Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & Strategy Committee held on 15th May 2024 at 18.00hrs using www.zoom.us

Present: Cllrs Tony Dawson (Chair), Ken Pollard, Jez Perkins, Mark Greenwood and Lisa Hayes.

Town Clerk: F Fitch

1. **Apologies:** received from Cllrs Fred Wilson and Paul Mackin.

2. **Declarations of interest:** JP declared an interest in Agenda item 10, due to being employed by Maydencroft, who will be the training provider delivering the Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) awareness training course. He left the meeting when the agenda item was being reviewed, and a resolution made.

3. **Minutes**
   The minutes of the meeting of the Committee on 17th April 2024 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. **Bank Reconciliations**
   The bank reconciliations for April 2024 were reviewed by TD prior to the meeting and approved. The petty cash was also counted by TD prior to the meeting and approved. All reconciliation documents require a counter signature from the Town Clerk when she is fully recovered from her current illness.

6. **D Day 80th Anniversary**
   The purchase of D Day lapel badges for distribution to the students from Robert Bloomfield Academy who will be assisting in lighting the beacon at the D Day 80th Anniversary event was reviewed by the Committee.

   It was resolved by Delegated Powers to purchase an official D Day 80th Anniversary lapel badge for every student who will be assisting in the lighting of the beacon event on 6th June 2024. Additional badges will be ordered for those Members who expressed an interest in purchasing and paying for a badge personally (including MG and KP).

7. **Final Internal Audit Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**
   The Final Internal Audit report for the year ended 31 March 2024 was distributed to the Committee and reviewed. It was noted that there were no recommendations made by the Internal Auditor.

8. **Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**
   The report on the income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2024, together with an explanation of variances for actual against budget, was distributed to

the Committee and reviewed. It was reported that although an overspend was predicted at the nine months to 30 December 2023 due to the unbudgeted costs of installing the new fire alarm system in Shefford House, an overall overspend at the year ended 31 March 2024 has not materialised; the combination of unbudgeted bank interest received and small underspends on other cost centres have offset this overspend. Any significant underspent budgets have been transferred to the respective Earmarked Reserve Funds as detailed in the explanations of variances. A detailed analysis of the Earmarked Reserve Funds at 31 March 2024 was also distributed to Members and reviewed.
The Financial Statements and Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2024 were distributed to the Committee and reviewed. The increase in Earmarked Reserves was noted, as was the total amount of General Reserves, which will now cover six months running costs for the Council.

Recommendation by Delegated Powers to be made to Full Council to approve the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Recommendation by Delegated Powers to be made to Full Council to approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2024.

9. Shefford Good Neighbour Group

The Shefford Good Neighbour Group report submitted for the Annual Town Meeting was distributed to the Committee for review, including a serious concern with regards to requests from clients for lifts to medical appointments.

It was resolved by Delegated Powers for KP to raise the matter of the Group's concerns with the Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, and with the Patient Participation Group at the Shefford Health Centre.

10. Oak Processionary Moth

Following contact being made by the Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate Tracing Team working for the Animal and Plant Health Agency (governed by DEFRA) regarding their work on implementing a new Plant Health regulation put in place to protect native oak trees and woodland from Oak Processionary Moth (OPM), the attendance of the Secretary and Chairman of the Shefford Greenspace Conservation Group (SGCG) on an OPM Awareness training course was reviewed by the Committee.

It was resolved by Delegated Powers for the Secretary and Chairman of the SGCG to attend an OPM Awareness training course held by Maydencroft Ltd. This will better enable them to educate and disseminate information on the OPM to other members of the SGCG, especially as the Greater London OPM buffer zone has been extended to include Bedfordshire.

11. Shefford Town Memorial Association

The draft minutes of the meeting of the Shefford Town Memorial Association (STMA) Management Committee held on 24th April 2024 were received by the Committee and noted.

Meeting closed 18:45hrs