

## **Woughton Community Council**

### **Operations & Resources Committee**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024, 6:30pm at the Woughton Community Council Hub, the Council Chamber, 60, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, MK6 5EG.**

**Present: Cllrs Sue Smith (Chair), Liz Simpkins (Vice-Chair),** Eamonn Bobey, Tony Coughlan, Penny Glasgow, Luke Louis, Deanna Norris, April Rennie, Alan Williamson

**Also present:**

Steve McNay (Council Manager)

**OC 86/24 Apologies:**

Cllr Donna Fuller (Other commitment)

Cllr D'Anne Mordecai (unwell)

Cllr Ruth McMillan (unwell)

**All agreed and accepted.**

**OC 87/24 Declarations of Interest:**

There were no declarations of interest.

**NOTED**

**OC 88/24 Chairs Announcements:**

The Chair reported that

- There would be a D-Day Working Group meeting prior to the Services Committee next Monday evening, please attend after 6pm if not on that group,
- That it is pancake day tomorrow (Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February)
- That there is an MKALC meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February.

**OC 89/24 Questions from the public (Max. 10 minutes):**

No questions received.

**OC 90/24 Minutes of the previous meeting:**

The minutes of the Operations & Resources Committee meeting held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024 Were **AGREED** as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

**Proposed: Cllr Smith.      Seconded: Penny Glasgow      Vote: Unanimous**

**OC 91/24 To agree the List of Payments, Bank Reconciliations for the month of January 2024:**

Due to the absence of the Responsible Finance Officer, it was proposed that the payments and reconciliations be signed outside the meeting, once the RFO returned. This was agreed.

**AGREED**

**OC 92/24 To inform the committee of the VAT return for quarter 3 (1<sup>st</sup> October – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023)**

The paper from the RFO was spoken to by the Council Manager, who explained that the Quarter 3 return (Oct – Dec 2023) was submitted to the amount of £12,059.96, which has been agreed and paid into the WCC account by HMRC

**RESOLVED – Noted by the committee**

**OC 93/24 Training calendar for the new council year:**

Discussion from the committee around

- logging of training (Council Manager explained that all training is added to the councillor training record)
- Importance of both training and, where possible, mentoring from an experienced councillor (especially for newer members)
- Any requirement for training (nothing in law, but expectation within the Terms of Reference for some committees, e.g. Planning training for the PLaD committee and Finance training for this committee)
- Regular training 'calendar' or a set route for training for new members – whilst there isn't anything in place, there are regular sessions that should take place, such as Safeguarding and a new requirement for Anti Sexual Harassment training as part of a wider focus on this area.
- Reminder of already agreed sessions (e.g. Bystander, Modern Slavery) and details of some Met Office sessions (some sessions for the Incident Group and a session on climate change for the Green Working Group)

The pros and cons of providing specific session within the council vs 'buying in' sessions from BMKALC, etc. were also looked at, with a view that the sessions that have been provided previously in Chambers (face to face) have been more beneficial, as they focus specifically on the parish and the needs of local residents, the councillor group and WCC. The resources needed to develop and deliver these sessions was also covered, with a view that there needed to be a minimum of seven (7) attendees to make it viable.

**Proposal tabled by Cllr Sue Smith:**

***"The councillors consider the areas that they would like to see covered in training"***

**Seconded by Cllr Tony Coughlan**

**RESOLVED BY WAY OF UNANIMOUS VOTE**

***Proposal tabled by Cllr Sue Smith***

***"That the Council Manager brings details of all training offered by relevant external organisations and potential internal training, with a minimum of seven attendees needed to allow delivery"***

**Seconded by Cllr Eamonn Bobey**

**RESOLVED BY WAY OF UNANIMOUS VOTE**

**OC 94/24 Annual meeting preparations and policy review**

The Council Manager gave an explanation of the Annual Meetings, explaining that there has been a challenge in engaging residents in recent years and explaining the essential elements needed – election of roles, review and agreement of key

documents, etc. There was a query regarding the need to review the Code of Conduct, as this wasn't on the list attached – whilst this is NOT noted within the Standing Orders, a review can happen anyway – this would be in line with MKCC Code.

**Proposal via paper**

***“That officers and members review the listed documents for agreement to submit to the Annual Meeting. This agreement to be at the Operations meeting due to take place on 15th April 2024.”***

**Proposal from Cllr Sue Smith**

***“That an engagement event linked to the Neighbourhood Plan be included as part of the Annual Meeting, to promote more engagement from residents”***

**RESOLVED BY WAY OF UNANIMOUS VOTE**

**OC95/24 Asset register review**

The Council Manager explained the purpose and reasoning behind the Asset Register, noting that there is work to be done. He apologised for the incorrect date on the document shared, suggesting that it hadn't been updated since 2020, confirming that this was an annual review.

**Proposal via the paper**

***“That the Council Manager is tasked with working with managers and others to ensure the register is thoroughly reviewed and updated, with a view to having the final version ratified in March, for submission within the internal / external audit processes.”***

**Seconded by Cllr Sue Smith**

**RESOLVED BY WAY OF UNANIMOUS VOTE**

**OC 96/24 Updated councillor allowance recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel:**

The paper provided within the agenda pack explained that the Independent Remuneration Panel had recommended a 4.48% rise in allowances for the 2024/25 council year. Whilst the paper did not specify the amounts for Parish councils, the following was stated:

*At our full Council meeting on 18 January 2023, the Council agreed an increase to the MKCC basic allowance by 4.69%. The IRP recommended that Parish / Town Councils who pay allowances should track the MKCC basic allowance, as follows:*

- Basic: Up to 10% of the MKC Basic Allowance for Quality Parish / Town Councils = £1,169 or Up to 7.5% of the MKC Basic Allowance for Non Quality Parish / Town Councils= £877*
- Chairs: Up to 20% of the MKC Basic Allowance for Quality Parish / Town Councils= £2,338 or Up to 15% of the MKC Basic Allowance for Non Quality Parish / Town Councils= £1,753*

*We are not currently registered as a 'quality council' (but may well become one over the coming year), so allowances for WCC elected members are £877 (with extra for Chair / Leader).*

*Based upon the updated figures (basic MKCC allowance has increased to £12,213), 7.5% of this means a WCC basic allowance of £916.*

**Proposal from Cllr Sue Smith:**

**"That WCC agrees to the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel and increases allowances in line with these"**

**Seconded by Cllr April Rennie**

**RESOLVED BY WAY OF UNANIMOUS VOTE**

**OC 97/24 To move and second and then to be put to the vote the following motion:**

**Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960**

**That by virtue of the provisions of Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded during discussion of the following business on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.**

**Proposed by Cllr Sue Smith. Seconded by Cllr Penny Glasgow.**

**RESOLVED BY WAY OF UNANIMOUS VOTE**

**OC 98/24 To consider various HR matters:**

There was discussion around the initial proposals regarding staffing structures, in line with previous agreements, with the Council Manager presenting a first stage plan to cover the loss of the Operations Manager and the Committee and Member Services Officer. This included changes to the managers duties, with new roles being Estates Manager, Youth and Community Manager and Operations Manager. There will be further work, once these changes are implemented, to address the remaining staff, suitable roles and any changes that may be needed.

Queries were raised with regard to continuity planning and ensuring suitable cover in the event that officers are unable to work – whilst there is some in place, there are also roles that are so specific or specialist that external candidates would probably be needed. This will be further investigated by the Council Manager.

The Council Manager detailed that the managers involved had been consulted and agreed to the changes. There will be a further period of clarification with job descriptions updated, consultation with unions and then further discussions across the officer team.

**Proposal from Cllr Sue Smith:**

**'That the initial stage of the staffing restructure is agreed as noted above, and that the Council Manager and other senior officers continue to consider next steps in terms of other officers, roles and needs for the organisation'.**

**Seconded by Cllr Tony Coughlan**  
**RESOLVED BY WAY OF UNANIMOUS VOTE**

The second issue was around replacing an officer who has had their contract cancelled due to failure to attend, contact, or respond to requests for updates. There is currently a volunteer (PP) who is in the role, and it was suggested to promote continuity and allow 'promotion' from within. This would be unusual, as we would usually advertise, but it is suggested that this is bypassed on this occasion.

**Proposal from Cllr Sue Smith**

**'That the committee agrees to the Council Manager undertaking the formal process to employ PP, the current landscape volunteer, without the need to put the post out to advert'.**

**Seconded by Cllr Alan Williamson**  
**RESOLVED BY WAY OF UNANIMOUS VOTE**

**Date of next meeting:**

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024, 6:30pm at the Woughton Community Council Hub, 60, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, MK6 5EG.

**THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 7.55 PM**

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