

Agenda item: FC 119/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 27th November 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

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

RECOMMENDATION:

That council notes the report and decisions made.

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Starting with the activities undertaken since last time (23rd October).

The 25th of October saw the first 'away evening', where officers and councillors shared a chippie tea and a wide range of ideas about what they considered to be the priorities for the council over the coming year(s). This was followed up with a councillor only session in November, where the discussions continued.

Whilst there remains some distance between what has been offered and what is needed, these two sessions provided some groundwork from which to build.

The 27th of October saw the Barista Park project commence – with the whole team playing a part, there were activities, food, dancing, street art and a start made to developing the park, with a new nature trail, cleaning of some of the equipment and ideas shared about what might go onto the walls when they are redone. LOADS that got started and LOADS more to do!

The first week of November saw me travel to Sunderland for the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN) annual conference. This was a combination of networking, of Sunderland showing their best side and the conference proper, with sessions covering a wide range of topics. Some really good links made, including a potential data management tool which may work well for our services.

Remembrance Parade took place and with a high number of young people, as well as the Mayor and Mayoress, Vice Lord Lieutenant and others. Another great example of how the council works together for the bigger events. There are some great photos which can be shared if people would like to see them.

I also met with Vanessa from Old Woughton, following the Community Action AGM, where our paths crossed. She is eager to see where there may be some collaborative work, as well as discussing the nursery at Netherfield which is, apparently, a Charitable business.

We also had a visit from O'Neil Homer, to look at Neighbourhood Planning – there is another paper for this meeting that covers this in more detail.

And I have also taken some leave – this was intended to be four days, but became three as I attended the Planning Conference, organised by MKALC.

I have not made any delegated decisions.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: FC 122/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 27th November 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the council on budget planning and encourage an initial proposal around precept levels.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That council notes the current budget proposal, with the additional elements noted and highlighted.**
- 2. That council notes the priorities that have been included, following recent discussions and meetings.**
- 3. That council understands that the advice of both the RFO and Proper Officer is that the budget should be balanced and that a deficit budget is not advised.**
- 4. That based upon all the above, that an initial agreement is reached with regard to a precept increase of 15% plus, to be finalised and agreed at Full Council in January, once all relevant information has been received (e.g. council tax base, second homes premium, LCTRS, etc.).**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

As previously discussed, the budget for the coming year (2024/25) is currently being developed, with updated information included as and when this is available. The latest version includes the following changes:

- Inclusion of monies for service plan (this was not completed this year)
- Inclusion of monies for emerging priorities (this was missed this year)
- Inclusion of monies for reserves, restricted to building maintenance (as recommended)
- Inclusion of monies for community centre improvements (minimal level)
- Inclusion of monies for Neighbourhood Planning (unclear at this point) – this is both the grant that may be offered AND the spending that will be necessary against that. This is a 'break even' element.
- Inclusion of grant income towards the community centre improvements (not guaranteed)

As you can see from the attached document, this leaves a significant disparity between the expected income and the proposed expenditure. The actual amount is unclear, as the council tax base has yet to be fully agreed (this is due to go to MKCC for agreement on 5th December). However, it looks as if the tax base will increase, despite some queries relating to increased rates of non-collection.

The baseline for this means that to bring in a balanced budget, based on current figures and proposed tax rates, an increase of 14.08% / 14.79% will be necessary (see the attached precept form, combined with the two options for council tax base, provisional figures).

This falls within the '£2 a month' increase level for band A and B (just) – the Council Manager has requested further information from the principal authority for details of charges at each 'band', alongside details of the specific number of properties at each band.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None noted at this point.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

This gives the current budget overview and helps council to decide on what decision may be made in January. As always, there is some information that remains unknown which will be updated as and when it becomes available.

It is also worth noting that there is some discussion around the level of 'non collection' that MKCC has included. Some parishes feel that this is unfair and that parishes are losing out on money as a result of these 'charges'.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

v3 planning budget Nov 2023 full cost.

Draft Precept return form 2024-5.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: FC 123/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 27th November 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To consider a 'Special resolution' to change the decision regarding the Nissan Van, with a proposal to keep it and allow use by Resident Associations, principally Tinkers Bridge, to support the delivery of food services.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the council considers a 'special resolution', to overturn the decision previously made to sell the Nissan Van to cover the costs of the new van.**
- 2. That If such resolution is agreed, that a new proposal is made at a later date that states:**
 - a. 'That the Nissan Van is kept, repaired and maintained by WCC for use by resident associations, specifically around the provision of community food approaches.'**
- 3. That if 2, above, is passed, that Council allocates a further sum of money to repair, tax, MOT and maintain the Nissan van.**
- 4. That if 2, above, is passed, that Council allocates further time to develop a suitable protocol with RA's around insurance cover, booking of the vehicle, fuel usage, driving licence requirements, etc prior to any further actions being taken.**
- 5. That for any of the above to happen, written notice from a minimum of six (6) councillors is required to the Council Manager (as Proper Officer) that they require a 'special resolution' is needed – this will need to happen prior to any further actions being taken (likely Decembers meeting).**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Agenda Item SC 38/23, of the 18th September 2023, proposed and accepted the request to 'change' vans, to enable more effective service delivery. This was agreed on the understanding that the process was 'cost neutral'. To this end, a new Vauxhall van was obtained and quotes for selling the Nissan van were also provided. This would have complied with the resolution, bringing in a small surplus.

Since the quotes were received, further issues have arisen, primarily regarding the donation of a van from Tesco to Abba Father, a local charity. There is some confusion around this, with different views around what was / wasn't agreed, how the van may be used or otherwise. The Council Manager understands that the donation was possible as Abba Father are a registered charity and Tesco were therefore able to make this donation. This will, undoubtedly, mean that Abba Father will be better

placed to continue to the work that they do across the parish in terms of food and other issues.

There was a view that the donation had been intended to be for use across the parish, by a variety of groups. This was, in the end, not the case, with a clear agreement between the two parties – Tesco and Abba Father, facilitated by former councillor Brian Hepburn. Whilst there may be opportunities in the future for further donations, they can only be made to registered charities.

As a result of the donation, concerns were expressed that other groups and individuals that work within the parish to help with food provision, specifically Tinkers Bridge Residents Association, had been left without any way to manage the collections and deliveries that they undertake. A suggestion was made that the Nissan van could, rather than be sold, be used to fill this gap.

Due to the resolution having been made recently (within the last 6 months), this can only be changed by means of a 'special resolution'. As detailed in WCC Standing Orders:

6. PREVIOUS RESOLUTIONS

a A resolution shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least 6 councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a committee or a sub-committee.

b When a motion moved pursuant to standing order 7(a) has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved for a further six months.

In the event that there are six members who would request this special resolution, this would then need to return to Council for further ratification, agreement and to ensure all aspects of the suggestions above are in place.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None noted.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

If this step were to be taken (i.e. the van is NOT sold), a further £10,000 'gap' in the budget would be present this year.

In addition, further work (and money) would be needed annually to ensure that the van continue to be usable, insured, maintained, etc.

At the current time, the van has been signed off the road and is now also untaxed and has no MOT. The tax and MOT were both due in November and, due to the delays in progressing the actions previously agreed, these have now run out.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Agenda item: FC 124/23

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 27th November 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

Update on Neighbourhood Planning process.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That council notes the report.**
- 2. That council refers back to the meeting of the Planning Committee dated 2nd October, if necessary**
- 3. That council notes the updated information regarding finances and timescales.**
- 4. That council notes that the first application from Locality has been submitted.**
- 5. That council agrees to an initial funding allocation for 2024/25 of £20,000 towards the additional costs associated with this programme, if agreed.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Following a paper that went to the Planning, Licensing and Development Committee (PLaD) in October, discussions around the potential review of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) have continued, with the specific agreements from that meeting having now taken place:

- *That the Council Manager to speak to the Town Clerk at Newport Pagnell Town Council as the Town Council has undergone several reviews of their Neighbourhood Plan.*
- *To arrange a meeting with O'Neil Homer to clarify the additional costings and funding sources and take to a meeting of Full Council for final approval.*

The outcome of the first point was that Newport Pagnell spent around £12,000 on their most recent review. This was a relatively low key review, with much of the work done internally – this may be a route to consider for WCC.

The second agreement, to meet with O'Neil Homer was arranged for the evening of 15th November. This took place with more than half of the elected members, plus the Council Manager. Neil Homer and Leah Coney attended from O'Neil Homer. The session covered:

- Timing and whether reviewing our NP at the same time as MKCC are creating the new MK Plan is sensible
- Changes that are proposed in terms of national planning legislation and any impact on WCC and the NP process

- Finances and the reality of what is possible or otherwise, given the budgetary pressures on WCC
- The changes that may be needed, the proposals that have been made so far and the options for inclusion in any reviewed plan for issues such as identifying development sites, communications infrastructure, linkage to some of the areas noted within the priorities in the Strategic Plan, etc.

The outcome of the discussion was that the review could be more affordable, utilising funding via Locality (up to £18,000, plus technical support), but acknowledging that this wouldn't include any additional staffing, publicity, resources or otherwise – purely the time for consultants to support any working group in developing a new plan.

Since this discussion, a further document has been provided by O'Neil Homer (see attached) that offers a new way of working, over a number of years. Whilst there remains an expectation that there is some funding that comes from WCC funds, this is a relatively small sum over a number of years. Again, as noted above, this doesn't include any additional staffing demands or engagement activities – it has been suggested that this is something that WCC is very adept at anyway, and so could fit nicely within the existing structures and staffing demands. It is, however, recommended that an additional sum be allocated towards this, that amount being the balance of the £20,000 noted in the recommendations above (around £14,000 toward engagement activities, additional staffing, etc.). This is based upon:

“Fee Proposal

*We charge £587/day + VAT for grant eligible activities and £650/day for activities beyond the grant. For 2023/24 we therefore require a total fee of **£10,476**, i.e. 17 days @ £578 (£9,826 + VAT) from the grant programme plus 1 day @ £650 from WCC. The £9,826 sum falls within the £10,000 core grant cap.*

*Assuming the grant programme is available in 2024/25 and 2025/26, we would therefore require a total fee of **£12,353**, i.e. 13 days @ £578 (£7,803 + VAT) from that programme plus 7 days @ £650 (4,550 + VAT from WCC). The £7,803 sum falls within the current additional £8,000 core grant cap, although this and the day rate cap may change in the future programme and so is subject to variation.*

*In which case this would require a budget from WCC of **£5,200** but over the three financial years 2023/24 – 2025/26. I have not included the examination (in 2025/26), for which some clients require support from us, usually a couple of days, so you may also want to budget for that additional sum in due course.”*

It is clear from the discussions that took place that there is a strong view from some councillors that this is a programme that needs to take place. Given this, the proposal that has been made is a good one – mainly covered by grant costs, with limited additional funding needed from WCC funds and with a view to work on the key issues identified.

The initial proposal has also been made to Locality for funding – further queries have been raised, which the Council Manager will continue to respond to. This initial

application included both financial support (£10k requested) and technical support around Housing Needs.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

There is currently a lack of capacity within the council at the level needed to undertake this work. This would usually sit with either the Council Manager (currently undertaking two roles and significant other work) or with a dedicated officer (as happened with the original place in 2015 – 2017). Neither

of these is likely and as such, any working group will need to manage this challenge. Whilst there will, no doubt, be a level of support from within the organisation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Whilst this new proposal is more manageable, there remains a demand for additional funding from WCC funds. Spreading this over a number of years makes it easier from an accounting perspective, but this will, nevertheless, place additional pressures on the budget.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

There is a need to review the NP. It is now over 6 years old and, with the updated MKCC plan in the works, changes to the planning system coming, the potential for a different approach at central government level and a variety of other factors mean that taking a level of control at a local level is increasingly important.

With the potential to also link any reviewed plan to some of the wider ambitions of the council (i.e. some of the elements noted within the strategic plan, currently under construction), this is an opportunity to provide a new, inclusive plan that addresses some of the issues that have arisen since the initial plan (e.g. communications infrastructure, local centre regeneration, etc.)

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Woughton NPR_OH Proposal_November 2023.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager