

**LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**  
**MONDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 7.30 PM**

Present: Councillors            F Kharawala (Chair)  
   D Bowater  
   C Palmer  
   R Berry  
   M Freeman  
   S Jones  
   T Morris (Vice-Chair)  
   G Perham  
   V Harvey  
   S Hemmings  
   D Scott  
   J Silverstone  
   P Snelling  
   R Goodchild  
   A Gray  
   S Owen  
   P Carberry

Also in attendance:            M Saccoccio, Town Clerk  
   S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk  
   I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental  
   Services  
   M Jahn, Committee Officer

Members of the Public:        6

**244        APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received and were accepted from Councillors Cursons, Dodwell and Yates.

**245        DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor V Harvey declared a personal interest as a member of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth and The Leighton Buzzard Society.

Councillors Goodchild and Freeman declared an interest as members of Leighton Buzzard Royal British Legion (reference: Policy & Finance Committee minutes of 20 September 2021).

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

**246 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Kharawala spoke to thank Members and officers for their hard work during a challenging year and hoped that during the remainder of her term as Mayor more charity fundraising events could be held to include a Quiz Night and Charity Meal, culminating in a big final social event on 6 May 2022. Civic events would include the Remembrance Sunday commemoration and the Civic Service.

A special mention was given to the Events Team for coping with the constantly moving goalposts during Covid-19 restrictions and for the excellent Films in the Paddock and band concert programme, especially the Last Night of the Proms where 400 plus members of the public enjoyed a great evening at Parson's Close Recreation Ground.

The Mayor informed Council she had attended the Light House Tea Party and saw the dedicated work carried out there to help members of the community who needed support especially during these difficult times. It was hoped that Members would support the upcoming Black History Month where thought provoking events would be held in the town from the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October providing information on Black History and an understanding of racism.

**247 LEADERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor S Jones, Leader of the Conservative group, spoke to thank officers especially the Events Team for their work over the last year coping with continued restriction changes and providing excellent events for the residents of the town.

Once the tax base had been agreed and finalised later in the year, this would give more insight into what projects could be progressed and what budget would be available.

Councillor R Goodchild, Leader of the Liberal Democrat group, spoke to confirm that Councillor A Gray would replace him on the Planning & Transport Committee with immediate effect.

He raised a concern regarding item 10 High Street Pedestrianisation and why point (ii) had been included on the agenda.

Councillor D Scott, Leader of the Labour group, spoke to give thanks to all officers for their work over the summer months providing excellent events.

**248 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Three members of the public spoke to raise their support for item no. 15 on the agenda (Climate Emergency Motion proposed by Councillor Harvey).

The first member of the public spoke as a member of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth, which looked after the Linslade Garden of

Remembrance and in doing so, used bee-friendly sustainable gardening methods. She wanted the Council to take a lead in reducing carbon emissions and sending the message to the residents of Leighton-Linslade about the urgency of the problem.

The second person, also a member of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth, gave her support for the Climate Emergency Motion and reiterated the importance of the Council declaring a Climate Emergency and how more action was needed as the crisis was not an everyday visible one and people needed to think and act on how to achieve carbon neutral targets by 2030.

The third speaker also spoke to support the Climate Emergency Motion and emphasised the need to consider the effects of people's actions on the climate and the decisions which are made would reflect on the future for the younger generations.

Members agreed with all the comments above and confirmed discussion on this would be brought forward in the agenda, to follow item 7 Minutes of the Previous Meeting.

All members of the public were thanked for attending the meeting.

#### 249 **FAIRTRADE RENEWAL**

A representative from Fairtrade Leighton-Linslade gave an update regarding their work and thanked Leighton-Linslade Town Council for its commitment and support promoting Fairtrade and providing grant funding to the group for awareness raising activities in the town. The Council was asked to consider renewing its support to assist the group in renewing the Fairtrade status for another two years.

#### **RESOLVED to:**

- (i) To support the status of Leighton-Linslade as a Fairtrade Community.**
- (ii) To promote awareness of Fairtrade on a regular basis through whatever means possible, including a link from the Town Council website to the Fairtrade website.**
- (iii) That, wherever possible, Fairtrade tea and coffee be served at Town Council premises and events.**
- (iv) That the Town Clerk be allocated the responsibility of working in Partnership with the local Fairtrade Steering Group to ensure continued commitment to its Fairtrade Town status.**

#### 250 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

- (a) Council received the draft minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 June 2021.**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 June**

**2021 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.**

(b) Minute reference 239 Town Centre Parking: the Town Clerk had contacted Central Bedfordshire Council on 29 July but no positive response had been received and Central Bedfordshire councillors were encouraged to seek a way forward in this matter

251 **TOWN COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL AND EQUALITIES AMBITIONS**

Council received updates on actions completed to date and proposed actions in relation to the Council's adopted Environmental Ambitions and Equalities Statement. The reports outlined actions across all areas of the Council but it was noted that where appropriate, more detailed information would be provided to the relevant committees, with an overview to Council.

Councillors asked that consideration be given to reformatting the reports to provide more specific, detailed information with SMART objectives and more quantified data. It was agreed that this would be looked at when time permitted. Overall, it was noted that the environmental and equalities ambitions now underpinned a whole range of Council activities and services and agreed that this information should be made more widely available. It was also suggested that any environmental and/or equalities implications be included on the executive summary at the header of all committee reports.

**RESOLVED to note the updates.**

252 **CLIMATE EMERGENCY MOTION**

Council received a motion submitted by Councillor V Harvey regarding Climate Emergency, that Leighton-Linslade Town Council should commit to being carbon neutral by 2030 and should work with Central Bedfordshire Council to achieve the government's targets of net zero emissions by 2050.

All Members thanked Councillor Harvey for bringing this Motion forward and supported the principles involved. It was suggested that the environmental agenda should be at the heart of all Council activities and that the Council's achievements in this area should be mapped out and a matrix produced for future activity. It was recognised that resources were constrained and that some elements would be dependent upon advances in technology. A suggestion was made that the wording be changed to "make every reasonable endeavour to become carbon neutral" in recognition that at the present time, it was not known if it was even possible to do so. This suggestion was not however formally endorsed.

It was agreed that contact be made with Central Bedfordshire Council in respect of their Sustainability Plan and how the local authority intended to support and work with parish councils to progress this agenda. Budgets for any proposed activity would need reviewing alongside other Town Council agreed priorities. It was suggested that consideration be given to involving the wider community to benefit from their knowledge and ideas.

**RESOLVED** that following the declaration of a “Climate Emergency” by the National Association of Local Councils at its Annual Conference in October 2019 and their excellent Case Studies Report and their detailed advice on how councils can take action on climate change, this Council declares a “Climate Emergency” and commits to the activities of this Council being carbon neutral by 2030. This Council also commits to working with Central Bedfordshire Council in influencing and supporting the wider community of Leighton Linslade to achieve the government’s targets of net zero emissions by 2050.

253 **APPROVED DECISIONS**

The Committee received the approved decisions taken since the previous meeting by delegation to the Town Clerk with email approval from a majority of committee members, in accordance with the procedure approved by Council.

**RESOLVED** to note the delegated decisions made in the period May-September 2021 in accordance with the scheme of delegation approved by Council in March 2020 and set out in Standing Order 15 (c).

254 **END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS**

The external auditor’s report on the 2020-2021 accounts had not been received in time to distribute for the meeting, but no significant issues had been highlighted. It was confirmed the accounts would be distributed by email as soon as possible to all Members and would be published as required by 30 September 2021.

**RESOLVED** to note the information and to await distribution of the external auditor’s report in respect of the 2020-2021 accounts.

255 **HIGH STREET PEDESTRIANISATION**

Council received a presentation previously given to Partnership Committee on 9 September 2021 by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) officers, in respect of next steps regarding the temporary pedestrianisation of the High Street which had been introduced as a safety measure during the Covid-19 pandemic. CBC proposed to undertake an economic impact assessment, a benchmarking survey and stakeholder engagement prior to a decision being made before March 2022 (the expiry date of the existing Experimental Traffic Regulation Order).

Council raised concerns regarding the whole process of the temporary pedestrianisation of the High Street. It was felt that full consultation was needed on the potential options rather than the limited engagement proposed, before a decision about the ETRO was made. It was felt that undertaking an economic impact assessment at this time did not make sense given the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses and that instead, a study should be done regarding the economic impact of

pedestrianisation in other, similar towns pre-Covid. It was imperative the public should be informed of what the pedestrianisation could look like and the space which would be available for their use. At present enforcement of the temporary pedestrianisation was not happening and cars were entering and parking in the High Street causing confusion and danger to pedestrians.

Councillor Owen made a proposal for a long term look at the High Street with a full consultation regarding the ETRO to include interested groups e.g. residents, shoppers, businesses, the disabled, emergency services, bus companies and taxi drivers. Council voted unanimously on this Motion.

**RESOLVED that this Council, noting**

- a) **CBC's intention for the Portfolio Holder to make a sole decision later in 2021 on the future of the ETRO relating to the temporary pedestrianisation of the High Street made in June 2020**
- b) **CBC's intention to rely on information on a mix of**
  - **historic email comments received from individuals,**
  - **benchmarking and market surveys which were/are not centred on the temporary pedestrianisation scheme,**
  - **"engagement events" meaning visits (by whom?) to market stall and "businesses" (scope of discussions unspecified)**
  - **consultants' report on whether the scheme has had "a positive effect" (also unspecified – the Partnership Committee presentation by CBC on 9.9.2021 referred to an "Economic Impact Assessment but gave no details)**
- c) **The lack of clarity on whether the options for the Portfolio Holder's decision are restricted to what CBC officers have been terming the "binary choice" of making the pedestrianisation permanent or reverting to the pre-June 2020 position, or some further option(s)**
- d) **CBC's intention of holding a consultation (scope unspecified) on the future usage of the High Street AFTER March 2022 when the ETRO has expired, but also noting that CBC has still not committed to the Partnership Committee's request in February 2021, endorsed by this Council, to produce a "well-prepared document setting out options for the post-COVID permanent usage of the High Street, with advantages and disadvantages carefully assessed, along with a plan for a thorough consultation with the public and other stakeholders".**
- e) **The slides presented to Partnership Committee on 9.9.2021 still do not detail those options, nor the assessment of advantages or disadvantages, nor a consultation plan. For example, the slide titled "Specification of Services" mentions "the economic benefits from the pedestrianisation", but makes no mention of seeking views on any practical disadvantages to users of the High Street.**

**Concludes that**

- f) **b) above will not allow the different interest groups, e.g. residents, shoppers, High Street businesses, the disabled, emergency services, bus companies, or taxi drivers, to be consulted on the pros and cons of options leading to a decision on the ETRO.**

- g) the public of Leighton-Linslade and the High Street users listed above will react badly to being excluded from the ETRO decision only to be “consulted” about the possibility of pedestrianisation after March 2022, when effectively a decision will have already been taken.**

**And RESOLVES TO call on CBC urgently to**

- 1. carry out a comprehensive consultation with residents, shoppers, High Street businesses, the disabled, emergency services, bus companies, and taxi drivers, on options for the future of the High Street, as part of the process leading to the ETRO decision.**
- 2. engage with the Town Council to discuss and plan a post-ETRO long-term plan for the High Street that takes into account the views of stakeholders expressed in 1. above.**

## 256 **PLANNING LED POLICY DOCUMENT**

Council received reports presented to Policy and Finance Committee on 20 September 2021 in respect of the possible creation of a planning led policy document and noted the presentation by an external consultant and subsequent long discussion which had taken place at that meeting, culminating in a recommendation made by Committee (5 in favour, 5 abstentions) to consider the principle of progressing towards the development of a Neighbourhood Plan.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Owen and seconded by Councillor Goodchild.

Several councillors spoke to express a range of views on the possible creation of a Neighbourhood Plan. Concerns expressed included any possibility of delaying the regeneration of land south of the High Street, an unrealistic raising of public expectations, the lack of clear tangible benefits given the unlikelihood of significant future development in the parish and the potential cost, timescale and resource implications of development of a Neighbourhood Plan. It was suggested that it might be quicker and more effective to undertake resident surveys and/or an infrastructure survey, although recognised that such options would not carry the formal weight of a Neighbourhood Plan. It was hoped that Central Bedfordshire Council would progress its Place Shaping agenda and that as supported by both Policy and Finance and Partnership Committees recently, that the Town Council could be actively involved in taking this forward.

Contrasting views were expressed about the risk of encroachment by surrounding parishes given the pressures on neighbouring authorities, particularly with the development of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and the need to ensure delivery of infrastructure for the town.

It was proposed and seconded that in order to continue the meeting past 2200 hours, Standing Order 3(x) be suspended for a period of 30 minutes.

**RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3(x) for a period of 30 minutes.**

On being put to a vote, the Motion was not carried (8 in favour, 9 against. A recorded vote was taken (Appendix A).

**RESOLVED not to progress the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan.**

257 **STANDING COMMITTEES**

(i) Council received the draft and approved minutes of Committee meetings held in the period 22 April 2021 – 20 September 2021.

**RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the following meetings:**

**Planning & Transport Committee 21 April 2021  
Planning & Transport Committee 23 June 2021  
Planning & Transport Committee 14 July 2021  
Policy & Finance Committee 26 July 2021  
Planning & Transport Committee 4 August 2021  
Planning & Transport Committee 25 August 2021  
Grounds & Environmental Services Committee 6 September 2021  
Partnership Committee 9 September 2021  
Planning & Transport Committee 15 September 2021  
Policy & Finance Committee 20 September 2021**

(ii) Council considered the recommendations contained in the committee minutes which had not already been resolved.

**RESOLVED to endorse the Town Council's Making Meetings Accessible Policy.**

**RESOLVED to endorse that the 55UP Technical Helpline contract be awarded to applicant A (citizens online), for two years, 2021 to 2023, inclusive of the option to extend for a further one or two years should committee deem appropriate, and to delegate authority to Cultural & Economic services committee to oversee the delivery of all works relating to 55Up projects.**

**That this Council RESOLVES to:**

- (i) Record its support for the UK's annual national 'Emergency Services Day' which is held on 9<sup>th</sup> September, and which is supported by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II**
  - (ii) Place on record its sincere appreciation for the two million people who work and volunteer in the NHS and emergency services today.**
  - (iii) Agree to fly the official flag of the Emergency Services Day above the town hall on 9<sup>th</sup> September each year to mark 999 Day.**
- (iii) Councillors were invited to comment and question the committee minutes as permitted in Standing Order 5 (l) (x).

Partnership Committee 9 September 2021 – the date had been missed off

the heading of the minutes, to be added.

Policy & Finance Committee 26 July 2021, minute reference 252/PF (Sub Committee and Task & Finish Groups) – concerns were raised regarding progress made with collaborative working between political parties towards a health care provision in the town.

Grounds & Environmental Services Committee, 6 September 2021 minute reference 124/GE – clarification was needed on the legal agreement with The Wharf management committee about hedge planting.

Policy & Finance Committee 20 September 2021, minute reference 283/PF – the wording of the resolution be amended as below -

**RESOLVED to note the correspondence and that there was no wish for the number of councillors on the town council to be reviewed.**

258 **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

No questions had been submitted by Councillors in advance of the meeting.

It was proposed and seconded that in order to finish the meeting, Standing Order 3(x) be suspended for a further period of 5 minutes.

**RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3(x) for a further period of 5 minutes.**

259 **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 detail discussion regarding Writing Off Bad Debts and Town Centre Workshop.**

260 **WRITING OFF BAD DEBTS**

Council received a report regarding writing off an outstanding debt.

**RESOLVED to write off an outstanding debt of £1,398.17.**

261 **TOWN CENTRE WORKSHOP**

Council received a report to confirm the delivery provider for the Town Centre Workshop.

**RESOLVED to endorse the commissioning of IntoPlaces to deliver a Members' workshop as requested by Council, to increase understanding of likely future uses of town centres and to inform future projects and activities as well as strategic direction.**

The meeting closed at 10.35 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2021.

Chair

29 NOVEMBER 2021

## APPENDIX A

**Recorded vote: Minute reference 256 (Neighbourhood Plan)**

**8 IN FAVOUR, 9 AGAINST – Motion not carried**

BERRY	RAY	AGAINST
BOWATER	DAVID	AGAINST
CARBERRY	PAT	FOR
FREEMAN	MARK	FOR
GOODCHILD	RUSS	FOR
GRAY	ANNE	FOR
HARVEY	VICTORIA	FOR
HEMMINGS	SHEONA	AGAINST
JONES	STEVE	AGAINST
KHARAWALA	FARZANA	AGAINST
MORRIS	TONY	AGAINST
OWEN	STEVE	FOR
PALMER	CLIVE	AGAINST
PERHAM	GORDON	AGAINST
SCOTT	DANIEL	FOR
SILVERSTONE	JEREMY	AGAINST
SNELLING	PETER	FOR