

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, 4 APRIL 2022 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors D Bowater
 C Palmer
 R Berry
 A Dodwell
 M Freeman
 S Jones (Chair)
 T Morris
 G Perham
 B Spurr
 V Harvey
 S Hemmings
 D Scott
 J Silverstone
 R Goodchild
 A Gray
 S Owen
 P Carberry

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk
 I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental
 Services
 M Jahn, Committee Officer

Members of the Public: 13

The Town Clerk asked for nominations to Chair the meeting in the absence of the Town Mayor due to illness.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor S Jones to Chair the meeting (11 in favour, 1 against, 5 abstentions).

298 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence for the meeting had been received from Councillors Kharawala, Snelling, Yates and Cursons.

299 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made and no dispensations were requested.

300 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Police Crime Commissioner spoke regarding his continued commitment to deliver on his campaign paper regarding the provision of a police contact hub . Work was underway to locate a suitable premises in the town to provide a community led police contact hub but property viewed to date was not appropriate for this use. Councillors could help with suggestions of a suitable property and these would be followed up. The safety of the community was the main objective and the PCC felt that positive support and engagement from the Town Councillors with Bedfordshire Police's Estates Department would help achieve this. A request was made to the Council to help recruit Special Constables from their wards. If any Councillors had any questions they could write directly to the PCC with their concerns.

Inspector Twyford of Bedfordshire Police informed the meeting that the number of officers in Leighton Linslade had increased to one Sergeant and nine PC's plus 3 Community Support Officers. In addition, the Rural Crime Section had one Sergeant and 6 PCs who, although based in Dunstable, also served the Leighton Linslade area and Response Vehicles also covered the area on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday until midnight and on the other days until 10 pm. Recruitment over the next 12 months would increase with 300 police constables being employed. There had been no spikes in crime figures over the last few months so no specific area of crime had increased.

A member of the public spoke regarding a Health Hub for Leighton Linslade. The increase in population meant patient numbers at the surgeries had grown and Leighton Linslade seemed to be at the bottom on the list for healthcare provision. The question was asked as to how this was being addressed by the Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council.

A comment was raised by a Town Councillor to ask why this Extraordinary Meeting had been called. The content of the agenda could have been discussed at the already scheduled relevant committee meetings. The Town Clerk was asked to advise how much additional work had been caused, whether there had been an impact on planned workstreams and to confirm the cost of the extraordinary meeting.

301 POLICING IN LEIGHTON BUZZARD AND LINSLADE

Councillor Owen introduced a motion which was seconded by Councillor Goodchild in respect of policing in Leighton Buzzard:

- a) *That this Council calls on the Police and Crime Commissioner to meet the promise in his 2021 Conservative election leaflet i.e. "I will bring back community-based policing for our rural and market towns by creating Police Contact Hubs in areas where Police Stations have closed", and to provide a firm Plan with timescale for doing so.*
- b) *That this Council requests the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel, to whom is the PCC is accountable, to ask the PCC how and when he plans to honour his May 2021 pledge, since the Panel has hitherto raised no issue with the PCC re. the absence of mention of a Leighton Buzzard Police Hub*

(or indeed Hubs for other Bedfordshire towns) in either his Policing Plan or his Annual Budget, both of which have received “scrutiny” at Panel meetings.

c) That Cllr A Dodwell be requested to brief this Council at a future meeting on her activity as a member of the Police and Crime Panel to hold the PCC to account for his pledge re the Leighton Buzzard Police Hub.

d) That the Town Clerk be asked to write to the Chief Constable to ask whether he will produce a Policing Plan for the town that addresses both on-site and on-call Police staffing numbers allocated to Leighton-Linslade, arrangements for easy contact for residents and businesses with the Police, and seek his willingness to a dialogue with the Town Council to identify a suitable town centre location (short-term if necessary to start with) for that contact to take place.

Discussion took place with several members of the Council expressing their views. Overall, it was felt that all Councillors wanted the same thing: adequate policing and a visible presence in the town.

With the Police Crime Commissioner having publicly confirmed his commitment to delivering his pre-election promise of a policing contact hub in the town and having confirmed he would put this in writing to the Council, Councillor Owen agreed to withdraw his motion.

302 LEIGHTON LINSLADE HEALTH HUB

Councillor Owen introduced a lengthy and detailed motion, seconded by Councillor Goodchild, regarding a Leighton Linslade Health Hub:

That this Council

a) Reaffirms the Town Council’s commitment to local residents to reducing the strain, time and cost of travel by residents (particularly older persons) to hospitals, by localising hospital services into a Leighton-Linslade Health Hub.

b) Rejects the BLMKCCG’s allocation of lowest priority to a Leighton-Linslade Hub that is based on statistics of current “spare” space at Leighton-Linslade surgeries which local GPs dispute, and ignores both the current lengthy travel to hospital distances for 60,000 local residents and the unnecessary costs to the taxpayer of basing diagnostic and treatment services in hospitals when they could be available at a local Hub.

c) Regrets the failure of BLMKCCG and CBC’s Health and Well-being Board to consult with this Council or local residents on their chosen prioritisation yardstick which is irrelevant to the needs of new space, equipment and staffing arising from the localisation of services.

d) Deplores the action of the BLMKCCG/CBC H&WBB in approving a Health Hub programme that funds two Health Hubs but contains no plans for funding the other three.

e) Deplores the HWBB secrecy in refusing to provide this Council with their draft plans for a Leighton-Linslade Hub and being prepared to discuss them with this Council.

f) Notes that the HWBB officers are working on the basis of three unsuitable potential locations for a Leighton-Linslade Hub when central

locations convenient for residents and bases are available and current Government policy is to seek central locations for such developments.

g) Notes with disappointment the lack of challenge on the part of many Leighton-Linslade CBC councillors to the actions of BLMKCCG, the CBC H&WBB, or the CBC Executive, and regrets the action of Leighton-Linslade CBC Conservative councillors Bowater, Berry, Wallace, Perham, Dodwell, Ferguson, and Spurr, in voting against the recent Motion at CBC from Cllrs Harvey and Snelling to promote the Leighton-Linslade Health Hub, as instructed by the Conservative CBC Executive.

h) Records its disappointment with the imperceptible progress by the Council's Health T&F Group in progressing the Council's objectives for both a Health Hub for Leighton-Linslade and a fourth surgery on the Eastern side of town, due in part to the absence of commitment from key stakeholders such as the Conservative CBC Portfolio-Holder to attend and contribute to T&F Group meetings, the HWBB refusal to share the draft Strategic Plan (with its listing of health services) with the Town Council or to engage with the Town Council to discuss practical funding and site options.

and therefore

i) Asks the Chair of the T&F Group, Cllr Perham, who is also a senior CBC administration member, and the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jones, to explain what they propose to do to improve the current impasse and allow the voice of local residents to be heard.

j) Invites the town's CBC councillors to explain

1. why they voted against the Harvey/Snelling Motion

2. whether and how or whether they intend to begin real progress with the Leighton-Linslade Health Hub

3. whether and how they will exert pressure on HWBB (i.e. BLMKCCG and CBC) officers to provide co-operation to the Council's T&F Group instead of saying publicly that they have no influence.

k) Resolves meantime in the interests of accountability to inform residents of the obstacles and lack of co-operation coming from the major bodies and most of the town's CBC councillors.

A number of Members spoke, with everyone in agreement that adequate health provision was a matter of the greatest importance. However, it was felt that this matter was already being discussed in detail at the Health Services Task & Finish Group, where actions were agreed to attempt to progress matters with the NHS and local authority, which had the statutory responsibility for delivering healthcare provision.

A proposal to strike paragraph g) from the Motion was approved by a majority vote.

Following further discussion with many members of the Council speaking, the remainder of the motion was put to the vote.

RESOLVED that the motion be not carried (7 for, 8 against and 2 abstentions).

Councillors Morris and Spurr left the meeting at 2127 hours.

The meeting was briefly adjourned at 2122 hours and reconvened at 2128 hours.

303 LEIGHTON BUZZARD HIGH STREET TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS ("TROS")

Councillor Owen introduced a motion, seconded by Councillor R Goodchild, regarding the High Street Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and the urgent need for Central Bedfordshire Council to engage with stakeholders to seek the best possible working solution for the High Street.

Councillor Freeman proposed the deletion of paragraph b) due to the naming of individuals which was considered inappropriate and this was agreed by Councillors Owen and Goodchild.

On being put to the vote, the remainder of the motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that this Council, noting:

- (a) The failure of Central Bedfordshire Council to use the 18 month period of the June 2020 ETRO to plan and introduce workable solutions for ETRO compliance both for the use of delivery vehicles in the High Street and the day to day enforcement of the ETRO.**
- (b) The stated promise of the CBC Portfolio Holder Cllr I Dalgarno at the 1 February 2022 CBC Traffic Management Meeting to seek an improved dialogue with the Town Council over those issues during the 18 months of the new ETRO.**
- (c) The passage of time since that meeting (1 February 2022 – 4 April 2022) without any apparent progress on that promise urges Central Bedfordshire Council to commit to urgent engagement with the Town Council, involving also the stakeholder groups that were omitted in the previous ETRO process, to seek a better possible working solution within the time frame CBC has set itself, and urges all Leighton-Linslade CBC councillors to contribute to those discussions.**

304 SCHOOLS RE-ORGANISATION

Councillor Owen introduced a motion, seconded by Councillor Goodchild, regarding the Central Bedfordshire Schools for the Future Programme and possible conversion from a 3-tier to a 2-tier education system and the implications of this for local schools and parents. It was in the public interest for proposals to be known, especially in terms of how educational standards would be improved.

Councillor Dodwell advised that a plan was evolving and predicated on housing numbers, but that work done by Central Bedfordshire Council suggested there were enough school places for the next 3-4 years. Central Bedfordshire Council was working with individual schools on proposals. It

was noted that a request had already been made in February 2022 for an update to be given at the Partnership Committee.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried (8 in favour, 5 against, 2 abstentions).

RESOLVED that this Council, noting that over a considerable period Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) has held private discussions with Leighton-Linslade schools' Head Teachers and Governing Bodies over a possible re-organisation, but that no public proposals have emerged, calls on CBC to share their plans and their educational rationale with parents and the public generally, accompanied by a proposed timeline for the process, and the effect on the town's current schools (i.e. which are to stay open which will be closed, the planned age-group for each school, the alterations required at each school and the estimated costs thereof, and the estimated capital receipts of disposal of current schools and sites), and state whether CBC plan to press local schools to become part of academy trusts, so that parents are able to plan sensibly for their children's' education.

305 BUS USERS CONSULTATION

Councillor Owen introduced a motion, seconded by Councillor Goodchild, regarding investigation into how best consultation with local bus users and local bus companies might be organised. Members agreed with the motion and it was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that this Council notes the comments and complaints from bus users in the local media, recognises the desirability of a forum to air those comments and get answers, and requests the Town Clerk to provide the Planning & Transport Committee with suggestions as to how regular consultation about local bus services involving bus users and bus companies might be organised.

306 LEIGHTON BUZZARD SOUTHERN BYPASS A505

Councillor S Jones introduced a motion, seconded by Councillor A Dodwell, regarding the urgent safety review of the Leighton Buzzard Southern Bypass A505.

Members agreed this road had historical problems with accidents as well as recent flooding on the road. It was confirmed that discussions were on-going with Central Bedfordshire Officers, Highways England and the Fire Service to look at immediate solutions and a long-term solution.

RESOLVED that this Council welcomes the current urgent safety review on the A505 Leighton Buzzard Southern Bypass currently being undertaken by CBC Highways following the recent flooding and series of accidents and requests that an update be given to the Council's Planning and Transport Committee following its initial findings. In the

interim the Council requests that temporary signage, lighting and cones continue to be provided at the new Stanbridge Road roundabout until such time as permanent safety measures are completed.

It was proposed and seconded that in order to continue the meeting past 2200 hours, Standing Order 3(x) be suspended for a maximum of 10 minutes.

RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3(x) for a maximum of 10 minutes.

307 UKRAINE

Councillor Hemmings introduced a motion, seconded by Councillor S Jones, regarding the need to look at a co-ordinated approach to support refugees from the current war in Ukraine. The original motion was amended, replacing the original wording regarding the setting up of a formal working party with “tasking a small number of councillors to look into”. The intention was to check what was already in place, consider how the town council could support it and ensure people were being signposted to the right places.

An amended motion was proposed by Councillor Harvey and as an independent councillor this was automatically deemed to be seconded per standing order 1 (u). The amendment was “that this council agrees to support the excellent work being co-ordinated by Central Bedfordshire Council in signposting people to all the groups involved”. On voting, the amendment was not carried and a vote then took place on the substantive motion.

RESOLVED that this Council agrees to task a small number of Councillors to look into the need for a co-ordinated approach to give support resulting from the current war in Ukraine (for example, the hosting of refugees in Leighton-Linslade) and if required assist centralised co-ordination, working through established groups and signposting/advertising as required.

The Councillors looking into this matter were agreed to be Councillors Hemmings, Carberry, Harvey, Bowater and Goodchild.

The meeting closed at 10.11 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 4 APRIL 2022.

Chair

25 APRIL 2022