**SIMPSON AND ASHLAND PARISH COUNCIL**

**Item 5. MEETING MINUTES**

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| **Meeting date:** | 2 September 2019 |
| **Venue:** | Simpson Village Hall |
| **Councillors present:** | Cllr Pye - Chair (DP) Cllr Barnes – Vice Chair (PB) Cllr Ezeh (CE)  Cllr Ling (RB) Cllr Thornton (ST) |
| **Also present:** | Cllr Emily Darlington, MKC Ward Cllr (ED)  Kay Pettit, MKC Programme Manager (Parish & Town Councils) (KP) |
| **Apologies:** | None |
| **Members of public:** | 21 members of public |

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| **Ref.** | **Agenda item and Minutes** | **Action** |
| **19035** | **Welcome, Introduction and Apologies for Absence** |  |
|  | DP welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending outlining that there was never a more important time than now for the community to come together to love and care for our part of MK. Members of the public present to hear the presentation on Devolved Services were given permission to speak during consideration of the agenda item (Minutes 19036 refers). |  |
| **19036** | **Devolved Services** |  |
|  | Cllr Emily Darlington was introduced in her capacity as Lead Cllr for the Public Realm along with Kay Pettitt, MKC officer with responsibility for managing the programme of Devolved Services between MKC and the Town and Parish Councils in MK. ED gave Nick Hannon’s apologies, going on to explain she has been in the role since May 2019.  The Public Realm directorate covers Highways, landscaping, dog fouling enforcement, street furniture etc so is not just about the open space maintenance. This area has suffered the most amount of cuts within MKC. Working in partnership is essential both from the perspective of being ‘closer to people’- the parish councils are more in touch with residents on the ground, but also as it costs less.  ED explained the background to the DS agenda, with the difficult time faced by MKC budget cuts. In MK the landscaping is currently maintained through Serco and the Parks Trust, through devolution the PC’s are able to increase the precept to take on the role of delivering landscaping services.  Landscaping agenda is also changing; floods, carbon emissions, bees, the role of trees in tackling pollution etc. In 2023 the current Landscaping contract with Serco is up. The Biodiversity Strategy currently being written will inform the way forward beyond 2023. The Draft Strategy is going to Cabinet in November.  A number of organisations will be involved in the Strategy and the way forward: The Parks Trust, Woodlands Trust, Canal and Rivers Trust. MK’s wish to become a Green City will take account of the rich environment and biodiversity of places such as Emberton Park and the Blue Lagoon, and MK’s Dormouse and Great Crested Newt habitats.  Dialogue has been ongoing for a number of months and years with 11 PC’s remaining committed to the programme. The ‘Third Option’ has been developed to address the concerns of many PC’s that the draft contract for the landscaping services is too onerous, with the implications of TUPE etc being too great for small PC’s.  The experience of Stony Stratford TC was shared, with their new contract having been won by Serco.  The Third Option has been developed to offer PC’s the opportunity to take on the administrative control of the contract within their parish, whilst MKC continue to pay Serco the base rate. Monthly meetings between the Parish contract manager and Serco would allow control and monitoring of standards with the ability to also ‘top-up’ services utilising the precept according to local need.  The current landscaping contract being offered for devolvement includes grass cutting, hedge and shrub maintenance, weeds within the shrubs but not weeds elsewhere or trees.  DP then outlined that the parish had developed a Village Plan and the PC had been looking at devolution for some time, increasing the precept in preparation. There had been concerns about the terms of the contract but the new model open to those who have continued to show commitment appeared to be great opportunity. The contract would commence from April 2020.  A Question and Answer session followed:  **Q.** an you summarise the base level service?  **ED** The technical specification has been shared with the PC’s along with maps which show the land under MKC maintenance contract. It does not cover Parks Trust land or Housing Association land and principally relates to grass, shrubs and hedges.  **DP** outlined that an audit was carried out over the Summer to identify the current status of the area. It is evident there is some catching up to do and is likely over the first year or so, more will need doing before things level out.  Topping-up to add work would be at additional cost to the PC and would come from the precept.  **ED** re-iterated the basic contract does not cover trees or weeds, which would remain an MKC responsibility. Beyond 2023 there will be different standards with for instance re-wilding of areas being considered. MKC would co-develop the strategy with all relevant partners.  **Q.** The current specification is 96 pages long – is this valid until 2023 or did the audit carried out identify new things or additional things which are required outside the contract?  **DP** Yes, the base contract is valid until 2023 but the audit did identify a mix of areas within the specification which do not appear to have been done and some areas which need more doing.  **Q.** From what we have heard today the Third Option appears a no-brainer. What are the downsides?  **ED.** For some PC’s it is considered too much hassle and they do not want to spend resource on ‘managing’ the contract. Other PC’s view it differently, Woughton CC who have been delivering the contract for 4 years see it as a local employment project, where staff delivering the contract are employed locally.  West Bletchley were very enthusiastic initially, but have found external contractors difficult to manage.  Another downside is that PC’s don’t have direct access to expertise on areas such as Great Crested Newts, which can have serious implications for projects and service delivery.  **LE** was introduced as the new Clerk and shared her experience working with Walton Community Council. Having liaised with all 6 PC’s currently delivering the contract, despite the ups and downs, all believe the benefits outweigh the negatives. Walton have been topping-up directly through Serco for a number of years and have developed an excellent relationship with the team on the ground.  **Q.** Can you clarify that the contract does not include the weeds and the trees?  **ED** No, MKC retain the responsibility, these areas are managed differently, with trees currently being addressed on a responsive basis. It I acknowledged this has been an issue and could be done better.  **LE** clarified that it is possible to ‘top-up’ to address the trees and weeds.  **ED** going forward there will be a lower threshold for addressing trees.  **DP** outlined that SAPC’s total precept is very small and we would have to weigh-up how best to spend resources.  **PB** can you clarify what weeds are addressed?  **ED** Just weeds growing within the shrub beds. The weeds on paths, around street furniture fall under highways responsibility.  **ST** Can you confirm the date for commitment by the PC’s to devolution.  **KP** for those PC’s who committed by 31st October 2018, the next date confirm continued commitment and in relation to the Third Option is end September/beginning October 2019. This is to be fair to the current contractors Serco, who have to be able to prepare resources beyond 2020.  **ED** It takes some considerable time for contracts to be drawn up, TUPE arrangements etc and therefore planning is already underway.  **PB** From the audit carried out in Simpson it was very apparent there are small parcels of land which require some expertise of advice. Is this available through Serco? Dialogue is required to ascertain the best way forward.  **ED** Yes, the Serco contactors, alongside the MKC specialists and the MKC contract manager will be available to contribute advice. This is where PC’s having the monthly meetings and monitoring of the contract will work well, MKC fell down on dialogue with residents.  **DP** stated that SAPC needs residents input, we are entirely dependant on working together with residents and need their involvement.  DP asked for a show of hands from those present if they thought the Third Option was a good way forward. A majority were in favour.  DP asked those who did not raise a had what the issues of concern were.  **Q.** Do we have all the information required? Financially nothing changes except SAPC manages the contract, is the Council prepared?  **DP** Yes, we have been preparing for this for some time. However, we have a number of Councillor vacancies – shortly to be four out of eight. We are committed and prepared but need more Councillors. We also have the expertise of LE as new Clerk to draw on. We have also prepared financially by raising the precept.  **ED** confirmed that going forward if there became an issue with SAPC staff/cllrs ability to respond, then MKC would step back in.  **Q.** Is the Third Way instead of total commitment?  **KP** to continue with commitment by end of September 2019 does not tie you to anything until such time as the contracts are signed.  **Q.** Would we employ someone to manage the contract?  **DP** This would be resourced through the PC and the precept. The initial commitment over 3 years allows time to prepare for a way forward beyond 2023.  **Q.** The scale of the maps is very small, but there appear to be inaccuracies?  **LE** MKC are currently reviewing the GIS maps, there may be some anomalies which require updating.  **ED** there may be examples where small areas have been forgotten, however this again highlights the advantage of managing the contract locally.  **ST** there is an area that the PC are aware of.  **DP** on Ashland there are different ownership issues altogether.  **DP** thanked ED and KP for attending.  ST promoted the upcoming invitation to lunch being held on 26th October at the Village Hall. This is an opportunity for residents to find out more about how they can be involved with the parish council and the role of a councillor. Residents were asked to promote to friends and neighbours.  ST further promoted the exercise taster sessions, the first one being Thursday 5th September, everyone welcomed. | **Noted** |
| **Noted19037** | **Declarations of Interest** |  |
|  | None received. |  |
| **19038** | **Ashland S106 Project** |  |
|  | The Chair requested that the Ashland S106 Agenda Item be brought forward to accommodate the Steering Group members present.  DP expressed his thanks to everyone involved with the event held on 1st September and the last couple of months work/events.  CB stated that the event had gone extremely well, the display boards were excellent and many useful comments had been recorded. Some lessons had been learned around use of language when engaging communities which will be taken in board going forward.  It was acknowledged that there were some residents who had knowledge and skills which would be useful and it is hoped they can be encouraged to become more involved.  The next Steering Group meeting is taking place on 9th September, LE will attend along with a representative from CAMK and MKC’s S106 officer.  The Summer events had limited numbers in attendance but CG has compiled a large list of contact details, both email and telephone, which will be utilised when communicating in the future.  Formal thanks to be given to Andrew Armes for his help and assistance in producing the displays. | **LE** |
| **19039** | **Public Forum** |  |
|  | No Public Forum, the Agenda Items on Devolved Services and Ashland S106 provided the opportunity for public discussion. |  |
| **19036** | **Devolved Services** |  |
|  | **Unanimously Resolved:** That SAPC continue with the commitment to Devolved Services with a view to take up the Third Option. | **Approved** |
| **19040** | **Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 1st July 2019** |  |
|  | Matters arising from the minutes:  **19031 Peace Picnic Insurance** – LE confirmed that community events can only be covered by the PC insurance policy if the organisation comes under the auspices of the council, otherwise each event will require a separate policy.  **19027 Ashland Event** – the project continues, however CG has resigned as Community Worker to take up Teacher Training. DP expressed his formal thanks for her work and wished her well for the future.  **Resolved Unanimously:** That the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 1st July 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record. | **Approved** |
| **19041** | **Chairs Report** |  |
|  | The Chair’s report was recieved and noted. | **Noted** |
| **19042** | **Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF)** |  |
|  | DP expressed his thanks to ST and RF for their preparation of the successful bid. LE outlined that draft plans for the crossing had been shared depicting a raised table crossing with dragons teeth, leading to a path to link into the existing car park.  The plans are being assessed by the road safety team before final drawings can be released for approval. There is no current timescale available. | **Noted** |
| **19043** | **Woughton Community Council Support Services** |  |
|  | The service has been running for two months, residents at the Coffee & Chat sessions have been supported in addition to visit to The Mount having taken place where explanation of the new prescription process was given. An article is in the newsletter to promote the sessions. | **Noted** |
| **19044** | **Open University Community Project** |  |
|  | DP reported that he continues to attend meetings. The partnership with Samsung could be very positive, however it is a complicated project. | **Noted** |
| **19045** | **Finance Report and Payments List** |  |
|  | The Council received the finance report and payments list. A replacement for RL as lead Member for Finance is required.  ST proposed DP, seconded by CE, all in favour.  With CG having left the role of Community Worker, DP thanked LE for agreeing to take on additional hours.  ST informed that the expenses for the Ashland Event had gone over budget. DP proposed that retrospective approval be given for the overspend, PB seconded the proposal.  **Resolved Unanimously:**   1. ThatDP take over as lead Member for Finance. 2. That the invoices to be paid be authorised and the payments list signed. The finance report was accepted. 3. That LE take on additional hours with remuneration at the hourly Clerk rate. | **Approved** |
| **19046** | **Planning Applications** |  |
|  | It was noted that the council’s responses were submitted in relation to the following planning applications:   1. **Application Ref: 19/01671/FUL 1 Thornbury, West Ashland, MK6 4BB** 2. **Application Ref: 19/01851/FUL Five Acres Nursing Home, Simpson, MK6 3AD**   The Decision Notice has been issued for 4 Penshurst Crescent and published on the SAPC website. | **Noted** |
| **19047** | **Delegated Decisions** |  |
|  | The report was accepted. |  |
| **19048** | **Bank Account Mandates** |  |
|  | **Resolved Unanimously:**   1. That the Clerk be added to the list of authorised signatories and that Rupert Fairclough and Catherine Pope be removed as signatories. 2. That the Clerk be authorised as debit cardholder, with a maximum daily withdrawal amount set at the maximum payment authority of the Clerk (£500). |  |
| **19049** | **Parish Noticeboards** |  |
|  | The requirement for additional noticeboards will be monitored.  **Resolved Unanimously:** That the quote from Serco for re-location of the Ashland noticeboard be approved. | **LE** |
| **19050** | **Note any changes to risk management** |  |
|  | It was noted that the councillor vacancies and the resignation of the Community Worker poses a low risk to business continuity. | **Noted** |
| **19051** | **Councillor Vacancies** |  |
|  | RL likely to be leaving in October. The ongoing project at the village hall should be completed by then. DP expressed his formal thanks to RL for his service as a councillor and wished him and Marianne all the best in their new life in Shropshire, they will both be missed.  With only four councillors remaining, the pressure is to more and more.  The lunch event planned for 26th October is being promoted with posters to be drawn up for the noticeboards. An article is in the newsletter and is also being promoted on Facebook. | **LE** |
| **19052** | **Simpson Village Hall Emergency Lighting** |  |
|  | The points raised during the maintenance inspections were reviewed and discussed. Further discussion focussed on the need for more support to manage the hall and carry out tasks such as the weekly fire tests.  CE agreed to step in when RL leaves. CE to liaise with PB/RL over tasks.  **Resolved Unanimously:**   1. **That the emergency light in the store room be replaced** 2. **That external solar PIR lights be fitted and monitored to ensure efficacy** | **CE/PB/RL**  **LE** |
| **19053** | **Any other business** |  |
|  | **Lissel Road Railings –** DP expressed thanks to ST for addressing this. ST outlined that the decision was yet to be taken with regard the painting of the railings.  **Newsletter** – Formal thanks were experessed to Lorraine Hodghton for her services in the production of the newsletters, flowers had been sent and received. Thanks also to Dylan Jeavons who will now take on the production of the newsletter.  **Ashland Newsletter delivery** – LE to email the new circulation list to request support in delivery of the newsletter.  PB reported the sad loss recently of Elsie Scriven who was the very first Clerk to the Council.  The request from the Mayor to visit the parish was noted.  DP is meeting with the Guinness Housing Regional Director  ST requested that a new ladder be made available at the Village Hall to access the loft area storage. | **LE** |
| **19054** | **Date of next meeting** |  |
|  | The next Full Council meeting will be held on Monday 4th November 2019. | **Noted** |
|  | **The meeting closed at 10.00PM** |  |

Signed ……….……………………………… Chair Date …………………….

Signed ………………………………………. Clerk Date …………………….