

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2022 AT 7.30 PM

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

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk
 M Jahn, Committee Officer
 Cllr V Harvey
 Cllr F Kharwala (joined remotely)

Members of the public: 0
Members of the press 0

307/PF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor F Kharawala, who joined the meeting remotely but was unable to vote.

308/PF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were declared.

No pecuniary interests were declared and no dispensations were requested.

309/PF QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC (3 minutes per person; maximum 15 minutes)

There were no questions from the public.

310/PF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

(a) The Committee received the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 22 November 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee held on

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

(b) Updates in respect of the previous meeting:

Minute reference 296/PF (Town Centre Report): work was ongoing. The town centre report had been formally presented to the Partnership Committee on 10 February 2022. In addition, the Town Clerk had written to and met with the Central Bedfordshire Director of Place, to welcome her and impress upon her that joint working between Central Bedfordshire Council and the Town Council regarding large projects like Land South of the High Street was imperative to make progress and find solutions.

Minute reference 304/PF (Central Bedfordshire Council Updates): following the meeting regarding the temporary pedestrianisation of the High Street a meeting had now been arranged with Steve Lakin, Central Bedfordshire Council to discuss buses in the High Street and a letter would be sent to portfolio holders in the next few days.

A question was raised regarding town centre car parking and the request for free car parking made by the committee in the autumn. It was confirmed that following a recent consultation, Central Bedfordshire Council had decided to allow free parking on Tuesdays and Saturdays in Duncombe Drive car park between 1.00pm – 6.00pm. In addition, a new tariff of 50 pence for 30 minutes of parking would be introduced.

311/PF **DELEGATED DECISIONS**

The Committee received a record of the decisions taken during the period December 2021 – January 2022 in accordance with the scheme of delegation agreed by Council, with email approval by a majority of committee members.

RESOLVED to note the decisions.

312/PF **MINUTES OF SUB COMMITTEES, TASK GROUPS AND WORKING PARTIES**

The Committee received the draft minutes of the South Side Working Party meeting of 7 February 2022. A number of typographical errors and minor amendments were proposed.

The recommendation to consider revised terms of reference and additional meeting dates was approved.

RESOLVED to approve the revised terms of reference and schedule of meetings for the South Side Working Party.

Discussion took place regarding the recommendation to consider a funding contribution towards the cost of the Peppercorn Company commissioning

plans/architectural drawings for a facility to be potentially located on land south of the High Street. The drawings were intended to augment the existing feasibility study, prior to the Peppercorn Company making a presentation to Central Bedfordshire Council.

Committee members were generally supportive of the initiative, but concerns were expressed regarding contributing public money towards the drawings unless confirmation had been obtained from Central Bedfordshire Council that they considered this a reasonable course of action and that there was no “block” to their consideration of a proposal from the Peppercorn Company based on the premise of a peppercorn rent being charged for a community facility. It was suggested that Central Bedfordshire Council would need to give careful consideration to the viability of any future proposal.

The possibility of transfer of assets to the community by the local authority was raised.

Some committee members expressed a wish to see a development plan for the entire site rather than seeing a piecemeal approach to development on individual parcels of land within the site.

Despite differing opinions and some strong views having been expressed, the Committee generally recognised that there was a wish in the community to drive forward progress in respect of a potential mixed use community facility and that awaiting a development plan for the entire site south of the High Street could cause considerable delay.

It was proposed and seconded that the recommendation be approved, subject to confirmation being obtained from Central Bedfordshire Council that it was prepared to consider any future proposal to be submitted on the premise of a peppercorn rent being charged, as this was integral to the feasibility of the evolving proposal. The Motion was passed (9 in favour).

RESOLVED that, subject to Central Bedfordshire Council providing written assurance that it is prepared to consider, as a request from the Peppercorn Company, the charging of a peppercorn rent for any future mixed use community building that might be located on land within its ownership to the south of the High Street, Leighton Buzzard, the Town Council agrees to meet any shortfall in funds raised by The Peppercorn Company for the commissioning of architectural drawings of a potential community facility, up to a maximum amount of £7,500, to be met from earmarked reserve 970/9026 (Cultural & Economic Services) and that this agreement remains in place until 31 July 2022.

313/PF **COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PLAN**

The Committee received the Committee work plan and objectives for 2021-2022. Members were informed that the CCTV would be installed this week in the parks.

External support was being sought with developing procurement and tendering documentation and it was hoped that this would be brought to the April meeting.

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

314/PF NINE MONTH BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received the nine-month budget monitoring report for the period April – December 2021.

RESOLVED to note the report.

315/PF PAYMENTS

The Committee received schedules of payments for November, December 2021 and January 2022 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 November 2021 dated 10 December 2021 included BACS payments amounting to £97,443.19 (page numbers 2974 - 2986), including petty cash payments to TACTIC of £43.18. A cash book report for November 2021, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

The schedule for December 2021 dated 21 December 2021 included BACS payments amounting to £91,686.07 (page numbers 2987 - 2994) including petty cash payments to the White House of £79.63. The monthly salaries listing for December 2021 amounting to £101,851.35 gross was received. A cash book report for December 2021, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

The schedule for January 2022 dated 19 January 2022 included BACS payments amounting to £144,091.18 (page numbers 2996 - 3009) including petty cash payments to the White House £40.74. The monthly salaries listing for January 2022 amounting to £131,948.18 gross was received. A cash book report for January 2022, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

RESOLVED to receive the schedules of payments for November and December 2021 and January 2022 which had been approved for payment by the Town Clerk and two councillor signatories.

316/PF PRESS PROTOCOL

The Committee received the proposed updated Press and Media Protocol and considered recommending the new document to Council for approval.

RECOMMENDED to Council to approve the updated Press and Media Protocol.

317/PF MODERN.GOV LICENCE RENEWAL FOR 2022-23

The Committee received and considered report for approval of the Modern.gov. licence fee renewal for 2022-23.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To approve renewal of the Modern.gov meetings management software licence from 1 May 2022 at a cost of £8,098.28 from revenue budget line 4395/12.**
- (b) To note the intention to review options for meetings management as part of the whole council software review anticipated for 2022-23.**

318/PF PROTOCOL REVIEW

The Committee received and considered a report with a proposed minor amendment to the Council's Protocol for Leader of the Council and more detailed changes to the Councillor/Officer Protocol to bring it up to date. Both documents had previously been endorsed in 2011 and the review work was part of the policy review schedule previously agreed by Committee for 2021-22.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

- (a) To approve a proposed minor amendment to section 1.5 of the Protocol for Leader of the Council.**
- (b) To approve the revised Councillor/Officer Protocol.**

319/PF FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS

The Committee noted that the accessibility audit reports for Town Council facilities commissioned in the Autumn had now been received and assessed. Many actions were relatively simple and cost effective such as installing handrails and signage. Other proposed improvements were more significant in scope and the intention was to knit recommendations together with a 10-year planned maintenance programme into one overarching, prioritised project plan. Members were informed that a Chartered Building Surveyor had been approached and would attend a scoping meeting to discuss taking this forward. Once the plan was complete it would be presented to the Policy and Finance Committee for its consideration.

RESOLVED to note the report.**320/PF LOCAL AUTHORITY REMOTE/HYBRID MEETINGS**

The Committee received and considered a motion in respect of lobbying Government for the changes in legislation necessary to allow local councils

to hold remote and hybrid meetings.

RESOLVED this Council supports the petition launched by The Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) and Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) on 5 January with regard to remote and hybrid meetings. We agree to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities calling on the Government to change the law to allow councils the flexibility to hold such meetings when they deem appropriate within agreed rules and procedures.

321/PF **INSURANCE RENEWAL**

The Committee received and considered a report to commence the process of inviting tenders for the purposes of insurance provision. The evaluation would be brought back to the June meeting of the Committee.

- (a) To note the Town Council 3-year Insurance agreement is due for renewal in June 2022.**
- (b) To approve the Town Council entering into the process of inviting tenders for the insurance renewal.**
- (c) To nominate Councillor Steve Jones to be present when tenders are opened in accordance with Financial Regulation 11.1 (f).**

322/PF **ANNUAL REVIEW OF MEMBERSHIPS**

The Committee received a report to review the Council's and/or employees memberships of other bodies. It was noted that the 2022-23 annual budget included provision for membership for the Deputy Town Clerk as well as the Town Clerk to the Society of Local Council Clerks in order to maximise benefit from its advice and training offer.

RESOLVED to note the Town Council's and/or employees' memberships of other bodies.

323/PF **ANNUAL REVIEW OF INVESTMENT POLICY**

The Committee received and considered a report to approve and recommend to Council the re-adoption of the Investment Strategy.

RECOMMENDED to Council the re-adoption of the Town Council's Investment Strategy.

324/PF **SIX MONTHLY COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

The Committee received a report in respect of communications, including the Town Council website social media channels, electronic signage and overall communications strategy.

The Committee agreed the website and communications were excellent and offered members of the public a wealth of information provided by the Town

Council and local community organisations.

RESOLVED to note the information regarding Town Council communications.

325/PF BUILDING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR ASTRAL PARK

The Committee received a report regarding the building management system at Astral Park Sports and Community centre and considered the recommendations contained therein.

RESOLVED to endorse the replacement of the BMS controller with a TREND IQ4 web-enabled controller and that funding of the works of £16,134.13 be met from code 111/4100 (Pavilions – Repairs & Maintenance) , to be offset by the £27,000 excess of Pavilions income.

326/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: Land at Vandyke Road and Aware of Fireworks Displays in Financial Year 2022-23.

327/PF LAND AT VANDYKE ROAD (information attached)

The Committee received the report regarding Land at Vandyke Road and agreed it was an excellent report which underpinned previous discussions at Council with representatives of Central Bedfordshire Council.

RESOLVED to note the report.

328/PF AWARD OR FIREWORKS CONTRACT

The Committee received a report regarding the contract to provide Firework Displays at a number of Town Council events in 2022-2023.

RESOLVED to award to Company A (Alchemy Fireworks) the contract to undertake the provision of Firework Displays at the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, Last Night of the Proms & Picnic in the Park and Christmas Lights Switch On Events.

The meeting closed at 8.48 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2022.

Chair

11 APRIL 2022.