



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE
OF AYLESBURY TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
AYLESBURY TOWN HALL, 5 CHURCH STREET, AYLESBURY ON
WEDNESDAY 6 OCTOBER 2021 AT 7.00 p.m.**

Present

Councillors: R. Lloyd (Chairman)
S. Bateman
A. Christensen
T. Dixon
S. Lambert
A. Sherwell

Officers: Mr K Gray (Town Clerk)
Mr M Broughton (Deputy Town Clerk)

One member of the public was in attendance.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES

To receive and note reasons for apologies for absence.

RESOLVED: To receive and accept apologies for absence from Cllrs Summers (prior commitment), S. Morgan (illness) and Willis (work commitments).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive and note any personal or prejudicial interests.

No declarations made.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED: To receive, accept and sign the Minutes of 14 July 2021.

4. MATTERS ARISING

To receive any updates from members or the Clerk

There were no matters to report.

5. COMMITTEE MATTERS

To receive updates from the Chairs of Committees

Planning Committee

In the absence of the Chairman, Cllr Sherwell advised that the Committee had noted Bucks Council's adoption of the Aylesbury Vale Local Plan. Members had also been invited to review the Bucks Council Licensing Policy, but the timeframe offered was severely limited. Committee had expressed some concern over the increasing number of new applications for commercial to

residential coming forward in the town centre - particularly in respect of small flats.

Direct Services Committee

Cllr Lambert, in the absence of the Chairman, provided a summary of the outcomes of the last two meetings of the Committee (8 September and 5 October 2021). The Town Clerk reported that a cemetery gates-person had now been sourced and also updated that work had progressed on remedial works associated with the two chapels. The vacancy for Cemetery Manager had now been filled and the new postholder would be starting on 1 November.

A member indicated that one new and one replacement litter bin were needed at Friarscroft in his ward, this being replacement of a small bin by a larger one near the school. The Town Clerk advised that replacement bins would routinely be provided but that there were budgetary implications on adding new bins as the cost of emptying would be added. The specific matter raised would be dealt with accordingly.

Grants Committee

In the absence of the Chairman Cllr Bateman reported that a meeting had been held recently and it was expected that a streamlined grants application process would be investigated. Unsuccessful applicants were also directed to other potential sources of local funding.

Communities Committee

The Chairman reported that the Parklife event had been thoroughly reviewed at the last meeting and members felt that this year's event had been extremely successful, especially against the backdrop of complying with uncertainties surrounding the pandemic.

Finance Committee

The Chairman indicated that he would report on this under item 10 on the agenda.

6. DEVOLVED SERVICES AGREEMENT 2022

To receive an update from the Town Clerk

The Town Clerk reminded members that a new Agreement was required from April next year but no progress had been possible as yet with Bucks Council. Over the years, additional land areas have been added to the agreement by Bucks Council, but without any additional finances to support the work we do. The Town Clerk has now instructed that no more additional land areas or works are to be added to the current agreement. A new agreement for 2022 needs discussing and deciding on. Recent road shrub/tree work requests were made and we have refused to do the work unless paid additional money to do so - this has been agreed and we have carried out the work as Bucks Council do not have the staff to do this kind of work. Members discussed the situation in some detail and there was a consensus that devolved services needed to be finalised at an early opportunity in order that the Council could plan service provision accordingly. Equally it was recognised that Bucks Council were very unlikely to be able to undertake their range of existing responsibilities if no new devolved services agreement was settled. Reference was also made to a recent communication received from Bucks Council that the Town Council's

contribution to the election expenses (for May 2021) was far and above in excess of that planned and expected and members fully supported the Town Clerk in receiving a line-by-line breakdown of the associated claimed costs.

7. LOCALISM AGENDA/BUCKS COUNCIL

To receive an update from the Town Clerk

The Town Clerk reminded councillors that Bucks Council had decided not to transfer the annual Remembrance Service to the Town Council but had recently suggested the Town Council may wish to take on running the Christmas Lights display in the town centre. The Town Clerk cautioned members that all aspects including infrastructure concerns would need to be fully assessed prior to any decision being subsequently taken to Full Council to proceed with this idea. The Town Clerk would continue to liaise with Bucks Council.

The Town Council, as do other Town and Parish Councils still awaits further discussion from Bucks Council officers in respect to the Localism Agenda and the discussions around transfer of assets and services.

8. AYLESBURY COMMUNITY BOARD

To receive an update from the Leader of the Council and the Town Clerk

Cllr Lloyd informed Committee that he and the Town Clerk had met with representatives of the Aylesbury Community Board (ACB) on 28 September in order to clarify roles and processes. The ACB were not tasked to deliver projects, but fund set up costs and overall project funding, whereas the Town Council can manage and deliver any projects. We discussed how to engage better, work on specific projects and brain-stormed some initial ideas for the ACB to work with the Town Council. There needs to be full commitment to working together and that includes the support of increased precept and budget so the Town Council can take on specific projects initiated and supported by the Community Board.

9. MARKET SQUARE AND KINGSBURY REFURBISHMENT PLANS

To receive an update from the Town Clerk

The Town Clerk reported that there had been recent organisational changes at Bucks Council which might impact on the refurbishment plans for Market Square and Kingsbury. Despite this project's longevity there is a clear need for a plan to ensure future maintenance and repairs for the new public realm spaces. The lead officer at Bucks Council, on this project is leaving the council in April 2022.

10. BUDGET/PRECEPT 2022/23

To receive an update from the Chairman of Finance Committee and the Town Clerk

Cllr Christensen indicated that work had recently got underway to consider the budget and precept for the next financial year and he drew attention to a number of elements which were obligatory, for example, staff costs, the increase in employer National Insurance contributions, heavy machinery leasing costs and a switch to using white diesel as red diesel could not continue to be used going forward. Whilst the approach taken to budgeting over recent years had been somewhat conservative, it was recognised that the level of general reserves were on or about standing at the legal minimum and if the Council wished to meet its aspirations then a revaluation of the precept levied in 2022/23 needed to be undertaken. The possibility of rate-capping by central

government was also recognised and thus any delay in raising additional funding through precept could represent a future risk to the Council's operations.

11. GARDENWAY AND AYLESBURY GARDEN TOWN PROJECTS

To receive an update from the Town Clerk

The Town Clerk reported that budgets had not yet been set and a staff review was ongoing at Bucks Council. Update meetings are being planned for parish councils.

12. HS2/TOWN STADIUM PROJECT

To receive an update from the Leader of the Council

Cllr Lloyd reported on a meeting with HS2, Ernest Cook Trust and Coldharbour Parish Council on 30 September in respect of the HS2 works in the area as well as the Stadium project. The matter of possible flooding was discussed at that meeting as well as the Environment Agency plans showing flood plains and risk areas of flooding. Discussion also centred around the concerns of additional traffic and the impact on the town and local communities if additional traffic lights were installed.

In relation to the stadium project, the extent of land acquirement was discussed with the lead designer and a land agent, with an indicative deadline of next month. Members discussed drawing on existing stadium design plans and Cllr Lloyd also reported that the Bucks Sports Academy had expressed interest in being seven days a week user of such a stadium.

13. FREDA ROBERTS CUP

To consider a new Council award in the name of Freda Roberts, possibly for the Best Community Volunteer of the Year

The Town Clerk reminded members that this matter had been raised at the last meeting of Full Council, when there had been agreement that a suitable form of commemoration for the late Freda Roberts be explored. It was possible that such an award could be given to an individual or a community group. A selection panel would need to be established along with a suitable judging criterion. Cllr Lambert suggested a bursary as a worthy addition to the silver cup and this also garnered general support from members. It was recognised that the Roberts family would need to be contacted to ensure any such commemoration was supported by them. It was agreed that the Town Clerk be tasked to devise a suitable criterion and submit it to the next meeting of the Committee.

Cllr Lloyd also reminded Committee that there was presently a vacancy for an Honorary Freeman/woman of the Town. The Town Clerk advised any members wishing to propose possible candidates to ensure they read the relevant policy document and he agreed to circulate this to members accordingly. There was no urgency to fill the vacancy at the present time and it was agreed that the vacancy should not be filled just because it is available.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 26 January 2022

The meeting closed at 8.52 p.m.

Signed: _____ Date: _____