



Policy and Finance Committee

Date: 23 August 2021

Title: South Side of the High Street

Purpose of the Report:

To set out operational and budgetary considerations to aid Committee in determining the next course of action in respect of the recommendations arising from the South Side of the High Street Task and Finish Group.

Contact Officer:

Mark Saccoccio, Town Clerk
Sarah Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk

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|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Corporate Objective/s | LLTC Five Year Plan – objectives 17, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 34, 41, 42, 43, 44 and 45 have previously been prioritised by Council for delivery 2019-2022 | |
| Implications: | | |
| Financial | Yes | Options for allocation of any likely project costs to be considered by Committee |
| Human Resources | Yes | Options for allocation of resources required to be considered by Committee |
| Operational/Service delivery | Yes | To ensure the council can continue to operate core services effectively. |
| Procedural/Legal | No | Localism Act 2011 (General Power of Competence) |
| Risk/Health and Safety | No | |
| Environmental Aims | No | |

1 RECOMMENDATION/S

Should members be minded, the proposals are:

- 1.1 To consider recommending to Partnership Committee and/or Council the next course of action in respect of the proposals coming forward from the South Side Task and Finish Group, bearing in mind the considerations outlined in this report.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following the September 2020 meeting of the Partnership Committee, a group of five councillors formed an informal working party and met with Central Bedfordshire Council officers on several occasions to discuss the land known as "land south of the High Street."
- 2.2 This informal group was formally appointed a Task and Finish Group by Partnership Committee on 10 December 2020 and has since met on five occasions, supported by officers of both councils.
- 2.3 Following its last meeting on 26 July 2021, the Task and Finish Group's Chairman has produced an informal report for this Committee and the Partnership Committee to consider further.
- 2.4 The purpose of this accompanying report is to provide Committee with information on the operational and procedural implications of any recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group to the Policy and Finance Committee and after that Council.
- 2.5 As the Task and Finish Group is a subgroup of the Partnership (Joint) Committee, it is essential that both Councils formally approve any endorsed aspirations or additional work.
- 2.6 Therefore, any recommendations that the Policy and Finance Committee may wish to put forward will need to be ratified by Council. As the corporate body, the Town Council will have to decide its priority level to give any Task and Finish Group recommendations. This is predicated on the fact that no significant resources (human or financial) have been committed by the Town Council to the project to date
- 2.7 Equally, the Partnership Committee will need to consider the appropriate mechanism for formally endorsing any aspirations or additional work by Central Bedfordshire Council. The former 2012 Development Brief on land south of the High Street/Bridge Meadow has no formal standing. To date, work has primarily been done by Central Bedfordshire officers as part of the regeneration agenda.
- 2.8 Presently, there is no capacity within the Town Council administration. Therefore careful consideration will need to be given by Committee and Council to the likely impact on the service areas and already endorsed projects and objectives. Detailed considerations are set out below.

3 CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 The workload generated to date by the South Side Task, and Finish Group has been absorbed into current workloads. This has mainly been facilitated by a leading role taken by Central Bedfordshire officers and a significant amount of work undertaken by individual councillors themselves.

3.2 Capacity with the Town Council staff team as we advance is extremely limited. Workstreams already endorsed by Council for this municipal/financial year can be summarised as below:

i) Core operations

- Public open spaces, play areas, sports facilities & pavilions
- Allotments
- Cemeteries
- Market
- Community events
- Community grants
- Civic role of Town Mayor
- Communications
- Public conveniences
- Defibrillators
- Town centre Trails
- Teenage Advice and Information Centre
- Town centre and business support
- Planning & transport liaison with Local Authority
- Community safety liaison with Bedfordshire Police

There are currently 40 members of staff. Employees and day to day operations are managed by seven managers and two supervisors.

ii) Five Year Plan objectives

Council agreed objectives and priorities in September 2019, but some were impacted by the delays arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

2020-2021

- Town Ranger service *Now in place following restructure*
- Drinking water fountains *Deferred due to pandemic*
- Changing Places facility in Parson's Close Recreation Ground *Delivered*
- Additional memorialisation options *Delivered*
- Scoping work for older people's projects *Delivered and workstreams now added to 2021-22 and 2022-23 as endorsed by the responsible committee*

2021-2022

- Inclusive adventure playground *Project underway*
- Consideration of overflow car parking at Linslade Memorial Playing Fields and Garden of Remembrance *Options for parking enforcement were being explored with the local authority with a view to determining if additional parking capacity is really needed*
- Projects for young people *Survey to be undertaken in Autumn 2021*
- Projects for older people *(£30k allocated for delivery)*

2022-2023

- An additional mausoleum, subject to interest *(self-funding)*
- Continued delivery of projects for older people *(£50k allocated)*
- Delivery of projects for young people resulting from the 2021 survey *(£25k allocated)*

The remaining projects were deemed longer-term (post-2022).

iii) Actions arising from the 2021-22 Risk Register Action Plan

- Byelaws to be updated
- Cemetery safety survey
- Ongoing impact on services as a result of the pandemic and changing guidance
- Documentation of procedures (risk of staff loss)
- Data protection audit & TACTIC data protection review
- Investment policy update
- Lack of clarity on the future management of public open spaces and facilities associated with the eastern urban extension
- Buildings ten-year maintenance plan
- Review condition of the skate park

An update report on the Risk Register Action Plan is a separate agenda item.

iv) Work arising from Motions endorsed by committee/Council

- Public realm improvements (CBC funding of equipment)
- Tree planting
- Investigation into potential free car parking trial
- Welcome Back Fund projects
- Investigation into the potential development of a planning led policy document
- Partnership Project list review
- S106 developer contributions review
- Boundary/governance review
- Health services

- Policy reviews
- Pigeon management in the town centre
- Liaison with the local authority over digital CCTV upgrade
- Progressing the adopted Environmental Ambitions
- Progressing the adopted Equalities Statement & actions
- Ongoing play area refurbishment programme
- Delivery of a new Living History Trail annually each October
- Finalising the last remaining work to be delivered from the Market Town Regeneration Fund (architectural lighting project).

3.3 The above is supported by the 2021-22 revenue budget (core operations) and the five-year financial plan (five-year plan objectives). Resource and financial implications arising from the Risk Register and endorsed Motions have largely been absorbed by existing staffing resources and revenue budgets/earmarked reserves.

3.4 Committee is asked to consider the above factors when putting forward any recommendations to Council in respect of progressing the actions proposed by the Task and Finish Group relating to land south of the High Street. Freeing up resources within the remainder of the 2021-22 financial year would require Council to endorse changes in the previously agreed priorities set out above.

3.5 From 2022-23, Council could consider the following options to progress additional/new workstreams. These options apply to the land south of the High Street and any other unanticipated additional workstreams, such as developing a planning-led policy document or any other unplanned projects/Motions.

- i) Defer a previously agreed objective to free up funds within the Future Projects earmarked reserve (as set out in the five-year financial plan, **appended below**) to hire in temporary additional staff or consultancy resources for a fixed period/project duration.
- ii) Repurpose funds in an existing earmarked reserve (impact will need further consideration).
- iii) Consider a significant increase in precept or a reduction in revenue budgets to fund the permanent recruitment of additional staffing resources. The operational implications of the latter option would need careful consideration as there would be an inevitable impact on service delivery.

3.6 Committee/Council will also wish to consider which service area/committee should oversee any work to be agreed on this subject.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Existing Town Council resources have been thinly stretched for some time due to additional, unanticipated work, which to date has been absorbed into existing workloads. This reflects employees' commitment, but it is felt that a limit has now been reached, which if exceeded could have a detrimental impact on individuals and their families. The Town Council as the employer, has a duty of care to staff.
- 4.2 By way of the five-year plan, the Council has created earmarked reserves. A five-year financial plan demonstrated forward-thinking and commitment to the continual investment in facilities and services to benefit the residents of Leighton-Linslade.
- 4.3 Therefore, the council may wish to reconsider its priorities and earmarked budgets or consider options in respect of the annual revenue budget, should it determine that additional workstreams should be progressed.

End.

Leighton-Linslade Town Council
5 Year Financial Plan

Appendix A

| Future Projects | 2020/2021 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 | 2022/2023 | 2023/2024 | 2024/2025 | Totals |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Actual YTD | Budget | Budget | Budget | Budget | Budget | |
| Democratic and Central Services | | | | | | | |
| IT Provision | | 2,916 | | | 7,500 | 25,000 | 35,416 |
| Grounds and Environmental Services | | | | | | | |
| Play Areas | 97,903 | 114,325 | 82,000 | 82,000 | 82,000 | 82,000 | 442,325 |
| Parsons Close Adventure Playground | | | 300,000 | | | | 300,000 |
| CCTV | | | 40,000 | | | | 40,000 |
| Cemetery Chapel & Lych Gate | | | | | 125,000 | | 125,000 |
| Drinking Water Fountains | | | 25,000 | | | | 25,000 |
| Potential Youth Capital Project * | | | | | 250,000 | | 250,000 |
| Cultural and Economic Services | | | | | | | |
| Living History Trail | | | 11,608 | | | | 11,608 |
| Pigeon Project | | | 40,000 | | | | 40,000 |
| Older Persons Project | | | 50,000 | 30,000 | | | 80,000 |
| Younger Persons Project | | | 25,000 | 25,000 | | | 50,000 |
| Expenditure | | 117,241 | 573,608 | 137,000 | 464,500 | 107,000 | 1,399,349 |
| External Funding (PWLB) | | | -300,000 | | | | -300,000 |
| Budget Requirement | | 117,241 | 273,608 | 137,000 | 464,500 | 107,000 | 1,099,349 |

* In accordance with Objective 45 of the 5 Year Plan which will be subject to future parish engagement