

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment Committee** of Buckingham Town Council held on 31st October 2022 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Cornwall's Meadow, Buckingham.

Present:

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| Cllr. Mrs. M Gateley | Town Mayor |
| Cllr. S. Hetherington | |
| Cllr. L. O'Donoghue | |
| Cllr. A. Osibogun | |
| Cllr. A. Ralph | |
| Cllr. A. Schaefer | Chair |
| Cllr. R. Stuchbury | |

Also present:

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| Ms. C. Molyneux | Town Clerk |
| Mr. L. Phillips | Estates Manager |
| Ms. P. Cahill | Committee Clerk |

Public session

A resident of Page Hill attended the meeting and expressed his concerns regarding noise and air pollution in Buckingham, specifically from light aircraft over Page Hill. He informed Members that he believed this has increased dramatically over the past few years, particularly on clear days. He is not complaining about the Silverstone weekend helicopters or passenger jets, but older light aircraft that are noisy and cause pollution.

The Town Clerk asked if the resident had contacted the CAA. The resident said that the CAA does not receive complaints regarding noise issues. Cllr. Osibogun said that the CAA is responsible for flightpaths.

The resident agreed to send a selection of videos and email trails to the Chair of the Environment Committee for consideration.

370/22 Apologies for absence

Members received apologies from Cllr. Ahmed, Cllr. Davies and Cllr. Willett.

371/22 Declarations of interest

There were none.

372/22 Action report

Members received the report and noted the updated information.

373/22 Budgets

Members received the latest figures.

Cllr. Gateley queried the raise in cemetery rates by 419.2% and the high percentage rises for Friends of groups and Railway Walk. The Town Clerk explained that the rates are being chased for correction and the high percentages are due to awaiting the Heart of England grant which will balance this.

374/22 Bourton Park Green Flag Award

Green Flag award feedback report - Members received and discussed the report. Members **AGREED** the recommendations:

It is recommended that Members note the update and review the recent feedback received on Bourton Park's unsuccessful bid for a Green Flag Award.

To agree for the office to address the recommendations for each section as laid out within the report received from the Green Flag judges and submit a revised Bourton Park Management Plan to Environment Committee on 19th December 2022.

To note that the results of Bourton Park's 2022 park user survey will be used to inform the annual update of the Management Plan.

Members commended the Green Spaces Team for their hard work and considered the option of contacting Buckinghamshire Council to request a copy of their report on the Heartlands for comparison. Members also discussed the possibility of not applying for the Green Flag Award next year.

The Estates Manager informed Members that a report will be brought to the next meeting to look at applications for funding to improve the park, and consideration of whether to concentrate on this rather than the Green Flag Award.

ACTION ESTATES MANAGER

375/22 Chandos Park Street Lighting

Members received, discussed, and noted the report.

Following the concerns raised by a Buckingham University student (public session 20th June 2022), the Estates Manager visited the park to assess the lighting. He found that it was well lit.

The Town Clerk said that there have been incidents in the park with anti-social behaviour and vandalism, but this has not necessarily made the park unsafe. Meetings have taken place with the neighbourhood police who have pursued the perpetrators and a letter of apology was received today.

376/22 Brackley Road cemetery wall renovation proposal

Members received and discussed the report.

It is recommended that Members agree in principle to the proposal outlined below and for the Estates Manager to seek quotations from local builders to:

- Remove the 84m stretch of brick wall and iron railings as outlined in 3.4.
- Renovate the western corner column and include repair of the section's indicated brick wall, coping and iron railings.

A tender pack to be produced, with details brought to a further environment committee for discussion.

The Estates Manager explained that the report relates to the remains of the wall between the old part of the cemetery and the extension. The roots of the pine tree have lifted the wall and the railings were removed for safety. A good solution would be to retain and repair both ends of the wall and the section with the brick pillars, remove the unsafe section and replace it with hedging.

Cllr. O'Donoghue Proposed, Cllr. Gateley Seconded and Members unanimously **AGREED** the recommendations.

Cllr. Osibogun left the meeting at 19:46.

377/22 Access Awareness

Cllr. Stuchbury raised concerns that the Access Group is no longer meeting. The Town Clerk said that this is being followed up with an action from the Town Centre and Events Committee meeting.

378/22 QuickLitterPick update

Members received and discussed the report.

The Estates Manager informed Members that although the closure of the litter picking points is disappointing, the kits are still available for the public to borrow. It was agreed to consider reinstating the stations again in the Spring.

379/22 Railway Walk Conservation Volunteer Group

Members received and discussed the report.

It is recommended that Members note the report and agree to receive £3,000 funding from Heart of Bucks on behalf of the Railway Walk Conservation Volunteers.

Cllr. Stuchbury Proposed, Cllr. Hetherington Seconded, and Members unanimously **AGREED** the recommendation.

380/22 Cemetery fees

Members received and **AGREED** the report regarding the cemetery fees uplift for 2023/24.

It is recommended that members agree to the uplift in the cemetery fees for Brackley Road Cemetery within the table below (see report) to come into place on the 1st April 2023.

Cllr. Gateley Proposed, Cllr. Ralph Seconded and Members unanimously **AGREED** the recommendation.

Cllr. Stuchbury expressed concerns regarding pre-paid plots and rising costs. The Estates Manager explained that costs relating to interment are not pre-paid.

381/22 Climate Emergency Action Plan

Members received and discussed updates to the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The Estates Manager confirmed that the Eco Audit is still being pursued.

Members discussed the possibility of increasing the number of bike racks available in the town, the cost of this and the possibility of putting it forward as a sports and leisure project under s106. It was **AGREED** that the office will investigate s106 options.

Cllr. Gateley reminded Members that Cllr. Whyte is involved in an Electric Vehicle group in Buckingham which offers information and support. **ACTION TOWN CLERK**

382/22 Updates from representatives on Outside Bodies

Members received verbal updates from Councillors.

Cllr. Gateley attended the Rural and Market Towns Group meeting. The notes will be circulated with the minutes. **ACTION COMMITTEE CLERK**

383/22 News releases

384/22 Chair's announcements

Cllr. Schaefer and Cllr. Gateley attended a meeting of the Federation of Local Councils regarding Climate Change. This will be brought to a future meeting.

385/22 **Date of next meeting:** Monday 19th December 2022.

COMMITTEE IN PRIVATE SESSION

Exclusion of Public and Press

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.**

386/22 Bourton Park bridge repairs update

Members received the report and noted the information.

Members **AGREED** the recommendation:

That members note the work that has already been carried out on bridges 3, 4 and 5, along with the work that is still to be carried out on bridge 1.

The Estates Manager explained that a report on bridge 2 will be brought to the Committee at a later date.

387/22 Tingewick Road Green Spaces updates

Members received a verbal update.

Cllr. Hetherington declared an interest.

Cllr. Schaefer Proposed that she and the Town Clerk meet to discuss writing to Barratts Management Committee and seeking the view of Buckinghamshire Council.

Cllr. Stuchbury Seconded. Members **AGREED** unanimously.

ACTION CLLR. SCHAEFER AND THE TOWN CLERK

388/22 Community Centre fire risk assessment

Members received and discussed the report.

Cllr. Stuchbury Proposed, Cllr. Hetherington Seconded and Members unanimously **AGREED** the recommendations.

Cllr. Stuchbury proposed that the Town Council write to the Community Centre Committee and request a copy of their constitution. Cllr. Ralph Seconded. Members unanimously **AGREED.**

ACTION TOWN CLERK

389/22 Proposed 2023/24 budget

389/22.1 Members received a written report from the Town Clerk.

389/22.2 To review and discuss the draft 2023 report.

The Town Clerk explained that this is a draft starting point, based on projections that take into consideration inflation and the substantial increases in the cost of fuel and energy rises.

390/22 New cemetery, maintenance depot and allotments plans and costings

Members received and discussed the report.

It is recommended that Members agree which of the 3 options to recommend to Full Council based on the plans and costs for the new cemetery and allotment site provided in the report.

It is recommended that Members agree to recommend to Full Council to carry out a public consultation on the agreed option as a part of submitting an application to the Public Works Loans Board for the required sum to complete the project.

Cllr. Ralph Proposed Option 2. Cllr. Gateley raised a concern regarding the lack of toilet facilities. Cllr. Ralph withdrew his proposal for Option 2.

Cllr. O'Donoghue Proposed Option 3, Cllr. Gateley Seconded. Members **AGREED** unanimously to recommend Option 3 to Full Council.

The Town Clerk will update the costs to ensure that it is as accurate as possible for Full Council.

ACTION TOWN CLERK

Meeting closed at: 10pm

Chair Date

Rural & Market Towns Group Meeting 11.10.22

The Government's Levelling up Approach/ Rural Cost of Living Crisis

- Ledbury have a campaign for vulnerable/ elderly residents. They have sent a leaflet to all households asking people to watch out for vulnerable neighbours, due to the cost of living crisis. *I wondered whether we could use this or something similar in our newsletter. Hopefully we will receive a copy once the minutes or PowerPoint slides of this meeting are published.*
- **The need to level up rural areas: rural economic regeneration:**

This is a 10 year project with "12 missions"/ indicators of progress.

- **The rural economy** has 500,000 registered businesses , mainly of small/ medium size. 85% aren't land/ agriculture based. Greater digital adoption could add £26bn to the UK economy.
- Wages in rural areas are lower than in urban areas (excluding London). Average wage in Predominantly Rural Areas (PRAs) was £45,500 vs average in Predominantly Urban Areas (PUAs) of £50,900. (May 2022)
- Using the Government white paper, most rural areas are in need of levelling up. Rural lags behind in headline metrics.
- Many current Cabinet Ministers are MPs in rural areas. So this could be an ideal opportunity to push the rural economy agenda. Much is urban centric: e.g. travel to work time, seasonal employment don't feature.
- A **Rural Prosperity Fund** was announced in September. This could provide opportunities for the rural economy.
- Rural areas have the right to, and deserve, better access to services, such as quicker transport , quality education and improved Broadband.
- The **Rural & Market Towns Network** wants the Government to establish a forward looking, properly funded, cross government strategy for rural England.
- Defra defines rural towns as those with a population of 1,000 -35,000.
- ***There is a Market Town questionnaire, which we should return.***
- The **Kovia Report** (June 22) highlighted the **rural cost of living emergency**. Homes in rural areas tend to be less energy efficient. Median wages are 6% lower on average than urban. People in rural areas spend on average 47% of their wages on rent, whereas those in urban areas spend 43%. Food prices are 2% higher (plus the additional cost of transport). 12.3% of disposable income spent on food (9.9% in urban). There is also the issue of fuel poverty.
- **Homelessness:** this is rising in rural areas, due to the lack of affordable housing. There is much hidden homelessness.