

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GREENACRE CENTRE ON WEDNESDAY 7TH DECEMBER 2022, AT 7.00PM

Committee Members present:

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

Also present:

One member of the public, Central Bedfordshire Council Ward Member S Dixon and Kate Elliott-Turner, Town Clerk

219/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence, as all members were present.

220/22 DISCLOSURES OF MEMBERS INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures of interests or 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.

221/22 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & CIVIC ATTENDANCE

13th November – Stotfold Service of Remembrance

17th November Mayor of Flitwick Charity Event

20th November – High Sheriff of Bedfordshire Road Victims Trust Remembrance Service

23rd November settle annual stakeholder event

222/22 PUBLIC SECTION

No requests to speak.

223/22 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

The Clerk advised members that our External Auditors will remain as Mazars for the period 2022/2023 to 2026/2027.

224/22 COUNCIL MINUTES

Members were updated on the minute relating to Warm Spaces, as not only is The Need Project circulating leaflets, but also the Stotfold Good Neighbour Group has circulated leaflets to all its clients over the last week. A member noted that a formal request needs to go to the Buildings Management Committee to consider the principle of town council buildings being used as warm spaces.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the council meeting held on 2nd November 2022 be taken as read and confirmed and signed as a correct record

225/22 GRANT – ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Members considered making a grant to the Royal British Legion, as it was omitted from the last round of grant considerations and is a usual request.

RESOLVED the sum of £150 is granted to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

226/22 MOTION TO RESCINDING PREVIOUS DECISION.

As per Standing Order 9a, a correctly submitted motion has been submitted, as follows: "We the undersigned request that the Clerk submit this motion to reconsider the decision made at the November 2022 Council meeting regarding Youth Work Earmarked Reserves, on the basis of a misunderstanding of what was being asked of members to consider, and that the decision made was not clear."

Members therefore considered increasing the Earmarked Reserve Youth Work for the remainder of this financial year. This is because the original funds available within the EMR have now been exhausted, and additional funds are required to enable the youth team to be able to continue their work, as supported by the council, through to the end of the current financial year.

RESOLVED that the sum of £5,000 is vired from General Reserves to Youth Work EMR to cover expenditure for the remainder of the year.

Members also noted executive action taken by the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to vire the sum of £2,000 from General Reserves to the Youth Work EMR in order that current invoices may be paid, and the youth team's work could continue until a decision was made at this meeting as to whether to top up the EMR.

227/22 COUNCIL'S CREDIT CARD

Members considered a request from the Clerk to increase the council's Barclaycard credit card limit from £2,000 to £3,000 and to amend Standing Orders/Financial Regulations accordingly to reflect the change.

A request was made for further detailed information of expenditure over the last 6 months, to support the request. Members were reminded that signatories to the monthly accounts are provided with a copy of credit card statements and receipts, and all members are entitled to see this information. More detail to support the request will be brought back to members.

228/22 CENTRAL BEDS FREE TREE GIVEAWAY

Members considered a date for Stotfold's Free Tree Giveaway, with trees provided by Central Bedfordshire Council. This will need to be in a central location, well publicised and held early in the new year in order that residents have time to plant their trees before the end of the planting season in March. Information on the scheme was provided for members.

RESOLVED that the Giveaway is promoted during January through to the first week of February, for residents to sign up to the Tree Adoption Care Agreement. Sign up can be via the QR code provided, or by coming into the council office to sign up to the Agreement.

229/22 KING CHARLES III CORONATION

Members considered the council's involvement in local celebrations of King Charles III Coronation.

Due to timescales involved, it was:

RESOLVED that options and costs are considered by the Establishment Committee at their December meeting, looking at a modern style bandstand, with power, as a performance/exhibition space to be erected within the Greenacre Park to mark the King's Coronation. The Establishment Committee is to make a recommendation to the full Council meeting in January in time for the cost to be included in the Precept submission, if felt appropriate and achievable. Funding opportunities are to be identified. Also, bunting will be erected around the town, and as with the Queen's Jubilee, residents will be encouraged to use our green spaces for Coronation picnics.

230/22 COUNCILLOR RESPONSIBILITIES IN REGARD TO INTERNAL AUDIT AND FINANCE IN GENERAL

The Clerk gave a report on councillors' responsibilities in regard to internal audit and finance in general.

The 'Council' is a corporate body, and therefore has a separate legal entity from its members. The decisions of the council 'are the responsibility of the whole council and all councillors share collective responsibility for the financial management of the council. However, as members of that corporate body, individual members have a collective responsibility to the council's finances'.¹

Useful document giving an overview of council's responsibilities and financial management were provided to members.

Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils (BATPC) have some useful training courses on local council financial management, and members were encouraged to book a place with the Clerk.

231/22 2022-2023 HALF YEAR AUDIT REPORT

RESOLVED that the Internal Auditor's Report on the internal audit carried out on first half year accounts 2022-2023 be noted.

232/22 REPORTS

Central Bedfordshire Council

Ward Member S Dixon gave the following report:

- Anti-social behaviour is still continuing outside Pix Brook Academy. Central Beds Council is looking to put in CCTV. Councillor Dixon is hoping to meet with the Assets team, who are responsible for the road. A meeting has already been held with Councillor Dixon, Councillor Buck and the Head of Pix Brook Academy to discuss the situation.
- Malthouse Lane site – Assets have today completed installing fencing, which will be more secure. The sale on the site has fallen through, and planning has lapsed, and it will be going back on the market.
- Greenacre development - Taylor Wimpey is not yet in a position to transfer tranche B which is Valerian Way and all the roads which go off it. They are waiting for a signature from Hallam Land Management, and they are confident they will be able to get this fairly soon. Taylor Wimpey will then offer over to Central Beds Council

¹ The Good Councillor's guide to finance and transparency 2018, pg 8

for full adoption, who will take the roads, footways, etc once satisfied that it is all correct.

- The Academy of Central Bedfordshire have been speaking to the Deputy Director of Education at Central Beds Council and the Headteacher. It has been confirmed that the old Roecroft Lower School playing field is part of the Academy's lease. They have a 125-year lease on the property from when it became an Academy and therefore the playing field is theirs. Currently the Academy and Central Beds Council are looking at the land as a way to expand their curriculum.
- Thanks was given to anyone who has input into Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. They have received 3,000 responses.

Ward Member B Saunders gave the following report:

- Gave an update on parking issues, outside St Mary's Academy. On Monday afternoon he met with two parking officers outside the school to observe the situation. Only saw one person parking incorrectly, and on this occasion, there were no other problems. Central Beds Council are going to send someone else this week and are going to monitor the situation. The zig zag lines and double yellow lines are going to be repainted very soon and the road sweeper will come to clear the leaves from the area around the double yellow lines.

233/22 ACCOUNTS

- a) Members considered the Expenditure Report for approval for December 2022 payment run, and the income received during November 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 and bank balances as at end November 2022.

RESOLVED that the monthly committee budget reports and bank balances for month end November 2022 are noted.

234/22 COMMITTEE MINUTES

Members noted the minutes of the following committee meetings:

- Planning Committee – 9th November 2022
- Recreation Grounds, Public Lands & Lighting Committee – 9th November 2022
- Buildings Management Committee – 16th November 2022
- Cemetery Management Committee – 16th November 2022
- Town Strategy Committee – 23rd November 2022
- Establishment Committee – 23rd November 2022

235/22 QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS ON ITEMS ARISING FROM THE MEETING

Not at this time.

236/22 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY

Councillor Buck thanked the councillors for helping out at the Christmas Switch On. Those who came along were absolutely brilliant. He felt the event went off quite well.

Members were advised that it was reported yesterday the main sewer had burst on the common fields. There were issues in accessing the fields via the Astwick Road and Pix Brook Academy service road gates, but the padlock code has now been passed on. Members were given the code in case of future similar emergencies. It is understood that approximately 10 thousand litres of sewerage has been pumped out, and they would be returning tomorrow with more equipment and a bigger digger.

Members were advised that on Thursday next week, 6pm, Santa on his sleigh will be leaving Astwick Road at 6pm for a tour around the town. He will not be collecting money but giving out sweets to wish everyone a Happy Christmas.

Councillors have received an invitation to attend the Stotfold Good Neighbour Group Panto entitled 'Cinderella 40 years On'. The panto will take place at 2.30pm on Friday 16th December in the Memorial Hall. An indication of numbers attending was requested.

Members were reminded that Councillor Mrs Cooper was looking for 3 or 4 Christmas tree decorations from each member, to decorate the Town Council's tree for the St Mary's Church Christmas Tree Festival and requested that she receives them within the next 24 hours.

The Mayor advised that the Deputy Mayor and Councillor Smith will be attending the Roecroft Christmas Concert next week at 9am to 10am. If anyone is interested in attending, they are to let him know.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 7.47pm

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: