

**LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 19 APRIL 2021 AT 7.30 PM**

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

Also in attendance            I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental  
   Services  
   M Saccoccio, Town Clerk  
   C Cummins, Finance Officer  
   S Sandiford, Head of Democratic and Central  
   Services  
   M Jahn, Committee Officer  
   Cllr Harvey  
   Cllr Kharawala

Members of the public:        0  
Members of the press         0

**218/PF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

**219/PF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Kharawala declared an interest in the March 2021 payments listing due to receiving the Mayoral expenses allowance.

Councillor Palmer declared a personal interest in the minutes of the Community Safety Sub-Committee due to his wife having spoken in the public question session on behalf of the Friends of Leighton-Linslade in Bloom, with whom he was also a volunteer.

No pecuniary interests were declared and no dispensations were requested.

**220/PF QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC (3 minutes per person; maximum 15 minutes)**

There were no questions from the public.

#### 221/PF **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

- (a) The Committee received the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held 22 February 2021 and 29 March 2021.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee held on the 22 February 2021 and 29 March 2021 be approved as correct records, to be signed at a later date when safe to do so.**

- (b) Any updates needed would be covered in the meeting.

#### 222/PF **MINUTES OF SUB COMMITTEES**

- (a) The Committee received the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 23 March 2021.

The Committee considered recommendations made by the Personnel Sub-Committee on 23 March 2021.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (i) **To renew the Service Level Agreement with Luton Borough Council for Human Resources and Occupational Health support for a three-year term from 1 April 2021- 31 March 2024, at a cost of £23,541 for the three-year period, based on up to 72 days service provision over the contract period.**
- (ii) **That the Service Level Agreement for HR and Occupational Health support be funded by the existing HR budget line (12/4388), which will be increased by £500 per annum for 2022-23 and 2023-24.**
- (iii) **To endorse that should the level of HR support needed exceed that outlined within the proposed SLA, that any additional cost be met from the Professional Fees budget (12/4384) where appropriate, or that where required, Committee approval be sought for budget from another source.**

Minute reference 60/PR (Town Clerk's Appraisal): Members were informed Councillor S Owen would replace Councillor R Goodchild for the Town Clerk's appraisal panel.

**RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 23 March 2021.**

- (b) The Committee received the draft minutes of the Community Safety Sub-Committee meeting held on 12 April 2021.

**RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Community Safety Sub-Committee meeting held on 12 April 2021.**

A problem had been experienced with the postal service and late delivery of Agenda papers. It was confirmed the post office had encountered problems during the pandemic with less staff than usual, but contact would be made with them ascertain if this problem had been solved.

**223/PF MARKET POWERS**

The Committee received a report to seek endorsement in respect to Market Powers and re-enforce our position as a Charter Market. Any market operating outside normal charter market days would need to inform the Town Council, this would include any regular car boot sales in the area. Members agreed the Town Council needed some control over other markets in the area so our market could survive and we could work in tandem with others.

**RECOMMENDED to Council:**

- (a) To endorse the use of the provisions of Part 111 of the Food Act 1984 alongside the Market Charter.**
- (b) To endorse the Market Rights public statement.**
- (c) To endorse the Visiting Markets Terms and Conditions.**

**224/PF MARCH 2021 PAYMENTS**

The Committee received schedules of payments for March 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 March 2021 dated 9 April 2021 included BACS payments amounting to £99,476.38 (page numbers 2871-2877). The monthly salaries listing for March 2021 amounting to £99,468,50 gross was received. A cash book report for March 2021, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

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

**225/PF ANNUAL REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND INTERNAL CONTROLS**

The Committee received a report to review the Town Council's Financial Regulations after leaving the European Union when slight amendments were made. Also the credit card procedure was revisited to reflect changes in personnel and to the reporting system given the deletion of the Accounts Sub Committee.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

**RECOMMENDED to Council:**

- (a) That minor amendments to the Town Council's credit card procedure as set out at Appendix A of the report be endorsed**
- (b) To endorse minor amendments to Standing Orders to fairly reflect Brexit transitional advertising of contract arrangement as set out.**
- (c) To endorse minor amendments to Financial Regulations to fairly reflect Brexit transitional advertising of contracts arrangements as set out.**

#### **226/PF HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**

The Committee received a report to review the previously endorsed Health and Safety Policy to ensure it was fit for purpose.

A question was raised regarding the number and type of recorded accidents over the past few years. It was confirmed there were very few accidents with none being reportable.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

**RECOMMENDED to Council to endorse the Town Council's Health and Safety Policy which had been the subject of its annual review.**

#### **227/PF LONE WORKING POLICY**

The Committee received the previously endorsed Lone Working Policy to ensure it was fit for purpose.

A question was raised regarding whether an analysis had been undertaken of staff over the past year particularly with home working. It was confirmed this policy did not include home working.

In respect of home working over the past year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, staff had been asked to complete display screen assessments and to request any equipment they needed. Staff were encouraged to talk to their line manager and a monthly reminder was sent to remind employees that the Employee Assistance Helpline offered online and telephone based support on a range of subjects 24/7.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

**RECOMMENDED to Council to endorse the Town Council's Lone Working Policy which had been subject to review.**

**228/PF PARSON'S CLOSE RECREATION GROUND: ACCESSIBLE ADVENTURE PLAY**

The Committee considered the recommendation made by the Grounds & Environmental Services Committee on 8 March: to consider the funding options to deliver this £297,946.00 project and to consider funding through the United Kingdom Debt Management Office via Public Work Loan or from Town Council held reserves.

Funding via a loan would provide a long term option and the repayments could be met through the revenue budget without any impact on the Town Council precept.

Members agreed this was an excellent project providing extensive accessible play equipment in the park. A question was raised regarding insurance for this extra equipment and it was confirmed the insurance company would be informed and they would assess our processes and equipment and decide the appropriate insurance required.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

**RECOMMENDED to Council to endorse the application for funding of the project up to £300,000 through the United Kingdom Debt Management Office via a Public Works Loan application.**

**229/PF COMPLAINTS POLICY**

The Committee received a report regarding the Complaints Procedure. Following a thorough review which included guidance from the Local Councils Ombudsman and the National Association of Local Councils, a new policy was recommended for approval. It was felt that the new policy provided clearer information to members of the public about the complaints process.

**RECOMMENDED to Council to approve the proposed revised Complaints Procedure.**

**230/PF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY**

The Committee received a report regarding the Freedom of Information Policy, which had been in effect since 2004. The fundamental legislation had not changed and only minor amendments to the Policy were recommended to bring it up to date (for example, removal of the reference to fax).

**RESOLVED**

**(a) To note the information in the report and appendices concerning**

**Freedom of information.**

- (b) To endorse the use of the flowchart published by the Information Commissioner to process requests, as set out in Appendix D.**

**RECOMMENDED to Council to approve minor amendments to the Freedom of Information Policy.**

**231/PF DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021**

The Committee received the draft Town Council Annual Report 2020-2021. The report followed a more abbreviated format and contained key highlights from the year. It was noted that financial information would be finalised following completion of the year end accounts. A number of amendments were suggested including the addition in the introduction of Church of St.Mary's as being another ancient building in the Parish and the addition of the names to the photographs of the volunteers bestowed with the Community Volunteer awards for 2020-21. Also some typographical errors which needed to be amended were highlighted and Councillors were encouraged to contact The Head of Central and Democratic Services of any other amendments required.

Members agreed that an acknowledgement should be added on the change in meeting structure over the past year due to the pandemic restrictions which meant cancelled meetings, delegated decisions and on-line meetings.

**RECOMMENDED to Council to approve the written content of the annual report for 2020-2021 with the amendments highlighted above (financial information to follow after completion of the financial year end).**

**232/PF COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PLAN**

- (a) The Committee received the Committee work plan and objectives for 2020-21.

**RESOLVED to note the committee work plan and objectives for 2020-21.**

- (b) The Committee received the draft Committee work plan and objectives for 2021-2022 and was asked to consider deferring a Council software review (addressing Objectives 1,2 & 3 in the Council's Five Year Plan) due to the need to focus on actions arising from the recent Social Media Audit and Risk Register action plan for 2021-22. Some work had been necessarily delayed due to the pandemic and needed attention in 2021-22. This included IT security, data protection, social media security and meeting of accessibility legal requirements for the website and apps.

**RESOLVED to approve a change in the work plan to progress actions**

**arising from the Council's Risk Register Action Plan for 2021-2022, including recommendations from a recent social media security audit, during 2021-22 and to defer the Council software review project (linked to approved Council objectives 1-3) until the municipal year 2022-23.**

**233/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: Appointment of Planning Consultant.**

**234/PF APPOINTMENT OF PLANNING CONSULTANT**

Members received a report regarding the potential appointment of a consultant to provide direction or otherwise on the merits of creating a neighbourhood plan or other similarly appropriate document to better inform parish wide improvements. A brief was issued to a total of 11 consultants and in addition the brief was circulated within a neighbourhood planning network comprising 21 businesses who specialised in creating neighbourhood plans and advising town and parish councils. From this a total of 6 expressions of interest were received which were provided to the Committee for consideration.

Following discussion the Committee decided to invite two of the companies to an informal meeting where they would separately be asked a set of questions to enable a final decision to be made on who would be engaged to take this project forward.

**RESOLVED**

- (a) To note the report**
- (b) That two consultants be invited to attend an informal meeting with Councillors and the Town Clerk and a decision made following this meeting.**

The meeting closed at 8.59 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 19 APRIL 2021.

Chair

21 JUNE 2021