

Woughton Community Council

Services & Communities Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 23rd November 2022, 6:30pm,
Woughton Community Council Hub, Council Chamber, 60, Garraways, Coffee
Hall, Milton Keynes, MK6 5EG.**

Present: Cllrs Nick Scott (Chair), Maggie Ferguson (Vice-Chair),
Jeanette Bobey, Penny Glasgow, Brian Hepburn, Ruth McMillan, John Orr,
Liz Simpkins, Alan Williamson, Pam Wilson.

Also present:

Brian Barton (Committee & Member Services Officer)
Tash Darling (Youth Manager/Safeguarding Lead)
Steve McNay (Council Manager)
Sean Perry (Community Services Manager)
Ian Tegerdine (Landscape Manager/Health & Safety Officer)

SC 44/22 Apologies:

Cllr Donna Fuller (meeting)
Cllr Amber McQuillan (unwell)
Cllr Sue Smith (meeting)

AGREED

SC 45/22 Declarations of Interest:

Cllr Pam Wilson in agenda item SC 49/22 as she is the Secretary to the Eaglestone Residents Association.

Cllr Pam Wilson also in agenda item SC 59/22 as she is a member of the Kevin Wilson Trust.

NOTED

SC 46/22 Questions from the public (maximum 10 minutes):

Cllr Alan Williamson – can, following requests from residents, a youth club be set up for the 13-16 age range on Beanhill?

The Youth Manager responded that there is youth service provision on Beanhill between 3:30pm-5:00pm every Tuesday, for those in the age range that was mentioned, they are not coming out to attend youth clubs at the moment due to the dark evenings.

The youth service cannot commit at present, due to a service review and is not in a position to change present provision.

The Moorlands Centre does have a youth club, there are no buildings on Beanhill that provides access after 5:00pm which would be a challenge to hold additional youth club sessions.

Cllr Brian Hepburn said that there was some discussion at a previous meeting about looking into the groups that use the centre.

The Youth Manager further said that she will be led by Councillor decisions and subject to budget provision

The Moorlands Family Centre is managed by Milton Keynes Council and their youth club is dependent on receiving grants to be able to run the service, and they are doing their best.

Cllr Alan Williamson said that he will feedback this information to residents.

NOTED

SC 47/22 Chairs announcements:

The Chair informed the meeting that 600 children had attended the remembrance service parade event on Coffee Hall, thanks was expressed to Officers for all their hard work.

NOTED

SC 48/22 Minutes of previous meetings:

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 19th October 2022 were **AGREED** as a true and correct record and was signed by the Chair.

Communities and Environment Fund Application(s)

SC 49/22 Eaglestone Residents Association:

Application received for £500 for prizes and refreshments for the Santa Sleigh event.

RESOLVED

To award £250 for prizes and refreshments for the Santa Sleigh event.

Reports

SC 50/22 To note the following Evaluation Forms:

- (a) Coffee Hall Residents Association – Trip to Brighton
- (b) Friends of Moorlands – Trip to Brighton

The meeting noted the challenge of providing meals especially on a long coach journey, it was suggested that the Community Café and Fridge could assist with Residents Association trips along with the provision of cool boxes, which can be accessed by the Youth Service as well, the Chair said he can provide cool boxes, Cllr Brian Hepburn said he will let the Moorlands Centre know.

- (c) Tinkers Bridge Residents Association – Halloween Events

NOTED

SC 51/22 To advise the Committee on the temporary closure of the Coffee Hall Meeting Place and proposed alternatives to continue service delivery:

On Monday 9th January 2023, an alarm system is being fitted in the Coffee Hall Meeting Place. This means there can be no services running there between Monday 9th January 2023 and Friday 13th January 2023. Specifically, this affects:

Community Café sessions on Tuesday 10th January 2023 and Thursday 12th January 2023.

Community larder on Wednesday 11th January 2023.

Job Club on Wednesday 11th January 2023.

Any wellbeing/advice sessions normally held in the wellbeing room.

The Community Larder can easily be relocated to the chambers for one session, with the only consideration being the need to temporarily install the glass fronted fridge there.

The Community Café cannot easily be moved into the chambers. Cooking facilities are very limited compared to the Coffee Hall Meeting Place, and there is much less room for café users to sit. This means that it will be impractical to hold normal café sessions in the chambers for the period when the Coffee Hall Meeting Place is closed.

Job Club can be paused for one (1) session.

Wellbeing/advice sessions can be moved to the chambers for the duration.

The simplest option would be to suspend the café sessions for the Tuesday and Thursday sessions. This will affect the thirty five (35) users that access the café on average per session.

Alternatively it is possible to offer a simpler takeaway menu. The most likely option would be jacket potatoes, which are easy to cook in large batches and can be served in disposable containers. However, this does incur some cost much more than would normally be spent on ingredients for an entire month's café sessions.

Costs may be reduced if the right ingredients are accessed through the Community Fridge in the time leading up to the closure, but this cannot be guaranteed.

Cllr Pam Wilson suggested approaching Christ the Vine Church on Coffee Hall as an alternative venue, the Community Development Manager said that he will contact the church to see if they would be willing to help with accommodating the Community Café sessions.

The Committee will be updated at a future meeting on how the arrangements worked out.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Committee notes the report.**

2. That the Committee considers the cost of running a takeaway service for the duration of the café closure.
3. That the Community Development Manager to approach the Christ the Vine Church with the possibility of using this venue for Community Café sessions.
4. That the committee to be updated at a future meeting on how the arrangements worked out.

SC 52/22 To inform the committee of a proposal from Stacey Bushes Meeting Place:

Stacey Bushes Meeting Place LTD had written to the Council Manager offering to provide a service managing the meeting places.

This matter was brought to the committee for members consideration.

After some discussion the meeting's view was not to proceed with the offer.

RESOLVED

1. That the committee notes the report.
2. That the committee's view is not to proceed with the Stacey Bushes Meeting Place LTD's offer to manage the meeting place's.

SC 53/22 To provide an overview of the Community Centres, compliance issues, repairs and maintenance challenges and usage:

Woughton Community Council provides four (4) community centres and, following recent agreements, two other rentable spaces (Chambers at the Hub and No 95, Jonathans, Coffee Hall).

There has been significant recent work undertaken following the discovery that many of the meeting places did not have up to date servicing records, in some cases haven't had essential servicing undertaken and, as a result, did not comply with all relevant legislation. This has included:

- Asbestos checks being undertaken on all seven buildings (should be redone every five (5) years)
- Gas checks on all buildings (will be needed annually)
- Electrical installation checks being prepared for all meeting places (on a five (5) yearly cycle)
- Water checks being prepared for all meeting places (every three (3) years)
- Air conditioning tests on Coffee Hall Meeting Place (the only one with air con!)
- Visual checks on all glazing, buildings, etc (annually)
- Review of risk assessments, fire safety checks, etc. (annually)
- Servicing of other elements (e.g. alarm systems, door openers, etc.) should also be considered. There is already a servicing contract in place for fire systems and equipment.

This has cost a significant amount of money (approximately £2,500) and will continue to be an additional pressure, there is around a further £5,000-£6,000 that will be spent on the final compliance checks and then additional annual charges to ensure that these are maintained. The costs of installation of the fire system in the Coffee Hall Meeting Place are also still to be paid. It is expected that around £500

per year extra will be needed to ensure that these areas are maintained and compliance met in future (varying year on year).

Additionally, the meeting places are starting to fail in key areas, Netherfield and No 95, Jonathans, Coffee Hall have both required new boilers over the past couple of months, Eaglestone and Tinkers Bridge will both need works within the kitchens soon and the toilets in the Coffee Hall Meeting Place need to be replaced. Whilst there is a plan in place to update and upgrade, getting quotes for this work has been a real challenge.

The meeting places as a whole are exceeding the budget for income this year, with the original budget being £40,000 in income. The income at present stands at £45,200, with a £60,000 revised budget a realistic expectation.

Expenditure is also exceeding the budget, some of this is to do with one off costs (such as the roof at Tinkers Bridge Meeting Place, fire system at the Netherfield Meeting Place, fencing for the wall, etc.) but is also likely to include additional costs relating to the utilities and, for some, the level of maintenance costs (for example Eaglestone Activity Centre has a £2,000 budget and has, at present, spent £3,300). This means that despite the additional income, the meeting places continue to be subsidised heavily.

A good example of this is the Netherfield Meeting Place. At present there is an income of almost £10,000 against the annual budget of the same, exceeding the budget with a quarter of the year remaining. An optimistic estimate is that year end will have an income of around £14,000.

Direct costs allocated to the Netherfield Meeting Place at this point are over £15,000 (not including staffing), repairs are needed, with a fire system, fencing for the damaged wall, etc. The budget is £8,900, so already £6,000 over budget, with three (3) months remaining. Whilst all known major costs are now covered (excepting the compliance elements), this shows the impact of ageing buildings and making good.

Tinkers Bridge Meeting Place is in a similar position, with significant repairs undertaken. The Coffee Hall Meeting Place and the Eaglestone Activity Centre are currently about right, but additional costs are coming (for example the fire system in the Coffee Hall Meeting Place).

Some of the investment will, it is expected, help reduce some costs, the new boiler at the Netherfield Meeting Place (currently gas spend for 2022/2023 is £1,269) will be more efficient and 'nest' controlled, meaning heating can be managed remotely, in line with bookings. Some investment is necessary for compliance and some is simply things that happens (for example the fencing at the Netherfield Meeting Place to provide protection for the damaged wall).

Removing the exceptional costs of roof repairs, fire systems and the back log of compliance issues, the income and expenditure is about balanced, until staffing is considered. Budgeting for this is questionable, the budget preparation work includes, for example, 50% of the bookings and reception officer (BRO) costs due to their role in managing the community centre provision. With this included and with pension

and 'on costs' also part of the equation, staffing costs for community centres is around £60,000. Again, there is no additional cost allocated for management, insurance, IT, phones, etc within this, which probably add a further 15-20% on overall costs.

The total allocated budget for meeting places for 2023/2024 is around £132,000 with a budgeted income of £65,000 around 50% subsidy.

The meeting places are used at no cost for a variety of projects such as the Community Cafes, Larders, Fridges, these costs are not incorporated in the figures in the budget.

Increasing use of the meeting places is going to be key in terms of future development and sustainability and ideas around how this might happen would be welcome.

It was suggested to advertise for contractors to undertake the refurbishments to the meeting places.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the committee notes the report.**
- 2. That the committee considers any additional steps that can be taken to increase usage of the centres.**
- 3. That the committee continues to receive updates on usage and costs on a quarterly basis.**

SC 54/22 To update the committee on preparations for any extension of the landscape contract, equipment, depot and similar:

The current landscape contract is due to expire on 31st March 2023, Woughton Community Council are currently contracted to deliver services until that date.

Milton Keynes City Council have said that due to delays in getting new contracts in place, they would like to extend the current contract until end of September 2023, with the 'new' contract then commencing on 1st October 2023.

There will be day to day spending, such as the renewal of hand tools, but these tools are all relatively new having been replaced following the series of burglaries at the Fishermead depot and other spending is limited. Other costs will be fuel, servicing, repairs, uniforms, training, etc. all of which will be around the same amount as is currently budgeted for (£18,000 in total per year).

The new depot is likely to reduce running costs, both in terms of rental (currently paying £3,600 in rent, plus an annual rates bill of £1,870) and additional running costs (fuel, etc.). However, this will also need investment 'up front', £25,000 has been allocated within the current budget and some additional contributions have been awarded from CIL grant funding (for flood equipment and storage).

After some discussion the Council Manager will investigate what the laws are regarding tree maintenance.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the committee notes the report.**

2. That the committee considers any approach that it feels appropriate in terms of delivering any additional landscaping contract
 - a. Investment in equipment and infrastructure
 - b. 'Paying back' or subsidising contractual amounts
3. That the council manager continues to update both this committee and, where appropriate, Full Council, as decisions are made by Milton Keynes City Council with regard to extensions or agreements for any delivery post March 2023.
4. That any other considerations that have not been covered in this report are raised for deliberation.
5. That the Council Manager will investigate what the laws are regarding tree maintenance.

SC 55/22 To update the committee on the Community Garden and multipurpose Depot:

There are two individual, but linked, proposals for land use within Coffee Hall; the Community Growing space and the Multi use depot.

Community Garden

This piece of land had now been fully transferred the land is now owned by Woughton Community Council. A planning submission has been made, this is a 'Certificate of Lawfulness' application, covering fencing, a log cabin, composting toilet, etc. Whilst there are some queries regarding vehicular access to this site (due to needing to cross pavements / pathways), these are not essential to the operation of the site and were included primarily due to the previous idea of having the Landscape depot within that site. This is no longer the case and as such, no vehicular access is required, other than occasional access which is granted via the Landscape contract allowances. There is no proposal to allow public vehicular access.

The second piece of land is the proposed 'depot' site. This aims to include the Landscape service (if this is continued), as well as a multi-purpose space to house environmental services (e.g. dog waste bin servicing, tool library maintenance and storage) and help to be able to develop new services, such as the 'Library of Things', 'geeks in sheds' and other related support. This will provide an 'on parish' base for the landscape team (currently in unsuitable premises off parish) which ensures that a suitable work base is provided, including drying facilities, rest area, storage and secure 'charging' for battery equipment (plus EVIE). The intention is to utilise solar to minimise costs and environmental impact, with battery storage.

The depot will also include the flood equipment storage for the parish, Woughton Community Council has been awarded funding towards this, including the 'storage' unit and equipment provision. This money needs to be spent within the financial year and therefore moving forward quickly with this provision is essential. It would be recommended that the flood group consider what equipment they feel is a priority and these can be obtained / ordered for delivery as and when there is suitable storage in place.

There have been significant delays with both of these proposals. The transfer of the land took almost a year and the lease arrangement for the depot has been a similar length of time. With planning then added on the end of this, this has meant that these two areas have taken considerably longer, considerably more officer resource and the delays have, potentially, led to monies being lost (although it is hoped that this will not be the case).

The Council Manager continues to liaise with the relevant Milton Keynes City Council directorates, the Woughton Community Council legal firm and other officers to prioritise and support these issues being resolved in the timeliest way possible. This will continue, with planning for the community garden now submitted and expected within the next few weeks and the planning for the depot ready to go as soon as the formal transfer takes place.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the committee notes the report.**
- 2. That the Landscape and Environment Manager continue to work to develop plans and proposals, including any further work on the National Lottery grant.**
- 3. That these plans are ready to enact as soon as planning permission is granted on both sites.**
- 4. That the flood group considers the equipment that would be helpful to have on parish so this can also be obtained for storage once in place.**

SC 56/22 To provide an overview of the Community Payback team:

The Community Payback Team provide additional support around the area by undertaking low level repairs, maintenance, landscaping, and improvement works.

The Community Payback Team can offer services within the area due to Woughton Community Council providing space for them to work from, following the recent changes as a result of the pandemic, they have been unable to travel within the area and as such, have needed to work within walking distance of whichever base is provided. With meeting places becoming more booked, finding space has become harder, with No 95, Jonathans, Coffee Hall being utilised over recent weeks.

The Community Payback Team have predominantly been working within Coffee Hall, due to the issues with halls and travel. The focus has been on small landscaping tasks (cutting back, tidying up, painting raised beds, etc.). It is anticipated that the team will be obtaining a new van and with updated covid management, will enable a wider, whole area approach.

The new depot / community growing space will provide further options for the team to have a base from which to work, they are also involved in the creation of these spaces through the clearance and preparation of the land.

In addition, the Community Payback Team will be using the Council Chamber at the Hub on Wednesday mornings for induction sessions that will be starting on November 30th. Probation services will be doing the inductions of one (1) or two (2) people, then going out with a supervisor afterwards to do good works. Probation will be paying a nominal fee (agreed with everyone necessary) to cover utilities etc.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the committee notes this report.**
- 2. That the Community Payback Team continue to be supported to work on parish, through provision of space and facilities.**
- 3. That the committee is encouraged to offer ideas for activities for the Community Payback Team to undertake.**

SC 57/22 To update the committee and resident representatives on the questions posed at Full Council regarding the recent grant application from the Beanhill Residents Association:

Following a grant application being submitted to this committee in October, where the committee decided to make only a partial award, several residents from Beanhill attended the Full Council meeting to pose questions and queries regarding this decision and, alongside Cllr Hepburn, one of the ward councillors of Beanhill, questioned the process, fairness and transparency of the grant awarding system. The questions posed included:

1. Why was the funding not awarded to the Beanhill Residents Association for the Christmas meal
 - a. Why was no information provided about the meal being open to all in the parish?
 - b. Why were the wrong costings provided?
2. Are other areas of the parish subsidising coach trips, specifically the Coffee Hall Residents Association trip that was agreed at the same meeting?
3. Was it appropriate for members of the committee to use the phrase 'begging letters'?
4. Can Woughton Community Council provide details of all monies awarded to Beanhill over the past five years.
5. Queries were also raised regarding the role of the Community Services Manager, where it was suggested that they had failed to provide the information necessary for the committee to make a decision.

Whilst it was not possible for these queries to be addressed in Full Council (both because this was a Services & Communities Committee decision and the questions from the public session related primarily to items on the agenda of the meeting they are posed at), following these issues being raised, the Council Manager reviewed the meeting, the minutes, the papers provided to the committee and, in conjunction with the Committee and Member Services Officer, was able to get a breakdown of funding provided each year. The responses to the specific questions posed are:

1. The meeting review suggests that the funding was awarded in part, with queries specifically around the funding of 'sweets' £319 in total, with a £200 request for Woughton Community Council to fund. This was the element that led to the conversation, the proposal to pay a lesser amount and encouragement to look at alternative ways of funding. The specific minute relating to this is SC 38/22. This details the reasons why the amount offered was reduced to half, encouraging the applicant to look at alternative sources of funding as well as the Communities & Environment fund from Woughton Community Council. The information relating to the application was provided in full to the committee, including an 'overview' report and the application form

(with confidential information withheld). The statement '*All Beneficences Will be from the Woughton Parish*' was part of this. The costings provided were based upon the numbers and budget given. Attendance was estimated at 'between 50-100', with the application requesting £460 and full cost being just under £650. The figures stated in the application provided suggested that the cost would be 'between £6.50 - £13.00 per attendee', this is based on the full cost of the project and is accurate. If based on the application amount only, this cost would reduce but would not then be accurate in terms of a 'cost per head'. It should also be noted that the cover report stated that the application was for '*approximately 70% of the cost, with the remainder being funded by themselves*'. This is the wording that has been used in other application cover notes, with a percentage amount being noted.

2. The issue of 'subsidy' is hard to answer as all taxation and spend from taxation benefits some more than others. In terms of the panel and spending, there has previously been a system in place which allocated a fixed amount of funding per estate, based upon population, deprivation and other considerations. This was withdrawn as the view of the committee was that 'whole parish' approaches were preferred, especially where projects were fully funded from the Communities & Environment Fund.
3. The use of the phrase 'begging letters' was discussed within the Full Council meeting where it was explained that this is 'shorthand' for asking for donations. Whilst the phrase may be considered unsuitable, the meaning behind it (i.e. trying to ensure best value, gather support from other places and gain greater reach and impact through the use of donations) is one that is supported. It is believed that the committee members involved will consider use of language in future, whilst acknowledging that no harm or disrespect was intended.
4. A breakdown of all grant funding over the past five (5) years has been provided and circulated to members.
5. The role of the Community Services Manager is to ensure that the application has been completed fully, that all relevant paperwork has been provided and that the application meets the policy set and dictated by the Services & Communities Committee. As an addition, a 'cover sheet' is included within the papers pack that gives an overview of the application. This cover sheet doesn't go into detail or offer any recommendation but supports the inclusion of the full application form. In conclusion there is no evidence to suggest the Community Services Manager was at fault as all the correct information was provided for Members perusal.

Whilst Woughton Community Council encourages participation at meetings with its residents' asking questions and challenging Members and Officers respectfully, to ensure residents have their questions answered on the night of the meeting it would be useful for all to know that:

- Written questions sent to the Council Manager at least 48 hours before the start of the meeting, will assist in collating all the information together and in

most cases a response which can be read out for consideration at the meeting.

- Questions posed at meetings that are not part of the agenda are unlikely to be able to be answered and as set out in legislation, decisions regarding issues not on the agenda are not possible.

Cllr Brian Hepburn said that residents were unhappy with the process and decision which did not seem to be fair, when compared to awards given to other resident associations, and the way information was presented, and gave a background to the figures as in the application form.

The committee preferred to go back to the previous formula for when considering funding applications.

The Chair encouraged groups to submit their applications in plenty of time, so that if any details need clarifying or is missing this can be corrected before going to the committee, the Community Development Manager can help advise any applicants on how to fill in the application form, this situation has been a learning curve.

The Council Manager welcomed a discussion on the decision making process for applications, including a formula, to be agreed at a future meeting.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the committee notes the report.**
- 2. That the information relating to the grant awarding process is shared with all Residents Association's to remind them of the expectations and agreements.**
- 3. That councillors and residents are reminded that questions and queries can be sent outside of the meeting process if concerns or queries arise.**
- 4. That this committee considers whether any further changes to the process, paperwork or demands on officers should be made, or whether the current system is sufficient.**

SC 58/22 To update the committee of the development of a new LGBTQ+ Youth Service in Milton Keynes:

Historically Q Alliance have been hosted by Woughton Community Council in order to enable Woughton LGBTQ+ young people to have better access to support services. The service was funded by Q Alliance Milton Keynes and up until June 2022, was offering the core youth group for ages 13-17 years, (a junior group for ages 8-12 for a one (1) year pilot period) and a Senior group for vulnerable young adults from the community aged 18-25 years. In June 2022, Q Alliance Milton Keynes ceased the delivery of the senior group, which was a particular blow to Woughton youth as 100% of the attendees were residents.

Noting the loss to the Woughton youth, the Woughton Community Council Youth Manager sought other options to continue to meet the needs of these identified vulnerable young adults. The existing team committed to develop a constituted community group, which they would work for as volunteers in order to enable continuation of support.

Following the news that Q Alliance would be closing all their Youth services and that all youth staff positions would be deleted, this group has decided to step up further and look to offer the core youth group sessions as soon as possible, following closure to ensure minimal disruption in service or support.

RESOLVED

1. That the committee notes the report.
2. That the committee is informed of the nature, structure, aims and objectives of the group.
3. That the committee considers whether they would like to host the group in the parish under a Service Level Agreement.

SC 59/22 To note the report by Milton Keynes City Council on the Woughton Library on Netherfield:

RESOLVED

To defer this agenda item.

SC 60/22 To discuss the 2023/2024 Service Plan:

RESOLVED

To defer this agenda item.

SC 61/22 To discuss the review of services and user engagement:

RESOLVED

To defer this agenda item.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 21st December 2022, 6:30pm, at the Woughton Community Council Hub, Council Chamber, The Local Centre, 60, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, MK6 5EG.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8:37 PM

Chair _____ Date _____