



Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 30 April 2020 Via video conference call, commencing at 1.00 pm and concluding at 2.16 pm.

Members present

M Tett (Leader), A Macpherson (Deputy Leader), K Wood (Deputy Leader), S Bowles, B Chapple OBE, J Chilver, A Cranmer, I Darby, T Green, C Harriss, P Hogan, D Martin, N Naylor, M Shaw, W Whyte, G Williams and F Wilson

Agenda Item

1 Apologies

Martin Tett, Leader, Buckinghamshire Council apologised for the technical difficulties which had resulted in a delayed start.

There were no apologies for absence.

2 Declarations of interest

Martin Tett, Leader, advised that all the members had previously declared any personal or financial interests under the previous councils but asked that any new declarations be made before the item if necessary.

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Question Time

The following question was received from Councillor Robin Stuchbury:

“Would the 11+ take place as I have received a considerable number of questions on this very concerning subject? Could the 11+ take place with the known circumstances where children of modest or low incomes, who would not be in education? Would they be able to achieve the very best result for their educational future if the 11+ happened in September noting that there had been disruption to GCSEs and A-levels Exams?”

I understand that the grammar schools were all academies and the decision may not be within Buckinghamshire Council’s hands on whether the 11+ could actually take place with the background of children being out of education for a long period in advance of the test in September.

My primary reason for asking this question was that it would be so unfortunate if this generation of children's life chances were changed through circumstances beyond their control and not having the formal education and support of their teachers and heads in preparation and gaining an understanding of the 11+ in advance of sitting the exam this year.

So I'm asking; would you be undertaking to question the academy group in Buckinghamshire as to what their aspirations were in regards to the 11+ taking place in September and communicating this to the public. Would they be putting any special procedures in place so that children in catchment areas within Buckinghamshire, who did not have the ability for tuition, were not prejudiced in taking this exam, against families who could afford online tuition or out of catchment area/county children who may be benefiting from additional support over and above what our important children living within the education authority area had during these unprecedented times. We must ensure that all children in Buckinghamshire had the opportunity to fulfil their ambitions; the coronavirus could prevent this happening."

Councillor Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Education, provided the following response:

A Cranmer advised that it was difficult to provide a clear response but Buckinghamshire Council was currently liaising with The Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools Group (TBGS), who owned and managed the test for Buckinghamshire. TBGS was working closely with their test supplier, GL Assessment, to find a solution and all parties would be included in discussions with the Department for Education to understand the national implications of the virus on secondary selection and to ensure the Buckinghamshire solution was the best of all possible outcomes.

The application portal would open on schedule on 1 May 2020. This would enable the Council to establish, at the earliest opportunity, the group of children to be included in the secondary transfer process for 2021 school entry. A Cranmer advised that there were online resources available to all and encouraged parents to continue with the selection process as normal.

Councillor Stuchbury re-emphasised his concern that pupils from low income families might not be able to use the online resources and would not receive the mentoring in the principles of the 11+ exam if they were not in school.

A Cranmer advised that the Council was committed to ensuring that no child in Buckinghamshire would be disadvantaged by disruption or change and that all councillors would receive an update when known. Tablets were available for loan to families in need.

- 4 Forward Plan (28 Day Notice)**
RESOLVED: Cabinet NOTED the forward plan.

5 Covid-19 Update

Neil Macdonald, Chief Executive, Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust provided the following update:

- A Level 4 incident was declared in the first week of March 2020 due to the coronavirus; this had never been experienced before.
- Significant transformation had been carried out at Stoke Mandeville Hospital (SMH) and Wycombe Hospital (WH) to segregate patients into green and red zones in order to provide protection and track the infection.
- Successful collaboration had taken place between Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust (BHT), Buckinghamshire Council (BC) and the health commissioners.
- Approximately 95% of out-patient appointments were transferred to a virtual platform in the first two weeks of the crisis.
- The majority of routine surgery and screening programmes had been suspended.
- Approximately 4,000 staff had been trained in the use of personal protective equipment (PPE); the national supply chain model was providing the PPE.
- Cancer services had been set up at the Chiltern Hospital in Great Missenden. The cancer ward in SMH had been relocated to the Shelburne Unit at WH to protect the particularly vulnerable patients.
- Approximately 2,500 members of staff were working from home.
- A mental health support line had been set up in partnership with Oxford Health to deal with the increased demand for mental health services.
- All emergency services, including maternity, had continued.
- BHT was engaging with local businesses to supply equipment and catering.
- The district nurse service had continued as normal and community services had played a significant role in linking in with BC colleagues and health commissioners to protect vulnerable residents and children.
- A level of change had been achieved which would normally have taken 3-4 years.
- The virus would be here for a while and would become the 'new normal'; preparations would be made for a possible second wave of infection.
- There was concern over the impact on residents' health as attendance for the most clinically serious 'type 1' admissions to Accident and Emergency (A&E) had reduced by 45%.
- The economic downturn would also impact people's health and BHT was working with BC and partners to support the non-hospital care sector.
- The priorities were to learn from the crisis and to shape future provision.
- People who needed urgent care should seek help immediately.
- A plateau had been reached and BHT was looking at safely bringing back other urgent services such cardiovascular.
- Risk assessment and segregations would need to be carried out to ensure safety of patients before bringing back routine services and would be a regional response in collaboration with other hospitals.

The Chairman invited a number of Cabinet Members to ask questions or provide a brief update as follows:

- In response to a query on the supply of PPE; N Macdonald explained that BHT had moved to a national PPE distribution model and overall the model had worked as the hospitals had not run out of PPE. BHT had been well supported by local businesses which had been making PPE and schools had offered their stock.
- A member of the cabinet asked how many patients were discharged early into care homes in order to free up beds and what would be carried out to ensure there had been no additional risk. N Macdonald was unable to provide the exact number of people who were discharged early due to the pandemic. The opening of Olympic Lodge had been a great success. BHT would work in conjunction with Public Health and the clinical commissioners to track the data on the early discharges.
- Concern was raised that the suspension of maternity services at WH could become permanent; however, N Macdonald confirmed that the ante-natal and post-natal services were continuing. The WH birthing centre would re-open when possible.
- A member of the cabinet commented on the amount of changes that had taken place in the hospitals and whether the collaborative work which had taken place previously had helped. N Macdonald acknowledged that a phenomenal amount of work had been carried out by his staff of approximately 6,500; he was proud of them all as it had been a scary experience treating so many Covid-19 patients. N Macdonald stressed that the strong public and private sector relationships had come to the fore when the crisis arose and worked extremely well; he hoped that some of the changes would be retained. It was noted that there had been a considerable amount of partnership work in many areas.
- The drop in 'type 1' A&E admissions was a concern; some people did not want to overwhelm the NHS and some people were fearful of catching the virus. N Macdonald advised that a new segregation unit had been built at the front of SMH; everyone was screened and checked before entering the hospital and diverted via the green route (non-Covid-19) or the red route (Covid-19). Patients were segregated throughout the hospital; this process was being considered for when routine services resumed. N Macdonald emphasised that everyone who needed urgent care should seek help.
- The Olympic Lodge was not being fully utilised enabling staff to be redeployed to other sectors of Adult Social Care (ASC).
- The situation in the care homes had been receiving media attention. ASC were working closely with the care homes; webinars had been provided on infection control and the use of PPE. PPE supplies had been obtained and testing was available which would help with staff shortages. Approximately 30% of the care homes in Buckinghamshire were affected by the virus.
- Approximately £65m of business grants had been provided to 5,000 businesses in Buckinghamshire. The remaining eligible businesses were encouraged to apply online for a business grant on the Bucks Business First

website.

- There was one known rough sleeper in Buckinghamshire who had not taken up the offer of temporary accommodation. Those in temporary accommodation had access to medication and food and did not need financial support; if members of the public wanted to help they should provide a donation to the food banks. The aim was that the housing team would continue to manage the rough sleepers once the pandemic was over.
- Green bin (or brown bin depending on the area) collections would recommence on Monday 11 May 2020; residents were requested to avoid over-filling the bins and extra bags/items would not be collected. Five Household Recycling Centres were ready to open but BC was awaiting government guidance. The sites at Amersham, Aston Clinton, Beaconsfield, Buckingham and High Wycombe would comply with the social distancing measures – opening dates would be published on the [BC website](#) when known.
- Approximately 1800 people had volunteered to help; BC was working closely with voluntary partners to allocate resources. A weekly funding call was held to avoid duplication; more funding was in the pipeline.
- BC was working on recovery stage planning. A mental health cell was working within the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) framework and would tie-in with work being carried out by Public Health. Tribute was paid to the volunteers who were phoning vulnerable residents, and those in social isolation, to provide support.
- Debt and domestic violence were issues that would be focussed on.
- Children with Educational Health Care Plans or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities were still being taken to school by the school transport providers; the transport providers were also taking children of key workers to school and helping ASC patients attend their appointments.
- The Education Service was waiting for direction from central government on when the schools would be re-opened; information would be communicated as soon as it was available.

The Cabinet members expressed their thanks to Neil Macdonald and the NHS staff for their efforts and collaborative working.

6 Council Tax Hardship

Katrina Wood, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the Council Tax Hardship item and stated that the Government had announced it would provide the local authority with grant funding to support economically vulnerable people and households in their local area, due to the Covid-19 pandemic causing some residents to struggle to meet their council tax payments. Cabinet was recommended to approve the policy for Buckinghamshire Council which was set out in Appendix A and had been drawn up in line with government guidelines. An estimated £1.6 million would automatically be given to those working age residents already on the Council Tax reduction scheme who met the government's criteria; there was no requirement for them to apply for the hardship fund as it would automatically be

applied to their account. The remaining £1.2 million would be used for individuals in need and would be decided on a case by case basis. This approach was the most effective way to target the available funds to where they were needed most. It would also result in a large number of our most disadvantaged residents having to pay no Council Tax at all. Once the initial £150 awards were made, BC would be in a position to review the remaining allocation and identify the optimum method of distribution.

Government guidance suggested Billing authorities should re-visit the broader approach during the year and that they may wish to consider using remaining grant allocation as part of the wider local support mechanisms. At this early stage this report recommended that remaining funds from this specific allocation were used to give immediate extra support to claimants experiencing hardship through the established discretionary council tax awards process.

K Wood highlighted that software would be required to implement the award; updates were required to deliver a uniform and consistent approach to the claimants. M Tett advised that it had been suggested that the remaining £1.2m be given back to everybody in the county as general relief on their council tax but this would equate to approximately £2 per head and would not be in line with Government guidance.

Members of the Cabinet raised the following points:

- There would be no cash flow implications as BC had already received the £2.8 million council tax hardship grant.
- The cost of upgrading the software could be claimed back against “new burdens”.
- New bills would be issued to those in receipt of the extra relief.

RESOLVED: Cabinet APPROVED the following recommendations:

- 1. The Discretionary Policy set out in Appendix A.**
- 2. That Buckinghamshire Council used its discretion to award up to an extra £150 Council Tax Reduction to working age claimants for 2020-21.**
- 3. That any remaining funds were retained for distribution to claimants experiencing hardship using the Discretionary Award Payments Policy.**

That the S.151, in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Resources, be authorised to make any technical scheme amendments to the Council’s Discretionary Award Payments Policy to give effect to Recommendations 2 and 3.

7 Committee Appointments and Proportionality

Martin Tett referred to the report which contained the names of the members who been selected for the Buckinghamshire Council committees. Once agreed, the induction process and member training would commence. M Tett stressed that this was a very important item as it was fundamental to the operation of the Council.

M Tett also announced the following as representatives of Buckinghamshire Council on the Local Economic Partnership:

- Steve Broadbent
- Steve Bowles
- Martin Tett
- Nick Naylor
- Isobel Darby

Councillor Gareth Williams, Cabinet Member, Communities and Public Health, announced the Community Board Chairmen as follows:

- Beeches - David Anthony
- Buckingham and villages - Charlie Clare
- Wing and villages - Anne Wight
- Winslow and villages - Susan Renshell
- Haddenham and Waddesdon - Michael Rand
- Aylesbury - Mark Winn
- Wendover - Julie Ward
- Missendens - Peter Martin
- Chesham and villages - Patricia Birchley
- North West Chilterns - Gary Hall
- High Wycombe - Arif Hussain
- Amersham - Graham Harris
- South West Chilterns - Dominic Barnes
- Beaconsfield and Chepping Wye - Anita Cranmer
- Denham, Gerrards Cross and Chalfonts - Santokh Chhoker
- Wexham and Ivers - Jilly Jordan

M Tett announced the following cabinet member responsibilities:

- Councillor Martin Tett (Leader)
- Councillor Angela Macpherson (Deputy Leader) - Cabinet Member Adult Social Care
- Councillor Katrina Wood (Deputy Leader) - Cabinet Member Resources
- Councillor Steve Bowles - Cabinet Member Town Centre Regeneration
- Councillor Bill Chapple OBE - Cabinet Member Environment and Climate Change
- Councillor John Chilver - Cabinet Member Property and Assets
- Councillor Anita Cranmer - Cabinet Member Education and Skills
- Councillor Isobel Darby - Cabinet Member Housing and Homelessness
- Councillor Tony Green - Cabinet Member Youth Provision
- Councillor Clive Harriss - Cabinet Member Sports and Leisure
- Councillor Patrick Hogan - Cabinet Member Culture
- Councillor David Martin - Cabinet Member Logistics

- Councillor Nick Naylor - Cabinet Member Transport
- Councillor Mark Shaw - Cabinet Member Children's Services
- Councillor Warren Whyte - Cabinet Member Planning and Enforcement
- Councillor Gareth Williams - Cabinet Member Communities and Public Health
- Councillor Fred Wilson - Cabinet Member Regulatory Services

RESOLVED: The Cabinet AGREED the following recommendations:

That the Executive of Buckinghamshire Council: -

1. APPROVE the updated proportionality arrangements set out at table 2;

2. Subject to the Regulations coming into force:

a) AGREED to designate appointments to Council committees at Appendix 2, and then confirm these on 11 May 2020;

b) NOTED the appointments to Select Committees at Appendix 3, as designated by the Chief Executive, following discussion with the Group Leaders.

3. AGREED to delegate to the Monitoring Officer powers to vary the membership of a Committee at any point on a permanent or casual basis upon the written nomination of a Group Leader.

8 Date of next meeting

26 May 2020 at 10.00 am.