



Buckinghamshire Council

High Wycombe Town Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 28 JULY 2021 IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD, HIGH WYCOMBE COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 8.32 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

A Alam, M Ayub, K Bates, A Baughan, L Clarke OBE, D Hayday, A Hussain, I Hussain, M Hussain, M Hussain JP, M Knight, S Raja, N Rana, M Smith, P Turner, J Wassell and K Wood

OFFICERS PRESENT

J Ford, N Graham, F Mugari, A Sherwood, C Steuart, L Vallis and I Malik

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: S Barrett, A Green, S Guy, O Hayday and N Thomas.

2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETINGS

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the High Wycombe Town Committee held on 9 March and 26 May be confirmed as a correct record.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations interest

4 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor A R Green be appointed Vice-Chairman of the High Wycombe Town Committee for the 2021/22 municipal year.

5 PENN ROAD CEMETERY UPDATE

A report was submitted which requested the establishment of a Working Group to review burial provision at the Penn Road Cemetery. It was anticipated that the cemetery would be fully

functional for burials in April 2022.

Members were advised that the decision regarding the types of burial provision would be attempted to be finalised by the end of August, enabling a further report to be brought back to this Committee in September, on fees and charges for burials and the new grounds maintenance contract which would become effective from 1 January 2022. To this end the presenting officer recommended the formation of a Member Officer Working Group to review types of burial that should be offered.

A Member questioned the timeline of the decision making process and whether there would be sufficient time to remain on track with an anticipated fully functional date of April 2022 for the Penn Road Cemetery. This was confirmed in the affirmative. The presenting officer stated that in spite of the tight timescales, officers would be working behind the scenes between meetings to ensure that they were gathering relevant information, and carrying out benchmarking activities to assist the Committee in reaching its conclusion.

RESOLVED: That

- (i) Members express their interest in serving on the Cemetery Sub Group via email to the Chairman of the Committee
- (ii) The report be noted

6 SPECIAL EXPENSES OUTTURN 2020/21

A report was considered which set out the revenue outturn position for 2020/21 and the impact on working balances at the years end for the High Wycombe Town Committee.

The report stated that the net outturn position for Special Expenses was £194k, a forecast underspend of £163k against a total budget of £375k. Further details were provided in the table within the report.

Some Members expressed their concern regarding the underspent grants within the voluntary sector, which they felt had become increasingly polarised since the unitary council came into being. Questions were raised as to how this situation had been brought about. Members were informed that whilst routine works had gone ahead, expenditure on maintenance had been halted due to the covid situation. It was also suggested that officers seek clarification on Hilltop Community Centre, and whether they were aware of the funding that was accessible.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

7 HIGH WYCOMBE MARKET UPDATE

A report was submitted which provided as an update to the High Wycombe Market report presented in January 2021. It focused on activities undertaken post the third lockdown in December 2020 to date, with the new reopening phase from April 2021. It also provided an update on strategic market management and the development of a Market Strategy for Buckinghamshire.

In general, Members were pleased with the progression in the area noting the change and increase in stalls along with the initiatives designed to revitalise the High Street. A number of questions were raised including one on the current social media practice. It was suggested that

this needed to go further to assist in reaching people in the surrounding areas regarding the exciting activities in the town. The officer reported that she was linking with the Forward Planning Communications Lead to amplify and promote the activities taking place.

Additional questions were asked about the new provision of space for charity stalls, that had been a specific request of Members. The officer confirmed that she was scheduled to attend a meeting this week with the Market Operators to discuss the booking process for charities to use a pitch space and would share this directly with members once determined.

Members were asked to note the following Facebook social media accounts in the interim:
MyWycombe (High Wycombe Business Improvement District)
High Wycombe Market (Saunders Markets)

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

8 WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme for the Committee was submitted for information. It was

RESOLVED: That

- (i) Penn Rd Cemetery Burial Types be added to the September meeting
- (ii) Town Centre regeneration be added to the September meeting
- (iii) Penn Rd Cemetery fees & Charges be added to the November meeting
- (iv) Existing Cemetery Regulations at Hampden Rd Cemetery be added to the November meeting.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday 23 September 2021 at 7pm.

10 PETITION REPORT - PINE TREES DAWS HILL

The Board considered a petition which requested that `the Council reconsider its decision of denying support for the maintenance of the children`s play areas on the Pine Trees estate for the safety and wellbeing of the children of the community`

The petitioners wished to see the maintenance of the play area as part of the council tax revenue received from this housing area. It had been further suggested that this area may be covered by a maintenance company to which households already paid a fee and which could incur increased charges to all households on the estate. The presenter also asked that the Special expenses budget also be explored as a possible option for the maintenance of the play area.

The officer recommendations had determined that maintenance for the area by the Council was not financially sustainable and that a commuted sum would need to be paid by the developer to cover the associated costs. This was in line with council planning policy.

In considering the petition, at the Community Board meeting, some Members had expressed their concern over covering the cost from the Special Expenses budget, as he felt that the residents within his ward would not wish to contribute an additional cost towards the maintenance of facilities in a similar estate to their own. Following a brief discussion, it was

agreed that the High Wycombe Town Committee would be best placed to consider the petition. Members agreed that the matter needed to be resolved and progressed quickly thereby bringing the play area back into use.

Members views were sought prior to the Board considering its own response to the petition at a future meeting.

The Presenting Officer provided detailed information on the background.

Members concurred in that swift action needed to be taken but that there was a wider long term issue which needed to be addressed with regards to access to play areas. A strategic overview needed to be adopted to ensure that organisations were held to account and that the Council had the appropriate control to enable it to have adequate facilities in place.

A Member proposed that Bucks Council, Planning and Legal Services establish discussions with Taylor Wimpey regarding the S106 payment which was silent in the 2013 Planning application about any commuted sum payable to the council for the management and maintenance of both the play area and parkland.

Following members` deliberations it was

RESOLVED: That

- (i) Officers consider initiating a discussion with Taylor Wimpey with a view to agreeing in principle a commuted sum for an appropriate period.
- (ii) The report be noted and referred to the High Wycombe Community Board for its further consideration.

11 SUB GROUPS

The Chairman stated that he intended to establish a Special Expenses Sub Group and a sub group for the memorial for covid heroes as soon as possible, in addition to the sub group for the Penn Road Cemetery. Members were invited to contact the Chairman via email should they wish to be involved.