were outlined in the report.

The Council's own trials for e-scooters started in Aylesbury and High Wycombe in

October 2020. A further trial was launched in Princes Risborough in May 2021. Fifty-one thousand people have downloaded the app and there were currently 85 e-scooters in Wycombe, 173 in Aylesbury and 10 in Princes Risborough. E-scooters tended to be used by younger people whilst e-bikes were used by older people. At the moment privately-owned e-scooters were illegal on both roads and in pedestrian areas, including within the designated trial areas; being classed as motor vehicles but not having received clearance by statute for use on roads. Safety features have been added to the rental scheme e-scooters during the trials at the Councils request, including enhanced braking and additional light fittings, which were likely to be absent from privately-owned scooters. In particular, the rental scheme e-scooters were 'geofenced' to operate within specified areas only, and their speed limited to 15.5mph, which private e-scooters were not. The trial zones could not be extended to new areas or towns at present.

Buckinghamshire Council's e-scooter and e-bike scheme was managed at zero cost to the Council by the supplier. If there was any loss the burden was on the supplier.

E-bikes were introduced to the Aylesbury and High Wycombe rental schemes in July 2023. E-bikes were legal to use on the highway, having the same road classification as pedal bicycles. Fifty e-bikes were split between Aylesbury and High Wycombe. However, Zipp Mobility had experienced multiple issues with vandalism and theft and so the security of these was currently being reviewed. Zipp was relaunching the e-bikes in early 2024, with enhanced security features.

Through the Council's own surveys and the DfT's 2022 report it was clear that e-scooters did provide a sustainable travel solution for local journeys. Zipp Mobility had performed well in terms of customer service (customer satisfaction is 83%) and safety record when compared to the national picture. Continuing the scheme meant the Council could continue to offer a sustainable travel option to the local community, helping to reduce congestion and carbon emissions.

It was noted that two local members in Wycombe, Councillors Clarke and Green had some reservations regarding the e-scooter trial and their safety. However the Council had worked closely with the police to educate young people on the safe use of e-scooters in Aylesbury and it would be helpful to have an education event in Wycombe. Reference was made to the fact that Paris had banned rental scooters but not private scooters which was confusing as the rental scooters had better safety control. Copenhagen and Madrid had brought back e-scooters with better controls.

During discussion the following points were noted:-

- In terms of the EQIA the service area had liaised with different groups and they had discussions with the supplier about improving features e.g a different coloured bell.
- Concern was raised about the vandalism and theft of the e-bikes and whether anything could be attached to the e-bikes to stop this. The Cabinet

Member for Transport reported that any obstacles could be trip hazards. When a resident had finished using them they were supposed to take a photograph of the bike/scooter and where they had left it. There were also geo locators to see where they could be picked up and also whether any batteries needed replacing. It was important to move units around to ensure ease of access. It was thought that the theft of e-bikes was an organised activity which was not replicated elsewhere.

- The aim of the pilot scheme was to look at the benefits of installing a more permanent scheme.
- E-scooters could be used in any designated area and shared walking and cycle ways. This was shown by a blue sign with a picture of a bike.
- There was also legislation in place to limit the speeds of e-bikes to ensure that they were not modified to increase speed. It was up to the police to enforce this.

RESOLVED that the E-Scooter and E-bike hire schemes continue until May 2026.

9 Sale of Land in High Wycombe to Existing Leaseholder

In September 2022, the Leaseholder signed a Collaboration Agreement (“CA”) with Buckinghamshire Council to investigate the potential to sell surplus land at Wycombe Air Park. In May 2023, the Leaseholder, with financial backing from an investor, approached the Council to acquire a 150-year leasehold interest in the Site. Linked to this were other terms to vary their existing leasehold interest on Wycombe Air Park. In October 2023, the Leaseholder put forward a “best and final unconditional cash offer” to the Council.

The Site was a 13-acre net (18-acre gross) site within WAP. It, along with other buildings on WAP, currently provided hangar space and other employment buildings necessary for the airfield to operate. Feedback from the Leaseholder was that WAP was in a state of gradual decline. This trend was set to continue without a material cash injection.

The Site was identified as a strategic employment site (HW15) within the adopted Wycombe District Local Plan (2019); in addition, there was potentially a further 6-12 acres of land within WAP that was also available for development, it too falling within HW15. The Leaseholder had secured financial backing from an investor (“the funder”) to upgrade WAP. A pre-condition of the funder was that the Leaseholder acquired the Site on a long leasehold basis on a peppercorn rent (150-year term minimum). This would benefit the local economy and employment. The capital receipt had been built into the MTFP.

During discussion it was noted that the local members were very supportive of this proposal.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approve:-

1) Buckinghamshire Council (“BC”) selling a long leasehold interest in the Site at

Wycombe Air Park (“WAP”) to the leaseholder (“the principal transaction”). This will generate a capital receipt which is budgeted for in the MTFP.

2) BC simultaneously completing on all associated legal agreements including Deeds of Variation to existing legal agreements between the parties (“related transactions”).

3) Granting delegated authority to the Director of Property Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, Service Director Legal and Democratic Services and the S151 Officer to progress legal due diligence, obtaining all necessary sign off reports and the carrying out of all necessary due diligence prior to exchange/completion on both the principal and related transactions (“the overall transaction”) on the terms set out in the Heads of Terms (Appendix 1 in the Confidential Appendix).

4) a budget spend on legal and professional fees to progress the transaction, noting that this is to be funded from the Capital Receipt and does not require a budget amendment.

10 Exclusion of the public (if required)
RESOLVED -

that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Paragraph 3 Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

11 Confidential appendices Sale of Land in High Wycombe to Existing Leaseholder
The confidential appendix was discussed.

12 Date of next meeting
25 March 2024 at 1pm