

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF CULTURAL & ECONOMIC COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors A Dodwell (Chair)
 S Hemmings
 K Cursons
 D Bowater
 G Perham
 M Freeman
 R Goodchild
 P Snelling
 F Kharawala (substituting for C Chambers)

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 S Sandiford, Head of Democratic and Central
 Services
 V Cannon, Head of Cultural and Economic
 Services
 M Jahn, Committee Officer
 L Farmer, TACTIC Manager – part meeting
 B Bodsworth, Town and Country Promotions
 Manager
 A Harrison, Market Manager
 G Borelli, LB First
 Cllr V Harvey
 Cllr T Morris

Members of the public: 1
Members of the press 0

51/CE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received and were accepted from Councillor C Chambers (substituted by Councillor F Kharawala).

52/CE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests, including the nature of those interests, which they had in any of the items under consideration at this meeting. No declarations were made.

53/CE QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public.

54/CE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- (a) The Committee received the draft minutes of the previous Committee meeting held on 9 March 2020.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cultural and Economic Services Committee held on 9 March 2020 be approved as a correct record, to be signed at a later date when safe to do so.

- (b) All updates would be dealt with in agenda item 12 (standing items and general updates)

55/CE **SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Market Sub-Committee meeting held on 27 February 2020 for consideration.

RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Market Sub-Committee meeting held on 27 February 2020.

56/CE **BUSINESS SUPPORT**

- (a) The Committee received a presentation from Gennaro Borelli of LB First to request Town Council funding and support with a proposal to promote independent businesses in the town by producing a digital platform. This would allow information to be stored with links to business' own websites, or if a business did not have their own website an e-commerce platform could be provided to facilitate online ordering and deliveries. It was felt that with winter approaching and the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, developing such a platform would provide a collective shopfront allowing residents to buy online if they were unable to come into the town to shop.

A question was raised regarding how much funding would be needed and what time frame was anticipated. It was confirmed that approximately £5,500 would be needed in total to provide a website with e-commerce functionality and to be operational as soon as possible. A request was also made for assistance from town council staff to help gather the information needed to set up the website.

Although the Committee fully supported the concept of the proposal, concerns were raised regarding the complexity of the task and the work and skills needed to keep the information current and up-to-date. The Town Clerk confirmed he fully supported the idea but that there was no capacity within town council staff to offer assistance at present without employing another person. The use of volunteers to help with the initial data gathering was suggested.

Whilst supportive of the principle, the Committee agreed that more detailed scoping work was needed to determine the level of interest from independent businesses. It was proposed that initial funding of £1,000 be provided to

support LB First in undertaking a feasibility study and further scoping work. Additional funding of up to £5,000 could be considered by Committee upon receipt of the more detailed scoping report and breakdown of the project. This could be provided to the next appropriate meeting of either this committee or the Policy and Finance Committee. If necessary an additional meeting could be scheduled to ensure the project was not unnecessarily delayed.

RESOLVED:

- i) That an initial £1,000 of a possible £6,000 be made available to LB First as soon as possible from earmarked reserves (970/9026), to fund further scoping work and feasibility study for a “Digital High Street” web portal for independent businesses.**
 - ii) That consideration of remaining funding (up to a further £5,000) from the same earmarked reserve be made by either this Committee or the Policy and Finance Committee upon presentation of a detailed report giving scoping details and a breakdown of how further monies will be spent. The report to be presented to the soonest appropriate meeting.**
- (b) The Committee received and considered a report on the creation of a web-based SME business directory. Once set up the directory should be self-managed with no additional involvement of the Town Council. The suggestion had arisen as a result of feedback from local businesses which were not necessarily town centre or retail based, seeking support.

It was noted that as with the previous web portal proposal, the directory would require the individual businesses to undertake to keep their pages up to date and current.

RESOLVED:

- i) That up to £375 be made available from the Business Support annual budget (101/4510), to assist with the launch of the electronic directory for small to medium sized enterprises (SME) upon receipt of a satisfactory scoping document detailing what is being delivered, the timeframe of delivery activity and how ongoing support and maintenance will be managed.**
- ii) To allocate up to £300 from the Business Support annual budget (101/4510), to contract the services of the same illustrator who completed the Town Centre Logo to create a logo in similar branding style for the SME Directory**

- (c) The Committee received and considered an update report on the Town Centre Promotion campaign.

A request was made for a Keeping It Local Banner to be put by the bus stops in West Street to confirm the town is open for business.

RESOLVED to note the report.

57/CE **COMMUNITY EVENTS UPDATE**

The Committee received a report to update members on the Events Programme following a period of amendments following COVID-19. Officers were working on music and leisure activities to compliment the pedestrianisation of the High Street during the coming months. Stand-alone performances and entertainment to comply with government guidelines and still offer a variety of styles. Also consideration had been given to the Christmas period to ensure a festive offering within the town centre during December including a festive Sunday market and Christmas music via loudspeakers in the High Street.

The Committee re-iterated the need to work with Central Bedfordshire Council to facilitate the placing of benches, chairs and tables in the High Street as soon as possible and a meeting was suggested with Steve Lakin and officers from the Town Council to move this on. A suggestion was made for entertainment and buskers to be invited to play now the High Street was pedestrianised on non-market days to encourage people into the town.

Members thanked the Events Team for their continued hard work during a difficult time providing ideas and facilitating on-line alternatives.

RESOLVED to note the report.

58/CE **TACTIC WORK UPDATE**

The Committee received a report providing a review of the previous year's work plan delivery 2018/19 to 2019/20 and an update report on the first two quarters of the current financial year. The Youth Forum met virtually every Thursday during lockdown and 1:1 mentoring continued over the phone where possible. The staff updated their training and created new workshops for schools to be delivered once they opened.

Outreach had taken place twice a week and the Youth Survey was given to some young people. A total of nineteen surveys were completed and highlighted the need for meeting places for young people, seating and shelters in the parks, outdoor cinema and music and the opportunity for martial arts classes.

The Committee agreed that the TACTIC centre was a 'safe' place for many

young people and how important the face-to-face mentoring was for many struggling with anxiety and difficult home lives.

Members were informed that the older persons Christmas meal would be replaced this year due to COVID-19 restrictions being replaced with the delivery of Christmas Hampers.

Thanks were given by the Committee for the in-depth report and the continuing hard work carried out by the TACTIC team, especially in the difficult circumstances generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLVED to note the report.

59/CE **LEIGHTON BUZZARD MARKET**

- (a) The Committee received and noted the decisions made by the Market Sub Committee between 20 March and 30 June 2020.

RESOLVED to receive and note the decisions made by the Market Sub Committee between 20 March and 30 June 2020, in accordance with the decision-making process agreed by Council on 20 March 2020.

- (b) The Committee received and considered the Market General Update Report on market activity including the market delivery plan review for 2019-2020 and current market activity including trader recruitment, social media platforms, promotion and future speciality markets.

During lockdown the Market Manager kept in contact with the traders by telephone to ascertain how they were coping financially and mentally and posted a summary of his finds on the National Association of British Markets Authorities forum. This received a response from the Chief Executive of the NABMA thanking the Market Manager for good practice and providing verbal support for traders.

The Committee were informed that Speciality Markets had begun to return with a successful Sunday Street Food Heroes event on the 9 August and this success had prompted them to return on Sunday 13 September in the High Street. The French Market has provisionally booked, restrictions allowing, for 2 October 2020 and the Vegan Market will run on 20 September with 30-35 stalls attending.

An extra monthly Thursday market had been organised to allow the casual and speciality market traders to attend because of limited spacing on a the regular Charter market days. This had been well received by traders and public alike.

A question was raised regarding the lay-out of the market and whether this could be amended with the position of stalls varied to allow shops a better outlook from their premises. It was advised this could be revisited but restrictions and regulations dictate spacing and general layout at present.

The Committee gave their thanks to the Market Manager and team and the Head of Service for their continued hard work during this difficult period enabling the market traders to return in the High Street.

RESOLVED to note the report.

- (c) The Committee received and considered the end of year 2019/20 Market Budget report

RESOLVED to note the report.

60/CE **COMMITTEE WORK PLAN AND OBJECTIVES**

- (a) The Committee received the Committee Workplan and Objectives for 2020-2021.

RESOLVED to note the Committee objectives and work plan for 2020-21.

- (b) **RESOLVED to receive and formally note the decisions made by the Committee between 20 March – 30 June 2020 in accordance with the decision-making process agreed by Council on 20 March 2020.**

61/CE **BUDGET REPORT**

The Committee received a system generated budget report for the revenue budget and earmarked reserves, as well as a report outlining and committed expenditure and the amounts remaining available.

RESOLVED to note the report.

62/CE **STANDING ITEMS AND GENERAL UPDATES**

The Committee received a report to inform on service activity during the COVID-19 pandemic which had caused delays but projects are on-going and progressing with the Architectural Lighting tentatively anticipated to be completed by early February 2021.

A suggestion was made by one councillor about reducing the number of messages displayed on the electronic signage.

A question was raised by one councillor regarding the number of people allowed in the multi-storey ladies toilets and if the risk assessment could be revisited due to there sometimes being a queue.

RESOLVED to note the information.

The meeting closed at 9.47 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2020.

Chair

7 DECEMBER 2020