

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors D Bowater
 F Kharawala (Chair)
 C Palmer
 R Berry
 A Dodwell
 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
 R Yates

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 V Cannon, Head of Cultural and Economic
 Services
 S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk
 I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental
 Services
 G Singh, Central Bedfordshire Council
 M Jahn, Committee Officer

Members of the Public: 3

Town Mayor Councillor F Kharawala welcomed everyone to the Meeting and thanked minister Rev S March for leading prayers.

262 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence for the meeting had been received from Councillors Cursons, Scott, Freeman, Silverstone and Spurr.

263 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 declared a personal interest as a member of Leighton Buzzard Royal British Legion.

Councillor C Palmer declared a personal interest as a member of the Friends of Leighton Linslade in Bloom and Councillor P Carberry declared an interest in item 11 as a member of a committee formed to install a permanent memorial to Walter (Wally) Randall.

Councillors Berry, Dodwell, Snelling, Bowater, Harvey and Perham declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 (land at Vandyke Road) as Central Bedfordshire Councillors.

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

264 **TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Kharawala advised the Council that over the last few months she had attended a variety of engagements and events. Black History Month in October had enabled serious conversations to take place with members of the public and it was hoped this would continue in future years. The events attended included civic services, quiz nights, a gala evening, awards nights and a visit by Small Business Saturday 2021, with Leighton Buzzard being chosen as one of the towns on their tour this year.

The children's service on Armistice Day and the Remembrance Sunday commemorations had been special events and it was a privilege to be Mayor at these occasions. The launch of the Christmas Festival Weekend had been well supported and enjoyed by members of the public and was especially welcome after the cancellation in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The first face-to-face charity fundraising event of Cllr Kharawala's term of office had now finally taken place. This was a charity meal and raised approximately £1,000 for the charities. The event was well received and enjoyed by all who attended. The next events due were a Christmas fair on 2 December at a local venue, a stall at the Charity Market on 5 December and the Mayor's Carol Concert on 11 December 2021.

265 **LEADERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor S Jones, Leader of the Conservative group, spoke to reflect on the work of the Town Council and that the Council endeavoured to support businesses in the town. The results of Central Bedfordshire Council's consultation on the High Street would be awaited and the future role of the High Street explored. He felt the launch of the Christmas Festival Weekend

showed the community spirit within the town as it was well attended and enjoyed by families and residents in the area.

Councillor R Goodchild, Leader of the Liberal Democrat group, spoke to thank the Town Clerk for his assistance in implementing free car parking for shoppers in the town centre on Saturdays in the run up to Christmas and on Christmas Eve. An extension of this would be looked at again in the new year.

Christmas greetings were extended to all members from the Liberal Democrat group.

Councillor P Carberry spoke, in the absence of Councillor D Scott, for the Labour Group and wished everyone a Happy Christmas and a better year in 2022.

266 **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Three members of the public spoke during the public session.

The first person spoke regarding item 14 (Partnership Project List) and the aspiration to provide an Arts, Drama and Conference Centre. It was felt that Leighton Buzzard was lacking in this type of facility and the nearest suitable premises were in Berkhamsted or Milton Keynes. A Cultural Hub Facility would bring people into the town and create a meeting place where arts and crafts activities could be undertaken and displayed.

A second person spoke on behalf of the Friends of Leighton Linslade in Bloom and presented a petition regarding the restoration of the Henry Finch Memorial Fountain in Linslade Recreation Ground. It was felt the monument needed at least a basic refurbishment with the possibility of a noticeboard giving the history of the park and monument, as many new residents were unaware of the historical interest.

The third question was about climate emergency and how the Town Council was publicising its recent declaration to residents, what actions it was taking to implement measures for its own operations, to encourage the community to also take action in respect of climate change and whether the Council would be contacting Government to encourage them to stop supporting fossil fuel extraction both overseas and in the U.K.

It was confirmed that the Council was in the process of committing resources and funds to climate emergency with the aim to become net carbon neutral by 2030 and was starting to publish messages to residents encouraging “just one change” to support sustainability on its social media platforms.

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

267 **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 Land at Vandyke Road.

268 **LAND AT VANDYKE ROAD**

By invitation, Gurminder Singh of Central Bedfordshire Council gave a presentation to Council in respect of a planning application submitted by CBC to build 6 housing units on land at Vandyke Road. A proposal was made that the number of units could be increased by the use of a small parcel of land owned by the Town Council. This would add to much needed social housing stock in Central Bedfordshire.

Following his presentation, Mr Singh left the room while the Council deliberated.

On being proposed and seconded, it was unanimously agreed to proceed with the sale of land, with the proviso the Town Council obtain their own valuation and request that Central Bedfordshire Council take on the legal costs for the sale. Councillor R Berry abstained from the vote as a member of the Development Management Committee at Central Bedfordshire Council.

RESOLVED to agree to the sale of Town Council asset known as land at Vandyke Road to Central Bedfordshire Council for the purposes of delivering affordable housing with the proviso that the Town Council obtains their own valuation of the land and that Central Bedfordshire Council covers the legal costs.

RESOLVED to re-admit the press and public to the meeting.

One member of the public re-joined the meeting.

269 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

(a) Council received the draft minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 September 2021.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 September 2021 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

(b) Minute reference 256 - Planning Led Policy Document – a request was made to monitor government guidance in relation to Neighbourhood Plans and to bring any significant changes to the Council's attention.

270 **APPROVED DECISIONS**

Council received the approved decisions taken since the previous meeting.

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

271 END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS 2021-2021

(a) Council received the end of year accounts 2020-2021 and there were no matters giving rise for concern.

(b) Council received the Auditor's Certificate and Opinion on the Annual Return for 2020-2021.

RESOLVED to approve and accept the Auditor's Certificate and Opinion on the Annual Return for 2020-2021.

272 MEMORIAL BENCH

Council received a motion proposed by Councillor Carberry and seconded by Councillor Jones for the provision of a memorial bench in recognition of Walter (Wally) Randall, to be positioned at the top end of Parson's Close Recreation Ground overlooking the park.

After discussion members unanimously agreed on the provision of a World War II themed bench and asked if the family could be consulted as to how they would like his name to be displayed – either Wally Randall or Walter Randall. A suggestion was also made to recognise his honour of being the only recipient of the award Honorary Freeman of the Parish.

RESOLVED to establish a memorial bench in recognition of Walter 'Wally' Randall, to be located at the top end of Parson's Close Recreation Ground overlooking the park. The bench should have a plaque identifying it as a commemorative bench from the Town Council and on behalf of the people of Leighton-Linslade in recognition of Walter 'Wally' Randall, the United Kingdom's oldest poppy seller.

273 PUBLIC WORKS LOAN: PARSON'S CLOSE RECREATION GROUND

Council received and considered a revision of a resolution made in respect of seeking Public Works loan approval for the refurbishment of Parson's Close Recreation Ground, to ensure criteria had been met for consideration of the loan application.

At the Leighton-Linslade Town Council Full Council meeting of 29th November 2021, it was RESOLVED to seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government to

apply for a PWLB loan of £300,000 over the borrowing term of over 9 ½ not over 10 years, for the delivery of an inclusive adventure playground for Parson's Close Recreation Ground. The annual loan repayments will come to around £34,920.00. It is not intended to increase the council tax precept for the purpose of the loan repayment.

274 **UPDATE PRESENTATION**

Council received a verbal presentation from the Town Clerk and senior officers in respect of Town Council services, activities, finance and resources. This was intended as a background information exercise particularly to benefit newly appointed councillors who were now entering into their first experience of the annual budget setting process. It was noted that 93% of the Council's expenditure was on day to day core services and operations, with 7% for significant projects as set out in the five year financial plan. To underpin this, the vast majority of the Council's 41 employees undertook a range of activities to deliver core services ranging from the maintenance of the parks and cemeteries to bookings of the facilities, creation of communications, provision of community events and the market and more.

RESOLVED to note the information.

275 **PARTNERSHIP PROJECT LIST**

(a) Council received a report setting out the background to the creation of the current Partnership Project List and the process for review agreed by the Partnership Committee in June 2021. To date, three specific recommendations had come forward as follows:

From the Grounds & Environmental Services Committee meeting held September 2021: to remove numbers 24 (provision of a clubhouse and launching site for canoe club) and 26 (a woodland cemetery, adventure play area, campsite and parking at Rushmere Country Park) from the Partnership List.

From the Ouzel Valley Park steering group meeting held September 2021: To include the park improvements identified by Central Bedfordshire Council in the Tiddenfoot Waterside Park Masterplan (2013).

It was noted that the report recommendations had now been superseded to some extent by the two Motions which had been submitted regarding proposed changes to the List.

RESOLVED to note the report.

(b) Council received two Motions submitted by Councillors in respect of proposed changes to the Partnership Project List.

The first Motion was proposed by Councillor Palmer and seconded by Councillor Jones. It was proposed to revise the list into categories A B C and D. Category A being projects which were primarily Town Council interest and pursued through the relevant Council Committees as part of their objectives. Category B would be in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council or significant partner where the Partnership Committee would take a central responsibility in connection with the relevant Town Council Committee if appropriate. Category C list would be projects of interest to the Town but where realisation would rest with a third party, not Central Bedfordshire Council, and kept under review for appropriate action by the relevant Town Council Committee. Category D projects should be deleted from the list.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Owen in respect of prioritising objectives, using sharper language, adding in additional projects and whether some projects ought to be under the direction of the Policy and Finance Committee. On further discussion, the amendment was withdrawn on the understanding that the standing committees could further review, revise and prioritise “their” projects and that the List would be kept under regular review.

Councillors Owen and Goodchild withdrew their Motion submitted in respect of proposed changes to the List.

On being put to the vote, the Motion proposed by Councillors Palmer and Jones was carried (15 in favour, 1 against).

RESOLVED:

- That the existing Partnership Project List* be revised into categories A B C and D as set out below.
- That those projects listed as Category A which have a sole or overwhelming Town Council interest be pursued through the relevant Town Council Committees as part of their objectives, subject to budget constraints within the 5 Year Financial Plan
- That those listed as Category B where Central Bedfordshire Council would be a necessary and significant Partner, form a Partnership List where the Partnership Committee should take a central responsibility albeit in some cases in conjunction with the relevant Town Council Committee
- That those projects listed as Category C which are of importance to the town but where realisation rests very largely with a third party (not Central Bedfordshire Council) are kept under review for any appropriate action by the relevant Town Council Committee(s).
- That those projects listed as Category D be deleted.
- that any new prospective projects be included in the list under the appropriate Category as and when they are endorsed by Council following a proposal from the relevant Town Council Standing Committee, and /or the Partnership Committee where Central Bedfordshire Council is the significant partner.

276 TOWN COUNCIL FIVE YEAR PLAN & OBJECTIVES 2019-2024

Council received a Motion proposed by Councillor Owen and seconded by Councillor Goodchild in respect of proposed amendments to the Town Council's Five Year Plan and Objectives 2019-2024 (adopted April 2019, revised September 2019 and updated wording agreed July 2021).

Thanks were given to Councillor Owen for his work on this. An amendment was proposed whereby the document would be used as a basis for review by the standing committees with recommendations for any changes brought back to Council. On being put to the vote, this was agreed (15 for and 1 against).

RESOLVED that the revised Five-Year Plan Objectives as submitted by Councillors Owen and Goodchild be supported as a basis for review at main committees and brought subsequently back to Council.

277 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no questions submitted in advance by Councillors.

278 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

There were no changes to appointments to committees

279 APPOINTMENTS TO/REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no changes to appointments to or reports from outside bodies.

The meeting closed at 9.58 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 2021.

Chair

31 JANUARY 2022