



MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SERVICES MEETING
HELD ON 13TH AUGUST 2020
AT 7.45PM VIA VIRTUAL ACCESS

Present:

Cllr A Snape
Cllr K Badham
Cllr I Blazeby
Cllr R Coleman
Cllr P Dodds
Cllr A Lutley
Cllr J Roberts
Cllr M A Williams

Rob McGregor – Town Clerk
Jon Barkat – Rufus Centre Manager
Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk
Cllr J Dann
Cllr G Mackey
Cllr D Toinko
Members of the public - 7

1172. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

1173. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Statutory Declarations of Interests from Members in relation to:

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – None.
- (b) Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – None.

1174. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked the Rufus Centre Manager and his team for the successful start of the Café. There had been some fantastic feedback from residents so far.

(Cllr Mackey entered the meeting at this time).

1175. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

- (i) A resident had attended to speak about item 8a regarding field events on behalf of residents of Froghall Fields. Her reasons for attending were regarding the potential rescinding of an agreement from 2017 and the outdoor cinema event.

(Cllr Lutley entered the meeting at this time).

- (ii) The resident explained that the residents had not been approached about the discussion and wanted to know why. She explained the negative impacts the event would have on the residents who lived on the estate, particularly regarding noise. She mentioned the need for residents to enjoy their gardens during the Covid-19 pandemic/warm weather and felt options should have been explored regarding finish times.
- (iii) The resident quoted email correspondence between herself, the Town Clerk and Chairman. Residents wanted the finish times for all the screenings to be 8pm and had concerns once Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed. The residents had concerns regarding visitor parking. The residents wanted to appeal to the Council to not rescind the original decision and to work with them like the previous Council had done.

1176. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were none.

1177. MINUTES

- a. For Members to receive and adopt the Minutes of the Business Services Committee held on 16th July 2020

Members received and approved as a true record, the Minutes of the Business Services Committee held on 16th July 2020.

1178. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Minutes of the Business Services Committee 16th July 2020 – none.

1179. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. **Rufus Centre Field Events – Rescind Decision**

Members are asked to consider rescinding the following decision from Business Services Committee - Minute Number 771 – ‘To discuss our strategy for the Rufus field late night business’:

‘It was Recommended that the Rufus Centre limit the use of the Rufus Centre field to events finishing no later than 21h00 (excluding derig time) and action the potential installation of a breaker switch, which would cut power to the DJ when a prohibited door is opened.’

- (i) Councillor Dodds requested for Councillors to place themselves in the shoes of the residents and asked for them to be shown respect. He believed the cinema issue should have been discussed with the committee before the event was booked. The Chairman advised that the event had been discussed at the previous meeting and that as it was a commercial activity, the Rufus Centre Manager was acting under his powers.
- (ii) Councillor Blazeby questioned what the Council would be doing by rescinding the previous agreement and asked if this needed to happen for the event to proceed. The Town Clerk advised that under the Standing Orders, the Council could rescind the agreement and that the event could go ahead even if the decision were not rescinded.
- (iii) The Rufus Centre Manager gave an update stating that he had been in contact with the Central Beds Council Pollution Team and the Safety Action Group, who had given permission for the cinema event to take place. The Rufus Centre had undergone many costly changes and a loss of revenue to accommodate noise attenuation for the residents and staff were briefed to monitor the situation live at the cinema event.

- (iv) Councillor Badham explained that the Council could review decisions and pointed out that the 'agreement' that had been mentioned was not agreement, but it was a Policy. He added that the Council could make decisions without seeking consensus from the public. Councillor Badham advised that in 2017, a different request was put to Council for an outdoor cinema event and an 11pm finish time had been deemed acceptable. He pointed out that the Council had asked for acoustic fencing to be installed by CBC as part of noise remediation linked to their planning decision, but this had not happened. Covid-19 had made a difference, but he commented that a balanced approach was required because some residents wanted the cinema event to happen. Councillor Williams added that this was not a legally binding agreement.
- (v) Councillor Blazeby had investigated the permitted decibel readings for sound and equated these to the noise levels of a vacuum cleaner.
- (vi) Councillor Mackey suggested that the cinema event should be dealt with as a special exception and for the original decision to remain. He endorsed the view that the Council should re-engage with the residents to agree a way forward.
- (vii) The Chairman provided a response to one of the resident's letter and outlined three changes since the arrangement had been put in place in 2017:
1. Covid-19 – the Council had an opportunity to provide entertainment and add community value.
 2. The Rufus Centre Manager had been hired and he had worked hard on the Noise Management Plan.
 3. A good relationship with CBC Environmental Services was formed. Trust had been established and it was hoped that the residents would have some confidence in this. Councillors were happy to leave decisions with The Rufus Centre Manager.
- (viii) Councillor Badham explained that the Council could have decided to put on field events since the policy was in place, but this had not happened, and the Council had acted in good faith. He also explained that Cllr Mackey had proposed an outdoor cinema event in August 2017 in aid of Macmillan that was previously approved and would have run until 11:30pm. He added that the Council should monitor the situation.
- It was **Recommended** for the outdoor cinema event scheduled to go ahead. It was agreed that the Council had acted reasonably and worked within the agreed Policy. Members agreed to monitor the situation and residents were informed that they could contact CBC in real time during the event.
- (ix) Members voted on the agenda item listed regarding rescinding the decision listed in Minute Number 771. The proposal was not supported with 1 Councillor in favour and 6 against.

1180. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Rufus Centre Manager's Report

- (i) Members were informed that the figure listed for the lunch trolley was monthly and the figures for the café were weekly. Councillor Badham congratulated all staff who had worked on the café launch and stated it was a great asset for Flitwick.
- (ii) Councillor Dodds asked about the 'Eat Well to Help Out' Scheme and was advised that this had been investigated but the registration process was lengthy. Councillors were informed that the café was not registered as a business, which meant that the Council could not apply for the scheme.

- (iii) The Chairman asked if there could be any forecasting done for the room bookings in the coming months. The Rufus Centre Manager advised that this would be difficult for the next two months, but it could be revisited afterwards.
- (iv) Members noted the budget, the whole financial report, and the aged debtors report. Councillors were advised that there had been a push on debt recovery and a new document had been produced for this purpose. The Town Clerk had been in touch with the Chief Executive at CBC (and subsequently the CBC Financial Director had been made aware) regarding CBC debts.
- (v) The Rufus Centre Manager advised that more robust systems for debt recovery were required.

b. Rufus Centre Income

Members noted the income for July.

c. Budget

Members noted the Business Services Budget.

1181 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

- (i) A resident commented that the previous reference to 11pm finish times related to the function room and not field use.
- (ii) He referred to the point in the meeting where the noise decibel readings were deemed the equivalent of a vacuum cleaner in sound level and commented that a vacuum cleaner would not be on for the length of time that a field event would be. He added that he was glad the Committee had not rescinded the decision but was interested to know how the new Policy would work. Residents did not want field events every weekend.
- (iii) The resident advised that when 11pm was previously deemed an acceptable finish time for an outdoor cinema, this was for a silent cinema with visitors wearing headphones. Councillor Badham advised that the silent option had come after this and this was traceable in the minutes from 16th May 2017.
- (iv) Residents were pleased that the Council intended to progress dialogue going forward. The Chairman advised that the residents would be contacted via the Town Clerk.

1182. EXEMPT ITEMS

The following resolution will be **moved** that is advisable in the public interest that the public and press are excluded whilst the following exempt item issue is discussed.

a) Additional Hours to support Cafe

Councillors discussed the information provided in the circulated report. It was agreed that the Café was doing well and there was no need to employ anyone new at this stage. CSA's had been redeployed to support the Café and Personnel Committee would look at apprenticeship opportunities.

Action: Deputy Town Clerk to put apprenticeships on Personnel Committee agenda

Councillors were keen for a profit and loss record to be done before employing additional staff.

It was **Recommended** to agree the proposal circulated to increase the staff members' hours from 20 to 30 hours per week to support the Rufus Centre Café.

b) Additional Funding for Agreed Three Year Project

Councillors discussed the necessary works for Phase 2 of the project to refurbish the Rufus Centre and were advised that it was difficult to sell the rooms that had not been upgraded.

The contractors were on site so it made sense to progress but ways of reducing costs would be investigated. Phase 3 was on hold.

It was **Recommended** to accept the release of £35,533.70 from the Rolling Capital Fund to complete Phase 2 of the Rufus Centre refurbishment.

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Council **resolve** to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

Meeting closed at 9pm.