

# Agenda Item 6

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## **1. Continuation of virtual meetings**

Councillor R Bradburn – 29 July 2020

That this Council notes:

- (a) As part of the government's lockdown measures, councils are permitted to hold meetings and committees virtually, which Milton Keynes Council has been doing successfully.
- (b) The hard work and support put in by the Democratic Services and IT teams to help in the set up and running of virtual meetings and committees.
- (c) Virtual meetings make Milton Keynes Council a more inclusive and flexible council.
- (d) Virtual meetings play a role in increasing the attendance record of all members.
- (e) Live-streaming virtual meetings can increase public awareness and participation in local government.
- (f) Live-streaming virtual meetings increases the openness and transparency of the Council.
- (g) That the 'place' of the meeting is set by the Monitoring Officer for Council/Committee Meetings and by the Leader for Executive meetings.

That this Council resolves to:

- 1) Request that the Monitoring Officer and Leader of the Council, continue the hosting of virtual, live-streamed meetings and committees where appropriate, alongside the option to physically attend, where legislation and guidance allows.
- 2) Lobby the government to continue to allow virtual meetings and remote attendance in local government.

## 2. The impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities

Councillor Reilly - 9 July 2020

That this Council notes:

- (a) The first NHS England report<sup>1</sup> into COVID-19, which found that compared to white people, people of Black and Asian ethnic origin were found to be at a higher risk of death from coronavirus.
- (b) The second NHS England report<sup>2</sup> into understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups which found:
  - Individuals from BAME groups are more likely to work in occupations with a higher risk of COVID-19 exposure.
  - They are more likely to use public transportation to travel to their essential work.
  - Historic racism and poorer experiences of healthcare or at work may mean that individuals in BAME groups are less likely to seek care when needed or as NHS staff are less likely to speak up when they have concerns about Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or risk.
- (c) In some BAME communities, households may be disproportionately hit by the pandemic economically, for instance if members of the household are carers or are self-employed. This may lead to BAME workers having to continue to work in jobs that are higher risk.
- (d) The Milton Keynes Local Outbreak Control Plan, which acknowledges the disparities of COVID-19 in BAME groups and aims to reduce those inequalities and protect vulnerable groups.

That this Council resolves to:

- 1) request that Cabinet consider implementing the recommendations from the Public Health England report 'Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups' where possible and appropriate.
- 2) request that Cabinet to consider investigating whether there is a need for extra support for BAME communities as part of the COVID-19 Recovery Strategy, undertaking a more targeted, specific response.
- 3) Write to the two Milton Keynes MPs, asking they acknowledge the two Public Health England reports and hold the Conservative government to implementing the recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-review-of-disparities-in-risks-and-outcomes>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-understanding-the-impact-on-bame-communities>

### **3. Low traffic neighbourhoods**

Councillor D Hopkins – 1 August 2020

That this Council supports the concept of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and requests the Cabinet to introduce them when and where feasible in locations where they have the support and involvement of the local community.

### **4. Planning for the Future**

Councillor Crooks – 2 September 2020

That this Council:

- (a) supportive of the Government's commitment that more houses be built;
- (b) mindful of its unanimous commitment to the growth of Milton Keynes expressed in its response to the MK Futures Commission report on 20 July 2016;
- (c) aware that in Milton Keynes under successive administrations, local government has not failed the city - some 16,000 houses have already been granted planning permission, but developers have failed to build them;
- (d) committed to the principles behind the 2011 Localism Act and the importance of Neighbourhood Plans; and
- (e) convinced of the value of a comprehensive democratic input from residents and businesses at all stages of the planning process,

Resolves to encourage the Cabinet to prepare a response to the Government's consultative White Paper *Planning for the Future* which includes the following points:

- (1) the dangers in grounding the Local Plan process on a reduced evidence base, on a potentially inadequate time for public consultation & meaningful involvement, and of introducing the threat of sanctions to already financially challenged councils;
- (2) the removal of the opportunity for local community input and democratic accountability by the proposed increase (within Renewal Zones) of automatic permitted development rights together with the threat to democratic scrutiny by the inclusion of an option to remove the Public Examination process from the approval of a Local Plan and the removal of democratically accountable decision-making on the balancing of competing requirements that emerges at detailed application stage for most developments;

- (3) the undesirability of removing the "duty to cooperate" with neighbouring councils in the preparation of Local Plans, particularly pertinent in Milton Keynes where local boundaries follow historic divisions long overtaken by the city's development;
- (4) the renewal of nationally imposed top down housing targets based on a standard method for calculating housing need regardless of local circumstances, with no indication of any local planning authority's ability to determine key elements of outline plans such as housing size and tenure mix, and access arrangements together with the impact on the principle of mixed neighbourhoods and community cohesion by allowing block allocations of affordable housing and executive housing to be considered on separate planning applications;
- (5) the need to ensure that any housing allocations deliver the required number of bedrooms, not homes with too few bedrooms, to house our population;
- (6) the expectation that "First Homes" will take priority over all other forms of affordable home ownership which may raise barriers to home ownership, not lower them, by lessening the opportunity for shared ownership, and reduce the supply of much needed affordable homes for rent resulting in homelessness;
- (7) the likelihood that the design code provisions will produce either (i) too detailed a manual to be helpful with lots of options and hundreds of pages, or (ii) an "identikit Britain" manual with such limited options that community character will be reduced to a memory, and all innovation stifled, or (iii) a minimalist manual with so few policies that developers will be able to reduce standards;
- (8) the threat to the rural economy, park-based leisure facilities, visitor buildings at historic sites and much else from the binary "development or none" approach to protecting sites;
- (9) the implications for environmental protection and biodiversity of the proposal that sustainability appraisals be abolished;
- (10) the impracticality of determining the infrastructure requirements and practicality of all sites proposed in just 12 months from the close of the call for zoning proposals - let alone when every Planning Authority in the country will be doing so during the same 12 months;

- (11) the difficulty for local councils that the proposed new national infrastructure levy will only be paid upon occupation leaving councils having to borrow in order to pay for and deliver any infrastructure needed up front, which is aggravated by the lack of any method for ensuring that the infrastructure levy actually covers the cost of the required infrastructure in an area, and by the White Paper's silence on how any infrastructure less unrelated to councils - for example medical facilities and public transport - is to be delivered; and
- (12) that the housing delivery test be replaced by:
- (a) An agreed timescale for submitting reserved matters or equivalent, and for completion of each phase or parcel, at outline approval of plans on each major site.
  - (b) Addressing the problem of developers who will not bring forward reserved matters or build housing on time through the tax system so that land approved for development does not lie untouched or incomplete as at present.
  - (c) A restriction on the sanctioning of Councils to those who fail to maintain a valid Local Plan that allocates sufficient housing, or who fail wholesale to determine plans within agreed timescales - councils should not be sanctioned when developers fail to build plans that they have assured councils are deliverable.

That this Council further resolves that:

- (13) that the Cabinet be requested to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government asking that local councils be given access to sufficient resource to promote large scale investment in quality affordable housing to rent
- (14) that the critical importance of development framework SPDs and related design guides and codes under the proposed system be recognised, and that the Cabinet assess the resource implications of producing them independently of developers in order to retain control over future developments.

## 5. Covid-19 Economic recovery

Councillor Walker – 3 September 2020

That this Council notes with concern:

- a) The economic crisis resulting from the global coronavirus pandemic.
- b) The Centre for Cities (21<sup>st</sup> August 2020) report showing Milton Keynes in the bottom 10 towns and cities across the UK for its offline retail recovery in terms of spend.
- c) The significant rise in unemployment in Milton Keynes and across the country.
- d) The lack of short-term policies and initiatives in the Cabinet's Economic Recovery Plan.
- e) The significant rise in unemployment in Milton Keynes and across the country and across the country and notes the end date of the Government's furlough scheme.

Furthermore, that this Council:

- a) Reaffirms its support for Milton Keynes' retail sector and understands its importance to supply chains, people's livelihoods and financial security.
- b) Recognises that to drive local economic growth and support for employment, small businesses, high streets and town centres, it must invest in relevant expertise and ensure sufficient staffing levels.
- c) Highlights its determination to do all it can to protect people's jobs and income across the entire economy.
- d) Reaffirms its commitment for MK to be a leading European City and encourages inward investment into Milton Keynes from around the globe to support our recovery.
- e) Welcomes the Government's schemes and funding which has protected jobs and helped restart the economy.
- f) Believes the consequences of the economic crisis should also be considered a public health issue.

That this Council therefore resolves, to call on the Cabinet to:

- 1) Consider a free parking scheme to stimulate visitor numbers in Central Milton Keynes to support the retail sector.
- 2) Invest in additional staffing levels in relevant areas of the Council such as planning, legal and economic development, to provide additional support and capacity to local businesses.

- 3) Draft a new and competitive inward investment strategy that will put MK at the forefront of the UK's economic recovery.
- 4) Work with our local MPs to draft a package of 'shovel ready' projects that can be submitted to Ministers and considered as part of the Government's ongoing spending review.
- 5) Broaden the £500,000 green recovery fund to incentivise businesses to create new green jobs.
- 6) Request the Public Health team focus resources on analysing and addressing public health challenges resulting from the economic crisis.