

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 23 OCTOBER 2014 AT 1930 HOURS

Present: Councillors S Cotter – LLTC
 A Dodwell - LLTC
 D Hopkin – CBC - in the Chair
 G Rolfe – LLTC
 K Sharer - LLTC
 M Bishop – LLTC (substituting for P Snelling)
 N Warren - CBC

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio (Town Clerk)
 V Cannon (Head of Economic Development)
 J Martindale (Partnership Officer)
 S Sandiford (Committee Officer)
 L Mason (M-E-L Ltd)
 G Borelli (LB First)
 B Chandler (LB Connect)
 Cllr A Brandham

Members of the Public: 1
Members of the Press: 0

317/LLP APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Councillors B Spurr, A Shadbolt, D Bowater, P Snelling (substituted by M Bishop) and from Sarah Hughes, Community Engagement Manager at Central Bedfordshire Council.

318/LLP DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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 of interest were made.

319/LLP DISPENSATIONS

No requests for dispensations had been received.

320/LLP PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions from members of the public.

321/LLP MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee received the minutes of the Partnership Committee meeting held on 7 August 2014.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Partnership Committee meeting held on 7 August 2014 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

322/LLP MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Economic Development Sub-Committee meeting held on 6 October 2014.

RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Economic Development Sub-Committee meeting held on 6 October 2014.

323/LLP COMMITTEE WORK PLAN AND OBJECTIVES

The Committee received a copy of the Objectives and Work Plan for 2014-2015.

RESOLVED to note the Committee Objectives and Work Plan for 2014-2015.

324/LLP RESIDENTS' SURVEY

By invitation, Lisa Mason of M-E-L Ltd attended the meeting to present data and conclusions arising from the recent telephone and face-to-face surveys undertaken with residents.

Following an inception meeting in July 2014 to discuss the brief for the survey, 400 face to face interviews had taken place at key locations in the town centre and a further 200 telephone interviews had taken place. 73% of those questioned lived within Leighton-Linslade. A draft version of a comprehensive report with full analysis of the data obtained had been circulated prior to the meeting and a final version, incorporating any further points raised at the meeting, would be provided within the next couple of days.

In addition to the interviews, three focus group meetings had taken place in three different locations and targeting different age groups.

The overall aim had been to find out people's perceptions of the town centre and why they visited it, or not.

A very positive 72% of respondents saw the town as a good place to shop, visit and do business. A significant number of respondents (24%) used the town centre on a daily basis. This tended to be mainly younger people and those who walked into the centre. A trend indicated a more frequent shopping pattern, with people buying little and often.

67% of respondents felt the town centre was very easy to get to from home, with a further 25% stating it was fairly easy. However, access by public transport was a potential issue, particularly in the evening and partly due to services being provided across county boundaries. Parking was felt to be

sufficient, but traffic congestion was a factor preventing some respondents from accessing the town centre.

Overall, respondents expressed a preference to support their local market town and enjoyed the traditional High Street layout and the number of independent shops. 92% agreed that the market made a positive contribution to the town. The main factor in deciding to shop elsewhere was the lack of variety of shops and in particular the lack of clothing stores or national chain stores. Respondents felt forced to shop elsewhere in order to have sufficient choice.

Key findings and recommendations in respect of Retail, Transport Traffic and Parking, Events/Leisure, Engagement and Atmosphere/Community were summarised in the presentation to the Committee.

It was agreed that a small working party be formed in order to analyse the findings in greater detail and agree recommendations for future actions/projects to put forward to the Committee. Membership was suggested as:

Councillors: S Cotter, D Hopkin and A Brandham

Officers: V Cannon and M Saccoccio (LLTC), S Lakin (CBC)

Town centre businesses: G Borelli (A Touch of Class) and P Curtis (Selections)

The Chair thanked Lisa Mason of M-E-L Ltd on behalf of the Committee for the detailed and clear presentation and all the work which had gone into the town centre survey.

RESOLVED to note the report and await further recommendations from the working party.

325/LLP BUSINESS UPDATE

G Borelli, Chair of LB First, advised the Committee that the current focus was on working with the Town Council on this year's Christmas Festival event, which was fast approaching. Fundraising for the town centre public-access defibrillators continued and the group was looking to undertake further community involvement projects next year. Some new members had been recruited, including from the industrial estate. LB First also continued to work with the Partnership Officer on the tourism strategy and leaflet.

B Chandler, Chair of LB Connect, advised the Committee that this year's charity for the group was "Kids in Action". Members continued to report good business.

RESOLVED to note the information.

326/LLP CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received a report from Central Bedfordshire Council containing updates on various service areas including community safety, leisure, library,

highways and transportation, social care, youth services and schools. Waste and recycling was a focus for the next three months with the aim of increasing the quality of the recycling.

It was noted that land on the old cattle market site had been cleared and the intention was for the Duncombe Drive to be extended in the near future.

A key focus for Central Bedfordshire Council was to raise the profile of the area as a business and leisure destination and to support the Visitor Economy.

Concerns were raised from the CCTV report which indicated issues with the Night Time Economy, particularly around 4am-5am. It was questioned whether the CBC Licensing Committee could take any action to curb late night opening hours but felt that this was unlikely as the Committee would need to adhere to strict licensing rules and regulations.

RESOLVED to note the report.

327/LLP DEFIBRILLATOR PROJECT

The Committee received two reports regarding the Leighton-Linslade defibrillator project. The Town Council would be provided with a unit at Astral Park in accordance with the scheme developed by Central Bedfordshire Council and the Beds Fire and Rescue Service. Funding for additional town centre units had been provided through the Leighton-Linslade Rotary Club and fundraising undertaken by the LB First Responders and LB First. Proposed locations were included for consideration.

It was recommended that the Town Council formally adopt the four or five defibrillators anticipated to be gifted to the Parish, to ensure their long-term maintenance. An initial cost would be for installation, insurance and community awareness training, with a proposed ongoing sum allocated each year for ongoing running costs.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to note the information**
- (ii) to endorse the proposal that Leighton-Linslade Town Council formally adopt all five defibrillators anticipated to be gifted to the Parish, to ensure their long-term maintenance and productive services to the community in future years.**
- (iii) That the estimated set-up costs of approximately £2,000 to include installation, insurance, running costs and community awareness training be met from the Town Centre Management budget (503/4505).**
- (iv) To allocate an ongoing sum of £1,000 per year starting from 2015-2016 from the same budget code, to ensure ongoing running costs can be met as needed in future years.**
- (v) For the Town Council to develop its working relationship with all those involved in the Leighton Defibrillator Project, particularly the Leighton-Linslade First Responders, to establish how best to work**

collaboratively towards ensuring ongoing provision, awareness raising and management of scheme funds.

328/LLP TEMPORARY BEACH POST-EVENT REPORT

The Committee received a report following the installation of a temporary beach in June-September 2014 in Parson's Close Recreation Ground, to attract both residents and visitors into the town centre during the summer months. The report outlined arrangements for building and dismantling of the beach, staffing, signage and publicity, opening times and uses, littering, vandalism and costs.

Feedback forms and anecdotal feedback had been analysed to determine the value of undertaking such a project compared to delivering one-off community events. Information suggested that the primary beneficiaries had been local residents but that a significant number of visitors had also come from surrounding villages and towns. A basic scoring system showed a majority of those completing the survey had rated the sand cleanliness, staff friendliness and appearance and activities as "very good" or "good". Data also demonstrated that a majority of those coming to the beach had visited the town centre and purchased something from a local retailer.

In conclusion, the beach had proven to be more labour intensive and operationally complex than originally anticipated, but had clearly attracted people, both residents and visitors, into the town centre. It was suggested that further consideration be given to development of a more permanent attraction within Parson's Close Recreation Ground and that provision be made within the budget for this purpose. The Town Clerk advised that various options for the development of the park as a destination park with Green Flag status were under consideration and that any future attractions would aim to ensure a sustainable year-round attraction. It was noted that this project should be added to the Committee Work Plan for December 2014 or February 2015 at the latest.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to identify £35,000 within the committee budget for 2015-2016 for the purposes of supporting permanent attractions within Parson's Close Recreation Ground.**
- (ii) That attraction options, to include a business case and other likely funding streams, be brought to the Partnership Committee for consideration as soon as practicable.**

329/LLP SIGNAGE STRATEGY

The Committee received a report regarding progress to date on delivering actions within the Signage Strategy. A number of actions had now been completed, with others such as new town maps in the car parks to be completed in the near future. A town-wide audit had identified a number of further signage improvements which were needed, for which budget was available within funds already allocated to the signage project.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed signage improvement works as set out within the report, to be funded from already allocated and approved budgets (TCM Signage, Town Centre Delivery Plan, Town Centre Management and Economic Development earmarked reserves).

A further update was given with regard to the Mews areas within the town centre. As part of the agreed Town Centre Delivery Plan, works to improve the mews areas had been identified, including maintenance works, improved lighting and making improvements to unkempt areas. Following a site visit by officers and Councillors, a list of actions had been drawn up, to be undertaken on a collaborative basis by both Councils in conjunction with tenants and landlords, using funding already allocated for this aspect of the Town Centre Delivery Plan. It was noted that funding of up to £20,000 had already been approved by the Committee as part of the Town Centre Delivery Plan on 12 December 2013 (Minute Reference 235/LLP).

RESOLVED to note the report and to endorse the proposed enhancement works to the Mews in the interests of town centre improvements.

Councillor K Sharer left the meeting at 2118 hours.

330/LLP CHRISTMAS 2014

The Committee received an update report regarding plans for the 2014 Christmas Festival weekend, taking place during the last weekend in November. Temporary traffic regulation orders had been applied for to close the High Street, North Street and Church Square, a site visit had taken place with the pyrotechnic company regarding the firework display and The Safety Advisory Group at Central Bedfordshire Council had been informed of activities taking place.

A Christmas market would take place on the Friday and Sunday, with the usual street market taking place on the Saturday. A food court accommodating up to sixteen stalls would be located in Church Square. LB First was organising a programme of entertainment to take place on stage. Additional entertainment included reindeer, donkey rides and birds of prey.

A publicity poster was being finalised and would be widely displayed. In addition, thirty thousand copies of a sponsored event guide were being printed, to be distributed to homes in the town and surrounding villages in early November. It was anticipated that all costs arising from the guide would be met by the advertising income.

RESOLVED to note the information.

331/LLP WINTER SALTING

The Committee received a report from Central Bedfordshire Council outlining arrangements for the 2014-15 winter season. A Winter Maintenance Plan was due to be published shortly and would outline the unitary authority's plans for

keeping the priority road network and footways clear during the winter season. It was anticipated that free salt would be delivered to any parish council requesting it. Any requests for siting of new salt bins would need to be approved by Highways.

Central Bedfordshire Council would not be able to provide gritting services in car parks, on footpaths or in residential areas and it was noted that parish councils and/or local volunteers could potentially undertake these services. An example was given of other parish councils which had entered into a delegation agreement with CBC to undertake local winter maintenance in a safe and legal manner, to benefit local parishioners.

It was suggested that subject to having the appropriate equipment, existing Town Council staff could potentially be used to undertake winter salting in certain areas and help keep the town centre open for business. Concerns were raised regarding insurance and liability, particularly if the Town Council was to salt areas which were not in its ownership such as the car parks. It was proposed and seconded that the Town Council investigate options further in respect of winter salting.

RESOLVED to note the report.

RECOMMENDED to the Town Council to investigate and consider options in respect of winter salting, with the aim of keeping the town centre open for business in winter weather conditions.

332/LLP BUDGET MONITORING AND 2015-2016 BUDGET

The Committee received a report outlining current year budgets in the three main areas of Economic Development, Town Centre Management and Big Plan Projects, as well as proposed budgets for 2015-2016.

It was noted that monies allocated within the Big Plan Projects budget for market trader workshops had not been utilised, as sufficient funding had been available within the Market budget. It was suggested that these funds be used for the continued greening of the parish, through community initiatives.

It was proposed that funds within the current year street furniture budget could be used to consider advertising banners on lamp columns on West Street, to promote events and the town centre, subject to obtaining the necessary permissions from Highways.

RESOLVED to note the budget reports.

The meeting closed at 2132 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 OCTOBER 2014.