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Minutes of an **Interim Council Meeting** of Buckingham Town Council held Monday
14th September 2020 at 7pm online via Zoom

Present:

- Cllr. R. Ahmed
- Cllr. T. Bloomfield
- Cllr. M. Cole JP
- Cllr. Mrs. G. Collins Mayor
- Cllr. P. Collins
- Cllr. Mrs. M. Gateley
- Cllr. J. Harvey
- Cllr. P. Hirons
- Cllr. A. Mahi
- Cllr. H. Mordue
- Cllr. Ms. R. Newell
- Cllr. L. O'Donoghue
- Cllr. A. Ralph
- Cllr. M. Smith
- Cllr. Mrs. C. Strain-Clark
- Cllr. R. Stuchbury
- Cllr. M. Try Deputy Mayor

Also Present: Mr P. Hodson Town Clerk
 Mrs. N. Stockill Committee Clerk

A minute's silence was held in respect for Mr. Bert Whitehead, Town Councillor from 1983 to 1987 and Buckingham's representative on AVDC from 1979-89, who had died the previous week.

PUBLIC SESSION

A member of the public attended the Public Session to express concern over comments expressed by the Chairman following the close of Interim Full Council on the 22nd June 2020 and asked Members the following questions:

- *Given the silence from other Councillors at this point in the meeting, can it please be clarified if the Mayor was expressing her own personal views or speaking on behalf of the Town Council?*
- *If the Mayor was speaking in a personal capacity, would other Councillors like to take this opportunity in public forum to distance themselves and the Town Council from these comments?*
- *Finally, would the Mayor like to take this opportunity to explain what she meant by 'I think it's bad news for Buckingham'?*

The Chairman reminded Members of the public that Town Councillors would not be able to enter into debate on any subject raised during the Public Session, but may consider the subject at a later date and respond accordingly. The Mayor confirmed that the Council would provide a written response to the questions raised.

A second member of the public attended to speak about a tapestry hanging in the Buckingham Community Centre. The resident confirmed they had received a response to their most recent letter to the Community Centre Association which indicated that a

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resolution was imminent. It was suggested that although the Town Council did not have responsibility for the running of the Community Centre it had a legal and moral responsibility to comment on the debate. The resident asked the Town Council the following questions:

- *Do the TC feel it is appropriate to have an image of a racist, homophobic and anti-Semitic murderer hanging in the Community Centre?*
- *Does the Town Council support the removal of this image?*
- *Further, will the Town Council write in a formal capacity to Trustees to set out this view? The Mayor confirmed that she would provide a written response to the questions raised.*

341/20 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies received.

342/20 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

343/20 Motion - Cllr Mike Smith on behalf of the following: Cllrs. R. Ahmed, J. Harvey, R. Newell. A. Ralph, M. Smith and C. Strain-Clark

Proposed by Cllr. Smith and seconded by Cllr. Strain-Clark:

“Given that the motion to establish the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group required there are to be an equal or greater number of community residents than Town Councillors, it is clear that 14 volunteering councillors are too many. Therefore, we recommend that no more than six councillors are needed and these should be selected on the basis of an evident support & affinity with the purpose of the Working Group. This will also help to ensure an atmosphere conducive to achieving constructive partnership with community members.”

Cllr. Smith spoke to the above motion, explaining that a working group of 30 individuals was not conducive to effective partnership working.

Cllr. Mahi proposed the following amendment to the motion *“If an equal or greater number of community residents to Town Councillors can not be achieved then the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group should be dissolved as it couldn’t reach a constructive partnership with members of the community.”*

The Town Clerk informed Council that the proposed amendment would negate the motion and so was not a valid amendment.

Cllr. Try questioned how Full Council were supposed to select Town Council representatives based on an individual’s support and affinity with the purpose of the Working Group when no evidence of such had been submitted in advance of the meeting. An amendment was proposed by Cllr. Try and seconded by Cllr. O’Donoghue to read: *“no more than 3 of the motion proposers be selected for the working group”*.

Cllr. Strain-Clark explained that, in line with Standing Orders (7.a) a special motion required written notice by at least 6 councillors in order to bring the debate back to Full Council. It was not intended that those six proposers should be considered as Town Council representative of the Working Group before their fellow Town Councillors. Cllr Smith said it was not his intension to serve further on the Working Group.

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Proposed by Cllr. O'Donoghue to move to a recorded vote.

Cllr. Cole raised a point of order that the amendment makes an assumption that one of the 3 original proposers would be selected to be Buckingham Town Council's representative on the Working Group. The Town Clerk explained that the amendment only said "no more than 3 of the motion proposers", and so did not imply that even one of the proposers had to be part of the group.....

Due to technical difficulties Cllr. Smith was not present for the vote.

A vote on the amendment was taken and the results were:

In favour: Cllrs. Try, Mahi, Hirons, O'Donoghue, P. Collins, G. Collins and Cole: 7

Against: Gateley, Newell, Harvey, Bloomfield, Strain-Clark and Ahmed: 6

Abstentions: Stuchbury, Ralph and Mordue: 3

The amended motion becomes the substantive motion and a further vote was taken.

Cllr. Smith re-joined the meeting at this point in the agenda.

In favour: Cllrs: Strain-Clark, Newell, Gateley, Ralph, Cole, Bloomfield, Harvey, Hirons, Mordue, Ahmed and Smith: 11

Against: Cllrs: Try, G Collins, Mahi and P Collins: 4

Abstentions: Cllr. O'Donoghue: 1

The substantive motion was carried.

343.1/20 To agree Town Council members of the Working Group

Proposed by Cllr. Mahi and seconded by Cllr. O'Donoghue to nominate Cllr. Cole to represent Buckingham Town Council on the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group.

Proposed by Cllr. Hirons and seconded by Cllr. G. Collins to nominated Cllr. Mahi to represent Buckingham Town Council on the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group.

Cllr. Cole advised Members that to conform to the wording of the agreed motion (343/20) then, candidates needed to submit a written statement before the next meeting of Full Council to allow Councillors to appraise their support & affinity with the purpose of the Working Group. Proposed by Cllr. O'Donoghue and seconded by Cllr. Hirons to move to the next agenda item. A vote was taken and the results were:

In favour: 8

Against: 3

Abstentions:4

344/20 Motion – Cllr. R. Stuchbury

Proposed by Cllr. R. Stuchbury and seconded by Cllr. L. O'Donoghue.

"Buckingham Town Council (BTC) wishes to express its deep alarm and concern with the implications of the wholesale changes to the current planning system proposed by the governments White Paper: Planning for the Future, which reduces or removes the influence of Buckinghamshire Council, Town and Parish Councils as well as members of the community on future applications. The effect of the new regime is likely to impact strongly on the environment and the economic prosperity as well as the social well-being of Buckinghamshire. Furthermore, it could see the end of local planning, local plans and residents having any ability to influence large developments.

Removing a layer of democratic governance undermines accountability within the planning of our community's future and so BTC seeks assurances from

Buckinghamshire Council that they will be voicing their objections to the drafters of the white paper about the content and scope of the proposed bill. In addition, BTC are pressing Greg Smith our local MP to raise questions and to seek to challenge the details of this bill in parliament. Finally, BTC will write to the Secretary of State reiterating the concerns noted at the head of this motion.”

Cllr. Cole proposed the amendment to Cllr Stuchbury’s motion that the first line be changed from: *“BTC wishes to express its deep alarm and concern...”* to the more forceful *“BTC expresses its deep alarm and concern”*, which Cllr Stuchbury accepted and therefore seconded.

Cllr. Try said that he would have preferred to see ‘voicing’ replaced with something stronger in the second paragraph, this was never seconded and the amendment fell.

An amendment was proposed by Cllr. Cole and seconded by Cllr. Try to remove the words “and concern” from the first line of the motion.

Cllr. Harvey called for a recorded vote on the following amended motion:
“Buckingham Town Council (BTC) expresses its deep alarm with the implications of the wholesale changes to the current planning system proposed by the governments White Paper: Planning for the Future, which reduces or removes the influence of Buckinghamshire Council, Town and Parish Councils as well as members of the community on future applications. The effect of the new regime is likely to impact strongly on the environment and the economic prosperity as well as the social well-being of Buckinghamshire. Furthermore, it could see the end of local planning, local plans and residents having any ability to influence large developments.

Removing a layer of democratic governance undermines accountability within the planning of our community’s future and so BTC seeks assurances from Buckinghamshire Council that they will be voicing their objections to the drafters of the white paper about the content and scope of the proposed bill. In addition, BTC are pressing Greg Smith our local MP to raise questions and to seek to challenge the details of this bill in parliament. Finally, BTC will write to the Secretary of State reiterating the concerns noted at the head of this motion.”

Cllr. Cole (Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee) read the following statement on behalf of the Planning Committee of Buckingham Town Council:

“Firstly, thanks to Roger Newall of the Buckingham Society for his expert guidance through the Planning the Future White Paper. As he points out, some of its is commendable, but much of it runs contrary to what is democratic and affordable.

We have a double problem here – firstly we are beholden to a new Shire Council which does not appear to consider that Buckingham Town Council or its surrounding parishes should continue to have a voice in planning matters. When the new Council was created it was expected that we would have a greater, not lesser, say in planning matters which affect Buckingham, whose residents we represent, and the talk of us taking on devolved powers for minor applications has vanished into thin air.

Assuming we can persuade Buckinghamshire Council to give us back that voice, then secondly I believe we need to challenge the Prime Minister and his Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on their pie-in-the-sky vision for the future of English planning.

What this White Paper proposes is that even more of the local planning process be swept away, with the possible scrapping of NDPs and only an initial consultation on plans, no follow-through even where there are complex local matters. Throughout England, town and parish councils have planning committees just as ours, formed of members who may not be planning professionals, but whom by the same token are not amateurs. We have been elected by our constituents to speak on their and the community's planning issues.

Here in Buckingham we have been trained and advised by professionals such as Katharine, Sheena and Roger; we have local knowledge; and many of us have attended enough enquiries, appeals and strategic planning meetings to understand how planning works. I would remind members we were one of the first communities in England to have a made neighbourhood development plan, something which the Government strongly urged all communities to do. Now the White Paper suggests abolishing them, and let central Government take control.

The Prime Minister and his Housing Minister's biggest misconception is that current planning law, enshrined in the 1947 Town & Country Planning Act and its various amendments, is not fit for purpose, as they want to see 300,000 new homes built every year. The fact is that planning permission has already been given for 1 million new dwellings in England, yet to be built, because developers are land-banking in the hopes that values will rise.

Build those, and the housing shortage disappears. Mr Johnson and Mr Jenrick should be targeting developers who have not yet built those houses, not the LPAs which they consider to be out of date in their plans and technology, but show little enthusiasm to force such developers to do it or lose it.

I also have grave reservations about the abolition of local planning levies such as S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy, to be replaced by 'a nationally-set value-based flat rate charge. As Roger points out, this could be used by local authorities to reduce council tax or to spend on non-planning related projects; it is essential that any new development continues to pay for related infrastructures within the community it is situated.

We also need to beware of the Government's knee-jerk reaction to empty town centre shops, replacing them with low-quality homes. Mr Johnson, when Mayor of London in 2010, fought for a minimum new home space of no less 37 sq metres; now it is deemed acceptable that it can be as little as 15 sq metres, thanks to a PDR loophole.

There are many things I could pick up on, but I will close with the contentious issue of what a beautiful building is. Proposal 14 seeks to fast-track beauty, updating the NPPF to make clear schemes complying with local design guides and codes will be given a positive advantage. All well and good, so long as those local design and

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codes are those in the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan, and not something which Buckinghamshire Council forces on us."

Cllr. Stuchbury spoke in response to the debate explaining that whilst the planning system needed to change it must not be at the expense of public involvement and the ability for councillors to represent their communities.

A recorded vote on the amendment was taken and the results were:

In favour: Cllrs: Try, G. Collins, Stuchbury, Strain-Clark, Newell, Gateley, Ralph, Mahi, Cole, Bloomfield, Harvey, Hirons, Mordue, Smith, O'Donoghue and Ahmed : 16

Against: Cllr. P. Collins: 1

The amended motion becomes the substantive motion and a further vote was taken.

Substantive motion

In favour: Cllrs: Try, G. Collins, Stuchbury, Strain-Clark, Newell, Gateley, Ralph, Mahi, Cole, Bloomfield, Harvey, Hirons, Mordue, Smith, O'Donoghue and Ahmed: 16

Against: Cllr. P. Collins: 1

345/20 Buckingham Town Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) Consultation

Members received and discussed a response to the consultation. Proposed by Cllr. Smith and seconded by Cllr. Mahi not to amend the current boundaries of the PSPO.

Cllr. Harvey raised concern that Councillors were being asked to make a decision without any data on how the current Public Spaces Protection orders have been enforced. Cllr. Harvey suggested that maybe the Town Council shouldn't prevent people from drinking in the parks as scientific evidence has shown that there is lower risk of spreading coronavirus outdoors.

A vote was taken and the results were:

In favour: 15

Against: 1

Motion carried.

346/20 Chairman's Announcements

The Mayor passed on her condolences to the family of Dean Mandabva, a local 11-year-old boy, who sadly died from a rare form of cancer. Members **AGREED** for the office to issue a formal letter of condolences to Dean's family.

347/20 Date of next Meetings:

Full Council	Monday 5th October 2020
Interim Council	Monday 22nd November 2020

Meeting closed at 20.03 pm

Signed Date

14th September 2020 Ratified

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PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY 2010/CRIME AND DISORDER ACT, 1988: the decisions made during the course of the meeting were duly considered and it was decided that there were no resulting direct or indirect implications in respect of crime and disorder, or equalities considerations, other than those stated in the minutes.

Initial.....