

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GREENACRE CENTRE ON WEDNESDAY 1ST MARCH 2023, AT 7.00PM

Committee Members present:

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

Also present:

Assistant Clerk – Ms Caroline Jenkins

32/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Russell and Bhasin and the Town Clerk.

33/23 DISCLOSURES OF MEMBERS INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Councillor Hayes declared an interest in expenditure for the reimbursement of £13.00 for the Civic Service refreshments. 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.

34/23 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS & CIVIC ATTENDANCE

February 2023

5th February – Ampthill Civic Service - Attended

18th February – Charity Night in aid of NEED project and Motor Neuron Disease Association - Attended

19th February – Stotfold Town Council Civic Service - Attended

21st February – Ampthill Town Mayor Charity Night – Attended

24th February – Flitwick Town Mayor Charity Quiz Night – Attended

26th February – Leighton-Linslade Civic Service – Attended

March 2023

3rd March – Mayor of Dunstable Civic Service - Accepted

5th March – Mayor of Sandy Civic Service – Accepted

10th March – Mayor of Dunstable Charity Fundraiser Deputy Mayor Steve Hayes and Mrs Lyn Hayes to Attend

11th March – Houghton Regis Family Bingo – Declined

12th March – Mayor of Biggleswade Civic Service – Accepted

12th March – Mayor of Pottton Civic Service – Accepted

24th March – Leighton Linslade Charity Bingo – Declined

A letter of thanks will be sent to the Conservative Club for organising the recent Charity night on behalf of the Mayor. Together with the collection from the Mayors Civic Service, we were able to send donations of £514.00 each to the Mayors Charities, MNDA North and East Hertfordshire and The Need project.

Thanks were also given to the Mayor, Councillor Steve Buck for his work in organising both of these events.

35/23 PUBLIC SECTION

None present.

36/23 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

Nothing to report.

37/23 COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the council meeting held on 1st February 2023 be taken as read and confirmed and signed as a correct record.

38/23 REMOVAL OF COUNCILLOR PERSONAL ADDRESSES FROM WEBSITE AND PUBLICATIONS LIST

Members were asked to consider no longer publishing councillor personal addresses. All Stotfold Town Council members now have a designated councillor email addresses and all have a contact telephone number, publicly available on our website. The Information Commissioner's Office states that the minimum in terms of publication of contact details for a councillor is their name, a phone number and an email address if they have one.

RESOLVED that it would be left to Councillors personal choice as to whether their full contact details would be published.

39/23 UPDATE FROM 'CORONATION COMMUNITY STAND' WORKING PARTY

Members were asked to consider a motion from Councillor Hayes, Chairman of Coronation Community Stand Working Party: In light of the level of increase in Council Tax precept, and noting the economic situation in the country, the working party are of the opinion that to proceed with the purchase of an outdoor performance area at this time would not be appropriate. We would therefore propose that for the time being the matter is held in abeyance until the economic situation improves.

RESOLVED that the purchase of an outdoor performance area is put on hold and reviewed when the economic situation improves. Councillors agreed that the money previously allocated should return to general reserves.

The project should be returned to the wish list to prioritise essential schemes which can be added to over time, with more forward planning for projects.

40/23 CONFIRM STREET LIGHTING MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

Following the full tender process, and subsequent evaluation of submissions received, members were asked to confirm the Street Lighting Maintenance Contractor for 2023 to 2026.

RESOLVED that 'Sparks' were confirmed as the Street Lighting Maintenance Contractor for 2023 to 2026. The company is based in High Wycombe but also has a presence in Milton Keynes, Bedford and Stevenage.

Councillors asked that the tender prices for both the Street Lighting and Grounds maintenance contracts be made known to them, to enable correct budgeting for the future.

41/23 RESIDENTS SURVEY UPDATE

Councillors noted an update from Councillor Smith on the Annual Residents Survey. 165 residents completed the survey. Items to be prioritised for residents were noted by members. Improvements can be made in engagement with residents and how we communicate, ie, website, facebook.

42/23 REPORTS

Central Bedfordshire Council

Ward Member B Saunders gave the following report:

- 17th March – 2nd April Great British Spring Clean, equipment and collection of rubbish from Central Bedfordshire Council.
- Central Bedfordshire Council agreed to no change to the budget. There will be no reduction in service, although prices for everything have gone up. Council will be using reserves for any shortfall.

Warm Spaces initiative

Councillor H Wightwick gave the following update:

- All Churches, Good Neighbour Group and Library have been providing a warm space since December. Mixed responses to the warm spaces.
- Clients are largely older and lonely and socially isolated.
- The Need project has generously provided bread, soup and cakes. This is very much appreciated.
- Central Beds Council has offered £500.00 grant to set up any warm space.
- Some are planning on running as social space into the Summer. Others are closing at the end of March.
- Action group has been formed – next meeting is on 16th March.

43/23 ACCOUNTS

- a) Members considered the Expenditure Report for approval for March 2023 payment run, and the income received during February 2023 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 February 2023.

RESOLVED that the monthly committee budget reports and bank balances for month end February 2023 are noted.

It was noted that money contribution had not yet been received from Central Bedfordshire Council for the play equipment installation at Arlesey Road. We have not yet heard back as to a completion date for the scheme.

44/23 COMMITTEE MINUTES

Members noted the minutes of the following committee meetings:

- Planning Committee – 8th February 2023
- Planning Committee – 22nd February 2023
- Recreation Grounds, Public Lands & Lighting Committee – 8th February 2023

45/23 QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS ON ITEMS ARISING FROM THE MEETING

None.

46/23 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY

Councillor B Saunders raised his concerns that he had asked for an item to be added to this meeting agenda, which has not been.

He raised at the last meeting of the recreation grounds and public lands and lighting that it would be of great benefit to keep the pathways at Arlesey Road clear of mud from the football pitches. He also stated that he had grant money from his ward councillor fund from Central Bedfordshire Council and together we could purchase a boot scraper for this purpose. As funding was involved it would be necessary to discuss this at the next Full Council meeting. This item had been left from tonight's agenda.

At the time of the meeting the application was needed to be submitted the following day to make use of the grant money, otherwise this would be lost.

Further information:

2metre Boot Scraper/brushes	£485.00 total cost
Ward Councillors fund (non-match funded)	£100.00
Ward Councillors fund (match funded)	£192.50
Town Council funding	£192.50

RESOLVED: Members unanimously agreed that as this is an urgent matter, as funding would be lost, this item could be added to the meeting.

FURTHER RESOLVED: To purchase the 2metre Boot scraper for a total of £485.00, using the Ward Councillors fund. Cost to Town Council is £192.50. Handyman to install at Arlesey Road.

47/23 FINANCIAL REVIEW

Members were asked to consider motion from Councillors Buck, Hayes and Smith: Council to review current financial in order for council to be able to plan for future growth. The aim is to determine how to make the most of the funds we have and so we can serve the town effectively in future years.

With the increase of 39% to the precept this year, Councillors considered an evaluation of our Ear Marked Reserves with an independent company to check if the Town Council is making the most of its funds. DCK is a company used to advise other Town Councils for this purpose. Costing would be £1100.00 for the day. Accounts would be looked at and any better methods of using our funds highlighted, so as to prevent such a large increase in the precept in the future.

Over the past couple of years the town council has become more ambitious to provide projects to enable facilities for residents. However, these facilities need to be paid for through our funds from the precept.

An independent outside body financial review could provide us with improvements to be made, or the answer that we are providing adequate work financially. The Town

Council should be holding enough working capital funds aside to cover 1 year precept in case any financial crisis should affect Central Bedfordshire Council.

Councillors also felt regular reviews of our finances would provide a clear transparency to the public, show Best Practice and provide any financial guidance with regard to the use of S106 money.

RESOLVED: that the Town Council will engage with DCK, who will be asked for a financial review of our accounts. Costing £1100.00 for the day.

48/23 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

PASSED BY MEMBERS

49/23 PENSION AND STAFFING STRUCTURE REVIEW

Members were asked to consider motion from Councillors Buck, Hayes and Smith: Council to review current staffing, for council to be able to plan for future growth. The aim is to determine how to make the most of the funds we have and so we can serve the town effectively in future years.

RECOMMENDED:

- All new staff starters will be offered NEST pension scheme, rather than Local Government Pension Scheme.
- The Town Clerk position will be kept on the LGPS, with a view to recruitment in the future.
- The role of Property & Estates Maintenance Technician will be replaced by a second Town Ranger position. This will be advertised to the public.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.53pm

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: