

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

25 APRIL 2022 AT 1930 HOURS

Present Councillors: F Kharawala (in the Chair)
K Cursons
G Perham
D Bowater
S Jones
R Berry
V Harvey
S Hemmings
S Owen
A Gray
R Goodchild
T Morris
P Carberry
A Dodwell
M Freeman
C Palmer
P Snelling

Also in attendance: S Sandiford (Deputy Town Clerk)
I Haynes (Head of Grounds and Environmental Services)
M Jahn (Committee Officer)
P Bate (Buzzcycles)

Members of the Public: 4

308 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence for the meeting had been received from Councillors Silverstone, Spurr, Scott and Yates and from the Town Clerk.

309 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made and no dispensations were requested.

310 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Kharawala advised she had attended a number of events recently and thanked all those who had helped to organise the Spring Fair at Pages Park, which had been very well attended and much enjoyed by residents.

311 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor S Jones, Leader of the Conservative group, advised that it was good to see the installation of the inclusive adventure play area at Parson's Close Recreation Ground coming on apace and looked forward to its completion.

Councillor R Goodchild, Leader of the Liberal Democrat group, expressed the wish for dual hatted councillors to lobby at Central Bedfordshire Council for improved bus services in Linslade and for a share of the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund to come to Leighton-Linslade as the largest town in the administrative area.

Councillor P Carberry spoke on behalf of the Labour Group highlighting the upcoming Jubilee Celebrations and urged all councillors to take part in this historical event.

312 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public asked what town councillors were doing to convince the local authority and Clinical Commissioning Group to provide appropriate healthcare for the town's growing population. It was agreed to provide a written response after the meeting.

A councillor asked a question as a member of the public regarding what steps the Leader of the Council was taking to improve liaison between officers and councillors of the Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council.

A councillor asked a question as a member of the public regarding why the Leader of the Council was not lobbying more actively for a health hub to be located on land south of the High Street.

313 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Council received the draft minutes of the Council meetings held on 31 January 2022 and 4 April 2022.

It was requested and agreed that the Motions considered at Council on 4 April 2022 should be included in the minutes even if not resolved, as this was easier than having to cross reference with the agenda.

Councillor Carberry noted the social media comment regarding the meeting on 4 April 2022 and that the lack of appreciation that town councillors were unpaid volunteers could be considered offensive.

Councillor Owen expressed the view that the length of the meeting on 4 April 2022 and the minutes thereof testified to the importance and value of the discussion. He estimated that the cost to residents of not having a health hub within the parish, necessitating travel to hospitals at some distance, was in the region of £150,000.

Minute reference 291 (Boundary review): there was no update from Central Bedfordshire Council as yet following the recent consultation on the parish boundary but it was understood that the next Central Bedfordshire General Purposes Committee meeting would take place on 16 June.

Minute reference 307 (Ukraine): it was noted that work had been started and it was known that refugees from Ukraine were coming to the town.

Minute reference 301 (Policing): Councillor R Goodchild spoke to withdraw the Liberal Democrat group's mutual work with the Conservative group on this matter. The Liberal Democrat group would continue to lobby on this subject.

Minute reference 302 (Health hub): it was reported that Central Bedfordshire Council was commissioning another consultant's report on potential uses of land south of the High Street.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meetings held on 31 January 2022 and 4 April 2022 (subject to an update to include all proposed Motions) be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

314 BUZZCYCLES STRAGTEGY

By invitation, Peter Bate of Buzzcycles attended the meeting to present the draft Buzzcycles strategy "Cycling: Everyone's First Choice". Endorsement of the strategy had been recommended to Council by the Ouzel Valley Park Steering Group at its meeting on 2 March 2022. The strategy included vision, rationale, objectives and outputs in respect of cycling.

Following the presentation, a number of points were made including the need for maintenance of roads and cycle paths, the necessity of reducing carbon emissions and the question of funding for cycling initiatives and infrastructure. It was anticipated that some funding would be available from the Department of Transport following the publication of the Government's Gear Change strategy but that the local authority would be responsible for highways maintenance.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To endorse the Leighton Buzzcycles strategy Cycling: Everyone's First Choice and to ask Buzzcycles to bring forward specific proposals for schemes the Town Council could assist with to the Ouzel Valley Park steering group and from there to the Planning and Transport Committee.**
- (b) To welcome the development by Central Bedfordshire Council of a Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan and to look forward to further consultation on this document.**
- (c) To press Central Bedfordshire Council for a follow-up discussion to the informal S106 councillor workshop held in September 2020 in which Central Bedfordshire officers stated a willingness to talk to the Town Council about the potential "re-destinating" of "unallocated" S106 monies.**

315 CEMETERY SERVICE EQUIPMENT PURCHASE

Council received a report to consider the purchase of larger sets of grave shoring equipment to allow for greater flexibility in expanding the size of graves which could be excavated.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To note the report**
- (b) To endorse the purchase of the equipment required using the Cemetery Earmarked Reserve 9007/950 with available funds of £36,920.00.**

316 COMMUNITY SAFETY AND OPERATION DODFORD

Council considered two recommendations from the Community Safety Sub Committee held on 6 April 2022. On being put to the vote, the recommendations were both agreed unanimously.

On discussion about the potential use of the earmarked reserve, it was noted that the Community Safety Sub Committee had received a legal topic note on the powers and duties of parish councils in relation to crime in their area and guidance on approaches and systems which could be supported within this legal framework.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the underspend from the Community Safety revenue budget 4401/410 for 2021-22 be transferred to the Community Safety earmarked reserve 9042/920 as part of the year end accounting process.**
- (b) To approve the Operation Dodford section 92 grant agreement for 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023, noting the reduction in maximum expenditure from £40,000 to £30,000.**

317 COMMITTEE MINUTES

- (i) Council received the draft and approved minutes of the Committee meetings held between 1 February and 11 April 2022.**

RESOLVED to receive the minutes of the following meetings:

- (a) Partnership Committee 10 February 2022**
- (b) Planning & Transport Committee 16 February 2022**
- (c) Policy & Finance Committee 28 February 2022**
- (d) Grounds & Environmental Committee 7 March 2022**
- (e) Planning & Transport Committee 9 March 2022**
- (f) Cultural & Economic Committee 14 March 2022**
- (g) Planning & Transport Committee 30 March 2022**
- (h) Policy & Finance Committee 11 April 2022**

(ii) Council gave consideration to the recommendations contained in committee minutes which had not already been dealt with as specified below.

RESOLVED to approve the updated Press and Media Protocol.

RESOLVED:

(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.

RESOLVED to re-adopt the Town Council's Investment Strategy.

RESOLVED to endorse that remaining unused funds from budget lines 104/4014 (projects) and 104/4300 (equipment) be carried forward into earmarked reserve 970/9020 – TACTIC.

RESOLVED to carry forward unspent funds Buzzard Trails (101/4509), into earmarked reserves 970//9018 and to create a single earmarked reserves budget line for Buzzard Trails to ensure adequate funds are available for the upkeep of the trail assets and to carry forward any unspent funds from Christmas Lights (101/4412) into earmarked reserves 970/9044 to ensure adequate funds are available for infrastructure and ongoing delivery of the scheme.

RESOLVED to carry forward into unspent funds from Community Access Defibrillator (101/4554) into earmarked reserves 970/9022.

RESOLVED to endorse the Health and Safety Policy following its annual review.

RESOLVED to approve that changes be made to appropriate documents including the Terms of Reference for standing committees and the Scheme of Delegation, to reflect authority to approve expenditure from earmarked reserves appropriate to that committee's responsibilities, for activities and projects for which there was specific Council/committee resolution, subject to any legal restrictions.

(iii) Councillor questions or comments on committee minutes were invited.

Policy & Finance Committee meeting of 11 April 2022, minute reference 333/PF (Minutes of Health Services Task and Finish Group meeting held 4 March 2022): three councillors spoke in respect of health services.

Councillor Snelling advised he had asked a question on the health hub at Central Bedfordshire's Council meeting last week and was likely to put forward a Motion to its next meeting in respect of S106 developer contributions for healthcare. It was understood that the next update to the Central Bedfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board would be in July.

Councillor Owen advised that he had new information in respect of local GP practice capacity and S106 developer contributions for healthcare and would likely submit a Motion to the next Council meeting unless a rapid meeting of the Health Services Task and Finish Group could be convened in the meantime.

Councillor Harvey spoke of the current crisis relating to loneliness and mental health and the need for a centrally located health hub, for which she was lobbying at Central Bedfordshire Council.

318 FIVE YEAR PLAN

Council received and considered recommendations from standing committees in respect of the Five-Year Plan and Objectives, following a review process agreed by Council last November. Recommendations from standing committees were to retain all objectives but to amend the wording of several.

Councillor Owen repeated a view that the plan was not fit for purpose as objectives had not been prioritised and the plan contained some items which had been completed, some which were not important and some which were not specific.

The recommendations for amendments to the Five Year Plan and Objectives from the standing committees were proposed and seconded. On being put to the vote, the amendments were agreed (10 in favour, 6 against and 1 abstention).

RESOLVED to endorse the amendments to the current Five Year Plan and Objectives as recommended by the Policy & Finance Committee on 11 April 2022.

319 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Councillor Goodchild introduced a Motion, seconded by Councillor Owen, regarding the development of a Neighbourhood Plan: *That the Council resolves to develop a Neighbourhood Plan and to convene an extraordinary Council meeting to review the effect on officers' workloads and priorities and to agree a group to progress the plan.*

Councillor Goodchild referenced the presentation by a consultant on neighbourhood plans in September 2021 and that these were powerful tools for local communities. The national picture was that town centres were likely to change over the next decade and the land south side of the High Street was an important factor, reflected by the town council having set up the South Side working party to pro-actively look at options for the site. It was felt that the costs of developing a plan could be managed.

Councillors Goodchild and Owen expressed frustrations with the current S106 developer contributions process, which seemed to lack the involvement of the town council or the community and which was failing to deliver the facilities and infrastructure it was felt were needed for the town. It was felt that a Neighbourhood Plan seemed the best solution to improve this.

Councillor Harvey suggested that further to the presentation made by consultant Neil Homer in September 2021, Neighbourhood Plan grant funding could potentially be used for evidence gathering and community engagement, even if the process did not lead to development of an actual Neighbourhood Plan.

No further discussion took place. On being put to the vote, the motion was not carried (6 in favour, 11 against).

RESOLVED that the Motion not be carried.

320 FUEL POVERTY

Councillor Owen introduced a motion in respect of fuel poverty: *that the Town Clerk be asked urgently to investigate and report back what role, if any, this Council might take in helping to combat fuel poverty in Leighton-Linslade.*

A number of councillors expressed concern for the impact of this matter on residents and agreed that it should be explored whether there was any role for the town council in signposting people to information or co-ordinating assistance. In recognition of pressure on officers' time it was agreed that councillors should lead this investigation on an informal basis and to seek information from the local authority and local community organisations such as Citizens Advice.

RESOLVED that several town councillors be asked urgently to investigate and report back what role, if any, this Council might take in helping to combat fuel poverty in Leighton-Linslade.

321 EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING HELD 4 APRIL 2022

Councillor S Owen introduced a Motion, seconded by Councillor Goodchild, in respect of the recent extraordinary meeting of Council: *That this Council welcomes the outcomes on six important matters from the 4 April Council meeting i.e. the decisions regarding:*

- *Delivery of the Police Crime Commissioner's promise urgently to deliver a Policing Contact Hub in the centre of town*
- *Pressing the Central Bedfordshire Council Portfolio Holder (again) to engage with the Town Council regarding the future usage of the High Street*
- *Pressing Central Bedfordshire Council to share their "Schools for the Future" plan with Leighton-Linslade parents and the wider community*
- *Resolving to receive suggestions from the Town Clerk regarding means of regular consultation about local bus services*
- *Pressing Central Bedfordshire Council for updates on the current A505 Southern Bypass safety review*
- *Resolving to investigate its possible role supporting refugees from the Ukraine conflict*

and asks the Town Clerk to make these standing items for report in the weekly councillors' newsletter.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor S Jones and seconded by Councillor C Palmer to the introductory wording of the Motion and to the outcome, suggesting instead that reports be made back to committees so the information was in the public domain. On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried (9 in favour, 7 against, 1 abstention).

RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3(x) for a maximum of 10 minutes.

A further amendment to the Motion was then proposed by Councillor Harvey, that consideration be given to holding additional committee meetings to cover these items due to insufficient time at present. On being put to the vote, this amendment was not carried (1 in favour, 14 against, 2 abstentions).

The substantive motion as amended was then put to the vote and carried (10 in favour, 6 against, 1 abstention).

RESOLVED:

While unconvinced of the need for the calling of an Extraordinary Council Meeting and of the justification to incur the expense and additional Officer time associated with it, in view of the availability of normal Committee Meetings and processes to have achieved the same objectives in a timely and efficient manner, this Council welcomes the outcomes on six important matters from the 4 April Council meeting i.e. the decisions regarding:

- ***Delivery of the Police Crime Commissioner's promise urgently to deliver a Policing Contact Hub in the centre of town***
- ***Pressing the Central Bedfordshire Council Portfolio Holder (again) to engage with the Town Council regarding the future usage of the High Street***
- ***Pressing Central Bedfordshire Council to share their "Schools for the Future" plan with Leighton-Linslade parents and the wider community***
- ***Resolving to receive suggestions from the Town Clerk regarding means of regular consultation about local bus services***
- ***Pressing Central Bedfordshire Council for updates on the current A505 Southern Bypass safety review***
- ***Resolving to investigate its possible role supporting refugees from the Ukraine conflict***

and reaffirms that these items will continue to be kept under close review by the relevant Council Committees with reports back to full Council as appropriate.

322 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

No questions had been received.

323 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

There were no changes to appointments to committees.

324 APPOINTMENTS TO/REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

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

The meeting closed at 22:06 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 APRIL 2022.

Chair

16 MAY 2022

DRAFT