

Minutes

Parishes Forum

10th December 2020

19.00 –21.15hrs

Via Zoom

In Attendance

Cllr Emily Darlington	Chair and Cabinet Member
Cllr Sue Smith	Vice Chair
Andrea Jones - Clerk	Astwood & Hardmead PC
Delia Shepard – Clerk	Bletchley & Fenny Stratford TC
Cllr Ed Hume	Bletchley & Fenny Stratford TC
Cllr James Alexander	Bradwell PC
Cllr David Monk	Broughton & Milton Keynes PC
Vicky Mote - Clerk	Broughton & Milton Keynes PC
Cllr Crispina Odunewu	Campbell Park PC
Cllr Phil Ayles	Castlethorpe PC
John Keane	Castlethorpe PC
Cllr Rebecca Kurth	CMK TC
Cllr Len Greenwood	Clifton Reynes & Newton Blossomville PC
Cllr Stephen Gibson	Emberton PC
Robin Thomson	Gayhurst PM
Cllr David Stabler	Great Linford PC
Eirwen Tagg - Clerk	Great Linford PC
Cllr Phil Turnbull	Haversham cum Little Linford PC
Cllr Paul Grindley	Kents Hill & Monkston PC
Cllr Steve Axtell	Lavendon PC
Cllr Ann Kelcey	Lavendon PC
Philip Compton – Clerk	Loughton and Great Holm
Cllr John Hamilton	Moulsoe PC
Cllr Alan Francis	New Bradwell PC
Cllr Phil Winsor	Newport Pagnell TC
Sheila Bushnell -Clerk	North Crawley PC
Cllr Mary Major	Old Woughton PC
Cllr Chris Williams	Shenley Brook End & Tattenhoe PC
Cllr Steve Weller	Shenley Church End PC
Cllr David Tunney	Shenley Church End PC
Cllr David Pye	Simpson & Ashland PC

Lynne Compton – Clerk	Stony Stratford TC
Cllr Amanda Taylor	Walton Community Council
Cllr Veronica Belcher	West Bletchley Council
Cllr Ernie Thomas	West Bletchley Council
Cllr Brian Stainton	Weston Underwood PC
Cllr Mynhardt Kitshoff	Whitehouse Community Council
Cllr Hilary Saunders	Wolverton & Greenleys TC
Steve McNay - Clerk	Woughton Community Council
Cllr Sue Smith	Woughton Community Council
Cllr Donna Fuller	Woughton Community Council
Officers	
Sarah Gonsalves	Director of Policy, Insight and Communications
Kay Pettit	Programme Manager – Parish & Town Councils
Heather Baker	Partnership Officer – Parish & Town Councils
Steve Richardson	Director for Finance and Resources
Lisa Wheaton	Budget and Financial Planning Manager
Apologies	
Cllr Simon Webb	Fairfields PC
Cllr Ian Hunt	Fairfields PC
Cllr Mark Covington	Weston Underwood PC
Cllr Paul Alexander	Ward Councillor

Unfortunately, as we were using Zoom, I may not have 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.

2	Minutes from last meeting	Action
	Minutes from the 17 th September 2020 meeting were agreed	
3	Local Council Showcase	
	<p>Great Linford PC</p> <p>Eirwen Tag (Clerk Great Linford PC) gave a presentation on their Community Larder initiative – see presentation attached. It is their journey in response to the Covid 19 pandemic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Linford PC now has 2 offers - the Community Larder and two Community Fridges • Community Larder open 48 weeks a year - £10 initial membership and then £3.50 per week for individuals to get up to 10 non-perishable items and free fruit and veg and discounts at local shops. Family members pay £7 for 20 non-perishable items etc. • Community Fridge - end of shelf life food – free of charge • Both Community Fridge and Community Larder are open to anyone – no means testing • Great Linford signpost people 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last week Community Fridge saved 1.5 tonnes food saved from going to landfill and anything what doesn't go to land fill goes to the pig farm so there is very little waste • Given residents opportunity to talk to neighbours - hope in future to start a community café – been given a platform to build on • Use every opportunity we must tell residents of what available • Lots of volunteers (10 volunteers0 helping out at Larder, who then go to the Fridge • Sofea has brought organisational capabilities • Luckily a team member had food hygiene qualifications • Have an appointment system so residents are not crowded • Lots of PPE required • Lots of practical hurdles to overcome but more than worth it. <p>People had asked 'Why locate in Downs Barn?'. We noted the Vital Signs report, where there was detail of Pupil Premium Used all communications channels available to promote.</p> <p>Future – more Fridges and more larders. Hope to work with other parishes</p>	
	<p>For your information Link to Sofea giving information and contacts https://www.sofea.uk.com/about-sofea/ Link to Fareshare https://fareshare.org.uk/</p>	
	<p>Q. What staffing and organisation did Sofea bring? A. 1 ranger helps to unload. 1 organises the sorting. Can leave to volunteers to run – between 4-6 people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving the amount of food is heavy work. • Sofea manages money, members and organisation • We have also had offers of money • Sofea have been very supportive any problems they find an answer 	
	<p>Stony Stratford TC Lynne Compton (clerk at SSTC) told the forum that Stony Stratford TC have a few things going on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy clerk has allocation part of her duties and is joint moderator of Covid 19 support group facebook page and volunteer group. Co-ordinating and gathering requests, collecting food parcels and prescriptions etc. • Work with Age Concern who do one to one's with people with job interviews and clothes and provide support. Stony Stratford provide space at their offices 	

	<p>MK had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country now one of the highest so any support to help these people is important</p>	
	<p>Shenley Brook End & Tattenhoe PC Cllr Chris Williams (Chair of SBE&T) gave an update on what they are doing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shenley Brook End & Tattenhoe PC covers 8 estates and 30,000 residents • Took advice from BALC, NALC and MKALC and neighbouring councils • Spoke to people we already have communications with especially the older people of our clubs. Talked to local supermarkets. • Took our staff away from landscaping service to pick up medicine and provide food parcels and anything residents wanted • Quickly discovered Sofea and similar set up to Great Linford PC • Converted one of our pavilions to a Community Larder and foodbank • One resident had to be removed from family home in a distressed state. Family unable to visit due to no income so the PC acted as taxi to provide connection between them • Spoken to West Bletchley Council, Shenley Church End PC and Stony Stratford TC to create hampers (100 so far) and deliver to huge number, been to local businesses to fund, still finding people to help. Quite a wide range of residents will benefit. Grateful to these Councils for their help • Put money aside to support 2 homes for people with dementia, 2 homes for people with severe brain damage, a home for children needing specialist help and domestic violence victims. Giving these organisations a large sum of grants to give these people a good Christmas - they need financial help • Working with younger people • 200 elderly residents will have a nice surprise at Christmas. 	
	<p>Bletchley & Fenny Stratford TC Delia Shepherd (clerk at B&FSTC) has been inspired by what she has heard.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The silver lining is partnership working. • Planning to use / spend recent Covid marshal money from MKC • Worked closely in the past with NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on self-care and promoting appropriate health messages. • Became aware of the need to improve the target messaging to ethnic groups particularly Bangladeshi groups. • Early stages of a project with West Bletchley and NHS CCG hoping to use Covid marshalling money to develop outbreak plan to work with young Bangladeshi residents to make a rap video for the harder to reach groups which are the younger people, elderly people and women, for us to get appropriate health message back 	
	<p>Q. How did you realise it was the Bangladeshi you need to target</p>	

	<p>A. It came from NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and by the amount of deaths in this group sadly</p>	
4	Budgets and Future Outlook	
	<p>Budget is not a good news story, although news about the vaccine is. Steve Richardson (Director of Finance and Resources) and Lisa Wheaton (Financial Planning and Budget Manager) thanked the Forum for inviting them.</p> <p>Challenges within MKC dealing with everything in the last few months See presentation attached</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great work going on in the communities like we have just heard • Challenges in recent months and how this translates to parishes • Brexit remains an uncertainty • Single year spending review also does not provide certainty, very late announcement for councils • Council tax increases down to authorities - up to 5% • One off payments Social Care grant around £1m for MK • Support around council tax reduction -nothing more known currently • Significant impact on council tax and unknown speed of recovery • Uncertainty in direction budget will go in. Not about to recover much before 2024 • Summer 2019 LCTRS consultation on size of pot and distribution methodology • Notional loss recalculated each year, IMD fixed until Index refreshed • Hopefully all parishes have received letters from MKC • Deadline for receipts for precept information is 1st February 	
	<p>Really tough proposals – not easy to cut more services especially after the last few years. Next year will be even tougher as one-off funding will not be there.</p>	
	<p>Q. Trying to twist arm of 70% refund for losses from the Government does that include income from parking and is June a definite the cut-off date? A. Yes parking is expected to be included. Losses on car parking is the biggest component by far. Potential for the June cut off dated to be extended. Four tranches of grant funding at different points this year trying to persuade MHCLG (Ministry of Housing Local Government and Communities) to twist the arm of the treasury to provide additional funding. All Local Authorities must provide monthly spreadsheet showing income and losses to MHCLG to show extra spending.</p> <p>Section 114 notices and financial stresses on councils is pretty strong Shows how many unknowns we are having to deal with.</p> <p>Announcement from Government money for local government based on LA to raise council tax increase of 5%. Trying not to increase by 5% as MKC know people do not have an extra 5% to cover the increase.</p>	

<p>Q. Council tax base to be confirmed, but my understanding is that tax base detail sent out to clerks already</p> <p>A. When sent out it was clearly stated provisional tax base, - not know them to change very much in the past.</p> <p>Q. Asking planning for new builds who are unable to come up with answers. Why do you not ask parishes and in the spirit of Together We Can - parishes can give you an accurate figure and in turn the parishes can benefit from it. All money coming from Government, but not parishes. Parishes took on assets i.e. like us with our swimming pool but when we ask for support as a parish, we are told that money cannot trickle down to parishes. Seems a disconnect between parishes and LA. We are not getting support from MKC</p> <p>A. Planning projection is a snapshot taken in October (legal requirement date) when we ask planners. Planners are in constant communication with developers. Have to take a prudent view on when developments take place and gets completed. Have taken some growth for Newport Pagnell. Approach we take is a common approach. We take our planning department as the best informed. If you feel there is a difference, we are happy to facilitate a conversation if you have evidence different to what we have. View MKC has taken is finance in MKC has been challenging government money goes direct to Principal Authorities for additional cost of the pandemic and losses incurred.</p> <p>Middleton pool – difficult situation. Up until this point MKC finance has been extremely challenging and for everyone. Can only claim up to 70% minus deduction for any savings so in fact less than 70%. We have made a £25k grant to NPTC through the business rate grant scheme - recognise not enough to cover loss and costs - we appreciate and understand that. Rescue package from government (£100m) for leisure providers provision for losses need to be looked at closely to understand. It is an application process. We are happy to work with you and support you in the process. Cllr Baume (Cabinet Member for Economy and Culture) who has leisure in her remit is doing a full review with leisure facilities - everything is changing – Cllr Baume will be speaking to parishes affected and is working with officers to support leisure in order to understand the appropriate level of support. We cannot underestimate how hard the whole leisure industry has been hit.</p> <p>Q Bletchley and Fenny is one of the 10 councils getting the LCTRS grant and extremely grateful, is there any way we can get information earlier for future planning and to understand what the future will be.</p> <p>A. As far as 2021/22 is concerned there are no changes from last year. We have started to discuss future - not sure what methodology will be but there will be a consultation process and we will work with you to minimise impact and to understand the impact and to avoid shocks. We will still be in a difficult position next year, not trying to underplay the impact. Empathise with challenges you are raising in terms of timescales – it's a challenge we all have, affected by the funding we receive - we don't hear until later in the year - we are calling for earlier settlement as this effects MKC also. Council</p>	
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	<p>tax base is another key element for all next year – we try to give an early head up. The tax base is shrinking because debt collection is minimal and legislation coming in to make it more challenging - we need to see what happens in the wider economy. We will give updates to give you more idea what it is shaping up like.</p> <p>Q. MKC does not seem to have in place a system for when buildings are eligible business rates when complete. One building is not contributing until April next year but we know that it was finished in May last year, does the council know what’s going on and what’s being rated?</p> <p>A. Unfortunately, unlike Council Tax there is no onus on the owner to notify us that they have occupied / a business building is completed / obligation to register. The council has an inspection team which uses planning data that is currently in force. The team take a view as to when it is ready for occupation - within a 3-month period. Property then gets brought in to rating. Owner can challenge this through the valuation office which is what happened in this case. Businesses find ways of stopping going on the rating list - e.g. businesses don’t complete the building fully (may look complete from the outside) and, in this case, there was an interruption due to Covid with our inspection team. Unfortunately, I am unable to comment beyond that on the specifics of this case.</p> <p>Response – The constructor was advertising to rent in March 2019. Why do residents have to pay right away disparege to businesses make no sense</p> <p>Q. Precepts is there any differential made between parishes who get 100% collection rate and those that don’t.</p> <p>A. As a Billing Authority we maintain a collection fund. There are major preceptors and minor preceptors. The major preceptors underwrite the minor preceptors. Parishes are minor preceptors and always get 100% precepts whereas the major preceptors take the hit for non-collection or overcollection or overestimate or underestimate the tax base.</p>	
	<p>Parish Council – effects and consequences</p> <p>Cllr Darlington asked how parish budget setting was going and did anyone want to tell the forum the effects they were experiencing.</p> <p>Cllr P Winsor – advised that due to the Middleton Pool issue budget, all departments within Newport Pagnell TC have been told to cut back as they are short of money</p> <p>Cllr E Thomas – A number of years ago West Bletchley increased their precept / budgets in case they had a bad year, so they had a contingency. They look to the longer term and have realistic budgets.</p> <p>Comment – MKC looking at long- and short-term impacts – good point. Its good for parishes to talk to each other and share information.</p>	

5	Good News and Hot Issues	
	<p>Together We Can Everyone has been sent V13 of Together We Can which is the version that came about following the latest consultation feedback Comments were</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think consultation should be increased from 6 to 8 weeks considering how parishes work. • Terms like champions – not aware • Not in a form that we are happy to sign • There is a lot of Covid in there – seems odd to have so much about this in there. KP to review • This is a living document to be looked at annually, hopefully this time next year Covid can be stripped out. • To be launched across the MKC, its about relationships, trying to build up within MKC to respond well. • V13 a lot better but agree overplayed the Covid content, continue to rewrite. See what works what doesn't • Have a glossary of terms • Despite the good work of Cllr David Pye, Kay, and Heather in reforming the document into more acceptable words, I remain deeply cynical still • Have a series of appendices about specific responses then we could have a basic document that does not distract. It is a toothless tiger, see no point in signing up if no power to back it up. <p>Cllr ED said she understands but when you compare with other authorities who have harrowing stories about their relationships, MKC do very well with the relationship's parishes. We are all grown-ups. What sanctions would you need to make it a reality? You need to build relationships not to create sanctions</p> <p>Q. is this document (V13) a consultation doc, and if so, what is the deadline? A. The document has been out to consultation and this (V13) is as a result of that, we will send final document as soon as we can, it's a living document to be checked to make sure it is fulfilling our needs.</p> <p>Q. On the previous protocol consultation period was 12 weeks now moved to 6 weeks MKC don't understand how PCs work. Some consultations are important and need time to consider. MKC need to get a grip and give PCs time if we are going to work in co-operation. A. Cllr ED There are all sorts of consultations and hope departments talk to parishes before going to consultation / enable some development of proposals together.</p> <p>The timescales in the document much depend on what the council is required to do / deliver and when, and MKC is often constrained by time (to enable things to be put into practice within required timescales). In some instances, MKC itself is governed by time scales. Much engagement is taking</p>	<p>KP</p>

	<p>place with parishes through online engagement by departments. Wherever we can we engage early. Cllr News gives the heads up on what is going on and what's coming up Please let us know if you are having difficulties. In a recent example (re the consultation on TWC) we gave weeks, but because did advise parishes to let us know if this was going to be a problem and was prepared to (and did) extend for those parishes who were unable to meet the deadline.</p> <p>Q. Asset and Service Devolution - extra line put in the TWC document which suggests that MKC does not trust PCs to engage with MKC – just let us get on with it if you are devolving assets and services - it goes to the heart of what has been said by Cllr CW</p> <p>A. Cllr ED – the added line was intended to be totally opposite of what you have just described - we will look at the wording again, but if you have any suggested wording, please let us know. It was more about supporting parishes in biodiversity etc. saying we are still in partnership and MKC officers are still available.</p>	
	<p>Parish Advisory Group</p> <p>Q. We need a decision about the PAG membership. MKALC</p> <p>A. Cllr ED is clear on PAG and its membership requirements. PAG is an informal group, advising her as the Cabinet member. It is not a decision-making body. Would like to see greater diversity participation. Cllr ED spoke to MKALC and explained about the nomination requirements, etc last week. We will be making a decision shortly. Whilst it is her decision, se want to ensure that the majority of PAG members are comfortable.</p> <p>Cllr Chris Williams is stepping down as the MKALC representative due to other commitments and the nominations received will seek to fill the MKALC role.</p>	

Dates of future meetings

- 18th March 2021

Further suggested dates

- 17th June 2021
- 16th September 2021
- 9th December 2021
- 17th March 2022