



Growth, infrastructure & housing select committee minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee held on Thursday 26 November 2020 via MS Teams, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 11.50 am.

Members present

Z Ahmed, D Barnes, D Carroll (chairman), S Chapple, N Marshall, L Monger, G Moore, R Newcombe, C Poll, R Raja, B Roberts, C Rouse and M Winn (vice-chairman).

Apologies

D Knights.

Agenda Item

1 **Declarations of interest**

Councillor W Whyte declared an interest in item 5 as a member of Buckinghamshire Electric Vehicle Club.

2 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October were agreed as correct record.

3 **Covid-19 and local economic recovery**

Members received an update from Leader of the Council, Martin Tett, and Cabinet Member for Town Centre Regeneration, Steve Bowles, on Covid-19 and local economic recovery in Buckinghamshire. The report set out the support being given to local businesses including the government and local schemes, as well as an update on the plan for economic recovery. Thanks were expressed to Buckinghamshire's MPs for their support in helping to set up the local scheme: the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). The Leader encouraged business to apply. In response to questions, a number of key points were raised:

- Environmental Health Officers go out in partnership with Thames Valley Police Officers to deal with instances of rule-breaking which includes issuing warnings. For more serious rule-breaking, officers have the ability to issue fines.
- Covid-19 marshals will be in place from week commencing 30 November.
- The council would find out week commencing 30 November how much money would be allocated to Bucks from the government's Outside In

programme that aims to improve digital connectivity. Funding allocation to support better connectivity of rural areas would be assessed as part of the budget review.

- Only one grant would be allocated per business even if multiple applications were submitted.
- The council is championing future government investment in infrastructure in the South East of England.
- An active campaign would take place to encourage people to shop local.
- Ongoing discussions were taking place on car parking charges and what could be done to encourage footfall in town centres, although it was noted that any alleviation of charges applied pressure to the council's budget.

Thanks were expressed to the residents working in town centres during the pandemic. Thanks were also expressed to the officers working hard to allocate and process business grants. Members were asked to encourage businesses to apply.

4 Long term plan for rough sleepers

Members received an update from the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Isobel Darby, on the long term plan for rough sleepers. The following key points were highlighted:

- The pandemic had pushed rough sleepers to the forefront of the national agenda.
- Partnerships had been established to help provide more long term accommodation units in Bucks.
- The council and partners provide wide-ranging support to help rough sleepers, including assisting with a deposit for accommodation and support with mental and physical health care.
- Members were encouraged to report anyone they see rough sleeping to the council.

The committee and cabinet member expressed their thanks to the housing team for their hard work to support rough sleepers.

5 Local plan for Buckinghamshire

Cabinet Member for Planning and Enforcement, Warren Whyte, gave an update to committee on the current local plans and the broad approach to preparing the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire. The following key points were highlighted:

- The position of the current local plans were as follows:
 - The Wycombe local plan was adopted.
 - The Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) was going through the final stages of examination. Cabinet Member for Town Centre Regeneration, Steve Bowles, was leading the work on this plan. It was hoped that the VALP would be adopted by spring 2021.
 - The Chiltern and South Bucks plan had been withdrawn.
- The council had formally begun the process for preparing the new Local Plan for Buckinghamshire.
- On 10 December, a local plan briefing would be held as part of the Essential

Knowledge Programme for members.

- The Local Development Scheme (LDS) would be considered at Cabinet on 15 December.
- The pandemic had given a new focus to what Buckinghamshire's town centres could look like in the future.

In response to questions, the following key points were highlighted:

- The current plans would no longer apply as soon as the new Local Plan for Buckinghamshire was adopted.
- It was expected that the new local plan would run 2025 – 2040, but the dates were still being considered.
- The housing need for the new plan was yet to be identified.
- The Planning Service was currently undergoing transformation.
- Members were assured that the service was well-resourced.
- Early engagement with town and parishes was anticipated.
- A community engagement plan was being worked up.
- The new local plan would work in synergy with neighbourhood plans.
- A review of the constitution was taking place. This included a review on the remit of the area and strategic sites planning committees. Members were encouraged to put forward comments to the Constitution Working Group.
- It was hoped that Duty to Co-operate would be reviewed as part of the government's consultation on the planning white paper.
- The government had made their net zero carbon emissions policy a high priority.

6 Work programme

Members agreed the addition of an item to the select committee work programme: the adoption of roads and transfer of management responsibility.

7 Date of next meeting

28 January 2021.