

**LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL**

**POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**20 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 1930 HOURS**

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

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio (Town Clerk)  
S Sandiford (Head of Democratic and Central Services)  
I Haynes (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services)  
M Jahn, Committee Officer  
Cllr V Harvey  
Neil Homer, Oneill Homer

Members of the public: 0

**273/PF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor F Kharawala.

**274/PF APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR**

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Dodwell be appointed Vice Chair of the Committee for 2021-2022. There were no further nominations.

**RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Dodwell Vice Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee for the municipal year 2021-2022.**

**275/PF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Palmer declared a personal interest as a member of the Friends of Leighton-Linslade in Bloom (agenda item 7, Payments).

Councillor Freeman declared a personal interest as Chairman of the Leighton Buzzard branch of the Royal British Legion (agenda item 8, Funding Request) and would abstain from voting on that item.

Councillor R Goodchild also declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 as a member of the Royal British Legion.

No pecuniary interests were declared and no dispensations were requested.

## **276/PF QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions from the public.

## **277/PF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

(a) The Committee received the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 26 July 2021 and 23 August 2021.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee held on 26 July 2021 and on 23 August 2021 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.**

(b) Minute reference 252/PF (Sub Committee and Task & Finish Group Minutes): it was confirmed that the next meeting of the Health Services Task & Finish Group had been moved to the 18 October 2021.

A meeting had been arranged with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable for 5 October 2021 to discuss options for police accommodation in Leighton Linlade. It was envisaged the meeting would begin with a presentation showing the vision for policing in our Parish with structured questions to follow. Members could submit questions in advance of the meeting.

The Committee were informed that the recommendations made at the meeting on 26 July 2021 in minute references 252/PF, 258/PF and 260/PF had all been approved by Council in accordance with the delegated decision procedure.

Minute reference 263/PF (Town Council Accommodation): Members were informed the room on the first floor had now been vacated and was being prepared for use. Thanks were given to Ian Haynes and John Connew for their help with this.

## **278/PF 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 decisions.**

**279/PF JULY AND AUGUST 2021 PAYMENTS**

The Committee received schedules of payments for July and August 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 July 2021 dated 14 July 2021 included BACS payments amounting to £105,095.87 (page numbers 2919-2932). A cash book report for July 2021, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

The schedule for August 2021 dated 12 August 2021 included BACS payments amounting to £140,472.64 (page numbers 2933-2944) including petty cash payments to TACTIC of £8388. The monthly salaries listing for Aug 2021 amounting to £100,173.41 gross was received. A cash book report for August 2021, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

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

**280/PF THIRD PARTY FUNDING REQUEST**

The Committee received and considered a request for funding of £429.60 for the purchase of a new Branch flag on the Royal British Legion Club in West Street. The request had come direct to Committee rather than through the usual general grant application process in recognition that Remembrance Sunday was not far off and the Grants Sub-Committee was not due to meet until 1 November.

It was clarified that the local Royal British Legion branch was not permitted to use branch funds for such a purchase but would have to hold a particular fund-raising event to do so. This had not been possible during the pandemic and the branch had also been unable to meet for a long time.

A vote was taken with 7 in favour and 3 abstentions.

**RESOLVED to approve funding of £429.60 for the purchase of a Branch flag on the Royal British Legion in Leighton Linlade, with funds to be taken from the General Grants budget 4353/102 and the funding subject to the Third Party Funding Protocol.**

**281/PF PLANNING LED DOCUMENT**

The Committee received a presentation and project brief from Neil Homer on the potential to develop a planning led policy document for the town and the potential advantages/disadvantages of a range of different options. This

followed an initial report presented to committee in June 2021 and previous discussions at committee/Council during 2019/2020.

Mr Homer noted the lack of detail regarding Leighton-Linslade in the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and it was suggested that a town council plan could help fill this gap, although noted that the local authority was required to undertake additional review of its Plan from the end of 2021. Neighbouring local authorities would also need to consider their long-term visions and policies, as multiple factors were likely to significantly change public policy in the coming decade – notably post-Covid, climate crisis and proposed planning system changes which would have spatial, land use and planning implications. In addition, the development of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc would be in close proximity to the town.

Mr Homer advised the Council that it had a number of choices, one of which could be to wait a year or even two to see what Central Bedfordshire Council would do in its Local Plan review and potential change in direction towards a place-shaping agenda. It was possible there would be no disadvantage in waiting. Mr Homer advised it was difficult to quantify the tangible benefits of developing a plan or the “return on investment” but that development of a town plan could enable the town to have a greater influence over the future development of the town and might provide a better chance to leverage infrastructure than was currently the case.

Different options were outlined in the report but it was felt that the structure and status of a Neighbourhood Plan made it the most suitable option, allowing for the investment of time and creative energy in a structured, formal way. The scope would need to be agreed early on and the process for creation of a Plan was outlined. It was expected that there would be peaks and troughs in the workload associated with Plan creation and that a mechanism would be needed to continue monitoring and taking the Plan forward following its adoption, usually through a planning committee.

Mr Homer advised that in his experience the maximum cost of a Plan would be £100,000 of which around £70-80k would need to be funded by the council, over 2-3 financial years, with grant funding for the remainder. Costs were essentially for external professional, technical and project management support although internal project governance and liaison would also be needed.

A number of questions were asked by committee members and responses given by Mr Homer, who was then thanked for his presentation and report and left the meeting at 21:19 hours.

It was proposed by Councillor S Owen and seconded by Councillor R Goodchild that a recommendation be made to Council to agree in principle to make progress towards development of a Neighbourhood Plan, whilst recognising that this would be contingent on identifying the budget and resources for doing so. The Committee had received a report from senior officers clarifying that there was no scope for additional workload within the current administration and that the Council would be required to review its existing priorities and finances in order to give direction on how this could proceed.

On being put to a vote there were 5 in favour 5 abstentions, so the motion was carried.

**RECOMMENDED to Council:**

- (i) That the Council endorse the principle of progressing towards the development of a Neighbourhood Plan**
- (ii) That should Council agree with the above principle, then an extraordinary Council meeting should be convened to clearly determine Council priorities and budgets/resources to deliver these over the coming five years.**

## **282/PF COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PLAN**

The Committee received the Committee work plan and objectives for 2021-2022. It was noted that the work on procurement policy and tendering procedures had been delayed due to workload. The Committee was advised that an asset management policy had been investigated and was felt unnecessary.

**RESOLVED to note the Committee work plan and objectives for 2021-22.**

## **283/PF TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP**

The Committee received correspondence from Central Bedfordshire Council asking whether the town council had any wish for a Community Governance Review to be undertaken, with a view to reviewing the number of councillors on the council. It was agreed there was no desire to reduce the number of councillors elected to the council.

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

**284/PF COMMUNICATIONS UPDTE**

The Committee received and considered a report to provide members with a six-monthly update in respect of Town Council communications. Any questions to be emailed to the Town Clerk outside of the meeting. Thanks were given to the Senior Administration Officer for her clear and concise report.

**RESOLVED to note the information.**

**285/PF ASSETS**

The Committee received the asset register for consideration, including land and buildings, infrastructure assets, community assets and equipment. The Committee agreed the asset register needed a thorough review and would be brought back next year once this review had been undertaken

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

**286/PF FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS**

The Committee received and considered a report regarding potential expenditure from the Facilities Improvements earmarked reserve for purposes set out in the original report from June 2021: replacement of furniture, increasing office capacity, storage furniture and the undertaking of disability access audits.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) To approve, in principle, expenditure of up to £23,000 from the Facilities Improvements earmarked reserve for the purposes set out in the report.**
- (b) To note expenditure to date from the same earmarked reserve as set out.**

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

**RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3(x) for a maximum of fifteen minutes.**

**287/PF 999 DAY**

The Committee received information regarding the Emergency Services Day which would take place annually on 9 September. The report set out the history behind the event and the motion that local authorities were being encouraged to approve.

**RECOMMENDED to Council to approve the Motion that this Council:**

- (i) records 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) places on record its sincere appreciation for the two million people who work and volunteer in the NHS and emergency services today;**
- (iii) agrees 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.**

### **288/PF LAND SOUTH OF THE HIGH STREET**

The Committee was advised that the Partnership Committee had, at its meeting held on 9 September 2021, endorsed the recommendations made by Policy & Finance Committee at its meeting held 23 August 2021 (minute reference 272/PF).

Now that the principle of establishing a “South Side working party” reporting to the Policy & Finance Committee had been established, the Committee was reminded that the resource and cost implications needed further consideration, as the Committee had recognised the pressures on staff at its previous meeting. As discussed on 23 August, the Terms of Reference for the new working party needed to be scoped out so that the implications for supporting it could be established and resources/budget agreed. Although discussions were already taking place in the community, the work would still require co-ordination, convening and minuting of meetings and so on.

It was agreed that officers should draft proposed Terms of Reference for the South Side Working Party for further discussion by the parent Committee. Resource implications could be discussed as part of the wider review of council priorities and resources.

**RESOLVED to request that officers create a first draft of Terms of Reference for the South Side working party for further discussion and approval by Policy and Finance Committee and that the resource/budget implications be further discussed by Committee/Council.**

### **289/PF WINTER SALT POLICY**

The Committee had been requested by the Market Sub-Committee to review the current Winter Salting Policy (adopted 2014). A report set out that it was considered that the council would be operating “ultra vires” in gritting land not in its ownership and this position was endorsed by the Council’s insurer. The Committee agreed the policy remained fit for purpose and the Town

Council would not be required to grit or salt an area which was not their responsibility.

Councillor Harvey wanted it recorded she did not feel there was sufficient time for discussion to review this policy and the whole process was undemocratic.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

### **290/PF PARTNERSHIP PROJECT LIST REVIEW**

The Committee was advised of the recommendations arising from both the Cultural & Economic Services Committee on 13 September 2021 and the Planning & Transport Committee on 15 September 2021, that the review of the Partnership Project List would take place at an additional meeting in November.

The meeting closed at 22.10 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 AUGUST 2021.

CHAIR

22 NOVEMBER 2021