

Full Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13th March 2023, 6:30pm at the Woughton Community Council Hub, Council Chamber, The Local Centre, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes

Present: Cllrs Sue Smith (Chair), Jordan Coventry (Vice-Chair), Maggie Ferguson, Donna Fuller, Penny Glasgow, Brian Hepburn, Liz Simpkins, Ruth McMillan, John Orr, Terri Parish, Nick Scott, Pam Wilson, Alan Williamson.

Also present:

Steve McNay (Council Manager)

Brian Barton (Committee & Member Services Officer)

FC 185/23 Apologies for Absence:

Cllr Elina Apse (personal)

Cllr Jeanette Bobey (personal)

Cllr Luke Louis (personal)

Cllr Amber McQuillan (personal)

AGREED

FC 186/23 Declaration of interests:

There were no declarations of interests.

NOTED

FC 187/23 Minutes of the previous Full Council meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13th February 2023 were **AGREED** and signed by the Chair as a true and correct record.

FC 188/23 Chair's Announcement(s):

There were no Chair's announcements.

NOTED

FC 189/23 Questions from the public:

There were no questions from the members of the public.

NOTED

FC 190/23 Ward Matters arising:

There were no ward matters arising.

NOTED

FC 191/23 Milton Keynes Council Ward Councillors report:

Cllr Donna Fuller – instances of Fly tipping, and has been in touch with the Waste and Environment Directorate at Milton Keynes City Council, meeting to be arranged with Julie Baines Environment Officer at Woughton Community Council, please let Cllr Fuller know of any areas where there has been incidents of fly tipping.

Thanks to Cllr Amber McQuillan for obtaining funding for the installing of dropped kerbs and adaptations especially for the Beanhill area following residents requests, Cllr Donna Fuller to supply Cllr Brian Hepburn with the criteria for the provision of dropped kerbs.

Some funding has been secured for the refurbishment of community centres.

Casework has mainly been related to the cost of living crises, the effect on residents mental health, evictions and education issues.

There then followed questions, and comments on the problems of reporting issues with Milton Keynes City Council.

NOTED

FC 192/23 Feedback from meetings with Outside Bodies:

- a) Woughton Welfare Trust - **Cllr Elina Apse** – No report.
- b) MKALC – **Cllr Sue Smith, Cllr Pam Wilson** – Proposing to hold a meeting in May 2023.
- c) Parishes Forum - **Cllr Liz Simpkins, Cllr Sue Smith** – The next meeting to be held this week.

NOTED

FC 193/23 To note the minutes from the following Committees:

- a) Operations & Resources – Monday 23rd January 2023
- b) Human Resources - Tuesday 31st January 2023
- c) Planning - Monday 6th February 2023
- d) Services & Communities – Wednesday 8th February 2023
- e) Operations & Resources – Monday 20th February 2023

NOTED

FC 194/23 Council Manager's report:

The Council Manager has attended a number of meetings, webinars and sessions over the past month:

- The Deputy Clerk from Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council spent time 'shadowing' to develop knowledge and understanding of how different councils work.
- Delivered training sessions to B&MKALC and an online session with Halewood Town Council around delivery of youth services.
- Meeting at the Stadium around the Bowl and summer concerts. Shared and passed on concerns noted by councillors around parking and some noise issues.
- Met with Gamiel Yafai who is working with the International Festival (the IF festival, as it is known) and is eager to work with residents in Woughton.

- Attended a meeting to discuss the 'Library of Things', including some liaison with Sarah at Milton Keynes City Council who are eager to support this delivery too.
- Also attended online sessions covering year end for pensions. the potential for different ways of managing expenses within the council (app based, with software that converts receipts, etc.) and an 'elections preparation' session with Milton Keynes City Council.
- The meeting arranged by Milton Keynes City Council to address issues with the residents association on Beanhill took place on Friday 3rd March 2023. It was well attended and hosted by Mr Kevin Harrison from the Milton Keynes City Council Involvement Team.
- Cllr Sue Smith and the Council Manager also met to discuss the Chair's Awards event.

Other items of work includes:

- Elections and engagement around democracy.
- Ongoing review of services – 'deep dives'.
- Service planning - has yet to happen, as a decision was made to place this on hold until the service reviews had taken place.

A devolved decision was made on Chipper hire. Following a fatal failure to the chipper, a short term solution was needed. A proposal was made by the supplier that they would 'rent' a new chipper, on the understanding that if Woughton Community Council continued with the new contract, all rental costs would be knocked off the cost of buying a replacement chipper.

RESOLVED

That Council notes the report.

FC 195/23 To update the Council on the budget covering up to the end of February 2023:

With only one month of the financial year remaining, the Council Manager was asked to provide an update of where the budget was, what the year end figure is likely to be and whether the overall position is manageable.

The budget that was set at the beginning of this council year (starting in April 2022), budgeted for the following:

Income	£1,020,650.19
Expenditure	£1,057,119.22

This left a deficit of £36,469.03.

In September 2022, when the budget was reviewed following some significant changes (such as a replacement roof at the Tinkers Bridge Meeting Place, additional costs associated with IT, cost of living impacts, etc.), the figures changed to:

Income	£1,053,150.73 (an additional £23,150)
Expenditure	£1,111,202.41 (an additional £54,083)

The new deficit was therefore £58,051.68.

Throughout the year, due to higher than anticipated costs, it has been expected that the council would need to use reserves (i.e. have less money left over) at year end.

The council spends, on average, just over £90,000 per month (based on the spend to the end of February 2023 divided by the 11 months from April – February). As things currently stand (at the end of February 2023), the figures are:

Income	£1,078,244.01 (around £25,000 ahead of budget)
Expenditure	£993,010.75 (with one month to go)

Current surplus is £144,095.72 (this is basically amount in versus amount out which leaves a surplus).

It is anticipated that March 2023 will be a month where spending is higher than average, with the depot site and some other larger spends due. However, it is not anticipated that this will be as much as £145,000.

This suggests that rather than a deficit this year, the council is likely to break even or, possibly, have a small surplus. This is an excellent result and reflects both a level of additional income that is higher than anticipated and controls on spending that reflect the uncertainty of the current situation.

It should be noted that next year, whilst still a balanced budget, has seen expenditure increase. It should also be noted that there is a further proposal that requests additional financial contributions towards infrastructure projects these changes do mean that whilst savings have been made, they will be needed over the coming months. There is also an additional report going to the Operations & Resources committee that, if agreed, will lead to additional money in the staffing budget.

RESOLVED

- 1. That council notes the report.**
- 2. That further updates are provided at year end.**

FC 196/23 To update Council on budget heading revisions:

Council was updated on some new financial considerations with a proposal for further investigations and adjustments to budgets for the 2023/2024 year.

Since the budget setting process, some changes have come to light that may impact on next year, including additional costs that were unknown at the time of the budget being set.

Insurance Rent

An invoice was received from Milton Keynes City Council relating to 'insurance costs' for the Coffee Hall Meeting Place. This invoice was for slightly under £300 and covered an annual period (November – October). Upon investigation, this relates to a clause within the lease agreement that states that the renter shall pay 'insurance

rent' annually. Milton Keynes City Council have previously not claimed this, but it is legally correct.

The Council Manager is continuing to investigate how the figure is arrived at. The clause is also contained within the leases for the Netherfield Meeting Place (and the amount will be £281 this year), No 95, Jonathans, Coffee Hall but no charges at the moment, again the Council Manager is continuing to investigate what this may mean financially. What is clear is that this will now become an annual payment due and may mean annual payments for each of the community centres (the Eaglestone Activity Centre remains unclear at this point).

Milton Keynes City Council has agreed to provide information on how figures are decided and the Council Manager will update as and when this is received.

The Council Manager was asked to contact Milton Keynes City Council to enquire if they provide buildings insurance for all their council housing.

Compliance Checks

Significant work has been undertaken to ensure legal compliance within the buildings that Woughton Community Council manages. This has included gas checks, electrical installation checks, water and legionnaires checks, asbestos checks and similar. These checks are due to be undertaken on a regular basis, varying dependent on the type (gas checks annually, electrical installation checks on a five year cycle, etc.). Some have not, to this point, been undertaken in accordance with these expectations and so there has been a higher than anticipated spend both on checks and on remedial works.

The standard costs vary slightly, but are approximately:

Legionella testing	£272 per venue	(£1,904 in total)
Electrical installations	£400 - £700 per venue	(£4,122 in total plus £5,000 to fix)
Asbestos checks	£234 per venue	(£1,638 in total)
Gas checks	£110 per venue	(£770 plus remedial works)

This equates to £11,500 every five years (everything on a five yearly cycle, bar gas which is annual) or an additional £2,500 per year on maintenance costs. It should also be noted that the remedial works needed following these investigations led to further costs of over £10,000 (including electrical works and new boilers at two venues), this should mean less additional investment needed but reflects the challenges of managing an aging estate.

Pension costs

Since the budget was set, the annual 'opt in / opt out' of pension discussions have taken place, resulting in four more officers joining the scheme. This means that all but one eligible staff member is now in the scheme. However, this also means an additional liability for the council in terms of contributions, equal to around £15,000 per annum.

Budget headings and recording

This issue will be discussed fully at the Operations & Resources Committee but will cover some suggested changes in how budgets are presented, additional lines within budget reports (such as a breakdown of 'running costs' within the Youth and Landscape budgets currently includes all building costs, rather than separating gas, electric, water, rates, etc.).

It is recommended that the Council Manager continues to liaise with Milton Keynes City Council with regard to the insurance and compliance issues to see what the long term impact is and provides further insight as and when new information is provided, via the Operations & Resources Committee.

RESOLVED

- 1. That council notes the report and potential impact on budgets.**
- 2. That council agrees to further investigations with Milton Keynes City Council around insurance monies, levels, how they are set, etc.**
- 3. That council agrees to minor changes to budgets to reflect the additional demands of legal compliance that have not previously been separated out, including breakdown of 'running costs' within No 95, Jonathans, Coffee Hall and the depot.**
- 4. That the Council Manager to ask Milton Keynes City Council if they provide buildings insurance for all their council housing.**

FC 197/23 To propose some additional investment in the community centres, following additional funding being allocated from Milton Keynes City Council:

As part of discussions with Milton Keynes City Council and quotes being provided relating to the Coffee Hall Meeting Place and Tinkers Bridge Meeting Place, Milton Keynes City Council has suggested that they will 'match fund' £40,000.

Alongside this funding, Woughton Community Council applied for and was successful in receiving 'match funding' for a series of improvements to facilities within the community centres, including Tinkers Bridge, Coffee Hall and Netherfield as well as accessibility upgrades to the Chamber doors. This funding provides an additional £8,144 towards these improvements and will help deliver accessible facilities.

These works will be considerable and time consuming and will require community centres to be closed for weeks to complete. Working around this will also be an essential part of any planning towards these improvements.

RESOLVED

- 1. That council notes the report and previous papers.**
- 2. That council agrees to accept and match the proposed £40,000 contribution from Milton Keynes City Council towards updating the community centres.**
- 3. That the funding includes monies allocated via the successful CIF bids for 2023/2024, that includes some work around accessibility.**
- 4. That council considers the best way to allocate this money, based upon whether any further spending is planned over the coming year(s), focusing on what is needed most.**

- 5. That, assuming that council agrees to point 2 above, that the Council Manager makes a detailed proposal to the Operations & Resources Committee around priorities and more 'urgent' works.**

FC 198/23 To propose the purchase of a four wheel drive pickup vehicle to replace the leased vehicle currently used:

It is recommended that council agrees to buying, rather than leasing it should be noted that a four to five year old pickup is around £20,000, with 10 year old vehicles being around £10,000 to £12,000.

The current lease deal equates to around £310 per month.

Buying at £20,000 over 10 years equates to £166.66 per month. Assuming a further £1000 per year towards tax, MOT, servicing, etc., this rises to £249 a month.

Over the course of 10 years, this equates to a saving of £60 per month or £7,200 in total, plus any residual value of the vehicle (estimated to be around £5,000 after 10 years).

RESOLVED

- 1. That council considers the report.**
- 2. That council agrees to replace the pickup truck.**
- 3. That council agrees to purchase a pickup, up to the value of £20,000 (excl. VAT).**
- 4. That council agrees to delegate the choice of vehicle to the Landscape Manager / Council Manager, based upon the most suitable option available.**

FC 199/23 To propose a series of engagement events to take place over March, encouraging residents to stand for election and / or to sign up for postal votes / and to inform on new election ID requirements:

Following a previous report that came to council for agreement, times and dates relating to the upcoming election have now been shared and some clarity around current councillors (and therefore possibly vacancies) is known.

It is clear that there are likely to be a number of seats where current councillors chose not to stand for re-election. There are also existing vacancies that have not been filled following resignations. This means that having candidates for the May election is crucial if Woughton Community Council is to remain a fully elected body. If there are unfilled seats, there are also issues around General Power of Competence being applicable, Woughton Community Council must have 15 elected representatives to maintain that power.

In addition to the issues around candidates, there are also issues relating to voter ID and ensuring that everyone who wants to vote is able to do so. This will be the first election where people will need ID to vote in person and there remains a significant number of people who are unaware of this or the potential to get specific ID for this purpose at no cost.

To ensure that democracy is promoted, Woughton Community Council has agreed that some resources will be provided towards this. This includes ensuring that people

are on the electoral register, that they have suitable ID if voting in person or that they register for postal votes.

Some work has started towards this, with online campaigns, leaflets and posters being placed in community venues and discussions taking place. However, for some, these approaches won't be sufficient. As such, in person, advertised sessions where information and relevant paperwork is provided with support to help complete it where appropriate, may be useful.

The relevant dates for these elections are:

- Nomination papers for candidates to be delivered to Milton Keynes City Council by 4:00pm on Tuesday 4th April 2023.
- Deadline to register to vote – midnight on Monday 17th April 2023
- Deadline to register for a postal vote – 5:00pm on Tuesday 18th April 2023
- Deadline for an application for a Voter Authority Certificate (the ID needed to vote if nothing else in place) – 5:00pm on Friday 24th April 2023.

It is recommended that this information continues to be shared widely, with countdowns where appropriate to remind everyone of upcoming deadlines.

In discussion with the Chair of Woughton Community Council, it has also been suggested that sessions take place within existing activities (e.g. community cafes, etc.) and that some evening events also take place to encourage people to take part, either as candidates or simply to support access to the elections.

The following existing sessions are suggested for information sharing and engagement:

- Netherfield Community Café - Monday 13th March 2023 - Netherfield Meeting Place (2.30pm)
- Residents Association Forum - Tuesday 14th March 2023 - Chambers (6:00pm)
- Eaglestone Café -Wednesday 15th March 2023 – Eaglestone Activity Centre (3.30pm)
- Warm Space at Tinkers Bridge - Thursday 16th March 2023 – Tinkers Bridge Meeting Place (5:00pm)
- Community Cafe – Week Commencing Monday 20th March 2023 – Coffee Hall Meeting Place (various times and dates)

It is also suggested that additional evening sessions are offered at Coffee Hall and Netherfield, as well as checking to see what options are possible on Beanhill (Friday afternoon café would seem sensible). Councillors are encouraged to provide days / times where they are available to support these sessions, but based upon bookings, other meetings and suitable times, the following slots are suggested:

- Coffee Hall Meeting Place – Thursday 16th March 2023 from 6:00pm
- Netherfield Meeting Place – Thursday 23rd March 2023 from 6:00pm

It is also proposed that the trailer is used to offer similar sessions on Peartree Bridge and Leadenhall for Saturday 25th March 2023, around lunchtime.

RESOLVED

1. That Council notes the report.
2. That council agrees to the dates for engagement events during March 2023.
3. That these events include councillors and officers, relevant leaflets, forms and publicity.
4. That residents are provided with information around standing for election, postal votes and voter ID.
5. That these events promote local councils, democracy and involvement.

Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 11th April 2023, 6:30pm, at the Woughton Community Council Hub, The Council Chamber, the Local Centre, 60, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, MK6 5EG.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 7:26PM

Chair _____ Date _____