

## **Woughton Community Council**

### **Operations & Resources Committee**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023, 6:30pm at the Woughton Community Council Hub, the Council Chamber, 60, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, MK6 5EG.**

**Present: Cllrs Jordan Coventry (Chair), Elina Apse (Vice-Chair), Maggie Ferguson, Ruth McMillan, Sue Smith, Alan Williamson.**

**Also present:**

Steve McNay (Council Manager)  
Brian Barton (Committee & Member Services Officer)

**In attendance:**

Cllr Paul Harvey (representative of NALC)

**OC 84/23 Apologies:**

Cllr Donna Fuller (meeting)  
Cllr Amber McQuillan (meeting)  
Cllr Liz Simpkins (personal)

**AGREED**

**OC 85/23 Declarations of Interest:**

There were no declarations of interest.

**NOTED**

**OC 86/23 Chairs Announcements:**

The Services & Communities Committee meeting is being held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at 6:30pm.

The first Community Café on Netherfield to take place.

**NOTED**

**OC 87/23 Questions from the public (Max. 10 minutes):**

There were no questions from the public.

**NOTED**

**OC 88/23 Minutes of the previous meeting:**

The minutes of the Operations & Resources Committee meeting held on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2022 Were **AGREED** as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

**OC 89/23 Cllr Paul Harvey Larger Council's representative to talk and answer any questions from Members of the committee on membership of NALC/B&MKALC:**

The Chair set the context as to NALC membership and issues.

Cllr Paul Harvey is a Councillor on West Bletchley Council, a member of the Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (B&MKALC) Executive Committee, and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Larger Councils Committee.

NALC has County Association's, and committees such as the Larger Councils, which Woughton Community Council is a member.

Lobbying takes place on behalf of Parish & Town Council's with an MP's.

This has included discussions around councillor allowances (childcare and dependency), to bring into line with the Welsh approach (payable in Wales but not England), removal of taxes on public toilets (this took 10 years to achieve) and other issues, such as hybrid or remote meetings.

NALC will also lobby opposition MP's as well, as they may hold ministerial office or be back benchers in the future if a new Government is formed. Monthly meetings take place with Ministers and senior civil servants. After extensive lobbying more MP's are backing legislation for remote meetings.

NALC produce an internal annual report, undertake casework on legal matters, and issue legal update notices.

NALC, SLCC and One Voice Wales launched last July a two (2) year project on standards for Parish & Town Councillors the Civility and Respect project.

NALC meets regularly with the Local Government Network (LGA). This has been happening for ten (10) years, such subjects covered have been standards, Parish & Town Council projects, joint review of policies.

NALC does not charge a lot for membership it is 12p per elector and the rate is capped, Parish Meetings and Parish & Town Councils who do not raise a precept are not charged a membership fee.

Cllr Harvey encouraged Woughton Community Council to speak to him on any issues which he can lobby MP's on.

There are forty-three (43) county associations supported by NALC.

Each week there is issued a bulletin, the website will be more user friendly.

On Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023 will be the NALC in person conference to be held in central London, tickets are still available.

Cllr Harvey had planned to visit Parish & Town Council's but due to lockdown it was not possible, but he will be starting to do so in future, any issues please contact him. The Larger Council committee meets four (4) times a year, Cllr Harvey said that he will email over across the dates, the Chair suggested that at meetings of the Operations & Resources committee can discuss what issues to raise and then contact Cllr Harvey so that they can be considered at a meeting of the Larger Councils, Cllr Harvey said that he can also speak to the NALC Policy Officers.

The Chair thanked Cllr Paul Harvey for attending the meeting.

**RESOLVED**

**To discuss at meetings of the Operations & Resources committee what issues to raise with Cllr Paul Harvey so that they can be considered at a meeting of the NALC Larger Councils.**

**OC 90/23 To provide an update on the proposed budget and precept setting for 2023/2024:**

This agenda item was discussed at the last Full Council meeting, with the precept, increased by 5%, and budget agreed, the Council Manager will provide budget updates to the committee.

**NOTED**

**OC 91/23 To update the committee on the 360 Appraisal system trial and propose incorporating this as the default appraisal approach:**

The appraisal system that has previously been used within Woughton Community Council was limited in scope and was seen by many as a 'tick box' exercise that was simply wasted time. In the opinion of the Council Manager, the previous format was unsuitable for all too limiting for full time staff and too excessive for very part time staff (e.g. youth workers who only work 1.5 hours per week).

As part of a review of this system, the Operations Manager and Council Manager investigated alternatives and agreed to trial a different approach a '360 Appraisal', which incorporates feedback from a range of people, rather than simply being the views of the appraiser (usually the line manager). This approach was used to undertake appraisals with managers during 2022 and feedback was generally positive.

The approach aims to ensure that the review enables a wider view of the person being appraised – whilst a manager may view them one way, staff being managed by them, their peers or others may see things differently. With the trial last year, feedback was gathered from both other managers and members of their team (those being managed) to see what views were. This gives a broader picture and helps managers to identify any issues that they may not be aware of.

The downside to this approach is that there is more 'admin' than previously. Sending out and collating information from others, as well as preparing for the appraisal from a managerial viewpoint, does place more responsibility on the manager. This is limited and should not be too much to cope with.

The new system therefore covers:

- Feedback from peers (i.e. other managers, others within the team)
- Feedback from others within the council (i.e. those who come into contact with or work alongside by from different parts of the council)
- Self-appraisal (a personal view of how the year has been)
- Managerial review (reflecting on 121's, performance, personal development, training, etc)
- Target or goal setting

It is assessed that this approach will mean around seven (7) – eight (8) hours of officer time is spent on each appraisal (although this will differ widely). This includes three (3) x twenty (20) minutes from peers and colleagues (1 hour), one (1) hour for a full self-appraisal, ninety (90) minutes preparation time from the manager (collating and preparing for the meeting), two (2) x ninety (90) minutes for the meeting itself and a further hour to complete the paperwork. This provides a complete picture of the employee within the wider council, agreeing some aims for the coming year and providing a document that details expectations, training and development needs, positive achievements and so on. For most officers, this approach is suitable and useful.

There are a group of staff where a shorter approach may be more sensible. This doesn't mean that a '360 approach' isn't possible, but undertaking the full appraisal approach, with the paperwork and demands upon managers may not be felt suitable, due to time constraints and use of resources. To address this, it is recommended that a further approach be developed for this group, to ensure that all officers receive an appraisal whilst being responsible with resources.

It was suggested that it would be useful to see a completed appraisal, the Council Manager will at the February meeting produce a completed appraisal, with a preferred method of undertaking a appraisal and to also review at the February meeting.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the committee notes the report and the attached 360 paperwork.
2. That the committee agrees that this approach is the preferred way of providing appraisals for all officers within the council.
3. That the committee agrees that there may be some roles where a less demanding process is more appropriate (anyone who is employed for 10 hours or fewer per week), with a new approach to be developed for those officers.
4. That this system will be used for the 2023/2024 appraisals for relevant officers.

#### **OC 92/23 To update the committee on the potential costs of the 'community centres upgrades', following previous reports:**

Prior to maternity leave, the Operations Manager had started a process around community centre improvements, with a breakdown of the works that were needed, which was sent to some companies for quotes to be provided. No quotes were forthcoming so further investigation into possible options was undertaken, alongside a broader review of maintenance provision.

Since this, some partial quotes have come in, as well as some additional work being undertaken (due to the urgency of this). These quotes include some aspects of remedial works needed following the electrical assessments (e.g. new lights, boards, switches, etc.) as well as the works requested by the Operations Manager.

The quotes received so far were for:

### **Coffee Hall Meeting Place**

- Replace all floors,
- Replace all bathroom facilities,
- Replacement of the ceiling tiles
- Replacement of the unsafe boarding in the kitchen
- Removal and disposal of the bench and radiator by the fire doors
- Replacement of all door furniture to provide safe, secure storage facilities
- Prepare and decorate all walls, ceilings and paintwork
- Supply and fit lockable storage for coffee machine

Full cost is just under £35,000 plus VAT

- There is a further £6,000 plus VAT for electrical works, including replacing all light fittings for LEDs, making safe trunking and switching, sockets and panels.

A total of approximately £41,000 plus VAT for the works requested at one of the four (4) meeting places.

This is likely to be a mid range centre, it is anticipated that the Tinkers Bridge Meeting Place will be slightly cheaper and the Netherfield Meeting Place will be of a similar cost for internal works. Due to the specialist nature of some of the work at the Eaglestone Activity Centre, costs for this are unclear until such time as a formal quote is in place. Assuming the costs associated with the Coffee Hall Meeting Place are an average, this means around £160,000 - £200,000 in total for the meeting places to be brought up to standard, with a presumed annual cost of £5,000 per meeting place per year to maintain.

Funding to enable this work to be undertaken would need to be sought from outside sources, as the situation with reserves is insufficient to fund this. A previous discussion has taken place regarding the possibility of a further Public Works Loan Board (PWL) loan, but exploration of grant funding should also be considered as part of any long term plan. This may, for example, include works to the courts at Netherfield, applications to 'village hall' funders, discussions with Milton Keynes City Council around improvements to their assets and any other funding that may be suitable / relevant. It is recommended that a small group is created to explore grant funding for these purposes (as well as highlighting any other funds that may be helpful).

To consider quotes at the March or April meeting, consult with residents for their views through questionnaires and leaflets on the works needed for the meeting places.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the committee note the report and quotes.
2. That further quotes are sought on a 'like for like' basis, given the level of expenditure expected.
3. That the committee considers whether, given the costs likely, that this is a programme to continue to work towards.
4. That other funding opportunities are investigated, including those that may contribute towards overall costs (e.g. the courts at the Netherfield Meeting Place, the changing rooms at the Eaglestone Activity Centre, creation of 'changing places' facilities where possible).
5. That a further report comes to this committee once a fuller picture of the total costs is in place.

**OC 93/23 To update the committee on the lone worker devices:**

In November, a report came to this committee regarding Lone Worker policy and proposals for some additional devices to help ensure the safety of officers, specifically caretakers (Agenda Item: OC 79/22 refers).

Following this meeting, an online 'demonstration' took place with PeopleTime, who demonstrated the device that they offer, clarifying the options and discussing needs.

The device in question is felt to be a best fit by the officers involved and as a result, a request has been made for six (6) devices to be provided, at a cost of £882.80 per year. This includes:

- The Device
- A roaming SIM (ensuring 'always on' cover)
- Fall alert
- Location alerts

The device itself enables two way communication with a twenty four (24) hour call centre and direct communication with emergency services, where necessary.

The units will include specific ones for caretakers, as well as having an additional one (1) available for officers or councillors to use where appropriate.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the committee notes the report.
2. That the Council Manager and relevant officers liaise with PeopleTime to get the devices in place.

**OC 94/23 To provide the committee with a Business Continuity Policy, including service specific elements and to propose a structure for management in the absence of a Proper Officer:**

Over the summer of 2022, this committee began discussions around contingency planning and the potential impact of the Responsible Financial Officer / Operations Manager being on maternity leave, meaning no Senior Manager being present in the absence of the Council Manager. As a result of these discussions, the Council

Manager was tasked with the development of a Business Continuity Plan (BCP), incorporating service specific elements that covered the major issues that may impact on the delivery of key aspects of the council's business.

This policy was in addition to the Risk Register, which provides details of risk, mitigating factors and further actions that may be needed. The two (2) documents work collaboratively to provide a fuller, more detailed approach to risk management and continuity planning. It is recommended that, for the annual policy review in May, these policies are combined and become part of the annual policy review schedule.

Version one (1) of the Business Continuity Plan sets the scene, but additional time was suggested to enable service managers to provide service specific plans. These are now attached as addendums to the overall policy.

The Organisational element of the plan details the steps that should be taken in the event that there is not a 'proper officer' available and no agreed deputy in place. It is recommended that this committee agrees to the proposals around management of this situation in the immediate term, managers within the officer team liaise with the Chair of Council, with a subcommittee being formed if there is a long term loss, making decisions until such time as a locum Clerk can be appointed. Liaison with B&MKALC and other neighbouring councils will also help ensure suitable cover / decision making can take place.

The current situation is not ideal, as there is no 'deputy' in place in the absence of the Council Manager. This committee may feel that designating another officer would be a suitable step whilst the Responsible Financial Officer / Operations Manager post is absent, or that appointing a short term 'deputy' would help. However, at this point, the proposal included in the policy document meets the immediate needs.

It is essential to remember that no individual councillor can take decisions the 'corporate body' makes decisions, either through full council, a designated committee (or subcommittee) or through delegation to an officer of the council. The approach noted above enables this to happen, with a small subcommittee acting in a timelier manner.

The process of creating this new continuity policy, as well as some other issues that have arisen within the council, mean that a review of the scheme of delegation and ensuring that all options are covered should also take place, this would usually happen as part of the annual review of policies in May, it is recommended that initial reviews take place in advance to enable this committee and Full Council to explore and define the approach preferred.

Clarity around lines of accountability is always useful for organisations. There have been one or two occasions where both the Council Manager and the Responsible Financial Officer / Operations Manager have been away, but no major issues have arisen as a result, whilst away, contact has been possible and liaison with councillors has happened where necessary. However, there have also been times where officer decisions made in the absence of the senior managers have been considered inappropriate by councillors. This proposal aims to ensure that Woughton

Community Council has clearly defined roles, clear channels of communication and clear decision-making processes, whilst also remaining legally compliant.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the committee notes the report and the version two (2) of the Business Continuity Plan.
2. That the committee
  - a. makes any comments or suggested alterations for including in version three (3), or
  - b. agrees to this version being ratified.
3. That the Business Continuity Plan becomes part of a wider policy that incorporates this as well as the Risk Register and that they are reviewed annually as part of the council year policy suite.
4. That the committee considers membership of a subcommittee of Full Council that would sit in the long-term absence of a 'Proper Officer', in line with this policy.
5. That the committee agrees to a full review of the Scheme of Delegation and powers within the council, to ensure suitable cover for all eventualities, with a view to agreement as part of the annual policy review in May.

**OC 95/23 To propose a sub-committee to address any human resources issues that need to be managed by the corporate body:**

To propose a sub-committee to address any human resources issues that need to be managed by the corporate body.

The meeting agreed membership of three (3) members of this committee, Cllr Elina Apse, Cllr Ruth McMillan and Cllr Sue Smith.

That the quorum of the subcommittee to be readjusted in the terms of reference.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the committee notes the report.
2. That the committee creates a small subcommittee of three (3) councillors to 'hear' any issues that need to be overseen by the council as a corporate body to consist of Cllr Elina Apse, Cllr Ruth McMillan and Cllr Sue Smith.
3. That the committee will mainly meet in private session (if agreed by the committee), due to the nature of the business to be conducted, but that notes and minutes from these meetings will be public record where suitable.
4. That the subcommittee will be responsible to the Operations & Resources Committee.

**OC 96/23 To agree the Bank Reconciliations, list of payments and receipts since December 2022:**

The Chair will look through and approve.

**NOTED**

**Date of next meeting:**

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023, 6:30pm at the Woughton Community Council Hub, Council Chamber, 60, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, MK6 5EG.



**THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8:08PM**

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