

Tuesday 6th February 2024

To: All members of the Operations & Resources Committee

Cllrs Sue Smith (Chair), Liz Simpkins (Vice-Chair), Eamonn Bobey, Tony Coughlan, Donna Fuller, Penny Glasgow, Luke Louis, Ruth McMillan, D'Anne Mordecai, Deanna Norris, April Rennie, Alan Williamson

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Operations & Resources Committee to be held on **Monday 12th February 2024** commencing **6:30pm** at the **Woughton Community Council Hub, the Council Chamber, 60, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, MK6 5EG.**

Members of the public can attend in person, submit questions in advance and or watch live via www.facebook.com/woughtoncc.

Please be aware that this meeting is being recorded and broadcast live. Microphones are live at all times – if you are not speaking formally within the meeting, please do keep any additional noise to a minimum and be aware that anything said within this meeting will be in the public domain'.

The Calendar of Meetings can be accessed at:

<https://www.woughtoncommunitycouncil.gov.uk/council-meeting-calendar/>

Steve McNay
Parish Manager

Please ensure that your mobile phone is switched to silent or is switched off completely during the meeting.

AGENDA

OC 86/24 Apologies:

To record apologies from members unable to attend the meeting.

OC 87/24 Declarations of Interest:

Under the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012, made under s30 (3) of the Localism Act, members must declare any disclosable pecuniary interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting, and any additional interests not previously declared.

OC 88/24 Chairs Announcements:

To receive announcements from the Chair.

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

To receive questions/statements from members of the public.

OC 90/24 Minutes of the previous meeting:

To receive and approve as a true and correct record the minutes of the Operations & Resources Committee meeting held on:

- Monday 15th January 2024.

(Attached)

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

(List of Payments& Bank Reconciliations to follow)

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

(Report by the Responsible Finance Officer attached)

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

(Report by the Council Manager, and Met Office online training offer attached)

OC 94/24 Annual meeting preparations and policy review

(Report by the Council Manager, and policy documents attached)

OC95/24 Asset register review

(Report by the Council Manager, and review document attached)

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

(Verbal report by the Council Manager & Scheme of Allowance paper attached)

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.

**OC 98/24 To consider various HR matters:
(Report by the Council Manager to follow)**

Date of next meeting:

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

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 _____

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Operations & Resources Committee

Monday 12th February 2024

Agneda Item OC 92/24

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the committee on the VAT position

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That committee notes this report.

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

After the end of each quarter, the RFO submits a VAT126 report to claim back VAT for the past quarter. This report is to inform you that such a report was submitted on 15 January 2024, covering the period from 1 October 2023 to 31 December 2023 (quarter 3), for a total of £12,059.96.

We are pleased to inform you that the report was accepted by HMRC, and the full amount was deposited into our bank account on 19 January 2024.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

AUTHOR

Marta Sobis - RFO

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Operations Committee – 12th February 2024

Agenda Item OC 93/24

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To gather ideas for the training calendar for the coming council year.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the committee considers the priority areas for training over the coming year.

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Training is an essential element of any successful organisation, and Woughton Community Council is no exception.

Early in this council year, we commenced a series of training sessions which were considered by attendees to be useful, despite limited attendance.

Due to significant pressures on time, these bespoke sessions didn't continue – this was due to a cost vs benefit analysis which showed that it would be more affordable to book councillors who were interested onto external sessions, rather than spending the time and resource to develop internal sessions.

The external sessions continue to be an option for all councillors, either via the existing providers (e.g. BMKALC, NALC, etc.) or by finding suitable training provision and submitting a request to this committee for support.

With new members, a new council year due in May and with some changes proposed within the staffing structures that should enable some more capacity for planning and delivery of sessions, this committee is encouraged to consider what would be helpful. It would be especially helpful to understand the gaps that the newer councillors feel there were, so that these can be filled accordingly.

It is also worth considering whether there is a value in providing sessions if only 3 or 4 participants attend.

There are already some ideas that have been considered:

- Bystander training
- Modern Slavery
- Housing law and support (requested for case work)

There is also some training that has been sent through following recent weather events – this is Met Office training that may be helpful (see attached). This may be something that the committee would like to have included.

Proposal: That the committee submits ideas, links to sessions, proposals, providers, or other related / relevant information to the Council Manager to enable a training programme to be developed.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Met Office 2024 Online CR training Prospectus (1)

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager



Online Community Resilience Course Prospectus

2024

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Introduction

Community responders and the voluntary sector play a crucial role in the resilience of the UK. This training prospectus is aimed at those who work or volunteer in the local community to make them more resilient to severe weather events.

The Met Office have a key role under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to provide information to Category 1 and 2 responders but also to warn and inform the public around severe weather. The courses contained in this prospectus will provide an opportunity for community responders and the voluntary sector who work closely with local responders to increase their knowledge and find sources of information to assist them as they respond to severe weather.

This prospectus outlines the courses available for 2024, includes dates when they will be delivered and details on how to register for a course. There is no fee to attend a course, but it is necessary to register so that you are able to receive joining instructions and handouts.

Please note that, the team that deliver these courses are operational so, if there is severe weather around at the time of the course that requires a significant number of the team to respond, courses may be postponed at short notice.

If you have any questions regarding this prospectus or any of the courses, please feel free to contact us at training.cca@metoffice.gov.uk and we will be pleased to help you.

How to Book:

Book via a Microsoft form by clicking on the date of the course you wish to attend in the calendar of courses below. On completion of the form, please take note of the message you receive around limited numbers. The joining instructions and handouts will be emailed to you nearer the time including the Microsoft Teams link required to join.

Calendar of Courses

Winter Weather Hazards	22 January	16 November	03 December
Met Office Information, Products and Services	18 March	08 June	10 September
Summer Weather Hazards	07 May	18 May	17 June
Climate Change and Community	22 April	16 July	19 October



Winter Weather Hazards

Aims and objectives:

This course is designed to provide further information about some of the specific weather risks associated with winter, which is often one of the more active seasons of the year. Over the 2 hours we will look at the risks and some of the products provided by the Met Office for community responders and the voluntary sector along with selected examples of previous events.

Course content:

The course will look at some of the natural hazards associated with winter and some information available to help people to stay safe and thrive during winter weather. The contents of the course will include:

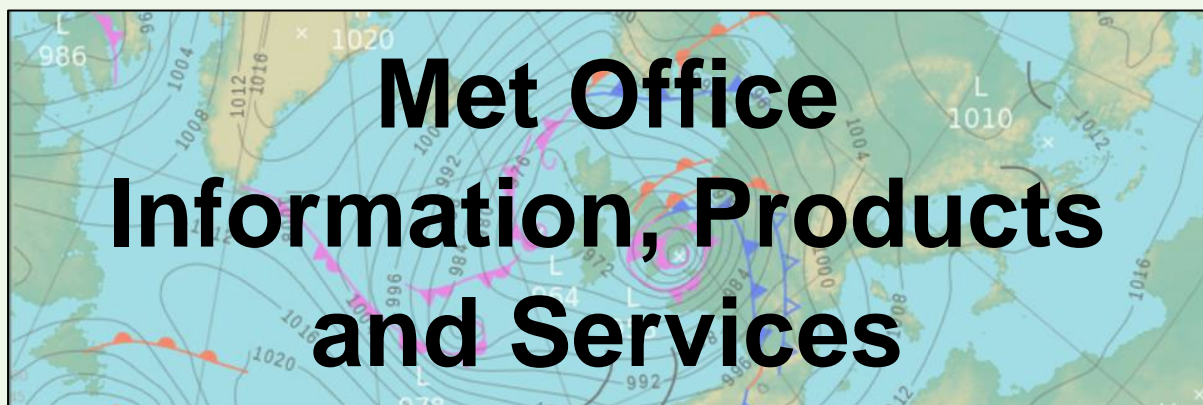
- Cold and Snow
- Storms
- Rain and Flooding
- Weather Ready Campaign

Course Dates:

Monday 22nd January, 1800-2000

Saturday 16th November, 0930-1130

Tuesday 3rd December, 1800-2000



This 2-hour course will look at the wide variety of weather information, products and services that are available to community responders and the voluntary sector to aid them in their role. It will include a look at some of the services available during periods of severe weather but also other information that may be helpful.

Course Structure:

Part 1: Severe Weather Warning and Informing

This will look at the main services provided to community responders to notify them of severe weather, including:

- National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS)
- Flood Outlook
- EA Flood Alerts and Warnings
- Emergency Alerts

Likelihood	High				
	Medium				
	Low				
	Very low				
	Very low	Low	Medium	High	
Impact					

Part 2: Sources of Information

This will look at some of the locations to access information and a section of the information and products available. This part will be a mix of PowerPoint slides and a practical run through of some of the websites.

- Met Office Website
- Met Office App
- Weather Observation Website (WoW)
- Partner Agency Information



Course Dates:

Monday 18th March, 1800-2000

Saturday 8th June, 0930-1130

Tuesday 10th September, 1800-2000

**Aims and objectives:**

This course is designed to provide further information about some of the specific weather risks associated with summer, which is often one of the more active seasons of the year. Over the 2 hours we will look at the risks and some of the products provided by the Met Office for community responders and the public along with selected examples of previous events.

Course content:

The course will look at some of the natural hazards associated with summer and some information available to help people to stay safe and thrive during summer weather. The contents of the course will include:

- Hot weather and Heatwaves
- Thunderstorms
- Drought
- Air Quality
- Pollen
- Wildfires
- Weather Ready Campaign

Course Dates:

Tuesday 7th May, 1800-2000

Saturday 18th May, 0930-1130

Monday 17th June, 1800-2000

Climate Change & Community

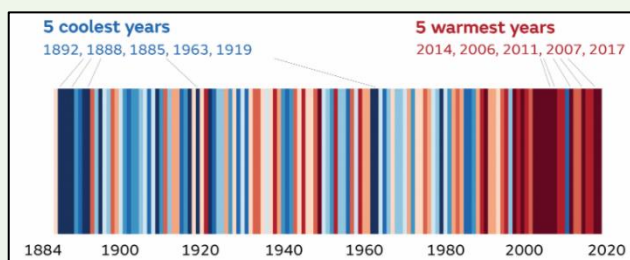
Aims and objectives:

This 2-hour session will set out to explain Climate Change to community responders and the voluntary sector, what the current state of the climate is within the UK and around the globe plus a look at what the future climate may hold. This will lead to an increased knowledge around the issues and potential impacts we may face in the future and where further information can be found to assist with planning and preparation.

Course Structure:

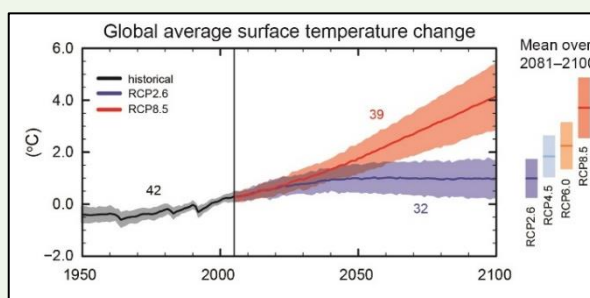
Part 1: Climate Science

This part will focus on the fundamentals of climate science, greenhouse gas emissions, current changes observed in global climate and the current state of the UK climate.



Part 2: Climate Projections

This part will move on to look at aspects of the future climate and what the UK is projected to see in the years to come and where information around this can be found. We will then finish off with a look at emission reduction and local adaptation actions that can be taken.



Course Dates:

Monday 22nd April, 1800-2000

Tuesday 16th July, 1800-2000

Saturday 19th October, 0930-1130

Additional Links and Information

Useful website links

Met Office Website - <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/>

Met Office Warnings - <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice/uk-warnings>

Met Office Community Resilience - <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/services/government/environmental-hazard-resilience/community-resilience>

Met Office Climate Change - <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/climate-change/what-is-climate-change>

Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/flood-forecasting-centre>

Environment Agency (EA) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency>

Scottish Environment protection Agency (SEPA) - <https://www.sepa.org.uk/>

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) - <https://naturalresources.wales/>

NI Direct (flooding) - <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/flooding>

EA Flood Alerts and Warnings - <https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk/alerts-and-warnings>

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Operations Committee – 12.02.24

Agenda Item OC 94/24

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To update the committee on preparations for the Annual Meeting and to propose a more engaging event.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the committee notes this report
2. That the committee notes the work needed to review all relevant policies and procedures in advance of the Annual Meeting
3. That the committee considers whether an additional element be included in the Annual Meeting evening.

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

The Annual Meeting of the Council is due in May, with the date set as Tuesday 7th May (due to bank holiday). As part of this annual meeting, alongside elections for all the posts (Chair, Leader, Vice, committees, etc.), there is also a need to review a suite of policies, procedures and papers, as detailed in our Standing Orders. This includes:

- Review of delegation arrangements
- Review of Terms of Reference for committees
- Appointment of members to such committees
- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations*
- Review of relationships with external bodies (including MKCC)
- Review of Asset register (see separate paper)*
- Review and confirmation of insurance*
- Review of all subscriptions and memberships*
- Review of councillor allowances (see separate paper)
- Review of policies relating to:
 - o Complaints procedure (Comments, compliments and complaints)
 - o Data Protection (GDPR and Sata Policy)
 - o Freedom of Information (Information Policy)
 - o Press / media relationships (Guidelines for broadcasting)
 - o Employment policies and procedures (many and varied – staff handbook is the ‘cover all’ and is due for a refresh. This is currently sitting with the HR provider).
- Calendar of meetings for the coming year

Those denoted with an asterix (*) to be led by RFO. All others by Council Manager.

This is a lot and as such, it is recommended that the Operations Committee members take time between now and May to undertake the reviews. These will be informed by officer reviews, NALC ‘model’ documents (e.g. Standing Orders, Financial Regulations) and up to date legislation and best practice. However, it is essential that members make time to look through, note any questions / queries / comments and that the content of the above is all agreed for submission prior to the annual meeting, where ratification takes place.

Proposal – 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.

The committee is also invited to consider whether there is any value in including other elements to the Annual Meeting(s) evening, to build engagement (if this is wanted). In recent years, the two meetings (the Annual Meeting of the Parish (NOT a council meeting as such) and the Annual Meeting of the Council) have taken place on the same night, one after the other. They have not been attended by members of the public and the committee may wish to make the evening more attractive by holding something more engaging.

Proposal – that the committee considers whether the Annual Meeting is an event that could / should be more engaging and if so, what they would like to see offered.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

The policies noted above are available via the website or, for councillors, via the shared folder included within the invite for this meeting.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Operations and Resources Committee – 12th February 2024

Agenda Item OC 95/24

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To update the committee on the review of the Asset Register, with a view to formal ratification in March 2024

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the committee notes this report and tasks the Council Manager and Senior Team with updating all aspects of the Asset Register.

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

The Asset Register is the overall document that details all 'assets' of the council. This should include all items that are valued at over £250, with smaller items grouped where appropriate (e.g. 'hand tools' within the landscaping team or 'craft equipment' within Youth).

The register should be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis, with additions and removals as and when they occur. However, in addition to this, is an annual review where this committee agrees that this is an accurate reflection of the councils' resources.

A brief review of the draft register (attached) suggests that there is some work to be done, with updating the resources that have been bought over the past year or so. This includes new vehicles, equipment and ensuring that the items noted remain valid and that costs are reflective of their value.

The register contributes to the internal and external audits, as well as the Annual Return.

Proposal: 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.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

This review will take some time but should be manageable within existing resources.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Draft Asset register 2024-25

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Woughton Community Council - Asset Register 2020/21

Landscaping	£89,664.00
Youth	£66,370.00
Environment	£22,175.00
HQ	£20,910.00
Community Food	£10,023.00
IT Stuff	£43,250.00
Community Venues	£13,810.00
Other	£33,900.00
Wellbeing Room	£1,675.00
Total	£300,102.00

24 January 2024

Scheme of Councillors' Allowances 2024/25

Report sponsor	Sharon Bridglalsingh Director for Law and Governance
Report authors	Peter Brown Head of Democratic Services Peter.brown@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Exempt / confidential / not for publication	No
Council Plan reference	Not in Council Plan
Wards affected	All

Executive summary

The Council operates a scheme of allowances for Councillors which was fully reviewed and agreed for the year 2022/23. It provides for indexation of allowances for the subsequent 4 years. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (the 2003 Regulations) require that before the beginning of each year, the scheme for the payment of (uprated) allowances, must be agreed for that year.

The adopted arrangements for annual indexation are based on the percentage pay award for officers in the preceding year. However, there were variable percentage rates in 2023/24 pay award; the 2023/24 pay settlement for officers was based on a flat rate for JNC pay scales and 3.88% for subsequent pay scales. Therefore, the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) met on 5 January 2023 to consider and recommend an approach to indexation for 2024/25. The IRP also considered a minor amendment to the scheme in relation to the advance payment of expenses in specific circumstances.

The Council is not bound by the recommendations of the IRP but must have regard to them when setting the rates of allowances for Councillors.

1. Proposed Decisions

- 1.1 That the recommendations of the IRP to index allowances by 4.48% be noted and agreed for 2024/25 only.
- 1.2 That the revised Scheme of Councillors' Allowances attached at **Annex A** to this report be agreed to take effect from 1 April 2024.
- 1.3 That the recommendations of the IRP that (where paid) Town, Parish and Community Councils, allowances should also be indexed by 4.48% for 2024/25 only, be noted.

2. Why is the Decision Needed?

- 2.1 Under the terms of 2003 Regulations, the Council is required, before the beginning of each year, to agree the scheme for the payment of basic allowance to each member of the authority for that year.
- 2.2 The scheme must also make provision for the following allowances if an authority intends to make such payments in respect of the year:
 - (a) special responsibility allowance;
 - (b) dependants' carers' allowance;
 - (c) travelling and subsistence allowance; and
 - (d) co-optes' allowance.

Indexation

- 2.3 Under the terms of 2003 Regulations, where utilising an allowance scheme with indexation, the Council is obliged to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel to review, comment and advise on the level of allowances paid to councillors at least every four years. The Council last appointed an Independent Remuneration Panel in summer / autumn 2021 and adopted its recommendations in January 2022 for the 2022/23 financial year.
- 2.5 It was not possible to index most allowances using the methodology previously agreed by Council utilising the percentage officer pay award for the previous year. This was because there was no single percentage pay settlement agreed for officers for 2023/24.
- 2.6 The Council's IRP met on 5 January 2024, to consider this issue. The recommendation of the Council's IRP was to uprate all allowances by 4.48 percent which is the median officer increase for 2023/24.
- 2.8 As the IRP has previously recommended that allowances for Town, Parish and Community Councils should be based on a percentage of MKCC basic allowances, the recommendation for Local Councils is that where paid, indexation should also be 4.48%. Each Local Council is however free to agree their own local arrangements having considered the IRP recommendations.
- 2.9 In line with the Council's decision to adopt the recommendations of the IRP in 2021/22 childcare costs will also be reimbursed in line with the real living wage of £12.00 from 1 April 2024.

Other changes

- 2.10 In agreement with the Leaders of Political Groups, the IRP was asked to provide a recommendation in respect of the advance payment of travel and subsistence costs by the Council, where hardship would be caused by a Councillor incurring the cost themselves and then claiming the expense back. The background to this change relates to the need for specific travel arrangements for disabled Councillors (such as disabled adapted taxis).

2.11 The IRP recommended an additional clause being added to the scheme of allowances, which provides for the advance payment of travel and subsistence costs on the basis of hardship, subject to:

- a) the authorisation of the Director of Law and Governance; and
- b) the reconciliation and publication (in line with legislative requirements) of expenses paid in advance, in the same way as other claimed expenses.

2.12 The additional clauses are set out at section 9 of the draft scheme (Annex A).

3. Implications of the decision

Financial	Y	Human rights, equalities, diversity	N
Legal	Y	Policies or Council Plan	N
Communication	Y	Procurement	N
Energy Efficiency	N	Workforce	N

a) Financial implications

The additional costs of indexation Allowances Scheme are provided for as part of the Council's draft budget for 2024/25.

b) Legal implications

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 make it a requirement to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel and for the Council to adopt a Scheme of Allowances for the forthcoming year by 1 April each year.

Under the terms of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council is required to take account of the recommendations of an independent panel before fixing its level of Councillors' Allowances.

c) Communication

The IRP's recommendation in respect of Parish, Town and Community Council's will be communicated to Clerks.

4. Alternative(s)

4.1 As the Council has a legal requirement to agree a scheme in advance of each municipal year it must do so. However, it could decide not to accept the recommended increase, agree an alternative increase / decrease or change, with the exception of the basic allowance, the allowances paid.

5. Timetable for implementation

5.1 The proposed scheme of councillor allowances, if adopted will come into force from 1 April 2024.

List of annexes

Annex A – Draft Scheme of Councillor Allowances 2024/2025