

MINUTES OF THE INTERIM BUCKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 4th FEBRUARY 2008 AT 7.00PM

PRESENT: Councillors T. Bloomfield
H. Cadd
Mrs. G. Collins
Mrs. P. Desorgher
P. Hirons
D. Isham
A. Mahi
H. Mordue (Mayor)
Ms. R. Newell
M. Smith
Mrs. P. Stevens
R. Stuchbury
M. Try
W. Whyte
Guests Cllr. D. Rowlands, Chairman } Buckinghamshire & Milton
ACFO A. Hickmott, Operations } Keynes Fire Authority

for the Town Clerk Mrs K. McElligott

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors P. Collins and G. Loftus.

3063 DECLARATION OF INTEREST FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Cllr. Cadd declared a personal interest as a member of the Bucks. & MK Fire Authority.

*Proposed by Cllr. Stuchbury, seconded by Cllr. Isham, and **AGREED** that Standing Orders be suspended to allow the guests to address the meeting.*

3064 PRESENTATION ON THE FIRE SERVICE IN BUCKINGHAM

Cllr. Rowlands gave a brief outline of the Authority: it has 17 elected members, 12 from Buckinghamshire and 5 from Milton Keynes. The total will be increased in June to 21 in line with recommendations from the Audit Commission, to cope with the increased workload. It is in its eleventh year as a stand-alone authority, and has a budget of c£26million funded partly from central government and partly from the Council Tax.

Mr. Hickmott had read the Minutes leading to the invitation to speak, and was able to assure Members that their fears were unfounded. The Fire Authority had no plans to close the Buckingham Fire Station, nor any plans to reduce fire cover in Buckingham.

There were 20 Fire Stations in the Authority area, from Marlow to Olney, employing some 700 staff. 380 were full-time fire officers, 240 part-time or retained and the remainder support staff, mechanics, admin personnel, etc. They attended 10,000 incidents last year and also inspected hundreds of commercial buildings, provided safety advice to 4000 homes and fitted 6000 smoke alarms free of charge.

In the Buckingham area, the Fire Station responded to 252 calls, of which 75 were false alarms (mainly smoke alarms triggering without cause); 32 small fires, 54 larger incidents and 91 'special services' of a non-fire nature eg. road traffic collisions and flood rescue.

In answer to questions Mr. Hickmott said

- that for flood conditions they had pumps that could move 1 ton/minute and access to more powerful units from neighbouring Brigades, and maps showing watercourses, likely flood risks, etc.; in major flood events the problem often lay in where to pump the water to in order to not cause further problems, and the (often great) length of hose necessary and the time taken to deploy it.
- during and since last summer the Service had been involved in distributing flood advice leaflets to vulnerable properties.
- Buckingham as a town was probably the quietest of the 10 stations with a whole-time presence. A particular local concern was the number of fatal road traffic accidents, often involving young male drivers. Weather conditions were important in the rural area – eg dry summers increased the fire risk.
- The Fire Authority keeps no statistics on resident/visitor origins for traffic accidents, although the Police may, but his personal recollection of three or four major road accident incidents in the last few years was that the drivers were local, within 10 – 15 miles of home.
- Sufficient retained firemen were required to be available 24/7 but in fact tended to be more available at night. Historically retained staff had been drawn from local tradesmen, but this was changing and they now came from all walks of life. Recruitment was more of a problem than for full-time staff, but more people were working from home nowadays and active recruitment campaigns were under way.
- Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and High Wycombe were entirely manned by full-time staff; Buckingham, Newport Pagnell, Amersham and Gerrards Cross have full-time day shift crews, and on-call full-time and retained staff for night shifts. The remaining stations are retained staff only. The second appliance at Buckingham is retained crew only, and in cases of unavailability (due to staff sickness, for example) Bletchley and Winslow stations may be called on for backup.
- Workplace reform may see the current two-shift (9am-6pm, 6pm-9am) pattern changed to 7am-7pm/7pm-7am or similar so that the peak callout periods at morning and evening rush-hour do not coincide with shift-changes.
- Retained crews will have enhanced training as part of the aim of giving a better service overall and to better reflect the skills of whole-time staff.
- Some narrow streets in the town, and some rural lanes - especially if there are parked cars – can present access problems for the

appliances (which are roughly the same size as refuse lorries) but having local crews is an advantage because they often know an alternative route. They do leaflet drop and call on householders in particularly bad areas.

- the prediction is that the increased population will not make a significant difference to Buckingham, unlike MK and Aylesbury. The Fire Service is working with planners to incorporate smoke alarms and other protection into new house design.
- Retained crew attend a series of weekend courses over 6 months and then have a two-hour drill night each week; they are generally called out between 5 and 12 times per week. Full-time crews may work overtime if an incident occurs just before shift-change, or if covering for absence, and receive extra pay for working public holidays, but otherwise overtime is minimal.

Members thanked Mr. Hickmott and Cllr. Rowlands for attending and expressed their appreciation for the information.

Mr. Hickmott and Cllr. Rowlands left the meeting.

*Proposed by Cllr. Mordue, seconded by Cllr. Stevens, and **AGREED** that Standing Orders be reinstated.*

3065 LICENSING APPLICATIONS

3065.1 00062/LAPRE White Hart – removal of condition re use of outdoor area

The application document gave no detail of the proposed variation, although it stated “The operating times and licensable activities authorised by the Premises Licence to remain unaltered”.

Members discussed the noise problems generated by outdoor areas, particularly late at night in the town centre, but felt that there was insufficient information on which to base a reasoned response.

Proposed by Cllr. Stevens, seconded by Cllr. Isham, and **AGREED** that response be deferred until further information was available.

3065.2 00118/LAPRE Halibut, 15 Cornwall Place

Application was for sale of alcohol for consumption off the premises, and background music, during shop hours (09.00 – 17.00 Mon-Sat & 11.00-16.00 Sun); sale of alcohol for consumption on the premises and background music for the first floor restaurant 09.00 – 24.00 Mon-Thur, 09.00 – 01.00 Fri & Sat, 11.00 – 24.00 Sun.

Proposed by Cllr. Stuchbury, seconded by Cllr. Whyte, and **AGREED** that the application be supported in full.

3066 POLLING CARDS AND BUDGET FOR BY-ELECTION

Members discussed whether to issue polling cards for the by-election, concluding that it might improve turnout.

Proposed by Cllr. Isham, seconded by Cllr. Stuchbury, that polling cards be issued for the forthcoming by-election.

Proposed by Cllr. Whyte, seconded by Cllr. Smith, and **AGREED** that the proposal be amended to include "if contested".

The proposal was **AGREED**.

Members also **AGREED** that the expenses be met from the contingency budget 4500/132.

3067 TOWN MAYOR'S ITEMS

3067.1 Ambulance Service reorganisation

Cllr. Stuchbury circulated an email from Mrs. H. Robinson-Gordon, PR Manager for the South Central Ambulance Trust which outlined changes to the service.

Members felt that she should be taken up on her offer to attend a Council meeting. The Mayor would liaise.

ACTION THE MAYOR

3067.2 Deputy Town Clerk

The Mayor had conducted a staff appraisal with Miss Fahey, as a result of which he would be recommending to the Finance and Admin. Committee that her appointment be made permanent.

3067.3 Invitations to Events

Both events required attendance decisions before the next Full Council meeting.

i) *Agreeing the New LAA – a Partnership Event*

8th February 2008, 10am – 3pm, at Green Park

Members agreed that Cllrs. Smith and Whyte could attend this event.

ii) *Workshop on Planning Issues and Ethical Standards for Town and Parish Councillors*

29th March, 9am – 12.30pm, Winslow Centre

Members agreed that Cllrs. Hirons and Smith could attend this event.

ACTION TOWN CLERK

Meeting closed at 8.15pm

CHAIRMAN..... **DATE**.....