

Minutes of the MEETING OF MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL held on WEDNESDAY
17 JUNE 2020 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillor A Geary (Mayor)
Councillors Akter, Alexander, Baines, Baume, Bint, Bowyer,
Brackenbury, K Bradburn, M Bradburn, R Bradburn, Brown, Cannon,
Carr, Crooks, Cryer-Whitehead, Darlington, Exon, Ferrans P Geary,
Gilbert, Gowans, Green, D Hopkins, V Hopkins, Hosking, Jenkins,
Khan, Lancaster, Legg, Long, Marland, Marlow, McCall, McLean,
McPake, Middleton, Miles, Minns, Montague, Nazir, Nolan, O'Neill,
Petchey, Priestley, Raja, Rankine, Reilly, Townsend, Trendall, Wales,
Walker, Wallis, Williams, C Wilson-Marklew and J Wilson-Marklew

Apologies: Aldermen Bartlett, Beeley, Bristow, Coventry, Henderson, Howell
and McKenzie and Alderwomen Henderson, Irons, Lloyd and
Saunders

Also Present: 5 members of the public

CL20 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on
18 March 2020 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct
record.

CL21 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

No interests were disclosed

CL22 ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2020

The Mayor congratulated Bosom Pals MK, The Brooklands
Centre, the Cowper and Newton Museum Volunteers, the
Marshall Milton Keynes Athletics Club, MK SNAP and Olney
Rugby Club on being awarded the Queen's Award for
Voluntary Service.

The Mayor indicated that he would be writing to each of the organisations to pass on the Council's congratulations.

(b) Covid-19 Appeal

The Mayor announced that the Covid-19 MK Emergency Response Appeal, which the Council had launched with the MK Community Foundation to support local charities and community groups help vulnerable people through the Coronavirus outbreak, had now raised £400,000 and had been used to support 75 organisations.

The Mayor thanked everybody who had made a donation, as every donation was making a difference.

The Mayor also announced that it was now three weeks since there was a Covid-19 death recorded at Milton Keynes Hospital.

(c) Queen's Birthday Honours

The Mayor announced that this year, because of the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, the announcement of persons awarded Honours by the Queen to mark her official birthday in June had been deferred until later in the year

(d) Councillor Fiona Chapman (Central Bedfordshire Council)

The Mayor announced the recent death of Councillor Fiona Chapman, who was a councillor at Central Bedfordshire Council.

The Mayor indicated that he would be passing on his condolences to Councillor Chapman's family.

(e) Passing of former Mayor Subhan Shafiq

The Mayor announced the death of former Mayor Subhan Shafiq on Sunday 14 June in Pakistan.

The Mayor recounted his memories of Subhan and expressed condolences on behalf of the Council.

The Council also heard from Councillors McCall and Walker before observing a period of silence as a mark of respect

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- (a) Question from David Tooley (Local Democracy Reporter) to Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council)

David Tooley, referring to the Council's decision at its meeting held on 20 May 2020 to defer the appointment of the Deputy Mayor, asked Councillor Marland when he would be able to confirm the name of the Labour Group's nomination for the position of Deputy Mayor for the municipal year 2020/21.

Councillor Marland indicated that he understood that the appointment of the Deputy Mayor would be on the agenda for the Council's meeting in September.

As a supplementary question David Tooley asked Councillor Marland why had the decision taken so long to make.

Councillor Marland indicated that Councillor Priestley had a personal matter to resolve and when concluded the Labour Group would be in a position to make a nomination at the Council meeting in September.

- (b) Question from Shanika Mahendran to Councillor Walker (Leader of the Conservative Group)

Shanika Mahendran, referring to recent events and the greater emphasis being placed on combatting racism reflected on a recent tweet from the Milton Keynes Conservatives account which said that we must 'stand against racism and prejudice in our society', asked Councillor Walker why he apparently said and did nothing when Councillor Baines, a member of the Conservative Group, made a comment on the 19 May saying we must "stop the invasion of migrants and send a lot back", which many found to be hateful and racist.

Shanika Mahendran invited Councillor Walker to take the opportunity to stand against racism and condemn this comment.

Councillor Walker indicated that the comments made by Councillor Baines were unacceptable and he had made that clear to Councillor Baines. Councillor Baines had deleted the comment immediately, issued a public apology and referred himself to the Council's Standard Committee. Councillor Baines was also deeply sorry for the offence he had caused

Councillor Walker commented that he knew Councillor Baines extremely well and that he did not believe he was a racist. However, Councillor Baines would be attending a diversity training course and his name was not to be put forward for the role as the Council's Armed Forces Champion for the year ahead

Councillor Walker also indicated that he was content with the steps he and the Group has taken and it was now a matter for the Standards Committee.

Shanika Mahendran commented that while Councillor Walker's concern appeared to be for the feelings of Councillor Baines, she was more concerned for the many people Councillor Baines was meant to represent who felt deeply uncomfortable with him being their representative. While Councillor Baines had apologised for publicly making the comment, he had not apologised for holding those views.

Shanika Mahendran, as a supplementary question, asked Councillor Walker to suspend Councillor Baines from the Conservative Group for all those others hurt by the comment who were concerned at Councillor Baines' ability to represent the diverse population of his Ward.

Councillor Walker reiterated that he believed the comments to be completely unacceptable and he was content with the steps he and the Conservative Group had taken.

Councillor Walker also reiterated that Councillor Baines knew he had caused offence and he was deeply sorry for causing offence. However, this was now a matter for the Council's Standards Committee and he had nothing further to add.

- (c) Question from Alan Francis to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm)

Alan Francis, referring to the Government's instruction that councils should temporarily reallocate road space to walking, cycling and buses in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic and lockdown, asked Councillor Darlington if further initiatives were planned beyond the closure of Newport Pagnell High Street and a few parking bays in Central Milton Keynes.

Councillor Darlington indicated that the closure of High Streets was based on measures to protect the health of residents and also enable business to resume trading in as

safe an environment as possible. To identify possible measures suitable for each High Street she had written to all Ward Councillors and Town Councils with a major High Street in their area, along with businesses.

Councillor Darlington reported that generally engagement had been good and a number of measures, which in general were temporary, had been developed, which included:

- 250 new cycle stands in a number of different locations;
- New bollards to restrict vehicular access to the Queensway in Bletchley, along with moving the Market and consideration of additional pedestrianisation; and
- Suspending parking bays in Fenny Stratford to allow pavements to be widened.

Councillor Darlington also indicated that schemes for Olney, Stony Stratford and Woburn Sands were being developed with the Town Councils and local businesses. She would give further details about Newport Pagnell as part of a later answer.

Councillor Darlington stressed that the measures taken so far would be reviewed regularly to ensure that they were having a positive benefit.

As a supplementary question Alan Francis asked Councillor Darlington if the Council was considering installing temporary cycleways to encourage increased cycle use and better access for cyclists into, particularly the older town centres in the Borough.

Councillor Darlington, recognising that the Covid-19 Pandemic had changed attitudes to commuting, acknowledged the need to develop the infrastructure to further encourage cycling and walking, as this would provide a number of benefits including better connectivity and would help achieve modal shift which was essential to help address the climate change emergency.

Councillor Darlington indicated that the Council would be submitting a bid to the Department for Transport which, if successful, would enable the Council to install permanent improvements which would make walking and cycling more attractive, giving as an example extensions and enhancements to the Redway system.

- (d) Question from Chris Wardle to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm)

Chris Wardle, referred to the decision taken late last week to close Newport Pagnell High Street to through traffic during working hours in order to “assist businesses back into trading conditions whilst complying with the Covid-19 restrictions” and the apparent lack of formal consultation with Ward councillors and with very scant and last minute conversations with Newport Pagnell Town Council.

Chris Wardle suggested that the measures were having the reverse affect as at 4pm on Monday 15 June the vast majority of businesses had closed their doors because it was not worth them being open. Therefore, the road closure was potentially damaging for the various businesses on the High Street.

Chris Wardle asked Councillor Darlington if she would urgently intervene and reverse the measures and look again at what, if anything, needed to be done to make the High Street safer for both the businesses owners and the general public.

Councillor Darlington indicated that Newport Pagnell High Street had relatively narrow pavements and was open to through traffic and while she understood the strength of feeling in Newport Pagnell about the measures taken to widen the High Street, they did allow greater safety for residents using the shops. The scheme not only protected pedestrians, but also retained the bus routes.

Councillor Darlington explained that the current arrangements were temporary but were important because they allowed businesses to trade and this included cafes, which, as a result of the measures, would have more outdoor space in which they could serve. The measures were under constant review and a number of improvements, particularly to signing, had been made already in light of feedback from residents and business owners.

Councillor Darlington also explained that before the measures were introduced, Ward Councillors and the Town Council were consulted, although not all had responded. Councillor Darlington particularly thanked Councillor Carr for her help and support.

- (e) Question from Ben Nolan to Councillor Walker (Leader of the Conservative Group)

Ben Nolan, referring to recent events in the US and then across the UK with the Black Lives Matter protests, which had shone a light on systemic racism and how much more society needed to do to ensure a world free from racial discrimination and inequality, asked Councillor Walker what action he had taken to ensure that his Conservative councillors did not hold racist views and opinions that were not compatible with the values the majority of people wanted to see in Milton Keynes

Councillor Walker indicated that he, like everybody else was disgusted by the murder of George Floyd and he hoped that what was going on in the United States would see lasting change to the institutional racism in the United States.

Councillor Walker welcomed the opportunity for the United Kingdom to look at similar societal issues recognised that all have a part to play.

Councillor Walker suggested that this was not a political issue for the United Kingdom and that every pragmatic, decent person knew that all were born equal without prejudice against others. However, unfortunately people did not have equality of opportunity and people were discriminated against in many settings, including in the workplace, by institutions and by the judicial system.

Councillor Walker stated that he believed that it was about action, not just words and as Leader of the Group he had always made every effort to ensure that the Group's focus was on levelling up society and supporting all communities, including BAME communities and the disadvantaged in the Borough. The Conservative Group had brought forward the motion to adopt the definition of anti-Semitism and the social mobility pledge motion to encourage the Council and businesses to open up their apprenticeship programmes to people from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those from BAME communities.

Councillor Walker indicated that he had been one of the biggest advocates of the Regeneration Programme, which would help level up some of the disadvantaged and diverse communities in Milton Keynes. He had also invested his Ward budget in 2016, working with MK Dons Set and the Bedfordshire Football Association, to fund a project where

people from Stantonbury Ward with disadvantaged backgrounds got their FA Level 1 Coaching Badge for free and a summer job at Stantonbury Campus.

As a supplementary question Ben Nolan, welcoming the views and actions expressed by Councillor Walker, suggested it was however more difficult to call out friends on racist incidents than it was to express views on the wider issue. For instance, former councillor Dransfield was readmitted to the local Conservative Group after he had said to a local black firefighter 'you are the first I've seen, now all we need is a woman'. In 2018 no action was apparently taken against the Conservative Council candidate for Stony Stratford who in an argument on Facebook with a Asian constituent, brought up the lack of freedom in the Middle East and that Councillor Baines had not been suspended by the Conservative Group after he talked about an invasion of migrants, stating that you do not believe him to be a racist.

Ben Nolan asked Councillor Walker whether he thought his approach was too soft and if that was why these incidents keep happening in the local Conservative Party.

Councillor Walker indicated that, as Group Leader he had removed Mr Dransfield from the Conservative Group, and Alderman Paul Bartlett's conduct was dealt with by the local Conservative Association. With regards to Councillor Baines, he had already answered that question and it was now a matter for the Standards Committee.

Councillor Walker reiterated his original answer and expressed his disgust with the events that had taken place in the United States and stated that he would continue to reflect on what actions he could take both personally and as a leader of a political group to try and ensure that discrimination was completely pushed out of our society.

CL24

CREATION OF A SINGLE CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP ACROSS BEDFORDSHIRE LUTON AND MILTON KEYNES

Councillor Jenkins (Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee) moved the following recommendation from the meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee held on 12 March 2020, which was seconded by Councillor Reilly:

- “1. That the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Council be asked to note the Committee's concerns that the creation of a single Clinical Commissioning Group across Bedfordshire, Luton and

Milton Keynes does not provide confidence as to the future protection of the 'Milton Keynes health pound'.

2. That the Council be recommended to make representations to the Secretary of State about the impacts of the creation of a single Clinical Commissioning Group across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes was likely to have on the Milton Keynes health economy should be raised with the Secretary of State."

On being put to the vote the recommendation was declared carried by acclamation.

RESOLVED -

1. That the concerns of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee that the creation of a single Clinical Commissioning Group across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes does not provide confidence as to the future protection of the 'Milton Keynes health pound' be noted.
2. That the Council make representations to the Secretary of State for Health about the impact of the creation of a single Clinical Commissioning Group across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes was likely to have on the Milton Keynes health economy.

CL25

HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL PLAN / CABINET MEMBERS ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor Jenkins (Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee) moved the following recommendation from the meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee held on 12 March 2020, which was seconded by Councillor Reilly:

"That the Council and the Milton Keynes Members of Parliament be requested to raise with the Secretary of State what seems to be the counter-intuitiveness of programmes to integrate health and social care services with the development of Integrated Care Systems."

On being put to the vote the recommendation was declared carried by acclamation.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Council raise with the Secretary of State for Health what seems to be the counter-intuitiveness of programmes to integrate health and social care services with the development of Integrated Care Systems.

2. That the Members of Parliament for Milton Keynes be requested to also raise the issue with the Secretary of State for Health and to support the Council's representations.

CL26

LICENSING COMMITTEE - AMENDMENT TO STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY (LICENSING ACT 2003)

Councillor Legg (Chair of the Licensing Committee) moved the following recommendation from the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 11 March 2020, which was seconded by Councillor Alexander:

“That the revisions to the Statement of Licensing Policy be endorsed and recommended for adoption at Full Council.”

On being put to the vote the recommendation was declared carried by acclamation.

RESOLVED –

That the revised Statement of Licensing Policy be approved.

CL27

AMENDMENT TO STATEMENT OF GAMBLING PRINCIPLES (GAMBLING ACT 2005)

Councillor Legg (Chair of the Licensing Committee) moved the following recommendation from the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 11 March 2020, which was seconded by Councillor Alexander:

“That the revisions to the Statement of Gambling Principles be endorsed for adoption at Full Council.”

On being put to the vote the recommendation was declared carried by acclamation.

RESOLVED –

That the revised Statement of Gambling Principles be approved.

CL28

MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL PLAN

Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council) moved the following recommendation from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 2 June 2020, which was seconded by Councillor McCall, on which the Mayor took a recorded vote:

“That the Council be recommended to approve the revised Council Plan 2016-2022.”

The voting was as follows:

FOR: Councillors Akter, Alexander, Baume, Brackenbury, K Bradburn, M Bradburn, R Bradburn, Brown, Cannon, Carr, Crooks, Cryer-Whitehead, Darlington, Exon, Ferrans Gowans, Khan, Legg, Long, Marland, McCall, McPake, Middleton, Miles, Minns, Montague, Nolan, O’Neill, Petchey, Priestley, Reilly, Townsend, Trendall, Wales, Wallis, Williams, C Wilson-Marklew and J Wilson-Marklew (38)

AGAINST: (0)

ABSTENTIONS: Councillors Baines, Bint, Bowyer, P Geary, Gilbert, Green, D Hopkins, V Hopkins, Hosking, Jenkins, Lancaster, Marlow, Raja, Rankine, Nazir, McLean and Walker (17)

RESOLVED –

That the revised Council Plan 2016-2022 be approved.

CL29

COUNCILLORS’ QUESTIONS

- (a) Question from Councillor R Bradburn to Councillor Middleton (Cabinet member for Resources)

Councillor R Bradburn, referring to the significant impact the Covid-19 Pandemic had, had on local businesses and to two schemes being suggested by the Council’s Conservative Group to provide financial support for small and medium size businesses by using the Council’s Financial Reserves and to allow two hours free parking, which he suggested were not based on sound economics, asked Councillor Middleton if he thought that the Conservative Group’s efforts would be better placed by lobbying Government to provide additional money to support businesses and to also take measures to put money into people’s pockets rather than expecting the Council to do the job of National Government.

Councillor Middleton indicated that the Council would do what it could to support local business and would be looking to see how best the Council could use its Financial Reserves. However, as the country was only just entering the recovery stage of the Pandemic it was important to be prudent,

particularly as both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Local Government Association were predicting difficult financial times ahead.

As a supplementary question, Councillor R Bradburn asked Councillor Middleton if his 'door' was always open to councillors to put forward ideas or suggestion.

Councillor Middleton indicated that with the scale of the problems likely to face Milton Keynes in the coming months it was important for all councillors to work collectively, to be realistic as to what the Council was able to achieve with its limited resources and remember that Reserves were for in emergencies.

Councillor Middleton encouraged the political groups on the Council to join together to lobby the Government and the Bank of England to provide the Council with the resources it needed to support its local communities.

(b) Question from Councillor Rankine to Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council)

Councillor Rankine, noting that the Council in September 2018 agreed to adopt the Social Mobility Pledge, asked Councillor Marland when did the Council formally sign the Pledge and become an accredited employer.

Councillor Marland indicated that this matter should have referred from the Council to the Cabinet for action, but unfortunately this had not happened, for which he apologised. However, the Council was already taking forward many of the actions required by the Pledge as part of other work it was undertaking.

As far as becoming an accredited employer, Councillor Marland indicated that the Council was looking at the specific requirements necessary to receive the accreditation to ensure that the Council was compliant.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Rankine, referring to the potential disadvantage that could be suffered by young people, mainly from poor households as a consequence of the Council failing to sign the Pledge, asked Councillor Marland what progress had been made so far towards signing the Pledge and the Council becoming an accredited employer

Councillor Marland emphasised that the failure to refer the matter to Cabinet had been a mistake, but Council was not able to dictate to Cabinet. However, a number of strands

which were integral to the Pledge were being taken forward as part of the Council's 2050 work and the Child Poverty Commission and work was underway to make sure the Council fulfilled the specific requirements become an accredited employer.

- (c) Question from Councillor Bint to Councillor Baume (Cabinet member for Economy and Culture)

Councillor Bint, recognising the importance of Central Milton Keynes to attract visitors to Milton Keynes and protect the jobs of many residents, asked Councillor Baume to consider what measures she could put in place to increase both the number of visitor and their dwell time, including the idea put forward by the Conservative Group to allow two hours free parking.

Councillor Baume indicated the she and colleagues were working on a Covid-19 recovery plan that addressed the economic aspects of recovery. As part of that work all suggestions would be considered, including allowing a free parking period.

Councillor Bint suggested that another potential initiative the Council could pursue would be to encourage retailers to have special offers to attract visitors which the Council could support and, as a supplementary question, asked Councillor Baume to involve all councillors with relevant experience and ideas to input into the Recovery Plan.

Councillor Baume emphasised that ideas from across the Council would be considered.

- (d) Question from Councillor Townsend to Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council)

Councillor Townsend asked Councillor Marland how the Council would be supporting residents, particularly younger people, with the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on their mental health.

Councillor Marland indicated that proposals would be included in the Covid-19 Pandemic Recovery Plan, which would be brought forward shortly, to support the mental health of children and young people.

- (e) Question from Councillor D Hopkins to Councillor Nolan
(Cabinet member for Children and Families)

Councillor D Hopkins, paying tribute to all school staff and to officer colleagues who had been supporting schools during these difficult times, asked Councillor Nolan to provide an update on the numbers of children attending both the maintained and the Multi-academy trust schools across Milton Keynes and just how that compared with national figures.

Councillor Nolan indicated that schools in Milton Keynes compared favourably with schools nationally. In Milton Keynes all schools were open compared to 92% nationally, 13% of children were attending compared to 9% nationally, 21% of children were attending special schools compared to 13% nationally and 20% of children with an allocated social worker, or on an Education, Health and Care plan were attending school compared to 18% nationally.

Councillor Nolan also took the opportunity to commend school staff and officer colleagues for their planning, preparation and hard work during the Covid-19 Pandemic and their adherence to the Guidance given to ensure students stayed safe while in school.

Councillor Nolan emphasised that every effort would be made to make it possible for as many children to attend school as possible.

As a supplementary question, Councillor D Hopkins, referring to the wealth of talent and experience held by school governors, asked Councillor Nolan if she thought it was time to hold a virtual conference for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Governors to enable experiences of dealing with the Covid-19 Pandemic and good practice to be shared

Councillor Nolan outlined that it had been hoped to hold a meeting of all governors, but this had not been possible because of the Pandemic. However, officer colleagues had been working on information for Governors and it was hoped to be able to convene a meeting shortly.

Councillor Nolan recognised the dedication of school governors and the important role they had played during the Pandemic to make sure the children attending their school stayed safe.

- (f) Question from Councillor Wales to Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council)

Councillor Wales asked Councillor Marland to confirm that the Council would be making a bid to the Towns Deal Fund.

Councillor Marland indicated that the Council had established a Towns Deal Board, which was to meet shortly. The Board would assess whether a bid should be submitted for either the first or second tranche and the Council would be advised once this had been decided.

- (g) Question from Councillor McPake to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm)

Councillor McPake, referring to the excessive amounts of litter in Milton Keynes, asked Councillor Darlington to instigate a major campaign to encourage people to take their litter home which would improve the appearance of Milton Keynes, reduce the cost of collection for the Council, parish councils and the Parks Trust and prevent litter blocking drains and water courses.

Councillor Darlington, in agreeing with Councillor McPake, recognised the importance of the various green spaces Milton Keynes had to offer in helping improve both the physical and mental wellbeing of residents. However, there had been a number of examples of poor behaviour by people who had left quantities of litter spoiling the environment for others.

Councillor Darlington outlined that the Council was working with the Parks Trust to prepare a social media campaign to encourage people to take their litter home.

Councillor Darlington also took the opportunity to commend the actions of the many volunteers who had come forward to undertake litter picks and to clear the litter left in the green spaces so that they could be enjoyed by all.

As a supplementary question, Councillor McPake suggested to Councillor Darlington that the campaign needed to be wider than social media and should include posters and notices.

Councillor Darlington indicated that it was intended to increase signage alongside the social media campaign.

(h) Question from Councillor Priestley to Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council)

Councillor Priestley, referring to the inequalities faced by many in the Black and Ethnic Minority Communities in Milton Keynes, particularly when accessing services, especially health services, asked Councillor Marland to outline what actions he was taking to address these inequalities.

Councillor Marland indicated that Councillor O'Neill, the Cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing, was working with officer colleagues to commission a review of the Council's Impact and Causes Assessment of Health Inequalities faced by the Black and Ethnic Minority Communities in Milton Keynes. The report, which was due to be received by the Council later in the year would both address the causes and positive actions the Council could take.

(i) Question from Councillor Jenkins to Councillor O'Neill (Cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing)

Councillor Jenkins, referring to the £1m allocated to the Council by the Government for Covid-19 Track and Trace, asked Councillor O'Neill when a plan to implement the Track and Trace would be ready and whether the Plan could be shared with councillors once it was ready to be implemented.

Councillor Jenkins also recorded her thanks to Muriel Scott, the Director of Public Health, and her Team for their hard work and dedication, particularly during the Pandemic.

Councillor O'Neill indicated that a system wide partnership had been established to develop the action plan which it was intended would be completed by the end of June. The action plan would be managed by the Health and Wellbeing Board and presented initially to Group Leaders before being shared with other councillors.

Councillor O'Neill also expressed her thanks to the Public Health Team.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Jenkins asked Councillor O'Neill if members of the public and councillors would be able to help with Track and Trace locally.

Councillor O'Neill stressed the importance of the public following the Government's Guideline if they were identified as having been in contact with a person carrying the Covid-19 virus.

Councillor O'Neill encouraged councillors to indicate if there were any likely high risk areas within their Wards in order that they could be identified in the action plan.

(j) Question from Councillor Gilbert to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm)

Councillor Gilbert, recognising the hard work that had gone in to the reopening of the Household Waste Recycling Centres, asked Councillor Darlington what actions were being taken to improve both the arrangements for booking slots to visit the Centres and the availability of slots, given the problems that had been experienced in introducing an online booking system.

Councillor Darlington indicated that the Household Waste Recycling Centres had reopened on 18 May 2020 and since then, in the region of 17,000 visits had been made to the Centres. A booking system had been essential to manage visits to the sites in order to ensure social distancing was maintained as much as possible.

Councillor Darlington acknowledged the problems experienced with the introduction of an online booking system, which had been working, but which was currently off line to be updated to accommodate the almost doubling of the number of slots that had been made available this week. During that period bookings would only be possible by telephone.

Councillor Darlington recognised the limited capacity of the Bleak Hall Household Waste Recycling Centre which served the south of the city and indicated that additional sites were being investigated to increase capacity in the south of Milton Keynes.

Councillor Darlington took the opportunity to pay tribute to the efforts of the Council's Waste Team and its contractors SERCO who had maintained a high quality of service during the Pandemic.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Gilbert asked Councillor Darlington if it was possible to make available details of how many residents were currently able to visit the Household Waste Recycling Centres per hour safely, together with details of the plans for increasing those numbers going forward.

Councillor Gilbert also asked if it was possible to consult with councillors on the possible additional site in the south of Milton Keynes.

Councillor Darlington indicated that she would continue to keep councillors informed of developments affecting the Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres and this would include the plans for opening an additional site.

Councillor Darlington undertook to provide Councillor Gilbert with the information regarding available slots at the Household Waste Recycling Centres in writing.

(k) Question from Councillor McLean to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm)

Councillor McLean, referring to the reopening of Emberton Park and the extensive traffic management arrangements that were put in place, with little consultation with local Ward councillors, asked Councillor Darlington, how much had the traffic management cost from 27 May until it was removed early during the week commencing 1 June.

Councillor Darlington indicated that the cost of the traffic management had been in the region of £4,000.

Councillor Darlington took the opportunity to thank Councillor McLean for his help with the reopening of the Park and for his input into the consultations on enhancing the biodiversity of the Park. Councillor Darlington also thanked both Councillors P Geary and McLean for their feedback on the arrangements for reopening of the Park.

Councillor McLean, referred to the two operatives who had been stationed at the entrance to the Park and, as a supplementary question, asked Councillor Darlington how much the two operatives had cost and whether she believed the overall traffic management costs had been justified and presented value for money, particularly as local Ward Councillors had suggested alternative options.

Councillor Darlington indicated that the Traffic Management Plan had been prepared in consultation with Thames Valley Police, which were supportive of both the Plan and how Traffic was managed when the Park reopened. Large crowds had been expected so it was necessary to have plans in place to manage traffic and control numbers entering the Park.

Councillor Darlington also indicated that she was unaware whether the cost of the two operatives was included in the sum quoted earlier, but she would confirm and inform Councillor McLean.

(I) Question from Councillor Lancaster to Councillor O'Neill (Cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing)

Councillor Lancaster asked Councillor O'Neill how many illegal encampments had there been across Milton Keynes in the past 3 Months.

Councillor O'Neill indicated that there had been 20 unauthorised encampments since 1 April 2020 and 25 since the start of 2020, mainly all involving the same family groups.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Lancaster, referring to the current public health concerns caused by Covid-19 and reports that Traveller Groups from the unauthorised encampments were not following social distancing rules and also leaving waste in public spaces, asked Councillor O'Neill what action the Council was taking to protect residents and members of the Traveller Community.

Councillor O'Neill indicated that the Council was following the national Guidelines and ensuring that members of the Traveller Community had access to washing facilities and health care. The Council was also carrying out regular welfare checks and maintaining communication with the Groups.

Councillor O'Neill advised Councillor Lancaster that if the Traveller Groups were failing to follow the Rules then it should be reported to the Police.

(m) Question from Councillor Bowyer to Councillor McCall (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group)

Councillor Bowyer, referring to recent social media posts by Councillor McCall concerning the closure of Newport Pagnell High Street, which contained a number of inaccuracies concerning which councillors had been consulted, asked Councillor McCall if it was Liberal Democrat Group Policy to make things up and also invited Councillor McCall to comment on the veracity of his social media posts.

Councillor McCall indicated that he had been advised that all Ward Councillors had been informed and also that Councillor Bowyer had been spoken to personally by the Cabinet member within the earshot of Councillor Carr.

Councillor McCall invited Councillor Bowyer to inform the Council as to whether he had had a conversation with the Cabinet member concerning the closure of Newport Pagnell High Street.

Councillor McCall, however, apologised to the Council if any information contained in his social media post was inaccurate.

Councillor Bowyer confirmed that he had had a brief conversation with the Cabinet member at the Food Bank, however, he did not consider this to have been a formal consultation on the closure of the High Street.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Bowyer, assuming that Councillor McCall had been consulted and had responded, asked Councillor McCall how, therefore, had the closure been allowed to go ahead, bearing in mind the anger and anxiety it had caused to residents and businesses.

Councillor McCall indicated that it was his understanding that the Council had a duty to enable shops to re-open while also taking measures to prevent a further outbreak of Covid-19. The Council had accordingly put measures in place across Milton Keynes that it believed appropriate to the specific location. In respect of Newport Pagnell High Street, because of the narrow pavements, it was difficult for residents to pass while maintaining the 2 metre social distance, particularly where there were queues outside shops.

Councillor McCall emphasised that the Council was implementing measures in line with Government Guidance and doing what it could to allow shops to reopen, whilst at the same time protecting the lives of residents.

Councillor McCall did, however, recognise that there was a conflict between what was best for traders and what was best for the health and safety of residents.

- (n) Question from Councillor Williams to Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council)

Councillor Williams asked Councillor Marland if the Council had any plans to commemorate the work of the NHS staff in responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Councillor Marland indicated that he had spoken to Joe Harrison, Chief Executive of Milton Keynes University Hospital, and he was happy for the Council to commission a high quality art work to be displayed at the Hospital to commemorate the work of all NHS staff in responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Williams, stressing the extremely challenging environment faced by the NHS staff on a daily basis as they dealt with the Covid-19 Pandemic and thanking the Leader of the Council for his efforts, asked Councillor Marland to keep the Council updated as to progress in producing the art work.

Councillor Marland agreed.

- (o) Question from Councillor Marlow to Councillor O'Neill (Cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing)

Councillor Marlow asked Councillor O'Neill how many rough sleepers were still staying in hotel accommodation in Milton Keynes and how many have left their emergency accommodation during lockdown.

Councillor O'Neill indicated that 78 rough sleepers still remained in hotel accommodation, 49 had left, but of those 49 only 9 had returned to the streets in Milton Keynes, others either having found alternative accommodation, or having left the area.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Marlow, recognising the efforts the Council had made, with Government support, to help the rough sleepers, asked Councillor O'Neill what proactive measures the Council would be taking to help those rough sleepers remaining in hotel accommodation to find more permanent accommodation.

Councillor O'Neill reported that each of the rough sleepers currently housed in hotel accommodation would be allocated a social worker and would receive an offer of accommodation.

(p) Question from Councillor Brackenbury to Councillor Walker (Leader of the Conservative Group)

Councillor Brackenbury, referring to the emergency budget passed today by Luton Council which saw heavy job losses and cuts to services and the concerns expressed by the Conservative Leader of Lancashire County Council at Prime Minister's Question time regarding the apparent back tracking by the Government to do whatever was necessary to support responses by councils to the Covid-19 Pandemic, asked Councillor Walker if he would add his voice to those concerns.

Councillor Walker indicated that he supported the call from across many parts of local government, including the Leader of the Council and the MPs for Milton Keynes for the Government to uphold its commitment to local government.

Councillor Walker undertook to use what relationships he had to bring pressure on the Government to secure the level of funding the Council needed to respond to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Welcoming Councillor Walker's response, as a supplementary question, Councillor Brackenbury asked Councillor Walker if he would make public the representations he would be making.

Councillor Walker indicated that he would be happy to and invited Councillor Brackenbury to ask him a question at the Council's September meeting.

- (q) Question from Councillor Marland to Councillor Walker
(Leader of the Conservative Group)

Councillor Marland referred to Councillor Walker's statement that 'it is actions not just words that matter' in response to an earlier question from a member of the public in relation to the recent statement by Councillor Baines in which he said 'it is time to stop the invasion of migrants and time to send a lot back'.

Councillor Marland also referring to Councillor Walker's statement that he did not believe Councillor Baines to be racist, asked Councillor Walker to outline his definition of racism and to explain why he placed the feelings of a white man above the hurt felt by a Black Minority Ethnic woman as explained in the earlier question.

Councillor Walker indicated that that he would neither get drawn into a debate on what was and what was not racist, nor on the wider Black Lives Matter Campaign.

Councillor Walker reiterated that he believed Councillor Baines's comments to be unacceptable and Councillor Baines had apologised. Councillor Baines was deeply embarrassed and sorry for any offence caused to any members of the Milton Keynes public.

Councillor Walker also reiterated his earlier statement that this was now a matter for the Standards Committee.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Marland asked Councillor Walker to clarify what his personal threshold was as to what constituted racism and what was his threshold to take action against a Group member.

Councillor Walker indicated that in his view racism was unacceptable in any form. He believed that he, as a Group Leader, had taken significant actions to demonstrate that and he had given examples earlier in the meeting in response to the public questions. He was content with the actions he had taken in respect of Councillor Baines and reiterated that this was now a matter for the Standards Committee.

- (r) Question from Councillor P Geary to Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council)

Councillor P Geary asked Councillor Marland to outline any communication he had had with a developer over a planning application for two warehouses east of the M1, other than the letter dated 12 June 2020.

Councillor Marland indicated that he had still to respond to the letter of 12 June, but in outline his response would be along the lines that the application was not policy compliant, therefore the recommendation of officers to refuse the application should be taken forward to the Development Control Committee which would then decide the Application.

As a supplementary question, Councillor P Geary asked Councillor Marland to confirm whether he had had any communications with officers over the Application and whether he had asked for it to be considered by the Development Control Committee.

Councillor Marland, indicated that he had confirmed with officers that an Application had been submitted and had expressed the view that as it was not policy compliant that it should not be taken forward.

- (s) Question from Councillor Walker to Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council)

Councillor Walker, referring to the Covid-19 Economic Recovery Plan mentioned in the Council Plan 2016 – 2022, asked Councillor Marland if he could outline the scope of the Recovery Plan and the timeframe for implementation.

Councillor Marland indicated that he believed that the Council would be one of the first local authorities to publish a Covid-19 Recovery Plan. The Plan, whilst being wider than just economic issues would have business recovery at its heart and include measures in relation to:

- Green Transport;
- Support for Community Groups;
- Health Inequalities;

- Encouraging contractors delivering Council contracts to use local labour to support employment in the city;
- Encouraging Inward Investment;
- Supporting the High Streets across Milton Keynes; and
- The provision of affordable housing.

Councillor Walker, indicating that he believed that as all local authorities and many other bodies would be seeking funds from Government to support their recovery efforts, asked Councillor Marland, as a supplementary question, to outline what measures he would be taking to ensure that Milton Keynes was at the forefront and doing everything it could to support the local economy and protect local jobs.

Councillor Walker suggested to Councillor Marland that the Council could consider seeking support from such organisation as the Growth Board, Fast Growing Cities, or even look to establish new partnerships, perhaps with other local authorities.

Councillor Walker committed the support of the Conservative Group and of the local Conservative MPs to helping to ensure Milton Keynes was successful.

Councillor Marland indicated that the Council together with the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Arc was looking at the possibility of bringing forward various Capital schemes. The Council would also be reviewing its spending priorities to identify opportunities to reprioritise in line with the Covid-19 Recovery Plan.

Councillor Marland outlined that while the Council would be lobbying for additional resources from Government it would also be using its own resources and also seeking support from its key partners.

Councillor Marland stressed the importance to the Council of its 2050 Strategy and the need to fulfil the aspirations set out in the Strategy.

CL30

BLACK LIVES MATTER

In accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Mayor ruled that the following motion should be considered as a matter of urgency in light of the developing situation following the death of George Floyd in the United States of America and the Black Lives Matter Campaign.

Councillor Crooks moved the following motion which was seconded by Councillor Walker:

“That this Council:

- (a) mindful of the death of George Floyd in the United States and of the demonstrations that followed;
- (b) aware of the depth of public concern expressed during the last week in Britain about ingrained institutional racism directed against non-whites, particularly following events in Bristol on 7 June 2020;
- (c) conscious of the difficulty of organising supportive community demonstrations at the present time while maintaining social distancing requirements;
- (d) therefore, on behalf of all Milton Keynes residents; and
- (e) urgently places on record its support for the objectives of the Black Lives Matter movement and for all similar initiatives.”

On being put to the vote the Motion was declared carried unanimously.

RESOLVED –

That this Council:

- (a) mindful of the death of George Floyd in the United States and of the demonstrations that followed;
- (b) aware of the depth of public concern expressed during the last week in Britain about ingrained institutional racism directed against non-whites, particularly following events in Bristol on 7 June 2020;
- (c) conscious of the difficulty of organising supportive community demonstrations at the present time while maintaining social distancing requirements;

- (d) therefore, on behalf of all Milton Keynes residents; and
- (e) urgently places on record its support for the objectives of the Black Lives Matter movement and for all similar initiatives.

CL31

QUARTERLY REPORT ON SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS

The Council noted that, in accordance with Access to Information Procedure Rule 17.4, the Provisions for Special Urgency, as set out in Access to Information Procedure Rule 16, was used twice during the period 7 March 2020 to 5 June 2020 as follows:

- (a) Council's Local Hardship Scheme for Council Tax 2020/21

The decision was taken on 7 April 2020, by Councillor Marland in relation to the Council's Local Hardship Scheme for Council Tax 2020/21. Special urgency was required because of the urgent release of additional grant funding from Central Government to local authorities and accompanying statutory guidance, requiring expedited provision of support alongside the use of light touch governance processes where required.

- (b) Local Authority Discretionary Grant Scheme 2020/21

The decision to distribute to £1.97m of additional Central Government funding to eligible businesses, in line with national criteria, was taken by Cabinet on 2 June 2020. Special urgency was required because of the timescales imposed by Central Government for the release of the funding and the need to support local business struggling with high fixed property related that had not previously received funding from the Small Business Grant Fund or Extended Retail Relief Grant Fund.

The Council also noted that, it had been agreed that the call-in procedure would not apply to the above decisions for the reasons stated and that delay in implementing the decisions would have seriously prejudiced the Councils ability to promptly release funding to households and business entitled to support.

CL32

BIODIVERSITY UPDATE

Further to Minute CL78 of the Council's meeting held on 24 October 2019, the Council received an update on the delivery of the Biodiversity Action Plan.

THE MAYOR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 10:20 PM