

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

26 JULY 2021 AT 1930 HOURS

Present Councillors: S Jones (Chair)
C Palmer
R Berry
A Dodwell (Vice Chair)
J M Freeman
F Kharawala
S Owen
G Perham
R Goodchild
D Scott

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio (Town Clerk)
S Sandiford (Head of Democratic and Central Services)
I Haynes (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services)
Cllr V Harvey

Members of the public: 0

248/PF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor T Morris.

249/PF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Palmer declared a personal interest as a member of Friends of Leighton-Linslade in Bloom (referenced in the payments and budget monitoring reports).

No pecuniary interests were declared and no dispensations were requested.

250/PF QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Councillor S Owen raised two questions as a member of the public.

Following the article in the Leighton Buzzard Observer on 20 July in respect of Arriva buses and the temporary pedestrianisation of the High Street, Councillor Owen reminded the committee of the request made by the Partnership Committee on 4 February 2021 to Central Bedfordshire Council: to prepare a document in respect of the High Street pedestrianisation. The Town Clerk was asked to seek an update on this from Central Bedfordshire Council.

Following the article in the Leighton Buzzard Observer on 27 June in respect of the apparent suspension of services and activities for older people at the Duncombe Drive Day Centre as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, officers were asked to seek further information from Central Bedfordshire Council and to provide this at the Older Persons Sub-Committee meeting on 19 August.

251/PF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(a) The Committee received the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held 21 June 2021.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee held on the 21 June 2021 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

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

252/PF SUB-COMMITTEE AND TASK & FINISH GROUP MINUTES

(a) The Committee received the draft minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 5 July 2021 and considered a number of recommendations contained therein. It was clarified that the proposed amendments to the Statement of Pension Discretions had no cost implication to the council.

RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 5 July 2021.

RECOMMENDED to Council approval of the revised Town Council Statement of Pension Discretions including the policy on determining the rate of employee contributions.

RECOMMENDED to Council approval of the Flexible Retirement Policy.

RECOMMENDED to Council approval of the updates to the Sickness Absence Procedure.

RECOMMENDED to Council approval of the Equality in Employment Procedure, which will replace the outdated Equal Opportunities Policy and Disability Discrimination Statement.

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

Councillor Goodchild advised that five months to the day after Councillors met with local MP Andrew Selous and Minister of State (Home Office) Kit

Malthouse to raise concerns about local policing and police accommodation, he had finally received a copy of the response from Mr Malthouse. This focussed on addressing antisocial behaviour and did not make any mention of police accommodation in the town.

RESOLVED:

- (i) **to receive the draft minutes of the Community Safety Sub Committee meeting held on 12 July 2021.**
- (ii) **To request the Town Clerk to write to Andrew Selous MP to follow up on the town council's concerns regarding police accommodation in the town.**

(c) The Committee received the draft minutes of the Health Services Task and Finish Group meeting held on 15 July 2021.

Discussion took place regarding the meeting and the frustration felt by many about the lack of progress with expanding healthcare provision in the town. It was noted that a follow-up meeting had been confirmed for 27 September 2021 and that the NHS/Central Bedfordshire Council had been asked to provide information specific to the proposed health hub scheme in Leighton-Linslade.

It was suggested and agreed that healthcare provision was a matter of concern for residents and councillors across all political parties and that elected Members should work together collaboratively on this, as with the policing concerns. Dual hatted councillors were asked to continue to lobby for progress and information at Central Bedfordshire Council and to update town councillors accordingly. Councillors Harvey and Dodwell agreed to work together on the wording for a Motion to Central Bedfordshire Council.

A number of points were raised including a suggested addition to the minutes, suggesting that Andrew Selous MP engage with MP colleagues and with local GP surgeries, asking the Town Clerk to raise the town council's concerns informally with Central Bedfordshire officers and monitoring the situation through both the Partnership Committee and the Health Services Task and Finish Group. It was noted that it was also crucial for the local GP practices to be engaging in the process.

RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Health Services Task and Finish Group held on 15 July 2021.

253/PF JUNE PAYMENTS

The Committee received schedules of payments for June 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 June 2021 dated 29 June 2021 included BACS payments amounting to £108,161.96 (page numbers 2908-2918) including petty cash payments to TACTIC of £70.68. The monthly salaries listing for June 2021 amounting to £98,881.75 gross was received. A cash book report for June 2021, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

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

254/PF BUDGET MONITORING: FIRST QUARTER

The Committee received the budget monitoring report for the first quarter: 1 April – 30 June 2021. No queries or concerns were raised.

RESOLVED to note the report.

255/PF INSURANCE CLAIMS

The Committee received an update report regarding Town Council insurance. Two claims had been made in the last year, one by the council and one against the council, both of which were market related and had been settled.

RESOLVED to note the report regarding the Town Council insurance policy and claims for the annual period 30 June 2020 to 29 June 2021.

256/PF COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORKPLAN

The Committee received the Committee work plan and objectives for 2021-22. It was noted that the meeting scheduled for 20 September was now also likely to include a report on land south of the High Street and the Motion agreed by Council in June regarding a trial of free car parking in the town centre (timing would be subject to receiving the necessary information from Central Bedfordshire Council).

The Committee suggested that in order to ensure sufficient time for adequate debate at the September meeting, that a number of routine or less time-sensitive matters could be either moved to a later meeting or circulated to the committee by email for approval, in accordance with the delegated authority which now formed a permanent part of Standing Orders.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to note the committee work plan and objectives for 2020- 21 and the additions for September 2021.**
- (ii) To authorise the Town Clerk to move some proposed agenda items to other meetings or to circulate for email approval**

outside the meetings in line with the delegated authority procedure, in order to ensure adequate time for debate on essential matters at scheduled meetings.

257/PF CHILDREN'S TRAIL

The Committee received a report to consider acceptance of charitable support for maintenance of the Children's Trail.

A comment was made that one or two of the Trail elements were hard to find, particularly if the gates to a location were locked and consideration might be given to relocating them.

RESOLVED to accept the offer for WJ UK, a private business, to undertake maintenance work on the Children's Trail under their business' charitable scheme, 'Thinking Community', and to recognise the support by including the business logo on an interpretation board to be created for the trail.

258/PF CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

The Committee received and considered a report regarding re-opening of the White House following the 16-month closure forced by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as a proposed Customer Service Strategy. The intention was to ensure the council remained accessible to residents whilst also managing operational concerns in terms of staffing levels and health and safety. Appointments would be available outside of core hours upon request.

RESOLVED:

(i) To note the report.

(ii) To endorse the proposed opening hours for the White House of 9:30am – 3:30pm Monday-Friday (subject to adequate staffing and any other health and safety requirements).

(iii) To endorse the proposed temporary amendments to the central telephone enquiry line (8:30am – 4:30pm Monday-Friday).

(iv) To note that calls and visits would be monitored and timings further reviewed within a six month period.

RECOMMENDED to Council approval of the Customer Service Strategy.

259/PF BUDGET SETTING TIMELINE 2022-23

The Committee received the proposed timetable for the 2022-23 budget setting process.

RESOLVED to note the proposed timetable for the 2022-2023 budget setting process.

260/PF FIVE YEAR PLAN AND OBJECTIVES: MID TERM UPDATE

The Committee received and considered proposed additional comments to the objectives list in the Council's Five-Year Plan and Objectives 2019-2024. It was noted that at the half-way point of the plan, considerable progress had been made, particularly given the Covid-19 pandemic which had significantly impacted the council over the last sixteen months.

Proposed comments had been limited to the objectives list but the Committee requested a number of minor amendments be made to other pages of the document to bring it up to date.

RESOLVED to thank Town Council employees for the progress made with Council objectives since adoption of the Five Year Plan and in particular, for their achievements during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDED to Council to approve the updated wording of the Five Year Plan and Objectives, subject to the minor amendments suggested.

261/PF BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW

The Committee received and considered correspondence dated 6 July 2021 from Totternhoe Parish Council regarding the Boundary Commission Review. It was generally agreed to not be directly relevant to proposals for Leighton-Linslade.

RESOLVED to acknowledge receipt of the letter and to consider reviewing any alternative proposals put forward by Totternhoe Parish Council.

262/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: Town Council Accommodation.

263/PF TOWN COUNCIL ACCOMMODATION

The Committee received and considered a report to seek approval in respects of increased accommodation within the White House building.

RESOLVED

- (i) To engage with the letting agent to secure further first floor accommodation within the White House building.**
- (ii) The initial rent and service charge fee of £8,225 to be met from the Facilities Improvement earmarked reserve which presently stands at £137,754 until such time as it can be incorporated within the annual revenue budget.**
- (iii) Any lease agreement to dovetail in with the main lease agreement meaning it will be reviewed and negotiated as a single future lease.**

The meeting closed at 2107 hours.

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

CHAIR

20 SEPTEMBER 2021