



# Buckinghamshire Council

## High Wycombe Town Committee

### Minutes

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 26 MARCH 2024 IN COUNCIL CHAMBER QVR, COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 8.25 PM**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

S Raja, T Green, L Clarke OBE, A Hussain, Maz Hussain, Majid Hussain, M Hussain OBE JP, J Wassell, K Bates, I Hussain, A Alam, M Ayub, N Rana, N Thomas, K Wood and P Turner

#### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

M Dickman, L Francis, M Pottle, F Mugari, D Harvey, J Caprio, J Ford, C Gray and I Malik.

#### **OTHERS PRESENT**

J Smith (Ridge & Partners)

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs: Baughan, Guy, Smith and Mr & Mrs Hayday.

#### **2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the last meeting held on 23 January 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

A query was raised with regards to the minutes of the November meeting, and the provision of information regards Local Centres Public Realm improvement funds.

#### **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received

#### **4 HIGH WYCOMBE MARKET UPDATE**

A report was submitted which informed members that the council had oversight of a total of five street markets. The contract for High Wycombe market was due for renewal by the end of the current financial year. An opportunity to jointly procure delivery for High Wycombe and Aylesbury markets had been identified.

Members were asked to note the review of Bucks Council led street markets and how this had shaped the current tender process for High Wycombe, and to note that the tender specification included requirements to help diversify the market offer, emphasising the need for greater enlivenment opportunities which in turn would increase vibrancy and boost trader numbers.

The procurement timeline for a joint contact to operate High Wycombe and Aylesbury market was set out on page 10 of the agenda pack.

The report emphasised that the success and evolution of the market space was not solely dependent on the market operators, and would require collaboration. This would be explored in more detail at a future meeting of the committee.

One of the proposed recommendations before Members was to indicate their support for a discussion to take place around the use of special expenses to help sustain the High Wycombe market. However, Members were in total agreement that there should be no such contribution made via the special expenses route for a variety of reasons.

A Member also asked what was viewed as an example of a successful model which could be applied to High Wycombe. In response he was informed that this was where there was a diversity of offer, and where markets were able to create a niche offer or event example, artisan, flea or food markets. The possible relocation of the markets away from the high street was also mentioned, and there was a consensus of opinion that the prominence of food markets and other dedicated events would provide more enlivenment around the town. This was duly noted by the presenting officer.

A Members expressed a desire to be involved in the tender and evaluation processes, which would prove to be invaluable with their first hand local knowledge. This opportunity would be explored in due course.

**RESOLVED:** That it be noted that;

- (i) The review of the Bucks led street market had informed and shaped the current tender process for High Wycombe market,
- (ii) The tender specification included new requirements to diversify the market offer, emphasising the need for innovation and enlivenment opportunities to increase trader numbers, footfall and dwell time.

## **5 THE CURVE BUILDING UPDATE**

James Smith presented an update on the curve building, a potential re-development of part of the old Octagon building, situated on the corner of Oxford Street and the roundabout. The building had formerly been used for offices, a night club and for a small collection of retail units, however it has remained vacant since 2017 with no interest from potential occupiers.

Members were informed of the work carried out to date, along with details of the consultation, which had been very social media heavy. Some Members did not view this as being the best form of media in terms of disseminating the information. However, Mr Smith confirmed that the video had received over 15,000 views. Members wished to assist in informing as many residents as possible, and as such requested that the information that was for public consultation be circulated to them so it could reach many others through the relevant councillor networks.

**RESOLVED:** That,

- (i) Mr Smith be thanked for his attendance and presentation,
- (ii) The public consultation document be circulated to Members of the Committee

## **6 PENN ROAD AND HIGH WYCOMBE CEMETERY SUNDAY AND BANK HOLIDAY BURIAL SERVICE**

Following the previous meeting of the Committee, Members had requested that a report be brought forward for consideration on the possibility of the provision of Sunday and Bank Holiday burials, and the relevant costings for such provision.

Members were keen to consider the report before them which would facilitate Sunday and Bank holiday burials from 1 July 2024, and the extension of burial times of up to 3pm from November-January from 1 November 2024, at both the High Wycombe and Penn Road Cemeteries.

The report stated that extending burials to include Sunday and Bank Holiday provision would require additional staffing resources which would amount to approximately £19,873 per annum, and a further £15,000 for Ideverde or a sub- contractor to provide this service. It was highlighted that provided the Committee agreed to funding of the costs, it would be possible facilitate the service to commence from 1 July 2024. Bank holiday provision could also be provided on 4 bank holidays per year excluding Christmas and Boxing Day, Good Friday and Easter Monday, at an additional cost of £1,462 per annum. Amounting to a total cost of between £35,000- £37,000 per annum.

The Presenting Officer confirmed that a new schedule of fees and charges would need to be submitted to the next meeting of the committee to reflect the increased costs, together with an update of the cemetery rules and regulations taking account of the changes. As there was much information to consider in greater detail particularly with relation to how this should be funded, was prudent to establish a sub- group for the purpose.

Members overwhelmingly expressed their support for the proposals and felt that the changes were long overdue and would provide an important step forward for the whole community of the town.

After the debate the following resolution was proposed by the Chairman (Councillor Sarfaraz Raja) and seconded by the Vice-Chairman (Councillor Tony Green).

**RESOLVED:** That;

- (i) The plans set out in the report to facilitate Sunday burials from 1 July 2023 be agreed,
- (ii) The provision of Bank holiday burials (excluding Good Friday, Easter Monday, Christmas and Boxing Day) from 1 July 2024 be agreed,
- (iii) The extended burial times to allow burials up to 3.00 pm November- January (inclusive) from 1 November 2024 be agreed,
- (iv) The officer and indicative contractor costs for the provision of the Sunday and Bank holiday burial service be noted, and that a new fees and charges schedule would be

required to ensure that cost increases were on a cost neutral basis.

- (v) The establishment of a working sub group to discuss the anticipated costs and proposed fees and charges schedule be agreed, and reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

## **7 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW UPDATE**

The response rates to the High Wycombe CGR consultation were reported upon by way of update.

There had been a total of 1920 responses received, 994 of which were via post (as of 21 March), 913 were online, with 12 emails and 1 written response.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

## **8 SPECIAL EXPENSES QUARTER 3**

A report was submitted which requested that Members note the quarter 3 revenue forecast position for 2023/24, and the impact upon working balances at year end for the High Wycombe Town Committee.

The report stated that the net forecast outturn position for the 2023/24 was £385k with a favourable variance of £120k in the forecast. The table on page 15 highlighted the detail at activity level, whilst the table on page 16 set out the approved grant applications to date this year. The impact on working balances were highlighted on page 17 showing that as of March 2024 this sum was £779k. The report stated that this was higher than the recommended minimum level of £150k but that end of year accounting was yet to be finalised.

A Member queried the matter of private unadopted roads and believed that the cost of maintaining the highways was the responsibility of the Council's Highway team, rather than a special expenses matter. He questioned how it was determined which road was charged to special expenses and which was not. It was agreed that Finance would explore this further with Highway colleagues.

**RESOLVED:** That

- (i) the report be noted.
- (ii) The list of roads covered by special expenses be made available by Finance for information

## **9 WORK PROGRAMME**

The work programme was submitted for information.

**RESOLVED:** That,

- (i) The work programme be noted;
- (ii) Fees and Charges for cemeteries be included on the next agenda;

(iii) An update on CIL monies and how these can be used within the wards be provided.

**10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED:** That the next meeting take place on Tuesday 11 June 2024 subject to approval of the meetings timetable at Annual Council in May.