



Buckinghamshire Council

High Wycombe Town Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2020 IN VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE MS TEAMS, COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 8.55 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

K Ahmed, Z Ahmed, M Asif, A Baughan, L Clarke OBE, M Clarke, R Farmer, T Green, M Hanif, D Hayday, A Hill, A Hussain, M Hussain, M Hussain, M Knight, W Mallen, B Pearce, R Raja, S Raja, N Teesdale and J Wassell

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

J Durkan

Agenda Item

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr S Graham, Cllr M Hashmi and Cllr Mahboob Hussain JP.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Regarding the minutes of the previous meeting the following queries were raised:

- Regarding the grants allocation it was requested that a list be provided on the applications for grants as it was unknown who received these.
- Following a query it was confirmed that the Dunkirk Memorial on Castle Street was maintained under the Council and not Special Expenses.
- An update was requested regarding the motion to carry forwards the underspend to the next year's accounts.
- Regarding the Bull Lane Service Yard Gates an update was requested on the written response regarding the match funding from Travelodge. A Member suggested that the Council could pay for the gates, however the Chairman explained there were issues with access and rights of way, and work was being undertaken on this issue. It was noted that the waste team had done an excellent job of clearing fly tipping in the area. It was suggested that a working group could be created to support dealing with this issue.
- An update on costs for the Interpretation Boards and signposts for areas of interest around High Wycombe was requested.

- Regarding the Daws Hill development allotments a member commented that if these were on Abbey Barn South land then they would not be able to be used as allotments due to pollution issues.
- Regarding the motion to refer the need for more allotments to the Strategy Sites Planning Committee the Chairman confirmed that this was sent to Cllr Warren Whyte and a response had been received which would be circulated to the Committee.
- A breakdown regarding the income and outgoings from allotments retained by the contractor was requested.
- A working group meeting had taken place to consider the grants criteria review and small amendments would be made. This would be brought to a future Committee to consider the changes and agree the final amended criteria.
- It was noted that the working group membership had been established to consider the roles of the High Wycombe Town Committee and the Community Board, however a meeting had not yet taken place.

The Chairman noted a response would be requested on issues raised.

The minutes of the meeting of the meeting held on 22 September 2020 were agreed.

4 CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECTS IN HIGH WYCOMBE

Penelope Tollitt, Director, Making Places Together and John Shaw, Chiltern Rangers, provided a presentation on climate change setting out evidence, consequences and actions that could be taken. Penelope noted that she believed this was a very urgent matter.

A number of charts and diagrams were provided in the presentation setting out the evidence and website links were provided for the source material. Penelope noted that after leaving the Council she reconnected with environmental issues and confirmed that she was Member of Institute of Environmental Sciences and a Chartered Environmentalist. She provided information on an initiative to support action against climate change, the '11th Hour Strike for the Climate'. Penelope provided a number of slides setting out evidence with regards to global warming, the effect on the planet, the economy and food and water shortages.

John provided information on the history and impact on the Chilterns and the chalk stream, specifically water usage from these streams. He noted that the impact of climate change was already visible in the Chilterns and water scarcity was an issue. Water resource needed to be protected and was one of the most important problems that needed to be considered. The Beech woodlands were also at risk due to climate change, and pest and diseases that thrive in a warmer climate. The chalk grasslands, rare areas of habitation which hosted various species of plants and butterflies, were declining and adding to the bio diversity crisis. Newly planted trees were helping to mitigate the crisis by linking habitats, creating hedgerows and protecting areas. All of these issues would need to be considered to protect against the threat of climate change. Urban spaces would also need to be used better for bio diversity in the town. It was suggested to act locally, make small changes, sharing of information and to save water at home where possible.

Actions suggested for High Wycombe included: tree and wild flower planting, rewilding areas in the town such as Desborough Rec, electric car networks, off-road bike super networks and more allotments. It was suggested that a High Wycombe climate change action team could be created with the High Wycombe Town Committee and the Community Board using volunteers and to connect with individuals, schools and groups.

In response to a number of questions the following main points were noted:

- Concern was raised regarding the increase in the number of bonfires and people paving over gardens. It was noted that most gardens were unregulated in planning however education was preferred over regulation.
- The ability for people to act together would enable changes to be made.
- Education of children was suggested to enable change within individuals and families.
- Water leaks should be rectified.
- Developments should be designed to support the environment. Alternatives to car use and the benefits of using other types of transport should be considered.
- Consideration should be given to the future rather than looking at the mistakes in the past.
- Regulation, education and leading by example would be required to deal with climate change. It was recommended that the council should go paperless.
- Elected members should set the standard and show by example. It was suggested that members provide information on changes they have made to tackle climate change.
- An information stall could be provided in the town centre providing information. Projects could be undertaken with schools and groups through the Community Board funding. It was suggested that a working group be created to move this work forward.
- It was suggested that members could work with faith and community groups on projects to tackle climate change.
- Consideration would need to be given nationally regarding electrical distribution for electric vehicles as some infrastructure would be outdated.
- Local energy production such as solar panels could be considered.
- Community champions could be used to highlight issues.
- Cabinet Members had been difficult to contact with issues and it was important that members were supported on a local level.
- Local people needed to be supported to change.
- Woodland could regenerate without the need for additional planting and was able to regenerate naturally.
- There were issues with consumption rather than just population.
- Members supported the suggestion of setting up an action team.
- It was confirmed that the presentation would be circulated to members.

The Chairman thanked Penelope and John for their presentation.

5 CHILTERN RANGERS UPDATE

John Shaw, Chiltern Rangers provided a short update. He explained that the Rangers were still undertaking work during lockdown and their volunteering programme would be up and running soon. It was noted that 700 volunteers had given 2000 hours of their time since April 2020 and engaged with over a 1000 children on projects.

It was agreed that this item would be moved to the meeting in January so a full update could be provided.

6 SPECIAL EXPENSES Q2 2020/21

Ramesh Prashar, Finance Officer presented a report on the Special Expenses quarter two position for 2020/21. It was noted that at the end of September the figures were lower as the managerial charges and grounds maintenance charges had not yet been added. In total the under spend expected at year end was £5000.

Information regarding the vacant post of the cemetery manager and the opening date of the snowdrop cemetery was requested.

Regarding funds not used in the special expenses such as for Town Twinning, it was noted that this would become part of the under spend at year end. Funds would go into the working balances and reserves to be used at a later time.

The Chairman thanked Ramesh for the report.

7 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's draft work programme looking ahead to March 2021 was present for review.

It was suggested that an item regarding action taken by members with regards to Climate Change be added to the work programme.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was incorrect on the agenda and confirmed to take place at 7.00pm on 19 January 2021.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance.