

Town Council
18th January 2021 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: T McMahon
D Abbott
J Carroll
C Copleston
D Dixon-Wilkinson
Y Farrell
S Goodchild
D Jones
M S Kennedy
R Morgan
A Slough
S Thorne
K Wattingham

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 2

11468 APOLOGIES

None.

11469 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

11470 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

11471 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14th December 2020.

Resolved: To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th December 2020.

11472 COMMITTEE MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the following committees and consider any recommendations contained therein

Corporate Services Committee	None to present
Community Services Committee	None to present
Environment & Leisure Committee	None to present
Planning Committee	30 th November 2020
Town Partnership Committee	None to present

To receive the minutes of the following sub committee and consider any recommendations contained therein

New Office Provisions Sub-Committee None to present

New Cemetery Sub-Committee None to present

Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above.

11473 TOWN MAYOR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr Jones joined the meeting (7.08pm)

Members received a verbal report on events that had been attended by the Town Mayor.

Members were advised that the virtual raffle had been successful, however, the Civic Service planned for spring 2021 had had to be cancelled.

11474 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS & ON TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED

Members provided verbal reports from meetings they had attended of outside organisations or from training courses they had attended on behalf of the Council.

Cllr Thorne updated members on Dial-a-Ride, regular e-mails had kept members up to date, funding of £1,300 from Central Bedfordshire Council had been received enabling the ability to offer journeys to receive Covid-19 vaccinations free of charge.

The Memorial Hall had been utilised for the Blood Donor Services, however, was closed to all other activities. The hall had been offered for use for Covid-19 vaccinations, they were awaiting a response. Thanks were offered to Cllr Wattingham for his work in applying for grant funding and for his hard work behind the scenes as Chair of the Memorial Hall.

11475 AUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2019/20

Members received the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for consideration.

Members were advised that the external auditor had raised the following under Section 3;

“We were required to return the Annual Governance and Accountability Return to enable the Council to correct the following:

A/ Total borrowing at Box 10 was initially understated by £3,000. The correct loan outstanding at 31 March 2020 was £245,393.

B/ Unspent grants and contributions received up until 2012 had not been included in other receipts in the year of receipt as required since then, but instead had been held in a government grants deferred account the balance of which was included as an adjustment between boxes 7 and 8. The accounts should have been restated and grants fully recognised in the year of receipt subsequently in accordance with Proper Practice. The restatement increased the reserves at Box 7 by £260,575 in both 2018/19 and 2019/20.

In future the Council should ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is accurate and complete.”

In relation to comment A/, this was a transcribing error by the company providing year end support services.

In relation to comment B/, the initial accounting treatment of this receipt for 2019/20 was consistent with previous years. The new external auditors have applied treatment of this type of receipt in a different way to previous external auditors.

In addition, in the completion letter, it advised the following:

Minor scope for improvement in 2020/21

The 2018/19 figures in the accounting statement were correctly restated and a reason provided but the column was not headed ‘restated’ to confirm the differences from the previous year’s annual return. In future, if prior year figures were restated the Council should head the column ‘restated’.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To approve and accept the Annual Return including the external auditor’s certificate;**
 - 2. To note the requirement that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is accurate and complete;**
 - 3. To note that if the prior year figures are restated the Council should head the column ‘restated’.**

11476 VILLAGE GREEN PLAY AREA SURFACING

It had been highlighted, through the budget setting process, that in approving the resurfacing of the Village Green Play area it was not confirmed how this project would be funded. At the Environment & Leisure Committee meeting, the discussion on how this project was to be funded was through the use of ear marked reserves, EMR 327 Play Areas. This was a decision for the Environment & Leisure Committee to make, however as it had an impact on the council’s budget setting process for 2021/22 it was felt important to rectify this situation ahead of the next scheduled meeting of the Committee.

- Resolved:** **To fund the re-surfacing of the Village Green Play area through the use of EMR 327 Play Areas.**

11477 2021/22 BUDGET AND PRECEPT

Members received the officers draft budget for 2021/22 for consideration and approval of a budget for 2021/22 and a precept.

An amendment to the officer recommendation was proposed to read: To approve the Budget as amended and a precept of £969,231 for 2021/22.

The officer recommendation read: To approve the budget and a precept of £950,853 for 2021/22.

The amendment was proposed by: Cllr Jones seconded by: Cllr Kennedy

A recorded vote was requested:

Members for: Cllrs: K Wattingham, S Thorne, S Goodchild, D Jones, R Morgan, D Dixon-Wilkinson, M Kennedy, J Carroll, C Copleston, Y Farrell and A Slough.

Members against: Cllr Abbott

Abstentions: none

Accordingly, this became the substantive motion.

Members voted on the substantive motion.

Proposed by: Cllr Jones seconded by: Cllr Kennedy

A recorded vote was requested:

Members in favour: Cllrs: K Wattingham, S Thorne, S Goodchild, D Jones, R Morgan, D Dixon-Wilkinson, M Kennedy, J Carroll, C Copleston, Y Farrell and A Slough.

Members against: Cllr: D Abbott

Abstentions: Cllr: T McMahon

An additional motion was proposed by: Cllr Jones, seconded by: Cllr Kennedy

The proposal read: To transfer with immediate effect the sum of £25,000 from General Reserves to Earmarked Reserve 322 – Pavilion Renovations.

Members voted in favour of the additional motion.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To approve the Budget as amended and a precept of £969,231 for 2021/22.**
 - 2. To transfer with immediate effect the sum of £25,000 from General Reserves to Earmarked Reserve 322 – Pavilion Renovations.**

11478 OUTCOME OF BOUNDARY REVIEW

Members recalled formulating a response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's draft recommendations for Central Bedfordshire Council at the Town Council meeting on 24th August 2020.

The consultation period closed on 7 September 2020. The final recommendations from the LGBC were released on 12th January 2021. The below relates to the LGBC final recommendations for Central Bedfordshire:

'ELECTORAL REVIEW OF CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL: FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has published final recommendations setting out new electoral arrangements for Central Bedfordshire. Details of the recommended changes are contained in a report which explains how they have been developed, including how we have taken into account local views. The report and interactive mapping are available on our consultation site

<https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/18789>. The full library of information relating to the review is available on our main website <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/eastern/bedfordshire/central-bedfordshire>.

The electoral arrangements for your parish or town council will change because of our recommendations.

The recommendations only become law once they have received parliamentary approval. The formal document (a draft Order) to start that process will be laid in Parliament shortly. The draft Order will provide for the new electoral arrangements for Central Bedfordshire to come into effect for local elections in 2023.'

The following summary of HRTC Objections and the LGBCE response to those objections was summarised by Cllr Jones as follows:

1. Objection against the combining together of the current wards of Parkside and Tithe Farm to form Houghton Regis East.
Result:- Objection not successful. The wards would be so combined.
2. Objection against the introduction of the area around All Saints Academy, part of Dunstable Town Council, into Houghton Regis West for the purposes of balancing the electoral numbers.
Result:- Objection successful. The area has been removed and reinstated in Dunstable North.
3. Objection against moving the entire polling district of HH5 into Tithe Farm parish ward and therefore into Houghton Regis East.
Result:- Objection not successful. This transfer would go ahead.
4. Objection against the carving up of the polling district of HH2 in an arbitrary manner that was inconsistent with the Commission's desire for strong, easily identifiable boundaries.
Result:- The proposal has been amended, but polling district HH2 was still being split up. The LGBCE has now decided that, where it meanders north-west to south-east across the polling district, the strong, easily identifiable boundary would be the Houghton Brook. Basically, houses north of the Brook would be transferred into Parkside parish ward and therefore into Houghton Regis East,

while houses south of the Brook would remain in Houghton Hall parish ward and in Houghton Regis West. This change affects approximately 700 electors.

At the next elections due in 2023, therefore, Houghton Regis East ward (Parkside and Tithe Farm) would elect 3 CBC councillors, and Houghton Regis West ward (Houghton Hall) would elect 2 CBC councillors. At parish level, Houghton Hall ward would elect 5 HRTC councillors, Parkside ward would elect 4 HRTC councillors and Tithe Farm ward would elect 5 HRTC councillors.

A motion was proposed to read: To note, following the final proposals of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in respect of Central Bedfordshire Council's electoral arrangements, the revised arrangements for the Town's CBC divisions and the consequential impact on the Town Council wards at the elections due to be held in 2023.

Proposed by: D Jones seconded by: K Wattingham

Members voted in favour of the motion.

Resolved: To note, following the final proposals of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in respect of Central Bedfordshire Council's electoral arrangements, the revised arrangements for the Town's CBC divisions and the consequential impact on the Town Council wards at the elections due to be held in 2023.

Members commented on the possibility of a boundary review to enable the existing part of the parish of Chalton which is within HRN1 to become part of Houghton Regis. It was requested that the Town Clerk establish links with Chalton Parish to gauge their views.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.46pm

Dated this 22nd day of March 2021

Chairman