



Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 24 October 2023 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 10.30 am.

Members present

M Tett, G Williams, J Chilver, C Harriss, A Hussain, M Winn, J Baum, G Hall, Z Mohammed and P Martin

Others in attendance

R Stuchbury

Apologies

A Macpherson, S Broadbent, A Cranmer and P Strachan

Agenda Item

1 Apologies

Apologies have been received from Cllrs Anita Cranmer, Angela Macpherson, Peter Strachan and Steven Broadbent. Cllr Joseph Baum (Deputy Cabinet Member for Skills), Zahir Mohammed (Deputy Cabinet Member – Public Health), Cllr Peter Martin (Deputy Cabinet Member for HS2/EWR) and Cllr Gary Hall (Deputy Cabinet Member for Enforcement) attended in their place. Apologies were also received from Rachael Shimmin, Chief Executive and David Skinner, Service Director for Finance.

2 Minutes

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 October 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

3 Declarations of interest

Cllrs M Tett and G Williams declared a personal interest in item 7 as Directors of the Local Enterprise Partnership Board.

4 Hot Topics

The following topics were discussed:

Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure

Buckinghamshire Council was fully aware of the cultural, historical, landscape and ecological value of the London Plane trees in Higginson Park and had invested significant time and resources over the years into managing these trees responsibly. Following the fire, the Council had employed its own specialist teams and expert arboricultural consultants to advise on the most appropriate management of this particular tree. A series of tests covering the roots and main body of the tree showed limited degradation which meant that the tree did not require felling or any major reductions. Deadwood however, would be removed. Officers would develop a tree management plan with local stakeholders to consider the long-term replacement plans for the veteran trees in Higginson Park and other areas in their control in wider Marlow area which would consider species, location, longevity, and climate change to ensure that trees continued to be a major landscape feature in Marlow.

Deputy Cabinet Member for Skills

The Deputy Cabinet Member referred to the Jobs and Apprenticeships Fair which took place in the south of the County about a month ago. He thanked the Economic Development Team for their work. The Leader referred to the Opportunity Bucks Programme and extending the Programme to those areas of deprivation. This was an item for the Skills Strategy Board; the Fair in Chesham had been funded by Opportunity Bucks.

5 **Question Time**

The following question was received:-

Question from Councillor Robin Stuchbury to Councillor Angela Macpherson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

“Firstly, can I thank you for your response at the September council meeting to the funding of vulnerability around adult and social care.

Whilst noting that since the introduction of the social care precept, the majority of available financial resources is primarily through secondary local taxation which places huge challenges upon the local authority to meet its statutory responsibilities, please can I ask what modelling is being undertaken between now and the precept meeting to ensure adequate funding is available and to ensure that you are able to meet your important responsibilities to meet a growing need within so many aspects of your portfolio?”

RESPONSE from Councillor Z Mohammed (on behalf of A Macpherson)

In order to model growth within Adult Social care a robust model has been developed by our business intelligence expert on predictive modelling, using data from the last 6 years. The model splits our Adult Social Care clients into 18 different categories. These categories are based on the clients’ needs e.g. learning disability or physical disability, the clients age and the type of service they have e.g. a residential service or a community based service. The model then uses historic data alongside overlaying average costs, alongside census data, to produce the expected

numbers of new clients which are fed into the model. All of the modelling is used to feed into the Council's MTFP process and subsequent draft budget which goes forward for member consideration and scrutiny. The model is still only really a model and can't be absolutely accurate in its predictions.

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 Future Buckinghamshire Economic Development Organisation

Cabinet received a report setting out the proposed arrangements for the transfer of the Bucks Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) functions to Buckinghamshire Council, and was asked to agree the approach within Buckinghamshire, in light of the Government's decision to transfer the economic growth and business representation functions of LEPs to local authorities.

Following a period of consultation earlier in 2023, the Government had confirmed in August its decision to end Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) core funding from 2024/25 and transfer current LEP functions to local government in the interests of supporting local leadership, establishing more joined up delivery, greater efficiency and increased clarity for the business community. Councils would receive transition funding in 2024/25 (also funding for the growth hub) to support them to take on these functions, with all future funding to be set out at the next Spending Review.

The Government expected seamless Growth Hub provision across the area, that would continue to support businesses and to provide a convening point for broader business support provision. The current level and duration of funding to be received by Councils was not known at present and it was unclear when the level of funding would be confirmed. The Government expected that all decisions on the transfer and future management of assets would be taken by the LEP and its Accountable Body by March 2024. Further guidance was expected by January 2024. However, in general, local agreement was expected, with government departments becoming directly involved only with those areas that could not reach agreement. Following a series of discussions locally, the Cabinet report set out the key principles and proposals that have been developed to achieve the transfer in Buckinghamshire.

It was envisaged that Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) continued as the Bucks Growth Hub and the Skills Hub working with the Skills Board. Future funding for BBF would need to be clearly agreed by the Growth Board and its deliverables should be defined as part of a new service level agreement negotiated with the Growth Board.

The Leader reported that the Council had a strong partnership with the Local Enterprise Board and it was a rationalisation of the existing structure. The Council had the Growth Board and the four Boards beneath it which included Skills,

Opportunity Bucks, Regeneration and the Investment Board. The Council would look to transition the current Members to the Investment Board. The funding available was limited given the overall financial situation in the Country and Buckinghamshire received very little Government funding. This funding would be discussed by the Growth Board who would decide how much would be used for economic development and be given to the Investment Board. There was a limited amount of funding for the Enterprise Zone which had a specified geography in the north of the County and that money with some reserves should be available to the Investment Board. It was important to be aware of what functions the current LEP discharge and how many of those could transition easily to this Council. Some of them naturally fit in well with existing Council functions and others not so it was important to be clear what Government funding was available and whether those other areas could be integrated into the Council. Clarity was also required on whether this was short or long term funding in order to understand the sustainability of these services. Ideally this should be in place by April 2024. Further clarity was required on Board Members responsibilities and TUPE implications for staff within the LEP transferring to this Council.

Following a comment by a Cabinet Member the Leader confirmed that he had given assurance that the Enterprise Zone funding would be used for economic development. A future Council however could decide not to ringfence this money.

Another Cabinet Member welcomed the report and the rationalisation of services, avoiding duplication. He was concerned about maintaining close relationships with the business community so he welcomed that the Chairman of the Investment Board and the Vice-Chairman of the Growth Board would have a business background. The Bucks Business Group would continue as a regular forum.

Another Cabinet Member suggested that a letter of thanks should be written to the LEP Board for the support they had given to this Council and to Buckinghamshire as a whole.

RESOLVED –

That the proposed arrangements for the delivery of the Local Enterprise Partnership functions within Buckinghamshire, as set out at Section 4 of the Cabinet report, be AGREED.

8 Date of next meeting

14 November 2023 at 10am