

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GREENACRE CENTRE ON WEDNESDAY 5TH OCTOBER 2022, AT 7.00PM

Committee Members present:

S Buck – Chairman, L Anderson, T Bhasin, B Collier, A Cooper, M Cooper, S Dhaliwal, J Hyde, D Matthews, G Russell, B Saunders, J Smith, H Wightwick

Also present:

Two members of the public (one remote attendance), one member of staff (remote attendance), and K Elliott-Turner – Town Clerk

178/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Hayes and J Talbot.

179/22 DISCLOSURES OF MEMBERS INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interests in respect of items on the agenda, and no requests for dispensations. Members were reminded that if at any time during the meeting they feel they have an interest in an item being discussed, they should declare it at that point.

180/22 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & CIVIC ATTENDANCE

4th September – Lord-Lieutenant Service of Thanksgiving Bedford – Attended
25th September – High Sheriff of Bedfordshire Justice Service – Attended
29th September – Mayor of Biggleswade Charity fund raising event – Attended
2nd October – ABF The Soldiers Charity Lunch – Declined
7th October – Houghton Regis Civic Reception – Accepted
9th October – Mayor of Flitwick Civic Service – Accepted
15th October – Mayor of Leighton Buzzard Charity fund raising event – Accepted
17th October – Mayor of Houghton Regis Charity fund raising event – TBC
18th October – Mayor of Flitwick Charity fund raising event – Declined

181/22 PUBLIC SECTION

No requests to speak.

182/22 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

Nothing to report

183/22 COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the council meeting held on 7th September 2022 be taken as read and confirmed and signed as a correct record.

184/22 RESIDENTS' SURVEY 2022

Councillor J Smith explained the purpose of the Residents Survey – this is the first residents survey to use as a benchmark to identify how people feel council is performing, and results will be fed back to public at the Annual Town Meeting in March. The survey closes on 18th December.

Members were advised that to date we have received 51 responses, with some time to go before the survey closes. Councillor Smith went through the questions and highlighted a few example responses. It is clear from responses to date that key issues are speeding, dog fouling, poor parking, and people using or dealing drugs. This mirrors some of the comments from the recent Community Action Day.

The survey is electronic, but paper copies of the survey are available in the council office foyer and will be available at the council's stand at the forthcoming Mill weekend.

185/22 PROJECT FORM

Members considered a draft Project Form to be used by members and staff when introducing a proposed project. This will provide a clear outline of the project proposals, constraints such as timescales, staff resources, budget/funding, etc, and is to be considered by council or committee, as appropriate, before undertaking a new project. This form will also help when applying for grants, to show that we have considered it as a business case.

It was felt that for the early stages of project consideration, the form is quite lengthy, and so it should be reduced for a committee consideration in principle, and then if approved to go forward, more detail is then provided.

186/22 COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Members considered a proposals report regarding creation/set up of Warm Spaces in Stotfold and Stotfold Community Fridge.

Members discussed the feasibility of hosting a Warm Space in the Greenacre Centre, but it was felt that to monitor attendance would be difficult with office staff numbers, and there may be safeguarding issues depending on who attends any sessions we host.

Discussions took place around other venues in the town and opportunities for people to attend regular sessions and use as Warm Spaces. The Council's website with list of events will be updated and clubs/organisations will be encouraged to provide updated details of their events for inclusion.

Churches Together have already been discussing the possibility of using some of their venues as Warm Spaces, but it requires further thought.

A meeting will be arranged between Churches Together and other appropriate organisations, such as the Good Neighbour Group to pull together a list of events, activities and dates which they can promote as a Warm Space.

Ward Members Dixon and Saunders are using some of their Community Grant money to purchase a fridge for The Need Project. They may consider altering their opening hours to enable more people to visit their premises.

187/22 REPORTS

a) Central Beds Council Ward Member Report

Councillor B Saunders gave the following report:

- Councillor Dixon is currently in talks with Assets about use of the former Roecroft Lower School Playing Field. At the moment it is being used as an area to encourage birds and wildlife. The new Headteacher will be invited to join talks about the future of the space.
- Central Bedfordshire Council was successful in their bid for residential electric vehicle charge points, securing £360,000 funding from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles. This funding will contribute to the installation of 48 new electric vehicle charge points across Central Bedfordshire, with Stotfold and Leighton Linlade being the only towns with two charge points.
- We now have 367 Ukrainian guests, 240 are adults and 127 are children, staying with 160 sponsors.
- Central Bedfordshire Council's yearly travel survey has been carried out, telephoning a random 2000 residents to find out about how they travel, if they have any travel issues, how they get to work, etc. Findings include that post-pandemic there has been a net reduction in reported car use, travel in general is down and walking has seen a net increase, a net reduction in cycling, car ownership continues to rise but only a minority of vehicles are hybrid or fully electric. Common transport problems include concern about availability of car charging points, obstructive car parking and speeding traffic. Residents felt that more and better maintained infrastructure would encourage them to cycle and walk more, plus cheaper fares, better routes and more frequent routes on public transport.

b) Member and Nominated Representatives on Outside Bodies

As Community Governor for St Mary's Academy, Councillor Anderson gave the following report:

- Schools for the Future – the school has met with Central Bedfordshire Officers to discuss the future of the Poppies pre-school provision on site. The Poppies building is on the verge of being condemned as it is a pre-fabricated 'temporary' building. A question was put to Ward Member Saunders as to whether something could be done to make use of economies of scale and take a sensible route of combining early years provision of a building for Poppies with a new building for the primary need as per the Schools for the Future programme.

c) Town Plan Implementation Group (IG)

No report to present.

d) Other Member Representative reports

No other reports.

188/22 ACCOUNTS

- a) Members considered the Expenditure Report for approval for October 2022 payment run, including those made in September, and the income received during September 2022 in the Income Report.

RESOLVED that all payments on the Expenditure Report are approved and are to be paid, and the Income Report be noted.

- b) Members considered the monthly committee budget report, budget variances report and bank balances as at end September 2022.

RESOLVED that the monthly committee budget reports, budget variances report and bank balances for month end September 2022 are noted.

189/22 COMMITTEE MINUTES

Members noted the minutes of the following committee meetings:

- Planning Committee – 28th September 2022
- Buildings Management Committee – 28th September 2022
- Establishment Committee – 28th September 2022

190/22 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Members considered the recommendation from minute 79/22 of Establishment Committee meeting held on 28th September 2022.

“That the following grant is approved:

Stotfold Bowls Club

Amount granted: £1,000

Purpose of grant: to purchase equipment to maintain turf”

RESOLVED that the recommendation from minute 79/22 is approved.

191/22 QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS ON ITEMS ARISING FROM THE MEETING

Not at this time.

192/22 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY

Nothing to report.

193/22 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Under section 3d of Standing Orders, the Chairman will propose that the press and public are temporarily excluded whilst matters pertaining to staff issues are discussed and that they be instructed to withdraw from the meeting for the following agenda item only.

PASSED by members.

194/22 REPORT FROM GRIEVANCE PANEL

Members considered a final update report from the Chairman of the Grievance Panel, which has concluded that part of the grievance was upheld, with part not upheld. A settlement has been agreed by the Panel and the grievant.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 7.53pm.

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: