



Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 26 May 2020 via video conference, commencing at 10.08 am and concluding at 11.12 am.

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

There were no apologies.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 21 and 30 April 2020 were AGREED as an accurate record.

4 Question Time

The following question was received from Councillor Robin Stuchbury.

“In view of the changes under the Buckinghamshire Council planning procedures to established practice in the Aylesbury Vale area, will there be any consultation with explanation to the parishes on how to best maintain an equivalent level of local representation in planning matters at committee, bearing in mind the position statements from the Buckinghamshire authority about wishing to work closely with town and parish councils? It is also the reality that many of these elected bodies will be preparing local plans presently and in the future and it would appear completely contradictory to the Council’s stated aims if these previous opportunities and rights to parishes were not reinstated at the first possible opportunity. In addition, for the Member to call in an application under the constitution, they may have to wait for the Parish Council to meet and agree a response to an application that triggers calling-in, and the time-scale of 28 days may not be adequate to allow this due to the schedule of meetings, especially if the period includes public holidays.”

Martin Tett, Leader, clarified that Councillor Stuchbury's question only related to the Aylesbury Vale area.

Councillor Warren Whyte, Cabinet Member for Planning, provided the following response.

W Whyte advised that the changes to the constitution had been made and approved by the Shadow Executive and Shadow Authority in February 2020. The rules of engagement had been inherited so the process had not changed in other areas of the County, just the Aylesbury Vale area. W Whyte clarified the call-in procedure; parish councils had the ability to call-in applications during the first 28 days of an application but they were also given a further seven days, once they were aware of the officer recommendation, to choose whether they still wished to exercise the call-in. Parish Councils had been engaged in the process, including a workshop for parish councils in December 2019; however, the training planned in March 2020 had to be postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic which was unfortunate. However, the council has also recently published further guidance to town and parish councils on how to engage with the planning process. This guidance gives specific advice to town and parish councils on the changes, in some areas, to the call in process. Online training was also available to town and parish councils. Like all matters in the new Council, this would be kept under review.

5 Forward Plan (28 Day Notice)

John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Property and Assets, advised that the decision on the Bledlow Household Waste and Recycling Centre (page 28) had been deferred until at least June 2020 as it was subject to the outcome of the planning application which was due to be determined at the Strategic Sites Committee meeting on 11 June 2020.

ACTION: Democratic Services

RESOLVED: Cabinet NOTED the forward plan.

6 Covid-19 Update

Martin Tett, Leader, stated that all the Cabinet Members had contributed to the Covid-19 update in the agenda pack. M Tett advised that the impact of the pandemic had been sudden and unprecedented and had resulted in the re-prioritising and re-direction of many areas of work and staff. A co-ordinated structure was created with the Thames Valley, Oxfordshire and Berkshire Local Resilience Forums to work collaboratively e.g. on potential storage facilities and the sourcing of personal protective equipment (PPE), in order to mitigate the effect of the pandemic on the public. Bi-weekly communications had been emailed to approximately 200,000 residents and would continue on a weekly basis. Work was being carried out with the care homes, supporting the vulnerable communities and with the education services to enable children to return to school. Information had been received from the government on the new policy for testing, tracking and tracing the infection and procedures would be put in place.

Rachael Shimmin, Chief Executive, Buckinghamshire Council, added that the Covid-19 planning started in advance of the transition to the unitary council and it had been clear that the unitarisation work, in the lead up to the start of the new Buckinghamshire Council, along with the existing partnership work with the health sector, had been extremely advantageous in Buckinghamshire's response to the pandemic. 'Business as usual' had continued and the report (pages 46-50) outlined the work by each service area. Many staff e.g. library staff, had been re-purposed to work in the community hubs. The 'outbreak control plan' would be developed and reported to the Cabinet in future.

M Tett highlighted the financial implications. Finances were being used in line with the government guidance but expenditure to protect the vulnerable had been high and the Council's income had reduced significantly. The Council was now entering recovery and looking to re-build the economy across Buckinghamshire.

M Tett invited the following Cabinet Members to provide an update:

Gareth Williams, Cabinet Member, Communities and Public Health

- Staff had been redeployed to work in the eight community hubs.
- There were 3,522 'shielded' people in Buckinghamshire and over 500 food parcels had been distributed since the end of March 2020.
- Approximately 1,800 volunteers had been assigned, by the Clare Foundation and Community Impact Bucks, to local community groups.
- Weekly calls were held to prioritise where funding should be used and ensure there were no gaps.
- Work was being carried out in the community hubs encompassing both public and voluntary sectors and organisations in the fields of mental health and financial insecurity in order to prioritise recovery towards those that were most vulnerable.
- A section of the Buckinghamshire Council website was dedicated to Covid-19.

Angela Macpherson, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

- An enormous amount of work had taken place to support the care homes; there had been only one confirmed case of Covid-19 in the last week in the care homes.
- The Care Home Support Plan had been drafted and needed to be submitted by 29 May 2020. The plan would be available to the public and would cover the use of PPE, infection control advice, the tracking process, commissioning around discharge from hospitals to provide alternative isolation facilities, clinical support for care homes, the workforce, support from volunteers and the financial support offer.
- Infection control plans were being developed jointly by the Public Health team and Adult Social Care.
- The Local Government Association (LGA) had used the Council's enhanced offer to the care homes as an example of good practice on their website.

- Excellent feedback had been received from some of the vulnerable residents regarding the regular phone calls from volunteers and there had been requests for the calls to continue indefinitely, possibly by incorporating it into the Befriending Service.

Mark Shaw, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

- Support had continued to those in the Early Help Service via remote video conferencing.
- Regular contact was being made to children of concern via virtual meetings and some home visits had been undertaken where necessary.
- The Portage Service had posted videos with suggestions of things to do and useful tips.
- Creative methods had been used to reach out to families and children in crisis.
- Preparations were being made for the challenge of increased cases when children returned to school.

Isobel Darby, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

- Tribute was paid to the housing teams who had worked together incredibly well.
- 80 rough sleepers were in temporary accommodation.
- Outreach work was continuing for the few rough sleepers who had not taken up the offer of temporary accommodation.
- Planning was being carried out for the homeless for when the temporary hotel accommodation was no longer available; permanent sources of accommodation were being freed up by moving people to permanent solutions.
- The department were mindful that there may be an increase in victims of domestic abuse or homelessness due to the loss of income as a result of the pandemic.

Bill Chapple, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

- There had been over 40,000 visitors to the recently re-opened household recycling centres. Visitors were required to provide proof of residency in Buckinghamshire.
- The bank holiday weekend had been busy; B Chapple thanked officers and contractors for their hard work and visitors for their co-operation.
- Garden waste collections had resumed.
- There had been approximately 500 new subscriptions for garden waste collections.
- The bulky waste collection service was running as normal.
- The amount of recycling waste had increased and food waste collection had re-started.

- There had been a 26% increase in general waste collection in April 2020 compared to the previous year.
- Full credit would be given for the period when the garden waste collections were suspended.

Clive Harriss, Cabinet Member for Sport and Leisure

- There had been an increase in the number of people taking regular exercise during the lockdown and this should be encouraged after lockdown to combat obesity.
- The country parks had re-opened. However, due to poor parking by some visitors, short-term parking regulations had been implemented to maintain the safety of the public.
- Children's play areas would remain closed as children were unable to socially distance.
- Golf and tennis clubs had re-opened.
- The leisure centres remained closed and the loss of income had added to the financial pressures for the Council.
- The building of the new Amersham Leisure Centre and the refurbishment at Chesham Leisure Centre were going ahead.
- A bid would be submitted for an active travel plan to help keep cyclists safe and maintain the flow of traffic across Buckinghamshire.

The following points were raised by members of the Cabinet:

- In response to a query on whether the Befriending Service extended to the whole community or just care homes, A Macpherson advised it was a community based service which currently focussed on the care homes and vulnerable residents; however, it would be worth exploring the possibility of extending the service to the wider community.
- Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Education, stated that the government had provided guidelines regarding the re-opening of schools. Many staff had worked continuously through the school holidays to provide schooling for special needs children and key workers' children. A Cranmer emphasised that there was no legal obligation for schools to re-open or for parents to send their children back to school and fines would not be issued if children were kept away from school.
- Following a question on whether public toilets in the country parks could be re-opened safely, C Harriss advised that on re-opening the toilets visitors would be asked to bring their own hand sanitiser. The cleaning of the toilets would be increased but could not be cleaned after every use. It was an unusual, difficult situation and the design of toilets was a problem; disabled toilets could be the easiest to open.
- A cabinet member highlighted the positive figures for looked after children which had decreased slightly; also, the total number of children on a child protection plan had decreased to 530 from 600. M Shaw explained that 23 children had left care and 18 had come into care; the service remained in

contact with all the children and had found that better relationships had been maintained via virtual methods and this would be considered as a way forward after the pandemic.

M Tett stressed the importance of supporting local businesses and advised that Bucks Business First was the main point of contact for advice on the government initiatives launched during the Covid-19 crisis. 82% of eligible businesses had been awarded a business grant (approximately £75 million in total). Details would follow on the Discretionary Business Grant once the criteria had been established.

R Shimmin and the Cabinet members expressed their thanks to Buckinghamshire Council staff for their hard work during this difficult time.

RESOLVED: Cabinet NOTED the Covid-19 Update.

7 Confidential Minutes

To agree the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2020.

RESOLVED: The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2020 were AGREED as an accurate record.

8 Exclusion of the public (if required)

Not required.

9 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED: The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2020 were AGREED as an accurate record.

10 Date of next meeting

16 June 2020.