



Minutes of the meeting of the MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL held on TUESDAY
13 JUNE 2006 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillor Carstens (Mayor)
Councillor Barry (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors Bristow, Brock, Burke, Campbell, Sandra Clark, Stephen Clark, Coventry, Crooks, Dransfield, Drewett, Eastman, Eaton, Edwards, Exon, Ferrans, Fraser, Geary, Gerrella, E Henderson, I Henderson, Holroyd, Hopkins, Hoyle, Irons, Jury, Latham, Legg, Lloyd, Long, D McCall, I McCall, McKenzie, Miles, Morris, Morsley, Pendry, Seymour, Snell, Tallack, Tamagnini-Barbosa, Tunney, Wharton, Williams and Wilson

The following Honorary Alderman was also present:

Alderman Howell

Apologies: Councillors Box, Butler-Ellis, Carruthers, Mabbott, Pugh and Aldermen Ellis and Saunders

Also Present: 8 members of the public

CL20 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Councillors Bristow, Sandra Clark, Gerrella and Tamagnini-Barbosa declared prejudicial interests in Item 5(b) [Health Cuts] as employees or spouses of an employees of the National Health Service.

Councillors E Henderson and I Henderson declared personal interests in Item 5(b) [Health Cuts] as Councillor E Henderson was a Non-Executive Director of the Primary Care Trust and Councillor I Henderson as his spouse.

CL21 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

- (a) Question from Councillor Tunney to Councillor Crooks:
"In respect of the Council's accounts for the year to 31 March 2005:
- (a) how many objections have been made by electors;
 - (b) what are those objections;
 - (c) how much is involved per topic;

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- (d) when will the objections be resolved;
- (e) what outcomes are predicted; and
- (f) what implications are there for current and future years?"

Answer from Councillor Crooks:

"There were two objections to the 2004/05 Statement of Accounts. These were:

- (a) to the cessation of the S136 arrangements and the consequential additional expense on the rural parishes (as well as the objection, this has already been subject to a report from the Audit Commission at Olney Town Council's request and has also been referred to the Ombudsman). The total amount involved is £430k. This is the impact on rural parishes from the cessation of S136. Overall there was an a nil net impact on parishes with the costs being apportioned via Council Tax.
- (b) The Special Parking account. Numerous queries were raised as part of this objection, the main issue being what the surplus is spent on, and also the inclusion of certain types of expenditure within the accounts, with the amount in dispute being circa £1.1m. This is again with the Audit Commission who are considering the Legal Department's response to the issues raised. The matter is complicated by a change in legislation at the latter end of the 2004/05 financial year that is being assessed as part of the objection.

It was anticipated that the S136 issue would be resolved by the end of June, but this may be optimistic. The District Auditor wrote to the Council on 15 May summarising the facts as he saw them and seeking clarification on these. The Council replied last week.

The Special Parking Account objection may take longer. It is now with the Audit Commission to review our legal interpretation. There hasn't as yet been any feedback on likely outcomes from the Audit Commission.

Concerning the impact on future years:

If the S136 objection is upheld, this would mean revisiting its cessation, and putting the costs of landscaping, etc, back onto Council Tax. In effect, the apportionment of costs would revert back to how it was pre S136.

With the Special Parking account, it would mean reassessing what is included in the account and the procedures/legality of spending the surplus."

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Councillor Tunney asked a supplementary question, which Councillor Crooks undertook to answer in writing.

(b) Question from Councillor Irons to Councillor Williams:

“The previous Cabinet Member for Transport gave an assurance to Councillor Miles that a small section of quality bus stops on Route 4 would be in this year’s budget. I have subsequently received a letter saying this is not the case. Could you please explain this discrepancy?”

Answer from Councillor Williams:

“First of all I have to ascertain that there is a discrepancy before I can explain it. In order to do that, I will need to discuss this with officers, and I will be more than happy to respond in writing within seven days.”

(c) Question from Councillor Morris to Councillor I McCall:

“During my many hours on the doorsteps of electors in Linford South, I regularly heard from residents that we must keep the successful grid roads in Milton Keynes. As my colleagues and I were elected on a clear Conservative mandate to keep those grid roads, I would like to ask if you could confirm that you fully support our policies to keep these grid roads; that you are against the proposed downgrading of V10 Brickhill Street; and that you support the continuation of grid roads in the new development?”

Answer from Councillor I McCall:

“The Liberal Democrats do support the continuation of the grid roads. This is a key part of our policy. The grid roads in the existing new City, including the V10 Brickhill Street, where I personally have fought on the Oakgrove Steering Group to try and get rid of the proposals to downgrade the grid road. On the issue of the new areas, that is where our policy will diverge because we have accepted that, in order to make public transport viable in Milton Keynes, we need to ensure that the designs of the new areas will enable public transport to be more economically viable, which the current grid system does not. The policy in the new expansion areas on the east and west flanks, is to have so called city streets, which are a little different from grid roads.”

Councillor Morris asked a supplementary question, which was answered by Councillor I McCall.

(d) Question from Councillor Holroyd to Councillor Burke:

“As a parent of a person intending to attend the Take That concert, I am disturbed by accounts in the paper that at a recent concert, food being taken in by attendees was confiscated in favour of expensive catering. Can you tell me

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if you are going to take all measures possible to ensure that this kind of thing can't happen?"

Answer from Councillor Burke:

"I am sure that we are the Licensing Authority for The Bowl. We need to find out whether there has been a misunderstanding between the organisers and the attendees. We need to find out why that's happened."

Councillor Holroyd asked a supplementary question, which Councillor Burke undertook to answer in writing.

(e) Question from Councillor Brock to Councillor Williams:

"While I understand that you are fairly new to your role, I hope you will be able to provide both myself and the residents of Olney with an answer. When the need for a traffic calming scheme next to the Olney Campus has been known about for over two years, why is it that only a few months before the school opens, that the consultation project has started?"

Answer from Councillor Williams:

"I apologise profusely for the fact that I am not going to give you an answer this evening. I am aware of the planned traffic calming, and I have received many e-mails on this subject from a variety of people. I have, therefore, requested a full briefing on the issue so I can personally understand the concerns of residents, and respond to those who have written to me. After the briefing has been held, which will be within the next fortnight, I will respond to you properly and with some care to detail."

Councillor Brock asked a supplementary question, which Councillor Williams undertook to answer in writing

(f) Question from Councillor Morsley to Councillor Geary:

"Can something be done about the retrospective planning applications for Houses in Multiple Occupation? This is of great concern to people."

Answer from Councillor Geary:

"I know Houses in Multiple Occupation have been the bugbear for Development Control now for about four years, with the current guidelines that are there. They have also been something which Members of the Development Control Committee have struggled with to some degree. This is something that needs looking at. There are clear guidelines laid out at the moment as to how these are granted. If you are not fully satisfied with these guidelines, my suggestion is that you submit a motion to the Development Control Committee, in order that Members have a chance to look at it and try to see if there is anything we can do to accommodate your concerns."

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- (g) Question from Councillor Edwards to Councillor Williams:
- Councillor Edwards asked that where advisory speed limits were displayed on grid roads, that the speed limit be either made compulsory, or abolished in favour of the national limit, so as to avoid possible confusion.
- Answer from Councillor Williams:
- “If there is some discrepancy that you are aware of, and I clearly am not, please elucidate.”
- Councillor Edwards asked a supplementary question, which was answered by Councillor Williams.
- (h) Question from Councillor Dransfield to Councillor I McCall:
- “I am confused about the statement you made about grid roads. You said that the existing grid roads are wonderful and you are going to keep them including the V10 Brickhill Street, yet the new grid roads on the outer reaches of Milton Keynes are not going to be there. Why are you not taking notice of the recent election results that my colleague referred to, which clearly denies the Liberal Democrat policy on removing, or not putting in, grid roads on the outer reaches of Milton Keynes. In fact, why are you not taking more of a Conservative approach and actually looking to enhance the grid roads towards the middle of the City, to take the extra traffic. Why won't you accept that people have come to Milton Keynes because they want to use their cars, and that you can't force public transport on people who don't want it?”
- Answer from Councillor I McCall:
- “The Liberal Democrats are not trying to force public transport on people who don't want it; we are trying to provide a viable alternative for people. At the moment, about 20% of the people of Milton Keynes do not have access to a car and, as the public transport system is no good, they find it difficult to access employment, to get to Doctor's Surgeries, shops and other facilities that you and I have no problem about because you and I have a car. That is not fair on disadvantaged people and it is not environmentally sustainable. With the growth of Milton Keynes, it won't be sustainable in the long term. What we are trying to do is to make sure that, by actions we take in the new developments on the east and west flanks, we prevent the existing grid roads system coming to a gridlock in a few years time.”
- Councillor Dransfield asked a supplementary question, which was answered by Councillor I McCall.

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- (i) Question from Councillor Tunney to Councillor Crooks:

“In respect of Page 16 Para 57 of the Audit Letter of January 2006 (considered at Audit Panel on 8 March 2006) what exactly were the ‘material misstatements’ - analysed by subject and amounts?”

Answer from Councillor Crooks:

“Unlike commercial accounts, local government must report movement from accounts sent for audit and adjustment of any items found in the audit. If items are corrected then accounts are not qualified, but the aim is for the authority to improve its processes to ensure that future year accounts do not have the same type of issues.

For 2004/05 the Council had a materiality level of £3m. This means that the financial value of any issues raised during the audit if they are not unlawful but merely misstated or incorrect accounting treatment, can be left unaltered and not affect the opinion on the accounts as long as in aggregate they are less than the £3m. The main reason why the objections did not prevent the closure of the accounts, was because they are under the materiality limit.

The material misstatements that the Audit Letter of January 2006 on the 2004/05 accounts refers to include (a summary of the larger material items):

- (a) Balance Sheet corrections to the Schools' Bank account figures. The initial accounts submitted did not reconcile to the school bank accounts by £2.4m. Manual adjustments were required to ensure that the General Ledger reconciled to the bank accounts.
- (b) Balance Sheet corrections to Capital Accruals (circa £2m) and Capital Financing (£1.4m).
- (c) A Balance Sheet correction to the NNDR accounts. That was £341,000 and it was the Council who advised the Audit Commission of this update.
- (d) A Balance Sheet adjustment between reserves - a correction of the classification between earmarked and capital.
- (e) A change in HRA subsidy provision, impacting on the Consolidated Revenue Account and the Balance Sheet (£250,000).
- (f) On the Consolidated Revenue Account, a correction on the accounting treatment of leasing (£197,000).

The misstatements are what the Audit Commission advise need amending in the accounts during or after the audit.

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'Materiality' was agreed between the Council and the Auditors as any item of c £250,000 upwards in the balance sheet or Consolidated Revenue Account, and I've listed all those that fell into this category."

Councillor Tunney asked a supplementary question, which was answered by Councillor Crooks.

- (j) Question from Councillor Miles to Councillor Burke:

Councillor Miles asked that, following on from the question from Councillor Holroyd about catering at the Bowl, that the issue of water being allowed to be taken into large scale events be included in the written answer to Councillor Holroyd's question.

Councillor Miles also suggested that the Cabinet was responsible for setting licensing policy for the Licensing Committee to implement.

Answer from Councillor Burke:

"Absolutely, no problem, I understand the issue. I know somebody who works at Tesco and he couldn't believe the amount of water being shifted on the day."

CL22

HEALTH CUTS

Councillor I Henderson moved the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor Drewett:

"That this Council

1. Notes with concern that NHS services for Milton Keynes are facing cuts of over £5 million to bail out health trusts elsewhere, including:
 - (a) reductions in mental health day services, which directly impact on the Council's social care services and budgets;
 - (b) the Closure of the Fraser Day Centre; and
 - (c) significant budget reductions at Milton Keynes General Hospital;
2. Notes that these cuts come despite much-vaunted real increases in NHS funding;
3. Notes that, in accordance with the Health Scrutiny Functions Regulations 2002, the service implications of the cuts will be considered by the appropriate Scrutiny Panel at its first available meeting;
4. Believes that:

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- (a) The Secretary of State for Health should not be forcing Milton Keynes Primary Care Trust to make cuts to cover financial deficits created elsewhere;
 - (b) The NHS is over-centralised with too much national target-setting;
 - (c) Greater local accountability would result in improved services in line with local priorities and better value for money;
5. Resolves to write to:
- (a) The Secretary of State for Health, asking her to halt the proposed cuts to our local health services; and
 - (b) Local Members of Parliament, urging them to support greater local accountability in the NHS.”

Councillor Long moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Campbell and on which a recorded vote was requested:

- “1. That all the words after ‘That this Council’ be deleted and replaced with the words:

‘notes...

- (i) that the Joint Health and Social Care Board (JHSCB) met on the 25 May 2006 and discussed the financial position of the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the importance of the developing relationship between health and social care including opportunities for joint commissioning, the creation of a joint venture to deliver community health and social care services in Milton Keynes and the growing importance of home based services and pooled resources;
- (ii) that the financial position is not clear and this is why the JHSCB at its meeting on the 25 May 2006 welcomed the idea of discussing its financial position with the Council’s Housing and Social Care Policy Development Committee at a future meeting, an area of work agreed by the Committee at its meeting on the 2 June 2006;
- (iii) that the Fraser Day Centre is currently running at only 50% capacity and that it is proposed, by the PCT, to make two existing city wide services relating to
 - (a) older people’s rehabilitation post-hospital stay; and
 - (b) the falls prevention work,primarily focused upon a home based approach to care and support;

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- (iv) that the new base for the rehabilitation and falls prevention services at the Bletchley Community Hospital offers opportunity to make the existing service more accessible and with improved value for money;
 - (v) that the concerns relating to Mental Health Services, a joint Council and PCT service with pooled budgets, needs further consideration with service users as the proposals in the Sainsbury Centre report are implemented; and
 - (vi) that since the Labour Government was elected in 1997 spending by 2007/08 will have trebled with significant improvements in waiting times and a range of more accessible services. This is reflected in local PCT services and in the PCT's strategic aims which include moving more services from hospital to the community and where possible home based services.
2. That the Council agrees to:
- (i) open discussions with the PCT on how the Council can financially help the PCT to improve services and overcome financial challenges in areas of common service provision, especially mental health and older people's services; and
 - (ii) ask the Cabinet Member responsible for Health and Social Care (Councillor I Henderson) to join with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Council's Health Scrutiny Panel (Councillors Stephen Clark and Irons) and the Social Care and Housing Policy Development Committee (Councillors Campbell and Hoyle) to form a Task Force to oversee the development of appropriate financial support and service improvement including issues of joint commissioning and new forms of service delivery.

The voting on the amendment was as follows:

FOR: Councillors Campbell, Coventry, Edwards, Holroyd, Irons, Legg, Lloyd, Long, McKenzie, Miles, Morsley, Pendry and Wilson (13)

AGAINST: Councillors Barry, Brock, Burke, Carstens, Stephen Clark, Crooks, Dransfield, Drewett, Eastman, Eaton, Exon, Ferrans, Fraser, Geary, E Henderson, I Henderson, Hopkins, Hoyle, Jury, Latham, D McCall, I McCall, Morris, Seymour, Snell, Tallack, Tunney, Wharton and Williams (29)

The amendment was declared lost.

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A recorded vote on the original motion was requested. The voting was as follows:

FOR: Councillors Barry, Brock, Burke, Carstens, Stephen Clark, Crooks, Dransfield, Drewett, Eastman, Eaton, Exon, Ferrans, Fraser, Geary, E Henderson, I Henderson, Hopkins, Hoyle, Jury, Latham, D McCall, I McCall, Morris, Seymour, Snell, Tallack, Tunney, Wharton and Williams (29)

AGAINST: Councillors Campbell, Coventry, Edwards, Holroyd, Irons, Legg, Lloyd, Long, McKenzie, Miles, Morsley, Pendry and Wilson (13)

The motion was declared carried.

The Council heard from two members of the public on this issue.

RESOLVED -

That this Council:

1. Notes with concern that NHS services for Milton Keynes are facing cuts of over £5 million to bail out health trusts elsewhere, including:
 - (a) reductions in mental health day services, which directly impact on the Council's social care services and budgets;
 - (b) the Closure of the Fraser Day Centre; and
 - (c) significant budget reductions at Milton Keynes General Hospital;
2. Notes that these cuts come despite much-vaunted real increases in NHS funding;
3. Notes that, in accordance with the Health Scrutiny Functions Regulations 2002, the service implications of the cuts will be considered by the appropriate Scrutiny Panel at its first available meeting;
4. Believes that:
 - (a) The Secretary of State for Health should not be forcing Milton Keynes Primary Care Trust to make cuts to cover financial deficits created elsewhere;
 - (b) The NHS is over-centralised with too much national target-setting;
 - (c) Greater local accountability would result in improved services in line with local priorities and better value for money;
5. Resolves to write to:

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- (a) The Secretary of State for Health, asking her to halt the proposed cuts to our local health services; and
- (b) Local Members of Parliament, urging them to support greater local accountability in the NHS.

(Councillors Bristow, Sandra Clark, Gerrella and Tamagnini-Barbosa declared prejudicial interests in this Item and left the meeting taking no part in the discussion, or voting thereon.)

(Councillors E Henderson and I Henderson declared personal interests in this Item.)

CL23

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2006/07

The Council considered a revised Calendar of Meetings for 2006/07, which reflected the new meeting structure agreed at the Annual Council Meeting.

RESOLVED -

That the revised Calendar of Meetings be adopted, subject to:

- (a) a meeting of the Audit Committee taking place on 22 June 2006, rather than 10 July 2006;
- (b) the meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel on 20 June 2006 starting at 6.00 pm;
- (c) a meeting of the Performance Review Panel taking place on 19 July 2006, rather than 6 July 2006;
- (d) a meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel taking place on 1 August 2006, rather than 27 July 2006;
- (e) a meeting of the External Scrutiny Panel taking place on 31 October 2006, rather than 24 October 2006; and
- (f) a meeting of the Social Care and Housing Policy Development Committee taking place on 5 September 2006, rather than 25 July 2006.

CL24

QUARTERLY REPORTS ON SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS

The Council noted that the special urgency provisions under Access to Information Procedure Rule 17.3 had been used once in the period March 2006 to May 2006 and that the item related to a decision taken by the Cabinet, relating to 'Bletchley Leisure Centre Redevelopment and Town Centre Living Project'

THE MAYOR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9.27 PM