

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment Committee** of Buckingham Town Council held on Monday 29th March 2021 @ 7pm online via Zoom

Present:

Cllr. G. Collins	(from minute 1183/20)
Cllr. Mrs. M. Gateley	Vice-Chair
Cllr. J. Harvey	(until minute 1187/20)
Cllr. A. Mahi	
Cllr. Ms. R. Newell	Chair
Cllr. Mrs. L. O'Donoghue	
Cllr. A. Ralph	
Cllr. M. Smith	
Cllr. Mrs. C. Strain-Clark	
Cllr. R. Stuchbury	

In attendance:

Mr. L. Phillips	Green Spaces Manager
Mr P. Hodson	Town Clerk
Mrs N. Stockill	Committee Clerk
Ms A. Paige	Project Officer for the Natural Flood Management (NFM) Project for the Upper Ouse.

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

1180/20 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies received.

1181/20 Declarations of Interest

Agenda item 8 (Commemoration Tree) - Cllr. Ralph declared an interest as a Member of the Buckingham Society's Executive Committee.

Agenda item 10 (Community Board Funding Bid) – Cllr. Stuchbury informed Members that he was involved in the approval of the funding bid.

1182/20 Minutes

Members received and **AGREED** the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held on Monday 15th February 2021 and received at Full Council on the 15th March 2021.

1183/20 Natural Flood Management Update

Members received a presentation from Annabel Paige, Project Officer for the Natural Flood Management (NFM) Project for the Upper Ouse. The following project highlights were noted:

- NFM works to increase the storage of water in the ground, slow the flow of water and increase temporary storage areas.
- The project does not just work in rivers channels, it also implements techniques across the whole of the river catchment area, often working best in the river's headwaters e.g. streams located far from Buckingham.

- The project has been focusing on the opportunities and delivery of NFM features across the Upper Ouse catchment (upstream of Buckingham) and it is currently working on stages of modelling and engagement.
- Risk simulation modelling has been completed by JBA Consultancy to identify the preferred sub-catchments (streams and brooks) where NFM interventions might be most effective. The summary findings have confirmed that the most suitable territories are in the high head waters, far from Buckingham. The key sub-catchments areas identified are the Syresham stream, Radstone Brook and Stowe Brook.
- Engagement has taken place with many local farmers, landowners, The Wildlife Trusts, Buckingham Society and many other local organisations including the Syresham Pocket Park.
- Following network engagement many larger scale projects have been identified for areas downstream of Buckingham, such as river restoration and floodplain meadow projects.
- The next stage of engagement is to target landowners in the identified priority catchments and to develop a letter pack to be delivered to target addresses.

Members were asked to pass on any other contacts groups or individuals interested in water route projects.

Cllr. Stuchbury reported on Tingewick Parish Council's maintenance programme to improve the flow of water from the culvert out of the village.

Cllr. Harvey asked if there were any disincentives for landowners to give agricultural land over to NFM. Ms. Paige explained that landowners are often unfamiliar with NFM options and funding arrangements. Some perceive the risks and liabilities arising from NFM works as being more significant than may be the case, and this leads to a reluctance to enter into NFM agreements. Misinformation and misunderstanding of NFM, and a fear of the unknown, together with a lack of guidance or accessible information are all significant barriers to NFM. Which further highlights the importance of effective engagement and communication with local landowners.

Cllr. Gateley asked how soon there could be a reduction in the level of flood risk to Buckingham. Ms. Paige said that it was dependant on how quickly the measures could be delivered on site. Land-based NFM measures would only provide effective protection against small flood events in small catchments. As the catchment size and flood events increase, the effectiveness of land-based NFM measures in reducing flood risk would decrease significantly.

Members thanked Ms. Paige for attending the Environment Committee.

1184/20 Action Report

Members received the report and noted the updated information.

Flood Plans – Cllr. Harvey reported on a trial project for a new approach to groundwater flooding in Chilterns and Berkshire Downs, including plans for property flood resilience measures in up to 200 homes, groundwater monitoring (including innovative technology such as gully sensors) and a Groundwater Flood Alert App for householders and businesses. Members **AGREED** for the Town Clerk to write to Greg Smith MP asking that Buckingham be considered as one of the communities to

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pilot the installation of specialised property flood resilience measures and an app for local residents to tackle the threat of groundwater in Buckinghamshire.

ACTION TOWN CLERK

Sports Provision – Cllr. Stuchbury asked for the Town Clerk to update new Councillors on the history and aspirations of the project. Members **AGREED** for the Town Clerk to prepare a written report on all of the Council's S106 schemes.

ACTION TOWN CLERK

Public Health Meeting – Cllr. Stuchbury asked for the item to be added to June's agenda Environment Committee.

ACTION COMMITTEE CLERK

Footpaths and Rights of Way – Members noted that the Council's Rights of Way application from Station Road to Railway Walk had been submitted to Buckinghamshire Council but that it was a three-year process.

1185/20 Budgets

Members received and noted the latest figures.

1186/20 Climate Emergency Action Plan

Members received the updated plan and noted reports from each of the Climate Champions.

Members discussed the issue of phosphorus pollution and that it is often, solely, blamed on agricultural sources such as livestock waste and fertiliser runoff. Members recalled a presentation from Mr Terry Cavender of the Canal Society where it was noted that wastewater, septic tank and industrial effluents generally contain high phosphate levels caused by utilities draining into drains and causing harm to the local environment. Members **AGREED** to publicise information on the water quality impacts of foul water misconnections into surface water sewers.

ACTION COMMITTEE CLERK

Members **AGREED** to promote Anglian Water's water saving advice and the 'Keep it Clear' campaign.

ACTION COMMITTEE CLERK

Cllr. Harvey reported on Oxfordshire County Council's experimental Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and suggested that the introduction of traffic filters could be trialled in an area similar to Bourtonville.

Pedestrian friendly town signage – Proposed by Cllr. Smith, seconded by Cllr. Stuchbury and unanimously **AGREED** for the office to review all existing footpaths and their intersections to see if it would aid an increase in their usage by publicising them.

ACTION TOWN CLERK

Members **AGREED** to advertise Buckingham as a 'pedestrian friendly town' on the Council's 'Walks and Maps' section of the website.

ACTION COMMITTEE CLERK

1187/20 Commemoration Tree

The following Councillors had written to the Town Clerk requesting a review of the decision made by the Environment Committee to agree to the request to plant a tree on Church Green to commemorate Thomas Jefferson's visit to the town (1070/20), in accordance with Standing Order 7.a:

Councillor Strain-Clark

Councillor Smith

Councillor G. Collins

Councillor Cole

Councillor Ahmed

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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.

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Councillor Harvey
Councillor O'Donoghue
Councillor Gateley

Members received and discussed a written report from the Town Clerk and noted that the original proposal was for the Town Council to host a tree on the Church Green and that if Committee decided not to support the project then Mr Cumming would seek an alternative location in the town.

Generally, Members were in agreement that it was not appropriate for the Town Council to support the proposed tree planting on Church Green to commemorate Thomas Jefferson's visit to the town in light of Jefferson's personal history of slave owning.

Cllr. Harvey left the meeting at 19.59

Cllr. Ralph explained that the visit was made by two future presidents of the United States and authors of the Declaration of Independence, important world figures in history. It was illustrated that the proposal was to exchange two trees, a London Plain and North American Tulip, between Buckingham and the Monticello Estate. The planting of the trees would connect both sites and become part of Buckingham's story, linking the town with the historical figures and their visit to the town.

Cllr. Gateley said the Town Council should be mindful of such suggestions in the future, particularly when being asked to commemorate historical events or persons of interest/note.

A vote was taken on whether to withdraw permission to plant a tree on the Church Green and the results were:

9 in favour

1 abstention

1188/20 Greenspaces Community Board Sub-Group

Members received and noted a written report from the Committee Clerk.

1189/20 Community Board Funding Bid

Cllr. Strain-Clark asked if accessible picnic benches could be considered for alternative locations in Buckingham. The Estates Manager said this could be considered in the design of the new picnic benches. Cllr. Smith said it was important to ensure that any new accessible benches were located on an area of hardstanding. Members noted that the bid had been submitted, and **AGREED** to accept and spend the funds as described if the bid is successful.

1190/20 Great Ouse 2018 pollution incident - Community Briefing 13

Noted.

1191/20 Tingewick Road Green Spaces Update

Members received a brief verbal update from the Town Clerk and **AGREED** to reissue the press release on the adoption of the Tingewick Road Green Spaces at the appropriate time.

1192/20 New Cemetery and Allotments

Members received a brief verbal update from the Town Clerk and **AGREED** to reissue the press release on the purchase of the new cemetery and allotments.

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1193/20 Buckingham Community Wildlife Project

Minutes to be circulated before the next meeting.

1194/20 Healthcare in Buckingham

Members noted the response from Greg Smith MP citing that, at present, there are no plans to make substantial changes to the pattern of services Buckingham Hospital, and this includes the inpatient services provided there.

Cllr. G. Collins reported on the withdrawal of short term and respite care beds and radiography services from Buckingham Hospital. Members **AGREED** for the Town Clerk to write back to Greg Smith MP explaining Members' concerns that Buckingham Community Hospital were no longer using beds for short term care or respite services and that the X-ray department had not been operational for months. Councillors were of the impression that key functions of the community hospital have been withdrawn on the quiet.

ACTION TOWN CLERK

1195/20 Access Awareness

Cllr. Strain-Clark announced that she would not be standing for re-election in May 2021. Members recorded their thanks to Cllr. Strain-Clark for all her contributions over 26 years on the Town Council. Members were in agreement that Cllr. Strain-Clark was the Council's patron of accessibility and had championed the issue across all of the committees, thereby leaving the town in a more accessible position than it was in 1995.

Cllr. Stuchbury reported a number of broken streetlights between Moreton Road and through the town centre. Members **AGREED** for a report on the defective streetlights on the Moreton Road from Highways.

ACTION TOWN CLERK

1196/20 News Releases

Members **AGREED** to reissue the press releases on the purchase of the Tingewick Road Greenspaces and the new cemetery and allotments.

Members **AGREED** to issue a press release on accessibility in Buckingham co-written by Cllrs. Smith and Strain Clark.

1197/20 Chair's Announcements

The Chair thanked Councillors who had been part of the Environment Committee over the last year and, for some, over the last 6 years. Cllr. Newell thanked the Committee for their support and wished everyone good luck whether they were standing for re-election or standing down from their role as Town Councillor. Cllr. Newell thanked the office and Greenspaces Team for all the achievements despite three national lockdowns.

1198/20 Date of Next Meeting: Monday 14th June 2021

CONFIDENTIAL SESSION

Exclusion of Public and Press

1199/20 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 210329 29th March Environment Minutes **RATIFIED** page 5 of 6

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.

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pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded **AGREED**

1200/20 Interment and Memorial Fees

Members received and discussed a written report from the Estates Manager. The following report recommendations were **AGREED**:

- It is recommended that for burials of a stillbirth that occurred before 24 weeks of pregnancy option B is adopted i.e. that the fees are charged at 20% of the standard fee. Therefore, initially an 80% reduction of the standard fee would be = £189.79
- It is recommended that the Cemetery Handbook is updated to reflect the amended policy/fees.

Members noted that this recommendation refers to the Brackley Road Cemetery. Once the new cemetery is available a new policy and fees will have to be considered.

Meeting closed at:8.45pm

Chair

Date