



MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SERVICES MEETING
HELD ON THE 8TH JULY 2021
AT 7.30pm AT THE RUFUS CENTRE & VIA VIRTUAL ACCESS

Present:

Cllr A Snape
Cllr G Mackey
Cllr A Lutley
Cllr J Gleave
Cllr P Earles
Cllr I Blazeby (via virtual access)

Also present:

Stephanie Stanley – Corporate Services Manager (CSM)
Tracy Lester – Catering & Facilities Officer (CFO)
Helen Glover – Senior Finance Officer (SFO)
Sarah Dempsey – Functions & Events Co-ordinator (FEC)
Member of the public – 0

1285. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted for Councillor Badham – unwell.

No apologies were received for Councillor Williams.

1286. 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 – Councillor Mackey declared an interest under agenda item 10c as he was a Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Member for their Licensing Committee.

1287. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised that there were necessary changes required for some upcoming Business Services meetings. He had hoped that Councillor Williams would have been present that evening to ensure that she could attend. The finance team had been struggling to produce reports early in the month as there was not enough time for preparation, which had led to mistakes being made. Moving the Committee to the following week for September and December led to clashes with Planning, therefore it was proposed to move these two meetings to the Tuesday of the same week. It was suggested to have Planning and Business on the same night, but some Councillors could not do this because of work commitments. It was agreed for the CSM to initiate discussion on this with Members via email.

Action: CSM

1289. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

1290. INVITED SPEAKER

No invited speaker.

1291. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

No questions.

1293. MINUTES

- a. For Members to receive and adopt the Minutes of the Business Services Committee held on 10th June 2021.

The Minutes of the Business Services Committee held on 10th June 2021 were adopted.

1294. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Minutes of the Business Services Committee 10th June 2021.

There were no matters arising. There was an Officer Update to be discussed under Exempt.

1295. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. **Friday Nights @ Rendezvous**

An extended discussion took place regarding the circulated report. Members were keen to know the profitability of the Friday Night events in relation to private bookings and whether market research had been undertaken. Questions were raised regarding staff/casual staff availability and whether enquiries would pick up after lockdown restrictions eased.

Members were informed that people who previously attended the events had been re-booking and a survey had been circulated at the most recent event to seek views on what the public wanted these events to include. No market research had been completed, but a social media survey was planned to try and answer some of the questions Members had raised. The FEC commented that she needed to recruit more casual staff to assist.

It was thought that interest would increase following the relaxation of lockdown. The Friday Night events could expand into the Lockyer Suite once more people could attend.

Members were advised that both Friday Nights and private bookings were profitable but that private hirers were more lucrative.

The Chairman advised that the Rufus Working Group was not on this agenda as the Council was waiting to replace the previous Business & Facilities Manager post. He felt a session covering an interim business strategy was needed to give offices focus.

It was **resolved** to progress with Friday Nights @ Rendezvous on the final Friday of the month (Option 3) for the next two months (July and August) and review the July event, along with costings, at the next meeting.

- b. **Strategy Feedback**

The Chairman commented that it was interesting to understand some feedback relating to Business Services' remit within the strategy consultation comments. The Committee were

asked to consider the comments circulated and if they wanted to do anything with these. It was clear there was a juxtaposition between commercial and community initiatives and that staff needed some clear direction from Members with this.

It was noted that for the comments relating to the Rufus Centre, a lot were related to how the Council develop Flitwick as a place people wanted to invest in. Members discussed their desire to assist businesses and how the Business Support Officer vacancy detailed in the new staff structure could do this. The Chairman advised this position had not been approved for recruitment yet but that this person would be key to achieving these matters. Councillor Blazeby advised that there was a rationale behind assisting physical and virtual shops as the town began its recovery after the Covid impact. He believed it was a missed opportunity that the restrictions were soon to be relaxed however, the Town Business Support Officer was not being advertised. The Chairman advised Members that the role was for Phase 2 and that the Job Description had not been signed off by Personnel; however it was clear now what the Council needed this person to do.

Members were keen for Flitwick Business Group to be re-launched. Councillor Mackey suggested contacting CBC/bus companies to see if there could be a permanent bus stop outside the Rufus Centre, he added that he would investigate any S106 funding that could be used for this purpose.

The CSM agreed to speak with the Town Clerk to ask for the recruitment of the Business Support Officer to be on the next Personnel Committee agenda with a revised Job Description circulated prior to the meeting.

Action: CSM

c. Delivery Plan

This item was deferred to a Clerks & Chairs meeting for initial discussions. It had not been intended for the Committee to look at the business services related actions in detail.

d. Quotation for works

Members discussed the circulated report at length, mentioning that it would be helpful if they could see a diagram to show proposed foyer changes. The report stated that the conversion of the former bar area would cost more, and Members asked for further information on this. The CFO explained that although the former bar area was bigger, there was an issue with the sewage works, the area would need to be dug up, gutted and the process would be costly, take a long time and cause disruption. There was a lot of structural changes required with that option as well.

Members believed the foyer works was not the right option either but that having an appropriate accessible toilet was essential. It was suggested to possibly have one located at the other end of the corridor or to look at replacing the current new toilets with one large disabled facility. The Lockyer Suite disabled facilities were compliant but were inaccessible at the present time due to the vaccinations booking.

The Chairman advised that the proposal was not compliant with procurement guidelines and that he had concerns already about the amount spent with the building company.

Members asked about the works being signed off and if the Council had any claim for re-course since this was an error by the building company. The CFO stated that the former Business & Facilities Manager had mentioned the building company had got the plans with all the dimensions but these had possibly been mis-read.

The CFO agreed to approach Building Control at CBC to give their opinion on what had gone wrong (Councillor Mackey would provide contact details of who to speak to) and this information could be communicated to the contractor.

1296. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Committee Responsibility to for Premises Licence

Members were advised that CBC had proposed the Committee to take responsibility for the alcohol license at the Rufus Centre. The Chairman and Vice Chairman had already signed the paperwork for this otherwise the licence would have been revoked. There were requirements to follow, and Officers would report on this at regular intervals to explain compliance.

After discussion, it was felt that 2 Officers should undertake training on how to comply with the license – via CBC – and Members of the Committee should receive some training. As they had personal licenses, Councillors Mackey and Lutley agreed to look at procedures.

Action: CSM/CFO

1297. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

1298. 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.

12 8b) Matters Arising – noted.

12a) Financial Reports – noted.

12b) Occupancy Stats – noted.

12c) Catering & Facilities Officer Report – noted.

12d) Offices Refurbishment

It was **resolved** for the Town Clerk to purchase the furniture but to seek to reduce the cost further if possible. Procurement rules would be followed for the refurbishment of the rooms.

12e) Rendezvous Café Hire – Members discussed the proposal.

12f) Rendezvous Capacity – This item was not discussed as it did not appear on the Chairman's or Vice Chairman's version of the agenda.

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.

