Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & Strategy Committee held on 18th October 2023 at 16.00hrs using www.zoom.us

Present: Cllrs Tony Dawson (Chair), Ken Pollard, Roger Fowler, Lisa Hayes and Julie Ford.

Town Clerk: F Fitch

1. **Apologies:** received from Cllrs Fred Wilson, Paul Mackin, Jez Perkins and Mark Greenwood.

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

3. **Minutes**
   The minutes of the meeting of the Committee on 20th September 2023 was 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. **Bank Reconciliations**
   The outstanding bank reconciliations have been the Town Clerk's work priority since the last meeting of the committee, and the reconciliations for April, May and June will be available for review by TD by the end of the week. The remaining reconciliations will be completed before the budgeting process commences in November.

6. **Engagement Survey for the Removal of Disused Phone Boxes**
   The notification from Central Bedfordshire Council of the launch of an engagement survey regarding the removal of disused phone boxes in Central Bedfordshire by British Telecom was reviewed by the Committee.

   It was resolved by Delegated Powers for Members to complete the online engagement survey individually.

7. **Budgetary Process for 2024/2025**
   It is proposed to hold a special meeting on Monday 11th December 2023 at 18:30hrs, with an invitation for all Councillors to attend in person (Council Chamber) or via Zoom to carry out the due diligence for reviewing the draft budget and Precept figures for 2024/2025. In addition to existing revenue expenditure and ongoing capital projects, several capital projects and events will be considered for inclusion in the budget, including: the fire alarm system and replacement fire doors at Shefford House; match funding for the 2024/2025 proposed Central Bedfordshire Council Community Grant Scheme; installation of an additional CCTV camera to view St Michael's Close play area and Pamoli Square; a second Harvest Celebration Civic Service and poetry competition; D-Day 80th Anniversary celebrations; and the Summer Picnic Day delivered by the Shefford and Stotfold Children's Centre. Details

of any further projects for consideration should be costed and submitted to the Town Clerk as soon as possible.

8. **Bellcote Meadow Millennium Green Trust**
   It was reported that an error had been identified when reconciling the Bellcote Meadow Millennium Green Trust bank account for the year ended 30th September 2023. TD, one of the bank signatories, erroneously paid a personal utility bill from the Trust's bank account. The money was repaid by TD as soon as the error was discovered; however, this was in a different financial year to the initial outgoing payment being made. As this has now highlighted a failing in the online banking system, TD and FF will be arranging a meeting with National Westminster Bank to change the electronic transfer process, so that this error cannot be repeated.

9. **Risk Assessment Review**
   It was reported that, although the Committee had previously agreed to use the LCRS system for the Council's annual risk assessment review process, LCRS are currently in the process of migrating/re-writing their system software to allow it to be run/operated on the current Windows operating system, and have halted sales of the system to new users. To ensure there is no further delay to the annual risk assessment process, the use of last year's risk assessment template was reviewed, together with choosing Members of the review panel.

   It was resolved by Delegated Powers that FW would lead on the annual risk assessment review, with LH and JF joining him on the panel, and RF assisting in the production of the final report. The first meeting of the review panel was scheduled for 10th November 2023 at 10:00hrs in Shefford House.

10. **Shefford Town Memorial Association**
    The minutes and financial overview of the meeting of the Shefford Town Memorial Association (STMA) Committee held on 27th September 2023 were reviewed by the Committee.

Meeting closed 17:00hrs