



Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee held on Thursday 25 June 2020 [virtually via MS Teams](#), commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 12.44 pm.

Members present

Z Ahmed, D Barnes, D Carroll, S Chapple, D Knights, N Marshall, L Monger, R Newcombe, C Poll, R Raja, B Roberts, C Rouse and M Winn.

Agenda Item

1 Election of chairman

It was proposed by Brian Roberts that David Carroll be elected chairman of the growth, infrastructure and housing select committee for the ensuing year. This proposal was seconded by Mark Winn and in the absence of any other nominations was agreed by committee.

Resolved:

That David Carroll be elected as chairman of the growth, infrastructure and housing select committee for the ensuing year.

2 Appointment of vice-chairman

David Carroll proposed that Mark Winn be appointed as vice-chairman; Brian Roberts seconded the proposal.

Resolved:

that Mark Winn be appointed as chairman of the growth, infrastructure and housing select committee for the ensuing year.

3 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Graham Moore.

4 Declarations of interest

None.

5 Covid-19 update

The committee received a covid-19 update in connection with the council's planning, growth and sustainability and adult social care services.

Leader of Buckinghamshire Council, Martin Tett, gave an update on the council's response to covid-19, which included the following key points:

- Covid-19 was declared a major incident in Buckinghamshire on the 19 March, and a national lockdown began on the 23 March, just 7 days before the new Buckinghamshire Council was due to be established.
- The senior management structure for the new council was in place, and enabled the council to mobilise quickly in response to the pandemic.
- A crisis response team was established and managed the council's response through a cell structure, working closely with partners including the NHS and Local Resilience Forum (LRF).
- Staff were repurposed into roles to support residents and particularly the most vulnerable also known as 'shielded'.
- It was noted that as lockdown measures were beginning to ease, the council was moving into the recovery phase of the response.
- Thanks were expressed to members and officers for their continued hard work during the pandemic.

The following key points were raised by committee members:

- In response to a question as to the decision to declare a major incident in Buckinghamshire prior to national lockdown, it was noted that this decision was assessed against the situation at the time. Further, it was known that a national lockdown would take place imminently but the exact timing of this was yet to be decided by central government.
- It was noted that individuals in the shielded group were identified by the NHS. The council worked closely with the NHS to provide support for the shielded group.
- In response to a question as to whether the council was prepared in the event of a second wave of infections, it was noted that the council would take advice from central government. It was unknown how potential future lockdowns would work, but it was understood that localised lockdowns may

be likely.

- Members were informed that the council's unitary status had been beneficial in terms of receiving government funding to respond to the crisis.
- Advice on how to mitigate the impact of covid-19 on vulnerable people was being continually released by central government.
- Concern was raised as to whether Buckinghamshire unemployment levels could get back to pre-lockdown unemployment levels.

Warren Whyte, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Environment, informed the committee that the impact of covid-19 on planning income was less than expected. Thanks were expressed to members of the planning team that undertook additional responsibilities to support work on the covid-19 response.

Steve Bowles, Portfolio Holder for Town Centre Regeneration, provided an update on the impact of covid-19 on Buckinghamshire's high streets and town centres. It was noted that officers worked closely with high streets and town centres to provide support during this period, including providing guidance and signage for safe reopening. Thanks were expressed to the officer team that had enabled the successful reopening of high streets and town centres.

The following key points were noted in response to questions from members:

- The plans to regenerate High Wycombe town centre were progressing and would continue to do so in consultation with local members.
- It was hoped that lessons learnt and best practice from successful local schemes established during lockdown would be taken forward.
- The Portfolio Holder will work closely with the relevant community boards in any regeneration plans.

Isobel Darby, Portfolio Holder for housing and homelessness gave an update on the work of the housing cell during covid-19 which focussed on rough sleeping, domestic violence, and the travelling community. Members were advised that the council had successfully housed rough sleepers during lockdown. It was noted that, as people were less likely to be evicted during the crisis due to government changes to regulations, fewer people were presenting themselves as homeless to the council.

Throughout consideration of the item, members of the committee and portfolio holders paid tribute to staff for their work in the community and in response to the pandemic. Staff were commended for the way they adapted during the crisis in light of becoming a unitary council on 1 April where separate teams quickly came together as one, many working remotely.

6 Cabinet member priorities for 2020 - 21

The committee received a report detailing the cabinet member priorities for 2020-21. The following key points were highlighted:

- The importance of the council maximising benefits of the Oxford - Cambridge arc by driving economic green growth and generating high skilled jobs for local people.
- The council had been successful in a housing infrastructure fund (HIF) bid for local infrastructure in Buckinghamshire, predominantly predicated for the Aylesbury area (the garden town), as well as a host of other projects.
- The transformation programme for an exemplary planning service is scheduled to commence this summer.
- A new enforcement strategy for Buckinghamshire Council was approved by cabinet at their meeting 16 June 2020.
- The council had high aspirations of environmental standards in planning.
- It was noted that a backlog of determining planning applications had been significantly reduced between January and May 2020.
- The council had a statutory duty to adopt a new local plan for Buckinghamshire for 2025.
- New call in procedures adopted by Buckinghamshire Council were a cause for concern for some parishes within the Aylesbury area. It was explained that the constitutional change empowered local Buckinghamshire Council members and provided consistency in procedure across all former district areas. Local members and parishes received notification of the change in the parish liaison newsletter, and a copy of the guidance sent to parishes is appended to these minutes.
- Members were informed that planning training for town and parish councils had been delayed due to covid-19, but it was expected that these training sessions would be rescheduled to a safe and appropriate time in the near future.
- Approximately 80 rough sleepers were being housed at present. The housing team in liaison with central government were drafting an exit strategy for rough sleepers.
- There were a number of options for the council to consider to support homeless prevention work, including repurposing buildings for residential use.

- The importance of affordable housing and key worker housing provision.
- The importance of reframing strong positive relationships with registered providers and partners, and working closely with these partners and other council services to achieve a housing service that works for Buckinghamshire residents.

Note 1: Councillors C Rouse, D Knights and N Marshall left the meeting at 11.56am, 12.30pm and 12.36pm respectively.

7 Work programme discussion

It was requested that housing be added as an item on the work programme, and that the following strands be considered:

- Affordable housing
- Housing providers and Buckinghamshire Council as a housing provider in its own right/ a delivery arm
- Equal opportunities in housing allocations
- Repurposing of office accommodation to residential housing

The Chairman asked that members submit any further items for the work programme via email.

8 Date of next meeting

1 October 2020.

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Parish and Town Council's involvement in Planning Applications

Author: Planning, Growth & Sustainability

Date: 20/05/2020

Introduction

This guidance note tries to answer some of the questions the parish and town councils may have about the scheme of delegation relating to planning applications in your area and how you can get involved.

The Council notifies you of planning applications received in your area, and you can make representations raising whatever matters you feel are important. These are very important in highlighting issues, particularly local issues that you have knowledge of, called material planning considerations, which need to be taken into account when applications are decided.

There will be separate advice on our web site giving guidance on what matters can be taken into account and what are not material planning considerations when we are determining an application.

Much of the content of this note was intended to be covered in workshops prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, therefore has not been possible. There will however be further training for parish councils offered in due course.

What Can a Parish and Town Council Comment On?

This will vary according to the different type of application.

You don't have to comment on every application. Where you do comment you should try to focus on the issues you feel are important (focus on material planning considerations) and explain why.

You don't need to quote specific policies, just explain why you think it's acceptable or unacceptable and provide any evidence you have to support your view.

How Do I Comment on Planning Applications?

If you feel it appropriate to comment on a specific application, you should do so using the Public Access section of the relevant part of the website (or Consultee Access where available).

This ensures that your comments are automatically and immediately published on the website.

How are planning applications determined?

The power to determine “Planning Applications” rests with either a Committee (one of the Area Planning Committees, or the Strategic Sites Committee), or more usually is delegated to Senior Planning Officers.

In accordance with national best practice over 96% of applications are usually determined under delegated authority. This allows our Planning Committees to focus their resources more effectively on cases of local or strategic significance which would benefit from scrutiny.

Details of the committee structure and the committee process can be found on our web site. <https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

What applications can be considered by committee?

The new scheme of delegated powers are different to those operated in the previous legacy authorities until 31 March 2020 and therefore may be unfamiliar in some cases.

The Buckinghamshire Council’s Constitution (the rule book) sets out the scheme of delegation which gives powers to officers to determine planning applications and which applications are to be referred to committee, known as exceptions.

The relevant Planning Committees can determine an application for full, outline or reserved matters in the following circumstances:

- a) **Member call in:** This allows a Buckinghamshire Council member to request scrutiny (call-in) of any “outline”, “full” or “reserved matters” planning application.

In such cases the Service Director for Planning & Environment would consider these requests, in consultation with the appropriate Planning Committee Chairman, and on the basis of the material planning considerations put forward they would decide whether the application would benefit from Planning Committee scrutiny.

- b) **Certain specified applications:** where these are applications submitted by the

- Buckinghamshire Council,
- a councillor,
- a Chief Officer,
- a Corporate Director,
- a Service Director, or,
- a planning officer.

Other types of applications, consents, and notifications are not the subject of these exceptions and can proceed to be determined under delegated powers.

The full constitution can be viewed on the council's web site setting out the full details of the scheme of delegation. <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/your-council/council-and-democracy/our-constitution/>

How does this apply to parish and town council comments submitted before 1 April 2020?

The previous triggers for applications to be reported to committee do not apply as the previous Councils and their scheme of delegations no longer exist. This means that in areas where the parish council comments may have meant there was an automatic referral for consideration at a committee, this no longer applies.

This includes in the Aylesbury Vale Area where the parish/ town council had made comments which were contrary to the officer recommendation and had ticked the box to say they wish to speak at committee.

Details on how the parish and town council can now ask for these to be considered by committee are set out below.

How can the parish council ask for an application to be considered by committee?

If you feel that the issues raised are of such local or strategic significance which would benefit from scrutiny, you can contact your local councillor and ask them to consider calling in the application to committee. The member call in arrangements and procedure are set out above.

Where an application is reported to committee there will be an opportunity for the parish or town council to speak at the committee.

What is regarded as a full, outline or reserved matters application?

This includes anything which is submitted under the relevant applications seeking full planning permission, outline planning permission or a reserved matters approval. This also includes variation or removal of a condition on an existing planning permission under S73 of the Planning Act. It also does not include any applications that fall outside this bracket which we can refer to as

- Related Matters and
- Follow On Decisions

as set out below:

Related matters:

There are many types of planning decisions in addition to actual planning applications, notifications and consents which are defined above we are calling these Related Matters and they include, but are not limited to:

- Permitted Development,
- Prior Approvals,
- Advertisement Consent,
- Tree Preservation Orders,
- High Hedges
- Listed Building Consent.

This also includes Permissions in Principle for minor housing-led development

Follow On Decisions: Once a decision to approve has been issued there are often consequent matters that need resolution. We are referring to these as Follow On Decisions and they include, but are not limited to Discharges of Conditions, Legal Agreements and Non-material Amendments.

Version	Date	Comment	Author
1	13.05.2020	Draft for review	SK
2	20.05.2020	Revisions made to deal with SB comments	SK

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