

Full Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 25th March 2024, 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, Margaret Ferguson, Michael Ferguson, Penny Glasgow, Michael Holland, Luke Louis, Charlie Marsh, Deanna Norris, D'Anne Mordecai, April Rennie, Liz Simpkins, Lorna Webb, Alan Williamson

Also present:

Steve McNay (Council Manager)

FC 35/24 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies received from:

Donna Fuller (unwell)

Ruth McMillan (unwell – attended online)

RESOLVED – Noted and accepted.

FC 36/24 Declaration of interests:

Declarations of interest were noted for agenda item FC 52/24, where the following councillors stated that they are tenants on MKCC:

Cllrs Eamonn Bobey, Janette Bobey, Maggie Ferguson, Michael Ferguson, Sue Smith, Charlie Marsh, Lorna Webb and Alan Williamson.

NOTED

FC 37/24 Minutes of the previous Full Council meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 26th February 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

RESOLVED

Proposed by Cllr Sue Smith Seconded by Cllr Michael Ferguson.

FC 38/24 Chair's Announcement(s)

- A reminder that scam emails are prevalent and if anyone receives an email supposedly from the Chair asking for Apple Gift Cards or similar, this is a scam. Please ring her if there is any suspicion.
- Four years yesterday since lockdown started.
- Office is closed over the Easter weekend.
- Thanks to the Islamic Centre for the Unity Iftar.
- Easter HAF is open for bookings. The Council Manager apologised for the booking website.

FC 39/24 Questions from the public:

Cllr Alan Williamson requested details of the events taking place at MK Bowl and Stadium MK, with details from the principal authority on how they are planning to manage traffic for the neighbouring estates.

FC 40/24 Ward Matters arising:

Cllr Eamonn Bobey again requested the issue of the paths at the ABC park be addressed, due to the overgrowth meaning that they are becoming impassable, plus the loss of bins. This was noted at the last meeting and no actions have been noted.

Question from Cllr Williamson around the upcoming concerts at Stadium MK and MK Bowl and how parking and access can be managed. The council manager will investigate plans from MKCC and feedback.

RESOLVED - noted

FC 41/24 Milton Keynes Council Ward Councillors report:

Cllr Sue Smith deferred this matter, due to the 'Pre election period of sensitivity' (previously known as purdah).

RESOLVED - noted

FC 42/24 Estate updates from councillors

Beanhill – Easter events planned.

CH – parking remains an issue. Reporting continuing.

ES – lots of fly tipping, but MKCC collecting quickly. Issue with parking on Harlans has been resolved.

LH – concerns about the lack of updating of notice boards. Litter and bins are an ongoing issue. Queries regarding access to gated court and ownership which Council Manager will follow up on. Maps for all areas denoting ownership requested for all areas.

NF – SHDF problems the biggest issue. They are doing a 'Find the Bunny' easter event.

PB – (Cllr McMillan via Zoom) – all the 'Top Hats' are off; scaffolding is done and final works taking place. Easter eggs – names to Cllr Sue Smith.

TB – lots of issues, with a multi-agency approach being taken. Drugs, needles, graffiti, damage, etc.

DVLA are visiting the parish currently and noting untaxed cars.

RESOLVED - noted

FC 43/24 Feedback from meetings with Outside Bodies:

a) Woughton Welfare Trust – meeting took place and proposal for potential for £400 per year to be passed for councillors to access for help with cost of living issues.

b) MKALC – Yellow line consultations are now the responsibility of Parishes, without consultation. Cllr Smith is requesting a meeting with highways around this.

c) Parishes Forum – covered carbon offset, a presentation from Centre for Integrated Living, transport (changes to MK Connect) and MK University College Hospital, where it became apparent that parking may be an issue as further works are undertaken on the hospital site.

RESOLVED - noted

FC 44/24 To note the minutes from the following Committees:

a) Planning, Licencing & Development - Monday 5th February 2024

Proposed by: Cllr Smith Seconded by: Cllr Glasgow

RESOLVED

b) Operations & Resources - Monday 12th February 2024
Proposed by: Cllr Smith Seconded by: Cllr Rennie
RESOLVED

c) Services and Communities - Monday 19th February 2024
Proposed by: Cllr Scott Seconded by: Cllr Michael Ferguson
RESOLVED

FC 45/24 Council Manager's report:
Council Manager spoke to the report.
RESOLVED - Noted

FC 46/24 To consider the process, categories and delivery of the annual Chairs Awards

There was considerable discussion around the awards, with agreement that this will take place, with some useful discourse around the type of awards wanted. Costs were considered, alongside venue, catering, etc. Cllr Smith is investigating the potential for sponsorship of the event to keep costs minimised. New suggestions included recognising the importance of sport and acknowledging the blue light / uniform services.

It was agreed that we would investigate potential venues, such as the Islamic Centre, Falconhurst, Moorland, Grand Union Vineyard – Council Manager will investigate options.

Involving residents in the nomination process was also felt important, but simply to nominate those that deserve recognition. The Council Manager agreed to provide an online nomination form.

It was also suggested that everyone who is nominated gets some form of recognition.

One request was made that nominations avoid council staff (MKCC council) and that individual estates can also nominate estate based residents, with councillors having input into the decision on who is most deserving.

Proposal:

'That the Chairs Awards 2024 take place'

Proposed by: Cllr Smith Seconded by: Cllr Scott
RESOLVED by way of unanimous vote

'That there is an indicative budget allocation of £1000, if no sponsorship is possible, is allocated'

Proposed by: Cllr Smith Seconded by: Cllr Ferguson
RESOLVED by way of unanimous vote

'That the nomination process is two stage, with all able to make nominations, a shortlist for specific awards then decided by the Chair and panel, with the 'Spirit of Woughton' award nominations then open to a public vote, with an estate 'superstar' option running alongside'.

Proposed by: Cllr Smith Seconded by:
RESOLVED by way of unanimous vote

FC 47/24 Consideration of MKCC transferring the lease of No 99 Jonathans to WCC

There was considerable discussion around the pros and cons of this suggestion – that of taking on a lease for the building at No 99 Jonathans by WCC, to run alongside the lease of No 95.

Concerns were noted that this would be another additional cost burden on the council, with Cllrs stating that with WCC *‘running a deficit budget’* and with the increase in precept, this cannot be justified – we already have buildings that need additional investment, and this would put further pressure on this money. This was expanded by commenting that WCC was still paying for the ‘Hub’ offices, via the loan. It was also stated that the cost of the loan is half the cost of the rental previously paid at the Netherfield offices. Cllrs from Netherfield pointed out that there is a need for investment at Netherfield and that this would potentially reduce the chances of this happening.

Other views suggested that with the additional space, the large gardens and the potential that the space brings, that NOT taking this one would mean the potential loss of a long term asset. It was also noted that WCC could offer a range of services from the building, offering more to the community. This was supported by some ideas and existing requests for space from external groups.

A query was raised regarding the recent reductions in staffing and whether there would be sufficient to effectively staff another building. The Council Manager explained that whilst the type of delivery wanted at No 99 would impact on this, that he felt that there was sufficient within the team to manage, with a view to running for the two years of the lease, assessing the value and, if unsuitable, not renewing.

The Council Manager also suggested that there could and should be further discussion around how investment into existing centres should take place, with one proposal that a Public Works Loan Board advance be taken, repayable in a similar way to that of the Hub improvements, to ensure that all the centres are brought up to standard. It was pointed out by a Cllr that in the past, s106 money had been allocated for refurbishment, but WCC failed to spend it, so it was returned, leading to the current situation where it was suggested that NFMP doesn’t have sufficient heating, amongst other issues.

The Council Manager stated that council can, at any point, request that investment from existing reserves or budgets can be allocated. Cllr Michael Ferguson requested that this be added to a future agenda – the Council Manager agreed to sit down and prepare any proposal with any councillors who would like to see this.

Proposal:

‘That WCC agrees to take on the lease of No 99 Jonathans, to run for two years alongside the lease of No 95 Jonathans and that during that two year period, a long term plan is developed’.

Proposed by: Cllr Smith Seconded by: Cllr Scott

**Votes were 7 for, 7 against with 3 abstentions.
RESOLVED with a casting vote by the Chair and passed.**

NB: There was then some discussion around the casting vote, requested by Cllrs E and J Bobey. The Council Manager confirmed that both the Standing Orders and the Arnold Baker on Local Council Administration both stated that a second, or casting vote, is correct. This is defined in the Local Government Act 1972, Sch 12 para 39(2).

FC 48/24 Shared prosperity fund

To consider applications towards certain areas of the above fund, administered by MKCC.

The Council Manager spoke to the paper, explaining that following previous discussions around public realm, there is also now a 'bid' process for specific areas, as detailed in the papers. They also gave some background on some possible proposals that council may wish to consider as guidance for ideas.

The Council Manager also updated on an external organisation that is eager to work with WCC on a proposal to deliver a 'job club' plus approach, with tailored support for individuals within the parish.

Lots of discussion around ideas and what can / can't happen, what fits in with this particular funding stream and what may sit elsewhere.

Due to the short timescales involved and the feeling that the proposals noted in the paper were suitable, the following was suggested:

Proposal:

'That the Council Manager submits suitable bids, based upon the discussions and with the proposals in the paper included, specifically engagement work with residents, cycling infrastructure and enhancements to the Job Club approach.

And that the Council Manager continues to investigate options relating to the Owl and the Pussycat park on Netherfield'

Proposed by: Clls Smith Seconded by: Cllr E Bobey

RESOLVED by way of unanimous vote.

FC49/24 Local Council Award Scheme submission proposal

To propose and ratify a decision to state that all relevant policies are in place and that a submission is made.

The Council Manager explained that there needs to be a formal resolution at council prior to submission that states that all relevant paperwork is in place.

Proposal:

'That council confirms that all relevant documentation for the submission for the Local Council Awards Scheme – Foundation Level, is in place as detailed on the application form and / or by provision by way of submission by the Council Manager to the assessment panel'.

Proposed by: Cllr Smith Seconded by: Cllr Marsh

RESOLVED by way of unanimous vote

FC50/24 Application to the Open University 'Challenge Us' scheme

To propose a submission to the Open University for support around creating a local council approach to developing sustainability and ecology approaches.

The Council Manager spoke to the paper and explained that the Green Initiatives Working Group had discussed use of 'Donut Economics' as a measurement tool, and to get this, finding a baseline is important. Huge piece of work which, if the Open University can help with, will make things considerably easier.

Proposal:

'That council agrees to the Council Manager, in liaison with the GIWG, to submit an initial application for the Open University 'Open Societal Challenges Online' competition to support the development of an assessment and planning process to help address environmental issues'.

Proposed by: Cllr Smith Seconded by: Cllr Coughlan

RESOLVED by way of majority vote

FC51/24 Training calendar for 2024/25.

Training calendar update, with the annual calendar to be proposed and agreed. The Council Manager provided the proposed training calendar for the 2024/25 council year, covering a range of sessions that have previously been highlighted by councillors as the most pressing. These are planned for the second Wednesday of the month and will take place in the Chambers.

Some further discussion took place around the specific sessions.

- ***That the council notes the dates below***
- ***That the council manager sends a calendar invite for each of the dates, with the heading of 'training'.***
- ***That councillors confirm their attendance at least a week prior to the date of delivery, to ensure sufficient numbers.***
- ***That if any changes are needed to accommodate external sessions, these will be communicated accordingly.***

RESOLVED - noted

FC52/24 Further information on 20mph zones

To update council on expected response levels to evidence public support for applications to implement 20mph zones within parish estates.

The Council Manager spoke about this issue, sharing the scoring matrix that MKCC transport had given him and explained that community support is important, but sits alongside other issues. He also shared the current levels of response online, which was relatively low.

There was discussion about schools on estates and need to reduce traffic, better signage and the need to look at all aspects of this issue. Speedwatch was also mentioned again.

Cllrs stated that this needs to be pushed with residents to get more signed up, with agreement that councillors would skill share on setting up suitable online presence and resharing the links to the online sign up.

RESOLVED - noted

FC 52/24 Rent, service charges and changes for MKCC tenants and leaseholders

To discuss the rent and service charge implemented by MKCC on tenants and leaseholders, with a view to further action from Woughton Community Council.

Cllr E Bobey spoke on this issue, commenting that this was an issue that had previously been discussed, noting that rent had risen by 7.7% and a service charge had also been added, leading to an additional £500 per year in rent, plus £90 on service charge. It was also suggested that this would bring additional money to the amount of £4 – 5 million in rent (adding to the £60 million each year through rents currently), with a further £1.2 million via the service charge, with this money going to Milton Keynes City Council. Cllr Bobey also suggested that the amount currently spent on the open spaces of HRA land is £100k.

Cllr Bobey stated that he has been contacted by people from across the city about this issue and detailed the ways that people can make their views known on this:

- Lobbying
- Complaints Procedure (needs to happen prior to the below options)
- Tier 1 Tribunal (ruling – enforceable)
- Housing Ombudsmen (recommendation – can be ignored)

Cllr Bobey also spoke about the consultation process and the view that this was flawed – only 400 responses from across the city and lack of clarity, only online options and the need for a code that was sent in advance.

There was also concern noted about the information online, with further lack of clarity, a view that a sheltered housing scheme which isn't related to this consultation, alongside some confusion around figures noted.

Lots of council tenants in Woughton and this impacts on them. Concern about paying twice (or three times) for some of the issues. Also some queries regarding the approach that MKCC have taken in comparison to other LA's – shared ownership and tenants seen as the same, limited use of general funds with all monies coming from the HRA fund.

The Council Manager read the response from MKCC to the concerns expressed prior to the meeting. A query was raised regarding the 'parish costs' and the Council Manager explained that he thinks that this is due to the charges being detailed to parish level – costs associated with Woughton will be met by Woughton residents, but this may need further clarification.

It was suggested that legal advice be taken to see whether this is how MKCC *have* to do it this way, whether they could do things differently and are there are legal reason / challenges that may be valid in terms of challenging this approach.

It was also suggested that Natasha from MKCC be invited to a meeting in future. It was also suggested that a 'step-by-step' guide to making complaints be provided to councillors who can share with residents if wanted.

A review of this issue was also requested for the next meeting.

- ***That the Council Manager obtain legal advice via the free BMKALC service, clarifying with councillors what specifically is being asked.***
- ***That Natasha Hutchin from MKCC be invited to the next meeting of the council to discuss this situation.***

- *That this issue be added to the agenda for the next meeting as an update on any actions or information gained'.*

RESOLVED - noted

FC 53/24

Date of next meeting:

Monday 29th April 2024, 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 8.29PM

Chair _____ Date _____