

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment Committee** of Buckingham Town Council held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021 at 7pm online via Zoom.

**Present:** Cllr. Mrs. M. Gateley Vice-Chair  
Cllr. J. Harvey  
Cllr. A. Mahi  
Cllr. Ms. R. Newell Chair  
Cllr. A. Ralph  
Cllr. M. Smith  
Cllr. Mrs. C. Strain-Clark  
Cllr. R. Stuchbury  
Cllr. Try

**In attendance:** Mr. L. Phillips Green Spaces Manager  
Mr P. Hodson Town Clerk  
Ms C. Molyneux Deputy Town Clerk  
Mrs. N. Stockill Committee Clerk

Members of the public were in attendance but no-one spoke in the Public Session.

#### **1062/20 Apologies for Absence**

Members received apologies from Cllr. O'Donoghue and Buckinghamshire Cllr. Whyte.

#### **1063/20 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **1064/20 Minutes**

Members received and **AGREED** the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held on Monday 14th December 2020 and received at Full Council on the 25th January 2021.

#### **1065/20 Action Report**

(320/20) Cattle Pens – The Estates Manager explained that the finger post was in storage; awaiting a date from the contractor for installation.

(328/20) Water Bottle Refill Station – Cllr. Harvey asked if there was an update on the start of the skate park regeneration project. Cllr. Stuchbury said the Cabinet Member was chasing the relevant officers and would pass any updates with progress on the skate park on to the Town Clerk.

(759/20) BMX Track –Member **AGREED** that the action should not be marked as completed in the Action Tracker. The Town Clerk explained that a standard pump track was a circuit of rollers, banked turns and features designed to be ridden completely by riders "pumping"—generating momentum by up and down body movements, instead of pedalling or pushing. The lengths of tracks vary as much as the arrangement of obstacles, but a standard 100m track could fit into an area smaller than the skate park in Bridge Street. The Town Clerk confirmed that Lace

Hill was no longer being considered as a viable option for a pump track as agreed by the Environment Committee on the 26th October 2020 (E/25/20).

The Town Clerk reminded Members that the Heartlands site is owned by Buckinghamshire Council, who have just received a renewal of the green flag status for the site. Aylesbury Vale District Council had previously made it clear that they would not support a BMX track in the Heartlands. This proposal would not be progressed until the further devolution negotiations were further developed.

(893/20) Land Grabs – The Chair explained the Planning Clerk had received several reports from Town Councillors and cases would be progressed through the Planning Committee with a deadline at the end of the week for additional reports.

### **1066/20 Water voles**

Members welcomed Mr. G. Eaton, resident of Water Stratford and **AGREED** to suspended Standing Orders to allow Mr Eaton and Mr. T. Cavender (Buckingham Canal Society) the opportunity to speak to Members.

Mr Eaton referred to a map, previously circulated to Members, of the results of the 2020 water vole surveys and mink control locations on the River Great Ouse. Mr. Eaton explained that an initial releases in 2006 and 2007, organised by Dr. T. Moorhouse and The Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) have been a success, and populations are not only established but have spread into Buckingham. Mr. Eaton noted that the UK had lost 99% of its Water Vole populations in two decades, largely as a result of predation by the invasive American mink. The only methods available to reverse this decline are reintroducing populations, and then safeguarding those populations through mink control. Any lapse in mink control - for even a few weeks - can be fatal to a water vole colony.

Mr. Eaton asked Members to consider providing the volunteer resources needed to safeguard Buckinghamshire's three water vole colonies through a coordinated approach to monitoring and controlling mink. Mr. Eaton suggest the creation of a central email address for volunteers could report their findings and then a message is sent out to the distribution group (currently 5-8 landowners) alerting them to the presence of a mink in the area.

The Town Clerk said he was happy to set up an email group via Google Groups for Mr. Eaton to invite people to join.

**ACTION TOWN CLERK**

Mr. Eaton suggested the River Wardens could observe the Mink rafts and coordinate with individual landowners over their findings.

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

Cllr. Stuchbury proposed for a press release to be issued, publicising the presence of water voles in and around Buckingham, how to identify the species and their importance to the local ecosystem – despite the challenges presented by the invasive American mink. To include an illustrative comparison of Brown rats and water voles to help distinguish between the two species

**AGREED ACTION ESTATES MANAGER**

Mr Cavender had reported a number of sightings at the Hyde Lane nature reserve where otters were also present. Cllr. Mahi suggested publicising a contact telephone number/email for reporting mink sightings.

E/05/20

**1067/20 Buckingham Canal Society**

Members **AGREED** to suspend standing orders to allow Mr. Cavender to speak  
1067.1/20 Mr. Cavender gave a presentation to Members on the options for surface water and watercourses in Buckingham. The following key points were noted:

Flood Betterment - Lord Pitt's recommendations to Gloucester flood enquiry (2007) referred to the use of restored canals as linear flood attenuation. Buckingham's restored canal can be designed and used as a linear flood attenuation channel along the Upper Ouse Valley and act as an aqueduct between water sources and holding pounds. Effectively, hold water until river can take it to assist with flood management for communities further down stream.

Surface Water – The surface water runoff from Page Hill is channelled through drainage networks and discharged in three separate locations across Buckingham. Of the three drainages channels from Page Hill, one is used to capacity and the other two are underutilised. The pinch point under the A413 leads to a backlog of water causing flooding in town and further upstream in the Well Street area.

Proposal to 'weir' the over-used drainage channel and divert the retained water into the underused channel (25m away), this would divert 80% of surface water from the A413 pinch point and reduce pressure on the Well Street area.

Early talks with Buckinghamshire Council have been positive and initial project costs are estimated at £20,000.

In the future there is opportunity to backflow water from under the A413 (southbound exit of Page Hill roundabout) by using weir in another chamber. This can then use an open ditch planted as reed bed to leech harmful phosphates from the water. The water can discharge into the canal and over spill across the flood plain to reduce fluvial backlog in the river flow.

Members thanked Mr Cavender for speaking to Members and **AGREED** to reinstate Standing Orders.

Cllr Smith asked for the slides to be circulate to Members **ACTION TOWN CLERK**

Proposed by Stuchbury and seconded by Cllr Newell. As a matter of urgency the Town Council will, with the assistance of Mr Cavender, prepare costs and a full proposal to be placed before the Buckingham and Villages Community Board or Buckinghamshire Council.

**ACTION TOWN CLERK**

Unanimously **AGREED**

**1068/20 Flooding**

1068.1/20 Members received and discussed a written report from the Estates Manager on the Council's planned service response to future flooding.

Proposed by Cllr. Stuchbury for the office to prepare a bid to the Buckingham and Villages Community Board to fund the purchase of flood equipment.

The Town Clerk explained that the Environment Agency had already agreed to fund the purchase of equipment such as the removable flood defence barriers.

Cllr. Gateley noted a typographical error on page 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> para "...any plans you have made..."

Members **AGREED** the following report recommendations:

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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 .....

E/05/20

- The Town Council investigates the feasibility and costs for obtaining removable flood defence barriers for the Cornwalls Meadows toilets and Shopmobility unit.
- The items listed are ordered from the Environment Agency to add to the Council's flood kit.
- The Council agrees that an emergency response will be made where staff are available, but cannot be guaranteed.
- The flood information described is published on the Council's website.

1068.2/20 To receive and discuss a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk on progress with updating the Community Flood Plan and the following points were noted:

- Additional properties have been added to the list of vulnerable addresses.
- Meetings have taken place between Buckingham Town Council and the Contingencies officer at Buckinghamshire Council to determine authorities' responsibilities.
- A number of volunteers have come forward and investigation is underway to determine the appropriate policies, procedures, insurance and training for volunteer flood wardens.
- The Deputy Town Clerk will be attending a Property flood resilience seminar at the beginning of March 2021 and will report back on latest findings.

1068.3/20 Members received and noted the minutes of the Upper Great Ouse Natural Flood Management (NFM) Steering Group meeting held on the 7th December 2020.

Cllr. Gateley asked the Town Clerk to feedback on the unhelpful number of acronyms in the minutes. The Town Clerk reported that the NFM officer would attend the next meeting of Environment Committee.

Proposed by Cllr. Smith that any documents put before council, whether produced externally or internally, are prefaced with a list of acronyms **AGREED**.

### **1069/20 Climate Emergency Action Plan – update**

Cllr. Newell reported that all future committee agendas will have a standing item for updates on the Climate Emergency Plan.

Cllr Stuchbury proposed looking into the Council's investments and whether they are supporting social and environment projects. The updated report was noted.

*The Deputy Town Clerk left the meeting at this point in the agenda.*

### **1070/20 Memorial Tree**

Members received and discussed correspondence received from Robert Cumming regarding a proposed tree planting on Church Green to commemorate Thomas Jefferson's visit to the town. Proposed by Cllr. Stuchbury, seconded by Cllr. Newell and unanimously **AGREED** to support the project.

**ACTION TOWN CLERK**

E/05/20

### **1071/20 Buckingham Community Wildlife Project**

Member received a verbal update from the Chair and Estates Manager, noting that some of the local conservation groups have not been formally meeting due to public health restrictions, but individuals were still undertaking wildlife surveys and the Town Council's work had continued.

### **1072/20 Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

Members received a verbal report from the Chair and Estates Manager. Details are available at <https://bucksmknep.co.uk/nature-strategy/overview/>

Cllr. Newell explained that Buckinghamshire Council were forming a strategy to be influenced by a wide range of people and organisations, from farmers and landowners, to the public, and conservationists, and the Estates Manager and Chair would be attending a follow up workshop. Everyone is invited to contribute to their short online survey, which will be open until 26th February 2021.

### **1073/20 Holocaust Memorial Stone**

Members received a written report from the Town Clerk and discussed the report recommendation to obtain a memorial stone and install this in a suitable location in Bourton Park.

Cllr. Smith said it was important to consider the stone's design and that it is cited somewhere that can be accessed by residents in wheelchairs, mobility scooters and those with pushchairs.

Cllr. Harvey suggested locating the memorial stone near the weir at Bourton Mill.

Cllr. Stuchbury reminded Members that TC&E Committee had agreed to report to the next meeting of Full Council to create an ear-marked reserve of £1,000 to allow for the production of an engraved stone using the additional underspend now forecast for the TCE budget.

The Town Clerk said initial plans were to use one of the large blocks of sandstone from the Brackley Road cemetery and to add a plaque with the standard Holocaust memorial emblem and wording, as used in similar structures across the country.

Members unanimously **AGREED** to progress with the plans to obtain a memorial stone and install this in a suitable location in Bourton Park.

**ACTION ESTATES MANAGER**

### **1074/20 Green Spaces Team work programme**

The Estates Manager updated Members on the backlog of work following the impact of the recent floods and waterlogged ground on the winter programme. Members recorded their thanks to the Greenspaces Team for all of their hard work to help the parks and town recover from the 2020 floods.

### **1075/20 Budgets**

1075.1/20 Members noted the latest figures.

1075.2/20 Members received and noted the revised budget forecast (covid-19 impact).

Members recorded their thanks to the team that have enabled the distribution of the flood relief funds.

**1076/20 Public Health Meeting to discuss healthcare provision in Buckingham**

The Town Clerk reported that there had not been significant progress in arranging a public meeting as many of the healthcare providers have been extremely busy with the delivery of the national vaccination programme. The Town Clerk was hopeful there would be progress within the next few weeks.

Cllr. Stuchbury expressed regret that the meeting had not yet been held and said it was important for the new Full Council, in May 2021, to understand the importance of delivering on this action. Cllr. Strain-Clark said that while she had supported in the original motion, it had not been appropriate to hold the meeting as yet for understandable reasons.

**1077/20 Buckinghamshire Council's Health and Social Care Committee (HASC)**

Members received verbal update from Councillor Harvey following the meeting of the HASC on the 7th January 2021.

Link to the webcast: [https://buckinghamshire.public-tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/536416/start\\_time/0](https://buckinghamshire.public-tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/536416/start_time/0)

Cllr. Harvey said it was vital that Buckingham's residents are made aware and consulted with over the long-term implications of healthcare services from Buckingham Hospital. Cllr. Harvey said he was not reassured that satisfactory consultation had already taken place. Proposals are to be published within the next few and it'll be vital for Councillors and the town's residents to be involved and engaged in those debates.

Cllr. Stuchbury suggested writing to Greg Smith MP to ask the Secretary of State to place a question to the Speaker's Chair on the Government's Health and social care White Paper and what is known about proposed changes to Buckingham's health care service. **AGREED**

**ACTION TOWN CLERK**

**1078/20 Access Awareness**

Cllr. Strain-Clark remarked on Buckingham's community spirit and the number of volunteers that have assisted during the Covid pandemic.

Scenic Walk – Cllr. Harvey reported that heavy mud along the stretch of the scenic walk below the St Rumbold's well was making the path inaccessible. Cllr. Harvey wondered if the Tingewick Road construction had impacted on the level of water present. Cllr. Stuchbury asked for the Greenspaces Team to inspect the drainage grid on the Tingewick road junction that takes the drain from the new estates to ensure it is clear from blockages.

**ACTION ESTATES MANAGER**

**1079/20 Council Chamber Works**

Members **AGREED** to move this agenda item to the confidential session.

**1080/20 Fees & Charges**

Members received and discussed a written report from the Deputy Town Clerk. Members unanimously **AGREED** that the Lace Hill hire charges are frozen for the new financial year. This will support long term hirers and keep the pricing workable.

**E/05/20**

It was **AGREED** to review the hire rates next February 2022 for the following financial year. **ACTION DEPUTY TOWN CLERK**

**1081/20 Social Media initiatives and Small Projects**

Members received and discussed a written report from the Communications Clerk and unanimously **AGREED** the report recommendations that the office team may develop and publish online activities that are free, apart from administration and stationary costs, providing these activities reflect the Committee's previously agreed policies and priorities.

**1082/20 News Releases**

Members **AGREED** to issue press releases on the following:

- Holocaust Memorial stone
- Water voles

**1083/20 Chair's Announcements**

There were none.

**1084/20 Date of Next Meeting: Monday 29th March 2021**

**COMMITTEE IN PRIVATE SESSION**

**Exclusion of Public and Press**

**1085/20 RECOMMENDED** In terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it is, therefore, **RECOMMENDED** that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded. **AGREED**

**1086/20 Council Chamber Works**

The Town Clerk reported on the progress of the Council Chamber extension. Members discussed implementing in-person/online committee meetings and **AGREED** to look into technology for holding and recording hybrid meetings.

**ACTION TOWN CLERK**

**1087/20 New Cemetery**

Members received and discussed a written report from the Estates Manager. Proposed by Cllr. Stuchbury, seconded by Cllr. Newell and unanimously **AGREED** to investigate and recommend to Full Council the immediate purchase of the allotment and cemetery land from money held with the Council's general reserve.

**ACTION TOWN CLERK**

Members **AGREED** to proceed with the tender process as described in the report provided, for the first phase of the planning and design of the new cemetery to create initial designs and to start initial site investigations required to create the new cemetery.

**E/05/20**

Members **AGREED** that earmarked reserve budget (901/9002) is used to fund the first phase of the design and that the tenders are taken to the Resources Committee to be agreed.

**ACTION TOWN CLERK**

**1088/20 Tingewick Road Green Spaces**

Members received a verbal update from the Town Clerk regarding discussions with Barratts about the option for the Town Council to take on the green spaces and play areas within the new development at Tingewick Road. Proposed by Cllr. Stuchbury, seconded by Cllr. Harvey and unanimously **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the Town Council take on the green spaces and play areas, provided that Barratts agree a suitable initial payment, and that the development of the green spaces are completed satisfactorily, in line with the agreed plans.

Meeting closed at:21.47 hours.

Chair

Date