

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 23 AUGUST 2021 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors S Jones (Chair)
 A Dodwell (Vice-Chair)
 C Palmer
 R Berry
 T Morris
 G Perham
 D Scott
 R Goodchild
 F Kharawala
 P Snelling (substituting for S Owen)

Also in attendance: I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental
 Services
 M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk
 Cllr V Harvey

Members of the public: 0
Members of the press 0

264/PF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors M Freeman and S Owen (substituted by Councillor P Snelling).

265/PF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Palmer declared a personal interest in the Land South of the High Street agenda item as a member of the Leighton Buzzard Society.

No pecuniary interests were declared and no dispensations were requested.

266/PF QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC (3 minutes per person; maximum 15 minutes)

There were no questions from the public.

267/PF WHITE HOUSE

The Committee received a report to consider approval for expenditure from the White House earmarked reserve for several maintenance projects.

RESOLVED to approve the expenditure of up to £10,000 from the White House earmarked reserve 9041/920 for several planned maintenance projects.

268/PF PROMS IN THE PARK

The Committee received and considered a report to allocate the use of earmarked reserves to enable a Firework Display as part of Proms in the Park.

RESOLVED to allocate £1500 from the Canal Festival Earmarked Reserve 9058/970 towards the provision of a Firework Display at the Proms in the Park event.

269/PF PUBLIC REALM PROJECT UPDATE

Ian Haynes, Head of Grounds, gave the Committee a verbal update in respect of the public realm improvement scheme whereby Central Bedfordshire Council had provided funding of £100,000 for the purchase of equipment which could be loaned out to neighbouring parish councils and community groups. Equipment purchased included a small road sweeper with attachments which meant it could be used for a number of purposes including chemical-free weed killing. A box van trailer had been purchased and tools would now be sourced. Once equipped, the trailer could be hired out in its entirety.

RESOLVED to note the information.

270/PF ADOPTION OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

The Committee received a report in respect of land transfer of Public Open Space to the Town Council. The original proposal had been considered previously by Grounds and Environmental Services Committee, with a recommendation made to Council to endorse the land transfer. Remedial works prior to transfer were being undertaken by the land owner and it was anticipated that Council would be asked to endorse the transfer by the end of the current financial year.

Since considering the original proposal a number of changes had taken place and it was proposed that consideration be given to use of the commuted sum to increase headcount in the Grounds team, to ensure adequate resources were available to manage and maintain the additional sites. The annual staffing budget would need to be increased gradually so that once commuted sums were spent, the revenue budget would support the increased headcount.

RESOLVED to note the report.

RECOMMENDED to Council that should Council be minded to approve the adoption of land, that careful consideration be given to the use of

the commuted sum to ensure adequate resources to manage and maintain the additional sites.

271/PF **RISK REGISTER MID YEAR UPDATE**

The Committee received a mid-year update report regarding the Risk Register action plan for 2021-2022. Many actions this year related to the continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and others included social media security, data protection, investment strategy, documentation of procedures, cemetery headstone survey.

In terms of the action plan item relating to land east of Leighton-Linslade, it was clarified that there was approximately 60 hectares of public open space included in the overall land east site, which if eventually transferred to the town council would double its current public open space. The lack of certainty over this and the lack of clarity over timing meant it was difficult to forward plan.

RESOLVED to note the report.

272/PF **LAND SOUTH OF THE HIGH STREET**

The Committee received a report from Councillor C Palmer as Chair of the current Land South of the High Street Task and Finish Group. The Group had initially been an informal working party comprising of several councillors and had later become a Task and Finish Group under the Partnership Committee. Having had several meetings and with some significant work undertaken by individual councillors as well as information from a study commissioned by Central Bedfordshire Council, the Group had now put forward a number of recommendations for consideration.

It was recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted market conditions and it was therefore unlikely that any comprehensive development options for the site would come forward in the near future. However, the Group felt that work could still continue to assess possible future uses of the site including the potential for an arts centre and/or civic uses including council accommodation, heritage centre and potential uses for a police or health related facility.

The Task and Finish Group had welcomed assurances from Central Bedfordshire Council that the 2012 development brief for the site would be revisited and that the site was identified for regeneration. As the primary (but not sole) landowner of the site, it was crucial that Central Bedfordshire Council support the proposed activity going forward.

It was proposed that the work of the Group should continue but under the remit of the Town Council's Policy and Finance Committee. Clear terms of reference would be needed and these would help inform resourcing

requirements and potential costs thereof. An accompanying report from Town Council officers set out the current workload which included day to day operations and management of services, Council endorsed objectives and priorities, actions arising from the 2021 Risk Register and actions arising from other initiatives and Motions endorsed by Council/committee. The Committee accepted that the current staffing structure had no capacity for additional, unanticipated workload and that the implications of any additional work would need further consideration.

Following some lengthy discussion, it was agreed that recommendations be put forward to Partnership Committee on 9 September and that thereafter, the Policy and Finance Committee could review the situation at its next meeting on 20 September.

RECOMMENDED from the Leighton-Linslade Policy and Finance Committee to the Leighton-Linslade Partnership Committee that:

- i) The report from Cllr C Palmer summarising the work of the Land South of the High Street Task and Finish Group be formally noted.**
- ii) In Central Bedfordshire work streams relating to land south of the High Street (e.g. revision of the 2012 development brief, planning matters, Local Plan review), that consideration be given to potential uses of the site such as a performing arts and cultural facility, a civic facility, police accommodation and/or location for the integrated health services hub.**
- iii) That the Land South of the High Street Task and Finish Group be formally disbanded following completion of its initial investigations and that the work continue through a new working party to report to the Town Council's Policy and Finance Committee with a suggested membership of Councillors: C Palmer, S Jones, T Morris, S Owen, R Goodchild, M Freeman, V Harvey and one member of the Labour group. Terms of reference and membership to be reviewed further by the group itself and approved by Policy and Finance Committee.**
- iv) That Central Bedfordshire Council be requested to:
 - a. Support the ongoing work of the working party with Central Bedfordshire Council officer involvement.**
 - b. Explore whether S106 monies could be utilised to fund a feasibility study/business case for a civic facility on land south of the High Street.**
 - c. Support the Town Council's aspirations to be actively involved in any future work around the place making agenda that the principal authority may undertake for Leighton-Linslade, including land south of the High Street and the eastern urban extension sites at Chamberlains Barn, Clipstone Park and the Stearn Land.****

The meeting closed at 9.08 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 23 AUGUST 2021.

Chair

20 SEPTEMBER 2021