



Minutes of the meeting of the MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL held on TUESDAY
13 MARCH 2007 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillor Carstens (Mayor)
Councillor Barry (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors Box, Bristow, Brock, Burke, Butler-Ellis, Campbell, Carruthers, 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, Lloyd, Long, D McCall, I McCall, McKenzie, Miles, Morris, Morsley, Pendry, Pugh, Seymour, Snell, Tallack, Tamagnini-Barbosa, Tunney, Wharton, Williams and Wilson

Apologies: Councillor Mabbott and Aldermen Ellis and Howell

Also Present: 20 members of the public

CL133 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 13 February 2007 and 27 February 2007, be approved and signed by the Mayor as correct records.

CL134 ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Craig Pickering

The Mayor, on behalf of the Council congratulated Craig Pickering on his recent success in getting a silver medal in the 60m final at European Indoor Athletics Championships in Birmingham.

(b) Central Milton Keynes Swimming Club

The Mayor also congratulated Greg Vinden, Adam Van Lockven, Matthew Masters and Ben Flaherty and the coaching staff of the Central Milton Keynes Swimming Club on the swimmers achieving national qualifying times.

CL135 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(a) Question from Ms G Rolfe to Councillor E Henderson (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Community and Economy):

“The parents of Giles Brook School children have great faith in the teaching staff of the School and are greatly concerned

that morale has dropped so significantly, because of the ongoing delays in resolving the issues, that some of the teachers are considering moving on. What is the Council doing to ensure that the teachers feel rewarded for their hard work and stay to see us through what will be another difficult year?"

Answer from Councillor E Henderson:

"Let me say first of all that I entirely accept that there are difficulties for the teaching staff and indeed the other staff at Giles Brook. They have been doing and continue to do an absolutely magnificent job and we thank them very much for that, as indeed do the Governors of the School. Both the Governors and the Council are extremely keen to do everything that we possibly can to avoid any loss of those staff during these present difficult times. The Governors, in consultation with the Council, agreed a package of bonuses which was agreed at a meeting of the Governing Body last Thursday evening, which I was also invited to attend. The effect will be that all teachers will receive two bonus payments, one immediately and one later this year. This is wholly exceptional to the best of my knowledge and belief. This has never been done and there have been difficult circumstances in other places, one thinks of the fire at Radcliffe, and the asbestos problems at Leon for example, some years back, but this is a wholly exceptional situation and we have therefore taken wholly exceptional measures. The first payment, at the Governors' suggestion, is going to be paid from School funds and the second payment will be paid by the Council."

(b) Question from Ms M Wyatt to Councillor E Henderson (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Community and Economy):

"Will you continue to provide Giles Brook School with financial support for the extra staff until the children return to their classrooms?"

Answer from Councillor E Henderson:

"The short answer to that is yes, but I will elaborate.

I should just say one other thing in relation to the previous question, if I may, which I forgot to say and that is the decision of the Governing Body on Thursday evening was conveyed to the staff on Friday morning who were extremely appreciative of the gesture which was being made.

Very early on in this difficult saga the Council asked the Headteacher if there were any ways in which it was possible to support the School with some extra staffing to compensate, if you like, for the fact that some children had lost some of a day of teaching and to provide more adult input. The Headteacher suggested that two things might be useful. One

would be that the classroom assistants, who were employed at that time only in the mornings, could stay in the afternoons, which the Council agreed to support financially and was supported by all the staff concerned. Secondly, the Headteacher suggested that it would be helpful to provide some supply cover to give the Deputy Head more time to work with Teachers in the classrooms. This is also happening and both measures will continue to happen until such time as the School gets back to normal.”

- (c) Question from Ms S Wood to Councillor E Henderson (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Community and Economy):

“The Portacabins are already getting too warm, so will the Council install air conditioning, or will the children continue to suffer yet another summer with the unbearable heat due to the poor ventilation?”

Answer from Councillor E Henderson:

“The advice that we were given, and continue to receive, in relation to the Portacabins is that the rate of air exchanged when they are occupied is up to and beyond the normal standard which is expected of a classroom situation. Although that was the case, I am aware, and I think it was on Tuesday or Wednesday last week which was a relatively warm day for the time of year, that there was a feeling that particularly in the temporary classroom which is used as an IT suite that the temperature did get rather high, also that the temperature in all of the temporary classrooms caused some concern. On Thursday this was brought to my attention by the Governing Body and on Friday I asked the relevant technical people here at the Council to arrange a meeting with the school as soon as possible and I believe that it is being fixed, or at least attempting to be fixed, for next week. This will enable a proper assessment to be made of the issues. It is conceivable, and it has been suggested that it could be, that if the windows were to be able to be opened fully the air circulation would be adequate, but that may be a problem because of the restraints on the windows to avoid access from outside. However, it may be that some way of dealing with the opening of the windows will be a solution. It has been agreed that, first of all, solar film would be put on to the windows in all of the temporary classrooms, whatever else may be done, and also that air conditioning will be put into the IT room because clearly with the equipment in there that tends to generate more heat. Whether more than that is required remains for the technical assessment and discussion with the School hopefully next week.”

Ms Wood asked a supplementary question which was answered by Councillor E Henderson.

- (d) Question from Ms L Matthews to Councillor E Henderson (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Community and Economy):

“Why has it taken the Buildings Research Establishment over five months to produce a report? Why did the Council agree to accept these timescales and then not ensure that the Building Research Establishment kept to their committed dates?”

Ms Matthews asked a supplementary question which was answered by Councillor E Henderson.

- (e) Question from Mr M Parris to Councillor E Henderson (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Community and Economy):

“I understand that the Buildings Research Establishment report covers the classrooms. What about the main administration building? Will the Building Research Establishment also be asked to produce a report on that?”

- (f) Question from Mrs A Parris to Councillor E Henderson (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Community and Economy):

“How soon after receiving the report from the Buildings Research Establishment will work commence?”

Response to questions (d) – (f) from Councillor E Henderson:

“The Buildings Research Establishment is a highly reputable national body. The Council agreed with the Governors, having taken advice from the local Member of Parliament who in turn took advice from the Department for Education and Skills, that the Buildings Research Establishment should be employed as a completely independent and expert organisation that would be able to advise if there were residual problems not yet identified with the Giles Brook School buildings which required attention.

In answer to the second question, which is the quickest one to answer the answer is, yes, the Buildings Research Establishment are commissioned to look at the whole of the construction which Gleasons put up, all and every aspect of it.

In answer to the first question, to be fair to the Buildings Research Establishment it was only just before Christmas that this phase of the operation commenced, once the original problem with the beams had been identified and a solution found and the work to put that right was well underway. It was only at that point that the Governors and the Council felt it was right to bring the further assurance of the Buildings Research Establishment into the equation and it was agreed for them to be engaged just before Christmas, so to be fair to them it has actually only been two and a half months that they have been working on it. We met and had an interim report from the lead officer at the Buildings Research Establishment on 27 February, just about two weeks ago, at which I pressed

him very hard on what he thought the best and worst case scenarios would be for him to complete his work. He assured us that it would be between two weeks or just over two weeks at best which takes us more or less to today and four weeks at worst. We have to make sure we get a full, adequate and proper report so that we are absolutely sure it is right. He is clearly running into the longer period rather than the shorter period. I very much hope that it will not be longer than four weeks, but we cannot be sure and we are pressing very hard to make sure he does it as quickly as he can, consistent with making sure that we absolutely understand any further problems that there may be.

In relation to the last question we wanted to be reasonably clear from the Buildings Research Establishment that there were no really major hidden problems with the construction of the school before we started doing any work. I mean you could imagine a doomsday scenario, which I am happy to say does not appear to be the case, where there was something so fundamentally wrong that we would have to start again. So I believe it would have been inappropriate to have commissioned other work until we knew that was not the case. The Project Manager who is going to organise the work has been appointed for about a month now and he has been working up packages of work that we already know about that can be done, and has already been through a process of identifying a contractor and so on and so forth. I cannot be precise but I am very hopeful that during the Easter holidays some of the work will get underway. You can be sure that nobody more than me, the rest of my colleagues, the Council as a whole, and everybody else associated with this wants to get the whole job sorted just as quickly as we possibly can, but we can only proceed as fast as we can proceed, if you see what I mean.”

CL136

CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION – ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 21.2, the Council noted that this item had stood adjourned since the meeting of the Council on 27 February 2007 (Minute CL132 refers), the Mayor having moved and the Deputy Mayor seconded the following motion:

“That the revised Council Procedure Rule 1 be adopted”.

On being put to the vote the motion, as amended, was declared carried by acclamation.

RESOLVED –

That the revised Council Procedure Rule 1, as set out as an **Annex** to these Minutes, be adopted.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

- (a) Question from Councillor Long to Councillor I Henderson (Cabinet Member for Social Care Housing and Health):

“Can Councillor Henderson please outline what progress she has made to implement Choice Based Lettings locally?”

Answer from Councillor I Henderson:

“Choice Based Lettings is a Government guidance that authorities should be offering tenants' choice at the point of which they are being offered a tenancy. The Council is doing what we call an options interview with all homeless people and all people who approach the Council. At the point at which they are being offered a home, they are given a choice. They are actually shown all the available properties that there are at that point in time and if they are going to be homeless in two weeks' time what will be available in two weeks' time and so on. That is real time choice based lettings which actually works for individuals. In other authorities where they are doing a huge type of exercise which is a bit like an estate agent where a 1,000 people are circulated the information and 999 of them are thoroughly disappointed as only one of them will get the home, has shown to be actually wasteful both in resources and in disappointing an awful lot of people and in raising expectations. My understanding is that at this point in time the Department for Communities and Local Government is perfectly content with what we are doing.”

Councillor Long asked a supplementary question, which was answered by Councillor I Henderson.

- (b) Question from Councillor Hoyle to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Transport and Planning):

“You recently gave your approval for a cul-de-sac in Knowhill to be named after Sir Frank Whittle, the well know inventor of the jet engine. However, you proposed a condition that the part of the name that indicated that he had been honoured by the Queen for his invention be omitted in other words that the cul-de-sac be called Frank Whittle Close rather than Sir Frank Whittle Close. Does this mean that you intend to petition Her Majesty the Queen for the removal of Sir Frank Whittle's knighthood and if so, on what grounds?”

Answer from Councillor Williams:

”First of all I gave no approval for any name. As the Head of Democratic Services has already pointed out to you, this was not a decision made by any individual Cabinet Member to what the name of a road, close, street, avenue etc should be. The decision is taken in consultation with the local Members, the Town Council and it is down finally to the judgment of the relevant Council Officer. So I could neither approve nor

disapprove. I just voiced an opinion when I was asked the question. Secondly, you insist that I imposed a condition that removed the word 'Sir' from the road name in question. I can neither impose or not impose a condition. Once again, I would point out that the Head of Democratic Services has already elucidated to you that the road name is a judgement for an officer to make based on the information and advice received from Members, Cabinet Members and Parish and Town Councils. Therefore, I firstly corrected the errors you have made in the hope that when it comes out in the Press, the Press will address it more accurately than you have. Secondly, I will not be petitioning the Queen for the removal of the word 'Sir' from the gentleman's name. I believe that if he has so been honoured it would not be right for me or any other person to attempt to remove that. I could just advise you, as I advised all three of the Ward Councillors of that area, to put in their suggestions as to what the name of that particular Close should be. Those suggestions will be examined and looked at by officers of this Council and the relevant officer will then make a decision based on the information received."

Councillor Hoyle asked a supplementary question, which was answered by Councillor Williams.

- (c) Question from Councillor Wilson to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Transport and Planning):

"Will you now confirm that the Capital Appraisal Scheme drawn up by officers for pedestrian crossing access at the V7 Saxon Street between Coffee Hall and Eaglestone received 33 points in the officers' appraisal, which should have given it a high priority in the capital programme, but that you decided not to approve such capital provision, thereby endangering the lives of a significant number of people who find they have to cross the road at that point? Incidentally this is the very same location where Barry Fraser sadly lost his life 2-3 years ago when I exposed the frailties of your predecessor in not giving us the truth on the speed limit fiasco at that time?"

Answer from Councillor Williams:

"I suspected this question might arise and therefore I brought with me the master copy of the appraisal form in order to confirm or deny the information that Councillor Wilson has alluded to. No, I did not turn down an appraisal that earned 33 points and made it therefore a priority. I looked at an appraisal that had only 26 points clearly indicated on the front of the form. 26 points meant that it was in fact amongst many appraisals that had to be looked at in order that some would receive finance from the Capital Budget and some that would not because of the limitations on the availability of capital funding. In addition I will also read from the report. It says 'the implementation of this facility would require a change in

Council policy with regard to on-grade crossings on grid road networks'. Mr Mayor, it is my belief that if I am to approve something that would require a change in Council policy that I, as a representative of the Members of this Council, should not do so without their approval. I have, therefore, sought to find a mechanism whereby this particular appraisal should go to the relevant Policy Development Committee in order for them to decide whether it would be justified in changing Council policy in allowing this one appraisal through and that is the situation where we are at this present time."

Councillor Wilson asked a supplementary question, which was answered by Councillor Williams.

- (d) Question from Councillor Dransfield to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Transport and Planning):

"Have you or anyone at the Council written to any of the owners or operators of outer City Centre car parks on the subject of introducing charging on those car parks and will you voluntarily release copies of any such communications?"

Answer from Councillor Williams:

"I have never written to anybody, and have never asked an officer to write to anybody. However, if an officer of this Council, or my predecessor, has written to somebody I will, of course, gladly release that information. Councillor Dransfield and I have had many discussions at the Parking Sub-Group about this issue and it is quite clear that there is an issue about out of town car parking and whether the owners would want to charge for that parking. I will release whatever papers he believes there are about the subject."

- (e) Question from Councillor Brock to Councillor I McCall (Leader of the Council):

"At the February Meeting of the Managers' Assembly a report called the MK Strategic Review was circulated. Under the title 'Community Engagement' the concluding paragraph reads 'community engagement is time and resource consuming which is difficult when faced with the tight timescales of the Growth Agenda. MKC Members' desire to involve the community in shaping its own future is therefore a frustration in the imperative for speedy and efficient delivery of growth'. Do you support this statement?"

Answer from Councillor I McCall:

"No, I do not agree with the sentiment behind that and I have never seen that paper before and it comes as a complete surprise to me. I fully support the community being consulted on growth and I am always making it clear in everything I write or say to officers, or write on this issue, that it is really

important that we take the people of Milton Keynes with us as we grow the City.”

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

- (f) Question from Councillor I Henderson to Councillor Long (Leader of the Labour Group):

"Two Council meetings ago you stood up and asked me whether I would review the Council's housing allocation policy because it was illegal. I replied that I would certainly be prepared to look at it if I knew which part of it was illegal. You could not tell me at the time, and you undertook to give me some details on which bit of it you reckoned to be illegal. I have yet to hear, or to receive any information from you and I would like to know whether indeed you have any such information, or whether you were simply showing off?"

Answer from Councillor Long:

“The first thing I will say is that I will certainly give Councillor Henderson the information far more quickly than Councillor Crooks gave me the information he promised me the following morning at the budget meeting. My belief is that the allocations policy of the Council, from what I understand of it, is very much in question as to whether it meets the legal requirements set out in Section 167 of The Housing Act 1996 and I certainly have questions about whether it meets the requirements in The Homelessness Act 2002. I accept your earlier point in the evening that it is guidance and not statute, but it is still something that you should have regard to. I suspect the new guidance also raises serious issues about the legality of the Council's so called Allocations Policy and by allocations I am talking about the Choice Based Lettings system.

Councillor I Henderson asked a supplementary question, which was answered by Councillor Long.

- (g) Question from Councillor Jury to Councillor I McCall (Leader of the Council):

“Can the Leader explain the failure of Sir Bob Reid to deliver the 2010 student games to Milton Keynes as Sir Bob so publicly promised at External Scrutiny?”

Answer from Councillor I McCall:

“I believe that it was actually the Council that was fronting this up and was the subject of some debate at an External Scrutiny Committee. I do not feel able to write to him and complain about Milton Keynes not getting the Games because it was actually the Council that was fronting up the bid. So I do not believe it has anything to do with Sir Bob Reid. I believe the issue why Milton Keynes was

unsuccessful was about insufficient accommodation being available for the students to stay in.”

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

CL138 RESTRUCTURING

Councillor Dransfield moved the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor Long:

“That this Council requests the Chief Executive to consult the relevant Policy Development Committees about any proposed restructuring of Directorates, or proposals that will involve a significant re-allocation of functionality between Directorates”.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried with 26 Members voting in favour, 23 Members against and 0 Members abstaining from voting.

RESOLVED -

That this Council requests the Chief Executive to consult the relevant Policy Development Committees about any proposed restructuring of Directorates, or proposals that will involve a significant re-allocation of functionality between Directorates.

CL139 THE FUTURE OF LOCAL ELECTIONS WITHIN MILTON KEYNES

Councillor Geary moved the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor Butler-Ellis:

“That this Council:

1. notes with interest the information in the Government White Paper, supporting the principles of “all out” four yearly elections, and the move to single member wards;
2. agrees to investigate further the possibility of moving from elections by thirds, the principle currently operated by this council, to the “all out” four yearly system;
3. agrees to investigate further the possibility of moving from multiple ward member representation to single member wards;
4. requests the Head of Democratic Services to prepare a briefing paper outlining all of the implications that these changes will have on the local democratic structure, both the benefits and the drawbacks, and to include in any such report a breakdown of the cost implications; and
5. requests that the Parish Boundary Review Group, assisted by the Head of Democratic Services, take this item as part of its work programme, and produces a report for consideration by the Cabinet in the Autumn of 2007.”

Councillor Ferrans moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Snell and accepted by the mover of the motion:

“That paragraph 2 be deleted and replaced with:

- ‘2. agrees to investigate further the advantages and disadvantages of elections by thirds, biennial elections and the "all out" four yearly system;”

Councillor D McCall moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Gerrella and accepted by the mover of the motion:

“That paragraph 5 be amended to read:

- ‘5. authorises the Group Leaders and Deputies Meeting, assisted by the Head of Democratic Services, to take this item as part of its work programme, and produces a report for consideration by the Council in the Autumn of 2007.”

Councillor Tallack moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Tamagnini-Barbosa and accepted by the mover of the motion:

“That the following paragraphs be added:

- ‘1. looks forward with interest to the Scottish local elections in May and congratulates the Scottish Parliament for its fairness in introducing proportional representation for local elections in Scotland;
2. makes representations to the English Government to amend the proposed White Paper to allow English local authorities to follow the Scottish example and use the same system in England;
3. looks forward to elections to Milton Keynes Council under proportional representation at a future date.”

Councillor Wilson moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Long and accepted by the mover of the motion:

“That the following paragraphs be added:

- ‘1. recognises that the Single Member Ward proposal is part of a package of measures aimed at enhancing the Ward or local community leadership role of Councillors elected to represent a community;
2. believes that enhancing this local community leadership role is essential and desirable and calls for a report on ways to help achieve this including:
 - (a) greater consultation rights and involvement for local Members on matters and decisions affecting only a single Ward or two adjoining Wards;

- (b) Improvements in support, training and resource arrangements for local Members to be able to perform this role effectively;
 - (c) enhancing the Ward Member role in scrutiny as envisaged in the 'call for action' proposals highlighted in the White Paper;
3. requests that these and similar matters also be considered alongside any report on Single Member Wards.”

The Council heard from 1 member of the public on this item.

The amended motion was as follows:

“That this Council:

1. notes with interest the information in the Government White Paper, supporting the principles of “all out” four yearly elections, and the move to single member wards;
2. agrees to investigate further the advantages and disadvantages of elections by thirds, biennial elections and the "all out" four yearly system;
3. agrees to investigate further the possibility of moving from multiple ward member representation to single member wards;
4. requests the Head of Democratic Services to prepare a briefing paper outlining all of the implications that these changes will have on the local democratic structure, both the benefits and the drawbacks, and to include in any such report a breakdown of the cost implications;
5. authorises the Group Leaders and Deputies Meeting, assisted by the Head of Democratic Services, to take this item as part of its work programme, and produce a report for consideration by the Council in the Autumn of 2007;
6. looks forward with interest to the Scottish local elections in May and congratulates the Scottish Parliament for its fairness in introducing proportional representation for local elections in Scotland;
7. makes representations to the English government to amend the proposed White Paper to allow English local authorities to follow the Scottish example and use the same system in England;
8. looks forward to elections to Milton Keynes Council under proportional representation at a future date;
9. recognises that the Single Member Ward proposal is part of a package of measures aimed at enhancing the Ward or local community leadership role of Councillors elected to represent a community;

10. believes that enhancing this local community leadership role is essential and desirable and calls for a report on ways to help achieve this including:
 - (a) greater consultation rights and involvement for local Members on matters and decisions affecting only a single Ward or two adjoining Wards;
 - (b) improvements in support, training and resource arrangements for local Members to be able to perform this role effectively; and
 - (c) enhancing the Ward Member role in scrutiny as envisaged in the 'call for action' proposals highlighted in the White Paper.
11. requests that these and similar matters also be considered alongside any report on Single Member Wards."

The voting on the amended motion was as follows:

Clause 1 was declared carried with 34 Members voting in favour, 11 Members voting against and 1 Member abstaining from voting.

Clause 2 was declared carried with 38 Members voting in favour, 6 Members voting against and 3 Members abstaining from voting.

Clause 3 was declared lost with 9 Members voting in favour, 37 Members voting against and 2 Members abstaining from voting.

Clause 4 was declared carried with 45 Members voting in favour, 2 Members voting against and 1 Member abstaining from voting.

Clause 5 was declared carried with 40 Members voting in favour, 3 Members voting against and 5 Members abstaining from voting.

Clause 6 was declared carried with 27 Members voting in favour, 17 Members voting against and 4 Members abstaining from voting.

Clause 7 was declared carried with 24 Members voting in favour, 19 Members voting against and 4 Members abstaining from voting.

Clause 8 was declared carried with 28 Members voting in favour, 17 Members voting against and 3 Members abstaining from voting.

Clause 9 was declared lost with 6 Members voting in favour, 38 Members voting against and 4 Members abstaining from voting.

Clause 10 was declared carried with 37 Members voting in favour, 7 Members voting against and 4 Members abstaining from voting.

Clause 11 was not voted on as a result of Clauses 3 and 9 not being carried.

RESOLVED -

That this Council:

1. notes with interest the information in the Government White Paper, supporting the principles of "all out" four yearly elections, and the move to single member wards;
2. agrees to investigate further the advantages and disadvantages of elections by thirds, biennial elections and the "all out" four yearly system;
3. requests the Head of Democratic Services to prepare a briefing paper outlining all of the implications that these changes will have on the local democratic structure, both the benefits and the drawbacks, and to include in any such report a breakdown of the cost implications;
4. authorises the Group Leaders and Deputies Meeting, assisted by the Head of Democratic Services, to take this item as part of its work programme, and produce a report for consideration by the Council in the Autumn of 2007;
5. looks forward with interest to the Scottish local elections in May and congratulates the Scottish Parliament for its fairness in introducing proportional representation for local elections in Scotland;
6. makes representations to the English government to amend the proposed White Paper to allow English local authorities to follow the Scottish example and use the same system in England;
7. looks forward to elections to Milton Keynes Council under proportional representation at a future date;
8. believes that enhancing this local community leadership role is essential and desirable and calls for a report on ways to help achieve this including:
 - (a) greater consultation rights and involvement for local Members on matters and decisions affecting only a single Ward or two adjoining Wards;
 - (b) improvements in support, training and resource arrangements for local Members to be able to perform this role effectively; and
 - (c) enhancing the Ward Member role in scrutiny as envisaged in the 'call for action' proposals highlighted in the White Paper.

CL140 POST OFFICE CLOSURES

Councillor Gerrella moved the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor Eastman:

"That this Council:

1. regrets the loss of nine post offices between 1999 and 2006 in Milton Keynes and notes with concern the announcement by the Government on 14 December 2006 of Ministers' plans to close 2500 Post Office branches across the UK;
2. further notes the social importance of Post Offices to the well being of both communities and individuals in Milton Keynes;
3. believes that the recently announced closure programme is unnecessary and calls on the Government to:
 - (a) end the branch closure programme;
 - (b) remove the Royal Mail restrictions on Post Offices to open up further business opportunities for the network;
 - (c) stop removing Government business from Post Offices;
 - (d) carry out a review of which additional Government functions could be carried out through Post Offices; and
 - (e) invest in the Post Office network
4. welcomes the decision of the Government to withdraw its previous proposals to scrap completely the Post Office Card Account, but calls on Ministers to ensure that any replacement Post Office Card Account should be open freely to all pensioners and benefit recipients who want one;
5. calls on the Government to avoid putting pressure on current and future Post Office Card Account users to switch to having benefits and pensions paid directly into bank accounts;
6. calls on both MPs for Milton Keynes to lobby Ministers to save the Post Office from gradual demolition and to protect this vital service for the people; and
7. further calls on the MPs to report back to this Council on their actions."

On being put to the vote the motion was declared unanimously.

RESOLVED -

That this Council:

1. regrets the loss of nine post offices between 1999 and 2006 in Milton Keynes and notes with concern the announcement by the Government on 14 December 2006 of Ministers' plans to close 2500 Post Office branches across the UK;
2. further notes the social importance of Post Offices to the well being of both communities and individuals in Milton Keynes;
3. believes that the recently announced closure programme is unnecessary and calls on the Government to:
 - (a) end the branch closure programme;

- (b) remove the Royal Mail restrictions on Post Offices to open up further business opportunities for the network;
 - (c) stop removing Government business from Post Offices;
 - (d) carry out a review of which additional Government functions could be carried out through Post Offices; and
 - (e) invest in the Post Office network
4. welcomes the decision of the Government to withdraw its previous proposals to scrap completely the Post Office Card Account, but calls on Ministers to ensure that any replacement Post Office Card Account should be open freely to all pensioners and benefit recipients who want one;
 5. calls on the Government to avoid putting pressure on current and future Post Office Card Account users to switch to having benefits and pensions paid directly into bank accounts;
 6. calls on both MPs for Milton Keynes to lobby Ministers to save the Post Office from gradual demolition and to protect this vital service for the people; and
 7. further calls on the MPs to report back to this Council on their actions.

CL141

POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES AND SCRUTINY PANELS ANNUAL REPORT

The Council received the annual report from the Council's Policy Development Committees / Scrutiny Panels. Each report was presented by the Chair of the Committee or Panel.

In addition to the report submitted to the Council, the Chair of the Learning and Development Policy Development Committee drew the Council's attention to the important role the Committee had played in supporting the successful delivery of the Children Act 2004 locally. The Children and Young People's Plan 'Every Child and Young Person in Milton Keynes Matters', had become embedded in the Council's priorities, focusing on continuing to raise standards in schools, social inclusion and the better integration of services for children and families and safeguarding children. The Chair stated that the Committee had worked at both a strategic level, contributing to the Council's response to the Joint Area Review recommendations and the interrogation of the robustness of the Learning and Development Directorate's budget proposals for 2007/08, and at an operational level, pursuing better outcomes under the 'Every Child Matters' framework, considering such issues as alternative education; and support for children with disabilities, as examples. The Chair also drew the Council's attention to the important contribution of the co-opted members, who brought valuable experience to the work of the Committee, which was

particularly important bearing in mind the considerable changes experienced in services for young people.

CL142 QUARTERLY REPORT ON SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS

The Council noted that in accordance with Access to Information Procedure Rule 17.3, the Provisions for Special Urgency, as set out in Access to Information Procedure Rule 16, had not been used in the period December 2006 to February 2007.

CL143 COUNCILLOR A MABBOTT

The Council noted that, in accordance with Regulation 10 of the Local Government (Committee and Political Groups) Regulations 1989, Councillor Mabbott was now a member of the Labour Group.

It was reported that the Conservative Group currently held 25.490% of the seats on the Council, the Labour Group 29.412% of the seats; the Liberal Democrat Group 45.098% of the seats.

THE MAYOR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 10.53 PM