

# Minutes

## Parishes Forum

23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020

19.00 –21.00hrs

Via Zoom

## In Attendance

Cllr Emily Darlington	Chair and Cabinet Member
Cllr Sue Smith	Vice Chair
Delia Shepard – Clerk	Bletchley & Fenny Stratford TC
Cllr Ed Hume	Bletchley & Fenny Stratford TC
Cllr David Monk	Broughton & Milton Keynes PC
Vicky Mote - Clerk	Broughton & Milton Keynes PC
Cllr Karl Kavarana	Campbell Park PC
Cllr Tubo Uranta	Campbell Park PC
Cllr Adan Kahin	Campbell Park PC
Cllr Phil Ayles	Castlethorpe PC
Eirwen Tagg - Clerk	Great Linford PC
Cllr Sharon Smith	Kents Hill & Monkston PC
Cllr Steve Axtell	Lavendon PC
Cllr Anne Kelcey	Lavendon PC
Cllr Alan Francis	New Bradwell PC
Cllr Phil Winsor	Newport Pagnell TC
Cllr Mary Major	Old Woughton PC
Cllr Chris Williams	Shenley Brook End & Tattenhoe PC
Cllr Michael Cato	Shenley Brook End & Tattenhoe PC
Cllr David Tunney	Shenley Church End PC
Cllr David Pye	Simpson & Ashland PC
Cllr Peter Kirkham	Stantonbury PC
Lynne Compton – Clerk	Stony Stratford TC
Lesley Sung – Clerk	Walton Community Council
Cllr Veronica Belcher	West Bletchley Council
Cllr Ernie Thomas	West Bletchley Council
Cllr Hilary Saunders	Wolverton & Greenleys TC
Steve McNay - Clerk	Woughton Community Council
Cllr Janette Bobey	Woughton Community Council
Cllr Terry Baines	Ward Councillor - Conservatives
Brian Barton	MKALC Rep

Cllr Paul Alexander	Ward Cllr - Lib Dems
<b>Officers</b>	
Sarah Gonsalves	Director of Policy, Insight and Communications
Kay Pettit	Programme Manager – Parish & Town Councils
Heather Baker	MKC Partnership Officer – Parish & Town Councils
<b>Apologies</b>	
Gemma Noble	Calverton PM
Cllr Vicky McLean	Emberton PC
Cllr Steve Gibson	Emberton PC
Cllr Linda Morgan	Great Linford PC
Cllr Steve Weller	Shenley Church End PC
Cllr Rob Gifford	Stony Stratford PC

Unfortunately, as we were using Zoom, I was unable to get all the names of those in attendance. If I have missed you off, please accept my apologies and let me know, so that I can add you to the attendee list. Thank you – Heather Baker.

<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes from last meeting</b>	<b>Action</b>
	Minutes from the 12 <sup>th</sup> March 2020 meeting were agreed	
<b>3</b>	<b>The Way Forward</b>	
	Cllr Darlington introduced herself and told the forum that she had taken over from Cllr Moriah Priestley and parishes was now in her portfolio of Public Realm which also includes highways, landscaping, waste and recycling, fly tipping and customers services and also working on the Covid 19 committee. She told the forum that we were using Zoom as most parishes were more familiar with this (as opposed to Microsoft Teams) and it had the ability to have more faces on screen at any one time. She thanked Woughton CC for hosting the meeting and, the Parish Manager, Steve McNay, who was administrating.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Covid 19 Information and Update</b>	
	<p>Cllr Darlington wanted to focus on Covid 19 as this is the big issue now and wanted to let parishes know what is going on at MKC and she asked that parishes join in.</p> <p>We are in the middle of the pandemic – need to think about ongoing pressing issues for residents and we are all facing difficult times.</p> <p>Sarah Gonsalves (who is a member of the Corporate Leadership Team at MKC and has parish liaison / relationships as part of her portfolio) gave a wider update on behalf of MKC.</p> <p>She updated the Forum on the Public Health response, managing Covid 19 and managing services and what is happening at MKC.</p> <p>In terms of the Public Health response, MKC has been working closely with the Director of Public Health has been overseeing / working on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working closely with Public Health England</li> <li>• How we ensure things are managed (this has been challenging)</li> <li>• A more localised response</li> <li>• Noting that lockdown is slowly coming to an end</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What MKC can do to prevent further spread</li> <li>• Publishing the MK Plan (which was circulated to all Parishes)</li> <li>• Noting the very positive position in MK with low transmission rates</li> <li>• Doing weekly updates</li> </ul> <p>The current rate of Covid 19 positive cases is 0.7 per 100,000 population which is very low and going down weekly. Bedford is 13.4 and Luton 27.6 for comparison.</p> <p>Really positive story in MK and want to keep it that way. Believe it is low because of the design of MK and infrastructure.</p> <p>M Bracey (CEO) wrote to everyone and got positive feedback in terms of all the great work being undertaken by parish and town councils across the borough</p> <p>Looking at several things and ideas on vagrancy etc and would like to hear from parishes as you know your areas best.</p> <p>Given new powers – want to be preventative, working with schools, businesses vulnerable groups care homes etc.</p> <p>Managing the pandemic is new to everyone – we have never had to deal with anything like this so all learning and would like to hear from parishes ideas</p> <p>Approach in MK is that businesses, schools etc know what they are doing, and we want to give support to them - we trust that people are going to be sensible.</p>	
	<p>Q. To provide better well thought out information we need to know / understand better why MK has an advantage? What analysis has been undertaken?</p> <p>A. What we think it has been a mixed economy of data and it was only last week that we got the picture; it has been quite difficult. Educated assumption now we have data, is that we understand particular groups and targeted them, accordingly, focussing on the public health theme. We have had a couple of outbreaks, but they were managed well, we are working with care homes, schools and employers etc. Also worked closely with hospitals. We are doing more now that we are getting the data.</p> <p>Q. There is legislation to share data. Would this be a possibility where it is useful to do so especially if there is to be local lockdowns?</p> <p>A. Not necessarily getting data from Government. We are doing work, so hopefully will not have a local lockdown. We are working to help businesses vulnerable groups etc. It has worked well. We have worked well together, and we must be there where there aren't any community groups available to support. MKC is really impressed with the responses of parish and town councils in respect of the pandemic and thank you all for working together.</p> <p>Comment: Agreed that support from MKC had been great and officers had worked really hard, alongside all agencies, etc to protect residents</p>	

	<p>Q. MK figures are really low, and MK is a new town with lots of green spaces, it would be beneficial to have figures for each areas?</p> <p>A. It has been a difficult time for everyone. MK has green spaces close at hand, which is a real positive. We only have results for now not retrospective. We have had several deaths tragically. We also need to be aware of data protection – we have yet to determine the most effective way. We are keeping an eye on numbers and looking for patterns.</p> <p>Q. Concern about care homes - has there been several deaths and is that included in data from Government?</p> <p>A. Been in daily contact with care homes there has been deaths - which I believe are roughly about a third - but don't quote me. Figures will emerge more, we acted quickly at the beginning of the national lockdown and supported people in homes. There were a low number of deaths in MK. We did an awful lot at the outset working with care homes.</p> <p>There was originally a lack of PPE at hospitals and care homes but MKC worked together with care homes and hospitals to get PPE very early on and hoped that this early intervention helped to prevent deaths in care homes.</p>	
	<p>How has Covid impacted on services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major changes around the area suspended and ongoing</li> <li>• Not enough recycling tips for size of the city</li> <li>• Tip plan agreed with the police</li> <li>• Keen to hear from parishes we need to learn what happened in first wave</li> <li>• Right from outset needed to maintain critical services and look at what could be reduced, stopped or maintained and carry on</li> <li>• Shut Civic Offices</li> <li>• Main focus was on vulnerable people. Redeployed staff, supported care homes and people in their own homes</li> <li>• Advised by Government on homelessness</li> <li>• All hotels asked to shut so had to find places</li> <li>• Used Travel Lodge for 48 people</li> <li>• Children's services targeted and kept in contact with them</li> <li>• Lots of suppliers took on a different approach Serco, Mears etc – worked closely – good experience</li> <li>• Highways - emergency response</li> <li>• Most services have started to come back to 'normal operation'</li> <li>• Registry of Births just started back,</li> <li>• Interesting few months (early months) where many staff were redeployed i.e. distributing food parcels, collecting medicines etc.</li> <li>• Really interested in hearing experiences from parish and town councils</li> </ul>	
	<p>Q. Netherfield experience of Mears has not been very good; there's been lots of fly tipping etc and Mears themselves were seen dumping stuff. Residents have been ringing Mears and they refused to come out. A vulnerable couple were flooded twice but Mears said it was not an emergency and Cllrs had to</p>	

get involved and follow up.

A. Cllr ED are aware of some issues and has raised them with Mears. There is now a backlog. Mears used the furlough scheme whereas Serco never did and redeployed staff so burials could take place. Cllr ED is in discussion with Mears and the system is now working.

Q. How long will you be able to keep people in the Travel Lodge?

A. We are working with Government to support; we are looking to buy the Travel Lodge. The homeless have many issues this is a good opportunity to work with them looking at underlying issues in terms of homelessness. We have a plan in place and want to move forward with it. It's not just about accommodation, its about multiple issues. It has gone mostly petty well and overwhelmed with support.

Q. Noticed in village cases of fly tipping is up. Is this because it is more difficult to get into tips? Is this the case all over the borough?

A. Cllr ED informed the forum that fly tipping is up 3% and more people are fly tipping on the outskirts of MK and may be from outside MK. In terms of commercial fly tipping, there is not enough data yet, but we are working on this. More pending cases to go to court and fines issued. Littering has gone up significantly and costing MKC and The Parks Trust more money.

Q. Been impressed by MKC who have demonstrated working well together and collaborating, especially for the homeless.

1. MKALC met and talked about services and finances and we believe MKC could do better with communications.
2. On the new Director Structure Chart that has been distributed, it does not say anywhere who has responsibility for parishes. We assume it is Sarah Gonsalves which we all approve. Could a new chart be re-issued to include parishes please?
3. Recognise KP and HB give help, is there a dedicated team for local councils?

SG is the director and KP and HB are dedicated to parishes – want to ensure that if you have issues contact KP and HB, appreciate communications could always improve. We appreciate input and compliments.

Q. How are the homeless getting on in hotels

A. Working well – At first it was quite difficult, and we didn't have enough space (some homeless people were accommodated in the Civic Offices overnight) but is now working well.

Q. Fly tipping and litter is increasing is this because you are dealing with the homeless? Parishes are doing litter picks themselves and if Mears staff are on furlough, are we getting money back as they are getting money from the government and MKC? Work at Bletchley High Street is good and appreciated additional enforcement.

	<p>A. Cllr ED returned thanks for the town council working with Highways and also to other parish councils that have been engaged and thank you for being flexible. We are continuing to monitor once the tables and chairs can use the outside space. Mears charge by the job. Regarding litter and fly tipping - there is big pressure on weekly rounds - it has increased with people working from home creating 30% more waste. Tips are not fully booked - there is enough capacity to meet demand. There have been difficulties with the booking system which have been dealt with by customer service teams who have been coming in at weekends to support. Thanks to all parishes that have done litter picks.</p> <p>Q. The tip in New Bradwell is managed well and not causing any problems. What's the future for tips? Will we continue with the booking system?</p> <p>A. Cllr ED - don't know whether the booking system will remain, but it will while social distancing is in place. There is a split in opinion, there are huge benefits with the booking system, which have included the fact that it has stopped people from neighbouring boroughs outside of MK, using them. We do need another tip and we are looking for sites in the south</p> <p>Q. Mask wearing in shops don't have to wear in libraries. When are they opening again?</p> <p>A. We must consider what the actual function, for a community hub, groups etc. We do not want to encourage groups don't know what will happen in the future but will be notified re a reduced library service very soon. There are also e learning services.</p> <p>Q. The dumping of rubbish has been going on for years - there appears to be no consequences. Could MKC let parishes know when i.e. prosecutions, fines etc take place so we can put something in newsletters so residents can see something is being done.</p> <p>A.SG will take this back.</p> <p>Q. Stantonbury having to hire skips for fly tipping which is costing a lot of money and managing what goes in. Could MKC manage skips</p> <p>A. Cllr ED - prevention works, and there is a need to create an environment to say it is not ok to tip. Please report and get residents to report - it's costing the taxpayers.</p>	<p><b>SG</b></p>
	<p>Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not been through cuts but last Tuesday announced £3m cuts and now spending reserves and having to review finances. As you know, as a principal authority we are unable to raise council tax beyond a certain limit.</li> <li>• Positive is that MKC is in a better position than many councils</li> <li>• We have managed the last 10 years well, but we are now in a difficult place – just being open and honest.</li> <li>• Extra expenditure</li> <li>• Homeless and accommodation very expensive</li> <li>• Spent a lot on PPE</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social care system kept going</li> <li>• Care homes – MKC have invested an extra 10% invested in their staff</li> <li>• Child placements</li> <li>• Additional waste costs</li> <li>• Loss of income – reduction in council tax and business rates collection rates</li> <li>• Parking income – significant loss</li> <li>• Looking at a number of scenarios – worst case loss of £45m</li> <li>• Management action plan developed</li> <li>• Had funding from Government but it no way covers the black hole</li> <li>• At the beginning of the pandemic we asked parishes about finances and feedback is appreciated and seems many parishes are doing / managing well</li> <li>• How are parishes doing?</li> <li>• Doing rapid services reviews</li> <li>• Parking charges – don't think it will ever go back to the same level</li> <li>• Having to do some big thinking – subsidies for buses, etc</li> <li>• We went into this with healthy enough finances, so we are in a better position than most councils</li> </ul>	
	<p>Q. A letter was sent to Cllr ED from MKALC, which detailed the financial impact of circa £900k from 8 parishes. Are there any grants from MKC?</p> <p>A. Response has been sent stating what we are doing. There has been significant job losses and many residents on furlough. Significant level of applications for Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS). Details about grants available following recent Delegated Decision, which extended Discretionary Scheme. Leisure service providers can apply for a grant. We have tried to think creatively as we are unable to give money directly to parishes. It is a constant moving beast; all are facing some challenges. Information regarding extended scheme will be issued shortly. Conversations are being had with parishes that have leisure facilities.</p> <p>Q. Can we get MKC to give financial advice, it's important that parishes can keep track?</p> <p>A. Support and leadership in lobbying parliament – doesn't seem right that parishes that have community organisations with leisure facilities could get a grant, but if parishes run directly you can't. MKC to keep up the lobbying of parliament. There is loss of finance from children's group which is terrible for children. We recognise the situation that parishes are in. Cllr ED informed the forum that there are really weird rules from government it is happening with everything saying you must do this with this money when they should trust us and parishes and what their needs are.</p> <p>SG said that she had never experienced a time like this it has been really difficult to keep on top of it and understand what we can do. Long term plans have been radically revised</p> <p>Q. Need dialog with MKC over services and reduction of services which affect residents so that parishes can plan. Partnerships really need to go down to</p>	

	<p>the nitty gritty so that parishes can help MKC.</p> <p>A. Asset transfer will still carry on as expected. We have a partnership approach, its difficult to say what will happen and what the future will look like. We will work with parishes and what we are doing for residents.</p> <p>Comment: Special plea to find a solution for financially affected parishes.</p> <p>Q. Trusting the lower tier – £2.2m to MKC. We asked MKC to support swimming pool (that was an asset transferred some years ago) and we were told no. There were no elected members involved the decision was taken by officers</p> <p>A. Cllr ED said there is confusion with the £2.2m - there are constraints on how that money can be used. Must have a think on leisure facility and include parishes in this discussion. Steve Richardson is to go back to the clerk. Leisure facilities are important, and we need to work together.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Good News and Hot Issues</b>	
	<p>Has anyone got any good news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Together We Can <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Conversations and workshop at March Forum</li> <li>II. The feedback amendments included</li> <li>III. Incorporate extra additions in relation to Covid 19</li> <li>IV. Once agreed at PAG it will be sent out to parishes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
	<p>Q. MKALC met and could not recommend adoption at this time. There are new and necessary amendments needed. Strongly felt at the MKALC meeting that it should not be sent to just PAG but sent to all parishes as many do not meet in August and will not see before September at the earliest and request adoption be deferred until September Forum.</p> <p>A. It was agreed it would go back to the Parishes Advisory Group (PAG) initially, and then on to all parishes to seek views / comments on the next iteration. Not for the Parishes Forum to agree (as not all parishes represented at the Forum). It will be circulated to all [48] parishes for feedback (as previous).</p> <p>Q. Any good news - all 48 parishes to disseminate information best practices as they are established</p> <p>A. Cllr ED wants parishes to learn from each other – something to bring back to the Parishes Advisory Group – Share best practices and sharing learning from each other.</p>	
	<p>Q. Cllr SS said it was lovely to see lots of people tonight and asked if people were interested and preferred to use Zoom (online) rather than going out to meetings?</p> <p>A. Cllr ED asked for a very quick straw poll – nothing official. Many agreed Cllr ED wants to look at the format of Parishes Forum and have big themes rather than 15-minute slots.</p>	



### **Dates of future meetings**

- 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020 - Online
- 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020
- 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021

### **Further suggested dates**

- 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021
- 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021
- 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021
- 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022