



DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SERVICES MEETING
HELD ON 12TH NOVEMBER 2020
AT 7.45PM VIA VIRTUAL ACCESS

Present:

Cllr A Snape
Cllr I Blazeby
Cllr P Dodds
Cllr A Lutley
Cllr J Roberts
Cllr Dann
Cllr Badham

Jon Barkat – Rufus Centre Manager
Sally Auken-Phillips – Receptionist
Members of the public - 1

1205. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted for Rob McGregor – Town Clerk.

Apologies were received and accepted for Councillor Williams – IT connection issues.

1206. 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.

1207. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman congratulated the Rufus Manager and his team for a record month on Rendezvous Café takings and extended his thanks to the committee for their support.

1208. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

A resident asked about the revenue lost due to the COVID restrictions during the year to date and wanted to know if there were plans in place to gain revenue.

The Chairman advised that the situation was being monitored and felt it was too early to comment. Plans were already in place where the Council had diversified commercial activities including opening the café in August, which had exceeded expectations and was continuing to perform well. A number of different initiatives would be run throughout the rest of the year with a view to boosting revenue, but that the impact and unpredictable nature of the COVID situation meant that the commercial element of the Council was not performing as it had done in previous years.

Councillor Blazeby added that the recent refurbishment of the Rufus Centre had made it a more attractive place for both businesses and residents.

1209. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were none.

1210. MINUTES

- a) For Members to receive and adopt the Minutes of the Business Services Committee held on 15th October 2020

Councillor Badham advised that his apologies were given in advance of the meeting.

Members received and approved as a true record, the Minutes of the Business Services Committee held on 15th October 2020.

1211. MATTERS ARISING

- a) Minutes of the Business Services Committee 15th October 2020 – None.

Councillor Lutley questioned whether money had been put aside for Rendezvous Café leaflets and where the contribution came from.

Action: Rufus Manager

1212. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. **Financial Regulations**

It was **Recommended** to adopt the Financial regulations circulated.

1213. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. **Health and Safety Updates**

Members noted the report circulated by The Rufus Manager.

There were no questions raised.

b. **Projects Update**

Members noted the project update circulated by The Rufus Manager.

There were no questions raised.

c. **EV Charging Points**

Members noted the updates circulated by The Rufus Manager.

Members agreed that the EV charging project had been hampered by COVID restrictions and should be deferred until January.

d. **Toilets on First Floor (Davis Suite)**

Members noted the report circulated by the Rufus Manager.

Councillor Dann commented that he had overheard feedback from hirers of the room suggesting the need for toilet facilities. In addition, he raised the question as to whether it was in the tenant contracts to have corridor doors closed.

The Rufus Manager advised that the tenants were not keen on having the corridors open for security reasons.

Councillor Blazeby raised a question for discussion with the tenants about using the upstairs toilets for when future events took place.

Action: Rufus Manager

Councillor Lutley commented that it was a drawback not to have access to upstairs toilets and suggested supervising access if we had special events.

Councillor Dodds raised concern with regards to the fire escape route, however the Rufus Manager advised that this would not be affected.

e. **Hub Insurance Policy**

Members noted the report circulated by the Rufus Manager.

Councillor Dann advised that Café Connect had recently been offered the use of the hub.

1214. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No questions raised.

1215. **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. **COVID Update**

Members noted the report circulated by the Rufus Manager.

b. **Tenants Payment Plan**

Members noted the report circulated.

c. **Rendezvous Café & Bar**

No additional comments made to the report circulated.

d. **Rufus Centre Income**

Members noted the report circulated by the Rufus Manager.

e. **Budget**

The budget was noted.

Meeting closed at 8:35pm.

Health & Safety – Update

EICR (Fixed Wire Testing) – Remedial works to the Tractor store took place w/c 30 Nov, and will last 4 days. Only class C2 (potentially dangerous/urgent action required) items are being rectified.

Mandatory staff H&S training was conducted on 01 Dec, with 18 staff in attendance. A second date is to be planned to catch any members of staff who were providing cover/unable to attend the session.

Rufus Projects – Update

Work to the Denel first floor toilets has been completed.

Work to improve the staff kitchenette has now been completed.

The builders will be moving on to the reception office refurb w/c 07/12/20.

Once the reception work has been completed, the builders will move to the Ruxox wing 1st floor toilets.

EV Charging points update

I have contacted 4 specialist companies to provide me with some further information, unfortunately only 2 of these have come back to me.

Both have said that they cannot provide an estimated install cost until they have surveyed the site, which may now be after lockdown. From my research, it looks like we would not be entitled to a grant, as these are only available for businesses providing EV charging points for employee use only.

Update – I have sent pictures of our main electricity board to 2 of the companies, along with pictures showing positioning of these points and the distance any cabling would need to be laid. Waiting for responses from them, as to how they will proceed.

Marketing – Update

Gift Vouchers

We have created new Gift Vouchers for the Café which we are promoting as Christmas gifts on social media and POS in the Café.

In addition, we have produced vouchers for a free, regular tea or coffee, which are being sent to our database of people who attend our community events with a Christmas card from the community team.

To support local charities and fund raising events in the town and surrounding areas we have been donating £10 vouchers as raffle prizes and our donations have been publicised by the two groups who approached the Café for a donation so far (Russell Lower School PTA and Respite at Home Volunteers, which offers befriending and support to families living with life limiting illnesses in Flitwick and the surrounding area). The actual cost to us is minimal in comparison to the awareness of the Café these donations are providing to a wider audience.

Christmas Afternoon Tea

Flyers are being produced to promote the special Christmas Afternoon Tea. We will be focusing on the takeaway option for those who cannot dine inside due to Tier 2 regulations and again promoting as ideal Christmas gifts and as ideas for Christmas office celebrations as people cannot dine out with their work colleagues.

Takeaway Service

During the second lockdown the takeaway offering and online ordering platform was promoted through social media and other channels including leaflet distribution. Thank you to all the Councillors who volunteered to distribute flyers around their local area. We received new customers as a result of this activity who have continued to visit. We will continue to promote the takeaway service and online ordering as well as the fact that customers are now able to dine in the Café.

Santa Experiences

We have focussed on promoting the Santa Experiences, Santa's Grotto and Breakfast with Santa through social media and other channels and these events have now sold out on all dates – 5th, 12th and 19th December.

Free School Meals

The free school meals supplied by the Café over the Christmas holidays is being promoted on social media and the community team have written to all schools and pre-schools in Flitwick to make them aware of the support being offered. Anyone who would like to take up the offer of support is being directed to the Café Facebook page with a telephone contact for those who do not follow social media.

Conferences & Meetings

We are planning an e-campaign in January to our business database relaunching the meeting rooms and the whole Rufus Centre refurbishment programme. We are looking to support this with advertising/editorial in local business publications, All Things Business and Business to Business as well as the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce.