

## LEISURE FACILITIES IN LEIGHTON-LINSLADE

### *The Issue and Motion*

Central Bedfordshire Council are consulting until 22 July on their proposal to invest £25 million in a new leisure facility on land to the east of Leighton-Linslade (albeit outside the current town boundary). It is stated that, once the proposed leisure centre is complete and ready for use, the existing Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre in Linslade to the west of the town centre would be closed.

The new Leisure Centre is to be welcomed and will be a very positive addition to the facilities available to the town and surrounding area. However, there remains the question of the future of the Tiddenfoot site, including the detrimental impacts of its potential closure for many people and, should it be closed, the alternative uses for the site. These are extremely significant matters.

In the light of this, the following motion is put before Council:

**That Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre and the land surrounding it be nominated by Leighton-Linslade Town Council for inclusion in Central Bedfordshire's Register of Assets of Community Value.**

### **Background**

Part 5, Chapter 3 of the Localism Act 2011 requires District and Unitary Councils to maintain a list of assets of Community Value, which can be either land or buildings, nominated by local community groups or parish councils. An asset of community value is defined as such if its main use has recently been, or it is presently used to further the social wellbeing or social interest of the local community and could do so in the future. The Localism Act 2011 states that social interests include cultural, recreational and sporting interests.

If a nomination is accepted, local groups will be given time to come up with a bid for the asset, if and when it is to be sold. The right to bid only applies when an asset's owner decides to dispose of it. There is no compulsion on the owner to sell it, and, if and when they sell it, they may still sell to whomever they choose.

However, if the Local Authority decides a nomination meets the necessary criteria, it must enter it on its list of assets of community value where it will remain for five years unless sold following a moratorium period being triggered. A moratorium will be applied when a listed asset is put up for sale. There is an initial six-week period during which a community group may express an interest in bidding. If a group does, a six month moratorium begins from the point at which the asset is put up for sale to allow a bid to be put together. After a moratorium period has ended, another one cannot begin for a further twelve months. There is no community right to buy the asset, only to bid. Disposal of an asset as a "going concern" is understood not to trigger the moratorium period.

To date, nomination of assets of community value has been widely used to attempt to safeguard facilities such as local pubs in particular. The current Central Bedfordshire Register appears to have two assets included within Leighton-Linslade, though both have seen their five year period from registration expire – Bossard House and land adjacent to 41 The Paddocks in Linslade.

Regulation 6 of the 2012 Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations sets out the content of a community nomination:

- A description of the nominated land including its proposed boundaries
- A statement of all the information which the nominator has in relation to the current occupants of the land and the names and addresses of those holding a freehold or leasehold estate in the land
- The nominator's reason for thinking that the responsible authority should conclude that the land is of community value, and
- Evidence that the nominator is eligible to make a community nomination.

It would appear from the above (much of which is derived from a House of Commons Research Briefing) that the nomination by the Town Council of Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre and immediate surrounds owned by Central Bedfordshire for inclusion in the Authority's Register of Assets of Community Value should be a relatively straightforward process. Only in the event of the proposed sale of these assets (not as going concerns), which, of course, may well not occur in any event, would the moratorium and bidding opportunity for community groups noted above come forward. In such circumstances, it does not mean that the Town Council would bid for the assets proposed for sale (though this could be considered) but it would ensure that the Town Council (and other community groups) would have early information on any proposed sale and be able to consider whether to respond to enable Tiddenfoot to continue as a community facility in one form or another, so long as there was a realistic prospect of reuse by the community in the following five years.

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