

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

26 APRIL 2021 AT 1930 HOURS

Present: Councillors

- A Dodwell
- C Palmer
- G Perham
- D Bowater
- K Cursons
- J M Freeman
- F Kharawala (Chair)
- S Jones
- R Berry
- V Harvey
- S Hemmings
- S Owen
- P Snelling
- A Gray
- R Goodchild
- J Silverstone
- T Morris
- D Scott
- R Yates

Also in attendance:

- M Saccoccio (Town Clerk)
- S Sandiford (Head of Democratic and Central Services/Deputy Town Clerk)
- Ian Haynes, (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services)
- M Jahn (Committee Officer)

Members of the Public: 3

189 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor B Spurr.

190 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor C Palmer declared a personal interest as a volunteer with the Friends of Leighton-Linslade in Bloom. Councillor Harvey also declared an interest as a member of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth and Councillor Dodwell declared an interest as a member of Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel.

No disclosable pecuniary interests were declared and no dispensations were requested.

191 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor F Kharawala gave thanks to all who assisted in putting together and attending the Civic Service in February with special thanks to All Saints Church for their assistance and participation.

In March some free events were held online under the banner "Mindful March", which offered the opportunity to engage with wellbeing workshops to help with loneliness and isolation at this time. A second on-line Pamper night was also held which was well received.

In April the Mayor attended the commemorative service held after the passing of the Duke of Edinburgh which was a very poignant moment and gave time to think of the Royal Family and to reflect on how covid-19 had affected people.

The Mayor and the Town Clerk attended the Leighton Buzzard Society Annual General Meeting, which gave an opportunity to meet and talk to another group formed for the betterment of the community and Parish and see the work they do.

Going forward it was hard to know what events would be able to happen and if people would feel confident enough to attend but when they recommence, the Mayor hoped that Members would support her in her charity fundraising activities.

192 LEADERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor S Jones, Leader of the Conservative Group, spoke and gave thanks to the officers at the Town Council especially with the problems encountered with the uncertainty of whether virtual meetings would continue or would return to face-to-face. Also thanks were given to the members of the Standing Orders Task and Finish Group and officers for the amendments made to the Standing Orders which provided an improved set to work with.

Councillor R Goodchild, Leader of the Liberal Democrats, spoke and gave thanks to Councillor Jones and all groups within the Council with their co-operation in addressing policing matters, the spirit of co-operation had been well received and actual progress had been made by working together. It was noted that a meeting should be called for the Health Services Task and Finish Group to keep this subject under review.

193 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public and shop owner spoke to support the improvement of the High Street which would be discussed later in the agenda. This was the time to look at what was needed to enhance the area and the retailers would be happy to have an input through consultation.

194 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(a) Council received the draft minutes of the Council meetings held on 25 January and 1 February 2021.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meetings held on 25 January and 1 February 2021 be approved as a correct record and would be signed at a later date, when safe to do so.

(b) No updates were given but any issues would be dealt with as needed through the agenda.

195 INSPIRING MUSIC TIME MACHINE PROJECT

In February 2020 Council approved a financial contribution of £2,266.25 (a 50% contribution) for the Time Machine project, which had been due to be delivered in Autumn 2020. This was delayed due to Covid-19 and now approval was sought from Council for the funds, which had been ringfenced by Central Bedfordshire Council, to support the delivery of the project in 2021-2022.

RESOLVED to approve the ringfencing of £2,266.25 contribution by Central Bedfordshire Council to support delivery of the Time Machine Project in 2021-22.

196 PROPOSED CHANGES TO STANDING ORDERS

Council considered a recommendation by the Policy and Finance Committee of 29 March 2021 to proposed changes to Town Council Standing Orders (in accordance with SO 26b, once proposed and seconded, any amendments will stand adjourned without discussion until the next ordinary meeting of the Council).

It was proposed by Councillor S Jones and seconded by Councillor M Freeman that the changes be adopted. This would now stand adjourned until the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

197 FIVE YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN

Further to the recommendation made by the Policy and Finance Committee on 22 February 2021, Council considered the most recent position in respects of the Five Year Financial Plan and the projects identified within it.

A request was made for further information on the rules and regulations regarding a Public Work Loan and whether other projects in the Five Year Plan would be suitable for this type of loan.

RESOLVED

(a) To endorse the most recent iteration of the 5 Year Financial Plan.

- (b) To endorse the request made by the Cultural & Economic Services Committee at its meeting held 7th December 2020 that £50,000 be included within the 5 Year Financial Plan for the financial period 2021-22 for the purposes of older persons projects to include:
- (i) Digital inclusion
 - (ii) Directory/information hub
 - (iii) Older Persons Visual Identity – branding of work
 - (iv) Direct support of local activity groups
- (c) To approve that a total of £50,000 as identified with the 5 Year Financial Plan for the financial period 2021-22 and 2022-23 be endorsed for the purposes of providing dedicated provision for young person's activities within the parish.
- (d) That the anticipated budget of £50,000 as agreed by Council at its meeting held 24th 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.

198 PARSON'S CLOSE INCLUSIVE ADVENTURE PLAY AREA

Council considered a recommendation from Policy & Finance Committee on 19 April to approve the submission of an application to the United Kingdom Debt Management Office for a Public Work Loan for the delivery of an inclusive adventure playground for Parson's Close Recreation Ground and for the submission of a planning application to Central Bedfordshire Council.

Members agreed this would be an excellent provision and one question was raised regarding the delay between delivery and starting of works. It was confirmed this would allow time for public consultation and for the start date to be delayed until the end of the summer holidays, without causing too much disruption avoiding the busy time of the year and inclement weather conditions.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To note the report
- (b) To endorse the recommendation made by Policy & Finance Committee at its meeting held 19 April 2021 to approve the submission of a £300,000 application to the United Kingdom Debt Management Office for a Public Work Loan.
- (c) To approve the submission of a planning application to Central Bedfordshire Council for elements of the scheme which fall outside the permitted development definition.

199 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2021-2022

Council received and considered a report to seek approval on the direction on meetings for the municipal year 2021-22. The report covered all eventualities

depending on the expected High Court ruling on whether remote meetings would be lawful from the 7 May 2021 in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.

A decision-making process was in place with delegated authority to the Proper Officer if meetings could not take place remotely. Decisions would be based on councillor feedback by email. It was agreed that all Councillors could be copied in when decisions were requested and that remote meetings could be held for informal discussions.

A question was asked whether the Health Services Task and Finish Group would reconvene as no meetings were listed on the proposed Calendar of Meetings. It was confirmed a meeting would be scheduled in June but no firm date had yet been set.

With regard to resuming face to face meetings, this would be dependent upon the Council's ability to meet any Covid guidelines to mitigate risks for all involved. Face to face meetings would not resume before 21 June at the earliest and would be dependent upon several factors including prior Council approval of a risk assessment. A question was raised whether investigations had been made into appropriate alternative premises to hold meetings and whether a Track and Trace system would have to be set up when in the position to do this. All options were being explored but the updated Government guidance, expected prior to 21 June, would be instrumental in setting out what arrangements would need to be in place.

In addition to the recommendations it was proposed that Standing Order 3a be suspended to allow Council meetings to take place at premises other than the White House, as this was likely to be necessary to allow for social distancing and other Covid mitigation measures.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the report**
- (ii) To endorse that the Annual Council Meeting be moved from Monday 17 May to Tuesday 4 May to allow it to be held remotely in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.**
- (iii) To endorse the proposed Calendar of Meetings for 2021-22 with the following arrangements in place:**
 - (a) Meetings scheduled from 7 May 2021 – 21 June 2021 will be held remotely, if the High Court action being taken on 21 April 2021 (with Government support) finds that remote meetings are lawful in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.**
 - (b) If the High Court decision is not in favour of the continuation of remote meetings or until such time as a decision has been published, meetings scheduled from 7 May 2021 – 21 June 2021 will be cancelled.**

Decision making will be delegated with councillor email approval in line with the procedure resolved by Council on 20 March 2020. Such authority will be further underpinned by the approval of revised Standing Orders which set out delegated authority arrangements at SO 15 (c) (vii).

(c) It may be possible to hold meetings after 21 June 2021 in person, subject to:

- the Council having approved an appropriate risk assessment which incorporates Government guidance in respect of Covid-19 and takes into account its duty of care to councillors, officers and the public.**
- an appropriate venue is available.**
- any measures required by said risk assessment can be implemented by this time.**
- appropriate arrangements in respect of members of the public can be put in place.**

(d) Should the steps at (c) not be achieved by 21 June 2021, meetings and decision making will continue as set out at a) or b) (as applicable) until such time as those conditions can be met.

(iv) That Council note and endorse that in the event of any further changes to Government guidance which prevent face to face Council meetings taking place (e.g. in autumn/winter 2021), that arrangements as set out at (a) or (b) (as applicable) will be implemented until such time as formal meetings can be resumed.

(v) That Standing Order 3a be suspended until further notice to allow for Council meetings to be held in a venue other than the White House, should this be necessary.

200 ANNUAL REPORT

Council received a recommendation from the Policy & Finance Committee on 19 April 2021 to consider approval of the amended Annual Report for 2020-21. The financial information would be added once year end accounts had been approved by Council in June.

RESOLVED to approve the Annual Report for 2020-21 (financial details to be added following completion of year end accounting statements).

201 OPERATION DODFORD 2021-2022

Council received a recommendation from Community Safety Sub Committee on 12 April 2021 to approve the Operation Dodford agreement with Bedfordshire Police for the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022.

On being proposed and seconded, the recommendation to approve the service level agreement was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED to approve the Operation Dodford Service Level Agreement with Bedfordshire Police for 2021-2022, to be signed by two Councillors in accordance with Standing Order 14.

202 COMMITTEE MINUTES

(i) Council received the minutes of the Committee meetings held since January 2021.

RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the Committee meetings held between 19 January 2021 – 21 April 2021.

(a)	Planning & Transport Committee	27 January 2021
(b)	Partnership Committee	4 February 2021
(c)	Planning & Transport Committee	17 February 2021
(d)	Policy & Finance Committee	22 February 2021
(e)	Cultural & Economic Committee	1 March 2021
(f)	Grounds & Environmental Committee	8 March 2021
(g)	Planning & Transport Committee	10 March 2021
(h)	Policy & Finance Committee	29 March 2021
(i)	Planning & Transport Committee	31 March 2021
(j)	Policy & Finance Committee	19 April 2021

(ii) Council gave consideration to the recommendations contained within committee minutes which had not already been dealt with as specific agenda items.

Policy & Finance Committee 22 February 2021 - minute reference 200/PF Investment Strategy.

RESOLVED to re-adopt the Town Council's Investment Strategy.

Planning & Transport Committee 10 March 2021 - minute reference 180/P Temporary High Street Pedestrianisation.

RESOLVED that a formal response to Central Bedfordshire Council on the future of the High Street from March 2022 be considered at an Autumn 2021 meeting of the Council.

Policy & Finance Committee 29 March 2021 - minute reference 214/PF Third Party Funding.

RESOLVED to adopt the Third Party Funding/Use of Assets Protocol.

Minute reference 216/PF Budget Underspend.

RESOLVED to carry forward underspend of £2,000 from Buzzard Trails (4509/101) to earmarked reserve (9018/970) to fund annual maintenance to the Children's Trail.

Policy & Finance Committee 19 April 2021:

Minute reference 225/PF Annual Governance Review (Financial Regulations and Internal Controls):

RESOLVED:

- (a) That minor amendments to the Town Council's credit card procedure as set out 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.**

Minute reference 226/PF Health and Safety Policy:

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

Minute reference 227/PF Lone Working Policy:

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

Minute reference 229/PF Complaints Procedure:

RESOLVED to approve the proposed revised Complaints Procedure.

Minute reference 230/PF Freedom of Information Policy:

RESOLVED to approve minor amendments to the Freedom of Information Policy.

(iii) A question was raised regarding the Architectural Lighting project in the High Street. It was confirmed that all installation would be carried out with supervision with the minimum risk to existing trees. The situation was on-going, and a full update would be available in due course.

The meeting was adjourned for a five-minute break at 9.04 pm and resumed at 9.09 pm.

203 GOVERNMENT WELCOME BACK FUND

(a) Council received a verbal update in respect of the Government's Welcome Back Fund to boost the look and feel of the high street. The project had been unveiled by Central Bedfordshire Council but formal communication to the Town Council was awaited. Once this detail had been received it was proposed to hold

a workshop for Councillors to produce revenue led projects to take back to Central Bedfordshire Council.

Members agreed a workshop would be a good opportunity to form ideas which could re-invigorate the High Street in the short and long term. Until official notification had been received it was decided to defer discussion to the Annual Council Meeting on 4 May 2021 and contact CBC to request the facts and figures of the Fund be provided to the Town Council for inclusion on this agenda.

(b) Council gave consideration to the recommendation made by the Partnership Committee at its meeting held 15 April 2021 that the Town Council expedite discussions regarding the Welcome Back Fund.

RESOLVED to carry this forward to the Annual Meeting on 4 May, when it was anticipated that a formal approach would have been made to the Town Council by Central Bedfordshire Council and a workshop for discussion of ideas could be agreed.

(c) Council received two motions from Councillor Harvey: one regarding the Public Realm: High Street and the other Greening in the High Street.

The first proposal being the provision of benches in the High Street to benefit the frail and disabled whilst shopping thus making the High Street more accessible and attractive to shoppers.

Members were supportive of this idea but suggested this should be discussed once the specific terms and conditions of the Welcome Back Fund were known and the discussion workshop was held. This amendment was proposed and seconded and on being taken to the vote there were 13 in favour, 5 abstentions and 2 against. The amendment was carried.

RESOLVED to discuss the Motion proposed by Councillor Harvey regarding benches in the High Street as part of the workshop session at which ideas for use of the Government Welcome Bank Fund would be discussed.

The second proposal was greening in the High Street with the introduction of planters, trees and shrubs. After discussion Councillor Harvey agreed to change the recommendation to discuss this further once information had been received from Central Bedfordshire Council. One important question was raised regarding the planting of trees which could not compromise the location and sight of the new CCTV camera system. The amendment was proposed and seconded and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to discuss the Motion proposed by Councillor Harvey regarding greening in the High Street as part of the workshop session at which ideas for use of the Government Welcome Bank Fund would be discussed.

204 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

No official questions had been received from Councillors.

205 REAR BOUNDARY OF LINSLADE MEMORIAL PLAYING FIELD

The Council received a report and was asked to consider options available in respect of a boundary fence with disputed ownership.

RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3(x) until conclusion of agenda item 17 (Rear boundary of Linslade Memorial Playing Field).

An addition to the recommendations was suggested that the Council seek indemnity from the Canal & River Trust and confirmation from the insurers regarding removal of the fence to protect ourselves. On being proposed and seconded the amended recommendations were taken to the vote with 16 for, and 3 against.

RESOLVED:

(a) To note the report.

(b) That the Council funds the removal of the dilapidated rear boundary fence between Linslade Memorial Playing Field and the Grand Union canal and installs signage to inform park users that they are leaving the park and entering land owned by the Canal & River Trust, to a maximum cost of £10,000 to be funded from general reserves, subject to an indemnity being received from the Canal & River Trust as well as confirmation from the Town Council's insurers that the town council would not be liable for any damage caused by removal of the remains of the fence.

The meeting closed 2204 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 APRIL 2021.

Chair

28 JUNE 2021