



## Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 18 March 2021 in Via MS Teams, commencing at 12.30 pm and concluding at 1.21 pm.

### Members present

M Tett, A Macpherson, S Bowles, B Chapple OBE, J Chilver, A Cranmer, I Darby, T Green, C Harriss, P Hogan, D Martin, N Naylor, M Shaw, W Whyte, G Williams and F Wilson

### Others in attendance

R Shimmin, Chief Executive

### Apologies

K Wood

### Agenda Item

#### **1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K Wood (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources).

#### **2 Minutes**

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March, 2021, be approved as a correct record.

#### **3 Declarations of interest**

There were none.

#### **4 Buckinghamshire Council Annual Report**

M Tett, Leader of the Council, introduced the report and explained that as the first year of the new Buckinghamshire Council was coming to a close, it was important to recognise the (non-Covid related) achievements of the Council. An annual report had been produced and highlighted the achievements against the 4 priorities set out in the agreed Corporate Plan for 2020-2023, namely:

- Strengthening our communities.
- Protecting the vulnerable.
- Improving our environment.

- Increasing prosperity.

The Annual Report sat alongside a complementary 'Our Covid Response Report 2020-2021', which highlighted the achievements specifically in relation to the pandemic response, and that would be considered separately on the agenda.

The Leader recognized the efforts that staff had put in over the last year in providing business as usual services for residents whilst also establishing the new Council, in responding to the Covid pandemic, and in supporting the most vulnerable residents during this period.

The Leader invited R Shimmin, the Council's Chief Executive, to comment on the Annual Report. The Chief Executive supported the comments of the Leader in recognizing the efforts of staff and stated that the Covid work had been done in partnership with many other organisations. The Chief Executive thanked Cabinet for the work they had done together with the senior management team to accelerate the Council's response to the Covid pandemic, and also thanked all Members for the work they had done to support their local communities.

Members highlighted the following services areas and achievements:

- Children's Services team – for keeping children safe and sound, and responding to many challenges including providing free school meals and providing support for mental health / welfare issues. Mention was also made of the support provided for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and to the support provided for children of key workers during the pandemic.
- Schools, teachers and the Education Department – for supporting children and responding to the many changes and challenges during the year.
- Planning Service – for working to transform the new Service from the legacy 5 Councils, and in establishing the new Planning Committees.
- Economic Development – for helping to open up High Streets (more than once), setting up Regeneration Boards in High Wycombe and Chesham, and for the work of the Aylesbury Garden Town team.
- Localism team – as a new service, in establishing the Community Boards whilst also playing a central role in the Council's response to Covid. The Community Boards were allowing the Council to respond locally to issues.
- The success that the Council had achieved in increasing the number of foster carers and adopters during the last year, which had been life changing for these children.
- Housing and Homelessness – for their resilience and partnership working.
- Waste Service – for their work throughout the past year, including the re-opening of the Household Recycling Centres.
- That the Annual report highlighted the solid foundations that had been laid for the new Council.
- The progress made by Cabinet in agreeing a Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy and for large scale tree planting on the Council's land holdings.
- Adult Social Care team, including improvements to service delivery and in the

- apprenticeship scheme for social workers.
- Parking Services – for working to transform the services from the 5 legacy Councils into the one service covering all on and off street parking for the whole Council area.
- Public Bus service – for services provided during lockdown and on improvements for rural bus routes that were anticipated for the future.
- Thanks were expressed to all back office staff, and to all staff more generally who were all embracing new ways of working.
- Property and Assets team, including modifying offices, supporting the Support Hubs, for liaising with and supporting property tenants, and in working to develop a longer term Accommodation Strategy.
- Regulatory Services – across all the different teams, including the Environmental Health team and cemeteries/crematoria staff.

RESOLVED –

That the achievements of the Buckinghamshire Council in 2020-2021 against the objectives outlined in the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2023 be noted.

## **5 Covid-19 Update Report**

M Tett, Leader of the Council, introduced the report and explained that in early March 2020 it became clear that the Covid-19 outbreak was likely to have huge implications for the UK, with a national lockdown implemented on 24 March 2020.

The 'Buckinghamshire Council - Our Response to Covid-19 2020-21' report, attached as Appendix 1, reflected on the responses and achievements of the Council, including those delivered in partnership with others, during the unprecedented challenges faced over the last year.

The report sat alongside the Buckinghamshire Council Annual Report 2020-2021, which reflected the successes and achievements delivered against the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2023 during the inaugural year of the Buckinghamshire Council.

G Williams, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health informed Members that at the start of the pandemic 150 members of staff from all areas of the Council had come together to provide assistance to the identified 17,000 clinically extremely vulnerable people in the Buckinghamshire Council area. The efforts had been led by the senior management team but had extended all the way down through the organization. The voluntary and community sector had also pulled together very quickly to help co-ordinate volunteers. 1,800 residents had stepped forward to volunteer (far greater than initially expected) which had been a huge effort. Special thanks were extended to the Public Health team for all of their efforts over the last year.

Members commented on the 'Buckinghamshire Council - Our Response to Covid-19 2020-21' report, and highlighted the following areas and achievements:

- Housing and Homelessness team – through providing accommodation and

- support for homeless people, that was already changing many lives.
- Thanks were extended to the Chief Executive and the senior management for their leadership in responding to Covid – which included weekly briefings for Members, to all of the Council’s partners, and to the Leader of the Council for his leadership and direction throughout the year.
  - On the speed with which the Council had been able to re-distribute Covid grant funding provided by the Government to local businesses.
  - That the Covid report explained well how the Council, Council staff and Members had responded quickly to the pandemic, and how the Council had been supported by partners, volunteers and the public.

Members also commented that the pandemic was not over yet so it was still important for everyone to heed guidance and advice to continue to keep people safe as the country moved back towards what was hopefully normality.

RESOLVED –

That the Council’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic as detailed in Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report be noted.

- 6**     **Date of next meeting**  
30 March 2021 at 10am