

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF SOUTH SIDE WORKING PARTY
THURSDAY, 21 APRIL 2022 AT 10.30 AM

Present: Councillors A Dodwell
 M Freeman
 V Harvey
 F Kharawala
 T Morris
 S Owen
 C Palmer

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk, (left meeting at 1215 hours).
 V Cannon, Head of cultural & Economic Services
 M Jahn, Committee Officer

Joining remotely: Sam Caldbeck, Central Bedfordshire Council
 Pamela Birch, Bedfordshire Archives

Members of the public: 1

19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received for Councillor S Jones.

20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest or pecuniary interests were declared.

21 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC (3 minutes per person; 15 minutes total)

There were no questions from the public.

22 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

(a) The Committee received the minutes of the South Side Working Party held on 7 March 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the South Side Working Party held on 7 March 2022 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

Concerns were raised regarding the pace and direction of plans for Land

South of the High Street and the need to monitor so it does not drift. Also more inclusion for the landowners was requested in discussions and meetings.

(b) Any updates would be covered in the agenda.

23 **BEDFORDSHIRE ARCHIVES**

The working party received a presentation from Pamela Birch of the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives service. She informed members that Bedfordshire Archives collected preserved and made available records for the public for the whole of Bedfordshire by providing an on-line catalogue, personal visits, a remote enquiry service and a copying service. The Service had been actively looking for alternative larger accommodation for the Archives for many years but because of the specific conditions needed to store archive material and funding the amount of extra space required no suitable premises had been found. No long-term strategy was in place but a review would be taking place in June 2022 when the need for bigger premises would be discussed.

In answer to the question how could Bedfordshire Archives assist Leighton Buzzard in setting up a heritage centre they would be able to offer regular workshops or talks at Leighton Buzzard Library and provide archivist sessions to spread knowledge. It would be difficult to do more than this as it is difficult to move archive material on a permanent basis as it requires correct storage temperatures and conditions. Exhibitions and digital involvement would be possible but discussions on timings and availability of staff would be needed.

Members confirmed the interest of this group was based on the development of land south of the High Street with an arts/cultural and heritage facility and the question was raised as to whether this type of facility would be a suitable to provide a permanent base for exhibiting material. Pamela Birch thought it would be difficult to facilitate a separate building as one location with the correct conditions was more economical to run and all material in one place proved more convenient for researchers.

RESOLVED to thank Bedfordshire Archives for their attendance and to note the information.

24 **COUNCIL ACCOMMODATION**

The Working Party received a verbal update on the current situation. A new twenty year lease had been signed in 2018 with a 10 year breakout possibility in 6 years. Members were informed that as technology had advanced and continued to do so the amount of space required would be similar to the space available at the present location but set up to accommodate ground floor storage, two meeting rooms, reception, office space with 20 to 30 parking spaces.

Sam Caldbeck thought the inclusion of the Town Council offices into a Community Building would be easier to pursue initially and access funding with staff already on site to manage and run the day to day use. A separate Heritage/Arts facility would require staffing and managing in addition to any new town council offices.

RESOLVED to note the information.

25

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL UPDATES

Sam Caldbeck, Central Bedfordshire Council informed members that after the review last year regarding the land south of the High Street and commencement of building the new care home, Marigold House, Central Bedfordshire Council had now commissioned a reassessment of the site to determine its current potential for a commercial project.

A question was raised whether Central Bedfordshire Council still supported the development of the land south of the High Street. Sam Caldbeck reiterated that CBC was investing in a reassessment of the area to inform CBC of possibilities and opportunities.

A further question was raised whether Central Bedfordshire Council had been aware of the recent sale of Post Office land behind the High Street. Sam Caldbeck confirmed he had only just been made aware of this sale. Concerns were raised whether Assets at Central Bedfordshire Council had been aware of the involvement of the Town Council and the Peppercorn Company in the proposed development of this land. Sam Caldbeck reassured Committee that he was in liaison with the Assets services.

It was agreed it was time to make decisions and progress with these plans and the need to keep in touch with an overall picture was important. It was felt the Town Council should take the initiative so the timescale was not delayed further.

RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3(x) for a maximum of 30 minutes to allow completion of the agenda.

RESOLVED

(a) That the Town Clerk seeks suitable authorisation from the most appropriate Committee to do what is necessary to enable the Town Council to secure a feasibility study for the potential future relocation of council offices and that the study extends to include options that may incorporate other facilities that the South Side Working party has referenced:

- (i) Council Offices**
- (ii) Community use/meeting spaces**
- (iii) Facilities that accommodate cultural activities**
- (iv) Facilities that accommodate heritage activities**

(v) Facilities that accommodate the TACTIC Youth Centre

- (b) That the Town Clerk send a formal request to Central Bedfordshire Council requesting a detailed update on the work being undertaken on the creation of a new Development Plan for Land South of the High Street in Leighton Buzzard requesting reassurance that the Town Council would be involved in it's formulation and kept abreast of progress in a timely manner.**

RECOMMEND to Policy & Finance Committee to authorise a meeting between elected members of the Town Council with Central Bedfordshire Council's Leader and relevant Portfolio holder to discuss how the two Councils may best collaborate on the issues relating to the land south of the High Street.

26 **STAKEHOLDERS UPDATES**

Members of the Working Party thanked Paul Brown for all his work regarding the Peppercorn Company and invited him to join the Working Party for future meetings.

Concerns were raised regarding communication between Central Bedfordshire Council and other stakeholders on sharing information regarding the land south of the High Street and it was hoped the landowners would be invited and included in future meetings.

RESOLVED to note the information.

The meeting closed at 12.50 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 21 APRIL 2022.

Chair

23 MAY 2022