

Woughton Community Council

Operations & Resources Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15th January 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, Luke Louis, April Rennie, Tony Coughlan, D'Anne Mordecai, Deanna Norris, Alan Williamson

Also present:

Steve McNay (Council Manager)

Marta Sobis (Responsible Financial Officer)

OC 73/24 Apologies:

Cllr Donna Fuller (Other commitment)

Cllr Penny Glasgow (unwell)

Cllr Ruth McMillan (unwell)

All agreed and accepted.

OC 74/24 Declarations of Interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

NOTED

OC 75/24 Chairs Announcements:

Chair noted one mistake within the agenda (OC 78/24 has an incorrect name) and assured the meeting this would be corrected in the meeting and minutes.

Chair also reminded everyone that the waste collections return to normal this week – bin days is now back to Tuesdays for the remainder of the year,

OC 76/24 Questions from the public (Max. 10 minutes):

No questions received.

OC 77/24 Minutes of the previous meeting:

The minutes of the Operations & Resources Committee meeting held on Monday 13th November 2023 Were **AGREED** as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

Proposed: Cllr Smith. Seconded: Eamonn Bobey.

OC 78/24 To inform the committee of a change of officer at Milton Keynes City Council and updated details within the Safeguarding policy:

There are two new named individuals within MKCC with oversight of safeguarding issues, the two being Debbie Long and Kay Newnam. The policy has been updated and is available on the WCC Website.

Noted

OC 79/24 To agree the List of Payments, Bank Reconciliations for the month of November and December 2023:

The list of payments and bank reconciliation forms were provided for signature and agreed. There were only December 2023's to complete, as Novembers have previously been signed off.

Noted

OC 80/24 Budget update, with revised figures following updated requests, information and staffing issues:

The Council Manager explained that as the committee responsible for finance (although final budget and precept decisions must be made at Full Council), final budget sheets were provided for examination and questions. This included an updated 'Scribe' budget, reflecting the linkage to the accounting software, previously discussed and agreed.

Main changes are:

- small increase to events budget (reflecting both D Day and 50 Years of Woughton celebrations),
- additional monies within the IT budget, reflecting likely cost rises and replacement equipment,
- £1000 allocated in each of the following areas, reflecting previous discussions and agreements and a reality following recent floods and the need to replace equipment.
 - o Kevin Wilson Trust
 - o Memorial contingency
 - o Flood equipment replacement
- Some differences in the way that wages are coded within the Scribe sheet – whilst some roles cover several areas (e.g. Youth Manager also covers Safeguarding, which was coded to HQ), payments are made to one cost centre. Amounts remain the same, but coded slightly differently.
- An additional amount in both income and expenditure relating to community centre repairs (with a view that we bring in additional funding for this purpose).

These updates and budget also included a 15% precept increase, leading to a deficit budget of just over £40,000. It is expected that this will be reduced due to the staffing changes that have happened and are planned.

Questions were also asked and answered regarding LCTRS (Local Council Tax Revenue Support Grant), additional feedback from consultation, and inflationary considerations. Concerns about the impact of an increase on residents were also noted.

The following recommendations were proposed:

- 1. That the committee notes the report, associated budget, and changes.**
- 2. That the committee acknowledges the significant challenges that WCC faces this year and in coming years, especially if LCTRS is reduced or withdrawn.**
- 3. That the committee agrees to the recommendation of a minimum of 15% precept increase for 2024/25.**

4. That this recommendation is taken to Full Council for agreement on 29th January 2024, in line with legislation and to ensure timely submission of the precept request for.

Agreed – 9 in agreement and 1 abstention

OC 81/24 Review of charges for rental of community venues:

The RFO explained that the charges for community centre rental were required annually and had been flagged within the internal audit. Following research and comparison with similar centres in other parishes, the charges were broadly comparable, even with centres that provided additional resources / better parking / newer buildings / etc.

The resident rates were questioned, as there was concern that neighbouring parishes were offering lower rates. Simpson and Ashland do offer rates at £12.50 per hour for the village hall. The residents of Woughton can have a 'party rate' of £50 for 5 hours – equivalent to £10 per hour, however the basic resident rate is higher at £15 per hour. The Council Manager will double check to ensure that the 'party rate' is advertised on the website.

There were also queries and comments around charity rates and that some charities could afford the basic rate. Some additional work can be undertaken to look at whether an assessment of income and differing levels of charity rates may be implementable.

Further discussions took place around how to increase usage, with an acceptance that the buildings are in need of work, that some have issues around parking and placement and that a 'working party' to explore options would be a helpful approach. It was also agreed that

A new proposal was put to the meeting:

- 1. That charges will be held at current levels until July 2024.**
- 2. That work will be undertaken to investigate rates, increasing bookings, repairs and maintenance and long-term proposals, with a further paper provided to this committee in July 2024.**

Proposed: Cllr Sue Smith
– unanimous.

Seconded: Cllr Alan Williamson

Resolved

OC 82/24 Terms of Reference for Incident Plan update working group:

The initial proposal around guidance for the Incident Plan review were provided by the Council Manager. Except for the suggestion for estate-based groups (item D on the paper), they were considered to be a useful base from which to work, with item D to be reviewed by the group at first meeting.

Cllr Rennie requested that she be included within the working group, which was agreed.

Thanks were passed to the Landscape Team and other officers for the excellent response to an incident earlier this month where flooding placed residents houses at risk.

Noted

**OC 83/24 New NALC model contract – for information only:
(Verbal report by the Council Manager & NALC model contract attached)**

The new 'model contract' was provided. Comments noted around the lack of inclusion for sustainable travel within the 'travel expenses' section and a view that the contract did not improve upon the current contracts and additional policy that WCC works within. However, committee members will, if they so choose, look further at the contract and pass comments to the Council Manager.

Noted

OC 84/24 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.

Prior to the vote on this, the Council Manager provided a brief update on some changes that have been made to holiday entitlement and payments for part-time / occasional or part-year workers. These won't have a major impact on WCC but do affect bank caretakers and occasional workers within the youth service.

The committee notes the HR updates – passed unanimously.

The vote was then taken and passed unanimously.

OC 85/24 To consider various HR matters:

The Council Manager provided an update on the continuing work, following the resignations of officers and the reviewed structures and focus for the council. This work has included initial discussions with managers, a 'time and motion' study (which has been exceptionally useful) and will move towards a more concrete proposal for March 2024.

The Council Manager also updated on the Community Garden officer, funded via Big Lottery Fund, following queries previously around employment of another officer during the uncertainty. The Council Manager explained that this post was part of the agreement with Big Lottery Fund, that it would be 'cost neutral' (all relevant costs covered by the funding) and as such, it was recommended that this post be advertised with an aim to have in place for the start of the new council year.

Some further comments were made around the people that may be interested in the post and the Council Manager agreed that advertising at allotments, MK College, etc would help ensure a wide range of applicants.

The following proposals were made:

1. **That the committee agrees to continued work with managers and others around the proposed new model, with definitive costings and a proposed model to return to this committee in March.**
2. **That the committee agrees to the Council Manager advertising for a part time Community Garden Officer, in line with the grant agreement, on the understanding that the wage costs associated will be fully covered by the BLF grant.**

Resolved - unanimous.

Date of next meeting:

Monday 12th February 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 _____