

Council Decision Notice

The following decisions were taken by Council at its meeting held on Wednesday 13 September 2023 at 19:30

2(b) Questions from Members of the Public

ACTIONS:

1. The Leader of the Council, noting known issues with the existing planning portal, advised that he had asked officers to ensure that appropriate channels for receiving representations were available and highlighted.
2. The Leader of the Council advised that he would ask officers to ensure that all planning web pages and associated documents were up to date.
3. The Mayor asked the Cabinet member for Climate and Sustainability to provide Mr Bartlett with a written response to his question and that a copy of the response be included in the minutes.

5 Delegated Decisions - 22 August 2023

RESOLVED:

That the Council makes the Haversham-cum-Little Linford Neighbourhood Plan pursuant to the provisions of Section 38(A)(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

6(a) Councillors' Questions

ACTIONS:

1. Councillor Townsend agreed to meet with Councillor Andrew and officers to discuss outstanding highways issues in the Newport Pagnell North and Hanslope Ward.
2. Councillor Townsend agreed to write to estate agents to remind them of the policy and associated enforcement action with regard to attaching signage to Council infrastructure.

7 Motion 1 - Save Bletchley and Wolverton Ticket Offices

RESOLVED:

1. That this Council notes that:
 - a) in July this year, the Rail Delivery Group that represents train operators across the UK announced that it was moving ahead with plans to close up to 1000 rail ticket offices across England over the next 3 years;

- b) not all residents are able to use station ticket machines or have the means to book a ticket in advance such as the elderly, disabled, visually impaired, and those with poor literacy and IT skills;
 - c) according to Age UK, 3 million elderly people in the UK do not have access to the internet, and data from data the Royal National Institute for Blind People shows that only 3% of those with partial or full sight loss feel able to use ticket machines; and
 - d) plans to close ticket offices could lead up to 2,000 job losses.
2. That this Council believes that:
- a) ticket offices provide a vital service to residents across Milton Keynes travelling from Wolverton and Bletchley train stations, Bletchley especially is likely to see an increase in footfall once East West Rail works are complete linking communities from Oxford and Bletchley;
 - b) having a sign posted ticket office to help people with enquiries provides certainty and confidence to customers who may otherwise struggle to locate staff to help;
 - c) the closure of ticket offices will disproportionately affect vulnerable customers, including the elderly, disabled, and visually impaired, as well as those with poor literacy and IT skills;
 - d) those customers without easy access to the internet will struggle to get the best possible price for their journey;
 - e) customers who are travelling on long distance trips that have multiple changes can find these journeys confusing and stressful, these customers would benefit from speaking to a member of ticket office staff who can explain the journey and ensure they don't incur fines or pay more than is necessary for their trip; and
 - f) current ticket office staff will be affected, and it is concerning that there will be redundancies – given that there will be no regulations for minimum staffing levels at stations and on platforms.
3. That this Council resolves to ask the Chief Executive of the City Council to write to the Secretary of State for Transport, the Chief Executive of the Rail Delivery Group, and London Northwestern Railway to express the City Council's opposition to plans to close staffed rail ticket offices at Bletchley and Wolverton.

Note:

The consultation period has been extended and will now run until 1 September 2023.

8 Motion 2 - Pet Food Banks

RESOLVED:

1. That this Council notes that:
 - a) the cost-of-living crisis continues to impact residents across Milton Keynes;
 - b) the City Council's £3.3million Winter Plan which included £100,000 to local food charities;
 - c) in July 2023, MK Food Bank revealed that 1 in 25 households across the city cannot afford to buy enough food, and every week about 50 people are contacting them for the very first time, and for those who care for much-loved family pets the crisis is also affecting their ability to care and look after their animals;
 - d) research from the RSPCA shows that 7 in 10 pet owners are worried about the cost of caring for their animals and a fifth are concerned about how they'll feed them;
 - e) the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) revealed that 770,000 owners are going without necessities, including skipping meals to keep money aside to afford the costs associated with looking after their pets, and around 140,000 pets have been given up for rehoming due to the cost of looking after them;
 - f) despite the hard work of MK Food Bank who currently collect pet food which is distributed to local animal charities, animal abandonments have increased by a quarter this year alone, whilst reports of animal neglect have increased by 13%;
 - g) an estimated 2.7 million animals enter UK animal shelters each year, whilst rehoming rates are falling with animals finding new homes falling by 8%; and
 - h) most animal shelters do not have the funding to help all animals that come into their care.
2. That this Council believes that:
 - a) for many, owning pets is a lifeline during the cost-of-living crisis;
 - b) pets help reduce their owner's isolation and combat loneliness, providing companionship and health / mental health benefits (stroking pets helps to reduce blood pressure and can make their owners more active);
 - c) facing the toughest financial crisis in a generation, many residents have been forced out of their homes and as a result have had to give up their

much-loved family pet, which causes emotional distress and a damaging effect on mental health;

- d) no one should have to choose between feeding themselves or feeding their pets; and
 - e) supporting residents by ensuring they have access to food for their pets will reduce the pressure on already stretched shelters and ensure pets can stay with their owners.
3. That this Council resolves to encourage food organisations such as MK Food Bank and SOFEA to work with animal charities to source pet food and provide it at human food banks as well as community larders to help struggling pet owners to feed their animals.

9 Limited Scope Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

RESOLVED:

- 1. The Council agreed to undertake a limited scope Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (PDR), for the current Polling District of Wavendon (HC).
- 2. The Council agreed a 6-week consultation on the draft recommendations.

10 Terms of Reference - Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED:

- 1. The Council agreed the Terms of Reference for the Committee.
- 2. The Council agreed that authority be delegated to the Director of Law and Governance to approve any variations to the Terms of Reference following further discussion with the other constituent authorities, subject to consultation with Group Leaders in respect of any proposed significant variations.
- 3. The Council agreed to waive the requirement of the Joint Committee to be politically proportionate across the constituent authorities.
- 4. The Council agreed the appointments of Councillors Adewale (substitute), Hall, Hearnshaw (substitute), D Hopkins (substitute), Long and Oguntola to the Committee.

11 Quarterly Report on Special Urgency Decisions

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

12 Ward Based Budgets 2023/24

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

