

## Full Council

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023, 6:30pm at the Woughton Community Council Hub, Council Chamber, The Local Centre, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes**

**Present: Cllrs Sue Smith (Chair), Nick Scott (Vice-Chair),** Eamonn Bobey, Janette Bobey, Tony Coughlan, Maggie Ferguson, Michael Ferguson, Michael Holland, Luke Louis, Ruth McMillan, D'Anne Mordecai, Deanna Norris, Liz Simpkins, April Rennie, Alan Williamson.

**Also present:**

Brian Barton (Committee & Member Services Officer)  
Tash Darling (Youth Manager & Safeguarding Lead)  
Steve McNay (Council Manager)

**FC 110/23 Apologies for Absence:**

Cllr Donna Fuller (unwell)  
Cllr Penny Glasgow (unwell)

**AGREED**

**FC 111/23 Declaration of interests:**

There were no declarations of interest.

**NOTED**

**FC 112/23 Minutes of the previous Full Council meeting:**

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2023 were **AGREED** as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

**FC 113/23 Chair's Announcement(s):**

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the small Woughton White Ribbon vigil event on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

The Santa Sleigh Tour will take place on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023 on Beanhill at 5:00pm and Netherfield at 6:00pm.

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023 Peartree Bridge at 5:00pm and Eaglestone at 6.30pm.

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023 Coffee Hall at 6:00pm.

Leadenhall and Tinkers Bridge have chosen not to have the Santa sleigh tour as they are planning their own events.

Members were reminded to return their feedback form following the MKALC conference on planning held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.

**NOTED**

**FC 114/23 Questions from the public:**

There were no questions from the members of the public.

**NOTED**

**FC 115/23 Ward Matters arising:**

Cllr Liz Simpkins – Parking on Eaglestone, increasing problem with contractor vehicles working on construction projects at the Milton Keynes University Hospital site, needs to be kept an eye on. There also vans parked and have not been moved for months. Cllr Sue Smith suggested reporting abandoned vehicles to Milton Keynes City Council, ward councillors can also help, roads most affected seem to be on Harlans Close and Golden Drive.

Milton Keynes University Hospital have promised that they will inform contractors not to park their vehicles off site.

The Council Manager informed the meeting that a letter had been written to the Highways Department at Milton Keynes City Council regarding another parking issue on Eaglestone on top of all the other car parking issues in the area, that was discussed at the last Planning, Licencing & Development Committee meeting, and is awaiting a response, but will circulate once a reply has been received.

**NOTED**

**FC 116/23 Milton Keynes Council Ward Councillors report:**

Cllr Sue Smith informed the meeting that she had been dealing with a lot of casework recently.

There have been changes to cabinet, Cllr Rob Middleton has stepped down from the finance brief and Cllr Lauren Townsend has been appointed to replace him.

It would appear that the cabinet member Cllr Jenny Wilson-Marklew still has the brief for Parish and Town Councils.

**NOTED**

**FC 117/23 Feedback from meetings with Outside Bodies:**

a) Woughton Welfare Trust - **Cllr Maggie Ferguson – No report, but there have been problems with communications as regards notification of meetings, but this is being resolved.**

b) MKALC – **Cllr Ruth McMillan, Cllr Sue Smith – Planning Conference held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 at the Milton Keynes Christian Centre Conference Centre on Oldbrook, was very well attended and concentrated on the Neighbourhood Plan process.**

c) Parishes Forum - **Cllr Ruth McMillan, Cllr Sue Smith – No report, the next meeting will be held on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

**NOTED**

**FC 118/23 To note the minutes from the following Committees:**

- a) Planning, Licencing & Development – Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023
- b) Operations & Resources - Monday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023
- c) Services & Communities - Monday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**NOTED**

**FC 119/23 Council Manager's report:**

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023 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.

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2023 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.

The first week of November saw the Council Manager travel to Sunderland for the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN) annual conference. This was a combination of networking, with events showing Sunderland and the conference in their best light, with sessions covering a wide range of topics. Some really good links were made, including a potential data management tool which may work well for the services provided at Woughton Community Council.

The 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.

The Council Manager also met with Vanessa from Old Woughton Parish Council. 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.

There was a visit from O'Neil Homer, to look at Neighbourhood Planning, there is another report that covers this in more detail later on the Full Council agenda.

The Council Manager had also taken some leave, this was intended to be four (4) days, but became three (3) days as he attended the Planning Conference, organised by MKALC.

The Council Manager has not made any delegated decisions.

**RESOLVED**

**That council notes the report.**

**FC 120/23 To agree the appointment of the following Councillors onto to the Operations & Resources Committee:**

- (a) Cllr Tony Coughlan
- (b) Cllr April Rennie

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. To appoint Cllr Tony Coughlan and Cllr April Rennie onto the Operations & Resources Committee.**
- 2. To appoint Cllr Tony Coughlan onto the Green Working Group.**

### **FC 121/23 To respond to the Milton Keynes City Council Rent and Service charge consultation:**

Cllr Janette Bobey explained what the service charge covers, there are eight (8) elements in total as listed in the consultation document, the consultation can be accessed using the following link:

<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/consultations/rent-and-service-charges>

There are no paper copies available and can only be accessed on line with a reference number.

The deadline to cast a vote on the consultation is close Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023, only one vote per household is allowed. The results will then be presented to a Full Council meeting at Milton Keynes City Council.

The proposed service charge will be an extra £52, this will also cover land maintained by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and all flytipping removal costs which is unfair as any resident could fly tip regardless of their tenure.

Cllr Sue Smith as ward Councillor will take the matter up.

The meeting proposed that in attention to the proposal from Cllr Janette Bobey, that a letter is written to Milton Keynes City Council, against the proposal in the consultation document expressing its concern that HRA monies are being proposed to be used in this way, and the cost implications to tenants and leaseholders double charging for services. The Council Manager will draft a response and circulate to Members for final approval.

The meeting also felt the consultation was badly planned.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. That Woughton Community Council works to increase awareness and understanding of the consultation into rent and service charges, currently being undertaken by Milton Keynes City Council and**
- 2. That Woughton Community Council supports parish residents with responding to the consultation.**
- 3. To write to Milton Keynes City Council, against the proposal in the consultation document expressing its concern that HRA monies are being proposed to be used in this way, and the cost implications to tenants and leaseholders double charging for services.**

### **FC 122/23 To update the council on budget planning and precept levels:**

As previously discussed, the budget for the coming year (2024/2025) 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 a 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)

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 Milton Keynes City Council for agreement on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023). 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.

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 alongside details of the specific number of properties at each band.

This gives the current budget overview and helps council to decide on what decision may be made in January 2024. 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 Milton Keynes City Council has included. Some parishes feel that this is unfair and are losing out on money as a result of these 'charges'.

#### **RESOLVED**

- 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 Responsible Financial Officer 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, to be finalised and agreed at Full Council in January 2024, once all relevant information has been received (e.g. council tax base, second homes premium, LCTRS, etc.).**

**FC 123/23 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:**

Council was asked 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.

After some discussion the chair suggested that the Nissan van is sold and an application to the Community Foundation is submitted for another van which council agreed to, and therefore the report was withdrawn.

**RESOLVED**

- 1. That council agrees and reaffirms the previous decision of council that the Nissan Van is sold.**
- 2. That council agrees to an application being submitted to the Community Foundation for another van.**

**FC 124/23 Update on the Neighbourhood Planning process:**

Following a paper that went to the Planning, Licensing and Development Committee in October 2023, discussions around the potential review of the Neighbourhood Plan have continued.

Newport Pagnell Town Council have 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 Woughton Community Council.

A meeting with O’Neil Homer was arranged for the evening of Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023. 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 Neighbourhood Plan at the same time as Milton Keynes City Council are creating the new MK Plan is sensible
- Changes that are proposed in terms of national planning legislation and any impact on Woughton Community Council and the Neighbourhood Plan process
- Finances and the reality of what is possible or otherwise, given the budgetary pressures on Woughton Community Council
- 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 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 Woughton Community Council funds, this is a relatively small sum over a number of years. Again, as noted this doesn't include any additional staffing demands or engagement activities, it has been suggested that this is something that Woughton Community Council 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 (around £14,000 toward engagement activities, additional staffing, etc.). This is based upon the fee proposal from O'Neil Homer.

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 Woughton Community Council 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 (£10,000 requested) and technical support around Housing Needs.

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 plan 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.

Whilst this new proposal is more manageable, there remains a demand for additional funding from Woughton Community Council 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.

There is a need to review the Neighbourhood Plan . It is now over six (6) years old and, with the updated Milton Keynes City Council 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 certain amount 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.)

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1. That council notes the report.**
- 2. That council notes the updated information regarding finances and time-scales.**

3. That council notes that the first application from Locality has been submitted.
4. That council agrees to an initial funding allocation for 2024/2025 of £20,000 towards the additional costs associated with this programme.

**FC 125/23 To consider proposals around Christmas events:**

The meeting agreed to hold a Christmas event after the Santa Sleigh Tour has taken place on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023, at the council chambers.

**RESOLVED**

**To hold a Christmas event after the Santa Sleigh Tour has taken place on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023, at the council chambers.**

**Date of next meeting:**

Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December 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 7:41PM**

Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_