

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

SOUTH SIDE WORKING PARTY

MONDAY 7 FEBRUARY AT 1030 HOURS

Present: Councillors M Freeman
R Goodchild
V Harvey
S Jones
F Kharawala (Chair)
T Morris
S Owen
C Palmer (Vice Chair)

Also in attendance: V Cannon, Head of Cultural & Economic
Services
M Jahn, Committee Officer
Paul Brown, Peppercorn Company
Cllr P Snelling

Members of the Public: 3

1/SSWP APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Dodwell and Scott and Sam Caldbeck, Central Bedfordshire Council.

2/SSWP APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor F Kharawala be appointed Chair of South Side Working Party. There were no further nominations and Councillor Kharawala took the Chair.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor F Kharawala Chair of the South Side Working Party.

3/SSWP APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor C Palmer be appointed Vice Chair of South Side Working Party. There were no further nominations.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor C Palmer Vice Chair of the South Side Working Party.

4/SSWP 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 Kharawala and Palmer declared a personal interest as members of the Leighton Buzzard Society.

5/SSWP QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC (3 MINUTES PER PERSON: 15 MINUTES TOTAL)

Three members of the public from the Peppercorn Company attended the meeting to observe and support Paul Brown for agenda item 6.

6/SSWP PEPPERCORN COMPANY

Paul Brown from the Peppercorn Company informed members how the Peppercorn Company had been set up and what their aspirations were.

The Peppercorn centre was a not-for-profit company set up with charitable aims to promote the building of an arts and heritage centre on the south side of the High Street in Leighton Buzzard. A feasibility study had been commissioned by the Peppercorn Company and this demonstrated that the proposed centre could be self-supporting from revenue it generated. Based on the presumptions contained within the feasibility study, an arts and heritage centre could therefore potentially operate without any public subsidy. Discussions had taken place with landowners and professionals and the next step would be to raise money to enable architects drawings to be made to back up the feasibility study.

Questions were raised regarding whether Central Bedfordshire Council had been included in discussions and whether they would be willing to initially move forward with this option. Members agreed that access to the site would be the main obstacle and its location in the overall scheme of the development of the South Side of the High Street. Pedestrian access would also be preferred from the High Street to the proposed centre via alleyways but the crucial element would be vehicular access. These would be complex and costly issues and would need comprehensive investigation.

Members gave in principle support of the group's independent approach and would look into the options for accessing money to fund the architectural drawings which were subsequently confirmed to cost £13,000 plus VAT.

RECOMMENDED to the Policy & Finance Committee to use Earmarked Reserve 970/9026 to meet £7,500 of the overall cost of commissioning architectural drawings (£13,000 plus VAT), on the proviso that the Peppercorn Company provide the balance by whatever means. That this agreement remains in place until 31 July 2022 to enable the Company to raise the funds.

Paul Brown was thanked for attending the meeting and for the comprehensive feasibility study and it was hoped the project could be moved forward through this Working Party and involvement of Central Bedfordshire Council, the landowners and other interested groups.

7/SSWP CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL WORK UPDATE INCLUDING CULTURAL ACTIVITY

No updates were available from Central Bedfordshire Council. A request was made for CBC to provide a bullet point list of what had been achieved to date in establishing the needs analysis of cultural activity across Central Bedfordshire.

8/SSWP GROUP PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Members received and considered a report to provide the objectives of the group and the delivery timetable to achieve them. Councillors also discussed a paper provided by Councillor Owen regarding the objectives needed and that flexibility might be needed to dates and content of meetings to allow progress of the project by this Working Party.

RESOLVED to further develop and maintain a high profile for, and to promote to the relevant bodies and organisations (including by an interchange of views), the opportunities presented by the Land South of the High Street Development site in an effort to encourage and accelerate that development to the benefit of Leighton-Linslade and it's residents.

RECOMMENDED to Policy & Finance to endorse the amended timetable of meeting dates, with flexibility to amend agenda items if and when required.

9/SSWP STAKEHOLDERS

Members considered what stakeholder representatives could be included in the Working Party.

RESOLVED that the suggested memberships were Peppercorn Company, Central Bedfordshire Council, Arts Forum and private landowners, to be invited to meetings as and when appropriate.

10/SSWP EXCLUSION OF 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: Land Ownership.

11/SSWP LAND OWNERSHIP

Councillor Owen spoke to members regarding land ownership of the land South of the High Street and the how to move forward plans for this land and engage with relevant groups and landowners. After discussion, it was agreed that individual confidential meetings could be held between the Chair, Vice Chair and Head of Cultural and Economic Services with the various landowners, to pass on information and include them in discussions. Suggested questions to be raised should be forwarded by Members to the Head of Cultural and Economic Services to help inform discussion at the individual meetings.

RESOLVED that where possible:

- (a) A visual map of all land ownership on land south of the High Street should be sourced.**
- (b) A list of all landowners be prepared.**
- (c) To contact landowners initially by telephone and then to follow up with a letter to introduce the South Side Working Party.**
- (d) To collate all existing reports relative to development on land south of the High Street.**
- (e) To proceed with individual meetings with landowners, to be held in confidence.**

The meeting closed at 1232 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2022.

Chair

7 MARCH 2022