

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN THE OAK HALL, GREENACRE CENTRE, ON FRIDAY 25TH JUNE 2021, AT 7.00PM

Committee Members present:

A Cooper - Chairman, S Buck, Mrs A Clarey, B Collier, Mrs M Cooper, S Hayes, D Matthews, C Phelps, H Pickering, B Saunders (& CBC Cllr)

Also present:

Mrs K Elliott-Turner – Town Clerk, Mrs J Everitt – Administration Assistant, three members of the public

112/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Dhaliwal, Mrs J Hyde, G Russell and J Talbot, and Central Bedfordshire Council Ward Member S Dixon.

113/21 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

As referred from the Annual Meeting of the Council, Councillor Cooper signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office for the role of Chairman and Councillor Collier signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office for the role of Vice-Chairman of Stotfold Town Council.

114/21 DISCLOSURE 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.

115/21 CASUAL VACANCY – CO-OPTION OF NEW MEMBER

Applications for filling the casual vacancy by co-option were previously circulated to Members. The two candidates were invited to introduce themselves to members and outline why they have applied for the vacancy and what they can bring to the council and the community of Stotfold.

As per Standing Order 10b, voting on the co-option was by secret ballot.

RESOLVED that Talvinder Bhasin is co-opted as Town Councillor for Stotfold Town Council.

The Declaration of Acceptance of Office for this role is to be signed after the conclusion of this meeting.

For note, committees with current vacant seats are Cemetery Management, Planning and Town Strategy.

116/21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES

None present.

117/21 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

Nothing to report.

118/21 COUNCIL MINUTES

Members were asked to note and sign as a correct record, the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 5th May 2021.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the council meeting held on Wednesday 5th May 2021 be taken as read and confirmed and signed as a correct record, with the following amendments:

Councillor S Buck is to be added to the membership of the Town Plan Implementation Group, and a typo is to be amended on the list of regular payments regarding salaries.

119/21 PUBLIC OPEN SPACES – FOOTBALL PITCH HIRE

Members considered a report from Mrs J Everitt, Administration Assistant responsible for facilities bookings, on current issues with hiring of Town Council public open spaces for football pitches.

The Town Council currently hires out the following public open spaces for football:

- Hitchin Road Recreation Ground
- The Green
- Riverside Playing Field
- Arlesey Road Playing Field

Current arrangements/issues

- Stotfold Junior Football Club have approx. 45 teams and over 600 players (as per their website) and do not provide the Town Council with fixtures.
- Stotfold Junior Football Club mark out all pitches used and are chased £5,000 per annum for use of The Green, Riverside Playing Field, Hitchin Road Recreation Ground and Arlesey Road. This is not exclusive use, and these spaces are available for booking by other teams/clubs.
- Stotfold Town Council own goals at Hitchin Road Recreation Ground. Stotfold Junior Football Club provide their own goals for other pitches on other sites.
- Stotfold Town Council does not know when pitches are in use by the Junior Football Club.
- Stotfold Town Council booking system does not have the capacity to schedule the Junior Football Club team bookings, due to the number of teams and games.
- There is only one adult pitch at Hitchin Road Recreation Ground and Arlesey Road Playing Field.
- There are no adult pitches at The Green or Riverside Playing Field.
- There are no toilet facilities or changing rooms at The Green or Riverside Playing Field.
- After taking a booking and payment from an adult team (not the town's Junior or Senior clubs – usually a pub team) for Arlesey Road, the team manager of that team must liaise with Stotfold Junior Football Club for pitch marking, use of goals, use of toilets and changing facilities and fixture clashes.

- After taking a booking and payment for Hitchin Road Recreation Ground, the team manager must liaise with Stotfold Junior Football Club for pitch marking and fixture clashes.
- Stotfold Junior Football Club prefer teams to be registered with Beds FA, so they do not schedule games on the same day and time, this does not include friendly matches.
- Question – who gets preference to pitch use if there is a fixture clash?
- At Hitchin Road Recreation Ground, once a team has paid for 4 games in advance, we provide them with a key for access to the goals (stored at rear of changing room building), toilet facilities and changing rooms. This is liable for misuse as we have no control over how many times the pitch is used and rely on the team manager providing us with fixtures for ongoing charges.
- Not being able to monitor pitch use makes it difficult to maintain our grounds – whatever the way forward with pitch use, knowing where teams are going to play or letting them play when and where they like within a determined number of sites, the Town Council will still have to manage and pay for the wear and tear caused by high usage.
- Storage of goal posts – now that Roker Park is being developed, the Junior Football Club can no longer use that space to store their goals. They have now left their goal posts at Riverside Playing Field - originally chained to the MUGA on Kingfisher Way but have now been repositioned to the rear hedge line (boundary with Taylors Road development) and The Green (chained to shrubs/tree which has caused complaints from nearby residents).

Initial comments from members to the issues currently being experienced, included that we have not got the capacity for the number of Junior Football Club teams on our open spaces, and that we cannot keep using all our public open spaces for football use. Comment that it was understood that the Junior Football Club carried out renovation works to our Hitchin Road Recreation Ground to accommodate their girls teams (acknowledging that the facility was also for wider community use), but that the girls could now play on Arlesey Road training area with adjacent changing and toilet facilities, and that the club was perhaps not using the site to its best use? Question about the current use of open space by Stotfold Junior Football Club, and what was the use by external teams – in the last 12 months we have had 2 external teams wanting to use pitches – one at Arlesey Road and one at Hitchin Road, and it was split this way because that is how the Junior Football Club wanted their games to fit in with their fixtures. The Junior Football Club have expressed a wish to have toilets on The Green.

The subject of current arrangements and pitch usage will be deferred to the September meeting of the Recreation Grounds, Public Lands & Lighting, together with consideration of the Junior Football Club's request for toilets.

120/21 2020/2021 ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT

A copy of the Internal Auditor's report on the internal audit carried out on year-end figures 2020/2021, together with the Annual Internal Audit Report of the 2020/2021 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) Part 3 was previously circulated to members.

RESOLVED that the Internal Auditor's report and the Annual Internal Audit Report of the 2020/2021 Annual Governance & Accountability Return Part 3 are approved.

121/21 2020/2021 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (SECTION 1)

Members were asked to confirm and approve the statements on the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) of the 2020/2021 Annual Governance & Accountability Return Part 3. The Clerk, being Responsible Financial Officer, and Chairman are to sign once approved by Council.

RESOLVED that the statements on the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) of the 2020/2021 Annual Governance & Accountability Return Part 3 are approved.

122/21 2020/2021 ACCOUNTING STATEMENT (SECTION 2)

Members were asked to confirm and approve the Accounting Statement (Section 2) of the 2020/2021 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) Part 3. The Clerk, being Responsible Financial Officer, has signed to certify that the Accounting Statement has been prepared following guidance in Governance & Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioner's Guide to Proper Practices and presents fairly the financial position of this authority. The Chairman of the Council is to sign once approved by Council.

RESOLVED that the Accounting Statement (Section 2) of the 2020/2021 Annual Governance & Accountability Return Part 3 are approved.

123/21 2020/2021 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN – EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS

Following approval of Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR, the Clerk, as Responsible Financial Officer, confirmed the commencement date for the exercise of public rights. The Annual Return will be published on the council's website on Monday 28th June, and the period for public rights will commence on Tuesday 29th June for a period of 30 working days.

124/21 REPORTS

a) Central Beds Council Ward Member Report

Councillor B Saunders

- With regard to the appearance of soil and works at Tudor Oaks, Central Beds Council is monitoring this.
- Councillor Dixon has recently met with Alys Bishop, Central Beds Council's Principal Drainage Engineer & Flood Risk Team Leader at Pix Brook and Brook Street, with Anglian Water with regard to flooding issues.
- The planning application for land rear of Arlesey Road and Hitchin Road, submitted by UKLand has been refused.
- Central Beds Council is currently trialling hybrid meetings – this method of meeting appears to be successful, and they are now waiting for the Government to confirm that hybrid meetings can legally be held.

b) Member and Nominated Representatives on Outside Bodies

St Mary's Church of England Academy – Community Governor, Councillor Mrs A Clarey:

- School continues to work well. Creative Arts Week prior to half term, provided exciting projects. Evidence on website.
- Since half term drama workshops have taken place and African Drumming sessions for Year 3 continue.
- Towards the end of term an Olympic Sports Week has been planned and Ark Farm will bring a 'Zoo for a day'.
- As Governor, Zoom meetings are planned for 17th and 24th June. I have also attended a recent meeting at the school to consider website content.

Town Plan Implementation Group – Councillor Mrs A Clarey

- The Town Plan Implementation Group meet in September (date to be arranged).

Good Neighbour Group – Councillor Mrs A Clarey

- Continues to operate with increased numbers of transports but less need for prescriptions to be collected.
- Chair-based Exercise Classes resumed on 11th June.
- AGM will take place, Wednesday 7th July, 7pm in the Memorial Hall.

Green Wheel Stakeholders Group – Councillor Mrs A Clarey

- Members met in the Oak Hall on Friday 11th June.
- Updates on progress made, news on Etonbury Wood and projects planned for Stotfold formed part of the meeting. Full report in September.
- It is proposed to take part in the 3 Wheel Challenge – linking in with The Bedfordshire Walking Festival (11th – 19th September). Plans currently being drawn up for walks around the Green Wheels in Sandy, Biggleswade (11th September) and Stotfold (12th September). Final details will be available in September.

125/21 DELEGATED DECISIONS REPORTS

Members were previously provided with Delegated Decision Reports, as per temporary delegation scheme – decisions taken by the Clerk in consultation with Chairman and Vice-Chairman of council and Chairman and Vice-Chairman of appropriate committee:

- Delegated Decision report 7th May to 7th June 2021
- Delegated Decision report 8th June to 21st June 2021

RESOLVED that decisions taken under temporary delegated powers, in the above Delegated Decisions Reports are noted. The Reports will be retained on file.

126/21 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Under Section 3d of Standing Orders, the Chairman proposed that the press and public are temporarily excluded whilst matters are discussed which include personal

staff information and that they be instructed to withdraw from the meeting for the following agenda item only. **PASSED** by members.

127/21 COVID-19 RETURN TO OFFICE WORKING AND RE-OPENING RECEPTION

Following the Government's recent extension of Step 4 to 19th July 2021, the requirement for staff to work from home when possible remains. Office staff members have discussed return to office working and re-opening the reception to the public. Concerns were expressed about risk to themselves and to their colleagues, and a workable solution has been discussed and agreed. Members were provided with a confidential report outlining the background, discussions and conclusion.

Assuming 19th July is Step 4 date, with no further extensions:

- Up to 19th July, staff continue working from home, with limited office visits.
- From 19th July, staff return to phased bubble working in office, and home for other hours, such as Wednesdays.
- Early September, staff to return to full working from office, initial re-opening of reception with reduced opening hours.

RESOLVED that the above proposed return to office working and re-opening of reception is agreed.

128/21 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY

Councillor Pickering reminded members that he was moving out of the area very shortly and submitted his resignation to the meeting. He was thanked for his work with the council and was presented with a leaving gift from members.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.22pm.

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: