

# MINUTES OF A MEETING OF STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GREENACRE CENTRE, ON WEDNESDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2021, AT 7.00PM

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## Committee Members present:

A Cooper (Chairman), Mrs T Bhasin, S Buck, B Collier, Mrs M Cooper, S Dhaliwal, S Hayes, Mrs J Hyde, C Phelps, G Russell, B Saunders (& CBC Cllr) and J Talbot

## Also present:

Mrs K Elliott-Turner – Town Clerk, two members of the public, Central Bedfordshire Council Ward Member S Dixon

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### **148/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs A Clarey and D Matthews. Councillor G Russell advised that he would be arriving late to the meeting.

### **149/21 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no disclosures of interests, and there were 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.

### **150/21 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & CIVIC ATTENDANCE**

#### Mayor's Civic Attendances September 2021

29<sup>th</sup> – Macmillan Coffee Morning – Stotfold Good Neighbour Group

#### Mayor's forthcoming Civic Attendances October 2021

10<sup>th</sup> – Lord Lieutenant's Service of Thanksgiving & Reflection – accepted

15<sup>th</sup> – Houghton Regis Town Council Civic Reception – accepted

17<sup>th</sup> – Potton Town Council Civic Service - accepted

17<sup>th</sup> – Ampthill Town Council Civic Service – Deputy Mayor to attend

18<sup>th</sup> – Houghton Regis Town Council 'An Evening at the Circus' – declined

### **151/21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES**

No questions at this point.

### **152/21 CASUAL VACANCY**

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 Elizabeth (Liz) Anderson 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 and Town Strategy.

A member of the public left the meeting at this point.

## **153/21 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION**

### Clerk's Report

We are sad to announce that our long-standing Memorial Hall caretaker, will be retiring at the end of this year. She has been with us for almost 50 years! Initially, we will continue with just the two keyholders covering both buildings, and will assess options in terms of cleaning of the Memorial Hall from the new year.

### Correspondence

- Police & Crime Commissioner's October 2021 Newsletter
- Central Bedfordshire Council's Town & Parish Council Bulletin October 2021

Members noted articles of interest within the T&P Council Bulletin regarding free salt for highways salt bins, the new Ward system from 2023 and S106 money currently available.

## **154/21 COUNCIL MINUTES**

Members were asked to note and sign as a correct record, the minutes of the Council meeting held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the council meeting held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 be taken as read and confirmed and signed as a correct record.

A member noted that in the extract of the Welcome Back Fund Delivery Plan document and in regard to flower planters, it should say that there are currently four square planters and one round planter which contain perennials and changing seasonal plants.

Councillor Russell arrived at this point.

## **155/21 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2020/2021**

A copy of the External Auditor's Certificate and completed Annual Return for year end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 was previously circulated to members.

### Auditor's comments

*Except for the matters reported below on the basis of our review of the annual return, in our opinion the information in the annual return is in accordance with proper practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislative and regulatory requirements have not been met.*

*The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 and Coronavirus Regulations 2020 required that the 2020 period of public rights should be made available for the public to inspect the accounts the day after the AGAR was published and to do so as soon as possible after it was approved. This requirement was not met but the Council has answered yes to the assertion on public rights in the Annual Governance Statement, which refers to the arrangements made during 2020/21. Although the Council met the requirements in 2021, in future the Council needs to put in place*

*arrangements to ensure that it consistently meets its statutory obligations in respect of public rights and answers no in the following Annual Governance Statement where this has not been achieved. The Council has declined to correct the following error at Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return so the Annual Governance and Accountability Return has not been prepared in accordance with proper practices: A/ Fixed assets at Box 9 for 2019/20 is understated by £7,713, due to assets identified in 2020/21 but already owned at 31 March 2020 being omitted. The 2019/20 figures should have been restated to ensure these assets were included in the 2019/20 Box 9 figure. In 2021/22 the Council should ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is prepared in accordance with proper practices.*

*No other matters came to our attention.*

**RESOLVED** that the External Auditor's Certificate and Report with comments for year end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 is received and noted.

A copy of the audited accounts has been published on the council's website and Greenacre Centre notice board.

#### **156/21 APPROVAL OF INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRAMME**

Members were asked to review and approve the Internal Audit Programme to be used by the Internal Auditor for auditing accounts.

**RESOLVED** that the Internal Audit Programme is approved for auditing accounts 2021/2022.

#### **157/21 REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT 2021/2022**

Members considered the draft Review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit 2021/2022.

**RESOLVED** that the draft Review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit 2021/2022 is approved.

#### **158/21 FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT 2021/2022**

Members considered the draft Financial Risk Assessment for 2021/2022.

**RESOLVED** that the draft Financial Risk Assessment for 2021/2022 is approved.

#### **159/21 REPORTS**

##### a) Central Beds Council Ward Member Report

##### Councillor B Saunders

- His Civic Role as Council Chairman is now almost back in full swing.
- The Planning in Principle application for Mill Lane was refused. These types of applications came about in 2018 and are not well used.
- Tidy Tips are now open 9am to 5pm and there is no longer a need to book.
- Garden Waste Collections – these will resume between 18<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> October, and will be collected on a day when you would normally have your recycling collected. With regard to food collection, if this is not being done, as there have been some issues with this, then food waste may be deposited in your black bin.

- Central Bedfordshire Council offices are not yet open to the public. They are mainly operating via telephone.

#### Councillor S Dixon

- Confirmed that the return of staffing to their Chicksands office was under consideration.
- Covid-19 cases are still on the rise, with 11 – 18 year olds being the bulk of the cases. With regard to hospital admissions with Covid-19, these are not near the level that they were in the past.
- Afghan refugees – Central Bedfordshire is ready to take them, although the amount we are seeing in this area is reduced, as most seem to want to go to the north of the country. These refugees have large families, requiring houses with 4/5 bedrooms.
- Further to the refusal of the Mill Lane Planning in Principle application, confirmed that these types of application have no right of appeal.
- Further to the last meeting and reference to out of date bus timetables at bus stops in the town, confirmed that Central Bedfordshire Council does not set bus timetables – it is down to commercial bus companies, such as Arriva, who place the timetables on the bus stops. The bus stop signs have been put up by Central Bedfordshire Council, but it is acknowledged that the timetables are not currently correct. This will be chased.
- Free School Meal vouchers are being bought in again for ½ term and the Christmas holidays – the scheme is currently being assessed by Councillor Richard Wenham, Central Bedfordshire Council Leader.
- Information on when 12 to 16 year olds will be vaccinated against Covid-19 will be forwarded to the Clerk.

Councillor Dixon left the meeting at this point.

#### b) Member and Nominated Representatives on Outside Bodies

In the absence of Councillor Mrs Clarey, her report as Community Governor for St Mary's Academy was read out to members:

- The autumn term began well. Everyone seems to have settled back into school life with new topics to explore and without the restraints of 'bubbles'.
- School Councillors have been voted in by their classmates; they are looking forward to working on activities that will benefit the St Mary's community.
- The Harvest Festival Service was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September with produce being donated to The Need Project. A request had been made for canned custard (The Need Project delivers 400 cans per month, which might have caused a local shortage!).
- Megan Rix, the popular children's author was welcomed to the school. She worked with years 3 and 4.
- School clubs have resumed and include Karate, Spanish, Gymnastics, Tennis and Homework.
- As a Governor, I have attended a General Meeting where amongst other things, we approved the 21/22 Governance Code of Conduct, received the Headteacher update and School Development Plan.

c) Town Plan Implementation Group

In the absence of Councillor Mrs Clarey, as Chairman of the Town Plan Implementation Group, her report was read out to members:

- The meeting scheduled for 28<sup>th</sup> September was unfortunately cancelled.

To be noted:

Good Neighbour Group

- In the quarter ending 21<sup>st</sup> September, 328 activities have been carried out. This includes 104 health transports, 117 social well being transports, 26 collection/delivery of prescriptions. Other areas where clients need regular help includes befriending, advocacy and shopping.
- The Macmillan Coffee Morning raised £300 and was run in conjunction with the Academy of Central Bedfordshire (ACB).
- Two chair-based exercise classes operate on a Friday afternoon the Memorial Hall.

Green Wheel Stakeholders Group

- The Green Wheel Stakeholders Group meeting was held on 24<sup>th</sup> September.
- Minutes of this meeting will be presented to Town Council in due course. They will include updates on progress made along the proposed Green Wheel route and a report on the 3 Wheel Challenge (Stotfold – 12<sup>th</sup> September).

d) Other Member Representative Reports – Police & Crime Commissioner's 'Cluster' Town & Parish Council meeting

Councillor Mrs Clarey's report on the meeting was read out to members:

- As the Assistant Clerk, Councillors Cooper and Dhaliwal and I attended the meeting with Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) Festus Akinbusoye in the comfort of our own homes, the PCC was keen to point out that he was sitting in his car on the Etonbury School site waiting for his son to finish a football game!
- He began by saying that his first 4 months in office felt more like 4 years. Amongst his concerns are:
  - Lack of visible policing
  - Bedfordshire is the worst county in the country for retention of Police officers and staff
  - Failings in the criminal justice system means that there is a backlog of court cases, many of them involving serious crime
  - Poor conviction rate – less than 10%
- The PCC is looking at best practice across the country, and will be holding the Chief Constable to account.
- Some tangible points to note are that the Community Policing Fund will mean that more Police officers and PCSOs can be appointed. The increase in cybercrime is an issue but intervention involving 500 young people took place over the summer. More road traffic calming has been introduced and calls to the 999/101 control rooms should be quicker and give a better experience.
- Questions were asked at random from the Councillor representatives. Clare Kelly (Chief Executive of the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner) indicated that answers would be shared on/by 5<sup>th</sup> October.

- In brief, for Stotfold:  
Councillor Cooper raised speed control/Speed Watch and the availability of large trailers that were placed at the side of the roads to relay messages to drivers – Clare Kelly agreed to investigate.  
The Assistant Clerk asked if there was any point in reporting crime. The PCC stressed that it was vital to report all crimes and incidents. He added that Facebook is not a crime report.  
Councillor Dhaliwal expressed the concern that PCSOs no longer attend Council meetings to give a crime update. The PCC indicated that information should come through representatives on the Community Policing Groups and data supplied by the Police. Solved crime figures would be of interest to Council.
- Other questions from the small number of council's who sent a representative included knife attack, drug crime and electric scooters.
- It was a positive meeting with more needing to be done at both Government, Police and the local level. The PCC has made the promise to visit all Councils in Bedfordshire.
- It is recommended that members read 'The PCC Parish Ward Cluster Sessions – Summary 2021', which has been circulated.

#### **160/21 ACCOUNTS**

- a) Members considered the Expenditure Report for approval for October 2021 and the income received during September 2021 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 and bank balances as at end September 2021.

**RESOLVED** that the monthly committee budget reports, budget variances and bank balances for month end September 2021 are noted.

Members were advised that the second half year Precept has now been received.

#### **161/21 RECREATION GROUNDS, PUBLIC LANDS & LIGHTING COMMITTEE – 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021**

Members of the Recreation Grounds, Public Lands & Lighting Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

#### **162/21 PLANNING COMMITTEE – 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021**

Members of the Planning Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

#### **163/21 PLANNING COMMITTEE – 29<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021**

Members of the Planning Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2021 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

#### 164/21 CEMETERY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 15<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

Members of the Cemetery Management Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

#### 165/21 BUILDINGS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 15<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

Members of the Buildings Management Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

#### 166/21 ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE – 29<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

Members of the Establishment Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2021 are a correct record.

Council considered recommendations within minute 28/21:

Recommended that the following grants are approved:

Organisation	Purpose of Grant	Amount Awarded
Stotfold Mill Preservation Trust	To install security fencing in Stotfold Nature Reserve	£1,500
Keech Hospice Care	To fund 12 music and art therapy sessions, advertising of their services which provides pre- and post-bereavement support to children with life-limiting conditions and their family members	£500
Transitions UK	To provide workshop and learning materials for the Aspire Plus project – providing support for school leavers (partnership with Academy of Central Bedfordshire) at risk of exclusion and/or offending before transition through summer and into place of education, employment or training during their first year	£1,000
Bedfordshire Police & Partnership Trust	To support the Bobby Scheme, set up and help the vulnerable and elderly victims of domestic assault by providing security assessments and advice for home and personal security – replacement door and window locks, video doorbells, key safes, etc	£750
Magpas Air Ambulance	Support to fund the ongoing costs of running aircraft	£1,500
Just Out	Set-up costs for new community youth club	£1,500

The recommendation was **RESOLVED**, and the minutes were noted by council.

#### 167/21 QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS ON ITEMS ARISING FROM THE MEETING

No questions.

#### 168/21 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY

A member passed on the thanks of a resident for the way in which Stotfold Cemetery is kept in a pleasant and tidy manner. This will be passed onto our contractors.

Councillor Mrs Hyde thanked those who sponsored her on her recent charity bike ride. She raised a total of £520 plus Gift Aid, after cycling 28 miles between churches in the local area.

Members were advised that work on Arlesey Road by Anglian Water had overrun, which has resulted in an extension to the time required for their compound in the Arlesey Road car park.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.07pm.

**MINUTES APPROVED (date):**

**SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN:**