

Agenda item: OC 20/22

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Operations & Resources Committee

Monday 20th June 2022

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the committee on Health and Safety issues.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the committee notes the report.**
- 2. That a similar report is presented to committee on a half yearly basis, or wherever there is a significant issue that committee needs to be aware of.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

This report covers the significant issues relating to Health and Safety in June 2022.

Fire Safety

All Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 are currently up to date for all buildings. Fire alarm testing, emergency lighting and fire extinguishers are undergoing testing currently, with the Hub complete and faults rectified. Netherfield and Tinkers Bridge Meeting Place have been tested but awaiting repairs. 95 Jonathan's and Eaglestone Meeting Place being tested on 24th June 2022.

PAT Testing

PAT Testing was undertaken in all buildings in April this year, out of 379 appliances tested we only had one failure which was an extension lead at No 95 Jonathan's.

First Aid Training

First Aid Training for all staff is currently being looked at, with a view to Landscape Operatives and Forestry School officers to be trained in an advanced course due to the nature of tools and machinery being used. This training will also include options for councillors, RA's and other local people, in line with the service plan, once a provider has been appointed.

Accidents/Reportable

We have had some minor accidents in The Hub this year that have needed to be recorded in the accident books around the organization.

In April, a Landscape Team member severely cut his fingers on a hedge cutter whilst on site. He was taken to A&E and then referred to Stoke Mandeville for assessment.

He suffered cuts to four fingers to his Left hand. No nerve or tendon damage occurred, and he is now back at work after an absence of two weeks. A full investigation was undertaken, and it was found to be operator error as he dropped a running hedge cutter and tried to catch it. All staff have had a Toolbox talk regarding this incident to ensure it doesn't happen again, also risk assessments have been updated.

In December 2021 we had our annual Occupational Health checks for Landscape Staff and there were a couple of referrals to GPs for hearing and lung concerns these have been done and no further action is required from us.

Another operative was referred to a specialist practitioner regarding HAVs/Carpel Tunnel Syndrome. The report was sent back with recommendations in which one was to have it reported to RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013). This was done and a follow up call to the HSE was made. All checks of tools, machinery, time usage and vibration magnitudes have been undertaken and risk assessments have been updated and re-issued to all landscape staff. The purchase of battery-operated equipment has alleviated some of the problems with vibrational tools.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Ian Tegerdine – Landscape and Environment Manager

Agenda item: OC 21/22

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Operations & Resources Committee

Monday 20th June 2022

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the committee on planning and preparation towards a Youth Council for Woughton.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That committee notes this report.**
- 2. That committee considers the issues of co-option, budgets, and influence of the Youth Council, to enable open and honest engagement with young people, with a view to formal agreement at the July meeting of this committee.**
- 3. That the Council Manager and Youth Manager continue to develop training and development routes, engagement with young people, discussions with schools, youth groups, etc. with a view to the timeline noted below.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

One of the items on the Service Plan is the creation of a Youth Council. This has been on the plan for a few years but has not been able to happen for a variety of reasons. However, this does mean that some preparatory work has taken place:

- Discussions with the MK Council Lead for Youth Cabinet (the MKC version of a youth council)
- Early talks with schools, youth groups and similar to gauge interest
- Discussions with other councils who are considering something similar to see whether there is shared learning / resources we could develop together
- Ideas within the team around what and how the youth council might work.

The overall aim for this year is to be prepared for a Youth Council to start operating at the same point as the new council, in May 2023, with 'elections' taking place at the same time. How these elections may take place is something that remains unclear – this is one of the issues that needs resolving.

The initial proposal is that we have 2 representatives from each estate of Woughton, providing a similar approach to the existing WCC council. This will also ensure that there is 'cover' if one member is unable to attend. The initial idea is also that the first 'cohort' of youth council will be secondary school age. The idea is that once in place and running, the Youth Council will develop resources and workshops that can go into primary schools, engaging the next generation and, when Youth Council members reach a suitable age, can stand for election for council proper.

These early considerations have also led to further discussion and ideas, some of which will need to be confirmed / declined by Council.

- how does council feel about 'co-opting' youth council members onto committees (in a non-voting role)?
- Is there a commitment to an ongoing budget, both in terms of training and development, but also to enable the Youth Council to have some responsibility and power to bring change (e.g. a specific project)?
- Questions and queries regarding the level of power and influence that the youth council may have.

These queries are important in terms of the next steps – having a clear idea of what we can promote and use to engage will be key for the next steps. However, over the summer period, the intention is to:

- Start a more formal engagement with schools, youth services, etc. with a clear 'offer' – what we are offering, what support is available, what the role entails, etc. etc.
- Make use of some of the 'Become a Councillor' resources to tweak and make bespoke, targeted and 'Woughtoned' engagement resources, to try and build enthusiasm and a desire to be involved with local young people.
- Create and deliver (in autumn / winter) a training and development programme – putting together some sessions for both engagement and then for when the Youth Council is in place.

So a significant piece of work that will sit with the Youth Manager (from a young person viewpoint), Council Manager (from a democracy viewpoint) and members, where potential for mentoring and support is likely to become apparent. In broad terms:

- Summer 2022 – creation of resources, agreement from council regarding levels of power and involvement, further discussions with schools, youth groups, etc.
- Autumn / Winter 2022 – policy development, budgetary agreement, training programme creation and workshops to begin engagement with young people directly, starting to create a group that may wish to proceed
- Spring 2023 – nomination process, manifesto / supporting statement workshops, clarity regarding the possibility of the need for formal elections and, if so, development of an election plan to deliver this.
- May 2023 – elections (if necessary) and initial Youth Cabinet meets.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

Time commitment from Youth and Council Managers, plus members and other officer's dependent on need.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

It is felt essential that this project provides a real opportunity for development, involvement, change and power – a 'tick box' exercise that simply pretends to have

involvement will fail and cause damage to the council more widely. Given this, a clear steer from council regarding the level of the Youth Council (co-option and involvement in committees, any budgetary powers, decision making involvement, etc) will be needed and will need to be an ongoing commitment.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHORS

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Tash Darling – Youth Manager

Agenda item: OC 22/22

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Operations and Resources Committee

Monday 20th June 2022

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the committee on any amendments made to the budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the Committee notes the report.**
- 2. That the Committee notes that works on Tinkers Bridge roof are kept as unbudgeted and therefore deducted from any reserves at year end (£17,285) plus additional payment of (£9,049) – Ex VAT.**
- 3. That the Committee notes mobile phones are all coded to HQ now, with relevant deductions being made from each directorates services budget to cover the costs of connections.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

There will be a detailed budget update at the next committee (July) once we have closed the first quarter of the year.

Looking at the budget some minor amendments have been made.

- No changes or transfers have been made to the IT & telephony budget line (as of yet) it looks as though our annual support invoice c. £19,000 was paid last year and therefore there is enough available funds in this budget to facilitate for the recent procurement of new Cllr IT equipment. £14,179.68 with £18,985.40 remaining for the year. We may need to eventually transfer some funds into this budget code much later in the year but for now there is no need for any amendment.
- Tinkers Bridge roof has had its own cost code created due to this not being works that were budgeted for I have set the budget for this year at 0 and therefore this will be deducted from our reserves at the end of the year. (£17,285) plus (£9,049) a total of (£26,874)

Cost Code Number

127

Cost Code

Tinkers bridge roof repair

Cost Centre

Tinkers Bridge Meeting place (2022-2023)

Reserve

No Reserve

Balance Brought Forward

0

Type

Default

Notes

To be deducted from reserves - not budgeted for 22/23.

- Relevant deductions have been taken from services directorates across the board to assist with the additional costs of our new phone connections. I have done this relatively rather than equally i.e., meeting places and community have far less disposable budget than youth and landscape. It equated to c. £600 per directorate. Youth and Landscape have each been deducted £1000 while community has been deducted £600. The meeting place on call phone was already costed under HQ. We are also no longer splitting the connection costs into each department therefore it has all been transferred to HQ – Mobiles (69).

As is pretty standard for this early in the year there is nothing of substance to report on that is of any concern at this moment in time, although further thorough review will take place at the end of quarter one (1) our July meeting to review the stance of all budgets and budget holders.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Previously agreed £26,874 to be deducted from reserves at year end.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None Perceived

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None perceived.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Samone Winsborough
Operations manager and RFO

Agenda item: OC 23/22

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Operations and Resources Committee

Monday 20th June 2022

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To explore options for 4G access on Surface Go's for Cllrs.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the Committee notes the report.**
- 2. That the Committee agree that at this moment in time, 4G access is not a necessity and we should pilot use of the equipment for a year before making any decisions on any further costs.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Having been away for much of the discussions surrounding the procurement of the new Surface Go's for councillors it's been brought to my attention that these models are not 4G enabled, therefore the option of procuring sim cards for Cllrs to utilise their laptops 'on the go' is not a viable one (as they do not accept sim cards).

Therefore, we have two further options that we could investigate:

Either internet dongles that provide 'plug and play' giving access to data where Wi-Fi is not available. From looking at the current market for data dongles these range from £15.00 – £30.00 per month. Looking at the cheapest option and to provide this for every Cllr for a minimum term of a year would be £3,420 – reoccurring every year.

The second option would be to provide mobile handsets so that Cllrs could use hotspot and connect their phone data onto their laptops. However, this option would increase our costs to an unviable position, for example for each officer we pay £18 per month per connection (and this is only for handsets with 2GB data) again to provide this at the cheapest option for each Cllr would increase our costs by £4,104 per annum – reoccurring.

In my professional opinion, as the functionality of the previous tablets were not very effective, they were not used as much as we would have all hoped. Therefore, I am suggesting that as we do not know yet how many instances Cllrs will find themselves in where they are unable to connect to Wi-Fi and how pressing it would be to have a Wi-Fi connection that we simply wait and see. I think we should get a years use out of them before committing to additional spend for a minimum term contract (which is usually no less than 24 months) for a service that might not be used very often. For example, all of our centres have guest Wi-Fi. You can still access your Microsoft apps (word, excel etc.) without Wi-Fi to make notes etc.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

None Perceived.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None Perceived.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None perceived.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Samone Winsborough
Operations Manager and RFO

Agenda item: OC 25/22

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Operations & Resources Committee

Monday 20th June 2022

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To consider the issue of childcare provision during council meetings.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That committee notes this report.**
- 2. That committee considers whether provision of childcare within the Hub during council meetings is appropriate to enable full participation.**
- 3. That if this is felt appropriate, that the Council Manager investigates options for an external company to provide this.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

As a council that aims to ensure equality and inclusion, the current rules regarding the payment of childcare expenses a barrier to this. Whilst councillors at unitary, borough and national level are all able to pay childcare (and indeed, dependency allowances) and, since 2011, councillors at parish level in Wales have been able to do likewise, the law in England continues to prohibit the payment of these allowances. This is defined in the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. Whilst this is an area that NALC have campaigned on very briefly in 2019, it seems unlikely that this situation will change any time soon as it does not appear to be a high priority for many.

In addition to this, we have several officers who have children and caring responsibilities who are expected to attend council meetings in the evenings, for whom access to childcare would also enable this more easily.

It is worth noting that childcare responsibilities (and dependency duties more widely) tend to fall more heavily on women than men, with research suggesting that 2/3rds of duties fall on women (when in two parent households) and 90% of single parents are female. These rules, preventing WCC from paying for direct expenses, could therefore be considered to be directly discriminatory, in breach of the Equalities Act 2010.

Whilst we are unable to pay expenses to councillors for childcare, there is nothing in legislation that would prevent us from offering childcare directly – the Localism Act 2011 allows councils with General Power of Competence, in simple terms, it gives the power to do anything an individual can do provided it is not prohibited by other legislation. Therefore, one route for us to consider would be to provide childcare when relevant meetings are taking place. Whilst there would be some considerations (where, who, costs, etc.), this approach would enable WCC to meet the needs of all within the community, encourage and support a more diverse meeting and councillor

group. It would also mean that we would be less likely to face a challenge under the Equalities Act (although we would welcome a more general challenge to this legislation).

Further consideration would be needed in terms of space (having suitably designed and child proofed), equipment, staffing levels, ratios,

If this committee considers that this approach would be one worth investigating, either for now or for future potential needs, a more in depth plan can be considered, to include suitable space, external or internal provision, equipment and costs. It is anticipated that, depending on the nature of the provision needed, that costs will be between £10 - £20 per hour, per child (baby sitting rates), with further costs of creating a suitable, safe space and provision of equipment.

Due to the significantly varied needs of children, this can only be seen as a 'ballpark' – needs and costs will vary significantly.

It is recommended that the committee considers whether WCC should provide support to parents who may find it difficult to attend meetings otherwise and, if so, consider the approach that may be taken. At this time, there is no direct demand for this, but there have been queries raised by potential candidates for election as to how these issues may be supported by WCC. Given this, consideration and decision would be helpful, especially with whole council elections due in May 2023.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager