

Agenda item: FC 84/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 25th September 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update council on activities and delegated decisions made since the last meeting of the Full Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

That council notes this report and the delegated decisions made.

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

It has been a couple of months since the last Full Council meeting, with summer (as far as summer went) having passed by. The weather played a significant part over the summer, with many local and national events being cancelled or negatively affected. This included both the festival and then the rearranged beach party.

It is recommended that weather forecasting gets better!

Despite these challenges, there has been lots going on:

- At the start of the summer, some changes were made to the community café at Coffee Hall, with a new menu, some clearer expectations and
- The Youth and Community Teams have been trialling a new information management system, which appears to be the best of the numerous systems that have been explored to this point. The system allows multiple users, shared or secured information, really helpful report and statistical information potential and mapping / text message / email / calendar integration. This trial continues until the end of September, and we will be looking to see if we can work with a partner organisation to share local trends and challenges, in return for funding the cost of the software.
- The new Landscape contract started, with interviews for new officers taking place in late July. The first newbie has started – Vinnie, with Luke due to start in early October. This will put us in a strong position for the winter season and the cutting back that is very much needed across the parish.
- The new waste contract started on the same day as the landscape – 4th September. This has been somewhat mixed in its impact – where it works, people seem happy with the new wheelie bins and the reduction in street litter after bin day. HOWEVER, there have been some teething issues, with missed collections, non-delivery of bins / bags in some places and, perhaps most damagingly, what appeared to be a stop on all street cleansing and public waste bin emptying. This left large piles of waste around the parish and undid much of the positive impact of the new scheme. I suspect that there will be a close eye on what happens over the coming weeks and months as the new contractor gets their heads around the challenges that MK brings.

- The Eaglestone Community Café celebrated a year of operation – the growth of this project, with a really positive collaborative approach from WCC, ERA and Abba Father has been fantastic.
- Meeting have taken place with people from the Electra Community Boat (with an offer of a project), Geraldine from MKCC around installing some benches and a secure bike store (to be agreed at Ops), and with Francesca from the Open University who is hoping to provide funding to explore the impact of the work that WCC and other community groups has on residents.
- Some officers and councillors gathered in the Chamber for a session on 'Action Planning' – it was not the most inspiring session and there was limited learning to take. As is often the case with online sessions, interaction is difficult (especially when the organiser mutes everyone and only enables questions at the end) and this was reflected in this activity.
- The trailer was delivered to MK Pride to once again act as a 'safe space' and provided a lovely visual backdrop to some of the photos that were taken. Former Councillor Jordan Coventry was hosting the space on what was a scorching hot day.
- This was following the following day with significant water and wind, leading to several issues including some minor flooding in a few properties and some major trees falling over / coming down. Thanks as always to those who were around to help out – we opened the flood container and hopefully made a small difference to those affected.
- A final engagement event was held to try and ensure everyone who wanted information was able to get it regarding becoming a councillor. Three people in attendance (two previous attendees and a new one). This means that we have a total of eight (8) applicants for the six seats and this should mean that we have a full councillor contingent soon. (it should be noted that two applicants withdrew their applications before the closing date and some people who had expressed an interest didn't submit applications).

The new meeting schedule has started again, with this being the final in the first month back. There have been some cracking discussions and I would recommend having a look at the minutes / meeting videos.

Delegated decisions

Not a great many but did get a washer / dryer (now installed at the Community Fridge kitchen) which should help ensure that tablecloths, t-towels and similar can be laundered. It also provides further potential where a washer / dryer would be useful.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: FC 85/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 25th September 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To inform the Council of the outcome of the External Audit.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the committee notes the report and attached auditors report.**
- 2. That the Clerk ensures that variations are monitored and adjustments made prior to next years AGAR submission.**
- 3. That the committee thanks the Accounts Officer for the work done in the absence of the RFO for a successful audit and AGAR.**
- 4. That the further steps, as detailed below, now take place to ensure all is completed in line with regulations (i.e. published on the website by 30th September).**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Following the submission of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), the external auditors, PKF Littlejohn, have now provided us with their report, and their invoice.

The report was clear, with one exception – the new Landscape truck was not included in the figures used for the asset box. This was due to the Asset Register being ratified in February, in preparation of year end, with the truck then being bought the following month.

This was an oversight from the Council Manager which, whilst not a risk (it is on the insurance and has since been added to the asset register), does mean that there is an 'except for' on the report.

The remainder of the AGAR was clear and agreed – this is testament to the hard work from Marta Sobis and shows her abilities and commitment.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234) set out what you must do at the conclusion of the review. In summary, we are required to:

- Prepare a “Notice of conclusion of audit” which details the rights of inspection, in line with the statutory requirements. We attach a pro forma notice you may use for this purpose (a Word version is available on request).
- Publish the “Notice” along with the certified AGAR (Sections 1, 2 & 3) before 30 September, which must include publication on the smaller authority’s website. (Please note that when the statute and regulations were amended in

2014 and 2015, they did not include a requirement for the length of time for which that the “Notice” must be published. The previous statute required 14 days; but it is now up to the authority to make this decision).

- Keep copies of the AGAR available for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum.
- Ensure that Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the published AGAR remain available for public access for a period of not less than 5 years from the date of publication.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

External Audit Certificate.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: FC 86/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 25th September 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To propose the appointment of an external HR company, to replace the 'ad hoc' agreement currently in place.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the Council considers the appointment of an external company to provide HR oversight, support and insurance, in line with the recommendations of the Operations Committee.**
- 2. That if agreed, that this appointment starts as soon as practicable.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

WCC has tried a variety of approaches with regard to HR oversight, having previously had an 'all inclusive' contract, with more recent approaches being an 'ad hoc / hourly rate' approach. Both approaches have pros and cons, but providers have not always met the expectation level of councillors / officers of WCC. This has included delayed responses, lack of knowledge of the sector and at times, very expensive approaches.

To address this, the Council Manager has undertaken some research into options, looking at both approaches:

Company 1. Hourly rate of £95 + VAT. Recommended by others in the sector, but concerns expressed by others around the capacity for them to be as responsive and knowledgeable as they need to be. Were previously a smaller, more specialised company but following 'buy outs' now part of a larger conglomerate with a much broader focus. Does offer a more flexible approach and can be used as and when needed.

Company 2. Two options: 3 year contract £3700 per annum or 5 year contract £3400 per annum. Specialist local councils approach, run and provided by former lawyer / Town Clerk and supported by others with personal experience within the sector. Review of contracts of employment, bespoke staff handbook and unlimited support on HR issues. Also offer governance support and reviews. Additional (paid for) options for other elements, such as training, investigations, etc.

Company 3. £13.36 per employee per month (£4,800 per year). Unlimited calls, 24hour advice line. Online HR software, tribunal representation, contracts handbooks and similar. Expensive, but comprehensive. Not sector specific and patchy previous experience.

Following discussions within the Operations Committee on 11th September, the committee supported the proposal for Option 2, but requested that the final decision was made by Full Council.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

This approach aims to ‘back up’ any operational staff that have responsibility for HR issues. Whilst day-to-day issues can be managed in house, where there are issues that are messier, complicated or which require professional oversight, an external third party is hugely beneficial.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Previously, WCC has tried both approaches, with an expensive contract initially and then an hourly rate option. The contract is equivalent to around 40 hours of hourly rate support, which is around half what is needed for any significant piece of work. Based upon the previous four years, there is likely to be at least one issue each year that requires external involvement. Given this, it is recommended that a contract be considered as the default.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

HR & Governance Support quotation.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item FC 87/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 25th September 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To propose the commencement of the annual survey.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That Council agrees to the annual survey starting.**
- 2. That if agreed, the survey is published, running until the end of December.**
- 3. That the feedback is used to direct planning, budgets and proposals for the coming council year.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

The annual survey is due.

This has been prepared in a similar way to previously, but with a broader focus than last year which was predominantly around the cost of living crisis.

The survey questions are attached to this paper.

Are there any questions missing? Anything that Council would like to see included?
Anything that Council would like to see changed?

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Survey 2023.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

The Future of Woughton - what matters to you?

Why are we asking your views?

Woughton Community Council provides a range of services and support to the 15,000 people living within the parish, alongside the hundreds of people who work, attend school and visit the parish every day.

Each year, we ask you, our residents, what you would like to see us do. Whilst we can't always do everything, we check every response and make sure that everybody who contributes has their views heard. Over the last year, this has meant that, following your feedback, we have:

- Increased the number of events, focusing on those that are suitable for everyone, young and old (community cinema, disco bingo, Coronation, Jubilee, community cafes)
- Worked with Crimewave to obtain CCTV cameras which will be used across the parish over the next three years to try and address issues such as anti-social behaviour, fly tipping, parking issues and other issues
- Increased cutting back of shrubbery to try and improve visibility and reduce the amount of litter / vermin within the bushes (this is ongoing - they just keep growing!)
- Worked with MKCC to try and address parking issues across the parish. This has not resulted in as much as we hoped, but we will continue to push for more improvements
- Updated dog waste bins and increased the number of waste bin within the parish. This will continue with more new bins planned
- Made some changes to mowing and planting, to help increase biodiversity and bring greater benefits to nature.
- Created a 'flood kit' - equipment to help reduce the risks, manage the situation and recover more quickly if flooding happens again (this includes wet / dry vacuums, inflatable sandbags, water diversion equipment, dehumidifiers, etc.)

There are things that we can't do - roads, street lights, rubbish collections, schools, social care - these are all MKCC services and whilst we will assist where we can, we cannot do the work ourselves. We continue to offer the wide range of support that we always have - advice, wellbeing, youth services, landscaping, environment team, community grants, training and education, community centres and more.

This survey aims to see what matter most to you, what you would like to see us doing and what matters most.

Question Title

1. Which estate do you live / work on?

- Peartree Bridge
- Leadenhall

- Eaglestone
- Coffee Hall
- Beanhill
- Netherfield
- Tinkers Bridge
- Redmoor
- Bleak Hall

Question Title

*** 2. Of our current services, which do you think are important? Tick all that apply**

- Youth Service (open access clubs, Play Rangers, music / film clubs, specialist services, schools work, etc.)
- Wellbeing and Advice Service (provision of tailored advice and information to local residents, outreach sessions, etc..)
- Grant Aid (grants to local groups for community benefit)
- Environment Team (dog bins and bags, flytipping, abandoned vehicles, rubbish / waste issues, green open spaces, etc..)
- Community Fridges and Cafes (reducing food waste, providing access to social and nutritional support, etc)
- Events (Festival, Apple Day, Divali, networking breakfasts, Christmas meals, Remembrance Day, etc..)
- Community Support (supporting local groups, schools, older people, people with disabilities, etc...)
- Community Centres (provision of centres in Coffee Hall, Netherfield, Tinkers Bridge and Eaglestone)
- Landscaping (grass cutting, hedge management, shrubbery, tree crowning, etc..)
- Other (please specify)

Question Title

*** 3. And of those services, which have you used or benefited from over the past year? Tick all that apply**

- Youth Service (open access clubs, Play Rangers, music / film clubs, specialist services, schools work, etc.)
- Wellbeing and Advice Services (provision of tailored advice and information to local residents, outreach sessions, etc..)

- Grant Aid (grants to local groups for community benefit)
- Environment Team (dog waste bins and bags, fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, rubbish / waste issues, green open spaces, etc..)
- Community Fridge and Cafe (reducing food waste, providing social and nutritional support, etc.)
- Events (Festival, Apple Day, Diwali, networking breakfasts, Christmas meals, Remembrance Day, etc..)
- Community Support (supporting local groups, schools, older people, people with disabilities, etc..)
- Community Centres (provision of centres in Coffee Hall, Netherfield, Tinkers Bridge and Eaglestone)
- Landscaping (grass cutting, hedge management, shrubbery, tree crowning, etc..)
- Other (please specify)

Question Title

4. And of the projects and new initiatives over the past year, which do you support

- New waste bins
- New dog waste bins
- The events, such as Jubilee, Coronation, Community Cinema, Games night, Disco Bingo, etc.
- The changes to landscaping, with areas left to 'meadow', reduced chemical use, battery powered tools, etc.
- The use of CCTV and evidence gathering across the parish
- The community cafes and fridges / larders
- The Community Gardens and growing spaces for residents to access
- Ongoing work to try and manage the issues of parking across the parish
- Oversight of planning applications and responses as an 'interested party'
- Work with MKCC to provide equipment to help prevent, manage and recover from any future flooding
- Something else (please provide some details)

Question Title

5. Last year, we kept the precept increase as low as possible - inflation meant that our costs increased by

around 12%, with the increase kept at 5% (about £1 a month for most in the parish). This compares to some other areas in the city where increases were as high as 33%.

What is more important to you?

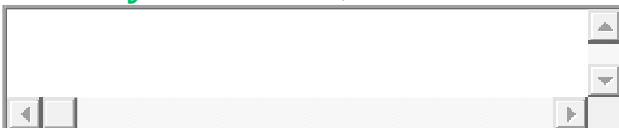
- Small / no increases and fewer services (less than £1 a month increase)
- A medium increase to maintain current delivery (around £2 a month increase)
- A large increase with more services and support (More than £2 a month increase -let us know what you would like to see)

If a larger increase, what should we spend that on? What services or support would you like to see?



Question Title

6. Are there other things that you would like to see Woughton Community Council provide? Please let us know your ideas, views or feelings below.



Question Title

7. If you are happy to do so, please let us know a little bit about you....This helps us make sure we are hearing from as many in our community as possible.

What age bracket do you fit into?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44

- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Would rather not answer

Question Title

8. And which of the following most accurately describe(s) you?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Transgender
- Intersex
- I prefer not to say
- Let me type...

Question Title

9. Which race or ethnicity best describes you?

- White
- Black
- Asian
- Mixed
- Other (please specify)

Question Title

10. Would you consider that any of the following apply to you?

- I or someone in my household has a physical disability
- I or someone in my household has a mental health issue
- I experience loneliness or isolation
- I find it difficult to access services or support
- I would like to volunteer to help others / I already volunteer
- I feel involved and connected with my community

Question Title

11. Many thanks for completing this survey. We will use your views to help decide on how we deliver services and

support in the future.

If there is anything else you would like to tell us about, please pop it in the box below.

Agenda item: FC 88/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 25th September 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update Council on the now agreed timeline and full plan for the Barista Park, Coffee Hall project that the Youth team has been developing with Motus Dance company.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the committee notes the report.**
- 2. That the committee is fully updated about project, proposed timeline and stages.**
- 3. That every WCC councillor can be made aware of their opportunities as individuals to meet and speak to the artist / team prior to the walls being painted.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Motus are funding a multi-disciplinary Arts project, incorporating Dance, Music, Physical Art and Street Art. Motus agreed to the Youth Manager's proposal that the project focus around the Barista Park on Coffee Hall, with the main outcome to repaint the four walls facing out onto Jonathans. Motus comes from the Latin word and means Movement, Progress & Passion, so, they really bought into the idea of a community play area, improvement and a community project.

The idea is to get a buy in and develop a pride of place around the park, with local people. TD has liaised with MKCC for all works and completed change of use paperwork etc for landscaped perimeters. All permissions are in place and MKCC have agreed to complete scheduled works to play equipment as part of the project.

*most landscaping works will be carried out in the late autumn to fit within the bird nesting guidelines. A natural trial will be created to the side of the park in the shrubbery/ hedgerow.

Everything will be documented to create a living archive of the park as part of WCC's wider Arts & Heritage trails project.

All project planning has now been completed by TD & the Motus team and there is a proposed timeline for the following:

- OCTOBER 23:**

Open Day. Friday 27th October (half term) 12-3pm Community event, Meet the Artist, sharing ideas about what goes on the walls. And, participate in a bit of a

clean up as a full team alongside the community. There will be some music and art/dance workshops happening alongside the clean-up and landscaping work* being carried out. WCC will provide a hot dog refreshment for community helping on the day.

- **FEBRUARY/MARCH 24:**

A minimum of 8 x 2hr workshops with the Dance Artist (a dancer that dances with paint) during February & March 2-24, in each of the following: MKA, St Pauls, New Chapter, Falconhurst, Langlands, Moorland, Phoenix & Under The Umbrella. Looking to do 2 further workshops- one with adults in the community and one with under 5s from the community. Youth Service will arrange these workshops with these partners.

- **APRIL 24:**

Community Day on Saturday April 20th. Another community-based day, when the community get involved with local artist to paint the inside of the four walls and anything within the park areas that is being renewed. Dance Artist will perform with paint and members of the public to create a lasting piece on the floor of the park. Participants from the workshops will be invited along. This being another opportunity to meet the Graf/ Street artist who will paint the main walls and put ideas forward for last time. We will encourage local people to participate in another litter pick and etc. This is when the repairs to equipment and landscaped trail can be completed.

- ******WALLS PAINTED*****

- **MAY 24:**

4th or 11th TBC, will be the public and publicised unveiling of the walls with the main event: Performances: dancers, local performers, beat boxers and HIP HOP music specialists, with a fun day/ picnic in the park type event for the community to celebrate, their newly regenerated park and the new walls completed. ***Artist will paint the outer walls in the 2 week period between the community day and the unveiling event.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

- Officer time- on the 27th October as the first open day, 'meet the artist' links to the wider community & environment elements of the regeneration of the park as a whole.
- Officer hours- Youth team officers will liaise and bring together schools and community groups for the purposes of delivering workshops. They will host some workshops within their existing projects.
- Staff are participating in the wider clean up and regen project of the park as team days are being incorporated into community day type projects.
- Some team will be asked to support the May event as will be an important date in the WCC calendar or events for 2024.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Negligible additional expenditure foreseen. WCC will provide hot dogs at the open day and potentially other refreshments on community days- sourced through community fridge where possible or planned youth budget.

All funding for the project has been sourced and provided through MOTUS, predominantly through Arts England.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Tash Darling – Youth Services Manager & DSL

Agenda item: FC 89/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 25th September 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update council on the Gazette and publication.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That council notes this report.**
- 2. That council decides whether to proceed with an alternative provider and,**
- 3. If proceeding with an alternative provider, whether to check for alternatives or take the offer from XL press.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Once the annual survey is agreed and the initial budget draft has been discussed, the Gazette is due to be designed and published.

The Council Manager has received an email suggesting that Bespoke Media (our publisher for the Gazette) is currently not working (it is unclear why, but appears that there has been some difficulty).

XLpress have contacted us with the statement:

As mentioned on Friday we are helping Hayley Price and Bespoke Media through a very difficult (time).

We produce The Woughton Gazette and have done so for the past five years or more.

To help Bespoke it has been suggested we deal direct with all her councils, take all the pressure of Bespoke.

From your point of view nothing much will change, apart from sending artwork or copy direct to.

You will then, once the work has been completed receive invoices direct from the accounts department here at XL Press.

We offer lots more , should your council need Pop up banners, or outside signage. All elements of your work are produced in house, keeping total control.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course, should you need me to visit, I am

happy to do so.

Kind regards,

*Roy Field
Sales Director*

The Council Manager has sent messages to both Bespoke and XL press asking for clarification on this situation. However, a 'plan B' needs to be considered, if this is not suitable.

It is envisaged that the Gazette will be ready to go shortly after the October Operations & Resources Committee (where the initial budget draft should be agreed) – are council happy for XL Press to be used for this edition whilst further information is sought? It is hoped that between writing this paper and discussing, further news will be forthcoming. The recommendation is that if this situation can be confirmed, XL press are used and in 2024, a full procurement process is undertaken for any further production.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: FC 92/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 25th September 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To facilitate the co-option process for the six (6) currently vacant seats.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That Council notes the paper.**
- 2. That the Council notes the vacancies, namely Eaglestone (x2), Beanhill (x 2), Coffee Hall and Netherfield.**
- 3. That Council considers the ‘applications’ and, combined with the previously held ‘Q+A’ session, decides on whether to co-opt the following applicants:**
 - a. Eamon Bobey**
 - b. Tony Coughlan**
 - c. Alisha Ebanks**
 - d. Michael Holland**
 - e. Teresa Keeves**
 - f. Jo Alexander Murickan**
 - g. Deanna Norris**
 - h. Geoff Woolmore**
- 4. That where there are more applicants than seats, Council considers whether to offer an alternative seat (e.g. for Coffee Hall, there are three applicants and one seat – if suitable, should an applicant be offered a seat on Beanhill, where there is one application for 2 seats).**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Following the elections in May 2023, there were six (6) unfilled seats on the council. These consist of:

- Beanhill – 2 vacancies
- Coffee Hall – 1 vacancy
- Eaglestone – 2 vacancies
- Netherfield – 1 vacancy

With the application window now closed, there have been eight (8) applications, with the following estates highlighted by applicants:

- Beanhill – one application
- Coffee Hall – three applications
- Eaglestone – three applications
- Netherfield – one application.

This breakdown suggests that there are sufficient applications for all estates, except Beanhill and more than enough applications for both Eaglestone and Coffee Hall.

Council will need to decide:

- Whether the applicants are co-opted (each applicant should be voted upon and only those who have a majority of votes will be co-opted).
- If agreed, council will need to decide on which applicants are chosen to represent which estate, where applicants are willing to represent another estate.

To this end, it is recommended that the following process is followed:

- Review of the applications by councillors (prior to the meeting)
- Meet the candidates (prior to this meeting) – 2 -3 minutes per candidate and Q+A from councillors.
- Where there are more seats than candidates, applicants are voted on and, if successful, the seat is taken.
- This will then clarify the seats remaining and the candidate in the running. It is advised that remaining candidates are voted upon, with the preferred candidate (i.e. those with the most votes) offered their preferred seat. Any candidates that remain are then offered the option of an unfilled seat and, if agreeable, are then voted upon.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

All candidate application forms are available to councillors via the link sent.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager