

**MINUTES OF THE BUCKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT  
BUCKINGHAM COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON MONDAY 5<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2007 AT 7 PM.**

**PRESENT:**

Councillors	J. Barnett	
	H. Cadd	
	P. Collins	(Mayor)
	Mrs. P. Desorgher	
	D. Isham	
	R. Lehmann	
	H. Lewis	
	H. Mordue	
	Ms. R. Newell	
	Mrs. P. Stevens	
	P. Strain-Clark	
	R. Stuchbury	
Town Clerk	Mrs P. J. Heath	

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors G. Loftus, Mrs. C. Strain-Clark and Mrs. H. Saul.

**2891 DECLARATION OF INTEREST FOR ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations of interest for items on the agenda except a personal interest by Cllr. Barnett in all aspects to do with the Community Plan and Circular Walk Project.

*Proposed by Cllr. Lehmann, seconded by Cllr. Isham, that the Council hear the motions at agenda item 11 before the motion at agenda item 10; this was defeated by 3 votes to 7.*

**2892 THE MINUTES OF TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED**: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2006, the Interim meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2007 and the Precept meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Town Clerk confirmed, following a query by a Councillor, that no response had been received from the letters requested under minute numbers 2877 and 2833 to the Buckinghamshire PCT and the Mental Health Trust respectively.

**2893 TOWN CLERK'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members were informed of the following items

**2893.1 NEWSLETTERS/BROCHURES**

THE FOLLOWING BROCHURES AND NEWSLETTERS ARE IN THE OFFICE

BCC – OPTIONS NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2006

AVDC – NEWS FOR THE PARISHES 7/2006 AND 1/2007

BUCKS COMMUNITY ACTION – IN FOCUS ISSUE NO 35

NALC – LOCAL COUNCIL REVIEW – JANUARY 2007  
BCC – TRAVEL PLANNING TEAM NEWS – SPRING TERM 2007  
BALC – MATTERS ARISING – WINTER 2006  
CLERKS AND COUNCILS DIRECT – JANUARY 2007  
BUCKS PLAYING FIELD ASSOCIATION – WINTER 2006 -2007

#### 2893.2 DIS

ISSUES NUMBER 647,648, 649

#### 2893.3 DIARY DATES – DETAILS ALREADY CIRCULATED TO MEMBERS

- 1) 13<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2007 - NALC CONFERENCE –SHAPING COMMUNITIES
- 2) 2<sup>ND</sup> – 3<sup>RD</sup> MARCH 2007 – SLCC CONFERENCE AT STOKE ON
- 3) 23<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT – HOW TO ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE

**ACTION** No member wished to attend the above events and the Council did not approve the Clerk's attendance

- 4) GT. OUSE FMP MEETING ON 12<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2007

**ACTION** Members confirmed that the Town Clerk could attend on behalf of the Council.

## 2894 RECEIPT OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

### 2894.1 PLANNING – 18.12.06 & 08.01.07.

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** - that the above minutes, and any recommendation contained within, be confirmed.

### 2894.2 ENVIRONMENT & PROPERTY 18.12.06

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** - that the above minutes, and any recommendation contained within, be confirmed.

Cllr. Newell proposed that following communication from BTCV the last part of the last sentence on minute number 345/2006, from 6<sup>th</sup> November 2006, should be removed as this had caused offence to a local volunteer. The Members noted that the minutes of that meeting had already been agreed and had been published but **AGREED** that in the minutes of this meeting it be recorded that the words “ there was a question whether the door had been left open by a BTCV member” be withdrawn.

### 2894.3 FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION.15.01.07

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** - that the above minutes, and any recommendation contained within, be confirmed.

### 2894.4 EVENTS.22.01.07

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** - that the above minutes, and any recommendation contained within, be confirmed.

*(355 Proposed by Cllr. Stuchbury, seconded by Cllr. Mordue, and **RECOMMENDED** that this Council start discussions on parking provision with AVDC)*

Following a discussion the recommendation was put and fell by 5 votes to 6.

## 2895 CORRESPONDENCE

The following correspondence had been circulated prior to the meeting.

- 6.1 AVDC AVDC and Parish/Town Council charter
- 6.2 Thames Valley Police – Confidential figures
- 6.3 email: Mr Grimsdale coach park
- 6.4 E-On Central Networks Power cut pack
- 6.5 BCC - No 32 Service

Members discussed the removal of Woodlands Crescent from the 32A route; it was felt that as the refuse vehicles and the coaches used by the previous bus company had successfully negotiated the road then the new bus company should look to change the bus and not the route.

Proposed by Cllr. Stuchbury, seconded by Cllr. Isham, and **AGREED** that this Council should write and oppose the removal of Woodlands Crescent from the 32A bus route.

## **2896 REPORTS FROM BUCKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL'S REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

### 2896.1 Buckingham Community Plan Steering Group – Cllr. Collins

Cllr. Barnett reported on the Circular Walk Project at the request of Cllr. Collins. One of the project's main lynch pins had been the bridge over the Gt. Ouse between the Heartland and Bourton Park. The original budget by Jacobs Babbie had included a cost of £12,000 for the bridge; this cost had now risen to £150,000, which means that that section of the project would not be financially viable. The Environment Agency had asked for a river clearance of 2 metres which is higher than the adjacent bridges; this would affect the access paths and also would mean that from the top of the bridge pedestrians would be able to see into nearby properties. It was **AGREED** that the Town Council should write to the Environment Agency questioning the proposed height of the bridge.

### 2896.2 Buckingham Partnership minutes

Cllr. Collins, Cllr. Stuchbury and Cllr. Mordue reported on the last Buckingham Partnership Meeting which looked at Moreton Road Toilets and the disabled improvements plus the cleaning regime. Also the meeting had discussed the Gt. Ouse and the rubbish that is dumped in the river with a view to a more joint working partnership to undertake a "River Rinse".

### 2896.3 Buckingham Twinning Association minutes

The Members noted the Buckingham Twinning Association Minutes which had been circulated prior to the meeting. Members were reminded that a coffee morning would be held on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February and that the Civic visit would be in April.

## **2897 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

Proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the invoices per attached list be approved.

## **2897 ACCOUNTS FOR RETROSPECTIVE PAYMENT**

Proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the list of retrospective payments per attached list be approved

## **2898 MOTION BY CLLR STUCHBURY**

*Motion under 7 8A Standing Orders (amended to 8A with permission of Cllr Stuchbury) I Councillor Stuchbury put forward the motion that Buckingham Town Council amend the plans for the Council Chamber to include public toilets (accessible from the car park). ~~Planning permission for this motion could be obtained from Full Council on 5 Feb 2007.~~*

Cllr. Stuchbury requested that the last sentence be removed from the motion. Concern was expressed whether the proposed plans for the extension could accommodate the toilets especially as the building would be open to the public. Members discussed the funding and responsibility to provide public toilets which many felt should remain with the District Council. It was noted that the discussions with the Community Centre were still ongoing and that a further meeting had been arranged for the 8<sup>th</sup> February in the Community Centre.

An amendment was proposed by Cllr. Mordue, seconded by Cllr. Stevens, that this motion should be considered by the Environment and Property Committee was **AGREED** by 7 votes to 6 with the Chairman's casting vote and as the substantive motion by 8 votes to 4.

## **2899 MOTIONS FROM CLLR. BARNETT**

1. *That this Town Council is no longer convinced of the value for money of expanding the BTC Council accommodation along the lines originally proposed and believes that the current chamber should be used for staff accommodation and that meeting accommodation should be obtained elsewhere. Further, it resolves to investigate opportunities to provide public toilets near to or as part of existing BTC accommodation, expanding as necessary, and to review costed proposals when available. The major projects budget to be used for these purposes.*

Members debated at length the motion proposed by Cllr. Barnett and seconded by Cllr. Lewis. Concern had been expressed at the overcrowding of the staff accommodation and whether the expansion provided best value for the town, with an expected cost of £500,000. Members discussed the service provision currently undertaken by the Council and whether that provision should be altered. It was agreed by the members that toilet provision in the town was of a lower standard than that expected by the residents but it was unclear what the best solution for the problem was. Members discussed the historic furniture of the Council Chamber which was c1850's and whether the Council had a moral duty to safeguard the town's heritage and whether that decision should be left to the Council who would be elected in May. The provision for the Council's meeting room was discussed but it was felt this should form part of the discussion for motion 2, which was a more detailed motion than motion 1.

The motion was put and **RESOLVED** by 7 votes to 5

Cllr. Stuchbury and Cllr. Stevens asked that their vote against the motion be recorded.

2) *That this Town Council resolves the following:*

- (a) *to take a block booking on a suitable meeting room at the Buckingham Centre for Monday nights for the remainder of this years and subsequent years;*
- (b) *to require the Town Clerk to negotiate with the Buckingham Centre management, as part of (a) above, for BTC staff to be able to secure the Buckingham Centre after meetings, whenever they run beyond 2130 hours;*
- (c) *to require the Town Clerk to review the schedule of meetings for 2007 in the light of (a) above, to avoid the need for Tuesday meetings by utilising the Mondays for which no meetings are currently scheduled;*
- (d) *to relieve staff overcrowding in BTC accommodation by allowing BTC staff to permanently utilise the Council Chamber and that Town Council furniture be relocated, as necessary, to the Buckingham Centre meeting room, subject to the agreement of the centre management.*

Members continued their debate on the more detailed motion at great length.

It was confirmed that the Town Clerk, Cllr. Stevens, and Cllr. Mordue had been to visit the Buckingham Centre and spoken with the Bucks. County Council Officer responsible; Cllr. Barnett had also visited some of the rooms. The Buckingham Centre was built using grant funding from Adult Education who had overall responsibility for the building. Cllr. Mordue

showed the Members photographs of two rooms which could be used – Mezzanine room on level 2, which will not be ready until May, and the ‘boardroom’ on the 4<sup>th</sup> level. The Officer had stated that the Town Council would not be able to put any of its own furniture in the Mezzanine room, which was the only one large enough to take the table and chairs, and that a sole use booking would not be allowed. The Mezzanine room will be adjacent to the coffee machine and TV area and which is intended to be a communal rest area; the dividing wall would only be stud partition which would not be sound-proof therefore any confidential items could be overheard by those in this area.. This room is on the same level as the ladies’ and disabled toilets. The ‘boardroom’, which is smaller, would have great difficulty in providing the space needed for 17 councillors, an officiating clerk and members of the public; this is on level 4 which is the same level as the gents’ toilets.

The Town Clerk raised the following concerns. -

- The adult education group will have priority so that although a block booking could be secured they will have the ability to override as they paid for the centre.
- There is no facility for tea/coffee/water in the ‘boardroom’ at the centre. Any refreshments provision would require the Council’s coffee machine being taken across every week; this could not be carried back that night as the equipment would be too hot. The only water available for the machine would be from the gents’ toilets. The Mezzanine room would be next to the coffee machine which the Councillors could use.
- The ‘boardroom’ is on the same level as the gents’ toilets; any female staff and councillors would either have to use the gents’ or go down 2 levels to the ladies’ therefore missing part of the meeting. There will be other people using the centre on the same night.
- The ‘boardroom’ is at the top of the building – all equipment, documents and meeting requirements would have to be packed into manageable boxes and carried to the centre from the office (this may mean more than one trip), and placed in the lift and taken up to the top floor, unloaded and sorted; the Town Clerk pointed out she suffers from claustrophobia. Lifting of bulky and heavy objects will need assessing in respect of the manual handling of items. The staff members will need to carry the boxes to and from the Centre prior to and after the meeting and the Council will need to carry out an assessment on lone-person working and safety of staff at night.
- Currently the table and Chamber can be set up during the day at the convenience of the office staff - this would not be a facility available in the Centre.
- IF the Council is allowed a key to lock up at the end of the meeting (this is subject to checks with the building insurers) then that responsibility in the summer will fall on the officiating Clerk who will have to check that all rooms, toilets, store rooms, etc., are empty before locking up. Again there will need to be consideration as to the safety of the staff member working alone as it is unlikely that there will always be a Councillor present.
- Wheelchair access will be a problem; general access for wheelchairs is only allowed on the ground floor. For all other floors the hirer and others involved will have to be EVAC chair trained – this in practical terms would mean ALL Council staff plus at least 2 Councillors who will be at most of the meetings being trained before the Council could meet in the Centre.
- The ‘boardroom’ will have extremely limited space for the public. The entrance to that side of the building is intended as controlled security therefore any members of the public attending will have to be escorted to and from the meeting room. Procedures will have to be set up to enable this to happen at any time during the meeting.

The Town Clerk pointed out that the Council would not be seen to provide an open and accessible government as the public will have to get through a locked door, and negotiate 4 levels if the ‘boardroom’ is used for the meeting, which could bring the Council in conflict with the Freedom of Information Act and Disability Discrimination Act as the room is not

accessible to all with ease. The Town Clerk also informed Members that the locked door will bring them in breach of Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 which states that all public meetings shall be open to the public unless specifically restricted by resolution. Members noted the Town Clerk's comments.

An amendment to 2(a) was proposed by Cllr. Lehmann, seconded by Cllr. Lewis, and **AGREED** by 7 votes to 6 with the Chairman's casting vote to add the words "The Town Clerk and Chairman of Environment and Property investigate a room for *a block booking on a suitable meeting room at the Buckingham Centre for Monday nights for the remainder of this year and subsequent years ....*" and remove the words "to take".

With the above amendment the motion was put and **RESOLVED** by 6 votes to 5 Cllr. Stuchbury and Cllr. Stevens asked that their vote against the motion be recorded

**2900 TO RECEIVE, IF REQUIRED, COMMENTS FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

Cllr Cadd reported that the Council tax increase for the District Council would be 4.5%. The County Council would be undertaking tree work on the by-pass in the autumn.

**2901 TOWN MAYOR'S ITEMS**

There were no Chairman's items for information

*The following item was heard under section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission of Meetings) Act 1960 which excludes members of the Public due to the confidential and financial nature of the business discussed*

**2902 UPDATE ON THE DEPUTY TOWN CLERK; TO DISCUSS THE OFFICE ARRANGEMENTS AND POSSIBLE 6 MONTHS CONTRACT TO COVER MR SKINNER'S ABSENCE**

Meeting closed at 9.40 pm

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