

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

MONDAY, 28 JUNE 2021 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors D Bowater
 F Kharawala (Chair)
 C Palmer
 R Berry
 A Dodwell
 M Freeman
 S Jones
 T Morris (Vice-Chair)
 G Perham
 V Harvey
 S Hemmings
 D Scott
 P Snelling
 R Goodchild
 A Gray
 S Owen
 P Carberry
 R Yates
 P Carberry
 R Yates

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 V Cannon, Head of Cultural and Economic
 Services
 I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental
 Services

Members of the Public: 0

227 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors K Cursons and B Spurr.

Council was asked to consider approval of an absence potentially longer than six months for health reasons, for Councillor B Spurr. Prior approval would prevent automatic disqualification after a six month absence in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, s85(1). This was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED to approve an absence of up to six months from 28 June 2021 for Councillor B Spurr for health reasons in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, s85(1).

228 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor V Harvey declared a personal interest as a member of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth.

No pecuniary interests were declared and no dispensations had been requested.

229 **TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor F Kharawala welcomed everyone to the first face to face meeting of Council to be held since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis in March 2020. She noted that as restrictions were lifted, she had been able to participate in some events recently as Town Mayor. These included the “flag off” of the first train of the year at the Narrow Gauge Railway, attendance at the first concert of the summer Music in the Park programme, attending new shop openings, attending an online awards ceremony at Central Bedfordshire College and presenting the 2021 Community Volunteer Awards to three deserving recipients.

230 **LEADERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor S Jones, Leader of the Conservative group, spoke to welcome the public support of a Public Works Board loan application to finance the refurbishment of the play area in Parson's Close Recreation Ground. Councillor Jones also welcomed Councillors Carberry and Yates to their first physical Council meeting and noted that the Union flag was flying at half mast at the White House today to note the funeral of former Mayor Mrs Shirley Inns (Mayor in 1987-88).

Councillor R Goodchild, Leader of the Liberal Democrat group, spoke regarding the recent online meeting held by the newly elected Police Crime Commissioner, which he and several other council representatives had attended. Councillor Goodchild had raised the Town Council's concerns regarding police presence and accommodation in the town but was disappointed to hear the PCC's view that there would be no police station in Leighton-Linslade in the near future.

Councillor D Scott, Leader of the Labour group, welcomed his newly elected group member Councillor P Carberry to the Council. Councillor Scott noted that it was positive to return to face to face meetings and he hoped that councillors would work together constructively.

231 **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

232 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

(a) Council received the draft minutes of the Council meetings held on 26 April and 4 May 2021.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the council meetings held on 26 April 2021 and 4 May 2021 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

(b) Councillor R Goodchild confirmed he would remain Leader of the Liberal Democrat group, with Councillor S Owen remaining Deputy.

233 **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2020-21**

Council received several documents previously presented to the Policy and Finance Committee on 21 June 2021 and recommended for approval.

Council received a report regarding the financial out-turn for 2020-21 and the proposal to create an earmarked reserve for facilities improvements. This would include measures to improve accessibility and environmental credentials, as well as seeking to ensure accommodation was appropriate for Town Council staff. Technological improvements such as port upgrades and equipment for facilitating hybrid meetings were also suggested.

On being put to the vote, the recommendations were carried with one abstention.

RESOLVED:

(i) **To note the report.**

(ii) **To endorse the creation of a Facilities Improvements Earmarked Reserve of £137,754 for the purposes of making town council facilities more resilient in the wake of the pandemic and where considered appropriate to consider introducing measures to meet the town council's environmental ambitions.**

(iii) **To agree to the draw down of a maximum of £3,000 from the Facilities Improvements Earmarked Reserve to enable any covid compliant changes to be made when considered appropriate and necessary to do so.**

Council received the Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2021.

RESOLVED to receive and approve the Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2021.

Council received and was asked to approve the Annual Governance Statement.

RESOLVED to approve the Annual Governance Statement, section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2020-2021.

Council received and was asked to approve the Accounting Statements for 2020-2021.

RESOLVED to approve the Accounting Statements, section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2020-2021.

Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return were signed by the Town Mayor and the Town Clerk (Responsible Financial Officer).

234 APPROVED DECISIONS 5 MAY - 27 JUNE 2021

Council was asked to note the two decisions made in accordance with the delegated authority approved previously by the Council, since it last met on 4 May 2021.

RESOLVED to note the decisions made by the Town Clerk with email approval by Council, in accordance with the scheme of delegation, in the period 5 May – 27 June 2021.

235 I.T. EXPENDITURE

Council received a report regarding I.T. expenditure and considered the recommendations contained therein.

RESOLVED:

(i) to approve additional expenditure of £1,100 from the Professional Fees earmarked reserve (£14,360) for the installation costs for the new telephone system.

(ii) To approve expenditure of £500 from the I.T./Modern.gov earmarked reserve (£3,360 available) for the purchase of additional monitors.

236 COMMITTEES

Council received a list of proposed appointments to Committees and Sub Committees

RESOLVED to appoint Committee and Sub-Committee members for 2021-2022 as follows:

Name of Committee	Conservative	Independent	Labour	Liberal Democrat
Policy & Finance	S Jones A Dodwell F Kharawala C Palmer R Berry T Morris G Perham	J M Freeman	D Scott	R Goodchild S Owen

Planning & Transport	A Dodwell J Silverstone C Palmer D Bowater G Perham R Yates	J M Freeman	P Carberry	R Goodchild S Owen
Cultural & Economic Services	A Dodwell S Hemmings R Yates K Cursons D Bowater G Perham	J M Freeman	D Scott	R Goodchild P Snelling
Grounds & Environmental Services	R Berry S Jones T Morris C Palmer R Yates B Spurr	V Harvey	P Carberry	A Gray P Snelling
Grants & Awards Sub Committee	C Palmer K Cursons S Hemmings B Spurr S Jones A Dodwell	J M Freeman	D Scott	R Goodchild A Gray
Personnel Sub Committee	A Dodwell D Bowater K Cursons S Jones		D Scott	R Goodchild
Community Safety Sub Committee	R Yates A Dodwell D Bowater F Kharawala R Berry J Silverstone	V Harvey	P Carberry	R Goodchild A Gray
Market Sub Committee	G Perham D Bowater A Dodwell F Kharawala T Morris R Berry	J M Freeman	P Carberry	R Goodchild P Snelling

Council members then proposed, seconded and voted on appointments of Chairs for the four standing Committees. Chairs of Sub-Committees would be appointed at the first meetings of those Sub-Committees.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor S Jones Chair of Policy and Finance committee for the municipal year 2021-2022.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor R Berry Chair of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee for the municipal year 2021-2022.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor A Dodwell Chair of the Cultural and Economic Services Committee for the municipal year 2021-2022.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor M Freeman Chair of the Planning & Transport Committee for the municipal year 2021-2022.

Council noted the five Central Bedfordshire Councillor appointments to the Partnership Committee.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillors T Morris, S Owen, C Palmer, S Hemmings and F Kharawala to the Partnership Committee for the municipal year 2021-2022.

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Partnership Committee would be appointed by the committee at its first meeting.

237 **APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

Council considered the list of appointments to outside bodies and agreed minor amendments as set out below. It was noted that the Senior Citizens Association ("LINK") was no longer in receipt of guaranteed grant funding but agreed to continue trying to make contact with them.

RESOLVED to agree the following changes in appointments to outside bodies:

- **Councillor Carberry to the Leighton-Linslade Carnival Committee**
- **Councillor Harvey to the Yes We Can Disability Sport programme**

238 **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

It was noted that several questions had been received in respect of agenda item 16 (contractor update) and proposed that this item be moved until later in the meeting.

RESOLVED to move this agenda item to later in the meeting, in closed session.

239 **TOWN CENTRE CAR PARKING**

Council received and considered a motion submitted by Councillor Goodchild and seconded by Councillor S Owen in respect of town centre car parking. The proposal was to approach Central Bedfordshire Council as owners of the

car parks to determine the cost for a three month free parking trial period, with the aim of increasing footfall and encouraging use of the town centre.

Several councillors spoke in support of the concept of subsidising short term parking to encourage visitors to the town centre. It was suggested that a breakdown of parking ticket duration be requested to look at the average dwell time. It was suggested that 1-2 hours of free parking might be most effective but agreed that all day free parking should not be encouraged. Officers would aim to bring the information to the July Policy and Finance Committee as requested but this would be dependent upon being able to get the required information from the local authority.

It was suggested that other town centre users, for example public transport users, should also be considered.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried with one abstention.

RESOLVED:

a) In furthering its commitment to the improvement and enhancement of the High Street retail experience and to aid the economic development of same, this Council requests the Town Clerk to instigate talks with Central Bedfordshire Council to provide the groundwork for a future agreement to enable free parking in all the town centre car parks for a trial period of three months.

b). The Town Clerk is further requested to ascertain the likely costs in the provision of said agreement including an accurate assessment any consequential loss of parking fee revenue by Central Bedfordshire Council that would have to be underwritten by Leighton-Linslade Town Council and bring a report to the meeting of Policy & Finance Committee scheduled for 26th July 2021.

240

TOWN CENTRE

Council received a motion proposed by Councillor S Owen and seconded by Councillor R Goodchild in respect of use of the town centre. The Covid-19 pandemic had accelerated a change in shopping habits and it was suggested that a Members' Workshop be organised to look at changing retail shopping habits, led by suitable retail shopping consultants with a view to revising the Town Council's strategic aims for town centre shopping.

Several views were expressed but it was generally felt that greater understanding of likely future uses of town centres would be useful information which could help inform future projects and activities as well as strategic direction. Councillors felt that the focus should be expanded to other businesses beyond retail and that the scope should also include leisure uses of town centres.

Council was advised that Central Bedfordshire Council had commissioned town centre benchmarking work for the fourth year and that this data could

be presented to Council once available.

RESOLVED:

(i) That this Council, recognising the changes in retail shopping habits that have gathered pace during the pandemic, resolves to organise a Members Workshop, led by suitable consultants, with a view to revising the Town Council's strategic aims for town centre uses including shopping, business and leisure.

(ii) The Council asks the Town Clerk to report to an early meeting of the Partnership Committee (or Policy & Finance Committee) on this matter, to discuss with CBC colleagues whether they would wish to participate, and on whether at this stage representatives of town centre businesses should be invited to attend.

(iii) To endorse expenditure of up to £2,000 from the Professional Fees earmarked reserve for consultancy fees.

241 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that, under the public bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded on the grounds of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. The public and press to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of detail discussion regarding Contractor Update and Public Conveniences cleaning contract/tender.

Councillor Yates left the meeting at 21:14.

242 **PUBLIC CONVENIENCES CLEANING CONTRACT/TENDER**

Council received a report regarding the public conveniences cleaning contract and unanimously agreed the recommendations contained therein.

RESOLVED:

(i) To approve an extension of the public conveniences cleaning contract from 1/04/20 to 31/10/21.

(ii) To approve that officers go out to tender for the public conveniences cleaning contract for the period of 1/11/21 – 31/3/23.

(iii) To endorse that the public convenience and pavilions cleaning be amalgamated together in a single tender from 01/04/23 onwards.

243 **CONTRACTOR UPDATE**

Council received a detailed report in respect of the town centre lighting project which formed part of the activity funded by both the Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council through the Market Town Regeneration Fund.

It was agreed that the project should be completed to make the town centre more attractive at night and proposed that additional learning points for the

future be added to those already included in the report.

Councillor P Snelling left the meeting at 21:37.

On being put to the vote, the recommendations were carried with one abstention.

RESOLVED:

(i) To endorse that remaining Market Town Regeneration Funds remain held in place (925/9590) for ongoing annual costs and ad hoc maintenance, repairs or replacement and that this be reviewed in three years' time.

(ii) To complete the remaining project works as set out in section 10 of the report.

(iii) To note the learning considerations for future projects identified at paragraph 9.2 of the report, with the addition of the following:

a) That a legal agreement should exist between the town council and any third parties.

b) That risk assessments should be completed for any complex projects.

c) That all senior management team members should be kept apprised of all complex projects.

It was proposed that the meeting be extended by five minutes to allow for completion of the Councillors' Questions agenda item in respect of this matter.

RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3(x) for a maximum of five minutes.

Councillors R Berry and A Dodwell left the meeting at 22:00.

Three questions were asked and answered in accordance with Standing Order 27.

The meeting closed at 10.09 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 28 JUNE 2021.

Chair

27 SEPTEMBER 2021