



Buckinghamshire Council

Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GROWTH, INFRASTRUCTURE & HOUSING SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 6 JULY 2023 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.15 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT

D Carroll (Chairman), S Chapple, Q Chaudhry, I Darby, C Poll, S Rouse, D Town, S Wilson, P Brazier and P Cooper

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

R Matthews, P Strachan and C Urry

Agenda Item

1 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman confirmed the appointment of Cllr Thomas Hogg as vice-chairman of the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee for the ensuing year.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies had been received from Councillors N Marshall, A Baughan, T Hogg, C Etholen and T Hunter-Watts.

Councillor P Brazier was present as substitute for Councillor T Hogg.

Councillor P Cooper was present as substitute for Councillor T Hunter-Watts.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Stuart Wilson declared an interest in item 6 as a Member of the Member Development Working Group.

Councillor Rachael Matthews declared an interest in item 6 as Chairman of the Member Development Working Group.

4 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meetings held on 6th April and 17th May 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

6 MEMBER ENGAGEMENT IN PLANNING - 12-MONTH PROGRESS UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed, Councillor Peter Strachan, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, Councillor Rachael Matthews, Deputy Cabinet Member for Town Centre Regeneration and Christine Urry, Head of Planning and Development to the meeting.

The following points were highlighted from the report.

- The Member Planning Handbook provided an overview of the planning service as well as a detail of how Members could be involved.
- Political Awareness training sessions had been well received by Planning Officers and would be provided corporately going forward. Officers were especially interested to hear how Members took the path to become Councillors.
- Meet the Planner events, and Planning Surgeries were held regularly allowing Members to build relationships, and approach officers with planning queries.
- Merging GIS systems from legacy Council's was complex and dependent on moving to a single Uniform. There were more than 1000 map layers to amalgamate into a new mapping system, it would take considerable time to achieve this. GIS systems were required for officer, member & public provision, therefore considerable work was necessary to implement a suitable system.

Members raised the following points.

- There was intention to update the Member Planning Handbook annually and provide it to Members as part of the Annual Member Refresher Training. The Handbook was to be published following the Member Development Working Group meeting to be held 11th July 2023.
- There were varying levels of Planning knowledge among Members, with those on Planning Committee's having more experience and special training. Those Members less engaged with the Planning system would find the Handbook especially useful.
- The Member Planning Handbook could provide an improvement in terms of Officer time spent responding to Member queries. This would be monitored to assess the impact.
- It was noted that the Planning Handbook was very well constructed and would be useful for Members. If uncertainty over interpretation was common (e.g. grey areas), it would be reviewed to see if more detail was required.
- It was suggested that the escalation procedure (with regards to recommended officer response timescales), and links to existing GIS Map provision be added to the Member Planning Handbook.
- The Cabinet Member noted his disappointment with the level of engagement by a large number Members with the Planning Service. It was suggested to investigate what is preventing Members from attending events. The Cabinet Member would take the engagement point back for discussion with other Cabinet Members.
- The Meet the Planner events were well received, and the formal presentation mixed with the informal chat was useful for attending Members. There were opportunities at these events to build relationships with officers. Going forward, it was suggested that as Members strengthened relationships with officers the number of these events could be reduced.
- Timetables for Planning Member events and surgeries were available on Bucksnet (the internal Buckinghamshire Council intranet) for Members.
- A Member noted that following Planning events, there was now a relationship between themselves and Planning Officers which allowed for good communication to meet the demands of their ward.

- Members expressed their thanks for the work put into the review, and the resulting documents & actions that had been completed as a result.

7 JOINT RAPID REVIEW WITH THE HEALTH & ADULT SOCIAL CARE SELECT COMMITTEE - FUTURE HEALTHCARE PROVISION IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Members considered the Joint Rapid Review with the Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee - Future Healthcare Provision in Buckinghamshire scoping document. This review was to be conducted jointly between the Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee (GIH) and the Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee (HASC).

There would be 8 Members in total (including the chairs), 4 would be drawn from each Select Committee.

It was noted that Councillors Isobel Darby and Chris Poll would be joint chairing the review group. They would be chairing on behalf of the GIH and HASC Select Committees respectively.

Councillors Stuart Wilson & Derek Town volunteered to take part as Members of the review group. Any other Members that wished to join the review group were advised to contact the scrutiny officer.

8 WORK PROGRAMME

The Work Programme for 2023-24 was agreed.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place 7th September 2023 at 2.00 p.m.