

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors C Palmer
 T Morris (Chair)
 S Hemmings
 S Owen
 F Kharawala
 A L Dodwell (joined meeting 19.52)
 V Harvey
 G Perham (substituting for R Berry)
 E Wallace

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 V Cannon, Head of Cultural & Economic
 Services
 S Sandiford, Head of Democratic and Central
 Services
 S Hughes, Community Engagement Manager,
 Central Bedfordshire Council
 M Jahn, Committee Officer
 G Borelli, Chair, LB First
 T Humber, Community Forum, part meeting
 S. Lakin, Strategic Transport Manager, CBC
 B Chandler, LB Connect
 J Gelder, Community Action Bedfordshire
 T Keaveney, Housing Solutions, CBC
 C Gurney, Head of Housing Solutions, CBC
 Cllr A Gray

Members of the public: 3

83/LLP APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Berry (substituted by Councillor G Perham), Councillor B Spurr and Councillor T Stock. Councillor A Dodwell had advised she might be late due to another meeting.

84/LLP 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.

Councillor V Harvey declared a personal interest as a member of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth.

85/LLP QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC (3 minutes per person; maximum 15 minutes)

A question was raised regarding the cost and method of car parking charges. Only cards could be used for a minimum of 5 hours parking at a cost of £3.50. There was no option to use a card for a lesser period of time - only cash could be used, which caused inconvenience and annoyance to shoppers if they only wanted to park for a short time.

Two members of Local Living Streets Group spoke to raise their concerns regarding the future of the temporary pedestrianisation of the High Street. There was no clear vision on how this would progress and until the COVID restrictions were lifted, the closure could not be fully assessed as to the pros and cons of the pedestrianisation. Consideration should be given to what the High Street would look like in the future with more opportunity for cyclists and pedestrians and the provision of outdoor seating for cafes and restaurants, free of cars, with a greener environment with trees and plants being added to enhance the area.

This was a big subject and the residents of the town should be involved in decisions once the restrictions had been lifted and all shops could hopefully begin trading again and a true vision could be laid out for the future of the High Street.

The members of the public were thanked for attending the meeting and invited to stay and listen to discussions on pedestrianisation later in the agenda.

86/LLP MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

(a) The Committee received the draft minutes of the Partnership Committee meeting held on 10 December 2020. The attendee list would be updated as J Gelder, Community Action Bedfordshire had been omitted from the list.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Partnership Committee meeting held on 10 December 2020 be approved as a correct record and would be signed at a later date, when safe to do so.

(b) Significant discussion took place on the content of the previous meeting minutes and the outcomes of actions discussed at the Committee meeting.

The Committee was advised that following discussion about procedure at Central Bedfordshire Council, it had been agreed that actions arising from joint committee meetings would be passed on to the Monitoring Officer, Mr S Rix, to then be taken forward to the appropriate Central Bedfordshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee. S Hughes advised that a report confirming the new process would be brought back to the committee in April.

A comment was made regarding the content of the minutes and the lack of specific agreed actions, timescales and outcomes so that Councillors could be advised on what would take place following the meeting. It was confirmed that the minutes were not a verbatim record of the meeting but a record of resolutions and recommendations agreed by the committee by vote. Every effort was made to include a relevant amount of context in meeting minutes but any resolutions, recommendations or actions to follow outside the meeting could only be included in the minutes if they had been clearly stated and agreed by the committee, during the meeting.

A number of specific queries were raised and discussed.

Minute ref 73/LLP (Parking Strategy): It was noted that several councillors had raised parking issues at the previous meeting but no specific outcome had been agreed or progressed. A suggestion was made by Councillor Perham to move Parking Issues to the Town Council's Planning & Transport Committee as this met every three weeks and was therefore perhaps able to pass on parking issues to the local authority more quickly.

RESOLVED to recommend to the Town Council's Planning and Transport Committee that consideration be given to how to seek action from the local authority on the parking and enforcement issues raised at the December meeting of the Partnership Committee.

Minutes ref 74/LLP Schools for the Future – a question was raised regarding when Leighton-Linslade parents would be consulted by the local authority over the Schools for the Future proposals.

Minute ref 75/LLP (Informal Town Centre Members' Group Introduction and Update). Following the decision at the previous meeting to establish a formal South Side Task and Finish Group, Councillor Palmer advised that one meeting had taken place and another was scheduled, with a particular focus on the possible development of a community facility. It was hoped that there would be further information to report back to the April committee meeting.

Minute ref 76/LLP (Partnership Project List): it was noted that this item and S.106 developer contributions were new additions to the Committee work plan and clarification was needed on how they would be taken forward, as there was no mention of this in the minutes. It was advised that both items would be factored in to the committee work plan so that further discussion would take place by committee at the appropriate future meetings.

Minute ref 77/LLP (Interim CBC Update Report): Councillor Owen asked for

an answer to his question from the previous meeting regarding whether there was a way of controlling the queueing of taxis the number of taxis in the High Street, whether there was a maximum number of taxis which should be queueing and whether Central Bedfordshire Council had any control over the cleanliness of taxis, whether there was any limit to how many licenses were issued by CBC and whether taxis were regularly inspected for cleanliness. Sarah Hughes, CBC, would follow this up and get back to Committee.

It was confirmed the Town Clerk had spoken to Inspector Gurr, Bedfordshire Police, regarding taxis idling engines and Inspector Gurr confirmed the police would follow this up.

A further concern was raised regarding the pedestrianisation of the High Street and that actions promised in summer 2020 had not been completed (installation of benches, clarification on management of planters and supply of extra keys for the bollard installed at the bottom of the High Street). A suggestion was made to write to the relevant Portfolio Holder or the Chief Executive of Central Bedfordshire Council to ensure action was taken on these points.

RESOLVED to write to Central Bedfordshire Council regarding the delay in completion of the agreed actions promised in relation to the temporary pedestrianisation of the High Street (provision of benches, management of planters and provision of additional bollard keys).

87/LLP **HIGH STREET PEDESTRIANISATION UPDATE**

(a) The Committee received a verbal update from Steve Lakin of Central Bedfordshire Council on the revised timescales for reviewing the experimental traffic regulation order closing the High Street to traffic.

Mr Lakin confirmed the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order could only stay in force for 18 months and during this time it would be monitored and assessed. At the end of the 18-month period, the ETRO could be allowed to lapse or be made permanent. It was further clarified that any formal objections about the ETRO needed to be submitted within six months of the start date.

The ETRO had last been amended on 30 September 2020 so any formal objections would need to be submitted by 30 March 2021 and if not further amended, the end date for the ETRO would be 30 March 2022. As this was a temporary order, no permanent changes would be made to road markings and options would be considered on the impact on surrounding roads and whether other restrictions could be implemented, for example timed restriction, taxi parking and changes to bus routes.

At the end of March 2022 this order would end and if needed, another could be put in place. With Bedfordshire firstly in tier 4 restrictions from December and then subject to the national lockdown since January, the High Street was not currently operating normally and it was considered too early to consult

with the public until COVID restrictions had been lifted and “normal” shopping habits resumed.

RESOLVED to note the information.

(b) The Committee received and considered a report from Councillor Owen proposing that CBC and LLTC undertake jointly to organise a consultation to take place into whether the pedestrianisation would become permanent and to ensure that the town had a voice in this decision.

A proposal was made by Councillor Owen for the local authority to produce a well-prepared document that set out options for the post-COVID permanent use of the High Street, with benefits and disbenefits carefully assessed, along with a plan for a thorough and wide-reaching consultation with the public and all other stakeholders. Following discussion, the motion was seconded and put to the vote. The resolution was passed (6 for, 3 against).

RESOLVED that Central Bedfordshire Council be requested to produce a well-prepared document setting out options for the post-covid permanent usage of the High Street, with benefits and disbenefits carefully assessed, along with a plan for a thorough consultation with the public and other stakeholders.

Councillor Harvey asked whether any further amendments could be made to the ETRO before the objection deadline of 30 March 2021 to improve access to the High Street for disabled people and bus users. Mr S Lakin advised that specific recommendations as to how the ETRO might be modified would need to be made. For example, was it being suggested that blue badge holders should be allowed vehicular access to the High Street. As the Partnership Committee would not meet again until April, it was agreed that the Town Council’s Planning and Transport Committee be asked to consider this matter further.

RESOLVED to request that the Town Council’s Planning and Transport Committee give consideration to making recommendations to Central Bedfordshire Council regarding possible modifications to the ETRO currently in place for the High Street, to improve access for disabled people and bus users, before 30 March 2021.

88/LLP HOMELESSNESS/BLACK HORSE AND FOODBANKS

The Committee received and considered an update from Charlotte Gurney and Tony Keaveney on Central Bedfordshire Council’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Plan from 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020.

During the time when the pandemic and first lockdown began, a campaign was set up called ‘everyone in’ where CBC had offered accommodation to all known rough sleepers. Since the 23rd March 2020, accommodation has been offered to 93 individuals who were either rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping and 44 of them had been supported into long term accommodation.

During the first lockdown it had been found that approximately 70% of approaches had come from single persons, with the main reason being eviction by family/friends. Once restrictions eased it was felt that more families would find themselves without housing as landlords would start to take eviction action. As the eviction ban has remained in place, the Housing Service was still anticipating this increased demand from families. To enable a joined-up response to rough sleeping, services had formed a Tasking Group so they could pool resources and work together to offer a better service and a greater understanding of the support needed for those threatened with homelessness and for those who sleep rough.

Members thanked Charlotte Gurney and Tony Keaveney for their continued hard work and the great service they offered to the vulnerable in Leighton Buzzard and Linslade.

RESOLVED to note the information.

89/LLP **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee received an update report from Central Bedfordshire Council on matters relating to the parish, including information in respect of social care, health and housing, crime figures, antisocial behaviour, business rates, car parking, transport matters, community services, waste, schools, public health and services to young people. Sixteen COVID stewards had been recruited to support businesses and the public in increasing understanding of COVID public health measures and gather intelligence and feedback to CBC officers.

Questions were raised regarding when parents would learn about the "Schools for the Future" proposals for Leighton Buzzard, the commercial property uptake in the town and the conversion rate giving last year's figures and list of vacancies, the increase in litter and how this could be addressed in future, the number of NEETS, whether the local authority was involved in the marshalling of Rushmere Park, if NHS Health checks would resume as a priority when able to do so and what assistance could be given to shopkeepers with COVID enforcement. Sarah Hughes, CBC would follow up these questions and report back to members.

Thanks were given to Sarah Hughes for her informative detailed report.

90/LLP **COMMUNITY FORUM UPDATE**

The Committee were informed that a decision had been made not to wait until the end of lockdown to resume the Youth Consultation in conjunction with TACTIC and CBC services to help understand what young people wanted within the town.

RESOLVED to note the information.

91/LLP **STANDING ITEMS**

(a) Market Town Regeneration Fund - there were no updates on this project since the last meeting but work was on-going and it was hoped it would be completed in the coming months.

(b) S106 Update – members were informed this item would be discussed in more detail as a single item at the next meeting on 15 April 2021. CBC colleagues would bring a proposal to that meeting for a Community Project at Tiddenfoot to discuss feasibility and views on this project. Work on the Partnership Project List was on-going with CBC colleagues going through the list of aspirations and it was hoped to bring this to the April meeting.

A question was raised regarding the presentation given by CBC Planning colleagues on 2 September 2020 where town councillors were encouraged to make suggestions regarding uses of S106 money for specific purposes and to ensure this would be discussed at the April meeting. Sarah Hughes, CBC, confirmed that CBC officers would be attending this meeting, and this could then be explored to determine, within S106 constraints, how the money could be spent.

RESOLVED to note the information.

92/LLP **COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PLAN**

The Committee received and considered the objectives and work plan for the municipal year 2020-2021.

Members were informed the next meeting on 15 April 2021 would be a themed meeting to discuss S106, so discussion on the Health Focus Subgroup would be deferred to the first meeting of the new municipal year.

RESOLVED to note the information.

93/LLP **BUDGET REPORT**

The Committee were informed that £500 had been carried forward from budget year 2020/2021 to assist with delivery of future Community Forum activities in addition to retaining an annual budget of £500 for the financial year 2021/2022.

RESOLVED to note the information.

The meeting closed at 10.10 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2021.

Chair

15 APRIL 2021