Minutes of an Extraordinary meeting of Bucklebury Parish Council held in The Victory Room, Bucklebury on Monday 25th November 2024 at 7.45pm

Present: Cllr. B. Dickens (Chairman); Cllr. J. Allum; Cllr. G. Loader; Cllr. M. Morgan; Cllr. G. Pask; Cllr. D. Southgate; Cllr. P. Spours; Cllr. P. Teal; Cllr. C. Willett; Cllr. L. Windmill; Cllr. G. Woods; District Cllr. C. Read; Mrs. H. Pratt (Clerk).
25 members of the public were present.

1 **Apologies**.
There were no apologies for absence.

2 **Declarations of Interest.**

2.1 Register of Interests.
There were no updates to the Register of Interests. HP

2.2 Declarations of Interest in Agenda Items.
There were no declarations of interest in any agenda items.

3 **Public Session.**

3.1 Background to the Local Plan.
Cllr. Dickens gave an introduction to the draft Local Plan. Regulation 18 and 19 consultations on the Local Plan have already taken place. The draft Local Plan was submitted to the planning inspector. Following his review and a number of hearings, suggestions for modifications were made. WBC will be considering those modifications at a full council meeting on Thursday 28th November.

4 **Local Plan.**

4.1 Debate on how to proceed.
BPC has been advised professionally by Andrew Black with documentation and representation at the consultations and hearings.
The 2,500 homes in the original draft plan, was reduced to 1,500 in the plan submitted to the planning inspector. The planning inspector has suggested this is unsound and recommended increasing the number of new homes back to 2,500.
There will be a public consultation (running from the 6/12/24 to the 31/1/25) on the main modification changes to the policy map, sustainability report and habitat regulation assessment reports. BPC will be responding to this consultation.
A Masterplan needs to be produced by WBC and the Thatcham NE Consortium. There will be consultation on the Masterplan. In this consultation BPC will be focusing on maintaining the strategic gap between Thatcham and Upper Bucklebury, traffic and environmental issues.
Costs to complete the above work are expected to be in the region of £5,000.
Thatcham Town Council (TTC) is understood to be considering its options and whether it should legally challenge the modified Local Plan and seek a Kings Counsel (KC) opinion, potentially followed by a Judicial Review (JR).
Cold Ash Parish Council (CAPC) is also considering a KC opinion after two sites, which were not identified in their recently adopted Neighbourhood Development Plan, were included in the modified draft Local Plan.
Midgham Parish Council (MPC) which contains 30-33 acres of the NE Thatcham site to be developed has agreed to put £500 towards a KC opinion.
District Cllr. Read commented that NE Thatcham is not the right location for this number of houses and that horrible outcomes would result from the development. A location should have been sought for a new town. Olivia Bailey MP has toured the surrounds of the NE Thatcham site and is strongly opposed to the Local Plan.

BPC will respond to the consultation on the modified draft Local Plan and to the Masterplan process/document.
The question is whether BPC should seek a KC opinion and potentially a JR. It was noted that the test for a JR is very high.
Both TTC and CAPC have different reasons for seeking a KC opinion and potentially a JR. A KC opinion is expected to cost in the region of £8,000 (excluding any preparation work) which exceeds the existing BPC budget. If the KC opinion is in favour of a JR, there are further substantial costs for the JR and if the case is lost potentially further costs (although these are capped). A JR could well cost a minimum of £30,000 plus any costs.
It was noted that a JR would take time and might result in the present Local Plan expiring in 2026 lapsing. The consequences of this would potentially be more development over and above what is in the draft Local Plan.
There are questions about whether the sustainability of the draft Local Plan is flawed. The Planning Inspector has suggested that an extra 1,000 houses are required to fulfil the increased West Berkshire housing requirements following the Deputy Prime Minster's statement on housing numbers. WBC says that the increase in housing numbers to 2,500 on the NE Thatcham site will have a positive impact on sustainability without any significant supporting evidence. Nowhere in the Local Plan are there any road improvements in the parishes of Bucklebury, Bradfield and Cold Ash, although much of the traffic from the development would travel through these parishes.
Members of the public made various comments including pledges of financial support for a KC/JR. There was surprise at the lack of impact the comments from BPC had had with the Planning Inspector.

4.2 To resolve what actions need to be taken.
It was agreed that there would be a public meeting, provisionally on the Tuesday 17th December in the Memorial Hall.

5 **Meadows.**

5.1 To consider the quotes for tree work around the meadows
Cllr. Pask reported that he has contacted four tree surgeons to quote for the following work in the Meadows:

- Removal of dead ash trees
- Removal of dead elm trees
- Removal of hollow ash tree
- Tidy up hanging and dead branches in oak trees.

A separate quote was been requested to either grub out or reduce the holly growing under, and into, the ancient oak trees between the small and large meadows.
Indicative costs to remove the dead wood from the oak trees on the eastern boundary of the large meadow, which are in the ownership of the Morton's Lane properties were also requested.
Three quotes for the work were received and it was agreed to accept Masons Trees and Woodland Management's quote, up to a maximum of £10,000, to have all of the work on BPC land completed. GP
All the tree surgeons visually inspected the large split oak growing on Orchard Gate land, but overhanging the meadow. All considered it a high risk. One option suggested was to fence off that corner of the field. Cllr. Allum will contact the owner of the tree to try and discuss potential options. JA
It was agreed that the Morton's Lane property owners need to be written to, to remind them of their responsibility and liability.

6 **To consider the following consultations:**

6.1 WBC Budget proposals.
It was agreed that Cllr. Southgate and Cllr. Pask would respond to the WBC budget proposal. DS GP

Signed . . . . . Date . . . . . .

6.2	Ministry of Housing consultation on remote meetings and proxy voting. It was agreed that Cllr. Morgan would respond to this consultation.	MM
7	**Round Table Comments.**	
7.1	Local Plan Meetings. It was questioned how much Andrew Black charges to attend meetings; Cllr. Dickens will confirm the amount. A question was raised about how BPC wish to manage meetings and extraordinary meetings related to the Local Plan in particular.	BD
7.2	Funding for the WBC Consultation on the next stage of the Local Plan. It was questioned how much was available in the budget to respond to the next stage of the Local Plan.	

The meeting concluded at 9.45pm.

Date of next meetings:

BPC Planning meeting:

Monday 9th December 2024 at 7.30pm – The Oak Room, The Memorial Hall.

Cemetery Carols: Monday 23rd December 2024 at 6pm.

Signed . . . . . Date . . . . . .