

Agenda item: FC 108/21

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 8th November 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the council on activities and delegated decisions made since previous meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the council notes this report.**
- 2. That the council considers the creation of a group to look at how WCC can improve its 'green' approaches (biodiversity, ecology, carbon footprint, etc.), with a view to having clear policies and processes, alongside a declaration of Climate Emergency, if this is felt appropriate.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Since the last Full Council meeting, there have been several meetings which may be of interest to the council:

- Meeting with Nick Hannon regarding landscaping and public realm. This was primarily arranged to discuss the concerns around the landscape contract, ensuring that whatever comes in 2023 is financially viable and to see what the proposal was regarding biodiversity within the new contract. However, it evolved into a much wider agenda covering a range of waste and public realm issues. Agreements included:
 - Regular meetings to restart with the enforcement team and WCC officers to address and manage these issues.
 - Regular updates from the team undertaking the work around rats, to ensure that councillors and residents are informed in advance of works being undertaken.
 - Some (limited) clarity around the landscaping contract, the 'weed machine' and the street sweeper (further work to do).
 - Agreement to clear the remaining alleys on Beanhill and clarify long term plans AND agreement to look at capital investment to transform the areas of landscaping that are most in need of changes.
- Meeting about MK Connect with officers from MKC and other parish councils. This was an online meeting where updates were offered, and views exchanged. The message appeared to be that this was here to stay, that there are issues that are being worked on and that further updates will be

offered in 6 months. We will continue to push for a more constructive meeting with the relevant parties to address the concerns expressed around the impact on Woughton residents.

- Online meeting with representatives about the former Arcadia site on Redmoor and the proposals around a new development. This is in advance of any formal application and was, I think, aimed at heading any issues of in advance. This was followed by a short (1 week) online
- consultation period which was designed to get positive feedback (the nature of the questions was such that it would be hard to answer negatively, e.g. 'would you like to see employment opportunities for local people?').
- Meeting with Phil Jeffs from MKC regarding the Marlborough Street proposals. Positive and encouraging that speed limit changes will be considered, but likely to be of limited value, as unlikely to be sufficient resource to enforce.
- I attended a Landscape workshop that further looked at the potential landscaping provision from 2023. Some positives and will continue to look at the pros and cons of any proposal for the contract.
- Two different meetings with Social Care and Mental Health Managers from MKC to look at what we do, what they do and how we might work more collaboratively to better meet the needs of residents. These meetings were both extremely positive with some good links made between the two organisations.
- In my absence, there was a further Flood Plan meeting (I shall let those in attendance cover this, but some useful discussions and decisions made).
- NALC provided an online session looking at how local councils can support biodiversity and ecology, which was attended by officers from across the council. It was of limited use (felt a bit like an extended advert for the presenters) but did promote some excellent discussion between officers. I would recommend the council considers creating a group to focus on this area, look at how we can embed ecological approaches across our council and build sustainability into our practices. Links nicely to the COP26 discussions currently taking place.
- I attended (most of) a session looking at how to improve community involvement and awareness around flooding, with a second session taking place tomorrow (Tues 9th Nov) – this was sent round to all councillors and RA's, so I would be interested to know of any feedback from other attendees.

We have also held meetings about the Blue Light Walk, Remembrance parade and meetings with other parishes to share best practice.

We have been successful in appointing a new Advice Worker, Lauren Steele, who will be starting on 23rd November. This is extremely positive news, following the

previous candidate withdrawing. Lauren will be working most of the week with the Advice Service and a few hours for Youth, offering even more cross departmental working.

I would like to apologise for postponing the GDPR training – I had been unwell and was unsure whether I would be back. Luckily, only two people had confirmed attendance, so I hope more will be able to attend when rebooked (I am aware now that the date also clashed with RA meetings, so will need to revisit the training calendar too).

In other news...

- Our online booking system for the community centres is now live – this is part of the new accounting system and provides an integrated approach, where bookings, invoicing, payments, etc will automatically update on the accounts system and should reduce both paperwork and time needed to manage these bookings.
- Halloween happened, with some really excellent activities around the parish, from 'Wicked Wanda' on Netherfield, to the Moorlands spooky disco, to the Coffee Hall tunnel of doom. Congratulations to all who worked to make this happen (and please do send me any photos or updates for the Gazette, asap, please!).
- Following a suggestion from a resident, some councillors have sourced a piano which will, at some point, appear. This will be stored in the Wellbeing Room in the short term, whilst a plan for use, storage, etc. is created.
- The transfer of the land for the new Landscape Depot is continuing – the payback team has started clearing the site, opening it up and showing the potential. Our Landscape Manager will be working to identify any issues, connection to services, fencing and security, access issues, etc. using the new Project Planning template, which will, when complete, go to Operations for oversight and agreement. However, the site is a decent size, should enable all Landscaping and Environment stuff to be stored there, including tool library / events equipment / etc. and mean the disposal of both the Fishermead depot and the Eaglestone garage.

We have had some staff absences, myself included, as the usual winter coughs and colds kick in with a vengeance. We have also seen increased rate of Covid locally (although at time of writing, a small reduction this week, following a month of increases) and some encouragement from local health leaders to consider a return to work from home / reduce gatherings / mask wearing / etc. We will continue to assess, and risk manage these issues, but as a council, should be prepared for the potential for more significant impacts over the coming months.

More positively, Christmas preparations are continuing and we aim to have Santa Sleigh travelling round all the estates during the week of the 14th December, with Residents groups putting other things around that. We also have the Remembrance

parades this week, with children on Thursday 11th and then the usual one on Sunday.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: FC 109/21

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 8th November 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the council on meeting schedules.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the council notes this report.**
- 2. That the committee is updated on the decision made by Operations Committee on 2nd November.**
- 3. That the Operations Committee decision forms part of the calendar noted below.**
- 4. That council agrees to the new meeting calendar.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Over the past few meetings, various proposals have been made with regard to the calendar of meetings. It was agreed (and ratified) that Full Council would return to Monday evenings, starting slightly later at 6.30pm to enable as wider attendance as possible. Other committees have also considered options and there is a general view that has been expressed that Monday evenings works well for most. However, at time of writing, Operations Committee still has not met and so the calendar below has gaps where Operations will be added prior to the Full Council Meeting.

The proposal is:

Full Council – Monday evenings at 6.30pm (this is already agreed and ratified).
Dates are: Nov 8th, Dec 6th, Jan 10th, Feb 7th, Mar 7th, April 11th.

Operations – To be confirmed in the meeting.
Dates are likely to be: Mondays on Jan 3rd, 28th Feb*,

Resources and Finance – Monday evenings at 6.30pm.
Dates are: Nov 29th*, Jan 31st*, April 4th.

Planning, Licensing and Development – Monday evenings at 6.30pm.
Dates are: Nov 15th, Dec 13th, Jan 17th, Feb 14th (Happy Valentines!), March 14th and April 18th.

Please note that this committee will only meet if there is business to transact.

Services Committee – will remain on Wednesday evenings but will move to 6.30pm
Dates are: Nov 17th, Dec 15th, Jan 19th, Feb 16th, March 16th, April 20th.
Please note that this committee will only meet if there is business to transact.

*Please note that these are the first Mondays before current dates but are in fact the month before the usual.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: FC 110/21

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 8th November 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the council on version 3 of the draft budget for 2022/2023.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the Council notes the report.**
- 2. That a further report is provided to Council in January 2021, providing details of the consultation and any potential updates.**
- 3. That Council prepares to ratify the final budget in January 2021, based upon feedback and updated projections.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

We have reviewed our draft budget for 2022/23, for review by this committee. As you will be aware we made some minor amendments to our Employers national insurance contributions and a small addition to our youth staffing budget.

Our council tax base has been published for next year (2022/23) which has allowed us to start looking at our budget including how this will affect our precept.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Our council tax base has increased from £2,282.48 last year and this is what we have been working with for our budget for 2022/23 on all previous revisions published. However, we have had confirmation that our council tax base for this year has risen to £2,420.49. With this knowledge we have reflected upon our current budget and made the relevant changes.

Our version 2 budget we drafted projected a surplus of £16,859.74 (total reserves £490,582.46) this was based at a 7% rise, with our council tax base at £2,282.48. We have revised our budget with the new council tax base in mind, to decrease our projected rise to a 3% increase in precept, this is in line with CPI (Consumer price index) where inflation rates are at 3.2%. Due to the increase in our council tax base this means our total precept has increased from £618,258.59 (V2 – based on 7% and old council tax base) to £631,140.74. An increase of almost £13,000 whilst reducing our precept rise.

Our LCTRS has been decreased from £169,782 for 2021/22 to £168,937.85 for 2022/23. A small reduction of just under £900. We are aware that this will not be the final decline in LCTRS and that we must plan and prepare for such a time that this will be eliminated from our budget stream.

We know, like last year and the current that Covid19 has had implications and caused constraints and uncertainty to every aspect of life. Our budgeting has also been affected by this, and whilst we know we will see increases in things such as utilities, and potentially an increase to minimum wage, again at this juncture we cannot produce any exact figures. By means of working around this we have budgeted as prudently as possible.

We have £10,000 (as seen of version 2 of the budget) sat in Emerging priorities for anything that may arise that has not been costed in the original service plan. This sits separately from the £30,000 which we increased from £10,000 from 2021/22 (current years budget). We have also added £20,000 to Emergency contingency which can be used towards any increased costs or aftereffects of Covid that are still to come into play. For now, we see this as the most practical way of ensuring we have enough funds to cover any increase in costs without using our reserves. (As previously expressed in this report we will need to start tasking ourselves with looking at how our budgets and services will look without the assistance that LCTRS currently gives us) having robust reserves will be pivotal in ensuring we can function as necessary if we do see a large proportion or all LCTRS disappear in the near future.

Given the addition of £20,000 sat in emergency contingency the £10,000 in emerging priorities and then £30,000 sat in service plan delivery (whilst we await to see actual figures from our costed service plans that will be published prior to final draft in January) this gives us £60,000 for new projects, initiatives and for any emergency or priorities money that will be needed – which we should gain some insight for from our budget consultation/priorities publication. I am confident that we should end the year with a portion of this money unspent, so long as we continue with finding best value for money and planning our spend appropriately. Consistent revisions of the budget which has become best practise for us will continue into next year.

You will see that the V3 budget reduces our precept rise from 7% to 3%, it increases our precept by just under £13,000 taking it from £618,782 up to £631,140.74. It gives us a surplus budget of £8,897.74 as opposed to V2 which forecasted £16,859.74 but this is due to the fact V3 we have forecasted the additional £20,000 in emergency contingency for any effects we are likely to see next year as another result of the stance of the country due to implications caused by Covid19. We will look at carrying over £482,620 (forecasted at £490,582 in V2) a reduction of £7,962 – but it means we are only raising our precept by the cost of inflation and have an additional £20,000 within our budget to help assist with any amendments that may need to take place. We can be fairly sure that some of this money may be unspent at the end of 2022/23, and if so, will see us with a carry over more akin to the original projection as per V2.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

All senior managers are given budget monitoring reports monthly to ensure they can review their budget streams, spend and any additional income they are helping to bring in. This should assist our budget holders not to overspend and to have to justify any significant under and/or overspend on a quarterly basis.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

As per discussed, we will almost see increases in utilities costs and other areas of spend, and therefore we must ensure we have contingency buffer available.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Version 3 of the draft budget for 2022/2023.

AUTHOR

Samone Winsborough
RFO

Agenda item: FC 111/21

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 8th November 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To agree the budget consultation for the 2022/2023 budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the Council notes the report.**
- 2. That the Council agrees to the proposed budget consultation for 2022/2023 to be published on Tuesday 10th November 2021.**
- 3. That the Council agrees for feedback to be given to the Resources and Finance Committee meeting in our December.**
- 4. That the Council agrees to the RFO/Council Manager reviewing feedback to ensure the 2022/2023 budget best reflects the majority response.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

After reviewing our engagement over the past 3 (three) years we have been in post, we have decided this year to expand on our Woughton priorities survey (which went live in October) this survey is for residents to respond on what is important to them and what they would like to see around the Parish.

With this in mind, we felt this was a strong starter block in terms of reviewing alongside our budget and would give us some key feedback in terms of budget forecasting.

We *may* see lack of engagement because the term 'budget consultation' could be perceived as daunting to people who are not well affiliated with local government finance, and therefore moving forwards we would like to refer to the consultation as our 'priorities survey.' This will also give us functionality to run the survey for longer (prior to budget forecasting) to give more time for responses, this will assist us in our first few drafts of the budget, and any questions regarding precept and final budget suggestions can be added at such a time it is relevant/appropriate.

We are suggesting the following addition to the survey:

'We know that it has been a difficult year for many, with the impacts of covid, Brexit, job changes and increased costs. Given this, we are suggesting a small, below inflation precept rise, equivalent to about 10p a week. This covers the increased costs to us (gas, electric, etc.) but keeps any rise to the absolute minimum.

Is this: too little, about right, too much.'

We feel this addition will give clarity surrounding the projected budget. We will publish postcard like documents with key questions from the survey AND the online link to the survey to increase interaction. Paper copies will also be available in the office, provided to councillors upon request with clipboards (for engagement with the public), and available at our events and projects i.e. community fridge and café. We would also like to provide copies to Netherfield community fridge to gain as much reach as possible.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

None perceived, although the priorities survey will assist us when making decisions concerning the final budget to be brought to Full Council in January.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

Pushing of the priorities survey from WCC officers, Councillors and social media/website communications.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None perceived.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

2022/2023 budget report.

AUTHOR

Samone Winsborough, RFO
Steve McNay, Council manager

Agenda item: FC 112/21

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 8th November 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the committee on Councillor Allowances for consideration over the coming budget setting period.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the Committee notes the report.**
- 2. That the Committee agrees to a 2% rise in Councillor Allowances for Financial Year 2022/2023 (unless any review published by Milton Keynes Council contradicts this)**
- 3. That the Committee agrees that allowances are considered on an annual basis as part of the budget setting procedure and as per linked to any relevant legislation and/or local policy.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Following on from discussions at Resources and Finance committee in September, the recommendations were to discuss further a 2% increase in Councillor Allowances in time for formal budget setting in January.

The recommendations at the time were not to proceed on any decision on the level of Councillor Allowances until Milton Keynes council had published their review findings. Upon writing this report the situation still stands that Milton Keynes council have not published any findings relating to level of Councillor Allowances.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The recommendation from Resources and Finance is to proceed with a 2% increase to Councillor Allowances this is to assist with inflation rates, as per Council managers report to Resources and Finance in September the Bank of England suggests a 2% rise per annum to equate for this.

A 2% increase to Council Allowances for 2022/23 will look as follows:

- Standard allowance, **£637** (currently £624.50 – an additional £12.50 per annum)
- Chairs allowance, **£1274** (currently £1249 – an additional £25 per annum)
- Leader's allowance, **£1274** (currently £1249 – an additional £25 per annum)
- Ambassador's allowance, **£51** (currently £50 – an additional £1 per annum)

I would recommend that the 2% rise in line with inflation takes effect for 2022/23 and that version four (4) of our budget for 2022/23 reflects this (which will be published at Operations in January and final draft brought to Full Council in our January meeting.)

We will revisit this once Milton Keynes Council publish their findings and adjust accordingly, should this be necessary.

I would also strongly recommend that the allowances for councillors commence to be considered annually as part of the budget setting procedure and as per linked to any legislation and/or local policy.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None perceived.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None perceived.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

IRP Councillors Allowances Briefing Note 24th September 2021.

AUTHOR

Samone Winsborough
RFO

Agenda item: FC 113/21

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 8th November 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the Council on the 2022/2023 Service Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the Council notes this report.**
- 2. That any further items for consideration for the 2022/2023 Service Plan are submitted to the Council Manager or appropriate committee prior by the end of the calendar year.**
- 3. That a 'first look' at the Service Plan proper comes to Full Council in December 2021, which should include the vast majority of ideas, with the exception of those from the public consultation.**
- 4. That a final proposal for the Service Plan will go to Full Council, alongside the budget, in January 2022, to include those items highlighted through public consultation.**
- 5. That anything that is not on the service plan and is proposed after ratification will be considered based upon a formal proposal and budget, linking to the 'emerging priorities' budget line.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Discussion around the annual Service plan have been taking place since August, with various committees and Full Council having specific agenda items to look at these discussions. There have been some excellent ideas proposed, including:

Services Committee

- First Aid courses to be run on each estate for young people.
- Blue Light Discos run by the Police, Fire & Rescue Service and the Ambulance Service.
- To revive the Youth Council.
- More Cultural events.

Operations Committee

- Community centre improvement plan/strategy
- Contract and preferred supplier review
- Asset (tagging)
- Online bookings and payments (website)
- Trailer (advertising, marketing and usage)

Planning Committee

- Improved coverage on website, including links to provide feedback and outcomes

There are also some items to 'carry over' from the existing plan

- All of the 'Covid recovery' are likely to continue for some time and continue to be built upon. Significant work has been undertaken, but more will be needed
- Business forum and Youth Council have both been victims of the restrictions and so will carry over.
- Community Growing Space is now transferred and work can get started on creating the services – grant applications will, we hope, cover much of the financial demand, but will remain on the plan for the coming year.
- Geeks in Sheds – is part of the plan for the new spaces, so will carry over too.

There are remaining items that, despite having been worked on and 'finished' in terms of the service plan, will continue to be a demand on time and resources and so will form part of the 'ongoing' element of the new service plan – the idea is that this details the stuff that the council does all the time, alongside the 'new' things that tend to be the items on the service plan.

One further element that needs consideration is that of additional items that come up after the plan is agreed. Whilst a level of flexibility is essential, we have seen this year that the 'emerging priorities' line in the budget has been hammered by new ideas, sometimes without a full exploration of the idea / proposal at committee or council. Given this, any new proposals from officers or members will need to be proposed and agreed, with a spending plan, project plan and any relevant risk assessment, prior to taking place. This ensures that we comply with our governing documents, keep the council safe and manage the budget accordingly.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

There will be an impact on staffing, as always, but this is unclear until such time as the plan is finalised. Looking at the current elements, there are some significant pieces of work to undertake, but mainly within existing roles.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial demands are likely to be considerable too – these elements are based upon committee ideas. There are also some views that have already come through the consultation (use of CCTV, Christmas lights, more bins (general and dog), etc).

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

2022/2023 Service Plan.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: FC 114/21

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 8th November 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To propose agreeing to an 'Expression of Interest' for the landscaping contact for 2023 onwards.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the council notes this report.**
- 2. That the council agrees to submit the Expression of Interest.**
- 3. That discussions and considerations around taking on the contract continue as more information is gained and contract development evolves.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

WCC has been delivering the landscaping service as a devolved offer from MKC for 7 years. The current contract ends in March 2023, with a new contract being offered from 1st April 2023.

Discussions have been taking place regarding this contract and whilst there is considerable work still needed to nail down essential elements (what we would be doing, how ecology and biodiversity issues may impact, how long the contract will run, how much money we will get, etc.)

The Expression of Interest is due to be returned by the end of Nov. IT DOES NOT COMMIT US TO ANYTHING but does suggest that we will proceed IF (and I cannot stress that IF enough) the contract offered is suitable, affordable and what is best for the people of the parish.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

If we don't submit the Eol, we will not be in the discussions about the contract. This is not advisable.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST form.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: FC 114/21

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Delivery of Landscaping Services from 2023

This form does not constitute any commitment to proceed by either party

Please return by **30 November 2021**

Parish / Town Council

Contact Name & Position

Telephone

Email.....

Please accept this as an Expression of Interest for Parish /Town Council to deliver its own landscaping services from 2020.

Additional comments

.....
.....
.....
.....

Signature.....

Name.....

On behalf of

Date

Please return to Kay Pettit (Parish and Town Council Programme Manager) by email to Kay.Pettit@milton-keynes.gov.uk