



Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 5 January 2023 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 11.53 am.

Members present

M Tett, Cllr A Macpherson, G Williams, S Broadbent, J Chilver, A Cranmer, C Harriss and P Strachan

Others in attendance

P Brazier, P Martin and R Stuchbury

Apologies

S Bowles and M Winn

Agenda Item

1 Apologies

Apologies have been received from Cllrs Bowles and Winn, and from Nick Graham, Service Director – Legal and Democratic Services. Cllr Arif Hussain (Deputy Cabinet Member – Community Safety) attended on behalf of Cllr Bowles and Cllr Carl Jackson (Deputy Cabinet Member – Regulatory Services) attended on behalf of Cllr Winn.

2 Minutes

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 December 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Hot Topics

The following hot topics were reported:-

The **Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing** reported that there were significant pressures on the NHS both nationally and locally. Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust declared a critical incident on 30 December 2022. Despite that health and social care had worked hard and managed to discharge 65

patients who were medically fit for discharge to free up beds for other incoming patients. However, the system remained extremely challenged and different options were being looked at for patient flow. Councillors were being updated on a regular basis.

The **Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources** reported that there had been an issue with the Council's phone lines which had been out of order a couple of times. This was a nationwide issue with the telephony system being used and other local authorities were affected. A message had been put on the website about using the contact us forms on the internet. The Leader emphasised that this was a serious issue which would be addressed with the telephony operator.

The **Cabinet Member for Transport** emphasised the importance of reporting potholes on Fix My Street particularly due to the recent cold weather and then wet weather which caused layers of the road surface to break up. Potholes would be prioritised in categories according to safety issues and some repairs would be temporary. Potholes were being repaired at every opportunity depending on the weather. He also informed Cabinet Members that the service area were three quarters of the way through the gully cleansing programme.

The **Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration** reported on the recent Planning Inquiry on Sunset Park Homes, Biddlesden as the Council had received the Inspector's decision for the intensification of the gypsy and traveller site. This was a complicated case as it involved 21 separate appeals each looking to intensify occupancy of the approved plots. The case appeared to hinge on the needs assessment for the County and disappointly the Inspector concluded that there was an overriding need for more plots and allowed each of the appeals. The sites that have been permitted would be restricted in occupancy to members of the gypsy and traveller community. This appeal had only been issued recently and the Council was still considering the report and any further action that might be taken.

The second Inquiry was Beeches Park, Beaconsfield for 450 residential properties which was refused at appeal by the Planning Inspectorate. This had been refused previously at South Bucks Area Planning Committee. The Planning Inspectorate upheld the Council's decision that it was inappropriate development and would have caused substantial harm to the green belt. 500 letters had been received objecting to this application.

The Cabinet Member was also pleased to report that last year there had been 128 enforcement actions and that Buckinghamshire Council's enforcement team was one of the strongest and busiest of all local authorities. Cabinet Members congratulated the team on their work.

The **Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure** reported on the success of the pantomimes held in Buckinghamshire. He also referred to an event in Higginson Park, Marlow where there had been damage to the grassed area. The organisers had agreed to repair the area and pay for new grass. The Service Area was undertaking a

survey on the Visitor Economy in order to develop a Strategy that identified a collective vision of what Buckinghamshire should strive for to optimise the benefits of tourism and leisure. The deadline for the survey was 17 February 2023.

<https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com/egr/visitor-economy/>

The **Deputy Cabinet Member for Community Safety** reported on a new Domestic Abuse Service Contract which had been given to Aylesbury Women's Aid who were the current service provider for five years (three years plus one plus one). The total value of the contract was £3.6 million.

5 Question Time

Question from Councillor Robin Stuchbury to Councillor Peter Strachan, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration and Councillor Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment

“Could the Cabinet Members please provide an explanation about the arrangements in place to check on the adequacy of sewage infrastructure/capacity, and on any likely sewage discharge and other impacts on local rivers and streams (e.g. River Ouse, Buckingham), when granting planning permissions for developments? Related to this, what can the Council do, e.g. by liaising with local water companies such as Anglian Water, relating to the output outflows of sewage from developments?”

RESPONSE from Councillors Strachan and Williams

I'd like to thank Cllr Stuchbury for raising this question as it affords me the opportunity to clarify the role of the planning authority when it comes to sewage infrastructure capacity.

Development's that require a Planning Application:

Developers are required to demonstrate in their planning application submissions that there is adequate infrastructure capacity both on and off site to serve the development and that it would not lead to adverse amenity impacts for existing or future users. Developers are therefore strongly advised to liaise with the relevant water company ahead of any planning application being made.

All water companies have a legal obligation under S94 of the Water Industry Act 1991 to provide developers with the right to connect to a public sewer **regardless** of capacity issues. Furthermore Section 91(1) of the Act in effect makes it impossible for water companies to object or for the council to refuse the grant of planning permission for development on the grounds that no improvement works are planned for a particular area.

If there is a lack of capacity, then the planning authority in consultation with the sewerage undertaker can take steps to ensure that there is no commencement and/or occupation of development until the capacity of the existing sewerage systems is demonstrated to be sufficient to accommodate the proposed development. This may be by imposition of a Grampian condition, which restricts

development until certain specified events have taken place. We are however reliant on the specialist advice of the relevant sewerage undertaker and if they raise no objections at the planning application, then as Planning Authority we cannot justify imposing such a Grampian condition.

Ultimately the water companies have a statutory duty under section 94 of the Water Industry Act to plan and implement any works that are necessary to ensure the network of sewers continue to operate satisfactorily once they have received notification that a developer intends to exercise their right to connection.

VALP Planning Policy:

Policy I5 in VALP looks to ensure wastewater collection and treatment has sufficient capacity and there are a number of allocations with requirements to provide a foul water strategy:

I5 Water resources and Wastewater Infrastructure

The council will seek to improve water quality, ensure adequate water resources, promote sustainability in water use and ensure wastewater collection and treatment has sufficient capacity.

The baseline position on water resources, quality and supply infrastructure, wastewater collection and treatment work capacity is set out in the Aylesbury Vale Water Cycle Study 2017. On major

developments where development could have an impact on water resources and wastewater infrastructure capacity, early consultation is advised with either Anglian or Thames Water (whichever is appropriate) at the time a planning application is submitted (and evidence of this must be provided) to understand if the baseline position on water resources and wastewater has changed. Development proposals must meet all the following criteria:

Water quality

- a. Water quality will be maintained and enhanced by avoiding adverse effects of development on the water environment. Development proposals will not be permitted which would adversely affect the water quality of surface or underground water bodies (including rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, source protection zones and groundwater aquifers) as a result of directly attributable factors.

Water resource availability

- b. Development will only be permitted where adequate water resources exist, or can be provided without detriment to existing uses. New homes should be built to not exceed the water consumption standard of 110 litres per person per day.

Wastewater treatment

- c. Planning applications must demonstrate that adequate capacity is available or can be provided within the foul sewerage network and at wastewater treatment works in time to serve the development.

Phasing

- d. Where appropriate, phasing of development will be used to enable the relevant water infrastructure to be put in place in time to serve development. Conditions may be used to secure this phasing.

We are reliant on the specialist advice of the relevant sewerage undertaker, as a consultee in the planning process, in determining the adequacy of the existing network including available capacity and the timing of any necessary improvements required to serve the development.

Building Regulations.

Drainage subject to Building Regulations, where the Council is providing the Building Control service is well controlled. The design capacity for foul and surface water drainage for new buildings and new building work is set out under Part 'H' of the Building Regulations. Buckinghamshire Council receives around 4,000 applications for Building Regulations approval and inspects all drainage to ensure compliance with Building Regulations. Many of these projects do not require planning permission but do require Building Regulation approval (Building Control). This is how the Council ensures that there is no misconnection of surface water drainage or foul drainage from buildings. Building Regulations control design capacity up to the point of connection with the Public Sewer, which is the responsibility of the water companies.

6 Forward Plan (28 Day Notice)

The Leader introduced the Forward Plan and commended it to all Members of the Council and the public, as a document that gave forewarning of what reports would be discussing at forthcoming meetings.

RESOLVED – That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

7 Select Committee Work Programme

The Leader introduced the Select Committee Work Programme and commended it to all Members of the Council and the public, as a document that gave forewarning of what Select Committees would be discussing at forthcoming meetings.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing suggested that it would be helpful to add the Work Programme of the Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to this Work Programme.

RESOLVED – That the Select Committee Work Programme be noted.

8 Council Tax Base 2023-24

Cabinet received a report on the Council Tax Base Setting 2023/24. The Head of Finance reported that in 2023/24 the provisional tax base was 228,997.95 which was 1.76% higher than 2022/23. The increase in the tax base was due to a slight reduction in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, increasing the collection rate from 98.2% to 98.3% and adjustments in respect of changes in the number of chargeable dwellings. The collection rate had improved from the previous year but was still not as good as figures pre-covid. This was in accordance with the Local Authorities Calculation of Council Tax Base (England) Regulations 2012.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the Buckinghamshire Council Tax Base of 228,997.95 for the year 2023/24 be APPROVED.

(2) That the Buckinghamshire Council estimated collection rate for the year 2023/24 of 98.3% be NOTED.

9 Draft Revenue budget and Capital Programme

Cabinet received a report setting out the draft revenue budget for the financial year 2023/24. The decision had been taken to prepare a one-year budget due to the extremely high levels of volatility in the economic environment and the uncertainties surrounding future Local Government funding. The report also detailed a capital programme over 4 years as many schemes span across multiple financial years. The Council currently had borrowing headroom of £100m. Where schemes were brought forward with a financially viable business case these schemes could be added to the Capital Programmes subject to Cabinet approval.

Local Government funding remained very uncertain in the medium term due to proposed changes to the Local Government funding regime, potential reviews of Business Rates and Council Tax, and the implementation of key Government policies regarding Adult Social Care reform and the 'Levelling Up' agenda. The Autumn Statement had laid out the Government's funding totals and priorities for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28. Actual allocations to individual authorities had been confirmed through the Provisional Local Government Settlement on 19 December and only provide certainty for 2023/24. These are broadly in line with the draft budget and any implications would be considered in the new year / final budget.

Changes to the revenue budget were largely focussed on changes in costs as a result of the significant increase in inflation, service demand and income (both service and corporate), and the recognition of the ongoing risks relating to global economic conditions and the wider Local Government funding regime. The Leader in particular referred to the following issues :-

- The conflict in Ukraine
- The global supply chain was still feeling the effects of the covid-19 pandemic
- The exceptionally high costs of energy
- Inflation costs
- Continued covid recovery including impact on the Council's income e.g. on car parking and an increase in working from home
- Government reforms such as education

Overall the draft budget included growth pressures of £33.2m and £30m of inflationary pressures in 2023/24 (£63 m in total), with offsetting savings /efficiencies and increased income of £30.4m in 2023/24. Cabinet had scrutinised a range of proposals to reduce the budget and had identified proposed savings of £10.1m across all portfolios included increased service income of £21 m (£30m in total). There was also £4.8m of corporate reserves but it was important only to use this for corporate contingencies where required.

The draft budget proposed was built on the proposed Council Tax base and assumed a 2.99% increase in basic Council Tax and a 2% increase for the Adult Social Care

Precept, giving a total increase of 4.99%. The Leader in particular made reference to the significant pressure on the NHS and the need to keep residents out of hospital. This was the maximum allowable without triggering a local referendum and was still significantly below the rate of inflation at 11.1% at the end of October.

The Council Tax Resolution report would be presented as a separate report as part of the final budget in February 2023 and would contain the final information from the other precepting authorities leading to the total Council Tax for the area, which full Council was required to approve. The Cabinet report did not include special expenses. Discussions were ongoing to agree special expenses budgets for 2023/24, and these would also be presented alongside the final budget. The level of precept charged in Special Expenses areas formed part of the Council tax referendum threshold calculation, so final Council Tax levels could not be finalised until this matter was agreed.

In terms of the draft capital programme the Leader reported that it was proposed that a recommendation be put to Council in February to add up to £100m worth of schemes to the programme, to be funded through prudential borrowing, subject to a robust business case being approved. This would include funding for economic growth and regeneration, school improvement, highways maintenance and infrastructure, waste (household recycling centres), housing and homelessness and climate change.

The Leader made reference to the Section 151 Officer who had a legal duty to scrutinise the budget and report to the Council on the robustness of the budget calculations and the adequacy of reserves as part of the budget and council tax setting decision. He also drew attention to paragraph 9 which detailed the financial risks and uncertainties of the budget.

The Leader suggested an amendment to Appendix 2 (Transport Portfolio Capital Programme section) to include in 2026/27:-

- £4.425m on Plane and Patch
- £2.15m on Footway Structural Repairs.

In total, this provided an additional £6.575m on roads and pavements in 2026/27.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- A Cabinet Member referred to the public consultation process and congratulated staff on receiving 1,797 responses from residents which compared well with recent response rates. More than two thirds of respondents either agreed with or were not opposed to the proposals presented. He commented that it was good to see that residents had put care and support services for older people and vulnerable adults as a priority as this was not usually prioritised. In addition that car parking should not be prioritised for council funding. Another point he highlighted was that a

higher number of residents were responding from the 45-54 age range as opposed to 65 to 74 age range and that it was good to see younger people responding to the survey. He also referred to the responses from the economically active and inactive.

- A Cabinet Member referred to the difficulties of setting the budget with current Council pressures whilst also being mindful of resident's household budgets during the cost of living crisis but there were no alternative funding options. He welcomed the high level of savings made by the Council. He particularly welcomed the additional funding in year 4 for plane and patch and footway repairs as maintaining the Council's highway asset was vital. He referred to the financial risks and uncertainties and the importance of monitoring the budget closely particularly looking at income streams. The Leader commented that a reduction in commuting had had a big impact on Council finances.
- A Cabinet Member referred to health and social care in particular protecting providers with regard to market sustainability. Adult Social Care was particularly demand led and complex and she also commented that it was good to see that residents considered this area a priority (67%). However, she expressed concern about the response on statutory responsibilities and emphasised that it was important to provide detail on this area so residents understood what it covered e.g. care packages for vulnerable residents. The Council had a duty to provide these services.
- A Cabinet Member referred to the Capital Programme and the need to fund statutory commitments. He particularly welcomed the commitment to a household waste recycling centre in Buckingham and Rights of Way.
- Reference was made to the importance of road safety and that if there was any additional funding it would also be helpful to put this towards this area.

The amendment proposed by the Leader was agreed and supported by all Cabinet Members, as there was a political commitment to continue to improve roads in the County. On a vote being taken it was agreed unanimously and

RESOLVED :-

- (1) That the outcome of the budget consultation (Appendix 4) be noted.**
- (2) That the current risks associated with the draft budget proposals be noted.**
- (3) That the draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2023/24 (Appendices 1-3) be approved, subject to an amendment to Appendix 2 (Transport Portfolio Capital Programme) to include in 2026/27: £4.425m on Plane and Patch and £2.15m on Footway Structural Repairs (page 93 of the agenda) which will provide an additional £6.575m on roads and pavements in 2026/27 to be funded either from Corporate resources or the Government's pothole funding (if announced).**
- (4) That the proposal to seek delegation from Council to Cabinet for up to £100m of new capital schemes to be added to the capital programme, through Prudential Borrowing, and where robust financial business cases have been made, be supported.**

- (5) That the Schedule of Fees and Charges for 2023/24 be agreed.
- (6) That it be noted that a supplementary report, the formal Council Tax Resolution, will accompany the final budget submitted to full Council.

10 Buckinghamshire Education Strategy 2022 - 2027

A strategy for Education and Skills for Buckinghamshire had been developed in 2018 through collaboration and consultation with key stakeholders, with the purpose of implementing continuous improvement in educational provision across Buckinghamshire until 2022.

Following further collaboration and engagement with a wide range of partners, the Strategy had been refreshed to show the progress made and to highlight the priority areas the Council needs to focus on in the future. The review of the Strategy was timely given the unprecedented period of change and uncertainty that had been experienced due to the Pandemic and wider economic and social events. The refreshed Strategy provided the opportunity to review and reformulate the vision for education for children and young people in Buckinghamshire.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education referred to the public consultation process which had been undertaken. She referred Cabinet Members to the five priority areas which were as follows:-

- Priority 1. Access to and availability of high - quality educational places
- Priority 2: Preparing our learners to reach their potential as adults
- Priority 3: Collaborative school improvement to raise standards
- Priority 4: Embedding a climate of inclusion
- Priority 5. Supporting the emotional health and well - being of all children and young people

The consultation process confirmed that the proposed priority areas were the right areas of focus. The service area would monitor performance targets against these priorities to ensure that the Strategy was being delivered.

During discussion the following areas were noted:-

- A Cabinet Member commented that it was essential that young people had transferrable skills, including children with special educational needs and that the education system helped provide a smooth transition period into adulthood.
- A Cabinet Member asked how many children were missing education and had fallen through the provision gap. In response the Cabinet Member for Children Services and Education reported that it was difficult to be accurate with 88,000 children in total in the education system but that there were probably 1500 children which the Council did not have good accounting for due to various reasons such as they might be travelling or immigrants. There were some young people who had been suspended (only 7 children). There were 150 people Not in Education, Employment or Training.

- Reference was made to the final priority and extra-curricular activity including school sports, particularly following the covid pandemic. In response Members noted that the DfE had provided mental health support to children in relation to the pandemic which covered 50% of schools including from local and private sources. All schools have access to an educational psychologist with a good referral system through schools. However, schools needed to pick up on pupils individual needs in order to make the referral. A further question was asked regarding the transition from primary to secondary which was supported by the School Improvement Board and Education Strategy Board which included primary and secondary school headteachers who would share data, good practice and documentation.
- A question was asked about online learning and whether this was being used. The Corporate Director reported that all children now had face to face teaching in schools. However, with the recent cold weather where some schools had closed they had reverted back to online learning. In connection with that, Members noted that IT equipment distributed through the pandemic had stayed with families to support their learning (about 1000) although further clarification was required on network access. Some equipment had gone to the virtual school e.g. for asylum seekers. There were also local charities who had funded equipment.

RESOLVED –

That the updated Buckinghamshire Education Strategy 2022-27 be APPROVED for publication and launch.

11 Work Smart Estates Strategy

Cabinet considered the Work Smart Estates Strategy which aimed to achieve a reduction in operational estate footprint based on organisational need, a reduction in carbon footprint and would deliver a potential £2.4m per annum revenue savings and £4m capital receipts savings from the operational estate in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. The establishment of the unitary council created opportunities to rationalise the office accommodation inherited from legacy councils. Furthermore the organisational use of office accommodation had changed significantly during covid.

The Council's Work Smart Strategy had been designed to enable the organisation to maximise the benefits of flexible working, whilst ensuring that the Council met the requirements of residents and continued to drive improvements in productivity. The process had already started with Easton Street offices in High Wycombe and Capswood near Denham. As part of a pilot a floor at the Gateway had been redesigned to provide a more flexible space with desks, break out areas, quiet areas and booths for online meetings, one to one calls as well as collaborative spaces to bring teams together.

The report and recommendations covered:-

- the Council Offices at Wycombe Old Library (move staff to Queen Victoria Road and let out the Old Library)
- Council Offices at Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe (reduce operational accommodation where possible with a future review in phase 2 of the project plan)
- Council Offices at King George V Road, Amersham (to redevelop the site, identify the need for a future Council presence and carry out a staff consultation regarding potential impact of staff moving offices)
- the Gateway, Aylesbury (look at potential for a possible extension).
- the Council Offices at Walton Street, Aylesbury (“the tower block”) (to look at the potential of redevelopment of the site subject to alternative accommodation for staff)
- the Council Offices at Denham (to surrender the lease at lease expiry and underlet in the interim).

There was a supplementary report which provided Member views on the proposed Strategy which was generally supported. The Leader reported that there were no proposals to close the Wycombe office currently. There was an important link with this Strategy and the Customer Contact Strategy to ensure that residents could access the Council through Customer Access Points around the County, some of these were in libraries. The Leader reported that it would be helpful to have a further report on how residents interact with the Council and what they could expect with each point of contact around the County.

With reference to King George V House the Deputy Cabinet Member, who lived near Amersham welcomed the recommendations to ensure value for money for Buckinghamshire residents. However, he commented that it was important to have a Council presence near the High Street in Amersham to provide internet access, emergency assistance and a warm space for residents. Another comment was made by another Deputy Cabinet Member that he supported the Strategy and that there should be a good communication strategy for residents about future plans for offices and Council Access points. A Cabinet Member asked why there was such a long timeline to implement the Strategy particularly in relation to Walton Street. The Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources reported that it was important to ensure that staff could be relocated appropriately, look at other areas such as a plan for archives which were currently located in the basement and also sort out the certificate of listing for Walton Street. The Service Director reported that this was a realistic timescale and also included the New County Offices. The Leader commented that it was important to look at the retail property nearby so those offices were not vacant for a long period of time. Cabinet Members welcomed the report.

RESOLVED –

Council Offices at Wycombe Old Library, Wycombe

(1) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in

consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to make necessary arrangements to move staff from the Wycombe Old Library to the main Council Offices in Wycombe at Queen Victoria Road.

- (2) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants, agree heads of terms, and terms for a leasehold contract, exchange and complete on the letting of all or part of the Council Offices at Wycombe Old Library, in accordance with the financial implications and proposed revenue savings set out in the appendices to the Cabinet report.

Council Offices at Queen Victoria Road, Wycombe

- (3) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to reduce operational accommodation as needed to reduce operational overhead in accordance with the provisions set out in the appendices to the Cabinet report.
- (4) That the property will be kept in the existing use for the interim period pending the conclusion of the series of actions set out in this report and the appendices and known as phase 1. At the conclusion of Phase 1 a further review of the accommodation need at the Wycombe Offices will be undertaken.

Council Offices at King George V House, Amersham

- (5) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants to masterplan the site for re development, realising the opportunity for much needed housing in the Town Centre including affordable housing. As part of the re development, consideration will be given for a future Council presence in the town to facilitate Officer operational desk space, ancillary space, meeting space including space for Planning committee meetings, Environmental Health meetings, Community Board meetings and community access where they are not undertaken online or virtually.
- (6) That it be NOTED that for a period of time it might be the case that operations will need to be re located and temporary accommodation arranged for Council meetings and potentially interim office space for staff members. Alternatively, and where there is no obvious local need, Officers would be asked to re locate temporarily to either Wycombe or Aylesbury. The Service Director of Property and Assets is authorised to make such operational changes and agree associated costs. It is further NOTED that the disposal is at least 18 months into the future and the project will involve staff consultation regarding continued operations and potential impact on staff that are based at the Amersham office.
- (7) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and

Resources, to appoint necessary consultants to progress the masterplan of the site and make an application for Planning if needed and subsequently agree terms for disposal, agree contracts, exchange contracts subject to conditions and complete on the transaction subject to a further report to Cabinet on the final business case.

Council Offices at the Gateway, Gatehouse Way, Aylesbury

- (8) That the Council offices that have been the interim headquarters for the organisation since Unitary be APPROVED as the longer term headquarters for the Council.**
- (9) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants to consider master planning and preliminary budgeting for a potential extension and this will be considered against the options set out elsewhere in this report regarding the Council's current legacy headquarters building in Walton Street.**
- (10) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants and contractors to bring forward the workspace accommodation strategy more widely at the Gateway following the recent successful pilot, in accordance with the financial implications set out in the appendices to the Cabinet report.**

Council Offices at Walton Street, Aylesbury known as Walton Street Offices

- (11) The Walton Street offices are only partially occupied. The Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants to bring forward the site for master planning, regeneration, development and possible sale.**
- (12) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants and if required make a Planning Application, agree terms for a potential disposal, agree contracts exchange contracts and complete on a disposal, The disposal would be subject if required to conditions and subject to alternative accommodation being provided for the staff currently based in Walton Street Offices.**

Potential Council Offices at Aylesbury

- (13) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to appoint necessary consultants to review alternative opportunities for a smaller office in Aylesbury town centre as set out in the appendices to the Cabinet report.**

The Council Offices at Denham

- (14) That it be AGREED that the Council offices at Denham that have been**

- closed for operational use for some time will not be re-opened.
- (15) That the Service Director of Property and Assets be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, to seek to surrender the lease with the Landlord or underlet the premises to reduce operational costs for the remainder of the term of the Lease.

General

- (16) That the Service Director of Property and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, will bring back a periodic report to Cabinet with an update on the strategy set out in this report and the appendices not less than every 6 months for the next two years.

12 Adoption of Local Heritage List

Cabinet considered a report that provided a summary of Buckinghamshire's new Local Heritage List which set it in its national and regional context. The report described the methodology and criteria behind the list's creation and listed those sites that were ready for adoption in Phase 1.

In March 2021 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG; now the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities – DLUHC) made funds available to 22 Local Authorities as part of a national initiative to improve the provision and standard of locally held Lists of Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDHAs). Buckinghamshire Council was successful in their application for a grant of £70k and was one of those authorities selected.

The Council had been working on the Local Heritage List for over a year and had received over 2006 nomination; there would be 771 sites in phase 1 for adoption by Cabinet. Local listing was different to statutory listing; local listed buildings were considered locally important and become a material consideration in the planning process. Adding a building to a list did not affect permitted development rights nor mean that listed building consent would be required for works to the property. The list in the confidential appendix included a wide range of heritage assets including buildings, archaeological sites, parks and gardens, crematoria and cemeteries plus public art and landmarks. There had been engagement with community groups and volunteers. All owners of locally listed properties would be informed once the list had been adopted by Cabinet and information would be provided on the Council's website. Information would be provided to nominators on why any application had been rejected. All Members had been informed through two briefings which were well attended.

Whilst the Local Heritage List would never be fully comprehensive, and sites would continue to be discovered and added to the list over time, the aim was to achieve formal adoption of Phase 1 sites in December 2022, and Phase 2 sites in 2023. The Cabinet report set out a proposed mechanism for accepting future amendments to the Local Heritage List.

RESOLVED –

That the Local Heritage List (Phase 1) be ADOPTED.

13 UK Shared Prosperity Fund Project recommendations and governance

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund gave Councils a fixed funding allocation for Levelling Up themed activity between 2022/23 and 2024/25 that would otherwise be lost by cessation of EU funding. Following the submission of the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan in Summer 2022, and receipt of Department for Levelling-Up, Housing, and Communities' approval of the Plan in early December, the Council now needed to decide how money would be allocated to specific delivery projects.

Buckinghamshire had been allocated £5.8m from the UKSPF over three years and the aim was to split the funding across the priority themes. Due to the limited funding it was important to prioritise fewer projects to enable sufficient funding for those areas and to link it with the Opportunity Bucks Programme to target more deprived areas. Funding had also been allocated for the Energy Doctor Programme which would consist of additional Council officers working on the ground in communities to provide a mix of advice and home assessment and delivering low cost quick win energy efficient measures.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment reported that £5 million had been allocated to help residents earning under £30,000 who had properties ranked in D, E, F and G which would help in other areas combined with the Energy Doctor Scheme bearing in mind the cost of energy and fuel but also helps reduce emissions and help the environment. The Council was already ahead of target in reducing CO2 emissions. It was important to help residents to reduce their energy consumption. It would be helpful to issue a press release on this.

It was recommended that a programme of quick wins for the first year of UKSPF funding due to the short timeframe between receiving the year 1 UKSPF funds by DLUHC and the end of the financial year. Recommendations were also set out for a project selection approach for 2023-24 and 2024-25 (the second and final years of UKSPF funding, for which there are far larger amounts of funding to allocate).

RESOLVED –

- 1. That the proposed funding for the projects identified for the 2022-23 allocation of UKSPF, as detailed in confidential Appendix A, be AGREED.**
- 2. That the Energy Doctor programme be established, to be delivered by the Council's Climate Change and Environment team.**
- 3. That the governance of the Bucks SPF programme, including the funding decisions for 2023-24 and 2024-25 allocations of UKSPF and as detailed in confidential Appendix A be APPROVED.**

14 High Wycombe Asset Disposal Strategy

The Cabinet Member reported that last year Cabinet had agreed to lease the southern area of Wycombe Air Park to Stage 50 operating as Wycombe Film Studios to build a new film studio complex with obvious benefits for employment and the local economy. The draft lease agreement which came into force once planning permission had been obtained included a Put and Call option whereby Wycombe Film Studios have an option to convert the 25 year lease under the current arrangements into a longer lease in return for a capital sum. This would secure a capital receipt for the Council and a long term income stream and mitigates any risk.

Under its existing legal contract with WFS, the Council had to shortly decide whether to exercise the Option Agreement (“the agreement”) for the Put and Call on the film studio site (“Site A”) adjoining Wycombe Air Park. If no decision was made, the P & C would fall away. Since the existing legal contract was signed in April 2022, WFS had requested a variation in the terms of the P&C to ensure delivery of the overall business plan for developing a major film studio complex on Site A.

Negotiations were ongoing between the Council and WFS and revised terms were close to being agreed. These terms would result in a greater capital receipt, in accordance with the terms set out in the confidential appendices. As currently worded, the agreement needed to be signed off by the Council no later than January 2023. Otherwise, the agreement would fall away. If the Council decided to serve notice, then it could secure a capital receipt that was greater than the value of the income stream under the current agreement.

Recommendation 1 was whether the Council would agree an extension to this sign off date of the Put and Call option. On the basis that the P&C did not go live until a planning permission was granted for a permanent consent for film studios on the site, that was likely to be in March 2023, this request for an extension was not a commercially sensitive point and WFS had confirmed that they were ready to progress the extension of time.

Recommendation 2 was whether the Council accepted the variations currently being asked for by WFS. The key changes sought enabled WFS to acquire the effective freehold for Site A anytime after the agreement was served; in contrast, the Council could not demand a sale until a later date but in the meantime were entitled to a higher rent than currently entitled to.

Recommendation 3 was whether the Council wished to trigger the agreement in either its existing or revised form. Officers had recommended all three actions as they were all financially advantageous to the Council and optimised the prospects for the film studio to be developed over the short to medium term.

RESOLVED –

- 1. That an extension to the date by when the Council must declare the existing Put and Call Notice (“P&C”) live be authorised.**

2. That the variation of the terms of the existing Put and Call Notice as set out in the confidential annex be authorised, including:
 - (a) Delaying the date that the Council can service its Put option; and
 - (b) Permitting Wycombe Film Studio (“WFS”) to serve its Call option as soon as the P&C is live, providing the Council’s revised financial position is no worse than that of November 2022.
 3. That the P&C be declared live, once in its final form, thus enabling the Council to receive the capital receipt form WFS as detailed in the confidential annex.
 4. That authority to take the actions to implement recommendations 1-3 above be delegated to the Service Director for Property and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources and the Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer), it being noted that the capital receipt will be retained for income generation – initially form the interest received on the capital.
- 15 **Exclusion of the public (if required)**
RESOLVED That the press and public be excluded for the following items as they were exempt by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 because they contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
- 16 **Confidential Minutes**
RESOLVED – That the Confidential Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 December 2022 were agreed as a correct record.
- 17 **Confidential Appendix - Adoption of Local Heritage List**
Cabinet noted the confidential appendix.
- 18 **Confidential Appendix - UK Shared Prosperity Fund Project recommendations and governance**
Cabinet noted the confidential appendix.
- 19 **Confidential Appendices - High Wycombe Asset Disposal Strategy**
Cabinet noted the confidential appendices.
- 20 **Date of next meeting**
14 February 2023 at 10am.