Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council held on Friday 27th October 2023 at 16.00hrs in the Council Chamber at Shefford House, 15 High Street, Shefford, SG17 5DD or viewed using www.zoom.us

Present: Cllrs Ken Pollard (Chair), Roger Fowler, Fred Wilson, Tony Dawson, Paul Mackin, Mark Greenwood, Julie Ford, Den Fensome, and Elsa Tattersfield.

Ward Cllr Anthony Brown, and three members of the public.

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

1. **Apologies:** received from Cllrs Steve Nash, Lisa Hayes, Jez Perkins, and Nicola King, and Ward Cllr Mark Liddiard.

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

3. **Minutes**
   The minutes of the meeting of the Committee on 29th September 2023 were approved and signed by the Chair. The Zoom recording of the meeting was agreed to be deleted.

4. **Matters arising**
   No matters arising.

5. **Public Question Time**
   No public questions received.

6. **Central Bedfordshire Council**
   AB reported that, following the election of the new administration of the Council in May 2023, all capital expenditure has been restricted, excepting the Community Asset Grant Scheme, through which the Town Council was awarded a grant in the current round of funding.
   AB is pursuing the ownership details of two benches located on Highways land on Hitchin Road and Bloomfield Drive.
   AB informed Members that there is still money available in the Ward Councillor Grant scheme. FF reported that once Shefford Town Council has had a response from the Robert Lucas Trust, detailing which projects on the 2023 Wishlist they would financially support, an application will be made to the Ward Councillor Grant Scheme for funding towards one of the outstanding projects – this may be a project in partnership with the Shefford Lower School.
   AB has contacted the Planning Officer regarding the previous call-in on the planning application for 6 Northbridge Street to inquire whether it is still valid. If it has expired due to the amendments, AB will issue another call-in via the Listed Building status, for the Development Management Committee to review.
   Both Ward Councillors met with Gary Powell, the Director of Highways, to demonstrate the areas of Shefford that need attention, including the Ampthill Road speed humps and 20mph speed limit zone. Although he has acknowledged the

necessity for the works, financial approval is required before an approved list of projects can be issued and scheduled.
The new school on Hitchin Road is being delayed by a legal disagreement between the developer and Central Bedfordshire Council, due to the provision of a nursery onsite.
AB and ML will be meeting with Highways in the first week of November to discuss the plan for the Old Bridge Way roadway. Two emails were received from residents regarding the degradation and safety issue of Old Bridge Way.
FF reported that CQ met a Central Bedfordshire Council officer, Simon Barter, who revealed that drainage works are scheduled to be carried out by the Council on Campton Road, including the installation of wooden posts on the grass verges by the cemetery entrance. The road may be closed during these works, which may impact on the maintenance and operating hours of the cemetery.
FF reported that the Tree Officer has yet to respond to her enquiry regarding the removal of a tree on the Highways grass verge on the entrance to the Shefford Town Memorial Association. It is understood that there is a blanket Tree Preservation Order on the area, but no planning applications have been submitted to fell the tree, which has had the stump ground out, leaving a dangerous iron rod in situ. AB will follow up on this enquiry.
FW queried the progress of the Section 278 agreement for Sekaran Close; AB has contacted Mark Womble to find out the reason for the delay, as both Central Bedfordshire Council and Settle have reported that they are not responsible for delaying the process. FF will bring up the issue at the Settle Annual Stakeholder Meeting.

7. Crime

It was reported that there were twenty recorded offences for the first twenty-six days of October 2023. A summary of offences include: three instances of assault with injury (one in Gresham way, one in Purcell Way and one in Bloomfield Drive); three instances of other theft (two in Southbridge Street and one in Ampthill Road); one instance of assault without injury in Walkers Close; one instance of criminal damage to a building – a business in Northbridge Street; one instance of harassment; one instance of interfering with a motor vehicle in Peartree Close; one instance of possession of control drugs (cannabis) in the High Street; one instance of race or religious aggression public fear; one instance of residential burglary – an unconnected building in River View; one instance of a sexual nature; one instance of state or public order in River View; one instance of theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle in Scotgrange Meadow; one instance of theft or unauthorised taking of a pedal cycle in St Francis Way; one instance of theft from a motor vehicle in St Francis Court; one instance of shoplifting in Southbridge Street; and one instance of criminal damage – residential in Lucas Way.
FF met with Police Community Officer Wilcox-Cassidy, Julia Hobson-Cooper from Central Bedfordshire Council's Community Safety Team, and the new Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) assigned to Area 5. The facilities in Shefford House have been extended to the new PCSO, as well as a tour of the town and any crime and anti-social behaviour hotspots that may need to be highlighted. It was

reported that there has been marked reduction in anti-social behaviour since the school summer holidays. Due to in part the reporting of crimes and intelligence reports submitted by the Youth Involvement Team and Shefford Town Council staff, together with CCTV footage from various sites in the town, sixteen gang members were identified and eight have been issued with Community Protection Notice Warnings (CPNW). This warns the individuals that they are no longer allowed to enter certain areas of the town, one of which being the Town Centre. If they breach the conditions of the CPNW, they may be issued with a Community Protection Notice, which can incur a fine of up to £5k or a prison sentence. As the individuals are under 18, their parents/guardians would be liable for the charge. It was reported that the last stop and search carried out in Shefford was a month ago of ten young people. The graffiti on Ampthill Road will be searched on the nation-wide tag system. KP reported that there is a racial abuse issue towards the Afghan refugee families in the town. A family has recently moved into the town and are perpetrating racial abuse towards one Afghan family recently settled in Shefford and another well-established Afghan family. KP has contacted Grand Union Housing Group (GUHG) as all parties are housed by them, but would recommend that if any more information is known regarding these incidents, it should be reported immediately to the police. The Central Bedfordshire Council's Community Safety Team have letter dropped to the area, and GUHG and Bedfordshire Police are aware of the issue.

8. Town Mayor's Announcements

The report was distributed to Councillors and included: the Harvest Civic Service and the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Robert Bloomfield's death; the opening of the Be Our Guest palace; KP's and PM's election to stand on the County Committee of the Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils; recent Streetwatch patrols; the upcoming Armistice and Remembrance Day services; the correspondence with the Tibbs Dementia Foundation regarding their involvement with Shefford; the upcoming Shefford Good Neighbours Group's Christmas celebration and 10th anniversary; the attendance of the Robert Bloomfield Academy assembly and presentation of the Robert Bloomfield postcards; the upcoming Mayor's charity race night; the town crier's outfit; and the Mayor's attendance at events (excluding normal council meetings) in October 2023.

9. Shefford Youth Involvement

FF reported that the Youth Involvement Team are currently delivering Halloween half term activities, which are well-attended by children, young people and their families. The activities include art and crafts with pumpkins and raffles. Detached work is also being carried out throughout the week. NK is proposing to hold a meeting at the Youth Hub with KP and Steve Bush, Mayor of Stotfold, to demonstrate the work that has been carried out in the area and its positive effect on the community.
KP suggested a local organisation in Biggleswade that works with young people, teaching them fishing as a creative and productive outlet.

10. Bedfordshire Bus Users' Forum and Shefford Housing Advice Clinic

JF gave an update on the Bedfordshire Bus Users' Forum, which is a quarterly forum attended by local councilors, local transport groups, and Bedfordshire Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils. A bus costs £180k to £200k, to run per vehicle per year. Since the mid-1980s, most bus services have been provided commercially and thus do not receive any funding from local authorities. However, Central Bedfordshire Council reimburses bus operators for the lost revenue for every free trip taken by bus pass users within their area. In Central Bedfordshire, these costs are in excess of £1.7m per year. Currently, the Central Bedfordshire Council public transport budget is allocated as follows: £63k for bus stop information, maintenance, new shelters/kerbs/real time screens; £250k for Community Dial-A-Ride (via tendered grants); £1.244m for subsidising bus routes, which has not increased since 2017; and £1.8m for the Concessionary Travel Scheme, which is a protected spend as the basic scheme requirements are governed by law. Furthermore, local authorities are not permitted to subsidise services that compete with commercial routes. As part of the 'Bus Back Better' strategy, announced in the spring of 2021, all local transport authorities with highways responsibility for their area had to produce a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and enter into a legal Enhanced Partnership with the bus operators running services within their area; this was to receive continued Department of Transport recovery funding to assist services following the pandemic. Central Bedfordshire Council's funding settlement was £3.72m, split to £1.54m for revenue costs and £2.18m for capital costs, lasting until March 2025. Stagecoach, one of the bus operators in the Central Beds area, attended the last meeting. Most buses have a lifespan of fifteen years and, upon their death in service, they will be replaced with either a hybrid or electric bus, meaning that all buses will gradually be replaced by more sustainable and environmentally friendly options. The integrated services between trains and buses were discussed and it was highlighted that Sunday being the day of rest is now an outdated notion, thus meaning the operational hours of buses should be changed to reflect this. AB suggested that some weekday services are rescheduled to Sunday to cover this with minimal additional charges to the operator.

JF reported on the progress of the Shefford Housing Advice Clinic, offering free confidential housing advice to property owners, landlords and tenants. The service will advise on a variety of issues, including: rent/mortgage arrears; homelessness or becoming homeless; notice to quit issues; eviction/repossession including illegal evictions, and mortgage provider possession; harassment in housing; discrimination in housing; serious disrepair (where disrepair is causing serious risk of harm); tenancy deposit disputes; rent increases; and letting agency practice. The clinic will offer face-to-face advice by appointment, and will work in partnership with LawWorks (a pro-bono solicitor service) and University of Bedfordshire law students, in addition to Citizens Advice (who are unable to offer advice to landlords and will refer them to JF; in return, JF will refer any non-housing issues to Citizens Advice), and the Finance Company (who will offer initial advice appointments for mortgages as a Mortgage and Protection Adviser). The launch date of the service is to be confirmed, but the clinic will run on Tuesdays or Thursdays, held in Shefford House. JF has also

Contacted Settle, Grand Union Housing Group and various other groups in the area to inform them of this service.

11. Application to Central Bedfordshire Council's Community Grant Fund

Following guidance from Central Bedfordshire Council, it was reported that two separate applications may be submitted to the Community Grant Fund: one from the Bellcote Meadow Millennium Green Trust for the resurfacing and line-marking of the car park at Bellcote Meadow Millennium Green; and one from Shefford Town Council for the provision of two new CCTV systems – located in Church Walk in the Town Centre, and in Bellcote Meadow Millennium Green. It was reported that the Community Asset Grant may be used to match fund the former project, however, approval was sought to match fund the provision of the two new CCTV systems from the Town Council's "CCTV Earmarked Reserve Fund".

It was resolved to approve the match funding for the application to Central Bedfordshire Council's Community Grant Fund to install two new CCTV systems (Church Walk in the Town Centre and Bellcote Meadow Millennium Green) from the Town Council's "CCTV Earmarked Reserve Fund".

12. Planning and Highways

A report on the committee meeting held on 4th October 2023 was approved for publication on the website.

13. Services and Environment

A report on the committee meeting held on 11th October 2023 was approved for publication on the website, and the one recommendation was approved as follows:

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.

14. Finance and Strategy

A report on the committee meeting held on 18th October 2023 was approved for publication on the website.

15. Town Clerk's report

The report was distributed to Councillors and included: the successful application to the Community Asset Grant scheme; the attendance of FF, CQ + KP to the defibrillator training session; the upcoming People Planet Pint event, in co-operation with Sustainable Shefford; the upcoming BeActive networking evening and subsequent presentation, with two attendees of the chair exercise sessions and FF;

the parliamentary by-election; FF's tour of the Central Bedfordshire Council's CCTV control room; and the progress of the Priory Gate play area refurbishment.

16. Accounts

The full list of payments for September was approved (shown below).

Supplier/Contractor	Description	Net Cost	VAT	Total Cost
S Riley	Window cleaning contract	78.00	0.00	78.00
Wave	Water - toilets	295.22	0.00	295.22
Wave	Water - Shefford House	70.99	0.00	70.99
Wave	Water - allotments	233.01	0.00	233.01
South East Security	CCTV maintenance	99.00	19.80	118.80
Fahr	Play equipment parts	65.26	13.05	78.31
Mazars	External audit 2022/2023	1,050.00	210.00	1,260.00
Character Press	Robert Bloomfield postcards	189.00	37.80	226.80
Benchmark Fire Safety & Training	Training/door survey/compliance platform	840.00	168.00	1,008.00
Wellness Hub Ltd	Yard rental	296.40	0.00	296.40
Reynolds Landscapes	Grounds maintenance contract	1,750.00	350.00	2,100.00
CPM Playgrounds Ltd	Install memorial benches	540.00	108.00	648.00
CPM Playgrounds Ltd	Play area inspection/cleansing contract	1,079.00	215.80	1,294.80
CPM Playgrounds Ltd	Play area repairs contract	400.00	80.00	480.00
Bedford Borough Council	Trade waste - Shefford House	70.50	14.10	84.60
Maydencroft	Himalayan Balsam control	1,950.00	390.00	2,340.00
Yoga with Rick	Active Communities Grant activities	160.00	0.00	160.00
2 Elms of Shefford Gardening Services	Grounds maintenance contract	1,205.00	0.00	1,205.00
GD Maintenance and Cleaning Services	Grounds maintenance and cleansing contract	2,994.63	0.00	2,994.63
Redacted	Redacted	6,672.82	0.00	6,672.82
Bedford Borough Council	Trade waste - Cemetery	38.32	7.66	45.98
DJ Granger Grounds Maintenance Ltd	Grounds maintenance contract	190.26	38.06	228.32
2 Elms of Shefford Gardening Services	Grounds maintenance contract	1,335.00	0.00	1,335.00
Utility Warehouse	Electric - Chapel	7.10	0.66	7.76
LEF Paving & Landscaping	Repairs to Cemetery wall	220.00	0.00	220.00
Wave	Water - Cemetery	28.20	0.00	28.20
British Gas	Electric - Hub	50.82	2.54	53.36
Zen Internet	Broadband	65.99	13.20	79.19
Opus Energy	Electric - car park	45.58	2.28	47.86
Vivi Voip	Phones	31.00	6.20	37.20
Smartest Energy	Electric - Shefford House	97.86	4.89	102.75
Smartest Energy	Gas - Shefford House	51.08	2.55	53.63

EE	Phones	20.80	4.16	24.96
British Gas	Electric - Hub	48.63	2.43	51.06
British Gas	Electric - toilets	57.22	6.50	63.72
Lloyds payments card	Sundries	9.49	0.00	9.49
		13,329.80	91.13	13,420.93

Meeting closed 18:03hrs