Minutes of the meeting of the Services and Environment Committee held on 11th October 2023 at 18.00hrs using www.zoom.us

Present: Cllrs Jez Perkins (Chair), Mark Greenwood, Ken Pollard, Tony Dawson, Paul Mackin, Den Fensome and Elsa Tattersfield.

Town Clerk: F Fitch and C Quinlan (Admin Assistant)

1. **Apologies:** received from Cllrs Fred Wilson and Julie Ford.

2. **Declarations of interest:** none declared.

3. **Minutes**
   The minutes of the meeting of the committee on 13th September 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed digitally by the Chair. The Zoom recording was agreed to be deleted.

4. **Public Question Time:** no questions received.

5. **Communications**
   TD reported that the articles for the winter edition of the Newsline have been passed to Character Press for editing and publication, including the eight winning poems from the Robert Bloomfield Poetry Competition.

6. **Parks and Open Spaces**
   The report on the parks and open spaces, including play areas, their inspections, and any repairs necessary, was distributed to Councillors and reviewed, including: an outline brief for two interpretation panels in the Meads and Waterside; the draft lease agreement for St Michael's Close play area; an application to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund; a quotation for the cutting of the established allotment perimeter hedges; a request from the Shefford Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Association (SALGA) to convert an unusable allotment plot to raised beds; a request from Polehanger Farm for written support in their pursuit of funding to improve access to their footpaths and woodland; and recent incidents of graffiti on the bus shelters in Ampthill Road, and the cleaning/removing/replacement of the damaged parts of the shelters.

   It was resolved by Delegated Powers to approve the outline brief produced by JP for the text and images (ready for consultation with the Shefford Greenspace Conservation Group) for the design, manufacture, delivery and installation of two interpretation panels (in the same style as the panel in Drovers Spinney) in the Meads and Waterside.

   It was resolved by Delegated Powers to approve the draft lease agreement for St Michael's Close play area, received from the St Albans Diocesan's Surveyor for a twenty-five-year term commencing 1st May 2023. Confirmation was also received that the Diocesan Board of Finance would be content for the

Parochial Church Council to remit the rents, on account of the Council continuing to keep the grass mown on the adjacent land (which is the current arrangement between the Parochial Church Council and the Council).

It was resolved by Delegated Powers that, if the application to the Community Asset Grant for the improvements to the accessibility in Bellcote Meadow Millennium Green is successful, an additional grant application will be submitted to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund (through Central Bedfordshire Council) to match fund this project. If the application to the Community Asset Grant is unsuccessful, an additional grant application will be submitted to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund to cover the shortfall to deliver the project.

It was resolved by Delegated Powers to raise an order to Branching Out Tree and Garden Services for the cutting of the perimeter hedges (Council maintained – front and right-hand side) at the Shefford allotments.

It was resolved by Delegated Powers to approve SALGA's request to create a raised bed allotment plot on an area of land that cannot be worked as a traditional allotment as it is full of concrete rubble resulting from the building of the Shefford Health Centre. All the works will be carried out by SALGA volunteers, which should be to an acceptable standard of workmanship. It was noted that the Robert Lucas Trust had offered SALGA a grant to cover the cost of purchasing materials for the project.

It was resolved by Delegated Powers for a letter to be sent from the Council to Andrew Foster at Polehanger Farm to support their efforts for securing funding to keep open and improve access to their footpaths and Polehanger River Woodland all year round for the local communities.

It was resolved by Delegated Powers that graffiti should be removed from the bus shelters (or best attempt), even if the result is for the Perspex and other parts of the shelter to have a smeared residue from the graffiti.

7. Shefford House

The report on Shefford House was distributed to Members and reviewed, including: a quotation for the replacement of the floor covering on the second floor; and an upgrade of the building's burglar alarm system.

Recommendation by Delegated Powers to be made to the Full Council for an order to be raised to M Cole to replace the existing floor covering (carpet in the two offices and vinyl in the kitchen) on the second floor of Shefford House. Different options were explored; the most economical solution being the replacement of the existing floor coverings with a similar carpet/vinyl (colour still to be confirmed). The works also include the removal and disposal of the old flooring and the laying of a flex latex preparation.

It was resolved by Delegated Powers to raise an order to Ace Fire and Security to carry out an upgrade of Shefford House's burglar alarm system, including the installation of a protection phone line (as a backup to the current single path monitoring line), which will also be connected to the new fire alarm system.

8. Events

An update was given on recently delivered and upcoming events, including: the well-attended Family Funday held on 23rd September 2023 as part of the Shefford Community Festival, with thanks given to the Shefford Children's Centre for the delivery of the event; the distribution of the Robert Bloomfield anniversary postcards to the pupils of Robert Bloomfield Academy at their school assembly on 1st November 2023; the successful Harvest Celebration Civic Service held on 1st October 2023, including the recital of the winning poems from the Robert Bloomfield Poetry Competition, and the desire to include a Civic Service and poetry competition in the events calendar for 2024; the Remembrance and Armistice Day Services; the Town Council joining with the Home Farm Trust for the Town Council's entry to this year's Christmas Tree Festival; and requests for volunteers to help for fund raising for the Keech Hospice Care on the Santa Sleigh on 1st and 2nd December 2023 (18:00 – 20:00hrs, and 10:00 – 14:00hrs respectively).

It was resolved by Delegated Powers to consider the inclusion in the 2024/25 budget, funding to cover the cost of holding a school poetry competition and a Harvest Civic Service in 2024. It was proposed that the recital of the winning poems would be included in the Civic Service, which would be held in St Michaels and All Angels Church and included in the Shefford Community Festival programme.

Meeting closed 19:04hrs