



# Buckinghamshire Council

## Communities & Localism Select Committee

### Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES & LOCALISM SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 26 APRIL 2022 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.12 PM

#### MEMBERS PRESENT

M Harker OBE, A Waite, M Hussain JP, G Smith, M Stannard, L Smith BEM, P Cooper, F Mahon, M Knight and R Stuchbury

#### OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

S Bowles, V Grey and L Jeffries

#### Agenda Item

##### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Councillors P Bass, J Baum and P Drayton. Members noted that Cllr Robin Stuchbury was substituting for Cllr Drayton for this meeting.

##### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

##### 3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

##### 4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

##### 5 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman extended her thanks to the contributors that attended the 2 days of evidence gathering in March in connection with the Community Board Review. The constructive conversations that took place with stakeholders including community board chairman, members, town and parish council representatives, community groups and officers were welcomed. The Chairman was very pleased to receive presentations from successful funding projects as part of this.

##### 6 COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Steve Bowles, Cabinet Member for Communities, Lloyd Jeffries, Service Director for Business Operations and Vince Grey, Head of Resilience Service to the meeting.

The following points were highlighted:

- The team has developed a community resilience framework using a one council approach that includes all council services. The Framework consisted of 3 key spheres, these were Place Resilience, Organisational Resilience and Emergency Resilience. Elements of the government's National Resilience Strategy had been embedded into the Council's framework.
- In the weeks following the committee meeting, the team would be contacting all town and parish councils to establish a grassroots connection and ask them to provide the team with any concerns they might have. Material would be made available in a comprehensive update of the website that would enable better self-help for the community. The resilience team want to engage in a meaningful way.
- The team would be establishing which areas are of most concern to the Town/Parish councils. They would then work with the organisation to ensure there is an emergency plan in place for those issues e.g. flooding. This emergency plan will have lead responsibilities allocated and this might include elected members, Buckinghamshire Council officers, local businesses or the town and parish council according to the local needs.
- Community Resilience aimed to empower individuals, business, community networks and voluntary organisations to prepare, respond and recover from emergencies and disasters.
- This did not aim to replace voluntary organisations or leave Parish/Town Council's without assistance. Co-ordinating resources between agencies would allow greater resilience and reduce risk.
- Benefits of Community Resilience included effective response, reduced exposure to social financial and health impacts, stronger relationships with government and responders, stronger sense of community.
- Emergency responders and government benefited from an improved understanding of communities needs and capacities, quicker and more efficient response times as well as reduced demand. This enabled greater prioritisation and better partnering & communication with volunteers and local organisations.

During discussion, comments and questions raised by the Committee included:

- It was confirmed that the Council works closely with Bucks and Oxon 4x4 Response Group (BORG). The team had recently met with BORG and improved their communication with the organisation.
- Following on from flooding in the north of the county, concerns were raised about communication arising from the event. The officers clarified that the framework looks to engage more fully with the community and rectify these issues. Co-ordination would be improved by this framework.
- Members questioned the resources available to support the new framework when the Resilience service was made up of only 5 officers. However Vince Grey reiterated that the team could call on support from across the Council and partners.
- Lack of sandbags had been an issue following recent flooding in Buckingham, this resulted in Steeple Claydon Parish Council acquiring and storing sandbags for future emergencies. Concerns were raised that emergency staff were unaware of BORG and possible extra resources to deal with the consequences of storm Eunice. These concerns

- had been taken on board and further communication improvements planned.
- The One Council approach was praised as a benefit of combining into a unitary authority. An approach for the whole County had been developed. Concern was expressed over whether there were adequate resources to maintain this plan, and how the emergency services fitted into it. The Framework would enable these communities to develop increased resilience before an emergency situation. By recognising their needs before an event, resources required would be reduced from elsewhere. The Bucks Resilience Group incorporated Buckinghamshire Council and emergency services among the 40 organisations included on the Board. This Board looked to provide continued improvement of emergency resilience and community involvement.
  - Local knowledge from Members and Parish Councils would be fed into the team to ensure responders are aware of local requirements, e.g. traffic redirection and parking restrictions during an emergency.
  - Lines of responsibility would be set out in the agreed community emergency plans with local stakeholders (e.g. Parish Councils). A template for a plan would be available on the website, but the Emergency Resilience team would look to engage with the community in more detail to ensure suitability and that their needs are met.
  - There were varying levels of Community connection across the County with the Council. The pandemic highlighted the effectiveness of local communities, and the team aim to improve the connections across the County. Following up on initial responses and doing a deep dive with Parishes/Communities would allow this.
  - The whole Council would be involved in delivering resilience. The Emergency resilience team oversee this and ensure its effectiveness. The team was confident that both financial and staffing resources are in place to enable the team to pursue this framework. The governance structure overseeing delivery of this new model involved a number of senior managers and this leadership, combined with member engagement would help to make it a success.

## **7 COMMUNITY BOARD REVIEW REPORT**

The Select Committee considered the Community Board Review Report. This was to be considered by Cabinet at their 10<sup>th</sup> May meeting.

- The Select Committee congratulated the Scrutiny Manager, Chairman and those involved in the review for their work in producing the report.
- A Member expressed the view that it was important that all communities in Buckinghamshire were engaged and he hoped that Community Board Co-ordinators would reach out to more difficult to reach groups. Following on from Covid, it was important that the Community Boards kept the momentum going through engagement with the community.
- It was clarified that detailed records of funding applications are maintained by the Community Board Co-ordinators. Information on funding and co-ordinators could be acquired by Members through the co-ordinators.

## **8 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman suggested that Resilience be added to the Work Programme following the earlier discussion. The follow-up to the Community Board review would also be included. A member also suggested that HS2 and East-West Rail should attend a future meeting. The Chairman confirmed this was being looked into.

Further topics that could be included in the work programme were Domestic Abuse and the community response to crime, community support available for Bereavement, visitor economy & tourism and community owned businesses.

**9 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next committee meeting was provisionally 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at 10am. The Chairman suggested that this date and future meetings may need to change from Thursdays due to an unavoidable commitment.