



Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2021 IN VIRTUAL MEETING VIA MS TEAMS, COMMENCING AT 4.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 8.20 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

B Adams, C Adams, J Adey, S Adoh, K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, D Anthony, M Appleyard, M Asif, A Bacon, R Bagge, D Barnes, P Bastiman, M Bateman, A Baughan, M Bezzant, P Birchley, J Bloom, A Bond, S Bowles, J Brandis, C Branston, D Bray, S Broadbent, N Brown, S Brown, H Bull, T Butcher, D Carroll, B Chapple OBE, S Chapple, S Chhokar, J Chilver, A Christensen, C Clare, L Clarke OBE, M Clarke, A Cole, A Collingwood, M Collins, P Cooper, A Cranmer, E Culverhouse, I Darby, D Dhillon, T Egleton, C Etholen, B Everitt, R Farmer, P Fealey, M Flys, C Ford, B Foster, R Gaffney, B Gibbs, J Gladwin, N Glover, S Graham, T Green, P Griffin, G Hall, B Harding, M Harker OBE, G Harris, M Harris, C Harriss, M Harrold, M Hashmi, D Hayday, L Hazell, A Hill, G Hollis, T Hunter-Watts, A Hussain, M Hussain, M Hussain, M Hussain JP, N Hussain, T Hussain, A Huxley, P Irwin, C Jackson, S Jarvis, S Jenkins, D Johncock, C Jones, P Jones, R Jones, J Jordan, P Kelly, R Khan, R King, M Knight, D Knights, S Lambert, J Langley, T Lee, M Lewis, J Lowen-Cooper, D Lyons, J MacBean, A Macpherson, W Mallen, N Marshall, D Martin, P Martin, V Martin, Dr W Matthews, H McCarthy, I McEnnis, T Mills, L Monger, G Moore, H Mordue, S Morgan, N Naylor, R Newcombe, C Oliver, S Patel, C Paternoster, B Pearce, G Peart, D Pepler, C Poll, G Powell, R Raja, S Raja, W Raja, M Rand, S Raven, J Read, R Reed, S Renshell, B Roberts, C Rouse, J Rush, B Russel, S Saddique, G Sandy, R Sangster, D Saunders, R Scott, D Shakespeare OBE, M Shaw, N Shepherd, D Smith, L Smith BEM, M Smith, M Smith, N Southworth, B Stanier Bt, M Stannard, P Strachan, R Stuchbury, L Sullivan, J Teesdale, N Teesdale, M Tett, M Titterington, D Town, A Turner, P Turner, D Varley, N Varley, A Waite, H Wallace, L Walsh, J Ward, J Wassell, J Waters, J Wertheim, W Whyte, A Wight, F Wilson, R Wilson, M Winn and K Wood

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Countess Elizabeth Howe, the Lord Lieutenant and Andrew Farncombe, the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire.

Agenda Item

BILL BENDYSHE-BROWN AND HEDLEY CADD

A minute's silence was held in memory of Buckinghamshire Councillor Bill Bendyshe-Brown, who had represented the Risborough Ward, and had been a Buckinghamshire County Councillor for 8 years from 2013-2021, a Wycombe District Councillor for 16 years from 1999-2015 and a Risborough Town Councillor for 8 years, and for Hedley Cadd, a former Buckinghamshire County Councillor for 8 years from 2005-2013 and AVDC District Councillor for 35 years from 1976-2011, both for the Buckingham South Ward, and for many years a Buckingham Town Councillor. Both had sadly passed away recently.

Bill and Hedley had achieved a great deal in their time at their respective councils and would be greatly missed.

Prior to the minute's silence, Councillor Richard Scott spoke about Councillor Bendyshe-Brown's service to the community and Councillors Bill Chapple and Robin Stuchbury spoke about Hedley Cadd.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors M Bradford, A Garth, M Hanif, P Hogan, D Phillips, N Rose, D Watson, C Whitehead and G Williams.

**2 MINUTES
RESOLVED –**

That the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 9 December 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Z Ahmed, G Hall, Maz Hussain, N Hussain, T Hussain, R Khan and W Raja declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item number 10 (Buckinghamshire Council Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy) and left the meeting whilst this item was discussed.

4 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Members of the Council to the meeting. He also welcomed Countess Elizabeth Howe, the new Lord Lieutenant, and Andrew Farncombe, the High Sheriff, who were also in attendance.

The Chairman noted that whilst the country had been in a national lockdown since before Christmas, he welcomed the measures set out by the Prime Minister on Monday for the future. The Council was very mindful of the effects of the pandemic on residents, members, staff and businesses and on behalf of Council, and he would like to again thank all who were continuing to brilliantly support Buckinghamshire residents at this difficult time.

The Chairman had recently had his vaccination at High Wycombe and was aware that the Leader had been impressed when he recently visited the mass Covid vaccination centres at the Bucks New University (Walton Street, Aylesbury) and at the Stoke Mandeville Stadium. The Chairman passed on his thanks on behalf of all in expressing pride and support to everyone involved with the centres, including front line NHS staff, volunteers and Council staff.

The Chairman advised that, unfortunately, the number of events the Vice Chairman and myself had been able to attend over the Christmas period had been limited by Covid and the National lockdown. He had however been able to join the Wycombe Guarantors group at North Dean Village Hall on 16 December, when the group distributed over 100 Christmas parcel to attendees of their normal Christmas lunch, which had been cancelled. The Chairman added that himself or the Vice Chairman were available to attend virtual or socially distanced events.

5 PETITIONS

There were none.

6 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER'S STATUTORY REPORT

The Chairman welcomed Mr R Ambrose, the Council's Section 151 Officer to the meeting. Mr Ambrose presented his report, highlighting that the Medium Term Financial Plan had been subject to frequent and rigorous challenge and review during its development, including the

public meetings of the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry group held in January 2021.

He concluded by advising Members that the budget proposals recommended by the Cabinet were robust and sustainable. General Fund reserves (unallocated) were currently circa £47m (approximately 10% of the net operating budget) and earmarked reserves (excluding Dedicated Schools Grant) were sufficient to cover all expected commitments against them, including approximately £17m for the cost of transformation as the new Council further developed its future operating model.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

7 2021/ 22 REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Chairman invited Martin Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire Council, to introduce the report to members on the proposed 2021/ 22 revenue budget and capital programme for Buckinghamshire Council.

It was noted that the Council Tax Resolution (**Appendix 4**) was found in the supplementary agenda pack. The following key points were highlighted:

- The budget presented for approval was heavily influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic and had been updated following the third national lockdown and potential ongoing financial impacts.
- The proposals presented were based on the latest estimated funding position, service budget pressures and the key financial risks facing the council both now and in the future. It also took into account the findings from the budget scrutiny inquiry.
- Given the level of uncertainty around future government funding and the difficulties with accurately forecasting the long term implications arising as a result of the pandemic, the proposed revenue budget was for 1 year (2021- 22) only. The overall revenue budget, with each Directorates element expanded, could be found in **Appendix 1**.
- The proposed capital programme covered the period to 2024-25, as many of the council's schemes spanned multiple financial years, and was balanced across its 4 years.
- During 2020-21, a thorough review of the capital programme had been undertaken. This reflected that the existing capital programme had been created by amalgamating the existing plans of the 5 legacy Councils. The review undertook to review the strategic alignment of all existing projects and to reprioritise the available funding to better meet the ambition of the Council and has resulted in the removal of some schemes which were not yet committed from the programme. The resulting capital programme would see £569m invested over the 4 years to 2024/25, with £178m of investment in 2021/22. This included key areas of investment in schools (£163m), Strategic Infrastructure and Highways projects (£135m), Strategic Highway Maintenance (£130m), Support for Economic Regeneration (£50m), Waste (largely due to the replacement of Waste Vehicles) (£20m) and Leisure Centres (£15m).
- The overall Capital programme and each Directorates element of the Programme could be seen in **Appendix 2**. In order to allow schemes which have a robust and financially viable business case to be added to the Capital Programme it was proposed that **authority be delegation to Cabinet to add up to £100m worth of schemes to the capital programme, to be funded through prudential borrowing, subject to a robust business case being approved.**
- Revenue funding for drainage works had been increased by £2m in 2021-22 to continue to reduce the risk of surface water flooding. There was also an increase of £2m in the Capital Programme for drainage works, giving a total increase in 2021-22 of £4m.

- The budget was heavily influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic and proposed a 1.99% increase in basic Council Tax and a 2% increase for the Adult Social Care Precept; a total increase of 3.99%. However, given the ongoing and well documented pressures for adult social care providers and the increasing number of people in the county needing adult social care services the council will need to revisit this additional 1% as a potential source of additional income when considering the budget for 2022/23.
- Details of all proposed budget changes could be found in **Appendix 3**.
- The revenue budget included a one-off use of General Fund balances (£2,047k) in order to produce a balanced budget and mitigate financial risks in 2021-22. The budget included significant growth in expenditure on both Adults and Children's Social Care as a result of the continuing increases in demand, cost and the complexity of cases in these areas.
- General Fund balances would be £45m, which was just under 10% of net operating expenditure.
- The Council Tax Resolution report was presented as **Appendix 4**. This agreed the Council tax to be collected by the Council, the major preceptors (Fire & Police), Special Expenses and Parish Precepts.
- As a result of the economic changes brought on by the pandemic there had been a reduction in the effective number of Band D equivalent properties in the County as a result of a slowing in new home completions, an increase in the number of claimants of Council Tax reductions, and an expected reduction in the collection rate for Council Tax. This has reduced the baseline for expected Council tax income before the increases above are applied, which sees Council Tax income rise at a slower than expected rate.
- The report included Special Expenses, that were particular costs specific to an area not covered by a local town or parish council (e.g. recreational grounds, allotments, community centres markets etc.) There were three special expense areas within the Council; High Wycombe Town Committee, West Wycombe Church Yard and Aylesbury Town. Following consultation with the relevant committees the proposed budgets and resulting precepts were presented in **Appendix 5 and the updated Appendix 6**.
- The budget proposals set out how resources would be used by the Council in a robust and prudent manner to achieve the Corporate Plan, the Council's main strategic business planning document.
- The Final Local Government Settlement had been announced on 4 February 2021. There had been no changes and as such the figures published in the Provisional Settlement which form part of these budget proposals had been confirmed. This included additional funding to reflect the ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic into 2021-22. However, the Chancellor in his Economic Statement of 11 January had indicated there were likely to be controls on public spending going forward.
- As expected, it has been announced that there will be a further delay to the Fair Funding Review of Local Government funding and to a move to 75% business rates retention, which were originally expected for 2020/21. Furthermore, there are further delays to the publications of a new policy and funding arrangements for Social Care. These initiatives are expected to have significant impacts on the Council when they are brought forward.
- The Council Tax Reductions Scheme Policy, which needed to be reviewed and approved annually, was unchanged from last year other than to update the values used in line with Government changes to welfare benefits that were used in the calculation of CTR (for example the amount of child benefit paid). It was recommended that the Council Tax Reductions Scheme Policy (**Appendix 7**) be approved.
- The Government had announced that the level of Business Rates would be frozen for 2021/22. The loss of income to the Council resulting from this decision would be compensated for through additional Government grant income. The budget included a

reduction in the level of Business Rates collectable. This reflects the impact which the Covid-19 pandemic is having on businesses, with an expected increase in business failures, a move away from 'bricks and mortar' business models and increases in appeals and defaults on payments expected in 2021/22.

- There were a number of ongoing impacts from the pandemic that would be felt in the short term, and potentially the medium term, including:
 - o Income from discretionary and statutory services.
 - o Rental income from property assets.
 - o Demand and costs / lost local taxation income of supporting the vulnerable had increased.
 - o The need to invest in the local economy to support jobs and growth.
- The robustness of existing and new budget proposals will continue to be monitored as part of normal financial management protocols and considering further developments in the pandemic response and recovery plans.
- The Budget Scrutiny Select Committee Inquiry had reviewed the draft budget and capital programme over 3 days in the week commencing 11th January. This had been reported to Cabinet on 16 February, who had responded to the recommendations, which could be found with the Minutes of that meeting.
- In response to the third lockdown and the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry recommendations the final budget included;
 - o additional funding for Cultural Services.
 - o additional economic uncertainty contingency against further losses of service income / support for outsourced providers income losses, and to manage demand, price and complexity pressures in Children's services.
 - o contingency against losses of property rental income where no government support has been forthcoming and to
 - o contingency for additional member allowance costs if local elections are postponed further.
- Contingency budgets, which were used to manage risk and uncertainty in the budget had increased in line with the uncertainties resulting from the pandemic, and one-off funding had been used to create a reserve to further mitigate short-term risks.
- That while every effort had been made to ensure the budget proposals were robust, deliverable and support financial sustainability there were significant risks identified in the proposed draft budget. A table identifying these key risks was included with the budget report. A robust risk management approach would be taken to monitor, manage and mitigate these risks through the delivery of these draft budget plans.

The Leader concluded by thanking all members who had been involved in the early development of the budget proposals.

Mr Tett moved the recommendations as per the report. This was seconded by Councillor Mrs Macpherson.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules, the Chairman then invited Mr S Lambert, as Leader of the Alliance Group) (main opposition group) to comment on the budget proposals. The following main points were noted:

- Mr Lambert thanked the Chief Executive, Directors and all staff for the work that had been undertaken over the past 12 months in very difficult circumstances to establish the new Council.
- That any further monies received from Government relating to the pandemic should be spent on residents and not put into reserves.
- That the proposed revenue budget should have included some information on forecasts

- and budget thinking for the next 3-4 years.
- Concerns were expressed on the way that some of the Community Boards were functioning, with it being requested that an urgent audit of their governance and arrangements be undertaken by the Audit and Governance Committee.
 - That budgets should be restored to fund the Household Recycling Centres, and include a review of the gate fees charged.
 - That the flood alleviation funding as part of the capital programme was supported, although a lot more work and funding was still required.
 - That an overall total Council Tax increase of 3.99% could also be achieved with a 3% increase of the Adult Social Care precept, accompanied by a smaller increase in basic Council Tax, and assist in supporting adult social care services for the future year.
 - That more should be done to devolve services to Town and Parish Councils, including looking at the need to continue levying Special Expenses for the provision of some services.
 - That more should be done to support businesses impacted by Brexit.
 - Commented on the drainage works initiatives.
 - That the Alliance Group was not supportive of recommendation 4 (giving Cabinet delegation to add up to £100m to be included in the capital programme).
 - That the SEND budget proposals were supported, although these provisions should still be increased.

The Chairman thanked Mr S Lambert for his comments and invited Mr M Bateman to speak on behalf of the Labour group. The following main points were noted:

- Mr Bateman thanked the Officers for their hard work on the budget, which had been even more difficult this year due to the pandemic.
- That given the current additional support required by the adult social care services it was surprising that the Adult Social Care precept had not been increased by 3%.
- A number of aspects of the budget were commended including the additional monies for children services, £2m for footpaths, £2m for drainage works and clearing gullies, and for culture.
- That the proposed revenue budget should have included some information on forecasts and budget thinking for future years.
- Concerns were expressed around some of the assumptions associated with future savings.
- That the Council should have considered funding any Council Tax increase this year from reserves.

At the conclusion, the Chairman thanked Mr Bateman for his comments.

It was thereupon proposed by Mr R Stuchbury and seconded by Mr R Raja that Council be recommended to support the proposal for an additional recommendation to be included with the budget as follows:

“That information is provided to residents regarding the calculation of their council tax bill details which contains the cumulative total of the adult social care precept charged since 2015/16, and what percentage of the overall council tax bill relates to this adult social care precept.”

After an explanation of the rationale for the amendment, it was opened up to debate. At the conclusion of the debate, the amendment was put to a vote and it was declared to be **LOST**.

It was thereupon proposed by Councillor Bateman and seconded by Councillor Stuchbury that

Council be recommended to support the proposal for an additional recommendation to be included with the budget as follows:

“Given the increased volatility of income streams and Government funding future Council Budgets will be Outcome Based, to deliver clear commitments to Buckinghamshire residents in accordance with the Corporate Plan. Those commitments will be established through timely engagement with ALL Council members and delivery against them embraced as a duty of the Council. Any funding gaps identified will lead to additional funding requests to Central Government and where this is not forthcoming, the Council will ensure this is communicated to residents so that they can understand why agreed commitments are not being met.”

After an explanation of the rationale for the amendment, it was opened up to debate. At the conclusion of the debate, the amendment was put to a vote and it was declared to be **LOST**.

The Chairman then invited questions and comments from other members that had registered to speak. The following issues were highlighted and responded to by the Leader or Cabinet Members:

- The adequacy of funding for mental health issues.
- On the River Wye scheme.
- Encouraging other environmental schemes, in addition to the drainage works initiatives that had been announced.
- The budget impact on homelessness initiatives for the future.
- Better Bucks Programme, which was linked to future savings.
- The need for a High Wycombe Town Council.
- Concerns were raised on the future financial viability of many care homes.
- On the capitalisation of some of the Transport Infrastructure budget (which was referred to the Section 151 Officer, who stated that he was satisfied).
- The Council’s actions on carbon zero initiatives.
- Maintenance of the Wycombe High Street.
- Green bins, Wycombe.
- In support of the regeneration of town centres.
- On the importance of maintaining public paths and footways.
- On the adequacy of the Children’s Services budget.
- Lobbying for Aylesbury to be connected to current railway infrastructure schemes being developed.
- That the Internal Audit team had spent a lot of time this year auditing Covid grants funding.
- On the re-purposing of Council owned land and buildings to assist in delivering more affordable housing.
- On the budget for plain and patch of road services.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their questions and comments, and reminded members that a recorded vote would be taken on the budget. The Chairman also informed Members that he intended to take a recorded vote, en bloc, for all of the budget recommendations. The vote was recorded as follows:

FOR (130): Councillors: J Adey, S Adoh, Z Ahmed, D Anthony, M Appleyard, R Bagge, D Barnes, P Birchley, J Bloom, A Bond, S Bowles, J Brandis, C Branston, D Bray, S Broadbent, N Brown, S Brown, H Bull, T Butcher, D Carroll, B Chapple OBE, S Chapple, S Chhokar, J Chilver, C Clare, L Clarke OBE, M Clarke, A Cole, A Collingwood, M Collins, A Cranmer, E Culverhouse, I Darby, D Dhillon, T Egleton, B Everitt, P Fealey, M Flys, C Ford, B Foster, B Gibbs, J Gladwin, N Glover, T Green, P Griffin, G Hall, M Harker OBE, G Harris, M Harris, C Harriss, M Harrold, G Hollis,

Mahboob Hussain JP, A Hussain, Maz Hussain, P Irwin, C Jackson, S Jenkins, D Johncock, C Jones, R Jones, J Jordan, P Kelly, R King, D Knights, J Langley, T Lee, M Lewis, J Lowen-Cooper, J MacBean, A Macpherson, W Mallen, N Marshall, D Martin, P Martin, V Martin, W Matthews, H McCarthy, I McEnnis, T Mills, G Moore, H Mordue, N Naylor, R Newcombe, C Oliver, S Patel, C Paternoster, G Peart BEM, D Pepler, C Poll, G Powell, S Raja, M Rand, S Renshell, B Roberts, C Rouse, J Rush, S Saddique, G Sandy, R Sangster, D Saunders, R Scott, D Shakespeare OBE, M Shaw, D Smith, L Smith BEM, Michael Smith, N Southworth, Sir B Stanier, M Stannard, P Strachan, L Sullivan, M Tett, D Town, A Turner, P Turner, N Varley, A Waite, H Wallace, L Walsh, J Ward, J Waters, J Wertheim, W Whyte, A Wight, F Wilson, R Wilson, M Winn and K Wood.

AGAINST (34): Councillors: K Ahmed, M Asif, A Bacon, M Bateman, A Baughan, M Bezzant, A Christensen, P Cooper, R Farmer, S Graham, M A Hashmi, T Hunter-Watts, Majid Hussain, N Hussain, T Hussain, S Jarvis, P Jones, R Khan, M Knight, S Lambert, D Lyons, L Monger, S Morgan, B Pearce, R Raja, W Raja, S Raven, J Read, R Reed, N Shepherd, Mike Smith, R Stuchbury, M Titterington and J Wassell.

ABSTENTIONS (1): Councillor: A Huxley

RESOLVED –

1. **That the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme (appendices 1-3) be approved.**
2. **That the Council Tax Resolution (appendix 4) be approved.**
3. **That the ‘Special Expenses’ budgets, precepts and associated services for Aylesbury Town, High Wycombe Town and West Wycombe Church Yard (appendix 5 and updated appendix 6) be approved.**
4. **That Cabinet be delegated to make decisions adding up to £100m to be included in the capital programme, to be funded by Prudential Borrowing.**
5. **That the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Policy (appendix 7) be approved.**

8 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021/22

K Wood, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced Buckinghamshire Council’s Treasury Management Strategy 2021- 22, which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. It was noted that it was a requirement for each local authority to approve a Treasury Management Strategy by 1st April each year. This strategy had been developed in line with the CIPFA code of practice. Ms Wood moved the recommendation to approve the Treasury Management Strategy. This was seconded by R Newcombe.

RESOLVED –

That the Treasury Management Strategy 2021-22 be approved.

9 CAPITAL AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Ms K Wood, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the draft Capital and Investment Strategy 2021/ 22, attached as Appendix 1 to the report. It was noted that the council was required to approve its capital and investment strategy on an annual basis and that it had been developed in line with the CIPFA and MHCLG guidance. Ms Wood moved the recommendation to approve the Capital and Investment Strategy. This was seconded by Mr J Chilver.

RESOLVED –

That the Capital and Investment Strategy 2021-22, detailed at Appendix 1, be approved.

10 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY

Mr Wilson, Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services, introduced the draft Buckinghamshire Council Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy. The policy was an important document that demonstrated the Council's commitment to securing public safety, provided clarity for applicants and licence holders, assisted decision making, facilitated enforcement activities and helped safeguard against legal challenge. The creation of Buckinghamshire Council presented an opportunity to create a new policy that incorporated the new Department for Transport (DfT) statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards as well as promoting the highest possible standards to secure public safety. The Policy supported the Council's key priorities of protecting the vulnerable, improving the environment and promoting the local economy.

The Council was committed to adopting a new taxi and private hire vehicle licensing policy to support the alignment of the licensing regimes of the former Districts. The adoption of a new policy presented an opportunity to ensure Buckinghamshire Council licensed vehicles, drivers and operators were all held to the highest possible standards along with consistency for both drivers and the public.

Mr Wilson moved the recommendation to approve the draft policy at Appendix 1 to the report. This was seconded by Mr C Jackson.

RESOLVED –

1. That the new Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy for Buckinghamshire Council be adopted, with a proposed implementation date of 1 August 2021.
2. That the Head of Service for Licensing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services, be authorised to change the implementation date of the policy, if necessary.

11 REPORT FOR INFORMATION - KEY DECISIONS REPORT

Full Council received for information a list of decisions taken by Cabinet Members since the last Council meeting.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

4pm, Wednesday 21 April 2021.