

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

31 JANUARY 2022 AT 1930 HOURS

Present Councillors:

G Perham
D Bowater (left 2031 hours)
F Kharawala (Chair)
S Jones
R Berry
V Harvey
S Hemmings
S Owen
P Snelling
A Gray
R Goodchild
T Morris
P Carberry
A Dodwell
M Freeman
D Scott
J Silverstone

Also in attendance:

M Saccoccio (Town Clerk)
S Sandiford (Deputy Town Clerk)
I Haynes (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services)
V Cannon (Head of Cultural & Economic Service)
C Cummins (Finance Officer)
M Jahn (Committee Officer)

Members of the Public: 1

Town Mayor Councillor F Kharawala welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked minister Fr B Minton.

280 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence for the meeting had been received from Councillors K Cursons, B Spurr, C Palmer and R Yates.

281 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.

Councillor R Berry declared an interest in agenda item 12 (Governance review) as Chair of the Central Bedfordshire General Purposes Committee and would abstain from voting on this item.

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

282 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Kharawala advised the Council that after a busy run up to Christmas attending numerous events, January was quieter due to the emergence of the new variant of coronavirus.

Looking forward two events had been organised in the next couple of months, being a Charity Meal on the 23 February and a Quiz on the 11 March. Also the celebration of International Women's Day would take place on the 8 March and the week beginning 7 February was Children's Mental Health Awareness Week and support for these would be greatly appreciated by Members.

283 LEADERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor S Jones, Leader of the Conservative group, informed members how pleased he was to see Leighton-Linslade Helpers represented at the Royal Carol Service at Westminster Abbey. Councillor Jones emphasised how important decisions were to be made at tonight's meeting especially regarding the budget.

Councillor R Goodchild, Leader of the Liberal Democrat group, agreed with Councillor Jones on the importance of the decisions agreed at this meeting especially the budget.

Councillor P Carberry spoke on behalf of the Labour Group to personally thank all Councillors and Officers for their condolences and messages of support given to him.

He also informed the Council that the commemorative bench for Walter (Wally) Randall had been delivered and it was hoped this would be put in place in March. The family was happy with it and with the agreed inscription on the bench.

He also requested with the start of LGBT History Month tomorrow it would be good to see the relevant flag flying above The White House again.

284 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public and business owner in the town centre spoke in support of the pedestrianisation of the High Street. She felt her business had flourished because customers now walked through the town and had time to browse and were more likely to visit the independent businesses and spend their money. She felt the traffic free environment was a huge improvement, being safer for families and more environmentally friendly by reducing fumes and pollution.

The lady was thanked by Councillors for attending the meeting.

285 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Council received the draft minutes of the Council meeting held on 29 November 2021.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 29 November be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

Minute reference 268: negotiations were ongoing with Central Bedfordshire Council and it was noted that their planning application for development of social housing at Vandyke Road had been approved. Council was advised that should the land sale proceed, clarification would be sought regarding legislation in respect of use of capital receipts.

286 2022-2023 RISK REGISTER AND ACTION PLAN

Council received and considered the 2022-2023 Risk Register and Action Plan presented to the Policy and Finance Committee at its informal session on 24 January 2022.

RESOLVED to endorse the Risk Register Action Plan for 2022-2023, to be signed by the Town Mayor and the Responsible Finance Officer.

287 2022 COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER NOMINATIONS

Council received and considered approval of nominations for the 2022 Community Volunteer awards as presented to Policy & Finance at its informal session on 24 January 2022. On being put to a vote the recommendations were carried unanimously. The awards would be presented at the Civic Service on 15 May.

RESOLVED to award the 2022 Community Volunteer Awards to Caryn Fripp and Pamela Brown.

288 PARTNERSHIP PROJECT LIST

Council received the updated Partnership Project List following resolutions made by Council on 29 November 2021. The updated document had had the obsolete objectives deleted, as well as the projects identified 'category A' (overwhelming town council interest), which would now be added to the standing committee work plans for 2022-2023.

RESOLVED to endorse the updated Partnership Project List.

289 BUDGET AND PRECEPT FOR 2022-2023

Council received a report and a proposed budget and precept for the financial year 2022-2023. It was noted that the proposed budget had been reviewed and recommended by Town Council standing committees. Discussion took place in which the pressure of increasing costs was recognised, for both the Council and for

residents. Councillors expressed a wish to ensure that all Town Council services and community projects including community grants and free community events be continued for the benefit of residents, as well as continued investment into community facilities.

It was noted that the possibility of splitting budget line Community Safety 4401/410 into two separate lines, one for the Operation Dodford agreement with Bedfordshire Police and one for other community safety initiatives, had been discussed at the informal meeting of the Community Safety Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee could discuss this further at its April meeting when the Operation Dodford for 2022-23 would also be considered.

On being proposed and seconded, the budget was endorsed, with all expenditure after predicted income to be met via the precept (10 in favour, 1 against, 6 abstentions).

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the report and budgetary recommendations made by the other committees with budgetary responsibilities.**
- (ii) To approve the proposed expenditure budget of £2,691,916 and proposed income budget of £267,662 for the Financial Year 2022-23.**
- (iii) To approve the precepting amount of £2,424,254, which Central Bedfordshire Council will collect on behalf of the Town Council for the Financial Year 2022-23, equating to an increase of £8.76 per year (5.6%) from £155.50 to £164.26 (Band D equivalent) for the Financial Year 2022-23.**
- (iv) To authorise the Town Clerk to submit the precept demand for 2022-2023 to Central Bedfordshire Council.**

290 MEETINGS FROM FEBRUARY 2022

Council received a report to consider the format of meetings/decision making from 1 February 2022 in the context of the Covid pandemic, given the recent changes in Government guidance and gradual reduction of cases of the latest variant.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To endorse a return to face-to-face meetings as per the agreed Calendar of Meetings with effect from 1 February 2022 to allow for decision making in accordance with LGA 1972, with any public health guidance relating to the Covid-19 pandemic to be taken into account (e.g. mitigation measures).**
- (ii) That as set out in Standing Order 15 c) (vii), should conditions change it be deemed not possible to hold a face to face meeting, decisions to be delegated to the Town Clerk with email approval from elected Members.**

291 BOUNDARY REVIEW CONSULTATION

Council received and considered a report prepared by Councillors to submit a formal response to Central Bedfordshire Council in respect of the Leighton Buzzard/Eggington Boundary Review consultation. The report set out the background context of the request for a boundary change as well as focussing on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance on community governance reviews. Council members spoke to express support for the document, the creation of which had been led by Councillor R Goodchild with input from several other elected Members. Endorsement of the submission was proposed by Councillor Goodchild and seconded by Councillor Jones.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That this Council adopts the amended document “Response to Central Bedfordshire Council Community Governance Review – stage 1” and authorises the Town Clerk to issue the same under cover of a letter to Central Bedfordshire Council, urging them to give due consideration to the document, to reverse their recommendation for no change to the boundary and to agree to this Council’s application to change the parish boundary to incorporate the Clipstone Park, Stearn Land, Leedon and the Pastures development area following the stage 2 consultation.
- (ii) That this Council reserves the right to instigate proceedings such as a Judicial Review to challenge any recommendation by Central Bedfordshire Council relating to the above.

292 COMMITTEE MINUTES

- (i) Council received the minutes of the Committee meetings held since 1 October to 24 January 2022.

RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the following Committee meetings held between 1 October 2021 and 24 January 2022:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| a) Planning & Transport Committee | 4 October 2021 |
| b) Planning & Transport Committee | 27 October 2021 |
| c) Planning & Transport Committee | 17 November 2021 |
| d) Policy & Finance Committee | 22 November 2021 |
| e) Grounds & Environmental Committee | 6 December 2021 |
| f) Planning & Transport Committee | 8 December 2021 |

RESOLVED to receive the notes of the informal Cultural & Economic Committee discussion held 13 December 2021.

- (ii) Council gave consideration to the recommendations contained within committee minutes which had not already been dealt with as specific agenda items.

Policy & Finance Committee 22 November 2021 – minute reference 298/PF

RESOLVED to adopt the Flexible Working Policy.

(iii) Two minor amendments to committee minutes in respect of councillor attendance were suggested and would be looked into.

293 DELEGATED DECISIONS

Council received and noted the delegated decisions made on behalf of Council/committees in accordance with the procedure approved by Council since October 2021.

RESOLVED to note the delegated decisions made in the period October 2021 to January 2022 in accordance with the scheme of delegation approved by Council in March 2021 and set out in Standing Order 15(c).

It was noted that two recommendations to Council had been endorsed by the Policy and Finance Committee and these were approved by Council.

RESOLVED to approve the Calendar of Meetings for 2022-2023.

RESOLVED to endorse the continuation of the Older Persons Sub-Committee until the Annual Council Meeting in May 2023.

294 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Councillor V Harvey read out questions submitted in advance of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 27:

“Can we have an update from this Conservative administration/leadership that includes Conservative Councillors, who also have senior positions in Central Bedfordshire Council, on the progress and plans for the High Street which includes an explanation of the lack of delivery as well as clarity on whether this council will actively pursue partnership working with CBC to deliver the best for the town or whether due to choosing not to fund adequate levels of staff it is choosing a blame culture towards CBC and lack of positive cooperation which will harm our town centre.

This includes:

- An update on the plans discussed in light of the levelling up fund of over £50,000 which were eagerly supported cross party by the majority of Councillors and the lack of delivery of those plans and what funds are outstanding and what is planned for them.
- In light of the challenges with the fund why can't the LLTC itself do a deep clean of the high street as was so supported by councillors.

- Why was the Conservative leadership so keen not to spend available money of its own on any benches to support the high street temporary pedestrianisation last year and as a result has waited until the scheme was nearly over before benches were installed to the detriment of disabled residents and those who want to enjoy the town centre.
- Why are the benches placed in such odd positions that make it difficult to engage with others or take part in listening to entertainment?
- Are they aware of the negative impact of the placing of the benches on the shopkeepers and on future partnership working?
- Why has the Conservative leadership been so keen not to adopt the planters in the high street or to find an alternative solution resulting in planters that look very uncared for in the centre of the town?

A written response would be provided to Councillor Harvey and all Members within the required ten working days.

295 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

There were no changes to appointments to committees

296 APPOINTMENTS TO/REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no changes to appointments to outside bodies. A number of brief reports were given by councillors in respect of outside bodies.

297 LEIGHTON BUZZARD TOWN CENTRE TRAFFIC ORDERS

Council received a copy of the officer report being presented to the Central Bedfordshire Council Traffic Management Meeting on 1 February 2022 in respect of the temporary pedestrianisation of the High Street and the temporary traffic order relating to Lake Street. Council received a document analysing the key points of the report and a proposed Motion for consideration from Councillor S Owen, seconded by Councillor R Goodchild.

A number of points were proposed as a representation from the town council to the Traffic Management Meeting on 1 February.

Significant discussion took place with a range of views being expressed and a recognition that this was a complex issue with many factors requiring consideration. There was agreement that further discussion and work was needed in order to develop a viable plan for the future of the High Street which would be beneficial to all users.

RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3 (x) for 15 minutes to allow completion of the agenda item.

Following discussion, it was proposed that each part of the Motion be voted upon separately.

RESOLVED that the Town Council requests the Town Mayor to present the following comments to the Central Bedfordshire Council Traffic Management Meeting on 1 February 2022:

“LEIGHTON BUZZARD TOWN CENTRE TRAFFIC ORDERS (Item 5 on agenda for 1 February)

Leighton-Linslade Town Council:

- a) suggests that a 12 month ETRO be put in place for the High Street, to allow time for consideration of future options.
- b) supports the recommendation to return buses to the High Street, using the existing High Street bus stops, along with the resulting necessary move of the taxis back to Market Square, in order to reverse the drop in bus usage and its effect on High Street footfall
- c) supports the report's intention to review the adequacy of facilities i.e. seating and shelters at both the High Street and West Street bus stops
- d) asks CBC to permit bus usage of the High Street for 5 days a week, i.e. excluding Tuesday and Saturday market days
- e) asks CBC to ensure that the traffic signage in Lake Street during the ETRO is clear and adequate
- f) urges CBC to commit to effective management of public compliance with the new ETRO to avoid the flouting of the current ETRO
- g) proposes to CBC that the two councils work together during a 12 month ETRO trial period to formulate some strategic options for the future functioning and ambience of the High Street (including pedestrianisation options) that can then be consulted upon with local residents and businesses and other interest groups including the bus companies and cyclists.”

Two parts of the proposed Motion were not carried:

- asks CBC to restore **all** bus services other than on Tuesdays and Saturdays to the High Street to avoid passengers, particularly older ones, having to walk between the High Street and West Street stops if they are using local and through bus services for a journey.

- asks that blue badge holders be allowed to use any of the High Street parking places (not just the marked disabled spaces) for the same 12-month trial period.

The meeting closed at 2215 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 JANUARY 2022.

Chair

25 APRIL 2022

DRAFT