

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

SOUTH SIDE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

THURSDAY 6 MAY 2021 AT 1300 HOURS

Present: Councillors V Harvey
S Owen (Vice Chair)
T Morris
C Palmer (Chair)
A Dodwell (substituting for S Hemmings)
E Wallace (substituting for B Spurr)

Also in attendance: V Cannon Head of Cultural & Economic Services
M Jahn, Committee Officer
S Caldbeck, Central Bedfordshire Council
R Dua, Leighton Library and Theatre Facility
D Waller Leighton Library and Theatre Facility

Members of the Public: 5

24/SS APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Spurr substituted by Councillor E Wallace and Councillor S Hemmings substituted by Councillor A Dodwell.

25/SS DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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 Palmer declared an interest as a member of LB Society and LB Archeological and History Society. Councillor Harvey declared an interest as a Member of LB Society and South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth.

26/SS QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public from the Arts and Heritage Projects Group spoke to emphasise the need by residents and families for a centrally located cultural facility in the town. The population continued to grow, and a space was needed for artists and designers to teach and provide workshops to nurture the local talent in Leighton Buzzard. The provision of a café or restaurant in this facility would be crucial and would encourage residents to use it especially if it offered good quality locally sourced produce. The library building would not be big enough to allow for these activities although it is very important to the community.

A further member from this group spoke to request whether the group could have a more collaborative role in discussions and engage in presentations of plans clearly linked to the Arts, working with local government and the library to meet

the needs of the community. Sam Caldbeck, Central Bedfordshire Council, confirmed he had met with the Arts and Heritage Projects Group and agreed all parties were working towards the same aim of wanting the best for the town and community.

One of the landowners spoke to give his support to the development of the land and a social hub facility within walking distance of the High Street to encourage people into the town.

It was agreed that all comments would be fed back to Central Bedfordshire Council for their information and consideration.

27/SS MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

(a) The group received the draft minutes of the South Side Task & Finish Group held on the 22 March 2021.

Minute ref 20/SS Update On Options Analysis – Southside Development – it was confirmed the Options Analysis was in the final stages of completion and once this was received the options would be discussed internally with Central Bedfordshire Officers and then reported back to this group.

Sam Caldbeck wanted to inform members that in the current market conditions a fully viable scheme would not be likely. It would be unlikely a community facility would provide sufficient revenue to cover costs and external funding would have to be secured. The Options Analysis was the first stepping stone and would provide what potential projects could be viable and following this there would need to be talks with landowners and a consultation which in current financial circumstances could take a few years to come to fruition.

A question was raised regarding whether CBC would be likely to sell the land or build and rent out the building. It was confirmed this was not known at present and would depend on circumstances at the time.

A further question was asked whether the Fire Station site would be included in the development area. It was confirmed the Fire Station site was not included in the Options Analysis brief and it would be difficult to relocate as costs would be very high.

Minute ref 23/SS Documentation for Land South of the High Street – a request was made for a title to be given for the document referred to which would assist readers in the future to identify the document.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the South Side Task & Finish Group held on 22 March 2021 be approved as a correct record and would be signed at a later date when safe to do so.

(b) No updates were made as they would be covered in the remainder of the agenda.

28/SS VENUE EXAMPLES

Members welcomed Rechelle Dua and Daniel Weller from the Leighton Library and Theatre Facility and thanked them for attending the meeting.

It was confirmed the vision of the Library and Theatre Facility was to ensure a vibrant cultural offer in Leighton-Linslade and across all of Central Bedfordshire. They had no issues with a proposed facility on Land South of the High Street and would be happy to be part of discussions and not just be informed of the end result.

A concern was raised regarding the suitability of the Library Building and whether it could offer space and had the availability to accommodate more groups. Rechelle Dua confirmed building works had been completed in the last 12 months and most parts of the building were hired out with some regular bookings. Particular nights and times were not fully used and the pricing was being reviewed with the aim to develop and cover wider community needs. They were willing to see what would be needed and would be willing to talk to groups about their needs especially music groups if the acoustics were proving unsuitable.

A request was made for Rechelle Dua to send an email with the availability of the different parts of the building to clarify the usage and revenue costs. It was confirmed the Theatre was usually within profit.

RESOLVED to note the information.

29/SS FORMULATION OF COMMUNITY NEEDS FOR LSHS

(a) The Task and Finish Group received a discussion paper to consider a process for a proposed consultation for the facility on LSHS.

Councillor Owen was thanked for compiling this report but until the Options Analysis conclusions had been received this could not be taken forward. It would be needed to know what would be achievable, what size community space would be needed and where the funding would come from to determine what could be built.

Members all agreed this would be a fantastic plan but advised not to go into too much detail as no sound options or solutions had been provided yet. Capital and revenue would pose the biggest problem and in the present climate it would probably be 4 to 5 years before this could commence.

The document should be a 'travelling draft' which would set out what types of facilities could be provided and how the development could proceed. All members could have access to include ideas on the document. A phased development would be the most likely approach when the project was finally agreed. A request was made to share the document with the Partnership Committee at their next meeting with the results of the Options Analysis report.

(b) Members decided the Summary Paper V2 would no longer be required and the first document would now be used.

RESOLVED to note the information.

30/SS FUTURE MEETING DATE

The next meeting date tbc.

The meeting closed at 1450 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 MAY 2021.

Chair

26 JULY 2021

DRAFT