



Council minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 20 September 2023 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 4.00 pm and concluding at 5.55 pm.

Members present

P Birchley, M Harker OBE, S Adoh, K Ashman, M Ayub, R Bagge, D Barnes, S Barrett, K Bates, J Baum, D Blamires, A Bond, S Broadbent, S Bowles, P Brazier, T Broom, T Butcher, M Caffrey, R Carington, B Chapple OBE, S Chapple, Q Chaudhry, J Chhokar, S Chhokar, J Chilver, A Christensen, L Clarke OBE, P Cooper, C Cornell, A Cranmer, E Culverhouse, I Darby, T Dixon, M Dormer, T Egleton, C Etholen, P Fealey, M Flys, M Fayyaz, E Gemmell, P Gomm, D Goss, T Green, S Guy, G Hall, G Harris, O Hayday, C Heap, T Hunter-Watts, A Hussain, I Hussain, M Hussain JP, Majid Hussain, Maz Hussain, N Hussain, T Hussain, P Irwin, C Jackson, S James, D Johncock, C Jones, J Jordan, S Kayani, P Kelly, R Khan BEM, D King, M Knight, S Lambert, S Lewin, J MacBean, Cllr A Macpherson, I Macpherson, F Mahon, P Martin, Dr W Matthews, Z Mohammed, H Mordue, S Morgan, R Newcombe, C Oliver, A Osibogun, A Poland-Goodyer, C Poll, S Raja, W Raja, N Rana, M Rand, G Sandy, G Smith, L Smith BEM, M Smith, B Stanier Bt, M Stannard, R Stuchbury, L Sullivan, D Summers, M Tett, N Thomas, D Thompson, D Town, J Towns, A Turner, M Turner, P Turner, G Wadhwa, A Waite, L Walsh, M Walsh, J Ward, J Wassell, J Waters, A Wheelhouse, G Williams, S Wilson, M Winn and K Wood

Others in attendance: Countess Howe, His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire

Agenda Item

1 Apologies

Prior to asking for apologies, the Chairman welcomed Councillor Jaspal Chhokar to his first full Council meeting following the Denham Ward by-election on 27 July 2023.

Apologies were received from Councillors Anthony, Baughan, Bracken, Brown, Carroll, Collingwood, Collins, Drayton, Griffin, G Harris, D Hayday, Hogg, Hollis, R Matthews, Naylor, Ng, Rouse, Rush, Southworth, Strachan, Wallace, Watson and A Wood. Apologies were also received from Dame Ann Limb, High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire.

2 Mrs Janet Blake and Mrs Val Letheren

Tribute was paid to Janet Blake and Val Letheren who had recently passed away. The Chairman recorded sincere condolences to their families on their sad losses.

Janet Blake had been a Member of AVDC from 2006 – 2020 representing the Stewkley Ward, and a Member of Buckinghamshire County Council from 2013-2020 representing the Great Brickhill Division. Janet was briefly on the Buckinghamshire Council until 2020. During her time on AVDC she was Chairman of the Council from 2009-2011, Chairman of the Development Management Committee from 2011-2015 and Cabinet Member for Business Transformation from 2015-2018.

During her time on the County Council, Janet was the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation from 2013-14 and a member of the Development Control Committee.

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to Val Letheren who had been a Member of Wycombe District Council from 1985 to 1999 representing the West Wycombe and Sands Ward and a Member of Buckinghamshire County Council from 2001-2017 representing the Green Hill & Totteridge Division from 2001-2005 and the Terriers and Amersham Hill Division from 2005-2017. During her time on the County Council she was Cabinet Member for Children's Services (2004-05 & 2011-13) and Cabinet Member for Transportation from 2011-2015. She was also the Chairman of the Education, Skills and Children's Select Committee from 2013-2016 and Chairman of the Council in 2016-2017. Val was made an Honorary Alderman by the County Council in 2017, and of the Buckinghamshire Council since 2020.

During her time on Wycombe DC, Val had been Mayor of High Wycombe in 1991-92, and Chairman of Wycombe District Council in 1993-94. Members had been notified separately of Val's passing and of the arrangements regarding the private service, memorial service and reception on Monday 2 October 2023.

Councillor Lambert then also spoke of his memories of Val Letheren, after which Members observed a minute's silence in memory of Janet Blake and Val Letheren.

3 Minutes

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

5 Chairman's Update

The Chairman detailed events that the Chairman and Vice Chairman had attended since the last Council meeting in July, which included Simply Walk 21st anniversary, the Buckinghamshire (The Rifles) Army Cadet Force Visitors' Day, Visit of the Lord Mayor of London to Burnham Beeches, the Bucks County Show, the Thames Valley Police LPA Commander's Commendation Awards Ceremony, and the Procession and Battle of Britan Church Service on 17 September at Wycombe.

6 Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2023/24

Members considered the Buckinghamshire Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2023 – 2024 that provided details of progress made against agreed outcomes for Children and Young People. It outlined priorities, alongside potential future challenges for the partnership over the coming year. It also highlighted the partnership arrangements and budget position for the Youth Offending Service Partnership.

The Buckinghamshire Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2023-2024 was produced in consultation with strategic partners. This was done through a series of focus groups which were held with representatives from the police, probation, magistrates, health, and Buckinghamshire Council services, including Children's Social Care, Education and Community Safety, as well as representatives from voluntary organisations such as Barnardo's and 'SAFE!'. The plan was produced in line with guidance published by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and must be submitted to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales and published in accordance with the directions of the Secretary of State.

In response to questions from Members the Cabinet Member provided information on the links between the Plan and corporate parenting by Members, about youth/community work happening in the county that supported children and young people and which included 16 youth workers based in schools, on the work and mentoring being undertaken by the Opportunity Bucks programme, and on the 3 aims/objectives of the plan and how these would be monitored.

RESOLVED –

That the Buckinghamshire Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2023-24 be AGREED.

7 Pay Policy Statement

Council considered a report that requested the Buckinghamshire Council Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 attached at Appendix 1 be approved. The Council was required to annually update and publish a Pay Policy Statement in accordance with Section 38(i) of the Localism Act 2011. The Pay Policy Statement had been considered by the Senior Appointments and Pay Committee on 13 July 2023, and following approval by Full Council, the Annual Pay Policy Statement and any amendments would be published on the website along with details of remuneration of the council's Chief Officers. The Pay Policy Statement covered all employees.

The general approach taken was that remuneration at all levels needed to be adequate to secure and retain high-quality employees dedicated to fulfilling the council's business objectives and delivering services to the public. This had to be balanced by ensuring remuneration was not, nor was seen to be, unnecessarily excessive. In setting remuneration levels, the council had to balance these factors taking account of own unique challenges and opportunities in doing so whilst retaining flexibility to cope with circumstances that may arise which may necessitate the use of market supplements or other such mechanisms for individual categories

of posts.

Members were informed that the main pay grades and information in the report related to Council service staff and did not relate to the pay grades of teachers or school support staff, and that the information on the lowest paid FTE employee would relate to someone on a TUPE transferred pay scale.

RESOLVED –

That the Annual Pay Policy Statement (1 July 2023) be APPROVED.

8 Proportionality Review

Council was informed that a request had been received from the Conservative Group Leader to conduct a proportionality review. Since the last proportionality review in May 2023, Councillor Jaspal Chhokar had been elected via by-election and subsequently joined the Conservative Group. Additionally, Councillor Nabeela Rana had left the Alliance Grouping and joined the Conservative Group. On 19 September 2023, Councillor Warren Whyte resigned as a Councillor, he was formerly a member of the Conservative Group.

Members were informed that a revised proportionality report had been published with the supplementary Council agenda on 19 September 2023, and this was the report to be considered for this item and not the report published with the original agenda. Appendix 1 to the report in the supplementary agenda detailed the allocation of seats on Council Committees and other bodies to political groups.

RESOLVED –

That the allocation of seats on Council Committees and other bodies to political groups at Appendix 1 (supplementary agenda report) be APPROVED.

9 Reports from Cabinet Members

Members received reports from Cabinet Members. There was an opportunity for members to ask questions of individual Cabinet Members about matters and issues affecting their portfolios.

Leader of the Council, Councillor Martin Tett

The Leader received questions on the strategic finance, income generation, the Local Enterprise Partnership, and on road infrastructure development. Members were informed:

- (i) That the adverse position of £8.3m (Strategic Finance) was the end of year forecast. This position could change as the year progressed.
- (ii) That the Portfolio Action Plans were being developed and would be published in due course.
- (iii) Thanked Members who had attended the recent income generation workshop. The feasibility of taking forward the suggestions was currently being assessed.

- (iv) On the Local Enterprise Partnership, and funding for services/functions that the Council had been asked to take on.
- (v) That with regards to road infrastructure development near to Aylesbury, the Council had been in negotiations with Homes England about viring money between different aspects of the Housing Infrastructure Fund that had been given to the Council, as the costs of the SEALR had increased significantly. Progression of the Eastern Link Road would be subject to the further development around the Woodlands area.

Deputy Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Councillor Gary Hall (for the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, Councillor Peter Strachan)

The Deputy Cabinet Member received questions on the 5-year housing land supply and on Town Centre regeneration. Members were informed:

- (i) That the Cabinet Member would respond to the Member on her query regarding the Council's 5-year housing land supply.
- (ii) That the Deputy Cabinet Member (Town Centre Regeneration) would respond to the Member with an update on Aylesbury Town regeneration strategy.

Cabinet Member for Communities, Councillor Arif Hussain

The Cabinet Member received questions on the Helping Hands scheme and on digital food vouchers. Members were informed:

- (i) On the work being done by the Helping Hands team and Opportunity Bucks to reach the most needy in the county. Members were also encouraged to contact the Cabinet Member and the team if they were aware of any issues.
- (ii) That there had been a slight increase in the last 12 months in the number of digital vouchers provided for families. Money for these came from the Government so there was not a direct cost to the Council. There had also been an increase from May 2022 when compared to May 2023 in the number of school vouchers given out from 13,500 to 15,000, which reflected the cost of living crisis and difficulties being experienced by many people.

Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Clive Harriss

The Cabinet Member received questions on events in Buckingham for the over 50s and on the Whizz Fizz festival. Members were informed:

- (i) That he would talk to a Member regarding an invitation to attend an event for the over 50s in Buckingham.
- (ii) The Cabinet Member apologised again for not mentioning in his report that the Whizz Fizz Fest had been delivered through partnership working with the Aylesbury Town Council.

Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, Councillor John Chilver

The Cabinet Member received questions on buildings in the Council estate that might be impacted by reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), and on the virtual work experience scheme. Members were informed:

- (i) That a full survey of Council buildings had been done last year and had not discovered any signs of RAAC.
- (ii) On the virtual work experience scheme that had gone live at the end of

August. Feedback on the scheme would be collated to assess its success. The scheme would also be looking at opportunities for Councillor shadowing.

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Angela Macpherson

The Cabinet Member received questions on future funding for adult social care and on the recruitment / retention of staff working in social work and for the safeguarding team. Members were informed:

- (i) That there continued to be funding pressures experienced relating to delivering adult social care services including providing care packages.
- (ii) With an update on the successful recruitment of social workers into the ASC Department with the 'Grow Your Own' programme, that was helping to drive down agency staff costs. The Cabinet Member would write to the Member specifically about the safeguarding numbers.

Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services, Councillor Anita Cranmer

The Cabinet Member received questions on children in care, on the Buckinghamshire Jobs and Apprenticeships Fair, and on improving education outcomes for disadvantaged children. Members were informed:

- (i) That a little book had been published that was written by 5 children in care, and describing how a child felt when they went into care.
- (ii) On the Buckinghamshire Jobs and Apprenticeships Fair was being held on Saturday, 23 September 2023 at the Elgiva Theatre, Chesham. Mention was also made of the Member Engagement Board, that was chaired by Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, and of a monthly newsletter that would be produced to highlight some of the initiatives created by Councillors.
- (iii) The Cabinet Member was thanked for including a separate section in her report on improving education outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Cabinet Member for Transport, Councillor Steve Broadbent

The Cabinet Member informed Members on improvements made to the High Wycombe P&R, which worked out of the High Wycombe Coachway. From 23 October, the Oxford Tube service which connected into London would be stopping at the Coachway a number of times in the morning and in the afternoon. The Cabinet Member received questions on a range of transport related issues. Members were informed:

- (i) That the Council was committed to delivering the link roads associated with developments around Aylesbury including the Eastern Link Road (ELR) South as soon as possible to assist with easing traffic congestion in the area.
- (ii) On the extension of the 'pick me up' bus scheme to Flackwell Heath.
- (iii) That the Council's Parking Strategy would come forward later in the year.
- (iv) That the Council had improved the Parking Enforcement Officer vacancy situation, which would assist with parking enforcement issues such as cars with combustible engines parking that had parked in EV spaces.
- (v) The Cabinet Member was congratulated for the recent improvements to highways maintenance and roads in the county. An update was provided on associated issues such as gully cleaning and cutting back trees and shrubs

- next to highways.
- (vi) That the Cabinet Member would come back to a Member regarding grass cutting / maintaining open space issues raised on Linden Village and Page Hill Avenue, Buckingham East.
 - (vii) With an update on the demand led bus service for Aylesbury. The procurement exercise to appoint a new supplier had not yet concluded, following the initial supplier withdrawing at a very late stage.
 - (viii) That the Council was committed to delivering more EV charging capacity across the county but was reliant on Government funding to deliver it.
 - (ix) On the actions being taken to get Thames Water to comply with permit conditions and the scheduling of works, including daily inspections by Council Officers and issuing fines or taking further actions where this was possible. The Cabinet Member would also be meeting with senior people from Thames Water in the next week.
 - (x) With an update on the work that was being done to put together the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. The Plan would then be used by the Council to seek funding (through bids to central Government or via developer contributions) to enable it to be delivered.
 - (xi) On the work being done, including liaising with the Environment Agency, so that the Berry Hill footbridge, Taplow, could be re-opened as soon as possible.
 - (xii) On the Council's policy and criteria for introducing 20 m.p.h. speed limits in areas.
 - (xiii) With an update on the spare seats scheme for school transport.
 - (xiv) With an update on the Buckingham Railway Walk.

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

The Cabinet Member received questions on preservation of trees and on the green bin scheme in the Wycombe area. Members were informed:

- (i) That LNRS work would be mapping different zones such as forestry, wetlands, chalk streams etc, and trees would form a part of this work. A Council wide look at the TPO process could be done separately but would not be part of the LNRS work.
- (ii) On the green bin garden waste scheme that had a 49% uptake in the High Wycombe area. If Members were aware of people that no longer wished to be a part of the scheme and wanted to return their green bin then they should contact the service.

Cabinet Member for Homelessness and Regulatory Services

The Cabinet Member was asked to pass on thanks to a number of Service areas that he was responsible for and responded to a question on illegal dog breeding. Members were informed:

- (i) Thanks were given to Housing Officers for their work with rough sleepers, to the Anti-Social Behaviour team for their work with rough sleepers in the High Wycombe area, and to the Gypsy and Traveller Service Officer for recent work/action undertaken in the High Wycombe area.
- (ii) On the recent enforcement action taken, as detailed in his report, against

people for illegally breeding dogs in Aylesbury.

10 Notices of Motion

The Chairman informed Members that a motion had been submitted relating to banning the sale of single-use vaping products. The motion was proposed by Councillor Z Mohammed and seconded by Councillor M Winn.

“Using an e-cigarette is known as vaping. Vape devices fall into two types: multi-use (rechargeable and refillable) and single-use disposable vapes ready-filled with liquid that may contain nicotine.

Vaping is generally considered a helpful aid to assist people stop smoking and less harmful than smoking cigarettes. However, the long-term effects of vaping are unknown and there is concern in the health community about the escalating popularity of vaping amongst non-smokers, especially children.

Selling vaping products to anyone aged under 18 and buying vaping products for anyone under 18 is illegal. Disposable vapes are often sold at “pocket money prices” and marketed to be attractive to children.

The council is actively discouraging children from vaping through a range of “smoke free” initiatives, information for parents and schools; and extra investment in Trading Standards to focus on underage sales (of vapes, tobacco, alcohol and nitrous oxide) and support prosecutions.

The Local Government Association is calling for the sale and manufacture of all single use vapes to be banned by 2024. In addition, without such a ban, there is also a strong risk that the UK will become a targeted disposable vape market as bans are rolled out in European countries.

Health concerns about vaping in children and young people

Research from NHS Digital in 2021 and the charity Action on Smoking in 2023 found that there has been a significant uptake of vaping amongst children. Children experimenting with vaping has grown by nearly 50% since 2022, and the use of disposable vapes is most favoured by children. In June this year, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) called for a ban on disposable e-cigarettes to prevent an "epidemic" of under-age vaping.

Environmental concerns about disposable vapes

There are also environmental concerns about disposable vapes – they are generally just thrown away. This creates a fire risk and environmental harm from the lithium batteries, as well as litter in public spaces. Lithium is a material that is critical to the Net Zero transition, and the 10 tonnes of lithium discarded from disposable vapes each year is the same as that needed for 1,200 electric cars.

Regulation

The marketing of single use vapes to children makes enforcement against under-age

sales very challenging. Nationally the intelligence is that underage sales went up in the 100s of percentage points in a few months after disposable vapes came into the UK market demonstrating that this is not a problem about all vapes, but specific to disposable vapes.

This Council therefore resolves:

1. **To support a full ban on the sale of all single-use vape products to the general public due to the disproportionate use among children and young people and their detrimental impact on the environment; and to continue proactive measures to tackle underage vaping alongside similar measures for smoking.**
2. **To call on the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to request that disposable vapes are banned.”**

Councillor Mohammed briefing explained the rationale of the motion, after which Councillor Winn (the seconder of the motion) spoke and stated that test purchasing done by local Trading Standards had shown that the sale of single-use vape products to children (under 18 years of age) was prevalent.

Councillor Morgan, leader of the Alliance Grouping, stated that her group was fully supportive of the motion and moved that in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules, paragraph 3.38 (Motions Without Notice) that the question be now put. This was seconded by Councillor Cooper, after which the motion was put to the vote and declared to be **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED –

- (1) **That the Council supports a full ban on the sale of all single-use vape products to the general public due to the disproportionate use among children and young people and their detrimental impact on the environment; and will continue proactive measures to tackle underage vaping alongside similar measures for smoking.**
- (2) **That the Leader of the Council write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to request that disposable vapes are banned.”**

11 Questions on Notice from Members

The written responses to questions from Members, published as a supplement to the agenda, were noted.

12 Report for information - Key Decisions Report

A list of decisions taken by the Leader since the last Full Council meeting on 12 July 2023 were received and noted.

13 **Date of Next Meeting**
4pm, Wednesday 6 December 2023