



Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 16 June 2020 Via Video Conference Call, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 11.13 am.

Members present

M Tett, A Macpherson, K Wood, 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 Minutes

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2020 were AGREED as an accurate record.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Question Time

Councillor Peter Cooper

“One of the remarkable consequences of the Covid19 epidemic had been the dramatic environmental improvements resulting from the transport system having all but stopped. Everyone had become aware of clean air, low noise pollution and relaxed working practices. Clearly many of these benefits were likely to be lost as we moved out of lockdown. However, public perceptions had changed and I would suggest that the new council had a once in a lifetime chance to grasp the new public mood, and lead the way to a new sustainable future.

Green ways of thinking no longer belonged to a minority. They were rightly mainstream and this should be reflected in all the Council’s actions and policies.

Walking, cycling and electric cars were now aspirations. Working from home and meeting online were normal and effective.

Would Buckinghamshire Council lead the way to a new way of working by following

policies that gave priority to:

- *Gigabit broadband*
- *Home working*
- *High class public transport*
- *Expansion of the cycleway network*
- *Installation of rapid electric car chargers*
- *20mph Speed limits in populated areas*
- *Traffic bans/restrictions in town centres”*

Response provided by Nick Naylor, Cabinet Member for Transport

Nick Naylor thanked Peter Cooper and confirmed that the question of how the Council could use this opportunity to improve the county's environment and how transport initiatives could support that had been considered. In the last few weeks, more had been achieved than ever thought possible whilst working from home and limited to essential travel only. This had brought improvements to air quality, reduced noise pollution and carbon emissions as well as other environmental benefits identified. Digital connectivity had always been a top priority for Buckinghamshire, with the County investing and managing the arrangements for the roll out of Superfast broadband and continually arguing for the roll out to cover the whole of the county. Recently, the Council had agreed to use some of its contribution towards East West Rail to secure the delivery of digital infrastructure along the route at the same time as the railway was constructed. N Naylor confirmed the Council was treating digital infrastructure as important as physical infrastructure.

When lockdown was introduced, the Council was able to roll out MS Teams to thousands of staff and to Members in a matter of days, so that staff and members could work effectively from home. The Return to Work Plan relied on most staff to work from home whenever possible and consideration was being given to what the Council's new guidelines on working from home would be. It would appear that the Council was not alone in considering permanent changes to how we worked, with many organisations saying that they did not expect normal working patterns to resume.

The Council was keen to encourage policies and proposals which benefitted the environment across all portfolios, both in the Council's practice and our wider communities. This was not only important in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in terms of broader environmental and climate change pressures.

- Significant investment was being made into improved sustainable transport networks.
- A comprehensive walking and cycling network plan for Aylesbury Garden Town had been developed; a similar project for High Wycombe would commence shortly.
- New walking and cycling links in Buckingham, Taplow and Waddesdon had

recently been delivered and the Council was working with partners on a range of further priority links across the County.

- On top of the longer-term walking and cycling work, there was a live work stream looking at how to deliver a number of temporary “pop-up” measures in our key towns, villages and high streets directly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to support social distancing and help make walking and cycling a safe and attractive option for local journeys.
- The Council was exploring options for more innovative technology-based solutions, and had recently contacted the Department for Transport to express interest in carrying out trials of an e-scooter hire scheme within Buckinghamshire.
- The Council was developing an Electric Vehicle Charging Point Strategy, setting out priority areas for investment in new charging points to facilitate wider uptake of electric vehicles, in line with the Government’s proposal to end the sale of new petrol, diesel or hybrid cars.

It was acknowledged that there was growing support for the introduction of lower speed limits and particularly 20mph zones/limits. Currently a reduction in the speed limit was not supported by the Council or the Police unless it could be shown that the physical layout of the road would ensure the speed limit was adhered to, so that they were effectively self-enforcing. Nevertheless a number of 20 mph schemes were being discussed, which local parishes were very involved in, and may be able to finance. N Naylor advised he would like 20mph schemes to be self-enforcing where possible and the transport team was happy to consider how these might best be progressed locally.

In terms of changes to our high streets and towns, the Council had been working with local communities to put in place measures to facilitate social distancing. In addition, work had been carried out with businesses to help them to open and operate in a safe manner. There were ambitious plans for High Wycombe regeneration and regeneration plans were due to be developed for a number of other towns over the coming year. The options for changes to traffic would need to be considered as part of these proposals.

Councillor Robin Stuchbury

“Page 193 of the new Constitution, Clause 2.18 stated: “The powers delegated to the Corporate Director or Directors with responsibility for Planning included delegated powers and duties to deal with all matters relating to development management including but not limited to:

a. Determine all applications, grant permission, refuse permission and determine all decisions relating to neighbourhood planning and other planning functions.”

The Localism Act as revised May 2019 stated:

“Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area.

They are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to plan for the types of development to meet their community's needs and where the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area – para 011 of the Localism Act.

Would the Council please confirm that the intention of this clause (2.18) was not to limit the powers of the Localism Act, and not to prevent and have an influence on neighbourhood plans, as it would be contrary to the Localism Act?"

Response provided by Warren Whyte, Cabinet Member for Planning and Enforcement

The Council could not delegate powers it did not have to begin with. Town and Parish Councils would, of course, continue to be able to exercise the statutory rights reserved to them. For information, the Constitution related to the statutory rights and powers that belonged to Buckinghamshire Council. In this case, it was clarifying that those statutory rights and powers which Buckinghamshire Council did have in relation to neighbourhood plans were delegated to the relevant director. W Whyte confirmed that the Council was very keen to work with Town and Parish Councils to support them in developing their neighbourhood plans.

5 Forward Plan (28 Day Notice)

RESOLVED: Cabinet NOTED the Forward Plan.

6 Aylesbury Garden Town - Governance & Masterplan

Steve Bowles, Cabinet Member for Town Centre Regeneration, introduced the Aylesbury Garden Town (AGT) report and stated that the Masterplan had been subject to extensive public engagement and had received mainly supportive comments during the consultation. It provided the basis of a comprehensive delivery strategy to transform Aylesbury into a Garden Town over the coming decades, achieving the 2050 Vision. S Bowles confirmed that he had been advised that the funding for the plan was secure. S Bowles thanked Councillor Bill Chapple OBE and the Board for their hard work; the review had been timely and reflected the new Unitary Authority arrangements and aligned with the Programme's future priorities. B Chapple added that the revised document covered climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic; it was a 'living' document and would be updated regularly. B Chapple also thanked the board members and officers for their hard work; particularly Homes England who had contributed £170 million from the Housing Infrastructure Fund plus almost £500,000 towards project costs. The AGT project was seen as one of the top ten in the country.

The following points were raised by members of the Cabinet:

- A member of the Cabinet was concerned that recommendation one was to

approve the proposed structure and composition of the Strategic Oversight Board and Programme Delivery Team for AGT; however, the core membership list on page 26 of the agenda pack, did not include representation from the Culture, Leisure and Heritage areas. S Bowles clarified that the first bullet point under paragraph 2.1 stated “Buckinghamshire Council Cabinet Member(s) with appropriate responsibility”; this meant that the relevant Cabinet Member(s), and officers, would be invited to the board meetings whenever it was appropriate.

- It was highlighted that there were other prime locations for investment in Buckinghamshire and it was agreed that an amendment be made to the text on page 13 of the Master Plan Executive Summary (page 77 of the agenda pack). The ambition should read “Aylesbury will be a prime location for investment and job creation in Buckinghamshire” rather than “**the** location”.
- A member of the cabinet acknowledged that climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic were covered in the revised plan and asked how our learning and recovery from the pandemic would impact on some elements of the plan. The Government had its own target for carbon reduction by 2050 and it was queried whether the AGT had its own initiatives. S Bowles advised that a study had been commissioned to assess the economic and commercial impact of Covid-19 to understand the detailed impact on the programme and how it would affect any other proposals in the master plan particularly in relation to the town centre. The AGT would help Aylesbury communities recover from the pandemic.
- It was noted that improvement to the roads to encourage cycling to work should be a priority along with organisations being advised to provide shower facilities.

In summary:

- Amendment - The ambition should read “Aylesbury will be a prime location for investment and job creation in Buckinghamshire” rather than “the location”.
- Undertaking - It was also agreed that the relevant cabinet members and officers be invited to the board meetings as appropriate.

RESOLVED: Subject to the agreed amendment and undertaking above, Cabinet APPROVED:

- 1. The proposed structure and composition of the Strategic Oversight Board and Programme Delivery Team for AGT as set out in the report and in the proposed Terms of Reference at Appendix 1.**
- 2. The Masterplan and 2050 Vision for Aylesbury Garden Town to Council.**

7 Local Planning Enforcement and Monitoring Plan

Warren Whyte, Cabinet Member for Planning and Enforcement, introduced the report and advised that the plan provided the opportunity to provide a county-wide enforcement service and manage the expectations of the public. A Local

Enforcement Plan was not a legal requirement and there was a finite budget to provide the service. Table 1 (page 98) showed the proposed timescales; W Whyte stressed the importance of responding quickly to planning control breaches. The plan would be reviewed after the transformation programme and in three years' time. The ambition was to provide a year-round service; in the interim and prior to transformation, officers would provide an out of hours' standby service during Bank Holiday weekends which would be rolled out if it was successful.

The following points were raised by members of the Cabinet:

- It was noted that it was important for the public to understand the process. W Whyte acknowledged that the key reason for the plan was to build confidence in the planning system and to implement pro-active monitoring. Parish councils would also have an important role in delivering the service.
- The ambition was to provide a 365 day a year, 24/7 service but this would depend on resources.
- A Cabinet Member wanted to understand the situation for potential breaches due to the construction of HS2 and whether the Hybrid Bill overrode the Council's policy. Steve Bambrick, Service Director, Planning, Growth and Sustainability, referred to paragraph 10.1 of the Buckinghamshire Council Planning Enforcement and Monitoring Plan (page 110 of the agenda pack) which clarified that projects such as HS2 were not immune from enforcement action and the Council would pursue enforcement action against unauthorised development where it was appropriate to do so.
- In response to being asked if there was an aspiration to remove the possibility of breaches of planning control becoming immune from enforcement action if they had existed for a certain period of time (paragraph 7.1.2 of the Local Enforcement and Monitoring Plan), W Whyte advised that the Council was unable to make that decision as it was national legislation; W Whyte emphasised the importance of a pro-active relationship with the parish and town councils in order for planning breaches to have less likelihood of gaining immunity.
- A member of the Cabinet recommended that the flowchart on page 113 of the agenda pack be published on the Buckinghamshire Council website.

The Leader emphasised the urgency of providing consistent planning enforcement and asked members to note the aspiration of providing a 24/7 enforcement service and the request for additional funding in the next financial year to provide the extra resources.

RESOLVED: Cabinet ENDORSED and ADOPTED the draft Local Enforcement and Monitoring Plan and NOTED the request for additional funding in the next financial year.

8 Unitary Implementation Budget Outturn Report

Katrina Wood, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report which

requested that the remaining uncommitted transition budget (£2.67m) be transferred to the transformation reserve to help the ongoing delivery of the unitary transformation programme. The overall outturn for the Unitary Implementation Budget for 2019/20 was £9.939m and was an underspend of £2.910m against the original budget. The last reported position (January 2020) reported a projected underspend of £1.157m. The main reasons for the change in outturn was in Resources where the underspend increased by £1m; and in Deputy Chief Executive where the underspend increased by £650k. K Wood highlighted that all the other areas also came in under budget.

The branding work had been undertaken in-house which had saved a considerable amount of money. An underspend had also occurred because some work had been put on hold due to the pandemic and was the reason for the request for Cabinet to agree to carry forward some funding into the 2020/21 transition budget. The branding underspend was mostly due to the reprogramming of various work to 2020/2021 but also partly due to minimal spend on consultancy fees as the work was carried out by the in-house project management office. In summary, K Wood requested that £620,000 be carried forward to the 2020/21 transition budget and the balance (£2.67m) of the unitary implementation reserve be transferred to the Transformation Reserve.

The following points were raised by members of the Cabinet:

- The prudent approach, particularly to branding and consultancy fees was noted.
- A member of the Cabinet asked for reassurance to the public that the Council would not be building new premises. K Wood confirmed that only existing council buildings were being used and there was no intention to build a new headquarters or increase the number of buildings in the future.
- Rachael Shimmin, Chief Executive, stated that it was a fantastic achievement to see such a green outturn which was a testament to the staff and elected members in knowing and carrying out the work that needed to be undertaken. The collaborative working had also been beneficial in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis.

RESOLVED: Cabinet AGREED the recommendations that:

- **£620k was added to the 2020/21 Transition budget taking the total to £9.564m.**
- **The balance on the Unitary Implementation reserve of £2.67m was transferred to the Transformation reserve.**

9 Date of next meeting

7 July 2020