



Minutes of the MEETING OF MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL held on WEDNESDAY
21 OCTOBER 2020 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillor A Geary (Mayor)
Councillors Akter, Alexander, Baines, Bint, Bowyer, Brackenbury,
K Bradburn, M Bradburn, R Bradburn, Brown, Cannon, Carr, Crooks,
Cryer-Whitehead, Darlington, Exon, Ferrans, P Geary, Gowans,
Green, D Hopkins, V Hopkins, Hosking, Jenkins, Khan, Lancaster,
Legg, Long, Marland, Marlow, McCall, McLean, McPake, 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

Alderman Bartlett

Apologies: Councillors Baume, Gilbert and Middleton and Aldermen Beeley,
Bristow, Coventry, Henderson, Howell and McKenzie and
Alderwomen Henderson, Irons, Lloyd and Saunders

Also Present: 103 members of the public

CL52 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on
16 September be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct
record, subject to Minute CL48 being amended to reflect:

- (a) Councillor Legg replacing Councillor Priestley on the Audit Committee; and
- (b) Councillor Lancaster replacing Councillor Baines on the Regeneration and Renewal Scrutiny Committee and on the Regeneration and Renewal Scrutiny Committee Call-in Sub-Committee

CL53 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

None disclosed.

CL54

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Queen's Birthday Honours

The Mayor announced that the following individuals had received awards in the Queen's Birthday Honours:

Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE)

Dr Deborah Katherine Morgan – (Director of Primary Mathematics at the National Centre of Excellence in Teaching Mathematics) for services to Education.

Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)

Melanie Beck - (Chief Executive Officer, MyMiltonKeynes) for services to the community during Covid-19.

Nasir Khan - (Co-Founder, Muslims in Rail) for services to Muslim Representation in the Rail Industry.

Medal of the Order of the British Empire

Myra Andrews for services to Performing Arts and Young People.

Kirshaida Mirza – (Volunteer Organiser, Great Get Together Iftar and Truby's Garden Tea Room [Inter Faith Café]) for services to Inter Faith and Community Cohesion in Milton Keynes.

Valerie Williamson for services to the community in North Buckinghamshire.

The Mayor expressed his pleasure that so many members of the Milton Keynes community had been recognised and indicated that he would be writing to all of those concerned to formally extend the thanks and congratulations of the Council.

CL55

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- (a) Question from Virginia Bell to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm)

Virginia Bell referred to The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the requirement for all public authorities to have regard for conserving biodiversity in the exercise of their functions.

Virginia Bell also referred to the Council's record as a progressive Council which had declared a climate emergency and was putting sustainable measures in place to back up its declaration and suggested that more needed to be done to protect wildlife.

Virginia Bell asked Councillor Darlington to ensure that the Council introduced the following measures to help minimise intensive land management:

- (a) mowing less;
- (b) stopping the use of harmful chemicals that adversely affect minibeasts and instead planting hardy native species of trees, shrubs and flowers which don't need sprays;
- (c) planting areas of grassland as wildflower areas, to include nettles, thistles and dandelions etc which were so precious to insects; and
- (d) finding an alternative to salt for treating icy roads.

Councillor Darlington indicated that the Council had, last year, produced a Biodiversity Action Plan which exceeded the new legislative requirements.

Councillor Darlington outlined that as Milton Keynes grew the Action Plan provided for 40% of the land to be either green or blue infrastructure. The Plan also aimed to provide protection for bees, bugs, bats, birds and butterflies and provide an environment where their numbers could increase. The Council had also provided finance to fund a rewilding project, but this had been delayed because of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Councillor Darlington explained that the Council was currently engaged in a biodiversity mapping exercise which would identify where best the Council could take action.

As a supplementary question Virginia Bell asked Councillor Darlington to confirm that the Council would mow less, stop the use of harmful chemicals that adversely affect minibeasts and finding an alternative to salt for treating icy roads.

Councillor Darlington indicated that as part of the biodiversity mapping exercise the Council was trying to identify which areas were most suited to rewilding, reduced mowing and in need of tree planting. The Council was constantly looking at measures where its impact on the natural environment could be minimised and as such was trying to reduce its use of road salt and chemicals and to this end it was currently trialling increased mechanical weeding.

(b) Question from Manish Verma to Councillor Townsend
(Cabinet member for Community Safety)

Manish Verma, referring to what he understood to be the Council's decision to stop buses being routed through Oxley Park, asked Councillor Townsend to clarify what was happening as many residents in Oxley Park depend on the service.

Councillor Townsend indicated that she had contacted Arriva and the disruption to the service had been as a result of a road being obstructed at certain times of the day because of building works. Although the Council's Highways Department had intervened and spoken to the developer, it had been necessary to close other roads at the same time. However, the bus was now back on its normal route.

As a supplementary question Manish Verma, referring to the question he asked at the Council meeting held on 16 September in connection with poor parking in Oxley Park and the difficulties being caused for some residents, asked Councillor Townsend to provide an update.

Councillor Townsend indicated that, as she explained at the last meeting, the Council had a Borough wide pavement parking ban, but that it needed to be activated in each area and have the support of the local community. Therefore, once a request had been received the Council would conduct a full consultation with residents to ensure there was support for the measures.

Councillor Townsend invited Mr Verma to supply her with details of the residents' concerns and the specific location where he believed a pavement parking ban was required.

(c) Question from Ethan Wilkinson to Councillor Townsend
(Cabinet member for Community Safety)

Ethan Wilkinson, referring to the current parking enforcement measures in Bletchley East which he did not believe were working because people were ignoring the signage and having no respect for parking enforcement officers, asked Councillor Townsend to outline what other measures the Council could explore.

Councillor Townsend emphasised that parking enforcement was never 100% effective as it was not possible to monitor at all times. However, it was possible to design schemes that addressed the majority of concerns.

Councillor Townsend therefore invited Mr Wilkinson to

provide specific details in order that the Council could review the existing parking scheme and consider how it could be redesigned to help address the concerns.

As a supplementary question Ethan Wilkinson, stressing that as the current parking measures were not working, asked Councillor Townsend if the Council would consider the use of wheel clamps and removing vehicles as a trial.

Councillor Townsend indicated that, once Mr Wilkinson responded with details of his specific concerns, she could liaise with officer colleagues to see which options, including wheel clamping and vehicle removal, would best address the concerns.

(d) Question from Charlotte Hall to Councillor Darlington
(Cabinet member for Public Realm)

Charlotte Hall, referring to the problem of littering of green-spaces and the efforts by some residents to clear the litter and report fly-tipping, asked Councillor Darlington what was being done to mitigate the problem.

Councillor Darlington, taking the opportunity to thank the many voluntary groups who were clearing litter across the Borough, indicated that the Council was able to support the groups with equipment, collection of rubbish, free passes to the Waste and Recycling Centres and advice on how to organise.

As a supplementary question Charlotte Hall, referring to the 'book a slot' scheme at waste recycling centres and the potential impact on fly-tipping, asked Councillor Darlington what was being done to open up the recycling centres to give more flexible access for residents.

Councillor Darlington indicated that the 'Book a Slot' scheme at the Council's Waste and Recycling Centres had been introduced to try to ensure social distancing was maintained and allowed residents to dispose of waste and recycling in as safe a way as possible during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Councillor Darlington also indicated that currently not all slots were being taken up and, should demand increase, the Council would review how access to the Waste and Recycling Centres was being managed.

However, Councillor Darlington did recognise that there was under capacity in the of the south of the Borough and as such the Bleak Hall Site was very busy. Therefore, it was necessary to identify an additional site in the south of the Borough, which would give the Council the opportunity to expand the services available and help meet its aspiration to be the Greenest City in the world.

(e) Question from Iain Layden to Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council)

Iain Layden, referring to a petition he presented to Council on 18 March 2020 opposing plans to lease Windmill Hill Golf Course to a developer, fence it off and build a sports hub, hotel and houses and Councillor Middleton's undertaking to review the arguments, both for and against the development, asked Councillor Middleton if he would commit to a date to meet in order to convey a response to the petition.

Councillor Marland indicated that, he was aware that Councillor Middleton had met with a number of groups several times on this issue, including attending several meetings of both West Bletchley councillors and of West Bletchley Council. As a result of those meetings and input from Councillor Wales, there has been several iterations of the scheme, and while Councillor Marland understood there were concerns he confirmed that Councillor Middleton was working hard to address as many of the concerns as he could.

As a supplementary question Iain Layden, referring to Councillor Middleton's response to the petition submitted on 18 March 2020, when he said that he would take account of the outcomes from the consultation exercise being carried out by Evolve when considering options and before responding to the petition, asked Councillor Marland if the Council had received the responses to the consultation exercise and, if so, whether the responses could be made available to the public

Councillor Marland indicated that, he was sure that when the decision came to be made, Councillor Middleton would honour his commitment.

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

Alan Francis, referring to the Council's waste collection pilot and the criteria for houses to be exempt from having wheelie bins, asked Councillor Darlington why many houses in New Bradwell had been given wheelie bins, even though they had no rear or side access and inadequate space to store wheelie bins, resulting in wheelie bins being left on the pavement where they caused an obstruction, and whether the Council would allow all houses that could not accommodate wheelie bins, when taking account of the Council's own criteria, to have boxes instead.

Councillor Darlington indicated that the Council had worked with the Keep Britain Tidy Group to identify a range of property types to participate in the trial and, recognising that the wheelie bin solution might not be suitable for all locations, encouraged residents to feedback comments after the four week trial as the comments would allow the Council to make changes and try different solutions appropriate to the specific location.

Councillor Darlington explained that the areas for the trial had been decided by a cross party working group, which had recognised that some of the areas selected would provide challenges. However, it was thought important that a number of different areas were included in the trial so that the Council was aware of any difficulties and could look at appropriate solutions.

As a supplementary question Alan Francis, referring to the fact that many wheelie bins remained on the pavements in New Bradwell since being delivered last week as it was not easy to get access to the rear of the properties, asked Councillor Darlington to confirm that residents would be able to have boxes for their recycling once the trial had ended and that they would not be fined £1,000 if the wheelie bins remained on the pavement.

Alan Francis also asked Councillor Darlington to meet with him in New Bradwell so that she could see the impact the wheelie bins were having on the street scene.

Councillor Darlington indicated that she was happy to meet Mr Francis and with residents to hear their views on the trial.

Councillor Darlington stressed that it was important to allow residents time to become familiar with the new wheelie bin system. However, Councillor Darlington pointed out that residents already had recycling boxes and if, after the trial, it was decided not to proceed with wheelie bins in certain areas they could revert to using the recycling boxes.

- (g) Question from Lesley Sung (Parish Manager – Walton Community Council) to Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council)

Lesley Sung asked Councillor Marland what was the Council's documented process for determining whether a change to a planning application was non-material and therefore not subject to public consultation, who was authorised to make the determination and what would trigger a review by the Development Control Committee?

Councillor Marland indicated that the Director Planning, Strategic Transport and Placemaking, the Head of Planning or a nominated officer were authorised to determine certain matters subject to a number of limitations provided in the Officer Scheme of Delegation for Development Management Matters. This included agreeing to accept or not accept minor amendments to planning permissions. If the limitations meant that officers did not have delegated authority the matter would be referred to the Development Control Committee.

Councillor Marland outlined that in determining whether an application constituted a non-material amendment, the local planning authority must have regard to the effect of the change on the planning permission as originally granted and be satisfied that the change being sought is non-material. There is no statutory definition of non-material and this was considered on a case by case basis. Neither was there a legal requirement to consult on an application for a non-material amendment.

Councillor Marland, referring to the planning permission agreed by the Development Control Committee in respect of an application on Hindhead Knoll, which he understood the question related to, advised that the decision notice had been issued with the incorrect set of plans appended and confirmed that once the Planning Department realised the error they had issued a new decision notice in line with the plans agreed by the Development Control Committee.

Councillor Marland believed that it was right for the Planning Department to issue a new and correct decision notice, in line with the decision of the Development Control Committee, where a non-material error was identified and he fully supported the officers who spotted the error and corrected it swiftly.

Councillor Marland drew the attention of Council to the Motion later on the agenda which was requesting the Chair of the Development Control Committee to make a statement on why the error happened.

As a supplementary question Lesley Sung, referring to the provisions of Section 96(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and its definition of a minor alteration and the requirement for the Local Planning Authority to have regard to the impact of the alteration on the local community, asked Councillor Marland for the justification to not consult on the alterations to the Hindhead Knoll planning permission, particularly as residents were of the belief that the alterations were significant.

Councillor Marland indicated that the issues raised in the supplementary question were considered and dismissed by the Development Control Committee.

Councillor Marland stressed that the Committee's decision on Hindhead Knoll was based on the correct information and it was an error that the decision notice was sent out with old versions of papers attached and to send out a revised decision notice with the correct papers did not amount to a material alteration.

- (h) Question from Nicholas Cadman to Councillor Townsend (Cabinet member for Community Safety)

Nicholas Cadman, referring to the decision of Vale Travel to not renew its contract for the Number 28 service serving Shenley Wood Village following recent changes to bus service subsidies across Milton Keynes, which would potentially mean that some residents would not have access to doctors' surgeries and the hospital, asked Councillor Townsend to confirm what steps were being taken to find an alternative solution for Shenley Wood Village residents.

Councillor Townsend confirmed that Vale had taken the option not to accept a contract extension for the Number 28 service and as a result the Council had rerouted Services 24 and 25 to serve Shenley Wood Village. The Council had also arranged for Demand Responsive Transport to be available as from Sunday.

As a supplementary question Nicholas Cadman asked Councillor Townsend if there would be any pre-requisites for residents to use the Demand Responsive Transport, such access to a mobile phone or a computer.

Councillor Townsend indicated that while it would be possible to book a journey using a mobile phone or a computer, resident who did not have access to such technology could book a journey by telephoning the Customer Service phonenumber.

Councillor Townsend explained that many private bus operators had withdrawn from providing services on a commercial basis as they were not profitable and the Council had been subsidising the routes to keep the services running. As the Council could no longer maintain the high levels of subsidy, alternative forms of providing services had been considered and the Council was intending to offer Demand Responsive Transport, which provided a bespoke, cost effective and sustainable option, on some routes.

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

Sharon Ghouila's question referred to the significant rise in both COVID-19 infections and unemployment and requested Councillor O'Neill to provide details of what plans the Council was making to support access and distribution of free, or subsidised, Personal Protective Equipment for BAME, low income and vulnerable groups, as it had been identified that these groups were most at risk.

Sharon Ghouila also submitted a supplementary question asking Councillor O'Neill what measures the Council was taking to educate and support its citizens to start using washable/reusable masks in order to reduce COVID-19 waste and meet its climate emergency targets.

As Sharon Ghouila was unable to participate in the meeting the Mayor requested that Councillor O'Neil provide written answers, which are attached as an Annex to these minutes.

(j) Question from Alderman Paul Bartlett to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm)

Alderman Bartlett, referring to the number of abandoned roadworks signs, metal frames, cones and equipment which had been left behind by the Council and its contractors on various roads in Milton Keynes which he believed to be an eyesore, confusing to road users and a danger to drivers and pedestrians, asked Councillor Darlington to recognise the problem and take measures to ensure that all contractors and the Council removed immediately, after the completion of works, signs etc.

Alderman Bartlett suggested that:

- Managers and Directors should take responsibility for this and that it should become part of their role and assessment;
- those responsible for failing to remove their equipment should be fined 5% of the value of the works for each item left behind; and
- the Council should put in place a programme to clear the road network of abandoned equipment 5 November 2020.

Councillor Darlington indicated that the Council encouraged residents to report what they believed to be abandoned signs so that they could be removed.

Councillor Darlington stressed that not all abandoned signs were left by the Council and its contractors, but that signs were also left by utility providers. Additionally, some signs which perhaps appeared abandoned, might have been positioned by Highways England to sign diversion routes in the event of motorway closures.

Councillor Darlington asked Alderman Bartlett if he had concerns about any particular signs and if so whether he had reported them to the Council.

Alderman Bartlett agreed to provide a list of abandoned signs and stated that many of the signs appeared to belong to the Council's contractor Ringway.

As a supplementary question Alderman Bartlett asked Councillor Darlington to do her best to enhance the visual appearance of Milton Keynes and ensure that abandoned signs were removed.

Councillor Darlington indicated that she welcomed Alderman Bartlett's offer to report abandoned signs and that she would try to ensure Ringway removed its signs once works were complete.

- (k) Question from Chris Wardle to Councillor Cannon (Chair of the Audit Committee)

Chris Wardle, referring to the independent report into the how the Council had dealt with Blakelands Planning Application, last promised for mid-October, asked Councillor Cannon for an update as to when the Report would be published.

Councillor Cannon outlined that Mr Dorfman indicated to the Council's Deputy Chief Executive that his report would be published by the end of October. The report would go straight into the public domain without prior sight by either the Council or councillors, and only after that would the report be considered by the Audit Committee, which hopefully would have full public participation.

As a supplementary question, Chris Wardle, outlining the concerns of the residents, asked Councillor Cannon to confirm that the report would be considered by the Council's Audit Committee.

Councillor Cannon indicated that the report would be considered by the Audit Committee. Residents and other interested parties would have the opportunity to highlight their concerns to the Committee.

- (l) Question from Liam Andrews to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm)

Liam Andrews, referring to his understanding that many businesses on Stony Stratford High Street were suffering a loss in trade since the introduction of measures by the Council to help social distancing and the potential damage this was doing to what was a unique and historic High Street, asked Councillor Darlington if she would meet with him and businesses on Stony Stratford High Street to discuss a way to support them moving forward and to confirm there were no plans for the measures to become permanent.

Councillor Darlington referred to the Council's responsibility to support local businesses, while at the same time keeping its residents safe by providing an environment where social distancing was possible.

Councillor Darlington recognised that there was a lack of confidence amongst some residents to use town centre retail because of the need for social distancing and the rule of six. To try and encourage residents to shop in their local high streets the Council had instigated a 'shop local' campaign.

Councillor Darlington referred to a particular pinch point that had occurred in Stony Stratford High Street, which she and officer colleagues had discussed with the Town Council and the Business Association and agreed to widen the pavement on a temporary basis.

Councillor Darlington emphasised that the Council continued to monitor both footfall and the various schemes to encourage use of the shops and maintain social distancing put in place in the shopping areas across the Borough. The availability of car parking spaces, both regular spaces and those designated for use by persons with a disability were also being closely monitored and it appeared, with reference to Stony Stratford, that there was not a shortage at present, although Councillor Darlington recognised that this could suggest that shoppers were continuing to stay away from the High Street.

Liam Andrews recognised that Councillor Darlington had spoken to local businesses but suggested that they still did not feel they had been listened to, which he considered to be important.

As a supplementary question, Liam Andrews asked Councillor Darlington to confirm that she would not implement any further measures in the High Street unless they were fully supported by local businesses.

Councillor Darlington indicated that there was not a unified view amongst the affected businesses on Stony Stratford High Street as to the measures that should be put in place, but the Council had consulted with businesses, the Town Council and residents prior to implementing the current measures.

Councillor Darlington stressed the importance of residents having confidence that they were safe when using the High Street and that if they did not feel safe, they would stay away.

Councillor Darlington also indicated that research had shown that footfall to the shops was down across the country and the Council was looking at what measures taken elsewhere had been successful in increasing footfall.

Councillor Darlington recognised that it was vital to support businesses to ensure their survival and an important part of this was residents being confident that they were safe.

Councillor Darlington undertook to continue to listen to the views of all interested parties when implementing and reviewing the various schemes, along with the public health advice.

- (m) Question from Adam Rolfe to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm)

Adam Rolfe's question referred to the recent discovery that the Mellish Courts flats were unsafe and asked Councillor Darlington what steps the Council was taking to ensure that families and residents could live safely and also why the Council was not rehousing all residents, so ensuring they were safe, instead of only offering them help to move.

As Adam Rolfe was unable to participate in the meeting Adam Rolfe would receive a written reply from Councillor Darlington.

CL56

COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS

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

Councillor Wales, referring to her ongoing efforts to influence the future proposals for Windmill Hill Golf Course, asked Councillor Marland to confirm that there would be an 18-hole golf course on the site for years to come.

Councillor Marland confirmed that it was the Council's intention that an 18-hole golf course would be retained on the site and in doing so thanked both Councillor Wales and West Bletchley Council for their work on the matter.

- (b) Question from Councillor D Hopkins to Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council)

Councillor D Hopkins, referring to the evidence emerging from the Grenfell Tower enquiry and the potential risks to residents of both Mellish Court in Bletchley and The Gables in Wolverton, asked Councillor Marland when would the Council come forward with a definitive plan for the evacuation and demolition of Mellish Court, particularly bearing in mind the recent action of the Housing Association responsible for managing the Paragon Tower Complex in Brentford which had after faulty cavity barriers, which prevent flames spreading, and issues with the buildings were found, evacuated all residents.

Councillor Marland indicated that a recent report in relation to Mellish Court in Bletchley and The Gables in Wolverton had highlighted a number of significant issues and as a result, to ensure residents were as safe as possible, the Council had placed a 24 hour watch on the buildings. However, the buildings were no less safe than they had ever been and the Council would not let residents remain in the buildings if they were unsafe.

Councillor Marland emphasised that the buildings were peoples' homes and the residents were part of a wider community. Many worked in the locality, had friendship groups in the area and children who attended the local schools.

Councillor Marland stressed the need to work with the communities and if it became necessary to move residents from the buildings that they were able to keep their children in school, travel to work and live in an area they wanted to be in.

Councillor Marland reiterated that the Council would never knowingly leave residents in an unsafe building and Councillor Darlington, the responsible Cabinet member, would be considering the options and taking a decision on how to proceed, including the possibility of moving residents out of the building.

Councillor Marland cautioned against the use of over emotive language which had the potential to scare residents unnecessarily.

As a supplementary question, Councillor D Hopkins asked Councillor Marland to come forward with a solution to the issues at Mellish Court and The Gables so that residents are aware.

Councillor D Hopkins emphasised that he was not trying to cause unnecessary concerns and, referencing that a number of different approaches had been adopted to similar situations across the country, encouraged the Council to take what action was necessary to ensure the safety of the residents.

Councillor Marland indicated that residents were as safe as possible as the Council was maintaining a 24 hour watch on the buildings.

Councillor Marland stressed that, as Councillor D Hopkins said, the Council needed to make sure residents were safe and that they were receiving clear reassuring messages as to what the Council's short and long term plans were.

Councillor Marland suggested that it was unhelpful for senior councillors to go to the press suggesting that residents were unsafe and should be evacuated.

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

Councillor McLean, referring to the start of the waste collection trial due to start next week, asked Councillor Darlington to confirm that SERCO and the Council's Waste Team were carrying out checks to ensure that the correct bins and boxes had been delivered to all properties in the trial areas ahead of the trial beginning.

Councillor Darlington indicated that the bins and boxes should have been delivered to all properties in the trial areas. The deliveries were supported by a number of communications which gave residents a dedicated telephone number to report any missing bins or boxes.

As a supplementary question, Councillor McLean asked Councillor Darlington if the Council's Waste Team would be keeping councillors up to date on a daily basis about how the trial was going, similar to how missed collections were currently reported, so that they could keep residents informed.

Councillor McLean also asked Councillor Darlington to answer his original question and to confirm that SERCO and the Council's Waste Team were carrying out checks to ensure that the correct bins and boxes had been delivered.

Councillor Darlington indicated that the Council had carried out a number of checks to reassure itself that all of the bins and boxes had been delivered. However, if any had been deliveries had been missed and not identified by the Council, then residents could report that either direct to the Council or their Ward councillor.

Councillor Darlington was of the view that daily statistics would be very onerous to provide, but it was intended to have a regular dialogue with Ward councillor, parish and town councils, and residents so that it was able to assess the success of the trial and whether bins and boxes should be included as part of the new Waste Collection Contract from 2023.

(d) Question from Councillor McPake to Councillor Townsend (Cabinet member for Community Safety)

Councillor McPake, referring to the flooding that occurred on 3 and 4 October 2020, largely as a result of the high water levels in the Great Ouse, the Ouse and Water Eaton Brook, all of which the Environment Agency was responsible for maintaining, asked Councillor Townsend if like her she thought the situation was unacceptable and that the Environment Agency should be asked to inform the Council of its maintenance arrangements for the water courses.

Councillor Townsend indicated that she would liaise with Councillor McPake to prepare a joint response to the Environment Agency about concerns regarding the maintenance arrangements for the Great Ouse, the Ouse and Water Eaton Brook and request a detailed schedule of the current maintenance arrangements.

Councillor Townsend sought confirmation from Councillor McPake that she would be raising the flooding issue and the apparent lack of maintenance of the water courses in Milton Keynes by the Environment Agency at tomorrow's meeting of the Anglian (Central) Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

Councillor Townsend also expressed surprise that the Environment Agency had contacted the local MPs to ascertain if there were any problems in Milton Keynes and had not contacted the Council or other bodies responsible for water management.

Councillor Darlington took the opportunity to thank all bodies and a number of private landowners, along with the Council's Emergency Planning Team who ensured that the response to the problems caused by the heavy rainfall on 3 and 4 October 2020 ran smoothly, particularly as she understood water levels reached a 30 year high in some areas.

Councillor McPake confirmed that she would be raising the flooding issue at the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee the following day.

Councillor McPake also referred to a recent letter received from the Environment Agency which mentioned assessing the maintenance requirements for the River Ouse.

As a supplementary question, Councillor McPake asked Councillor Townsend if she agreed that rivers should be subject to ongoing maintenance so that the risk of flooding was minimised and not maintained after flooding had occurred.

Councillor Townsend indicated that she agreed that rivers and water courses should be maintained on a regular basis in order to help prevent flooding and avoid the costs of having to clear up afterwards.

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

Councillor Townsend, referring to Councillor Walker's call-in of her decision to provide a Demand Responsive Transport system in Milton Keynes and the mediation meeting he had attended last week, asked Councillor Walker why he had failed to attend the follow-up meeting scheduled for earlier today.

Councillor Walker indicated that he had been available to attend the meeting and in fact had requested additional information ahead of the meeting. He had however, been contacted by an officer informing him that the meeting was cancelled.

Councillor Townsend, referred to an email she received at 4:46pm today which she understood to say Councillor Walker had asked that the meeting was cancelled. Councillor Townsend indicated that she would clarify what messages had been sent the following day.

Councillor Townsend indicated that all other parties to the call-in had withdrawn their requests for the decision to be reviewed as they had wrongly assumed that bus services in their areas were to be cut, it appeared, largely as a result of an inaccurate Tweet from Councillor Walker.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Townsend asked Councillor Walker if he regretted the amount of time that had been wasted as a result of his Tweet and his attempt to create a sensationalist headline.

Councillor Walker indicated that he did not consider the call-in to be a waste of time as the decision was made using data on bus usage from May 2020, during the Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown, so was not in his view, representative.

Councillor Walker also indicated that he would continue to mediate with Councillors Townsend and Middleton and made the point that Demand Responsive Transport was a new system for Milton Keynes and not a replacement for the existing services which were now largely at risk because of the potential for them to have their subsidy withdrawn.

Councillor Walker stated that he would continue to press the Council to make a more informed decision until such time as he was assured that the 2,000 bus users would not see a reduction in the services they relied on.

(f) Question from Councillor Marlow to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm)

Councillor Marlow asked Councillor Darlington, as Cabinet member for the Public Realm, when was she first made aware of possible fire safety issues Mellish Court in Bletchley and The Gables in Wolverton.

Councillor Darlington stressed that this was a question of fire safety and peoples' homes and should not be a matter of party politics.

Councillor Darlington indicated that she was first made aware of potential fire safety issues in September following the invasive review of the buildings. Measures such as the 24 hour warden service had been put in place to keep the residents safe in a matter of weeks.

Councillor Marlow referred to a Council Statement from January 2020 saying that an urgent programme of works was required to upgrade fire safety measures at Mellish Court. However, while the Council had allocated £1.8m in 2016 to upgrade fire safety systems at Mellish Court, only £110,000 had been spent.

Councillor Marlow also referred to comments expressed to her by residents about what would happen in the event of a fire as access to the balconies had been prevented because of the need to undertake repairs and their understanding that fire alarms had only been installed following a fire incident and on the request by the Fire and Rescue Service, as opposed to proactive action by the Council.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Marlow asked Councillor Darlington how the Council was going to deal with the problems at Mellish Court and The Gables.

Councillor Darlington indicated that following a fire at The Gables the Council decided to commission an invasive review of the The Gables and Mellish Court buildings. The results of the review were shared with the Fire and Rescue Service and as a result, the evacuation plan was modified, and wardens put in place. The £1.8m referred to by Councillor Marlow, was part of a previous investment programme which upgraded fire safety measures by the installation of new fire doors and fire alarms.

Councillor Darlington stressed that the Council's priority was that residents remained safe in their homes.

Councillor Darlington also indicated she had scheduled meetings with the residents so that she could hear their views direct, including views on the long term future of the buildings.

- (g) Question from Councillor Jenkins to Councillor Marland (Leader of the Council)

Councillor Jenkins, referring to the importance of good, clear proactive public health information for residents during the Covid-19 Pandemic and the introduction of the local tier system, asked Councillor Marland what planning was taking place to ensure continued clear communication by the Council, particularly if infection rates increased as predicted and Milton Keynes moved into tier two.

Councillor Marland initially stressed both the importance of understanding the requirements which would be imposed at each of the three tiers and the importance of taking what measures the Council could at tier one to limit any increase in the infection rate.

Councillor Marland recognised that despite any actions the Council could currently take, such as publicising the £500 Stay at Home Fee for people on low incomes who needed to self-isolate, infection rates were likely to increase, but the Council had, because of its current low infection rate, a little more time to put plans in place to cope with a move into tier two and this included a review of the Council's communication strategy which was currently being undertaken.

Councillor Marland also referred to the success of the Covid-19 Champions and indicated that it was important for the Council to listen to feedback from Covid-19 Champions and others who were in contact with many of the hard to reach groups. This would help the Council to ensure its communications were reaching as many residents as possible.

Councillor Marland also indicated that it was intended to bring forward a delegated decision which would address how to spend some of the money available to help the Council to address the ramifications of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Jenkins, referring to the recommendations made by the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee in respect of communication of key messages during the Covid-19 Pandemic, particularly with regard to reaching hard to reach groups whose first language was not English, asked Councillor Marland to ensure that the recommendation was considered and taken forward.

Councillor Marland indicated the importance of being able to take evidence based decisions and that the key to this was being able to have up to date information from the Track and Trace System as this would allow the Council to identify patterns and target groups who were shown to be at higher risk.

Councillor Marland also referenced the importance of enforcing the restrictions if infection rates were to be controlled.

- (h) Question from Councillor Walker to Councillor Darlington (Cabinet member for Public Realm)

Councillor Walker, referring a comparison made by Councillor Long in 2017 of Mellish Court to Grenfell Tower and also his undertakings to upgrade fire safety equipment, including the installation of sprinkler systems in the communal areas at both Mellish Court and The Gables, asked Councillor Darlington if sprinkler systems had been installed.

Councillor Darlington stressed that her primary concern was for the residents and it was not correct to draw any comparison between Mellish Court and Grenfell Tower as there were no cladding issues at Mellish Court and this had been confirmed by the Fire and Rescue Authority. However, she accepted that there were issues at both Mellish Court and The Gables as they were both older buildings, not built to modern day fire standards.

Councillor Darlington indicated that the Council had proactively commissioned a survey of fire safety issues and had requested the Fire and Rescue Service to recommend a course of action as a result of the survey's findings and these had included fire wardens and changing from a staying put to an evacuation approach, in the event of a fire.

Councillor Darlington emphasised that the Council was following the Fire and Rescue Service's advice.

Councillor Walker outlined that sprinkler systems had not been installed at either Mellish Court or The Gables as promised by Councillor Long and in doing so referenced the views of a senior officer from the Fire and Rescue Service who had said the most efficient way to stop the spread of fire was to have a sprinkler system installed.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Walker asked Councillor Darlington to apologise for letting the residents down by failing to install the sprinklers and other fire safety measures as promised and potentially putting their lives at greater risk.

Councillor Walker also took the opportunity to invite Councillor Long to apologise for the comparison he made between Mellish Court and Grenfell Tower if in fact they were untrue.

Councillor Darlington indicated that she was focussed on the safety of the residents and protecting their homes and not scoring political points.

Councillor Darlington explained that it had been decided not to install sprinkler systems at Mellish Court and The Gables as they were not recommended by the Fire and Rescue Service and she believed it was important to follow the advice of the experts.

(i) Question from Councillor Ferrans to Councillor Marland
(Leader of the Council)

Councillor Ferrans, referred to the Council's Local Welfare Scheme, the 'discretionary hardship fund' which was limited to families with 'extra vulnerable' people in the household such as those with a learning or physical disability, victims of domestic abuse, or those families threatened with homelessness.

Councillor Ferrans outlined that officers had previously stated that the level of Universal Credit required by a family with children, but that was not 'extra vulnerable', was insufficient to meet their needs and as a result these families were living in poverty.

Councillor Ferrans asked Councillor Marland to consider as part of the budget for 2021/22 an increase in the monies available for those currently eligible for support under the Local Welfare Scheme and also to consider expanding the scheme to include children who met other elements of the scheme, but are not extra vulnerable.

Councillor Marland, expressing his dislike of Universal Credit suggested that the Government should commit, without delay, to extending the current top up payment for Universal Credit.

Councillor Marland indicated that the suggestions made by Councillor Ferrans on behalf of the Community and Housing Scrutiny Committee, would be considered as part of the budget setting process.

Councillor Marland also indicated that the impact of Universal Credit on families with children was also being addressed by the Child Poverty Commission and he suggested that any recommendations from the Commission would carry considerable weight.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF BREXIT AND COVID-19

Councillor Ferrans moved the following motion which was seconded by Councillor McCall:

- “1. That this Council notes that:
- (a) on 31 December 2020 the Brexit transition period finishes, ending British membership of the EU single market and customs union.
 - (b) the ending of this transition period and the potential of a no-deal Brexit, combined with the fall-out from the COVID-19 pandemic, will have drastic economic impacts on Milton Keynes, the country and worldwide trade as:
 - (i) Milton Keynes has a high number of small businesses who trade internationally; bureaucracy and restrictions on the movement of people and goods, as well as tariffs, will impact heavily on them as they struggle with the impact of COVID-19;
 - (ii) many local companies and organisations draw on the skills and expertise of people worldwide, and a return to work permits is likely to cause delays to, or to prevent, recruitment;
 - (iii) Milton Keynes has a large financial services sector that will be impacted by the expected move of European and American businesses to mainland Europe, with no trade agreement covering services or free movement of personnel;
 - (iv) Milton Keynes has many companies who are world leaders in international research and extra conditions, involving guarantees against the possible effects of Brexit, for which companies can get no insurance, are now routinely being imposed on UK participants even before the end of the transition period. In addition, the viability of some contracts may be damaged by restrictions on movement and possible tariffs on research material movement; and
 - (v) many Milton Keynes residents aspire to study or get work experience abroad; the lack of funding agreements and freedom of movement will impact them heavily.

2. That this Council also notes that worldwide trade and freedom of movement will be severely impacted. The effect of ending British membership of the EU single market and customs union is not just on business and freedom of movement in relation to the EU, but on international arrangements. Many of our international agreements depend on EU-wide agreements; when Britain exits those agreements, the country also exits the subsidiary agreements.
3. That this Council resolves to request Cabinet to:
 - (a) work with Milton Keynes businesses and service organisations to identify their particular concerns and lobby the government alongside them;
 - (b) factor in the ending of the transition period, and the potential of a no-deal Brexit, in the COVID-19 recovery plan for Milton Keynes; and
 - (c) lobby the Conservative Government to financially support councils during this time to help mitigate the impact of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Councillor Brackenbury moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor R Bradburn and accepted by Councillor Ferrans, mover of the motion:

- “1. That the words ‘request that the Cabinet consider factoring in the ending of the transition period, and the potential of a no-deal Brexit, in the COVID-19 recovery plan for Milton Keynes’ be deleted and replaced with ‘request that the Cabinet factor in the effect of the Government’s replacement for furlough, as well as the potential of a no-deal Brexit in their continuing work on the COVID-19 recovery plan’ in clause 3(b).
2. That additional clause 3(d) be added after clause 3(c):
 - (d) lobby the Government for continued support of viable businesses forced to remain closed by Government COVID restrictions, and for more honesty and clarity on the terms of Brexit”

Councillor Rankine moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Walker:

- “1. That the word ‘drastic’ be deleted from clause 1(b).

2. That additional clause 1(b) be added:
 - (b) UK and EU negotiators are currently working to conclude a free trade deal that will be mutually beneficial to both parties and which would give back UK control of its laws, its borders and its trade with the rest of the world.and existing clause 1(b) be renumbered 1(c) accordingly.
3. That the words 'will impact heavily on them' be deleted and replaced with 'may impact them' in renumbered clause 1(c)(i).
4. That the words 'However, the UK's new immigration system will allow the UK to access more of the skills it needs from around the world.' be added at the end of renumbered clause 1(c)(ii).
5. That the words 'that will be' be deleted and replaced with 'that may be' and the words 'with no trade agreement covering services or free movement of personnel' be deleted and replaced with 'if no trade agreement covering services is agreed by EU-UK negotiators' in renumbered clause 1(c)(iii).
6. That the words 'the lack' be deleted and replaced with 'a lack' and the word 'will' with be replaced with 'would' in renumbered clause 1(c)(v).
7. That the words 'will be severely impacted' be deleted and replaced with 'will change' in clause 2.
8. That clause 3. a) be deleted and replaced with a new clause 3. a):
 - (a) work with Milton Keynes businesses and service organisations to identify new Brexit opportunities and work with them to help deliver these opportunities."

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared lost with 16 councillors voting in favour, 35 councillors voting against and 0 councillors abstaining from voting.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared with 36 councillors voting in favour, 0 councillors voting against and 15 councillors abstaining from voting.

RESOLVED –

1. That this Council notes that:
 - (a) on 31 December 2020 the Brexit transition period finishes, ending British membership of the EU single market and customs union.

- (b) the ending of this transition period and the potential of a no-deal Brexit, combined with the fall-out from the COVID-19 pandemic, will have drastic economic impacts on Milton Keynes, the country and worldwide trade as:
 - (i) Milton Keynes has a high number of small businesses who trade internationally; bureaucracy and restrictions on the movement of people and goods, as well as tariffs, will impact heavily on them as they struggle with the impact of COVID-19;
 - (ii) many local companies and organisations draw on the skills and expertise of people worldwide, and a return to work permits is likely to cause delays to, or to prevent, recruitment;
 - (iii) Milton Keynes has a large financial services sector that will may be impacted by the expected move of European and American businesses to mainland Europe, with if no trade agreement covering services or free movement of personnel;
 - (iv) Milton Keynes has many companies who are world leaders in international research and extra conditions, involving guarantees against the possible effects of Brexit, for which companies can get no insurance, are now routinely being imposed on UK participants even before the end of the transition period. In addition, the viability of some contracts may be damaged by restrictions on movement and possible tariffs on research material movement; and
 - (v) many Milton Keynes residents aspire to study or get work experience abroad; the lack of funding agreements and freedom of movement will impact them heavily.
- 2. That this Council also notes that worldwide trade and freedom of movement will be severely impacted. The effect of ending British membership of the EU single market and customs union is not just on business and freedom of movement in relation to the EU, but on international arrangements. Many of our international agreements depend on EU-wide agreements; when Britain exits those agreements, the country also exits the subsidiary agreements.

3. That this Council resolves to request Cabinet to:
 - (a) work with Milton Keynes businesses and service organisations to identify their particular concerns and lobby the Government alongside them new Brexit opportunities and work with them to help deliver these opportunities;
 - (b) factor in the effect of the Government's replacement for furlough, as well as the potential of a no-deal Brexit in its continuing work on the COVID-19 Recovery Plan;
 - (c) lobby the Conservative Government to financially support councils during this time to help mitigate the impact of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - (d) lobby the Government for continued support of viable businesses forced to remain closed by Government COVID restrictions and for more honesty and clarity on the terms of Brexit.

CL58

BECOMING THE WORLD'S GREENEST CITY

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

- "1. That this Council:
 - (a) is fully committed to its ambition to be the world's greenest city, carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon negative by 2050;
 - (b) believes that there is a once in a lifetime opportunity offered by the COVID-19 emergency to change the lifestyle of residents in ways that will reduce carbon emissions;
 - (c) is supportive of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's announcements in July and August this year launching the Green Homes Grant scheme; and
 - (d) is aware of the Council's bid for funding under the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) arrangements to set the grant scheme up locally on which a decision is expected shortly.
2. That this Council resolves to request Cabinet to:
 - (a) With regard to homeowners:
 - (i) publicise as widely as possible the availability of vouchers under the scheme, and to do as quickly as possible in view of its end date on 31 March next year; and

- (ii) ask Trading Standards to publicise a list of TrustMarked traders on the Council website with a local email and telephone address for enquiries rather than the present national numbers.
 - (b) With regard to public assets to welcome the Council's intention to apply for further funding under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund, including the retro-fitting of social housing, taking advantage of the Re:fit Energy Performance contract already in place through the Local Partnerships Framework.
- 3. That locally, this Council further resolves to request Cabinet to:
 - (a) to establish without delay the Milton Keynes citizens' action panel envisaged in clause 17 of the Council Plan as a means of promoting resident engagement with the task ahead;
 - (b) to work with local schools and parents to embed the practice of a carbon-neutral lifestyle within the curriculum;
 - (c) to work with the College of Education in enhancing training and apprenticeships for young people to work in green industries, such as renewable energy, home insulation, tree planting and rewilding and encourage the employing body to pay at least the National Living Wage for young people after their first year and the Real Living Wage from 24 upwards;
 - (d) to investigate and take further new schemes for local electricity generation; and
 - (e) insofar as is legally possible, to build on the results of the Council's BEIS study to determine whether Council Tax and/or business rate incentives would encourage local people to be more energy efficient.
- 4. That nationally, this Council resolves to request Cabinet to:
 - (a) urge the Government to raise capital by introducing a new system of climate bonds;
 - (b) promote tax incentives on savings and pensions for investing in green areas;
 - (c) advocate zero-rating VAT on home insulation and other energy saving products and services; and
 - (d) play a full part in raising the national ambition to the level commensurate with the scale of the crisis facing us."

On being put to the vote the motion was declared by acclamation.

RESOLVED –

1. That this Council:
 - (a) is fully committed to its ambition to be the world's greenest city, carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon negative by 2050;
 - (b) believes that there is a once in a lifetime opportunity offered by the COVID-19 emergency to change the lifestyle of residents in ways that will reduce carbon emissions;
 - (c) is supportive of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's announcements in July and August this year launching the Green Homes Grant scheme; and
 - (d) is aware of the Council's bid for funding under the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) arrangements to set the grant scheme up locally on which a decision is expected shortly.
2. That this Council resolves to request Cabinet to:
 - (a) With regard to homeowners:
 - (i) publicise as widely as possible the availability of vouchers under the scheme, and to do as quickly as possible in view of its end date on 31 March next year; and
 - (ii) ask Trading Standards to publicise a list of TrustMarked traders on the Council website with a local email and telephone address for enquiries rather than the present national numbers.
 - (b) With regard to public assets to welcome the Council's intention to apply for further funding under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund, including the retro-fitting of social housing, taking advantage of the Re:fit Energy Performance contract already in place through the Local Partnerships Framework.
3. That locally, this Council further resolves to request Cabinet to:
 - (a) to establish without delay the Milton Keynes citizens' action panel envisaged in clause 17 of the Council Plan as a means of promoting resident engagement with the task ahead;

- (b) to work with local schools and parents to embed the practice of a carbon-neutral lifestyle within the curriculum;
 - (c) to work with the College of Education in enhancing training and apprenticeships for young people to work in green industries, such as renewable energy, home insulation, tree planting and rewilding and encourage the employing body to pay at least the National Living Wage for young people after their first year and the Real Living Wage from 24 upwards;
 - (d) to investigate and take further new schemes for local electricity generation; and
 - (e) insofar as is legally possible, to build on the results of the Council's BEIS study to determine whether Council Tax and/or business rate incentives would encourage local people to be more energy efficient.
4. That nationally, this Council resolves to request Cabinet to:
- (a) urge the Government to raise capital by introducing a new system of climate bonds;
 - (b) promote tax incentives on savings and pensions for investing in green areas;
 - (c) advocate zero-rating VAT on home insulation and other energy saving products and services; and
 - (d) play a full part in raising the national ambition to the level commensurate with the scale of the crisis facing us.

CL59

COMMUNITY AT WORK

Councillor Trendall moved the following motion which was seconded by Councillor Darlington:

- “1. That this Council:
- (a) applauds the work done by individuals and informal local groups who, during the current Covid-19 emergency, have undertaken litter picking and basic landscape maintenance work in their towns, villages and estates, including areas unadopted by the Council which have been ignored and neglected by developers and managing agents; and

- (b) acknowledges that they have rendered valuable assistance to their communities and to the Council by undertaking work which needed to be done or was overdue, at no cost to the Council.
- 2. That this Council therefore resolves to request that Cabinet actively support these individuals and informal groups by providing:
 - (a) mentoring, so that the work may continue to be carried out correctly;
 - (b) the loan of equipment wherever possible; and
 - (c) logistical support, primarily in regard to the removal of collected litter and green waste.”

On being put to the vote the motion was declared by acclamation.

RESOLVED –

- 1. That this Council:
 - (a) applauds the work done by individuals and informal local groups who, during the current Covid-19 emergency, have undertaken litter picking and basic landscape maintenance work in their towns, villages and estates, including areas unadopted by the Council which have been ignored and neglected by developers and managing agents; and
 - (b) acknowledges that they have rendered valuable assistance to their communities and to the Council by undertaking work which needed to be done or was overdue, at no cost to the Council.
- 2. That this Council therefore resolves to request that Cabinet actively support these individuals and informal groups by providing:
 - (a) mentoring, so that the work may continue to be carried out correctly;
 - (b) the loan of equipment wherever possible; and
 - (c) logistical support, primarily in regard to the removal of collected litter and green waste.

CL60

PROCEDURAL MOTION

Councillor Jenkins moved the following procedural motion in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12(c) which was seconded by Councillor Walker:

“That the order of business be changed in order that the motion entitled ‘Saving Golf at Windmill Hill will benefit all Milton Keynes’ Citizens’ is debated before the motion entitled ‘Urgent Planning Improvements’.”

On being put to the vote the procedural motion was declared lost with 15 councillors voting in favour, 35 councillors voting against and 0 councillors abstaining from voting.

CL61

URGENT PLANNING IMPROVEMENTS

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

“1. That this Council notes:

- (a) The concerns voiced by Blakelands Residents Association, former planning officers, Ward Councillors, Town & Parish Councillors and other groups and individuals regarding the performance of our planning department over the past three years.
- (b) The absence of visible action from the Leader of the Council (in that capacity and in his additional capacity as Portfolio-holder for planning), and his apparent reluctance to take any measures to restore faith in the planning department.
- (c) The recent occurrence of multiple further problematic instances across all 4 main aspects of the Planning Service (plan-writing, determining planning applications, planning enforcement, and planning appeals), highlighted most recently by the Walnut Tree Reserve A & D, Hindhead Knoll application that illustrates many of the same things that went wrong with the Blakelands application.
- (d) The lack of public trust and confidence in the independent report into the 1 Yeomans Drive, Blakelands, development due to severe delays and alleged officer interference.
- (e) The importance of an effectively functioning planning department that has the confidence and trust of MK’s residents and their elected representatives, ahead of any large-scale contentious infrastructure projects such as the proposed new bridge over the M1.

- (f) That the two MK MPs and the leader of the largest opposition group on the Council have written to the Secretary of State asking for an external review into the planning service and expressing concerns over the ability of this Council to deal with systematic failures within the planning department.
2. That this Council therefore calls on the Leader of the Council:
 - (a) to give a written statement at Cabinet on 15 December, on the Blakelands review, and
 - (b) to give a written statement at Cabinet on 15 December of his plans to improve the Council's planning service and repair its reputation, whether or not the Dorfman report has been published."

Councillor Marland moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Trendall:

- "1. That the word 'perceived,' be inserted after 'The,' and that the additional words "by the main opposition party do not take into account the improvement work taking place across the service, which should be highlighted to alleviate those concerns,' be inserted after the word 'department.' in clause 1(b).
2. That additional clause 1(c) be inserted:

The work of the Planning Improvement Board, welcomes the Planning Improvement Action Plan as noted by Development Control Committee, highlights the recent improvement on enforcement issues and the current consultation taking place on the restructure of the Planning Department to address performance issues, and believes these improvements should be welcomed.

and original clauses 1(c) – 1(f) be renumbered 1(d) – 1(g)
3. That all words before 'highlighted,' in original clause 1(c) are deleted and replaced with 'Concerns'.
4. That all words after 'application,' in original clause 1(c) are deleted and replaced with 'and asks the Chair of Planning to make a statement at the next Development Control Committee on the matter.'
5. That all words after 'delays,' in original clause 1(d) are deleted and replaced with 'and apologises unreservedly to residents for that delay.'
6. That additional clauses 1(f) – 1(h) be inserted:

- (f) The work of the Newport Pagnell South ward councillors in seeking the answers the residents want on the issue of 1 Yeomans Drive, Blakelands and their disappointment with the delay in the review.
- (g) The finding by Internal Audit that there is no basis to corroborate a specific allegation of officer interference in the independent report.
- (h) The public statement by Mr Dorfman that he has not encountered any undue interference in his investigation and awaits his report.

and renumbered clauses 1(e) and 1(f) be renumbered as 1(i) and 1(j) accordingly.

7. That the word 'contentious,' be deleted in original clause in 1. e).
8. That the words 'although they did not approach the council, Leader or Chief Executive before doing so with their concerns, did not provide Milton Keynes Council with a copy of the letter which was then circulated to the media and expresses disappointment at this poor behaviour' be inserted after the word 'department' in original clause 1. f)
9. That additional clauses 1(k) – 1(m) be added after renumbered clause 1(i):
 - (k) The failure of the immediate former Chair of Development Control Committee to bring forward any clear actions to address issues within the planning department and their failure to constructively address these issues with all councillors and officers and welcomes the more constructive and positive approach by the new Chair of the Development Control Committee.
 - (l) That there have been clear problems in the planning service in the past and reiterates the commitment of this council to improve the service and address any issues that may arise from the independent report.
 - (m) That the Development Control Committee exercises a quasi-judicial function and the creeping attempts to politicise its proceeding, or to use it as a forum to criticise council officers who have no right of reply, impedes its ability to function properly and badly services Milton Keynes residents.
10. That the words 'or before if appropriate,' be added after the word 'December' in clause 2(a)."

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared carried with 34 councillors voting in favour, 14 councillors voting against and 1 councillor abstaining from voting.

On being put to the vote the motion as amended was declared carried with 35 councillors voting in favour, 14 councillors voting against and 1 councillor abstaining from voting.

RESOLVED -

1. That this Council notes:
 - (a) The concerns voiced by Blakelands Residents Association, former planning officers, Ward Councillors, Town & Parish Councillors and other groups and individuals regarding the performance of our planning department over the past three years.
 - (b) The perceived absence of visible action from the Leader of the Council (in that capacity and in his additional capacity as Portfolio-holder for planning), and his apparent reluctance to take any measures to restore faith in the planning department by the main opposition party do not take into account the improvement work taking place across the service, which should be highlighted to alleviate those concerns.
 - (c) The work of the Planning Improvement Board, welcomes the Planning Improvement Action Plan as noted by Development Control Committee, highlights the recent improvement on enforcement issues and the current consultation taking place on the restructure of the Planning Department to address performance issues, and believes these improvements should be welcomed.
 - (d) Concerns highlighted most recently by the Walnut Tree Reserve A & D, Hindhead Knoll application and asks the Chair of Planning to make a statement at the next Development Control Committee on the matter.
 - (e) The lack of public trust and confidence in the independent report into the 1 Yeomans Drive, Blakelands, development due to severe delays and apologises unreservedly to residents for that delay.
 - (f) The work of the Newport Pagnell South ward councillors in seeking the answers the residents want on the issue of 1 Yeomans Drive, Blakelands and their disappointment with the delay in the review.

- (g) The finding by Internal Audit that there is no basis to corroborate a specific allegation of officer interference in the independent report.
- (h) The public statement by Mr Dorfman that he has not encountered any undue interference in his investigation and awaits his report.
- (i) The importance of an effectively functioning planning department that has the confidence and trust of MK's residents and their elected representatives, ahead of any large-scale infrastructure projects such as the proposed new bridge over the M1.
- (j) That the two MK MPs and the Leader of the largest opposition group on the Council have written to the Secretary of State asking for an external review into the planning service and expressing concerns over the ability of this Council to deal with systematic failures within the planning department although they did not approach the Council, Leader or Chief Executive before doing so with their concerns, did not provide Milton Keynes Council with a copy of the letter which was then circulated to the media and expresses disappointment at this poor behaviour.
- (k) The failure of the immediate former Chair of Development Control Committee to bring forward any clear actions to address issues within the planning department and their failure to constructively address these issues with all councillors and officers and welcomes the more constructive and positive approach by the new Chair of the Development Control Committee.
- (l) That there have been clear problems in the planning service in the past and reiterates the commitment of this council to improve the service and address any issues that may arise from the independent report.
- (m) That the Development Control Committee exercises a quasi-judicial function and the creeping attempts to politicise its proceeding, or to use it as a forum to criticise council officers who have no right of reply, impedes its ability to function properly and badly services Milton Keynes residents.

2. That this Council therefore calls on the Leader of the Council:
 - (a) to give a written statement at Cabinet on 15 December, or before if appropriate, on the Blakelands review, and
 - (b) to give a written statement at Cabinet on 15 December of his plans to improve the Council's planning service and repair its reputation, whether or not the Dorfman report has been published.

CL62

SAVING GOLF AT WINDMILL HILL WILL BENEFIT ALL MK CITIZENS

Councillor Rankine moved the following motion which was seconded by Councillor Nazir:

- "1. That this Council notes that:
 - (a) Milton Keynes is the 2020 European City of Sport with the aim that this will allow MK Council to unlock more opportunities for investment into sports and physical activity that will provide local people with enjoyable, active and healthy lifestyles;
 - (b) golf is a popular sport in England just behind football in terms of levels of participation. Golf is not in decline, in fact over the last five years the number of people playing golf in England has slightly increased;
 - (c) golf courses in the UK and locally have seen a surge in memberships and levels of participation since being given a green light to reopen after lockdown;
 - (d) properly managed, affordable full-size municipal 18-hole golf courses with family oriented supporting facilities are recognised as being the most economically sustainable and play an important role in promoting social interaction, health, fitness and wellbeing from young to old;
 - (e) full size 18-hole golf is a popular sport but is under threat in Milton Keynes with only two courses in the city to serve a growing and ageing population;
 - (f) the cost of building a new course on a green field site is prohibitive due to the high cost of land and is unlikely to happen in Milton Keynes;
 - (g) Milton Keynes will be left with only one full size 18-hole golf course if the course at Windmill Hill is lost; and
 - (h) inter-club league competition is not possible without the facility of a full size 18-hole golf. Competition golf is essential for growing young sporting talent.

2. That this Council agrees that:
 - (a) Windmill Hill Golf Course is an important community asset and green space for Bletchley and Milton Keynes and provides affordable golf in a convenient location for local citizens;
 - (b) Windmill Hill Golf course has suffered from a lack of investment and strategic direction and, as a result, has performed poorly compared to other local courses;
 - (c) Windmill Hill golf course is dependent on pay and play. Membership numbers alone are not a good financial performance indicator for this golf course;
 - (d) Windmill Hill plays an important role in promoting social interaction, health, fitness and wellbeing across all sections of the community and golf is one of the few sports that provides an active social outlet for an ageing demographic;
 - (e) it is important that this Council commits to preserving the remaining two full size 18-hole golf courses in Milton Keynes for the benefit of the local community;
 - (f) all options to redevelop the Windmill Golf course site should guarantee the retention of a full size 18-hole golf course and investment to secure the golf course's long-term economic viability; and
 - (g) the redevelopment of the Windmill Hill site should be sympathetic to the concerns of neighbouring residents and not add unnecessary access restrictions.
3. That this Council calls upon the Cabinet to:
 - (a) acknowledge that golf as a participation sport is not in decline and to acknowledge that participation of this sport exceeds that of most other sports;
 - (b) recognise the social and wellbeing benefits of retaining more than one affordable, full size 18-hole golf course within the boundaries of an ageing and growing city;
 - (c) acknowledge the importance of retaining full size, competitive 18-hole golf as a means to enable young talent and future golf professionals to emerge. To potentially put Milton Keynes on the international golfing map;

- (d) conduct a full independent investigation into the finances of the Windmill Course that includes analysis of membership and pay and play / tee occupancy data;
- (e) unreservedly commit to the retention of a 18-hole full size golf course on the Windmill Hill site; and
- (f) ensure that all commercial options for the regeneration of the Windmill Site are fully explored to find a proposal that satisfies the commercial viability of the site, delivers for golfers and properly addresses the concerns of Windmill Hill neighbours.”

The Council heard from 6 members of the public on the matter.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared by acclamation.

RESOLVED –

1. That this Council notes that:
 - (a) Milton Keynes is the 2020 European City of Sport with the aim that this will allow MK Council to unlock more opportunities for investment into sports and physical activity that will provide local people with enjoyable, active and healthy lifestyles;
 - (b) golf is a popular sport in England just behind football in terms of levels of participation. Golf is not in decline, in fact over the last five years the number of people playing golf in England has slightly increased;
 - (c) golf courses in the UK and locally have seen a surge in memberships and levels of participation since being given a green light to reopen after lockdown;
 - (d) properly managed, affordable full-size municipal 18-hole golf courses with family oriented supporting facilities are recognised as being the most economically sustainable and play an important role in promoting social interaction, health, fitness and wellbeing from young to old;
 - (e) full size 18-hole golf is a popular sport but is under threat in Milton Keynes with only two courses in the city to serve a growing and ageing population;
 - (f) the cost of building a new course on a green field site is prohibitive due to the high cost of land and is unlikely to happen in Milton Keynes;
 - (g) Milton Keynes will be left with only one full size 18-hole golf course if the course at Windmill Hill is lost; and

- (h) inter-club league competition is not possible without the facility of a full size 18-hole golf. Competition golf is essential for growing young sporting talent.
2. That this Council agrees that:
- (a) Windmill Hill Golf Course is an important community asset and green space for Bletchley and Milton Keynes and provides affordable golf in a convenient location for local citizens;
 - (b) Windmill Hill Golf course has suffered from a lack of investment and strategic direction and, as a result, has performed poorly compared to other local courses;
 - (c) Windmill Hill golf course is dependent on pay and play. Membership numbers alone are not a good financial performance indicator for this golf course;
 - (d) Windmill Hill plays an important role in promoting social interaction, health, fitness and wellbeing across all sections of the community and golf is one of the few sports that provides an active social outlet for an ageing demographic;
 - (e) it is important that this Council commits to preserving the remaining two full size 18-hole golf courses in Milton Keynes for the benefit of the local community;
 - (f) all options to redevelop the Windmill Golf course site should guarantee the retention of a full size 18-hole golf course and investment to secure the golf course's long-term economic viability; and
 - (g) the redevelopment of the Windmill Hill site should be sympathetic to the concerns of neighbouring residents and not add unnecessary access restrictions.
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 - (b) recognise the social and wellbeing benefits of retaining more than one affordable, full size 18-hole golf course within the boundaries of an ageing and growing city;

- (c) acknowledge the importance of retaining full size, competitive 18-hole golf as a means to enable young talent and future golf professionals to emerge and to potentially put Milton Keynes on the international golfing map;
- (d) conduct a full independent investigation into the finances of the Windmill Course that includes analysis of membership and pay and play / tee occupancy data;
- (e) unreservedly commit to the retention of a 18-hole full size golf course on the Windmill Hill site; and
- (f) ensure that all commercial options for the regeneration of the Windmill Site are fully explored to find a proposal that satisfies the commercial viability of the site, delivers for golfers and properly addresses the concerns of Windmill Hill neighbours.

THE MAYOR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 10:54 PM