

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

4 MAY 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)

Members of the Public: 2

206 ELECTION OF CHAIR (TOWN MAYOR)

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor F Kharawala be appointed Chairman (Town Mayor) of the Town Council for the municipal year 2021-2022. There were no further nominations.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor F Kharawala Chairman (Town Mayor) of Leighton-Linslade Town Council for the municipal year 2021-2022.

207 DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE

Councillor F Kharawala made the statutory declaration of acceptance of office of Town Mayor for the municipal year 2021-2022.

208 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor F Kharawala noted it was likely to be another tricky year ahead with the continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, but hoped she could rely on fellow Councillors for support in the coming months.

209 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN (DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR)

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor T Morris be appointed Vice Chairman (Deputy Town Mayor) of the Town Council for the municipal year 2021-2022. There were no further nominations.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor T Morris Vice Chairman (Deputy Town Mayor) of the Leighton-Linslade Town Council for the municipal year 2021-2022.

210 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Councillor T Morris made the statutory declaration of acceptance of office of Deputy Town Mayor for the municipal year 2021-2022.

211 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor B Spurr.

212 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests, and the nature of those interests, that they might have in any of the items under consideration at the meeting.

It was noted that many councillors had some involvement with the organisations requesting grant funding and that councillors were also appointed as Town Council representatives to those organisations. Councillor P Snelling declared himself a volunteer with the Greensand Trust and Councillor D Bowater a member of the Rotary Club of Leighton-Linslade. Councillor V Harvey declared herself a member of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth and would abstain from voting on their general grant application. Councillor G Perham declared that he had given one grant applicant (Friends of Tiddenfoot Waterside Park) grant funding through the Central Bedfordshire ward councillor grant scheme.

No pecuniary interests were declared and no dispensations had been requested.

213 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor S Jones be appointed Leader of the Town Council for the municipal year 2021-2022. There were no further nominations.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor S Jones Leader of the Town Council for the municipal year 2021-2022.

214 GROUP LEADERS

It was announced that Councillor S Jones would be Leader of the Conservative group and that Councillor A Dodwell would be deputy.

Councillor R Goodchild advised that the Liberal Democrat Group would not be making announcements until after the by-election in St. George's ward on 6 May.

215 GROUP LEADERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor S Jones spoke of his disappointment to be having to use a delegated decision making process again, following the High Court ruling of last week that local councils could not continue to hold remote meetings after 6 May 2021. He noted that Andrew Selous MP and Robert Jenrick MP had expressed equal disappointment and frustration and that it was acknowledged that the problem particularly affected larger parish councils, which could not easily meet in person while accommodating Covid risk mitigation measures such as social distancing.

Councillor R Goodchild spoke of his concern in respect of an incident which had taken place in the town the week previously, involving a firearm. He advised he would continue to work collaboratively with the Leader of the Council on policing matters and would continue to seek appropriate policing resources for the largest town in the area.

216 QUESTIONS

- (a) There were no questions from members of the public.
- (b) A question had been received and circulated in advance of the meeting from Councillors S Jones and R Goodchild, as follows:

Could the Town Clerk update us on any progress in lobbying by many Local Authorities for the continuation of virtual meetings and can he write to Andrew Selous MP, Robert Jenrick MP and the Rt Hon Jacob Rees Mogg (Leader of the House of Commons) expressing the views of this Council namely:-

- 1. Following the introduction of The Local Authorities and Crime Panels (Coronavirus)(Flexibility of Meetings)(England and Wales) Regulations 2020 last April, the Town Council has successfully managed to resume its normal cycle of council and committee meetings using the technology available to meet digitally. This has allowed business to be successfully conducted without the need for face-to-face meetings and has also facilitated greater engagement with our residents.*
- 2. Following the High Court Ruling the above legislation will end on 7 May 2021 unless primary legislation is enacted to permit virtual and hybrid meetings as is the case for Parliament at Westminster.*

3. *At a time where many people are continuing to work from home, with the advantage this affords both environmentally by reducing travel and in terms of working environment, this Council calls upon the Government to expedite the allocation of parliamentary time to allow for either an extension of the above regulations, an appropriate amendment to the 1972 Local Government Act or new primary legislation to allow Local Authorities to continue with virtual meetings where this is appropriate.*

Whilst no dissent was expressed, it was felt that the question was more of a Motion. It was agreed that the Town Clerk would seek Member approval by email for the proposed actions, as well as for authority to submit a formal response on behalf of the Council to the current Government call for evidence in respect of local council meetings.

217 COMMITTEE STRUCTURE, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SCHEME OF DELEGATION

Council received the existing Committee structure, the Terms of Reference for the four Town Council standing Committees and the Scheme of Delegation.

RESOLVED to approve the Committee structure, standing Committee Terms of Reference and the Scheme of Delegation.

RESOLVED to continue with existing memberships and chairmanships of committees and sub committees, plus existing appointments to outside bodies, until the next Council meeting.

218 PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

RESOLVED to continue with the existing membership of the Partnership Committee until the next Council meeting.

219 TOWN COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS

Proposed amendments to Standing Orders, as recommended by the Standing Orders Task and Finish Group and subsequently by the Policy and Finance Committee, were proposed by Councillor M Freeman and seconded by Councillor R Berry. The motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED to approve the proposed amendments to Town Council Standing Orders.

220 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

Following agreement by the Policy and Finance Committee at its meeting on 29 March that review of this policy was a priority, best practice guidance had been reviewed and proposed amendments to the policy circulated for consideration.

RESOLVED to approve the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

221 GRANTS**(a) General Grants**

The Council was advised that the annual budget for General Grants was £10,000 and that seven applications totalling under £3,500 had been received. A summary of grant applications was circulated for consideration.

It was proposed and seconded that six applications be approved, with the seventh referred on to the Arts Forum. The motion was carried (18 in favour, 1 abstention).

RESOLVED to refer the application from Heath Band to the Leighton-Linslade Arts Forum.

RESOLVED to approve General Grant funding amounting to £2,831.84 as follows, subject to all applicants having met the required criteria by providing the required documentation:

Organisation	Purpose of General Grant	Amount
Friends of Tiddenfoot Waterside Park	To replace Hazel Hurdles damaged by flooding	£500
South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth	To purchase litter picking equipment for use by volunteers	£474.84
Buzzcycles	To purchase a gazebo to provide Dr Bike services	£380
Challenging Behaviour Counselling	To provide five "wild days" workshops for children aged 3-14	£500
Leighton Buzzard Mencap	To purchase two gazebos to allow a support group to meet outdoors	£477
Phoenix Explorer Scouts	To purchase tents for use by 14-18 year olds for scouting and Duke of Edinburgh scheme expeditions	£500

(b) Guaranteed Grants

Council received a summary of the 15 Guaranteed Grant recipients, following award of the grants in May 2020. Whilst grants were for a four-year term, recipients were required to submit an annual report on expenditure as well as annual accounts each year, before the next tranche of funding could be released. The reports received were circulated to Council and accounts were available to view on request.

RESOLVED to approve the release of 2021-22 Guaranteed Grant funding to: Leighton-Linslade Arts Forum, Autism Bedfordshire, Buzzer Buses Dial-a-Ride, Cruse Bereavement Care, Freddie and Friends Sunshine Stop CIC, Leighton-Linslade Carnival, The Greensand Trust, Keech Hospice Care, Home-Start Central Bedfordshire, Macmillan Cancer Support, Meadow Way Community Association, Rotary Club Yes We Can programme, Leighton-Linslade and District Sports Council and the Town Twinning Forum.

222 WELCOME BACK FUND

Council received correspondence from Central Bedfordshire Council in respect of the Government Welcome Bank fund. Queries were raised regarding whether monies could only be spent on the immediate town centre area and whether funding was likely to be forthcoming faster for certain types of schemes than others. This would need to be clarified by the local authority.

RESOLVED:

- To receive correspondence from Central Bedfordshire Council in respect of the Welcome Bank Fund.
- To hold an informal councillor workshop on Monday, 10 May at 7:30pm to discuss potential uses of funding.
- That formal ratification of discussion on 10 May take place thereafter by delegation to the proper Officer with email approval from Councillors, in accordance with the decision making procedure agreed by Council, in order that ideas may be submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council before the deadline date of 28 May 2021.

223 FINANCIAL BANKING ARRANGMENTS

Council received a report regarding the investment of the annual precept and banking arrangements throughout the year.

RESOLVED:

- a. To transfer the annual precept (which is paid in two instalments, first in April 2021 and second in September 2021) from the NatWest Business Reserve Account to the existing Nationwide Instant Access Saver Account currently paying 0.05%.
- b. To endorse that funds be drawn down from the Nationwide Instant Access Saver Account and transferred to the NatWest Business Reserve Account to fund the Monthly expenditure, as and when required throughout the year.
- c. That the arrangements above be reviewed upon receipt of the first tranche of the precept for 2022/23.

224 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: Community Action Bedfordshire and appointment of planning consultant.

225 COMMUNITY ACTION BEDFORDSHIRE

Council received correspondence from Community Action Bedfordshire in respect of its Guaranteed Grant funding to support the voluntary sector, as well as the funding received specifically for the Jazz Up Your Life tea dance programme.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To support the transfer of the balance of the Jazz Up Your Life grant funding (£1,145.72) from Community Action Bedfordshire to Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) for delivery of the three remaining dances once Covid-19 restrictions permit these to go ahead.**
- (ii) To support the transfer of Guaranteed Grant funding for 2021-22 until 2023-24 from Community Action Bedfordshire to Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) to fund the promotion, development and support of the Leighton-Linslade Timebank.**
- (iii) To release 2021-2022 grant funding to BRCC upon receipt of their constitution and account details.**
- (iv) To write to John Gelder and to thank him for his longstanding and exceptional service to the community of Leighton-Linslade.**

226 APPOINTMENT OF PLANNING CONSULTANT

Council noted that consideration of expressions of interest submitted by a number of planning consultants had been undertaken by the Policy and Finance Committee at its meeting held on 19 April 2021. Subsequently, informal sessions had taken place with two consultants. On being proposed and seconded, it was unanimously agreed to appoint one of the consultants.

RESOLVED to appoint O'Neill Homer to undertake initial scoping work on the possible creation of a Neighbourhood Plan or other appropriate policy document to better inform parish wide improvements and to report back to the Policy and Finance Committee.

The meeting closed 2042 hours.

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

Chair

28 JUNE 2021