

BTC/07/20

Minutes of a meeting of the Full Council of Buckingham Town Council held on Monday 25th January 2021 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. A. Ralph
Cllr. M. Smith
Cllr. Mrs. C. Strain-Clark
Cllr. R. Stuchbury

In attendance: Mr. P. Hodson Town Clerk
Mrs. N. Stockill Committee Clerk
Cllr. C. Clare Buckinghamshire Councillor
Cllr. W. Whyte Buckinghamshire Councillor

No members of the public attended and so there was no public session.

988/20 Apologies for Absence

Members received apologies from County Councillor T. Mills and accepted apologies from Town Cllrs. Try and O'Donoghue.

989/20 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

990/20 Minutes

Members received and **AGREED** the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on: Monday 23rd November 2020.

991/20 Interim Minutes

Members received and **AGREED** the minutes of the Interim Council meeting held on Monday 21st December 2020.

992/20 Planning Committee

Members received the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on:
Monday 30th November 2020
Monday 21st December 2020

993/20 Town Centre and Events Committee

Members received the minutes of the Town Centre and Events Committee meeting held on Monday 7th December 2020.

994/20 Environment Committee

Members received the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held on Monday 14th December 2020 and noted that the recommendations were agreed at an Interim meeting of Full Council on the 21st December 2020 (min 917/20).

995/20 Resources Committee

Members received the minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on Monday 4th January 2021.

996/20 Diversity and Inclusion Working Group

Members received and discussed a paper of interim recommendations from the Working Group.

Proposed by Cllr. Stuchbury, seconded by Cllr. Newell and **AGREED** to accept the following report recommendations and for a report regarding both items to be provided to the next meeting of the Resources Committee:

- That the Town Council reviews the current Equality and Diversity Policy and includes this in the list of policies which is reviewed each May
- That the Town Council considers appointing a member of staff to be the officer lead for equalities and diversity.

ACTION TOWN CLERK

997/20 To receive and question reports from Buckinghamshire Council Councillors

Councillor Stuchbury

Cllr. Stuchbury reported on several meetings including Budget Scrutiny, Children and Education Select Committee, Planning Committee and Buckingham and Villages Community Board. Cllr. Stuchbury expressed disappointment that the Community Board had not been able to support free parking zones for those having covid-19 vaccinations in Buckingham Community Centre and that an incorrect article in the Buckingham Advertiser had caused confusion for patients arriving for their jabs.

Cllr. Cole stressed that it was a contentious issue that had caused much upset in the community and that Buckinghamshire Council should not expect elderly and vulnerable residents to use parking meters, for which human contact is required, adds to the risk of spreading the virus. Cllr. Cole reported that Buckingham only required ten short-term spaces throughout the day, which would be supervised by volunteer marshals.

Members noted that that every election polling day and Charter Fair weekend there is free parking in Cornwall's Meadow car park. Cllr. Cole asked Cllr. Clare how the Community Board had been able to fund use the BART bus to provide transport to get people to the Community Centre without reference to the Board, on which Cllr. Cole is Buckingham Town Council's elected representative.

Cllrs Harvey and Mahi said that many patients were arriving at Cornwall's meadow car park over the weekend confused as to where the free parking areas were and how to use the new parking meters.

Councillor Clare

Cllr. Clare said he shared the Town Councillors' frustrations and assured Members that County Councillors had worked hard to try and negotiate a solution. However, legal advice was that Buckinghamshire Council could not offer free parking within sections of a car

park, nor could it offer parking exemptions in Buckingham without suspending parking charges across all of the county's council owned car parks, which Buckinghamshire Council could not afford to implement.

Cllr. Clare responded to Cllr. Cole's question regarding Community Board funding, explaining there was a Covid-19 quick response fund in place to get help quickly to voluntary and community organisations that are in crisis as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Such applications only require votes from three Buckinghamshire Councillors but it was emphasised that the views and opinions of other Board members were valued and would be considered and would be taken into consideration for decisions being made. Cllr. Clare thanked Full Council for assisting with the distribution of money raised by the community towards supporting residents who were heavily impacted by flooding over Christmas.

Councillor Whyte

Cllr. Whyte reminded Members of the free parking bays alongside Buckingham Community Centre and within Stratford Fields and Western Avenue Car parks.

Cllr. Whyte reported on joint review meetings with The Flood Manager at The Environment Agency and Buckinghamshire Council's Strategic Flood Management Team. The Environment Agency were challenged as to why early warnings were not issued in Buckingham and the Agency said they would work closely with the Council to better understand the nature of the flooding in December 2020. Cllr. Whyte reported that a representative from the Environment Agency would be attending the next meeting of the Buckingham and Villages Community Board and that the Strategic Flood Management Team will be working on a formal review (Section 19 report) into the event. Cllr. Whyte stressed that work was progressing with the Upper Ouse Natural Flood Management Project and it was hoped that some physical interventions can be delivered in 2021 based on the 2020 pilot study on the River Leck.

Cllr. Whyte emphasised the importance of regular communication to ensure new and existing residents understood what measures can be taken to minimise flood damage.

998/20 Action List

Covid-19 Public crossing at Moreton Rd (226/20) – Members noted that the crossing was removed due to a road closure order. The Town Clerk **AGREED** to investigate the potential of alternative temporary crossings such as bollards that can be secured to the road surface.

ACTION TOWN CLERK

Public Health Meeting to discuss healthcare provision in Buckingham (912/20) – The Town Clerk confirmed that a verbal update would be provided at Environment Committee on the 15th February 2021.

999/20 Motion – Cllr. M .Cole JP

"That this council opposes the closure of more local Thames Valley Police counters. We need more, not less. We lost our local Magistrates' Courts (Buckingham, Bicester and Aylesbury), and now TVP wants to make our guardians of the peace even less accessible. It is proposing the closure of Bicester, which has a growing population, already 33,000, so that should remain open. We need a counter again here in Buckingham, with a growing population now 15,000, and more and more housing development coming. Buckingham has a growing crime problem, with car and van break-ins, and anti-social behaviour in the parks and even the High Street. Our nearest counters are Bicester and Milton Keynes, both 11 miles away, which many people can reach only by costly public transport. I understand that if there is an incident then officers are sent from Aylesbury, which is 20 miles away. We pay a lot of our council tax towards policing. Any further cuts to the police service would be unacceptable."

Cllr. Mahi seconded the motion and a vote was taken. Members voted unanimously in favour of the motion.

ACTION TOWN CLERK

1000/20 Covid 19

The Town Clerk reported that Green Spaces team continue to work out and about and are currently working on a new garden of rest area for the Brackley Road Cemetery. The Lace Hill Sports and Community Centre remains closed to group sessions. The market remains open for traders selling essential supplies only.

1001/20 Financial Risk Assessment

Members received and unanimously approved the Financial and Risk Assessment as received by Resources Committee on the 4th January 2021.

1002/20 Representation at the Buckingham and Villages Community Board

Councillors discussed the Town Council's representation at the Board in light of Buckinghamshire Council's insistence on not allowing Town Councillors to be called by their title of Councillor. Cllr. Cole expressed concern that the democratic role of Town and Parish councils is being further eroded; Buckinghamshire Council had already removed voting rights from those members, and since the July meeting Town Councillors were no longer referred to as 'Committee members' but as 'Public'. Cllr. Cole requested that all councillors, not just Buckinghamshire Council members, be afforded their correct title of 'Councillor' in attendance lists and minutes, and are reinstated as Board Members and not Public, at those meeting.

*Members **AGREED** to suspend standing orders to allow Cllr. Clare to speak.*

Cllr. Clare explained that the meetings of the Community Board are not vested with deep formal authority, they serve as critical links between agencies and governing bodies and the communities they are supposed to serve. It was felt that the use of formal titles could act as a barrier for encouraging wider engagement; formal arrangements can be off putting for residents that are new to processes of local authorities. Cllr. Clare encouraged Members to vote on the matter at the next meeting of Community Board and not within a meeting of Buckingham Town Council.

Cllr. Smith asked why Thames Valley Police Officers were referred to as PC (Police Constables) or Sgt (Sergeant) within the minutes of the Buckingham and Villages Community Board meeting on the 10th November 2020.

Cllr. Clare explained that the use of a 'Cllr' prefix does not explain which local authority you are representing. Within the minutes of The Community Board members are recorded in the list of attendees with the organisation they are representing.

Cllr. Clare confirmed the policy was supported by Buckinghamshire Council but it was not a policy in use across other County Community Boards.

Cllr. Clare said he was more than happy for a vote to be taken within the next meeting of the Buckingham and Villages Community Board as that was the appropriate place for the matter to be decided.

*Members **AGREED** to reinstate Standing Orders*

Proposed by Cllr. Stuchbury and seconded by Cllr. Newell that Town Councillors accept Cllr. Clare's agreement to discuss Buckingham Town Council's representation at the next meeting of the Community Board in light of Buckinghamshire Council's insistence on not allowing Town Councillors to be called by their title of Councillor.

Cllr. Stuchbury asked to move to the vote.

Cllr. P. Collins raised a point of order that no motion had been listed on the agenda, or recommendations provided in advance of the meeting for Councillors to vote on. Cllr. Smith raised a point of order that Members were being asked to agree the words of a motion (to be taken to the next meeting of the Community Board) that has not yet been written. The Chair agreed that it was procedurally incorrect to move to the vote. Cllr. Stuchbury withdrew his proposal.

Cllr. Clare left the meeting at this point.

1003/20 Annual Town Meeting

The Town Clerk explained that a number of other town and parish councils have decided to host their 2021 Annual Town Meeting after parish elections at the end of May 2021.

Members received a written report and discussed the following report recommendations:

- That Members decide whether to hold an Annual Town Meeting in 2021
- That Members agree to the suggested outline for the 2021 Annual Town Meeting and note the dates of the two events.
- That Members agree the initial topics for discussion on social media as:
- Flooding response and future preparations
 - How can the town support businesses and residents following the Covid restrictions?
 - Climate change and improving the environment
 - When the new Town Council is elected later this year, what should its top three priorities be for the town? (provide a link to roles and responsibilities)
- That Members confirm a facilitator of the Online Annual Town Meeting to be hosted via Zoom on Wednesday 17th March 2021 at 7pm

Members unanimously **AGREED** to make arrangements for an Annual Town Meeting in late May 2021.

Cllr. P. Collins was absent for the vote.

1003/20 Draft Buckinghamshire Town and Parish Council Charter

Members received and discussed a written report from the Town Clerk and **AGREED** that the Town Council establishes a working group to draft a response to the draft Charter, for Interim Council to consider on Monday 22nd February 2021. **ACTION TOWN CLERK**

Cllr. Mordue was absent for the vote.

Cllr. Smith nominated Cllr. Cole. **AGREED**

Cllr. Bloomfield nominated Cllr. Ralph **AGREED**

Cllr. Cole nominated Cllr. Smith seconded by Cllr. Mahi **AGREED**

Cllr. Mahi nominated Cllr. P. Collins. Cllr. P. Collins declined the nomination.

Cllr. Strain-Clark nominated Cllr Gateley seconded by Cllr. Bloomfield **AGREED**

Members **AGREED** the nominations and for the Town Clerk agreed to allocate sections of the Charter to each of the four representatives.

Cllr. Mordue was absent for the vote.

1004/20 External Audit Report and Certificate

To receive the External Audit Report as discussed by Resources Committee on the 4th January 2021. Members received and discussed the External Audit Report. Members were satisfied with the Town Clerk's explanation of the exception within the Annual Return, and noted the External Audit Report and Certificate.

1005/20 Unitary Council

Members received a brief verbal report from the Town Clerk.

1006/20 Representation on the Buckingham Alms-houses and Welfare Charity

Proposed by Cllr. Newell, seconded by Cllr. Stuchbury and unanimously **AGREED** to nominate Cllr. Ralph to replace Cllr. Bloomfield, whose term has ended, as the Town Council’s representative on the Buckingham Alms-houses and Welfare Charity.

Members recorded their thanks to Cllr. Bloomfield for his term on the Charity’s Board.
Cllr. Mordue was absent for the vote.

981/20 Reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies

Members were asked to note the reports listed below:

981.1/20 Rural Market Town Group – 9th November 2020

981.2/20 Buckingham & Villages Community Board – 10th November 2020

1007/20 Mayoral Engagements

Members received a list of events attended by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Functions the Mayor has attended:

10th Dec 2020 Presentation of Mayor’s salver to Cllr. M. Cole JP

15th Dec 2020 Leighton Buzzard Mayor’s online Carol service

15th December 2020 & 12th January 2021 Buckingham General Charities

1008/20 Chair’s Announcements

The Mayor encouraged everyone to stay home and stay safe.

1009/20 Date of the next meeting:

Interim Council – Monday 22nd February 2021 (preceded by an informal meeting)

Full Council - Monday 15th March 2021

Meeting closed at: 21.18

Signed Date

Town Mayor