

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF SOUTH SIDE TASK AND FINISH GROUP
MONDAY, 26 JULY 2021 AT 10.00 AM

Present: Councillors V Harvey
 S Owen (Vice-Chair)
 C Palmer (Chair)
 S Jones
 G Perham (substituting for B Spurr)

Also in attendance M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 Caldbeck
 V Cannon, Head of Cultural and Economic
 Services
 M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental
 Services
 S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk
 S Caldbeck, Central Bedfordshire Council
 M Jahn, Committee Officer (joining remotely)
 Cllr T Morris (joining remotely)

Members of the public: 1

A request was made by Councillor Palmer, Chair of the Group, to move item 7 Exclusion of the Public and item 8 CBC Research Findings for discussion after item 4. Members agreed with this change in the agenda.

31/SS APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Spurr (substituted by Councillor Perham) and Councillor Hemmings (substituted by Councillor Jones).

Councillor Morris was joining remotely due to self-isolation and therefore was not legally present as a voting committee member (LGA 1972).

32/SS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Palmer declared a personal interest as a member of the LB Society and the Leighton Buzzard and District Archaeological and Historical Society. Councillor Harvey declared a personal interest as a member of the LB Society and South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth.

33/SS QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public.

34/SS **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

(a) The group received the draft minutes of the South Side Task & Finish Group held on the 6 May 2021.

Minute reference 29/SS (a): it was agreed to replace the third paragraph with the wording: "Members agreed that this paper provided an excellent starting point into which sound options and solutions would need to be grafted. Timescales were uncertain".

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the South Side Task & Finish Group held on 6 May 2021 be approved as a correct record, subject to the amendment above, and were signed accordingly.

(b) Minute reference 28/SS Venue Examples – it was clarified that an email had been received from Rechelle Dua regarding the Leighton Library and Theatre Facility. Central Bedfordshire officers would be meeting with community groups to better understand their needs and to clarify any queries.

35/SS **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 detailed discussion regarding: Central Bedfordshire Council Research Findings.

36/SS **CBC RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The Group received a verbal update from Sam Caldbeck of Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) regarding the commissioned research pertaining to Land South of the High Street. Two consultants had been commissioned as they had different areas of specialism. The work had looked at a range of potential options for the land in the ownership of CBC (and potential options in terms of third party landowners for adjacent premises). The purpose of the study was to better understand the current development market and the development potential for the site.

Scenarios considered in the commissioned research included mixed uses with a leisure led development (e.g. gym, bowling) or a cinema led development. The study concluded that likely residual land values for a leisure or cinema led mixed use development indicated that neither was currently a viable option, largely due to the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. A residential led development might offer greater financial viability

but would not be appropriate for a town centre redevelopment site.

This situation was reflected across the country with market conditions seriously impacted by the pandemic.

It was hoped that market conditions would improve over time and that a development of some kind would become feasible in the future, but timescales were unknown. Whilst fully recognising the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Members received with dismay the prospect of a further substantial delay in making progress with development on land south of the High Street. It was suggested that the intervening period, possibly a number of years, could be used to continue discussions with the community about options for the site and to look to progress access to/from the site from the High Street.

Officers were thanked for their presentation.

37/SS **FORMULATION OF COMMUNITY NEEDS FOR REDEVELOPMENT OF LSSH**

The Task and Finish Group received a report prepared by Councillor S Owen with comment added by others, in respect of potential redevelopment uses of the site and possible next steps.

Following the presentation on research findings, it was suggested that a phased approach to the site might be possible rather than looking at the entire site. Members and officers raised the possibility of an initial community-led facility to spark the overall redevelopment.

It was suggested that the potential for a community arts centre could be further explored with appropriate community groups and that the town council seriously consider bringing to the attention of the appropriate authorities the possible inclusion of a police hub facility and/or a health hub facility as part of the development. Other potential ideas included a civic led facility with provision for council offices and possibly with a heritage element. It was recognised that financial planning would be an important dimension of any such initiative.

In order to proceed further it was suggested that recommendations needed to be put forward to both the Partnership Committee and also to the Policy and Finance Committee (given potential implications of further research on town council resources, staff, budgets and other current projects).

RESOLVED to develop reports with specific recommendations to go forward to the Partnership Committee and the Policy and Finance Committee for consideration.

38/SS FUTURE MEETING DATE

No date was set as the future of the Task and Finish Group was yet to be determined, as it had now run for the initial six month duration.

The meeting closed at 12.10 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 26 JULY 2021.

Chair