



# Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council

## Minutes of a meeting of the Full Council of Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council held at Sports Hall at Newton Leys Pavilion, Furzey Way, Newton Leys on Tuesday, 28th November, 2023 commencing at 7.30 pm

**Present:** Cllrs E Kelly-Wilson, R Graham, A Palmer, S Browne, K Ely, R Haine, E Hume, E O'Rourke, U Osumili, T Stephens, M Wymer and I Hussein

**Absent:** Cllrs L Campbell

**Apologies:** Cllrs G Bedford, A Khanom and A Segebrecht

**In attendance:** Cllr A Khanom (attending remotely); Alison Brown (Finance Manager), John Fairclough (Deputy Town Clerk), Davina Pancholi (Community Events and Support Services Officer) and Delia Shephard (Town Clerk)

### Min Ref

FC23/24-87 **Councillors' apologies for absence**

It was RESOLVED to note the apologies for absence and the absences without apologies as listed above. Cllr Khanom had given apologies for absence but was attending the meeting remotely via Teams link though this meant she was unable to vote.

FC23/24-88 **Councillors' declarations of interest in matters on the agenda**

Cllr Kelly-Wilson informed the meeting that his child was an NHS patient at Dr Jay Joshi's dental practice but that he did not believe he had a disclosable pecuniary interest as a consequence.

FC23/24-88.i **Approval of the draft minutes of the extraordinary meeting of council held on Tuesday 21 November 2023**

It was RESOLVED that the draft minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Council held on Tuesday 21 November be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

FC23/24-88.ii **Approval of Town Council response to the public consultation on the draft Brunel Centre Development Brief**

Following discussion it was RESOLVED to approve a draft response to the Brunel Centre Development brief consultation with one amendment to the wording regarding S106/Planning Gain. The final wording was as follows.

"Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council welcomes the publication of a draft development brief. The town council supports the Vision Statement on page 5 of the brief and believes that the combined ownership of the sites within the brief can unlock positive opportunities for the development of Bletchley.

We note that the brief sits within the context of the Bletchley Urban Design Framework SPD, a policy which the town council strongly supports.

Community engagement work undertaken to inform that SPD, the Town Deal Investment Plan, and the developing Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Plan points to the community's continued desire for change in the physical environment and appearance of the town centre as described at s 1.19.12 of the SPD.

The town council remains committed to the aspirations of :

- opening up the physical and visual links between the town centre and the



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railway station including provision of an Eastern facing entrance and changes to the Brunel site

- improving the quality of the public realm especially safety and wayfinding
- 'green' improvements to Queensway and creation of space for public/community activities and events
- addressing car parking – enforce illegal parking and plan for more car parks
- reuse and redevelopment of empty buildings for new uses
- improved access to the Redways network and improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists including links to the station and greater permeability of the town centre
- investment in culture and heritage to nurture the community and celebrate the area's distinctive heritage linked to Bletchley Park

as well as the key placemaking themes shown in S3.5 of the illustrative masterplan in the SPD.

Therefore we have the following specific comments to make on aspects of the brief.

## **Relationship to Central Bletchley Urban Design Framework SPD (adopted 2022)**

As noted above, the town council is supportive of the Urban Design Framework SPD but the brief does not appear to take the SPD any further forward in terms of detail. The brief does not include land in the Town Centre West opportunity area of the SPD which includes the former Co-op building and the car parking land on Albert Street. Yet the SPD correctly defines the former Co-op building and the Wilko building as crucial to defining the northern side of a new larger Stanier Square. The Wilko building is already in the ownership of MKDP; but the brief seems to allow for the retention of this building in apparent contradiction of the SPD.

We welcome the parking study (which was proposed in the SPD) and is now being undertaken by MKCC and the commitment in the brief that the council will be commissioning a parking strategy for Central Bletchley (p35 – 4.8.6) but the exclusion of the current car parking sites on Albert Street and the failure to synchronize the development brief with the parking study completely undermines the value of the brief. Decisions about the numbers and distribution of car parking spaces affect the whole town centre not just the area contained within the brief and we argue it is premature to produce the brief without sight of the results of the study. The brief and the parking study outcomes and are streams of work which should inform each other.

## **Land uses**

The land use requirements in the development brief are ambiguous and too flexible in comparison with the SPD. We would like to have seen more detail and stronger guidance for developers on the requirements for housing numbers, commercial space and mix, and potential community use. For example on page 31 at 4.2.5 the brief states it will support a range of complementary "main town centre uses" (as defined by the NPPF) including evening economy, community/leisure and cultural. This is not very specific and the next section 4.2.6 is vague about the requirement for a multi-use community hub which "might" house the Library and a Health Hub. We would ask that the potential relocation of public WCs is also included along with the provision of an indoor town centre community meeting space to replace that which has already been lost from the library in Westfield Road. The town council supports the development of an evening economy but does not wish to see specific reference to nightclubs and casinos (p19 2.72).

The town council anticipates housing densities of 150 -250 per hectare as prescribed



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in HN1 of Plan:MK and notes that “taller buildings will be sought that capitalize on Central Bletchley’s sustainable location”. But the design requirements are also imprecise and we would welcome details about maximum building heights so that residents can understand what is planned and how it is justified. The town council would welcome strengthening of the parts of the brief that require that high standards of amenity should be provided along with good design for this housing (p34 - 4.6 and 4.7). Also, policy HN2 must be adhered to and the town council wants to see genuinely “affordable” housing provision which should include affordable service charges.

The town council supports mixed use development with retail development at ground floor level recognizing and welcomes the recognition in the brief that retail development should be capable of serving the daily and weekly convenience shopping needs of the increasing number of residents living in the town centre (p 31 - 4.2.2). It is recognized that provision of retail floor space of an equivalent size to the existing buildings may not be necessary. There is a limit to the to the volume of commercial floorspace which the town centre can sustain without risk to the critical mass of retail and commerce in Queensway. Active frontages with retail uses are considered important (p31 - 4.2.1) as are outward facing developments which connect with the public realm (p32 - 4.3.4). However the brief is not precise about spatial distribution of uses as it allows for any distribution on the three main development plots shown at p33 Fig12. So, for example, does this allow for commercial retail active frontages along the length of Oliver Road and Duncombe Street? This does not feel especially compatible with these residential terraces.

Within the brief there is little analysis or reflection on how the proposed redevelopment will impact on the rest of the town centre because it has been taken out of the context of the SPD.

### **Public Realm and Green Space**

We agree that there are areas of poor-quality public realm around the edges of the Brunel Centre site (p27 - 3.4.4) and we want to see improved public realm provision which is pedestrian and cycle friendly and which connects any new developments with the existing town centre, Stanier Square and Queensway. As well as the visual re-connection of Queensway and Buckingham Road there must be physical space for community events and activities both formal and informal and soft landscaping to “green” the area. We support the content at 4.5 of the brief (p 33- 34) but note that adequate provision must be made for the maintenance of any green spaces and soft landscaping which should not be derived primarily from service charges levied on leaseholders (fleecehold) but via alternative funding such as S106 commitments.

### **Sustainability, Flooding and Ecology**

The town council shares the city council’s carbon reduction objectives and would wish to see any development exceed policy SC1 in Plan:MK. However it is recognised that measures to mitigate the effects of climate change increase development costs and so we support 4.10, 4.11 and 4.12 as written though we would like to see the lowest carbon emissions possible.

### **Identity, heritage and public art**

The Central Bletchley SPD talks about “Creating a ‘Place Identity’ for Central Bletchley Building on Bletchley’s history of technology and innovation to create a long term future for Central Bletchley focussed around an environment that supports sustainable and healthy life styles .” (p38) The brief refers to Bletchley’s war time history, the proximity of the site to Bletchley Park tourist attraction and the IOT and National Museum of computing (eg p31 4.2.6) but it could place more emphasis on the role that



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this site could play in supporting tourism and acknowledging the heritage of our town. It is suggested that any public art which is funded by the development should recognise this heritage and that the design and/or naming of buildings should seek inspiration from the local history and the vision of “Groundbreaking Bletchley and Fenny Stratford” which is embodied in the town deal’s strap line. The town council does recognise that opening the view from the town centre towards the station and increasing good pedestrian links between Bletchley town centre and the railway station/former fire station site could also assist with this goal.

### **Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Plan**

The town council asks that the development brief strengthens references to the emergence of policy ideas in the Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Plan and encourages developers to actively engage with both town councils in respect of their NDPs.

### **S106/Planning Gain**

The town council and many residents are keen to influence any S106 agreements or planning gain which arises out of proposed developments on this site. Whilst we recognise that this is not strictly part of our response to the brief itself, we would like to state now to both MKCC and MKDP that we hope to be actively involved at as early a stage as possible in consideration of planning gains from developments on this site. The planning gain must be focused on the infrastructure needs of the residents of Bletchley and prioritise the strengthening and enrichment of the town before being considered for other projects”.

(Cllr Hume joined the meeting during discussion of this item and did not participate in the vote.)

FC23/24-89

### **Public Speaking**

There were no representations from members of the public.

FC23/24-90

### **Co-option to Casual Vacancies**

It was noted that there were existing casual vacancies in the following wards: Central Bletchley, Eaton South, Fenny Stratford, Queensway and Denbigh North. On 22 November it had been confirmed that the community had not requested a poll for the additional casual vacancy in the Granby ward and therefore the council was free to co-opt to any of the vacancies when suitable applicants came forward.

Two candidates had come forward for co-option and members had the opportunity ask questions.

It was unanimously RESOLVED that Ms Othelia Fenandes be co-opted as member for Fenny Stratford and Dr Jay Joshi be co-opted as member for Queensway and Denbigh North and both new councillors make their declarations of acceptance of office before the council.

Following co-option the new members of the council made their declarations of acceptance of office before the council.

FC23/24-91

### **To review and comment on planning applications due to be considered by Milton Keynes Council**

Cllr Hume declared a DPI in the first two planning matters on the agenda due to his position as a member of Milton Keynes City Council and withdrew from the meeting for consideration and voting on these items.



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- FC23/24-91.i **23/02050/FUL - Blue Lagoon Local Nature Reserve - Improved redway connectivity with associated works to Section 2 of the redway (Regulation 3 application under the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992)**  
It was RESOLVED that the proposed development be supported.
- FC23/24-91.ii **23/02051/FUL - Blue Lagoon Local Nature Reserve - Retrospective application for improved redway connectivity with associated works to Section 4 of the redway (Regulation 3 application under the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992)**  
It was RESOLVED to support the proposed development.
- Cllr Hume returned to the meeting room following this resolution.
- FC23/24-91.iii **21/00725/FUL - Land Off Albert Street And South of Princes Way (Burger King Site) , MK2 2UQ - Demolition of existing structures and erection of a mixed use development comprised of 120 homes, flexible commercial units (Use Class E) and other associated works**  
Members noted that this was the second application for a mixed use development on this site and that there had been considerable discussion between the developer and the Local Planning Authority since submission of the original application to which the town council had made several objections and there had since been adjustments to the height of the building, the parking, overlooking and other aspects of the scheme. No information was available about any S106 planning gain and the town council noted the viability statements in the suite of planning documents.
- Discussion followed and the main adjustments in the scheme were considered.
- It was RESOLVED that the town council would object to the proposed development on the grounds that there was no provision for affordable housing and therefore the development was not in conformity with Policy HN2 of Plan:MK or the Affordable Housing SPD.
- FC23/24-91.iv **23/02579/PRIOR - Queensway House 207 - 209 Queensway Bletchley Milton Keynes MK2 2EE - Prior Approval for change of use of the existing ground floor commercial unit (Class E) to 3 x 1-bedroom residential units (Class C3)**  
It was RESOLVED to note the proposed development.
- FC23/24-91.v **23/02581/PRIOR - Queensway House 207 - 209 Queensway MK2 2EE = 2302584 PRIOR Queensway House 207 - 209 Queensway MK2 2EE 2 - Prior Approval for the change of use of part of the first floor from Class E (commercial) to Class C3 (residential)**  
It was RESOLVED to note the proposed development.
- FC23/24-92 **Financial management report showing income and expenditure against budget to date**  
It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.
- FC23/24-93 **List of payments made or due to be made by the council before the next meeting of the Finance & Governance Committee**  
It was RESOLVED that the list of payments made or due to be made be ratified.
- FC23/24-94 **Appointment of the internal auditors**  
A procurement exercise for provision of internal audit services had been undertaken



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and confidential quotations shared with councillors.

Following discussion it was RESOLVED that the town council retain the current auditors Auditing Solutions for the next three financial years at a fee for the first year of £1,000 plus VAT. It was further RESOLVED that the Finance and Governance Committee approve any fee changes during the second two years of the contract.

FC23/24-95

### **Progress report on Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Plan**

Cllr Hussein, Chair of the Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, gave an oral report on progress with the plan, noting that the Neighbourhood Plan was of great importance for the future of the town. During November there had been two joint meetings of the environment and development task forces to review the emerging policy ideas which had arisen from work to date. A further joint meeting of the steering group at which all members of the task forces were welcome was due to take place on 7 December 2023 (hybrid meeting at Sycamore House). At this meeting arrangements for a community consultation on the emerging ideas would be confirmed. It was anticipated that the consultation would take place in late January 2023. Cllr Hussein encouraged all members to consider participating in the Neighbourhood Plan work.

FC23/24-96

### **Clerk's report on recent meetings of the Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Deal Board**

It was RESOLVED that the clerk's report on Town Deal matters be noted.

The clerk drew particular attention to the parking consultations due to be held by Milton Keynes City Council as follows:

- Wednesday 6th December – 17:30 -19:30 – Bletchley Library
- Saturday 9th December – 11am -1pm – Fenny Stratford Community Centre
- Monday 11th December – 9:30am -11:30am – Bletchley Library
- Tuesday 12th December – 17:30-19:30 - Institute of Technology

and encouraged all councillors to publicise and attend these sessions.

FC23/24-97

### **Community events for the remainder of 2023-2024**

Members discussed a report on proposed community events between Christmas and Easter 2024 in some detail.

It was RESOLVED that the proposed lunar new year celebration be removed from the programme and that the holding of an Iftar to be held at Palatial Halls at an estimated cost of £9,000 be approved. It was also RESOLVED to increase the £1,000 existing budget for the Easter celebration by £2,000 to a total of £3,000 and that the additional £11,000 would be found from an anticipated underspend within the 2023-24 budget.

FC23/24-98

### **Progress report on the town council's delivery plan for 2023-2024**

It was RESOLVED that a progress report on the town council's 2023-2024 delivery plan be noted. The Chair commented that the plan had been an ambitious one and although most projects would be delivered in line with the timescale it would be important to set a realistic delivery plan for 2024-2025 to allow for a period of consolidation and focus on the Sycamore Buildings project, the Neighbourhood Plan and improvements to the Albert Street public conveniences.



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FC23/24-99

### **Residents' Survey 2023**

The Deputy Clerk introduced a report showing preliminary results from the Residents' Survey. The report included only those questionnaires completed on line as data input from the paper surveys was taking time. The town council had chosen not to provide a prepaid envelope for reasons of cost and as a consequence the number of surveys returned was much lower than the previous survey. Members shared differing opinions about the importance of paper surveys and ways in which completion rates could be improved in the future.

It was RESOLVED to note the preliminary findings and to extend the deadline for completion of the survey to 11 December 2023. The final collated results would be available for the precept meeting in January 2024.

FC23/24-100

### **Review of Town Council's existing strategic priorities and to consideration of a draft delivery plan for 2024-2025**

Members reviewed the town council's approved strategic priorities and values set in 2021. It was RESOLVED to make no changes except for the wording of the following priority:

#### **"Closer to our community**

- We will consult on major decisions affecting our community and our decision making will reflect what is important to our community
- We will support the development of local community groups/social enterprises and initiatives which promote community resilience
- We will listen before we act and we will explain our decisions".

It was felt that the wording of the first bullet point could be misleading and therefore the clerk would propose a new wording in line with the communications and engagement policy which would be circulated for comment and a new wording would be included using officer delegated powers in consultation with the Chair and Vice-chair.

Councillors did not make any further suggestions for the council delivery plan for 2024-2025 and the clerk noted that a draft plan would be available for the next meeting.

FC23/24-101

### **Variation of order of business**

It was RESOLVED to deal with the final agenda item next which was a review of the first draft of the budget document.

FC23/24-102

### **First draft budget document for the financial year 2024-2025**

The Finance Manager introduced the draft budget documents and draft medium term financial plan and drew attention to recommendations from officers and committees and notes to the budget.

At the last full council meeting on 21 November 2023, following further market testing, it had been decided not to follow a recommendation from the Finance and Governance Committee made on 24 October to amend hire charges at Newton Leys Pavilion and at Fenny Stratford Community Centre (minute reference FC23/24-86).

It was now RESOLVED that

- i the proposed charges for Fenny Stratford Community Centre, for all hirers, remain at the 2023/24 rates



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- ii the proposed charges for Newton Leys Community Centre, for regular hirers, will remain at the 2023/24 rates
- iii the proposed charges for Newton Leys Pavilion, for private hirers, will be amended as follows:
  - Saturday rates will increase from £462 to £500 for a full venue hire from 5pm
  - Saturday rates will increase from £544 to £600 for a full venue hire from 5pm (Sports Hall from 1pm)
  - Sunday rates will decrease from £354 to £300 for a full venue hire from 5pm
  - Sunday rates will decrease from £436 to £400 for a full venue hire from 5pm (Sports Hall from 1pm)
  - an additional £35 hourly rate will be implemented for Friday and Sunday evening for the Community Hall after 5pm.

On 7 November 2023 the Employment Policy Committee had also recommended that the budget for community events should include provision for personnel costs on the day of events and this had been deferred. It was now RESOLVED that this funding be added to the first draft of the budget for further consideration at the Community Committee meeting on 12 December 2023 and at Finance and Governance on 9 January 2023.

The Finance Manager noted that funding for an information and advice service had been removed from the budget as it had not been spent during 2023-24 due to lack of suitable service provision. Following discussion it was agreed that the Deputy Clerk would research feasibility of delivering this service in 2024-25 prior to a final decision on the budget.

The Chair of the Finance and Governance Committee invited all members to attend the meeting of that committee on 9 January 2023 so as to fully understand the budget and its implications before the precept meeting and officers offered one to one informal briefing sessions for any councillors who felt this would be useful.

FC23/24-103

### **Exclusion of Public**

It was RESOLVED that that members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest. This was because discussion might include disclosure of commercial sensitive information which might influence future procurement.

FC23/24-104

### **Sycamore Buildings Project**

FC23/24-104.i

### **Review of progress with Sycamore Buildings project and to consider phasing of the project**

Following the grant of planning permission the Sycamore Buildings Working Group had determined that before taking further steps members a revised high level costing report should be commissioned which showed the financial implications of phasing the project or undertaking the project in a single phase and these costs had been circulated before the meeting.

Following discussion of the outcome of this exercise. it was unanimously RESOLVED that the building project should be proceeded with in a single phase. The reasons for this decision were that the cost to the public purse would be less and there would be





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other operational benefits in terms of access to the buildings and continuity of guarantees etc.

Members noted a break down of anticipated funding sources for the project and discussed contingency and business continuity implications.

### FC23/24-104.ii **Governance arrangements for the project delivery**

It was noted that decision making about the project would now be needed on a more frequent basis and a review of the governance arrangements was discussed.

It was RESOLVED to set up a small Sycamore Buildings steering group to replace the existing working group. The Steering Group would have no delegated powers, this would be an administrative and monitoring group. The group would meet during the day via Teams as there would be a regular need to involve professionals and would include officers and councillors. There was discussion of the skillsets needed for the group. Cllrs Ely, Graham, Hussain, Kelly-Wilson and Osumili volunteered to participate.

It was further RESOLVED that the steering group would report to the Finance and Governance Committee and to Full Council on alternate months.

The meeting closed at 9.14 pm