

## Woughton Community Council

### Operations & Resources Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023, 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, Donna Fuller, Luke Louis, Ruth McMillan, Deanna Norris, Alan Williamson

**Also present:**

Brian Barton (Committee & Member Services Officer)  
Steve McNay (Council Manager)  
Marta Sobis (Responsible Financial Officer)

**OC 60/23 Apologies:**

Cllr Penny Glasgow (unwell)  
Cllr D'Anne Mordecai (personal)

**AGREED**

**OC 61/23 Declarations of Interest:**

There were no declarations of interest.

**NOTED**

**OC 62/23 Chairs Announcements:**

The Chair thanked everyone who helped to make the Childrens Remembrance Service on Friday and the Remembrance Service on Sunday such a great success.

The Santa Sleigh Tour will take place on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023 on Beanhill at 5:00pm and Netherfield at 6:00pm.

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023 Peartree Bridge at 5:00pm and Eaglestone at 6.30pm.

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023 Coffee Hall at 6:00pm.

Leadenhall and Tinkers Bridge have chosen not to have the Santa sleigh tour as they are planning their own events.

Members were reminded about the MKALC conference on planning to be held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 10:00am to 4:00pm, at the Milton Keynes Christian Centre on Oldbrook.

**NOTED**

**OC 63/23 Questions from the public (Max. 10 minutes):**

There were no questions from the public.

**NOTED**

**OC 64/23 Minutes of the previous meeting:**

The minutes of the Operations & Resources Committee meeting held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023 Were **AGREED** as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

**OC 65/23 To agree the Terms of Reference for the internal audit:**

As part of the financial regulations and to ensure compliance with best practice, it is important that Woughton Community Council undertakes a regular review of the internal audit, the provider and the 'terms of reference'.

There is a 'checklist' in place which has been regularly reviewed, but a more formal policy, with agreement from council that everything is in place and working correctly is an essential element of this oversight.

Internal Audit is agreed in legislation and forms part of the overall governance and accountability elements of local government. This should include an annual agreement around the best audit provider (independent, suitably qualified, etc) and ensure that the systems in place are reflective of the operations, the regulations and exceeding best practice.

The Internal Audit Terms of Reference includes this, details the elements necessary and lays out the expectations of the auditor, the Responsible Financial Officer and others.

This will need to be reviewed annually and agreed at the Annual Meeting in future. It has previously been 'delegated' to the Operations & Resources Committee, as was agreed at the Annual Meeting held in May 2023.

It is recommended that in future, agreement for internal audit is agreed at the Annual Meeting.

It is also important that the overall financial processes of the council are reviewed, in line with the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners Guide (the JPAG). The checklist included within this guide are highlighted in the terms of reference.

It is recommended that the financial practices are reviewed annually, in line with the JPAG recommendations and that a report is provided to this committee and, in turn, to Full Council.

It is also important that regular reviews of all providers are undertaken and as such, it is also suggested that investigations are made into other internal audit providers. This is also useful as there is a concern amongst some in the sector that there is a lack of suitable providers. Given this, having an alternative and comparing options is a sensible action to take.

It is recommended that the Responsible Financial Officer investigate options for internal audit provision to ensure that procurement processes have different options and to ensure suitable provision can be provided in the event that Auditing Solutions are unable to provide in future.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the committee notes the report and Internal Audit Terms of Reference.
2. That the committee ratifies this as an agreed way of working.
3. That the committee agrees that the 'checklist' has been completed and all is in place.
4. That in future years, agreement on these Terms of Reference and agreement for auditing provision is agreed at the Annual Meeting.

**OC 66/23 To agree to reappoint Auditing Solutions to undertake the Internal Audit for the 2023 / 2024 financial year:**

It is recommended that for this financial year, that Auditing Solutions continue to be the internal auditing company that is used.

**RESOLVED**

**To agree to reappoint Auditing Solutions to undertake the Internal Audit for the 2023 / 2024 financial year.**

**OC 67/23 To note the content of the new Safeguarding leaflet:**

The leaflet has already been circulated to all Councillors and Officers, and is a good reference on the safeguarding process and how to report any issues, along with useful contact details.

**NOTED**

**OC 68/23 To consider the second draft of the 2024 / 2025 budget following from suggestions / ideas from the recent Councillors AwayDay:**

The committee was appraised of the additional budget amounts, which have been added since the last draft such as service plan delivery £20,000, emerging priorities £10,000, new neighbourhood plan £30,000, community centre improvements £50,000, which due to those additional budget figures creates a deficit of £139,930.14p, on a 5% precept increase, £105,509.95p on a 10% precept increase and £71,089.76p on a 15 % precept increase but will depend on the final agreed precept rise, therefore consideration will need to be made on what will be affordable.

The Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Grant from Milton Keynes City Council has increased slightly by £2,500, the council tax base is £2,552.79p, due to a lack of band d properties in the area which equates to a loss of £225,512.87p, due to most properties in the Woughton Community Council area falling in band a and band b the council tax will be going up slightly, the base precept will be £699,285.76p an increase of £12,000 from the last financial year based on a no increase in the precept, Milton Keynes City Council is proposing an empty home charge in the council tax but this has yet to be implemented as agreement is needed at a full council meeting.

There are considerable challenges to the budget and decisions will need to be made on possible savings, service levels and provision which can be afforded this was

discussed at the awayday, both the Responsible Financial Officer and Council Manager would recommend future surplus budgets.

**NOTED**

**OC 69/23 To update the committee on the responses from the budget consultation survey:**

The feedback so far suggests that all services provided are valued by residents, there have been good responses from all estates, the Community Fridge, the landscaping service, and community centres are the most popular along with the toy library, services most used by residents are the youth service, community centres and the community fridge, a resident had responded that services provided by Milton Keynes City Council should not be duplicated by Woughton Community Council.

Residents said they valued services such as the proposed mobile CCTV, dog & waste bins and community fridge, responding to planning applications / policies on residents behalf was not seen as such a high priority.

80% of residents preferred a medium increase of around £2.00p per week rise in the precept, the lowest response received was for a higher increase, although a resident responded that they were prepared to accept a higher increase if services such as for the youth were maintained.

The committee was made aware that a lot of residents will not respond to the consultation survey. So far only twenty four (24) responses have been received so far.

The survey will be online and in the Woughton Gazette which starts to be delivered to residents this week.

**NOTED**

**OC 70/23 To sign off all bank reconciliations, bank balances and lists for payment:**

The meeting agreed to the Chair signing off all bank reconciliations, bank balances and lists for payment, on behalf of the committee, and the Responsible Financial Officer will present to the Internal Auditor as part of the auditing process.

**NOTED**

**OC 71/23 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.**

The motion was moved by Cllr Sue Smith and seconded by Cllr Alan Williamson, and when put to the vote of the meeting was **AGREED**.

**OC 72/23 To consider various HR matters:**

The committee agreed that the Council Manager would continue to work around job roles and organisational structures, looking at priorities and strategic plans. The aim of this will be to ensure that the council responds to changes in delivery, changes in the communities it serves and to ensure that council delivery is fit for the future.

**NOTED**

**Date of next meeting:**

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023, 6:30pm at the Woughton Community Council Hub, 60, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, MK6 5EG.

**THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8:00PM**

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