

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

16 NOVEMBER 2020 AT 1930 HOURS

Present Councillors: S Jones (Chair)
C Palmer
R Berry
A Dodwell
J M Freeman
D Bowater
S Owen
T Morris
G Perham
R Goodchild
D Scott

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio (Town Clerk)
S Sandiford (Head of Democratic and Central Services)
M Jahn (Committee Officer)
Clare Cummins (Finance Officer)
Vivien Cannon (Head of Cultural & Economic Services) – part meeting
Stuart Wilbur ((Microshade Business Consultants Ltd) – part meeting
Gennaro Borrelli, (LB First) – part meeting
Kash Karimzandi (Chief Officer CALL) – part meeting
Cllr V Harvey
Cllr P Snelling

Members of the public: 3 (part meeting)

154/PF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

155/PF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests, including the nature of those interests, which they had in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

(a) Councillor C Palmer declared a personal interest as a member of Friends of Leighton-Linlade in Bloom and Friends of Linlade Woods.

(b) Councillor J M Freeman declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 Minutes of Sub-Committees due to involvement with the Leighton-Linslade Music Centre. A Dispensation Form had been completed, requesting that permission to speak and/or vote on the items be granted by the Committee.

RESOLVED to approve the request for a dispensation from Cllr J M Freeman, allowing him to speak and vote on agenda item 8 (Minutes of Sub-Committees, Grants and Awards Sub Committee).

(c) Councillor S Jones declared a personal interest in agenda item 18 as a trustee of Leighton Linslade Helpers and requested permission to speak and/or vote on the items discussed by the Committee.

RESOLVED to approve the request for a dispensation from Cllr S Jones, allowing him to speak and vote on agenda item 18 (COVID-19 Response).

156/PF QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Gennaro Borrelli from LB First spoke to inform members on the progress of the online business portal for businesses in the Town Centre which would provide a platform to inform the public of the shops and products available to them. Questions and discussion on this would take place later at item 6 on the agenda.

157/PF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

(a) The Committee received the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 21 September and the Extraordinary Policy and Finance Meeting held on 29 October 2020 for consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meetings held on 21 September 2020 and 29 October 2020 be approved as a correct record, to be signed at a later date when safe to do so.

(b) Item ref 144/PF Quality Gold Re-accreditation – the Committee were informed the application for the award had been sent off and receipt acknowledged.

Item ref 146/PF Town Council Standing Orders Review – the first meeting of the Task and Finish group would take place next week.

Item ref 150/PF Neighbourhood Plan – it was confirmed the Partnership Project List had been provided to Central Bedfordshire Council and acknowledged.

A question was raised regarding grants available to urban parishes to produce a Neighbourhood Plan and whether this could be looked into.

158/PF CITIZENS ADVICE LEIGHTON-LINSLADE (CALL)

(a)The Committee received an update from Kash Karimzandi, Chief Officer of CALL regarding Town Council funding and services.

The service provided has had to adapt since lockdown began in March 2020 with a fall in the number of volunteers available down from 45 to 10 due to shielding restrictions. No face-to-face appointments could be offered with telephone and email contact instead. Since the beginning of lockdown 1500 clients had been helped with a variety of issues, including challenges presented by the Furlough Scheme, applying for universal credit and support for the self-employed. It was felt that the service had provided a lifeline to many residents at a very difficult time.

Members agreed that CALL offered an important service to residents of the town and thanks were given to all staff, volunteers and trustees for their continuing hard work especially in the current climate.

(b)The Committee considered future funding arrangements from the Town Council for CALL and agreed unanimously to support this. Further details to be clarified outside the meeting and recommendations brought back to Committee at its January meeting.

RESOLVED to agree in principle that Leighton-Linslade Town Council continue to provide financial support to Citizens Advice Leighton-Linslade for the forthcoming five years.

159/PF ON-LINE BUSINESS PORTAL

The Committee received a report detailing the provision of a digitally enabled High Street to enable retail businesses to flourish as customers could access information about their local independent retailers in an easy, "one stop shop" format.

A question was raised on how this would be supported once set up. It was confirmed that a nominal subscription would be paid by each business to cover running costs and LB First would be responsible for the website. It was hoped that the portal could be up and running by Small Business Saturday at the beginning of December at the latest. Following discussion, it was unanimously agreed to support the one-off release of funds for this purpose.

RESOLVED to release £5000 from earmarked reserves (970/9026) to LB First to fund the setting up of a digital high street web portal for independent businesses in the Town.

160/PF MARKET SUB COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) The Committee received and considered a report to waive payment of pitch fees for a further month. The proposal resulted from the change of

circumstances since the previous decision regarding fees, following the national lockdown implemented due to the rising number of Covid-19 cases nationally. The proposal was supported unanimously, to be reviewed again by Policy and Finance Committee at its next meeting on 18 January 2021. It was suggested to encourage Central Bedfordshire Council to use its Government emergency funding to support local traders.

RESOLVED to waive the payment of market pitch fees by permanent market traders for two further months, with collection re-commencing on Saturday 30 January 2021.

(b) The Committee considered recommendations made by the Market Sub Committee on 5 November 2020 in respect of cashless payments.

RESOLVED:

(a) to introduce cashless payments for on-the-day market rent collection

(b) to enter a contract with WorldPay to facilitate the collection of cashless payments for market rents.

(c) to vire funds across from the central bank Charges budget line 4381/12, into the Market cost centre creating a new budget line to cover the service charges associated with the contactless payments for the remainder of 2020/21, in order that accurate costs for running of the Market can be established.

(d) that the new budget line is taken forward within the Market cost centre for 2021/22, to cover future service charges associated with the cashless payment system.

161/PF MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS

(a) The Committee received the draft minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 12 October 2020.

RESOLVED:

(i) to receive the draft minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 12 October 2020.

(ii) that the budget for employee health checks be carried over into 2021-22 if checks could not take place by 31 March 2021.

(b) The Committee received the draft minutes of the Community Safety Sub-Committee meeting held on 26 October 2020.

RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Community Safety Sub-Committee meeting held on 26 October 2020.

(c) The Committee received the draft minutes of the Grants & Awards Sub-Committee meeting held on 2 November 2020.

Minute ref 20/GE Leighton-Linslade Music Centre – a recommendation from Grants & Awards 2 November 2020 to provide funding for a further 5 years was approved.

RESOLVED:

(i) that the Town Council continue to provide support to Leighton-Linslade Music Centre for the next five-year period.

(ii) that the existing Service Level Agreement for 2016-2020 be extended for the financial year 2021-22.

Minute reference 21/GA Awards Schemes – a recommendation from the Grants & Awards Committee on 2 November 2020 to fund the Young People Awards in future years.

RESOLVED to include an additional £300 in the Awards revenue budget line (formerly Honorary Burgess, ref 4372/20) from 2021-22 onwards, to fund the Young People Awards in future years.

Minute reference 23/GA Nominations for 2021 Community Volunteer Awards – this recommendation would be taken forward to the January Meeting.

RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Grants & Awards Sub-Committee meeting held on 2 November 2020.

162/PF TOWN MAYOR'S ACCOUNTS 2019-2020

The Committee received the full accounts for the Town Mayor's Charity Fund for the period May 2019 – September 2020. A total of £7,710 had been raised for Councillor Bowater's chosen charities of Hospice at Home Volunteers, Yes We Can and MNDA.

The Committee expressed gratitude and appreciation to Councillor Bowater for his efforts throughout the year in raising funds for these worthy causes.

RESOLVED to note the report.

163/PF INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2020-21 (First Interim)

The Committee received the first interim internal audit report for 2020-2021 and noted that no issues had been identified. It was recognised that the Council was continuing to operate a sound, pro-active approach to risk management and corporate governance issues, together with the development and management of effective internal controls and procedural documentation. The Committee expressed thanks to officers for another excellent report.

Some questions were raised to clarify how this report was formed and in which way Members contributed to the content. It was stated that the internal audit was carried out 4 times a year in accordance with relevant guidance and the auditor would take his information from the recommendations made in the minutes from this Committee or Council. Councillors' input was therefore included as part of the Committee or Council review of relevant minutes, policies and procedures.

RESOLVED to note the report.

164/PF PUBLIC LIFE STANDARDS CONSULTATION

Members received information regarding the consultation by the Committee for Standards in Public Life and considered whether to submit a response individually or as a Committee to the National Association of Local Councils. A response would be required by the 4 December 2020.

It was agreed that Members would submit individual responses if they wished to do so.

RESOLVED to note the information.

165/PF VOLUNTEER POLICY

The Committee received and considered a revised Volunteer Policy to recommend to Council for approval

RECOMMEND to Council that the revised Volunteer Policy (see Appendix) be adopted.

166/PF COMMITTEE WORK PLAN AND OBJECTIVES

(a) The Committee received and considered the Work Plan and Objectives for 2020-2021 and noted the deferred items would be picked up at a later date.

(b) The Committee noted the telecoms contract and confidential waste contract reviews would be deferred until Spring 2021.

RESOLVED to note the report.

167/PF SIX MONTH BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received the six-month budget monitoring report for the period April – September 2020. No queries were raised by Committee.

RESOLVED to note the report.

168/PF SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER PAYMENTS

The Committee received schedules of payments for September and October 2020, which had previously been approved for payment by the Town Clerk and countersigned by two signatories. There were no anomalies or matters of concern to draw to the attention of the Committee.

The schedule for September 2020 dated 30 September 2020 included BACS payments amounting to £113,259.30 (page numbers 2797 - 2806) including TACTIC petty cash amounting to £73.79. The monthly salaries listing for 30 September 2020 amounting to £111,691.79 gross was received. A cash book report for September 2020, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

The schedule for October 2020 dated 12 October 2020 included BACS payments amounting to £117,486.08 (page numbers 2807 – 2821). The monthly salaries listing for 31 October 2020 amounting to £99,679.59 gross was received. A cash book report for October 2020, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

RESOLVED to receive the schedules of payments for September and October 2020, which had been approved for payment by the Town Clerk and two councillor signatories.

169/PF FIRST DRAFT BUDGET

The Committee received the first iteration of the overall draft budget for the financial year 2021-2022. The draft budget would now be presented to each standing committee for detailed consideration, prior to a final draft coming to the next meeting of the Committee.

The recommendations contained within the report were approved (9 in favour, 2 abstentions).

RESOLVED:

- (a) to note the report**
- (b) that each standing committee with budgetary responsibility be presented with its own draft budget for consideration and thereafter, for the draft budget to be returned to this committee on 18 January 2021 for its further consideration.**
- (c) that the Covid-19 Earmarked Reserve to the sum of £128,010 be considered for the purposes of meeting the anticipated budgetary deficit for the period 2021-22.**
- (d) to acknowledge that the draft budget for 2021/22 is responding to the current pandemic situation with expenditure lines to the value of £46,425 deleted for the coming financial year but anticipated to return for the financial year thereafter.**

170/PF 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: COVID-19 Response.

171/PF COVID-19 RESPONSE

The Committee received a report regarding the COVID-19 response and discussion took place.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To note the report**
- (b) To request the Town Clerk to undertake further investigation and to report back to a future meeting of the Committee.**

The meeting closed at 22:05 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2020.

CHAIR

18 JANUARY 2021