



Minutes of the meeting of the MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL held on TUESDAY
14 NOVEMBER 2006 at 7.30 pm

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

Aldermen Bartlett, Connor and Howell were also present

Apologies: Councillors Bristow, Sandra Clark and Coventry and Alderman Ellis

Also Present: 60 members of the public

CL68 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 10 October
2006, be approved and signed by the Mayor as correct records.

CL69 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced the death of former Councillor Roy Miller.

The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect.

CL70 PROCEDURAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The Mayor announced that he would be taking the items in the
following order, before returning to the order on the agenda:

- (a) Public Involvement
- (b) Item 5(b)(v) - Tavistock Street, Bletchley: Road Closure
- (c) Item 5(b)(i) - B&Q Roundabout and Garage

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- (a) Question from Dr. Sarah Sherlock to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways):

“We are aware that proposals have been made to reconsider the decisions regarding Tavistock Street by Councillors Long, Dransfield and Mabbott. Are these proposals being seriously considered by the Council regardless of previously agreed decisions?”

- (b) Question from Dr. Victoria Pearson to Councillor I McCall, referred to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways):

“Residents believe that the Tavistock Street consultation process was robust, open and honest and as a result a democratic outcome was achieved. Does the Council agree?”

- (c) Question from Dr. Manish Patel to Councillor I McCall referred to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways):

“Are the Council going to allow a minority of people, who entered into the consultation process, but refuse to acknowledge its validity, to delay or even derail the democratic process?”

- (d) Question from Dr. Andrew McMillan to Councillor I McCall referred to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways):

“Does Councillor Mabbott have any validity in challenging the Council’s agreed decision over Tavistock Street by dividing neighbourhoods with vexatious tactics aimed to be divisive to the democratic process?”

- (e) Question from Mr Marcus Ronaldson to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways):

“Given that the democratically agreed decision is for an experimental order, with opportunity for a review after 6 months, would the Council agree that there would be value in trialling this agreed scheme?”

- (f) Question from Ms Lorraine Hurst to Councillor I McCall referred to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways):

“Should there be a reconsideration of the Tavistock Street agreed decisions, residents will be disillusioned by the Council. Do the Council wish local communities to feel empowered by their involvement in the democratic process, as recommended in recent Government White Papers, or not?”

- (g) Question from Ms Barbara Day to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways):

“If the gating of Tavistock Street is to be suspended, can we be guaranteed that the remainder of the agreed works will be continued to completion within the agreed timescales?”

Response from Councillor Williams:

“Tavistock Street has proved to be an interesting occasion for me, as a new Cabinet Member. I am grateful for the opportunity given to me to answer questions in a public arena with regard to the proposed severance of Tavistock Street.

Your first question mentions Councillors Dransfield, Long and Mabbott. I can honestly say that I don't know yet what their proposals are, so whether I would seriously consider them remains to be seen. At the moment, there is no intention of renegeing on any promises that were given as a result of the consultation process.

This leads me to Dr. Victoria Pearson's comments. Yes, I concur with the residents of Tavistock Street that the process was robust, open and honest and democratic outcome was achieved. That is my view, a view that I have expressed publicly and will continue to do so.

Are the Council going to allow a minority of people to derail the democratic process? The answer is no. At the moment, there is no intention to renege on any of the consultation processes.

Does Councillor Mabbott have any validity in challenging the agreed decision? The answer is, yes, he does. He is an elected Member of this Council and he has the same right as every resident of Milton Keynes and every Parish and Town Council, to challenge the Administration on any decision that it makes. I welcome that ability that people have because I believe in open and fair government, and I believe, therefore, Councillor Mabbott, and indeed any Councillor, should have the right to challenge any decision made by this Council. I think every and any resident should also have that right. However, as to him dividing neighbourhoods with vexatious tactics, I can only say that I can't comment for the morality and ethics of another Councillor. You who vote, may be able to make that comment in due course.

Mr Ronaldson, given that the democratically reached decision was an Experimental Order, and I thank you for saying this because, again, it gives me the opportunity to say this is an Experimental Order, and only after the six months that the street has been severed by a gate, will there be a final decision. We recommend that every resident, every trader, every Parish Council representative and every Ward

Councillor gets involved and gives their responses to what they see as a result of the severance.

Mrs Hurst asked should there be a reconsideration of the Tavistock Street agreed decision. At the moment, there is, in my view, no need for a reconsideration. The consultation process was complete, robust, open, fair and obvious.

Mrs Barbara Day asks if the gating of Tavistock Street is to be suspended, can we guarantee that the remainder of the agreed works will be continued. I believe I have answered the bit about the gating of Tavistock Street, but I will say that, without regard to the severance of Tavistock Street, the remainder of the works have been agreed. There is a plan in progress, which the Ward Councillors and the Town Council have been a part and, yes, all of those works will continue to be progressed.”

Dr Patel and Ms Hurst asked supplementary questions which were answered by Councillor Williams.

- (h) Question from Ms Karen Stephens to Councillor Dransfield (Chair of the Audit Committee):

“Why have you suddenly become concerned with Fenny Stratford issues?”

Answer from Councillor Dransfield:

“I am a resident of Milton Keynes and I am concerned about issues in all areas of Milton Keynes. I actually use one of the businesses in Tavistock Street. I was approached by this business to say that they haven’t been properly consulted. The first reason why, those businesses serve not just Fenny Stratford or Bletchley, they serve the whole of Milton Keynes and beyond. This is a concern to all of those who are interested in making sure that businesses that provide services in Milton Keynes are sustainable and continue to provide those services and employing people from Milton Keynes.

The second reason, that I will raise in a motion later, has been answered by the arrogance with which Councillor Williams has answered those questions. He’s not going to listen and he’s not going to be concerned. I am very much aware that you, as part of Tavistock Street, have got an interest in what happens. There are others that I am aware of in the business community who are concerned about it, and there are others, I suspect, from North Street and Western Road, who are concerned that it will affect them.

My motion, later tonight, isn’t to say that it shouldn’t be closed, I am not supporting one side or the other. I am actually saying there should be a reappraisal of this, there should be a consideration of all the evidence and issues that

might be raised. I have a fear at the moment that there is no natural justice being done. Something has been railroaded through. A Cabinet Member is quite arrogantly going to go one way without listening to evidence. Quite frankly, if he heard the evidence at the last Council meeting, he would have delayed the gating, which I think would have been the right thing to do, and I don't think we would have had this issue on the table today. It is not a decision being made by the Council, it is a decision being made by the Cabinet.

Later on tonight, I am putting a motion forward to say that the issue should be considered again. As I suspect, if this Council agrees that this should be considered again, it will be considered by a special Committee to see all the facts that Councillor Williams refuses to acknowledge. I think we have a Cabinet that is out of step with the whole Council, and there should be some question mark about whether or not this Cabinet is fit for running this Council."

Ms Stephens asked a supplementary question which was answered by Councillor Dransfield.

- (i) Question from Mr Tom Graco to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways):

"In the interests of democracy would it not be best to let everyone who will be affected by the proposed gating of Tavistock Street vote in a simple yes or no ballot?"

Answer from Councillor Williams:

"The reason that a simple, as you put, yes or no ballot would be difficult is because, as Councillor Dransfield is correct in saying businesses draw people from all over Milton Keynes. How would it be possible to determine everyone that will be affected? There doesn't appear to be any way that one could actually determine who would and who would not be affected.

Secondly, I believe the consultation process was complete and not flawed in any way, and that the results were quite clear. I believe that the interests of democracy, therefore, have already been served."

Mr Graco asked a supplementary question which was answered by Councillor Williams.

- (j) Question from Mr Ian Ross to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways):

"As you are no doubt now aware the consultation process for the proposed gating of Tavistock Street was fatally flawed in numerous areas. With this in mind are you and the rest of the Liberal Democrats happy to waste at least £30,000 of Council Tax payers' money on defending this flawed consultation in the High Court in election year?"

Answer from Councillor Williams:

“You again have attacked the consultation process. I am satisfied that the consultation process was not, in your own words, fatally flawed, and I am also satisfied that it was open, honest and complete.

It is a matter of principle that if something is right, whether it's an election year or not, is not a matter of consideration. What is a matter of consideration is principles and priority. Therefore, if Milton Keynes Council has to, because of any legal action taken against it, defend that in the High Court, then, yes, that's what we would do.”

Mr Ross asked a supplementary question which was answered by Councillor Williams.

(k) Question from Mr John Parker to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways):

“There is at best, an element of doubt concerning the processes involved at the decision to gate Tavistock Street.

There are a few residents in Tavistock Street who would like the scheme to go through, as it would be in their best interests to do so. Most of those in favour are here tonight, it would appear.

However, the fact remains that the vast majority of both local residents from North Street and Western Road and all the businesses in Tavistock Street amounting to hundreds of people, not just a few, are against it.

Would it not therefore be the correct and democratic thing for you to review the whole matter in the light of the huge public outcry that has emerged since all the facts came to light, rather than attempt to 'railroad' through a plan that clearly has enormous shortcomings, with little or no concern for the majority view?”

Answer from Councillor Williams:

“I actually don't agree that there is an element of concern about the processes. All the traders were invited to give comment and there was also a two day exhibition that they were invited to attend and to give comment. Some of the traders took that opportunity, but not all of them. It is regrettable that any element of doubt has been caused by a number of people by not taking the opportunity to be involved in the democratic process.

You also state that there was a huge public outcry. I would have to point that the public outcry has been fairly equally divided into those in favour of gating Tavistock Street, and those against. If you look at the newspapers over the last few weeks, you will see photographs of people holding placards

saying "Please Sever Tavistock Street", and you will also see interviews with those who are opposed to that severance. I don't believe there has been any attempt to railroad this through. The consultation process was fair and democratic."

- (l) Question from Mr Barry Watson to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways):

"If your gating of Tavistock Street goes ahead, can you explain to us all how commercial vehicles are going to turn in Tavistock Street legally and safely?"

Answer from Councillor Williams:

"Quite clearly, commercial vehicles will not be able to turn because Tavistock Street will be gated. However, this is the reason we wrote to every business in Tavistock Street, and included a clear message that we would need their point of view on any turning circle that would be required. That was in the letter and it was also part of the consultation process."

Mr Watson asked a supplementary question which was answered by Councillor Williams.

- (m) Question from Mr Simon Wilkinson to Councillor E Henderson (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Community and Economy):

"As a representative of several landowners whose land is in the preferred growth plan, we need to have the cultural strategy made available as a matter of urgency to incorporate its policies into our plans. When will it be available?"

Answer from Councillor E Henderson:

"We expect the full document, as approved by Council, to be published on MKWeb on 20 November 2006. It is already on the MK Culture website."

- (n) Question from Ms Jackie Tracey to Councillor E Henderson (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Community and Economy):

"As a representative of retail in Central Milton Keynes, please can I be assured that the Council is committed to continuing partnership delivery, as this has been excellent throughout the whole consultation period?"

Answer from Councillor E Henderson:

"I would like to thank Jackie Tracey for her comment on the quality of the partnership working during the development of the Cultural Strategy. We value the contribution The Centre:MK has made to this process. Our firm intention is that the delivery of the Strategy will similarly be very much a partnership activity between all interested parties throughout the Borough."

(o) Other Questions

The following questions were also submitted, but could not be asked due to the expiry of the time allocated for Public Involvement by the Council's Procedure Rules.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.9, Members were asked to provide a written response.

(i) Question from Ms V Prince to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways):

"As a resident of The Crescent at the bottom of Tavistock Street, where will traffic go apart from our road to avoid the Speed Camera?"

(ii) Question from Mr Geoff New to Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways):

"Although I understand the residents of Tavistock Street do not want the traffic coming down their street, the street has been partially industrial for many years, if you block off their access from the top end of the road then the fully residential streets of North Street and The Crescent are going to have to take the traffic. They are going to either cut through the BP garage, or turn off into Dukes Drive down the side of Lidl to avoid the speed camera in Princess Way. As a resident of The Crescent I do not want my children's lives in danger by lorries coming down a residential only street. What safeguards do you intend to put in place to stop this happening?"

(iii) Question from Mr Danny Galvin to Councillor Long (Leader of the Labour Group):

"At the meeting of the Full Council on 10 October 2006, why did Councillor Williams state that all three Ward Councillors were in favour of severing Tavistock Street, when at the same meeting, you said that the Ward Councillors stated that severance would not work?"

(iv) Question from Mr Paul Bartlett to Councillor Jury (Leader of the Conservative Group):

"Given the policy of the Conservative Party to 'oppose residential infilling in gardens', what is your view as Leader of the Conservative Group to the infilling of garden land in London Road, Loughton?"

CL72

TAVISTOCK STREET, BLETCHLEY - ROAD CLOSURE

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

“That this Council notes the evidence supplied by Councillor Long that officers considered the closure of Tavistock Street to be impractical, and evidence of inconsistent consultation by the public at the last Council meeting, about the proposed closure of Tavistock Street and therefore agrees to request the Cabinet to suspend the closure of Tavistock Street until it has been advised by the Environment Policy Development Committee about the implications of the closure.”

The voting was as follows:

FOR: Councillors Box, Brock, Butler-Ellis, Campbell, Carstens, Edwards, Dransfield, Geary, Holroyd, Hopkins, Hoyle, Irons, Jury, Latham, Legg, Lloyd, Long, Mabbott, McKenzie, Miles, Morris, Morsley, Pendry, Tunney, Wharton and Wilson (26).

AGAINST: Councillors Barry, Burke, Carruthers, Stephen Clark, Crooks, Drewett, Eastman, Eaton, Exon, Ferrans, Fraser, Gerrella, E Henderson, I Henderson, D McCall, I McCall, Pugh, Seymour, Snell, Tallack, Tamagnini-Barbosa and Williams (22)

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

The motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED -

That this Council notes the evidence supplied by Councillor Long that officers considered the closure of Tavistock Street to be impractical, and evidence of inconsistent consultation by the public at the last Council meeting, about the proposed closure of Tavistock Street and therefore agrees to request the Cabinet to suspend the closure of Tavistock Street until it has been advised by the Environment Policy Development Committee about the implications of the closure.

CL73

B&Q ROUNDABOUT AND GARAGE

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

- “1. That this Council is concerned about the access problems into Central Bletchley and the delays in addressing problems associated with the B&Q roundabout.
2. That this Council therefore agrees to ask the Cabinet to:
 - (a) bring forward proposals to improve the roundabout, and identify sufficient resources to commence work in the current financial year; and
 - (b) bring forward proposals to re-develop the central Bletchley Bus Garage at the earliest appropriate time.”

Councillor Mabbott moved the following amendment which was seconded by the Deputy Mayor and accepted by the mover of the motion:

- "1. That in paragraph 1 of the motion, the words, 'and the significant delay in progressing work on the link road between Saxon Street and Tavistock Street', be added to the end of the sentence.
2. That, in paragraph 2(a), the words 'and build the Saxon Street/Tavistock Street Link Road;' be added after the word 'roundabout'".

The voting on the motion, as amended, was as follows:

FOR: Councillors Box, Brock, Butler-Ellis, Campbell, Carstens, Edwards, Dransfield, Geary, Holroyd, Hopkins, Hoyle, Irons, Jury, Latham, Legg, Lloyd, Long, Mabbott, McKenzie, Miles, Morris, Morsley, Pendry, Tunney, Wharton and Wilson (26).

AGAINST: Councillors Barry, Burke, Carruthers, Stephen Clark, Crooks, Drewett, Eastman, Eaton, Exon, Ferrans, Fraser, Gerrella, E Henderson, I Henderson, D McCall, I McCall, Pugh, Seymour, Snell, Tallack, Tamagnini-Barbosa and Williams (22)

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

The motion, as amended, was declared carried.

The Council heard from three members of the public on this item.

RESOLVED -

1. That this Council is concerned about the access problems into Central Bletchley and the delays in addressing problems associated with the B&Q roundabout and the significant delay in progressing work on the link road between Saxon Street and Tavistock Street.
2. That this Council therefore agrees to ask the Cabinet to:
 - (a) bring forward proposals to improve the roundabout and build the Saxon Street/Tavistock Street Link Road, and identify sufficient resources to commence work in the current financial year; and
 - (b) bring forward proposals to re-develop the central Bletchley Bus Garage at the earliest appropriate time.

REPORTS FROM CABINET AND COMMITTEES

Cabinet - 7 November 2006

Cultural Strategy

Councillor E Henderson moved the following recommendation from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7 November 2006, which was seconded by Councillor Seymour:

“That the Cultural Strategy be adopted.”

The Council heard from the Chair of the Cultural Strategy Review Group.

Councillor Dransfield moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Miles and accepted by the mover of the recommendation:

“That the following clause be added to the recommendation:

‘That the Cabinet be requested to keep the Strategy under review, and be authorised to agree changes from time to time to ensure that the Strategy reflects the changing cultural, sporting and leisure needs of Milton Keynes.’”

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

“That the following additional clauses be added to the recommendation:

- “3. That whilst the Council welcomes the proposals in the Work Plan on the development of the Library Service, the Council is saddened to see no absolute commitment to improving the current situation in the 9 Priority Action Plans.
4. That the Council notes:
 - (a) the damning report of the Peer Review on the failing Library service; and
 - (b) the replies Members have received from officers to questions on the worsening situation as regards books and book fund,
5. That the Council agrees to ask Cabinet to agree a further action priority point number 10 and that this should read:
‘To improve the current Library system to at least meet the library standards, and to promote the development of libraries in the new areas of Milton Keynes.’”

The voting was as follows:

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

AGAINST: Councillors Barry, Burke, Carruthers, Stephen Clark, Crooks, Drewett, Eastman, Eaton, Exon, Ferrans, Fraser, Gerrella, E Henderson, I Henderson, D McCall, I McCall, Pugh, Seymour, Snell, Tallack, Tamagnini-Barbosa and Williams (22)

ABSTENTIONS: Councillors Box, Brock, Butler-Ellis, Carstens, Dransfield, Geary, Hopkins, Hoyle, Jury, Latham, Morris, Tunney and Wharton (13)

The amendment was declared lost.

On being put to the vote the recommendation, as amended, was declared carried unanimously.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Cultural Strategy be adopted.
2. That the Cabinet be requested to keep the Strategy under review, and be authorised to agree changes from time to time to ensure that the Strategy reflects the changing cultural, sporting and leisure needs of Milton Keynes.

CL75

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

(a) Question from Councillor Long to Councillor I McCall:

"Would you please outline for the Council your views on Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and clarify whether you support Liberal Democrat MPs in Parliament who have consistently opposed measures to take a tougher line on crime and anti-social behaviour?"

Answer from Councillor I McCall:

"This Council's policy is to use ASBOs as a last resort, having tried other methods including mediation and anti-social behaviour contracts. As a Council, we are not competing to get the highest number of ASBOs, as some other Councils seem to be doing elsewhere in the country. We use them if no other alternative has worked. We believe that the result is often to fast track young people into prison rather than actually preventing crime, which is the whole point of them. We believe in delivering effective management of anti-social behaviour rather than trying to look tough on crime.

Only 5% of the complaints received on anti-social behaviour are repeats complaints, so we believe that shows we are managing this effectively. Many complaints are referred to mediation and 62% are resolved satisfactorily to all parties concerned. Those that can't be resolved with mediation or visits are taken further, ideally to an anti-social behaviour contract and, if that doesn't work, to an ASBO. The Council

has issued 30 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and 28 ASBOs.

The Liberal Democrat MPs also believe in delivering effective management of anti-social behaviour. They support parts of legislation that they think are effective and, again, they don't just try to look tough for the sake of it. However, Government policy is not working on anti-social behaviour. We are just ending up with overcrowded prison and high levels of crime."

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

(b) Question from Councillor Geary to Councillor D McCall:

"I'm sure that Councillor Douglas McCall will recall my interest in the trial of the food waste recycling scheme which took place about a year ago. Early indications showed this to be a very successful scheme. Can Councillor McCall therefore enlighten this Council as to what the final results of the trial were, i.e. how many tonnes were recycled over what period from how many dwellings, and how much this reduced the amount of waste going to landfill?"

Answer from Councillor D McCall:

"We are awaiting the final report on the 'official' twelve month trial from DEFRA appointed consultants ORA, but I can inform you of some of the 'raw' figures from the twelve month trial from September 2005 to September 2006.

There were a total of 1,000 dwellings in the two trial locations, 500 in Newport Pagnell and 500 in Bradwell Common.

Newport Pagnell trialled a 'food only' collection system and just over 42 tonnes were collected over the year, while Bradwell Common trialled a combined food and garden waste collection system and a total of 74 tonnes were collected."

(c) Question from Councillor Morris to Councillor E Henderson:

"Do you fully support the future of the MK Music Service?"

Answer from Councillor E Henderson:

"Absolutely. We are completely committed to a service which we believe is educationally of great value, socially of great value, culturally of great value and which we want to continue in every way."

Councillor Morris asked a supplementary question, which was answered by Councillor E Henderson.

(d) Question from Councillor Miles to Councillor E Henderson:

"Are you aware of the correspondence recently e-mailed to all Councillors by Mrs Patricia Haig on behalf of the Milton Keynes Music Service Friends and if so, would you tell the

Council how you plan to address the (non-personnel) issues raised therein?"

Answer from Councillor E Henderson:

"Because of the switch to the new accommodation, there were some significant teething problems with IT systems. One of the first teething problems was getting voicemail, etc. up and running, and this did not happen as smoothly as we would have liked over the summer. I understand that that was resolved by 9 September 2006.

It appeared that the server which uses a programme called 'Music Service System' was not performing the necessary function for the Music Service. An upgrade of the server was required. I understand that that has taken some time to work out exactly what the specification is and some time to resolve. IT has, within the last day or so, now sorted the problem.

The problem is in the process of a solution."

(e) Question from Councillor Campbell to Councillor D McCall:

"In 2005/06, Milton Keynes issued just seven fines for littering and rubbish dumping. Manchester, meanwhile, which is a city of more than twice our population, issued over 2,500 such fines. Are you aware of how little this Council is doing to keep our streets clean, compared to so many other local councils?"

Answer from Councillor D McCall:

"I would like to say that the Council will be aware of the substantial financial investment that the Administration has put into Enforcement Officers, and that those officers have been taking numerous people to Court, where fines of £'000s have been issued for fly-tipping. To try and go back to some historical figure before the Enforcement Officers were employed, seems to be missing the point about what is happening now. Our Enforcement Officers are doing excellent work in tackling fly-posting and fly-tipping. In the last week, we have had a very successful case against Barrett Homes, who have been fined £4,500 for fly-posting.

I know your Labour Government is obsessed with league tables. I think it is the quality of service the residents receive that is important."

Councillor Campbell asked a supplementary question, which was answered by Councillor D McCall.

(f) Question from Councillor Pugh to Councillor I Henderson:

"Could you tell us what the level of homelessness is in Milton Keynes at present, and what progress has been made since the Liberal Democrats took over control from Labour?"

Answer from Councillor I Henderson:

"I think the measure of success came last Thursday. Two members of staff and I went down to the Department for Communities and Local Government to receive an award and a thanks from Yvette Cooper, the Minister responsible, for the work we have done in tackling homelessness in Milton Keynes. We have been made regional champions for this area, and given the task of helping other Councils to reach the same level. I think the important thing for is that we have actually got far less homelessness than we had when the Liberal Democrats took control of the Council. People are now in Bed and Breakfast accommodation for a number of days, rather than a number of weeks, and those in temporary accommodation have now reduced by a quarter."

(g) Question from Councillor Wharton to Councillor I Henderson:

"A resident in my Ward of Stony Stratford has recently left hospital and is now registered disabled. Do you think it is acceptable that she has had to wait for over twelve months for her Council home to be adapted? Assuming that you do not find this acceptable, can I ask what you are going to do about it?"

Answer from Councillor I Henderson:

"The first thing I need to do is explain the background on how this works. People are assessed by an Occupational Therapist to decide whether they need disabled adaptations. The Occupational Therapist awards points and then the adaptations are carried out, according to the number of points that people have.

I have looked into the tenant's case that you have brought to my attention. This lady was awarded six points by the Occupational Therapist, at the point when she left hospital. The urgent cases, that are done immediately, come in at about 150 and the ones on the waiting list, that we are doing at the moment, have got 126 points. This tries to put into context the reason why this lady may have to wait.

Having said that, I do think it is important that people should get their adaptations as quickly as possible. However, we have also got to remember the Housing Revenue Account pays for the tenants' adaptations. This Account is under tremendous pressure to deliver all the things it has to do, despite the fact that every year since we took over, we have added considerable sums of money to the original adaptations budget. This year, for example, we added £525,000. At the end of the year, we will have spent £900,000 actually doing this year's work. However much I do not want people to wait for their adaptations, there is a question of resources and it is also a question of priorities."

(h) Question from Councillor Dransfield to Councillor Long:

“At the last Council meeting, during the debate on School Meals, Councillor Campbell made statements about the Government’s expenditure in the area of support for new school meals. It has now come about that a large part of the money that the Government is offering for school meals is due to come from the Lottery Fund, and the Lottery Fund has not agreed this. Do you agree that Councillor Campbell should be more economical with her spin, and less economical with the truth, and not to mislead the people of Milton Keynes about the failed policy from the Labour Government?”

Answer from Councillor Long:

“No.”

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

(i) Question from Councillor Morsley to Councillor D McCall:

“Two to three months ago, we asked if it was possible to get a display cabinet to display the awards we received for Britain in Bloom, several of which I received on behalf of the Council. What is the latest position on this please?”

Answer from Councillor D McCall:

“I believe it is already on order.”

CL76

QUESTIONS OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE POLICE AUTHORITY

Questions from Councillor I Henderson

Five family Sized Houses on the Grounds of Newport Pagnell Police Station

- “1. For what periods of time has each of these houses been occupied over the last three years? (detailed information for each dwelling please.)
2. What has it cost Thames Valley Police to maintain these houses over the last 3 years?
3. What income would have been received by Thames Valley Police if these houses had been let?
4. Will Thames Valley Police hand these houses to Milton Keynes Council to manage on its behalf so that local families may be housed and Thames Valley Police receive an income?”

Answer from Councillor Crooks (Representative of the Police Authority appointed to answer questions on its behalf)

“In order to address the various questions you raise, I have provided a written briefing note relating to the use of these properties, as follows”:

Briefing Note:

The police houses located at Newport Pagnell are an integral part of a site which is an operational base and because of this they cannot be treated as stand alone residential entities. They are located within the inner yard of the police station and there would be both security and health and safety issues were non police personnel granted rights of residency and access. The configuration of the site means that access to four of the houses is directly across the front area of the site and right beside the police station at a narrow point.

For the purposes of housing legislation the Police Authority is considered to be a local authority and runs the risk of creating secure tenancies and the possible loss of houses to police use in perpetuity unless tenants meet the specific and narrow criteria set out in the Housing Act 1985.

For these reasons the Force has refrained from letting outside of the organisation or of selling on the open market and the houses have therefore been designated for use to provide short term accommodation for police recruits and police staff. They are let on a short term basis to enable officers and staff to move into the area in which they are to be employed, to provide a base within reasonable travelling distance from their place of work and to provide a base from which they may then look to secure their own longer term housing. Three of the five have been occupied in the past twelve months.

It is not possible to anticipate very far in advance when and for how long a property will be occupied or vacant because the demand for such housing varies greatly between batches of recruits. Occupancy records for each property for the last three years are as follows:

1 High Street

Vacated by long term occupant in 2004 then refurbished and re-designated for short term accommodation. Occupied since September 2006.

2 High Street

Vacated by long term occupant in 2004 then re-designated for short term accommodation. Occupied from 2 February 2005 until 10 March 2006. Currently vacant.

3 High Street

Vacated by long term occupant in 2005 then refurbished and re-designated for short term accommodation. Currently vacant.

4 High Street

Vacated by long term occupant in 1998 then re-designated for short term accommodation. Occupied from 22 June 1999 until 26 November 2000, 29 January 2001 until 28 March 2003, 16 November 2005 until 5 March 2006. Currently vacant.

6 Bury Close

Vacated by long term occupant in 2004 then refurbished and re-designated for short term accommodation. Currently vacant.

Expenditure incurred collectively on these houses since they became available for short term occupation totals £64,700. This sum incorporates expenditure on the following elements: routine repairs and maintenance, Council Tax, utility charges and refurbishments to bring them up to reasonable standard.

Income received collectively over the last two years totals £4,230 plus savings on housing allowance where officers who qualify for housing allowance were temporarily in occupation.

On a final note, the Police Station at Newport Pagnell will be considered for possible development in the light of the future policing needs of the Milton Keynes area.

Questions from Councillor E Henderson

Numbers of Police Officers

- “1. What is the ratio of police officers to population in Milton Keynes currently and what has the ratio been in each of the last ten years? (Please explain the sources of data used in the answer.)
2. What plans are Thames Valley Police making to ensure that the number of police officers in Milton Keynes keeps pace with population growth over the next ten years?”

Answer from Councillor Crooks (Representative of the Police Authority appointed to answer questions on its behalf)

“The data in relation to police officer numbers and the population are set out in the table overleaf:

Police Officer Strength and Population Figures in Milton Keynes				
As At March	Police Officer Strength	Mid Year Estimates	Population	Population served per Police Officer
2006	390	2005	218,500	560
2005	385	2004	216,734	563
2004	378	2003	215,715	571
2003	353	2002	210,426	596
2002	349	2001	207,055	593
2001	337	2000	210,550	625
2000	335	1999	207,560	620
1999	334	1998	203,740	610
1998	340	1997	N/A	
1997	314	1996	N/A	
The Police Officer Strength figures are from historical tables and reports used for the submission of annual data requirements to the Home Office, Performance Book and SPI Book.				
The Population figures are from the 2001 census and Mid-Year Estimates.				

The overall level of resources available to the Force is dependent on the level of Government Grant support and Council Tax precept. Within the overall budget determined by the Police Authority, the Chief Constable applies a Total Resource Allocation formula to determine an equitable distribution of resources across the whole Force area.

As you will note from the data given, Police Officer strength in Milton Keynes has grown significantly over the past ten years, and, in addition, the area will have benefited from increases in Police Staff and latterly Police Community Support Officers.

The Chief Constable and the Authority are extremely conscious of the development plans in relation to Milton Keynes and will continue to lobby for realistic settlements by Government to ensure that the Force area, including Milton Keynes, receives the appropriate level of resources.”

CL77 BUDGET 2007/08

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

- “1. That this Council is concerned that the Cabinet’s budget process lacks clear priorities, as evidenced by the target of £9 million of cross departmental cuts agreed by Cabinet on the 12 June 2006.
2. That the Council agrees that the Cabinet should give priority to the following eight service areas and that they should be the priority for extra resources:
 - (a) Safer Communities, including the funding of Community Safety Officers and Police Community

Support Officers and the extension of CCTV to Central Bletchley;

- (b) Children's Social Services, including a £1 million contingency fund;
 - (c) Better Environment, including extra funding for roads, pavements, tackling graffiti and improved drainage;
 - (d) Increasing education standards, learning and skills, including libraries funding;
 - (e) Support for older people services including disabled adaptations, support to stay in people's homes;
 - (f) Services for vulnerable adults including Mental Health Services and Learning Disability services;
 - (g) Addressing Social, Health and Economic inequalities across the Borough, through regeneration. social inclusion, public health, skills programmes and learning and children's centres especially in the more deprived areas; and
 - (h) Public Transport.
3. That the Council further agrees:
- (a) that the Cabinet should ensure the 2007/8 draft budget includes revenue funding 2.5% growth above inflation and demographic growth in each of the eight priority areas; and
 - (b) that the regeneration should bring together revenue and capital resources including Housing Revenue Account and General Fund monies."

In accordance with Procedure Rule 12(d) Councillor Crooks moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Tallack:

"That the motion be referred to the Cabinet for consideration as part of the ongoing budget discussions."

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared carried with 35 Members voting in favour, 12 Members voting against and 0 Members abstaining from voting.

RESOLVED -

That the following motion be referred to the Cabinet for consideration as part of the ongoing budget discussions:

- "1. That this Council is concerned that the Cabinet's budget process lacks clear priorities, as evidenced by the target of £9 million of cross departmental cuts agreed by Cabinet on the 12 June 2006.

2. That the Council agrees that the Cabinet should give priority to the following eight service areas and that they should be the priority for extra resources:
 - (a) Safer Communities, including the funding of Community Safety Officers and Police Community Support Officers and the extension of CCTV to Central Bletchley;
 - (b) Children's Social Services, including a £1 million contingency fund;
 - (c) Better Environment, including extra funding for roads, pavements, tackling graffiti and improved drainage;
 - (d) Increasing education standards, learning and skills, including libraries funding;
 - (e) Support for older people services including disabled adaptations, support to stay in people's homes;
 - (f) Services for vulnerable adults including Mental Health Services and Learning Disability services;
 - (g) Addressing Social, Health and Economic inequalities across the Borough, through regeneration, social inclusion, public health, skills programmes and learning and children's centres especially in the more deprived areas; and
 - (h) Public Transport.
3. That the Council further agrees:
 - (a) that the Cabinet should ensure the 2007/8 draft budget includes revenue funding 2.5% growth above inflation and demographic growth in each of the eight priority areas; and
 - (b) that the regeneration should bring together revenue and capital resources including Housing Revenue Account and General Fund monies."

CL78

PROCEDURAL MOTION

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 21.1 (Suspension of Council Procedure Rules), it was moved by Councillor Tunney and seconded by Councillor Geary, 'that Council Procedure Rule 8 (Duration of Meeting) be suspended to allow the remaining motions to be considered'.

On being put to the vote the procedural motion was declared carried with 19 Members voting in favour, 18 Members voting against and 9 Members abstaining from voting.

RESOLVED -

That Council Procedure Rule 8 (Duration of Meeting) be suspended to allow the remaining motions to be considered.

CL79

STRONG AND PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES' WHITE PAPER

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

- “1. That this Council welcomes the publication of the ‘Strong and Prosperous Communities’ White Paper.
2. That this Council agrees to ask Cabinet to introduce the following measures, which do not require statute:
 - (a) devolution of more powers, services and resources to Parish Councils throughout Milton Keynes giving local people a real opportunity to shape services to meet the needs of local areas;
 - (b) resource equalisation to ensure that the poorest communities are protected and provided with resources to do the job that local people want;
 - (c) the provision of small budgets to all Councillors to enable them, to respond direct to their local communities’ needs
 - (d) extension of the scrutiny system to enable the local authority to scrutinise the work of all the local agencies more effectively; and
 - (e) providing Parish Councils and local communities with the power to challenge the work and priorities of the local authority, through a ‘Community Call for Action’.”

Councillor Mabbott moved the following amendment, which was seconded by the Deputy Mayor, and accepted by the mover of the motion:

“That the current paragraph 2(c) be deleted and replaced with the following:

- ‘(c) The introduction of robust measures which ensure local ward councillors are able to fulfil the 'community leadership' function set out in the White Paper, including protocols to ensure effective consultation and sharing of ward information with ward councillors by the Council and its partner bodies, and the provision of designated budgets to enable ward councillors to respond directly to their local communities' needs’

Councillor I McCall moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Hopkins:

“That all after the first two lines be deleted and replaced by:

'but regrets that the White Paper does not give any indication of the extent of the powers that may be devolved to local government.

- 2 That the Council notes a number of positive aspects of the White Paper, in particular:
 - (a) recognition of the importance of parish and town councils as the first tier of local government;
 - (b) restoration of the right of local councillors to defend their local communities on planning and licensing decisions;
 - (c) more powers for scrutiny committees to hold public services to account; and
 - (d) a cut in the number of Performance Indicators from 1200 to 200.

- 3 That the Council regrets the many opportunities the White Paper has completely missed, including:
 - (a) no radical devolution of power or funding from central government and quangos to town halls;
 - (b) no review of local government finance;
 - (c) no return of business rates to local control;
 - (d) no abolition of the Standards Board; and
 - (e) no recognition of the unpopularity of elected mayors.”

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared carried with 33 Members voting in favour, 13 Members against and 0 Members abstaining from voting.

On being put to the vote the substantive motion was declared carried with 33 Members voting in favour, 13 Members against and 0 Members abstaining from voting.

RESOLVED -

1. That this Council welcomes the publication of the 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' White Paper, but regrets that the White Paper does not give any indication of the extent of the powers that may be devolved to local government.

- 2 That the Council notes a number of positive aspects of the White Paper, in particular:
 - (a) recognition of the importance of parish and town councils as the first tier of local government;
 - (b) restoration of the right of local councillors to defend their local communities on planning and licensing decisions;

- (c) more powers for scrutiny committees to hold public services to account; and
 - (d) a cut in the number of Performance Indicators from 1200 to 200.
- 3 That the Council regrets the many opportunities the White Paper has completely missed, including:
- (a) no radical devolution of power or funding from central government and quangos to town halls;
 - (b) no review of local government finance;
 - (c) no return of business rates to local control;
 - (d) no abolition of the Standards Board; and
 - (e) no recognition of the unpopularity of elected mayors.

CL79

CALVERTON LANE TRAVELLERS SITE

With the consent of the Council the motion submitted by Councillor Hoyle, relating to Calverton Lane Travellers Site, was withdrawn.

THE MAYOR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 11.10 PM