



MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON 30TH JUNE 2020
AT 7.45PM VIA VIRTUAL ACCESS

Present:

Cllr I Blazeby (Chair)
Cllr R Shaw
Cllr G Mackey
Cllr J Roberts
Cllr J Dann
Cllr D Toinko

Rob McGregor – Town Clerk
Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk
Members of the public - 5

569 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Dodds

570 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – None declared.
- (b) Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item. Councillor Roberts Declared a Non-Pecuniary interest for agenda item 8a – Flitwick Library Office – and he took no part in the discussion. Councillor Roberts would sign the Declaration of Interest Book at a later date as the meeting was taking place virtually.

571 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised that virtual meetings had been held with the Royal British Legion and Sea Cadet representatives since the last meeting.

572 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no items.

573 MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were no questions.

574. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Minutes of the Corporate Services Committee Meeting 27th May 2020.

Members received and approved as a true record, the Minutes of the Corporate Services Committee Meeting, held on **Wednesday 27th May 2020** via Virtual Access.

575. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Town Council Website Launch

Members considered the supporting paper circulated and discussed what still needed to be done to make the site ready. The site would not be launched until it was complete, and Members felt it needed a deadline attached.

Councillor Snape commented that other venues for hire were still listed and the Chairman explained that this was because the site was non-commercial and should give residents a more rounded picture of what was available in the town.

It was **RECOMMENDED** for a 'soft launch' for the website to be scheduled for 9th July 2020 subject to final confirmation by the Chairman of Corporate Services and the IT Panel Members agreeing, prior to 'go live', that it is in a fit state to be launched. (Vote: all in favour).

b. Flitwick Papers

Members discussed the options presented on the agenda. The Chairman explained how the advertising income had been declining and that the Committee should consider whether the production/circulation of Flitwick Papers should be altered. It was agreed that the publication needed an updated look.

Some Members raised concern for stopping the hard copy versions of Flitwick Papers being distributed as many residents were not on online. Other Members felt that the role was being fulfilled by other publications locally and that costs could be investigated to see if residents could request a delivered version. It was suggested that print copies could be left at central points in the town with agreement for residents to pick up.

The Communications & Marketing Officer gave a verbal update on the time it took to produce the paper.

It was **RECOMMENDED** for the current digital version of Flitwick Papers to be continued, while Officers investigate costs to redesign, reformat, print and distribute an updated version. (Vote: all in favour).

It was **RECOMMENDED** for the Town Clerk and Officers to create an integrated Communications Strategy across all available mediums to maximise the use of the new FTC website, noticeboards, alongside hard copy mechanisms to promote information about the Council, events in Flitwick and local organisations. (Vote: all in favour).

c. Councillor Surgeries

Members discussed options for future Councillor Surgeries based on information included in the supporting papers. It was agreed for Zoom surgeries to be included.

Councillor Dann updated Members on how the first Zoom surgery had gone and Councillor Snape advised that he would lead face to face surgeries at appropriate locations outdoors in August.

(Councillor Toinko left the meeting at this time.)

It was **RECOMMENDED** for Officers to clarify that the range of previously agreed surgery options is still currently 'Covid' viable. Councillors agree to add further options of Zoom online meetings and outdoor locations to the previously agreed locations. (Vote: 5 in favour).

It was **RECOMMENDED** for a quarterly outline surgery calendar to be produced by Officers which Councillors will be able to put themselves forward to attend. (Vote: 5 in favour).

(Councillor Toinko returned to the meeting at this time.)

d. Councillor/Staff Workshop

Members discussed that the intention of these workshops was to:

- Focus time on a particular issue or area
- Give an opportunity for Councillors to meet with a wider range of staff
- Be a medium through which to raise questions without going through the management structure

It was suggested to pause the workshops for now and it was understood that the Council already had a Whistleblowing Policy.

It was **RECOMMENDED** for the Staff/Councillor Panels to be suspended until the outcome of the staff structure review had been completed.

e. Social Media Policy

It was **RECOMMENDED** to defer acceptance of the proposed updated Social Media Policy, pending submission and review of an alternative option, currently being considered by PDRT.

576. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Flitwick Library Office

Members noted that Central Bedfordshire Council was interested in taking back the former office at Flitwick Library under the same terms as put forward the previous year. Members discussed that the office was no longer suitable for a disaster recovery venue and that the Hub was more appropriate because it had internet access.

The Chairman suggested that it could be an inappropriate time to decide about the office considering the Asset Review.

The Committee noted the willingness for CBC to negotiate the transfer of the Flitwick Town Council rented space at the Library at a higher than previously proposed fee.

b. Local Organisation Meetings Update

Members noted the summary provided by the Chairman and the organisations were formally thanked for taking part in the process.

It was understood that all organisations were keen for leases to be renewed.

The Committee noted the completion of the initial re-engagement exercise with local organisations regarding their current use and maintenance of the buildings leased to them by Flitwick Town Council. The information gathered is essential background information that will be required for the Council to make planning and investment decisions once the current Asset Review is completed.

c. Valuation & Saleability of Current Assets

The Town Clerk updated Members on the valuation process that was ongoing. There was nothing concrete to raise at this time, but it was hoped for timescales to be understood after a meeting the following day. Members noted the progress so far.

d. Country Park Funding

Members noted the summary report prepared by the Deputy Town Clerk.

e. Burial Ground Report

Members noted the report prepared by the Amenities Officer and Councillor Roberts commented that the figures were consistent.

f. Budget

The budget was noted. The Chairman commented that Officers were in the process of looking what general savings could be made due to the current situation and that a Working Group had been tasked with this at Business Services.

577. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

- A resident in attendance was part of the Scout Group who had been consulted with regarding item 8b. He explained that the Town Council (former Town Mayors and Officers) had been promising a new building for 10 years. There was a track record of this in the form of a planning application and press releases but so far had not been fulfilled. The Scouts were unable to expand to growing demand. The planning application was still undecided.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that Officers were frustrated that CBC had yet to determine the application and feared that they would decide to re-consult, despite previous updates indicating that a favourable decision was likely in the near future. Members were advised that the expected weighting of community benefit generated by the scheme was not as high as anticipated and the Leisure Team had asked a series of questions that needed to be answered. The Architect on board with the project had answered the questions.

The resident asked if there would be any merit in separating the car park and the Headquarters building and stated that he would be happy to meet with the Planning Officer. It was advised that CBC had raised concern particularly about the HQ site due to the loss of open space so it was felt that separating the schemes would not achieve anything.

Councillor Dann acknowledged what was said but explained that there was a funding issue and spend going forward needed to be contingent on the Asset Review.

The resident believed that the situation they had been put in was unacceptable. The Chairman stated that the leases being put on hold was not a new decision and that representatives were informed of this in October 2019. He added that the Council were coming towards the end of the process to understand its assets. There were no minutes which agreed to the replacement of the building and no record of a vote taking place.

The resident asked a question about how the match funding worked and an explanation was given about the CBC Market Towns fund.

- A resident in attendance was part of the Girlguiding organisation who had been consulted with regarding item 8b. She was keen for their lease to be renewed and expressed concern that at their meeting, those in attendance who represented the Council had no knowledge of the current or proposed lease agreements. The resident had previously offered to supply copies. She was disappointed with the meeting and believed the questioning that occurred was inappropriate. There was a section of land that they were hoping to adopt and there had been challenges surrounding the Aragon Housing building nearby.

- Councillor Snape apologised and had sympathy for the organisations. He advised that the Asset Review was near completion and that the ability to make decisions was close.

578. 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.

There were no exempt items.

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.