

**LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL**

**POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**22 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 1930 HOURS**

Present Councillors: S Jones (Chair)  
C Palmer  
R Berry  
A Dodwell (Vice Chair)  
J M Freeman  
F Kharawala  
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)  
Clare Cummins (Finance Officer)  
M Jahn (Committee Officer)  
A Harrison (Market Manager)  
Cllr V Harvey – part meeting  
Cllr R Yates

Members of the public: 0

**191/PF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

**192/PF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**193/PF QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions from the public.

**194/PF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

(a) The Committee received the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 18 January 2021.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 18 January 2021 be approved as a correct record, to be signed at a later date when safe to do so.**

(b) Several verbal updates were given in respect of the previous meeting minutes.

Minute reference 185/PF (Neighbourhood Plan): the brief for consultants would be ready by the end of this week and circulated to members of the Committee for their comments with recommendations of a consultant appointment available for the April meeting. It was hoped that some direction could be provided by the July meeting.

Minute reference 188/PF (Community Volunteer Award Nominations 2021): it was confirmed the recipients would be included in the Civic Service to be held virtually on Sunday 28 February 2021, with the awards being presented when able to do so.

Minute reference 190/PF (Van Hire): it was confirmed the recommendation would be taken to the next Grounds & Environmental Services Committee meeting scheduled for 8 March 2021.

#### **195/PF COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PLAN**

The Committee received and considered the Work Plan and Objectives for 2020-2021. Members were informed the Freedom of Information Policy and Complaints Policy review were deferred to the April meeting. The Health and Safety policy would also be brought to the April meeting.

**RESOLVED to note the information.**

#### **196/PF JANUARY 2021 PAYMENTS**

The Committee received schedules of payments for January 2021 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 January 2021 dated 18 January 2021 included BACS payments amounting to £117,738.42 (page numbers 2849 – 2858) including petty cash payments to TACTIC of £95.28 and cheque payments of £5,035.00 (cheque numbers 17256-17257). The monthly salaries listing for January 2021 amounting to £100,299.30 gross was received. A cash book report for January 2021, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

**RESOLVED to receive the schedules of payments for January 2021, which had been approved for payment by the Town Clerk and two councillor signatories.**

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

**197/PF MARKET RENTS**

The Committee received and considered a report regarding payment of market rents. As the situation regarding the decision to waive market rents during the pandemic was fluid with ever changing timescales, an amendment to the recommendations was proposed by Councillor Freeman. On voting the proposal was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) To waive payment of Market rents for those permanent traders who are classified as essential traders (and therefore able to trade currently) until first Tuesday Market after the date that the Government allow non-essential traders to resume trading.**
- (b) To waive payments of Market rents for those permanent traders who are classified as non-essential traders (and therefore unable to trade currently) for a period expiring 12 weeks after the first Tuesday market after the date that the Government allow non-essential traders to resume trading.**

**RECOMMENDED to the Market Sub-Committee to consider that those casual traders who had supported the market during the lockdown period, and paid rent be given priority for casual pitches for six months after the date that the Government allow non-essential traders to resume trading.**

**198/PF CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2021-2022**

The Committee received and considered a report on the proposed Calendar of Meetings for 2021-2022 and meeting considerations from May 2021, when the current temporary legislation allowing virtual meetings to take place would come to an end.

The proposed meeting calendar was based on the normal timetable, but the format of meetings from 7 May 2021 until such time as Coronavirus restrictions were lifted or amended was uncertain. It was noted that a thorough risk assessment process would need to take place prior to commencement of any face-to-face meetings and that expenditure might be required in terms of technology or mitigation measures to protect against the virus.

A request was made for an extra Council meeting to be added to the calendar on 29 November 2021. A question was raised regarding the date of the Annual Council Meeting and whether this should be brought forward to 5 May 2021 to enable the meeting to take place before the proposed possible ending of remote meetings on the 7 May 2021. After discussion members agreed to defer this decision until the April Council meeting.

It was hoped that the situation would be clearer by the next meeting on 19 April 2021 and that a formal recommendation could then be made to Council on 26 April 2021 in terms of meetings for the municipal year 2021-2022.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) To note the report.**
- (b) To approve that the draft Calendar of Meetings for 2021-22 be circulated to Councillors for awareness with the addition of a Council meeting on the 29 November 2021 and informal consideration, but to await a further update at the April meeting regarding Coronavirus legislation before any formal recommendations to Council.**
- (c) To write to Andrew Selous MP and to Robert Jenrick MP to press for an extension to The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 to allow remote meetings to take place after 7 May 2021.**

**199/PF FIVE YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN (FUTURE PROJECTS FUNDING)**

- (a) The Committee received and considered the recommendations made by the Cultural and Economic Committee on 7 December 2020 in respect of funding allocation for Older Persons projects. It was noted that the required funding of £80,000 had been included in the reprofiled Five Year Financial Plan, for 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- (b) The Committee received and considered a report which outlined the most recent position in respect of the 5 Year Financial Plan and the proposed projects which would be included in it. This was an iterative document which would continue to be amended as projects came forward through the standing committees in more detail.

Members agreed to defer until 2022/2023 the installation of water fountains as it was not felt appropriate to have shared drinking facility in the present situation.

A question was raised for clarification on the capacity of the cemetery and whether additional space was being sought. It was agreed an update report should be brought to the next appropriate Grounds and Economic Services meeting regarding this and also the commitment of Central Bedfordshire Council in this search following the agreement made regarding COVID burials in our cemeteries.

**RESOLVED:**

**(i) To note the most recent iteration (Appendix 2) of the 5 Year Financial Plan and to recommend its endorsement by Council.**

**(ii) To recommend to Council that the £50,000 as requested by the Cultural and Economic Services Committee at its meeting held 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 be met from the 5 Year Financial Plan for the financial period 2021-22 for the purposes of:**

- Digital Inclusion
- Directory/information hub
- Older Persons Visual Identity – branding of work
- Direct support of local activity groups

**(iii) To recommend to Council that £50,000 as identified within the 5 Year Financial Plan over the financial periods 2021-22 and 2022-23 be endorsed for the purposes of providing dedicated provision for young person's activities within the parish.**

**(iv) To recommend to Council that the anticipated budget of £50,000 as agreed by Council at its meeting held 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019 for the purposes of installing drinking water fountains within town council parks be reduced to £25,000 based on more detailed scoping work undertaken by officers since the resolution made by Council.**

**200/PF INVESTMENT POLICY**

The Committee received a report to approve and recommend to Council the re-adoption of the Investment Strategy.

**RECOMMENDED to Council to approve the re-adoption of the Town Council's Investment Strategy.**

**201/PF TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERSHIPS**

The Committee received a list advising of all current memberships of other bodies, for the Town Council and/or employees.

**RESOLVED to note the information.**

**202/PF COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

The Committee received a report in respect of communications, including the Town Council website, social media channels, electronic signage and overall communications strategy. It was noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had necessitated numerous changes in communications over the previous year.

The Market website had been relaunched and extensive work had taken place during the last year to move towards more services and information being offered digitally.

The Committee recognised the ever increasing workload in respect of communications and requested that thanks to Town Council staff be minuted for the professional, timely issue of communications.

**RESOLVED to note the information regarding Town Council communications and to thank all staff involved in the communications process.**

#### **203/PF LOTTERIES LICENCE RETURNS**

The Committee received a request to appoint two Councillors to approve and sign the return forms required after each lottery event to return to Licensing at Central Bedfordshire Council. The licence related to Mayoral charity fundraising activity.

**RESOLVED that Councillors Berry, Jones or Bowater act as signatories for Lotteries Licence Returns.**

#### **204/PF EXCLUSION TO 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: Employee Assistance Programme Renewal**

#### **205/PF EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME RENEWAL**

Members agreed the Employee Assistance Programme was a valuable support for staff and on voting it was unanimously agreed to the renewal of said programme.

**RESOLVED to renew the Employee Assistance Programme for 2021-2022.**

The meeting closed at 2100 hours.

**I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 FEBRUARY 2021.**