Minutes of the Community Services Committee meeting held on Tuesday 6th October 2026 at the Rufus Centre

Present:
Cllr Thompson
Cllr Wilsmore
Cllr Toinko
Cllr Earles
Cllr Harald
Cllr Bandy
Cllr Roberts
Cllr Hart

Also Present:
Steph Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO (remote access)
Sarah Burgess – Community & Environmental Manager
Sue Quinn – Community Services Officer
Aaron Pepper – Public Realm Supervisor
2 residents

1413. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was **RESOLVED** to accept apologies for absence from Cllr Platt (medical) and Cllr Hart (holiday).

1414. 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.

1415. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded Members that many events were coming up, and welcomed Members' assistance.

1416. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

1417. INVITED SPEAKER

There was no invited speaker.

1418. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were no questions.

1419. MINUTES

a. For Members to receive and adopt the minutes of the Community Services meeting held on **Tuesday 1st September 2026.**

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 1st September 2026 as an accurate record of the meeting.

1420. MATTERS ARISING

a. Minutes of the Community Services Committee Meeting on **Tuesday 1st September 2026.**

There were no matters arising.

1421. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Hatfield Crescent Play Area

Members noted the supporting paper.

Cllr Harald asked for confirmation whether it was Hatfield Crescent or Hatfield Road play area. The Chairman confirmed it was the Hatfield Crescent play area.

Members discussed whether the Council wanted to take ownership and maintain the park, and noted that Central Beds Council (CBC) would provide no financial assistance.

An extended discussion took place, including:

- Cost implications – the Council currently owned nine play areas and the revenue budget allocated approximately £1,000 per site for maintenance.
- CBC had sent the ROSPA Report for the play area, and there were no initial risks.
- The Public Realm Supervisor added that the team would be willing to take the additional park, and it would be no extra hardship from a maintenance and vegetation point of view.
- Members discussed that CBC were relinquishing more of their assets, and if the Council did not take on ownership of this play area, then it could be left to disrepair.
- Members questioned what would happen if the Council chose not to take ownership and how this may impact residents and current users.
- The Chairman mentioned the possibility of negotiating an 'asset swap' in relation to CBC taking back ownership of lampposts (an ongoing issue) and the Council taking on the play area.
- Cllr Wilsmore asked about equipment replacement costs and how much it would cost to replace and the cost to replace the whole area. The Chairman commented that one piece of equipment could cost around £15,000.
- The Community & Environmental Manager (CEM) advised that the team budgeted £1,000 per year for maintenance of play areas and this was rarely used in its entirety. The team followed a schedule to replace capital equipment, upgrading one play area per year, in addition to repairs throughout the year.

It was **RESOLVED** that Officers respond to CBC to understand whether there is scope for an asset swap, as discussed, regarding the street lights and play area ownership. Officers were to prepare a financial forecast for taking on the additional play area and bring it back to Committee.

Action: DTC

b. National Lottery Awards for All England – Environment

The Chairman explained that a grant funding opportunity had been identified for an environmental project worth up to £20,000. Members were asked to put forward ideas.

Cllr Toinko suggested applying the funding to the volunteering coppicing project and learning in the Nature Park. The Chairman commented that this aligned with the CEM's idea of a volunteer project across both the Nature Park and Manor Park, including professional learning opportunities for volunteers. Cllr Wilsmore commented that he thought this was a fantastic idea. No further ideas were put forward.

It was **RESOLVED** to apply for the National Lottery Awards for All England – Environment grant for a volunteer programme covering the Nature Park and Manor Park.

c. Request for Hire – Town Square

The CEM explained that Flitwick Jewellers had requested to hire the Town Square space to celebrate their 50-year anniversary. Initial planning was vague, but it would include a marquee on one Saturday afternoon into evening in September 2027 (date TBC). The celebration would include food, drink, and music for around 100 invited guests.

Members discussed that, under the Event Booking Protocol, the charge should apply to this event, as it would be private and exclude the wider community. Members also discussed the need for potential traffic management, security and clean-up. Officers confirmed that the applicant would need to apply for SAG approval and implement the measures they recommend. Officers further confirmed that the applicant would be responsible for all of this, but they would assist by providing supplier contacts if required.

A Member asked how this would affect the leasing 3 Station Road. The Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) informed Members that the prospective lessee fully supported these ad hoc events, noting that they see them as positively affecting their business.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the request and work with Flitwick Jewellers to ensure all necessary SAG measures were in place.

Action: CEM

1422. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Community Financial Report

Members noted the financial report.

b. Summer Programme Review 2026

The Town Mayor thanked Officers for their work on the summer programme and for producing the report. The Chairman agreed and added that the summer programme needed to be discussed and planned earlier, in line with budget planning for 2027/28.

Action: Community Team

The Community Services Officer (CSO) asked Members for feedback on the events and for any ideas for future events. The DTC commented that her children loved the circus skills activity and valued that it was a drop-in session.

The Chairman commented on the number of drop-outs, noting that the activities were free, and asked whether a deposit scheme was in place for free activities. The CSO confirmed that this needed further discussion to set the criteria for charging and how customer refunds would work. The DTC said the Council now used a One-Time Payment link option for commercial

customers, and this could be investigated for use at community events.

Action: DTC and CSO

The Chairman requested Members email the Community team with ideas for future events.

c. Allotments EMR

Members noted the spend of approximately £1500 from the Allotment EMR (324) for pipe tracing and installing a new stop tap within Steppingley Road allotments site.

d. Officer Update

(i) Members to note the Community & Environmental Manager's Update.

The Chairman read the report to Members as the item was not included in the papers and asked Officers to check.

Cllr Wismore commented that within the Nature Park the loss of Hazel was significant but the rest of the park was good. The Chairman confirmed that the FoMV would replace the Hazel losses this year, but Officers and Members would rethink the Hazel compartments if they continue to not thrive in the park. Cllr Harold asked why the losses were so significant and it was confirmed that the park had been under stress due to two consecutive, extreme summers.

Cllr Wilsmore asked where the hedge planting at Hinksley Recreation Ground was to be and Officers confirmed that this was circulated to Members at a previous meeting and that the hedging is to be planted at the back, adjacent to the industrial estate.

(ii) Members to note the Community Officers' Update.

The Chairman asked for an email to be sent to all Cllrs for help at upcoming events.

Action: Community Team

1423. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

The two members of public in attendance had no questions.

Two residents left the meeting at 20:24.

1424. 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) Confidential Report – noted.

b) Remembrance Event – for consideration

It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve the proposed measures.
2. Approve the overspend of £1,893.33 (nominal code 4043/313) to cover additional costs.

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: 20.35

Signed……..