

Agenda item: FC 256/21

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 8th February 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the council on Eaglestone Activity Centre and the proposed transfer to Woughton Community Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That council notes this report.**
- 2. That the Council Manager / Operations Manager arrange for a full and complete survey of the building, ensuring any outstanding issues are identified and any significant costs are considered.**
- 3. That the Operations Manager continues to work with MKC to manage the existing repairs and ensure they are completed.**
- 4. That a further report is provided to Council based upon the outcome of the survey, costs evaluation, proposed use and similar, prior to any agreement with MKC about any transfer.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Eaglestone Activity Centre has been proposed as a centre that could be transferred to WCC under the Community Asset Transfer programme. The current proposal is a 99-year lease, with full repairing obligations placed on WCC. This is something that has been under discussion for over 3 years and the draft 'Heads of Terms' has now been issued.

When this suggestion was first made, there were concerns about the state of the centre with a view that the costs of getting it up to a decent standard would be prohibitive. Since then, MKC have undertaken some remedial work, with replacement toilets upstairs, refurbishment of the main entrance hall and some additional work to repair damage following the floods in May 2018. However, there are some outstanding issues – the squash court remains affected by damp, the heating system continues to cause concern and there are some continuing challenges with the children's toilets and hot water system. We continue to work with MKC to address these issues and ensure that these are addressed and resolved prior to any agreement.

There is additional work that will be needed to bring the centre up to standard across the board – whilst the majority of the building and surrounds appears to be in reasonable condition, the bottom storey changing rooms are in need of significant work, which is likely to cost significant sums (although grant funding may be possible, especially if linked to re-opening the squash courts).

A full survey, covering all essential elements and providing a detailed and full report is anticipated to cost between £600 - £1000. It can be undertaken relatively quickly, once agreed. This will form the basis of any further recommendations to council with regard to this building and its future with WCC.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

At this time, the cost of a survey is the only cost – as noted above, up to £1000 should be allocated for this.

Financial implications in the future are considerable and should be considered fully. The building is approx. 40 years old, has not been updated and maintained as well as it could have been and could become a significant drain on resources if not effectively managed. Given this, a full report and plan for future use, with costings, is essential.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None noted currently.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Heads of Terms Eaglestone Community Centre v2 (003).

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager



HEADS OF TERMS PROPOSED LEASE

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|------------------------------------|--|
| Premises: | Eaglestone Community Centre & Play Area Harrier Court Milton Keynes MK6 5BZ |
| Landlord: | Milton Keynes Council Civic Offices Saxon Gate East Milton Keynes MK9 3EJ |
| Tenant: | Woughton Community Council 33-37 Farthing Grove Netherfield Milton Keynes MK6 4JH |
| Rent: | £1 per annum if demanded |
| Rent Deposit | Not Applicable |
| Guarantor/Surety: | Not Applicable |
| Term: | 99 years |
| Break Options: | Landlord redevelopment break on 12 months notice |
| Security of Tenure: | The lease is to be contracted out of the security of tenure provisions of the Landlord & Tenant Act 1954 |
| Rent Reviews: | None |
| Sub-letting and assignment: | Assignment, as a whole permitted with landlords consent only to a successor authority or organisations provide community use subject to landlord consent Subletting of part permitted with landlords consent The tenant will be permitted to allow organisations to rent space within the premises providing they can demonstrate that they are offering a service to the community on a not for profit basis. The tenant must inform the landlord of all organisations using the building, prior to their use, and the terms of their use. Provided a landlord and tenant |

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|---|--|
| | relationship is not created in the event tenancy arrangement is to be created the Landlord is to be notified. |
| Service charge: | Yes |
| Statutory Compliance. | The tenant will be responsible for complying with all statutory requirements, including but not limited to health and safety, planning, food hygiene (if applicable) PAT etc. |
| Repairs & Decoration: | Full Repairing Lease Tenant Responsible for all works The tenant is responsible for all repairs to the building and for maintaining internal and external decoration. For the avoidance of doubt this will include the external play area/court and all boundary features. |
| Alterations: | Internal non-structural Permitted External and structural alterations will require landlord consent. Licence for Alterations will be required. |
| Permitted Use: | D1 Community use and ancillary offices. |
| Insurance: | Landlord to insure building and recover in part from the tenant Tenant to have Contents Insurance, Business Insurance and Liability Insurance |
| Rates/Utilities/other outgoings: | Tenant |
| Other terms: | As per the lease. Inform the landlord of the emergency key holder Ensure that safeguarding policies and processes are in place for all children and young people using the building |
| Rights reserved: | TBC |
| Rights granted: | TBC |
| Costs: | Tenant to pay Council Legal fees and Surveyors Fees in the region of £1,500 plus vat where applicable. |
| Conditions: | Subject to Formal Council Approval |
| Landlord's Solicitors: | Legal Services Civic Milton Keynes Council Saxon Gate East Milton Keynes MK9 3EJ |
| Tenant's Solicitors: | TBC |
| Tenants Acceptance: | |

Agenda item: FC 257/21

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 8th February 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To provide proposed responses to Priorities and Budget Consultation feedback, as agreed previously.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That council notes the report.**
- 2. That council agrees to an article in the next edition of 'The Gazette' that includes these responses to comments made.**
- 3. That the article also includes an 'easy read' explanation of precepts, budgets and the process that agreed these for 2021/22.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

As part of the Priorities and Budget consultation, there are opportunities for people to add comments, ask questions or make suggestions on how we might proceed. Some of these are simply 'nothing more to say' or 'keep up the good work', but some are more detailed or ask pertinent questions about activities or actions we might take for the betterment of the parish.

This year there were many comments which covered a wide range of issues. As discussed at the previous Full Council meeting, it is recommended that there is a response to these comments published in the next edition of the Gazette, showing that we have listened to and acted upon the feedback.

In addition, it was suggested that we provide an 'easy read' explanation of the budget, the precept, the process that was undertaken to agree and set these for the coming year to inform people of the difficult decisions and reasons behind them.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

None noted.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None noted.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None noted.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Proposed article for The Gazette – March 2021.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

Proposed article for The Gazette – March 2021

Following the Priorities and Budget Consultation that took place over December 2020, residents made a number of comments regarding the things that they would like to see happen. These included some suggestions for priority actions, some comments about the activities that are provided and some more general comments around the council and what we do.

We have tried to respond to as many as possible below – some of these answers are in response to more than one resident, as some issues came up on a number of occasions (e.g. fly tipping, rats, community activities) and some comments have been edited due to space or accuracy.

We would love to hear your views throughout the year and have created an online form where you can offer suggestions whenever you want to – we hope that this will mean more people can contribute and have a say in how we, YOUR council, can help support the communities of Woughton.

Are there other things that you would like to see Woughton Community Council provide or is there any feedback you would like to offer?

Informal co-ordination - ensure people on different estates can link and learn from each other.

We hold regular Resident Association Forums, where the resident representatives from each estate have a chance to meet, discuss ideas and work together. These sessions have been held 'online' this year, but we hope to be back 'face to face' in 2021.

Better drainage

We continue to work with the Flood Resilience Forum to look at ways that flooding and drainage can be better across the parish. This has included work towards a Community Flood Plan, discussions around practical elements that will help reduce flooding and flood damage and we continue to work with MK Council to address the areas that flood regularly. Please do keep reporting and issues.

Some kind of group of really young children that could make visits to the sheltered housing around Woughton. It has proven to be good for young and more mature minds to socialise with each other in many places. Maybe a group of 3-6 years olds that could go on 'play dates'. I think it would be lovely because a lot of the older members of our community don't get the chance to socialise with the younger generations and it teaches respect to younger members of the community.

This is a lovely idea and one that we will look at in the coming year.

More support for disabled people and those with long term conditions. Also, when it is safe to do so, support and advice for people needing to do disability benefits forms and advice and support with tribunals etc which I would be more and willing to help with. Also increase the disabled accessibility within the estates. Not enough drop curbs or in the right place

The Woughton Advice Service can help with disability forms (alongside a whole range of other issues) and we have continued to provide this throughout the pandemic, using online and phone. Anyone who is able to offer help would be very welcome indeed, especially once we are back to normal.

Drop curbs is an issue for Highways at MK Council, but we are happy to collect a list of the areas where there are issues and push for urgent works where needed.

Proper plan to get rid of rats (this was mentioned a number of times) and better management of fly tipping.

We are working with MKC to develop options for pest management – this includes rats, better waste management (which causes rats), work with households to address issues with storage and rubbish and trial some ‘whole terrace’ approaches to see if we can get rid and then keep rid of rats.

Fly tipping is an issue across the city and here in Woughton, we know that there are some places which get constantly used as ‘dump sites’. This is a blight on our community and shows a total disregard for local people. Whilst we have seen some successes with people being prosecuted, we need stronger penalties and a more robust approach to waste from those with enforcement powers. Unfortunately, as a parish council, we are unable to provide enforcement officers but our Environment Team work closely with MKC to gather evidence for prosecutions, offer education and advice to residents and report any issues as they become aware of them.

I would like some help in requesting the council to consider adding parking bays on the houses along Phoenix Drive in Leadenhall or widen the road. This will help alleviate the traffic system due to the traffic from three big academic institutions. The buses struggle to move along the bend towards the Sikh temple. All houses have more than one car so it's hard to drive along this road without tucking in and out to give way.

This is an issue for MK Council Highways Department, but we think that this is unlikely due to the huge costs of this type of work. We have explored getting more parking enforcement onto the parish to try and stop people parking inconsiderately / illegally and will continue to push for this.

In landscaping, is there funds for more benches - some of us can't walk very far.

This is certainly something that we can look at – we will talk to our Resident Associations about this and see if there are places that would benefit from an extra bench.

Community spirit is really important. Gives people pride in where they live and be kinder to each other and help out more.

We agree. It has been great to see just how much Woughton steps up when times are tough – during the first lockdown, groups sprang up all over the parish, offering help and support. We want to try and carry this on into the future and will be working to develop some estate-based activities and groups, alongside the whole parish events and activities that people have missed so much.

The Santa parade was a great example of where community spirit was shining through and we have already started work to make sure every estate gets this in 2021. We hope that we will be able to get some events happening over the summer / autumn but are very much looking forward to 2022 as the year that everything gets back to 'normal'.

I do think pride needs to be brought back to Woughton as we are looking very tired.

Our Landscape and Environment Team, alongside resident associations and other community groups, are eager to see some of the 'tired' areas given some love. We have seen the difference it can make with the 'Ashby' project on Eaglestone, the community gardens on Netherfield and Beanhill, the fantastic environment team from Tinkers Bridge Residents Association – it shows what a change can come from a small group of committed people.

Woughton is somewhere to be very proud of – we are the oldest part of the 'New City' and it is fair to say that some places are looking 50 years old (or even slightly more). But at the heart is a parish with some wonderful green spaces, some fantastic public art, fabulous communities and huge potential. We would welcome your ideas about what we could do to reinvigorate some areas and for some, with the 'Estate Renewal' still being discussed, there are opportunities for some real change to take place.

I'm slightly astonished you don't have some savings that could be used to help balance your budget. I'm sure WCC did have some money put by a few years ago in case the old offices needed major renovation.

Whilst Woughton does have some savings, the new offices DID need full renovation, so maybe not as much as was thought. During 2020, we have lost around £100,000 from community centre rentals and faced some additional costs with equipment, PPE and so on. Whilst we have some 'savings' (or reserves), they are below a 'safe' level, as suggested by our governing body and will reduce further with the losses from this year.

We also have a reduction in 2021/22 due to fewer people paying council tax – this led to a reduction in income of around £35,000 for the coming year, if we hadn't increased the precept. The increase agreed is enough for us to stay at the same level as last year, despite increased costs. This is because of the efficiencies that we have made and will continue to try and find over the coming months and years.

As residents we have little power over our own homes/streets. The council went ahead with installing a communications mast despite a lot of opposition with concerns about health and house values. There sure was money to be made out of this at our cost and funding will still be cut. That's disgusting.

This is a Milton Keynes Council issue – the mast is part of the 5G rollout and is placed on MK Council Land. Woughton Community Council met with residents and supported their objections to this mast. And we can assure you, we didn't make any money from this either!

We need fairer distribution of services between estates. Peartree Bridge receives very little compared to other estates, so why should our costs be increased? WCC wastes a huge amount on services not used or needed by our residents. We need regular estate inspections and action on problem houses and litter which have been neglected for 30 years.

We are sorry that you feel we waste money on our services that aren't used by Peartree Bridge residents. Unfortunately, there are some challenges with providing everything on every estate, especially those estates which don't have a community building. We did provide weekly sessions on Peartree over the summer this year, making use of the trailer (which was bought for this reason) and hope that we will be able to continue with this in the coming years.

In terms of problem houses, there are options under anti-social behaviour rules where houses can be 'shut down' – this sits with MKC and Thames Valley Police, but we would be happy to work with you on this if you contact us.

Litter is not covered by Woughton – again, this is part of your MKC Council Tax. We did collect and remove around 25 sacks of rubbish from PB over the summer and would love to continue to support residents who feel strongly through regular litter picks and similar.

Pensioners like me who are paying no Council tax should be required to pay a small amount. It is unfair to other payers that we pay nothing.

This is a national decision – if you feel that you would like to support your community, then we would encourage you to consider donations to a local charity. But thank you!

Landscaping in Eaglestone needs improvement as it looks awful currently. Eaglestone Park needs to be maintained. Park behind Hawkmoor Close in Eaglestone is in bad shape. We pay full council tax but the service we get against the money we pay is not fair. Please request landscape manager to manage Eaglestone Park properly. Weeds and grass are not cut along the pavement. Streets are not cleaned as it is expected to be.

We are sorry that you feel that the landscaping isn't up to scratch. We have been working with the Residents Association on Eaglestone to try and highlight the areas that need work and, where we can, undertaking this. We will continue to make improvements and make

changes where we can. Please note that street cleaning doesn't fall under the landscape contract – this is MK Council.

Agenda item: FC 258/21

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Full Council

Monday 8th February 2021

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update the council on preparations for the elections scheduled for May 2021.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That council notes the report and associated document.**
- 2. That council agrees that if elections take place, that WCC Meeting Places can be used as Polling Stations.**
- 3. That council agrees to publicity around postal voting and registering for this be shared from WCC online accounts.**
- 4. That the Council Manager returns to council with any update in the event that the government changes their mind and elections DON'T take place, including the impact on WCC.**

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Central government has stated that they are planning on going ahead with elections in May, despite the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. This has been supported by NALC.

Given this, it is important that WCC is prepared for any impact this may have. Our four community buildings are traditionally used as polling stations (and MKC have already checked to ensure covid compliance) and we have one ward councillor and one vacant WCC seat (Leadenhall) included.

There has been further guidance offered by government with regard to campaigning – in very simple terms, door to door campaigning is seen as 'bad', whilst online is 'good'. This reflects the ongoing concerns around transmission rates.

WCC could publicise the option of postal votes for those who feel that attending a polling station is unwise at this time. The Council Manager has considered the demographics of the parish, the vulnerability of many members and considers that making people aware of this option is something that would potentially help ensure that as wide a population as possible is able to take part in the elections, if they take place.

Given the current uncertainty, there is no guarantee that the elections will be able to take place safely, so this situation may change. If this were to happen, the Council Manager would return to the Full Council with an update, to include options for managing in the period until elections were to take place (current options include postponing until November 2021 or until May 2022).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Polling stations bring in rental from community centres – approximately £900 in total.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

None noted.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

None noted.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

MCD_letter_to_members_of_the_Parliamentary_Parties_Panel.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager