

**LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**MONDAY, 20 JUNE 2022 AT 7.30 PM**

Present: Councillors            S Jones (Chair)  
   A Dodwell  
   C Palmer  
   R Berry  
   G Perham  
   M Freeman  
   D Scott  
   R Goodchild  
   S Owen  
   D Bowater (substituting for F Kharawala)

Also in attendance:            M Saccoccio, Town Clerk  
   C Cummins, Finance Officer (remotely)  
   S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk  
   M Jahn, Committee Officer  
   S Wilbur (Microshade VSM) (remotely)

Members of the public:        0

**344/PF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Morris and Councillor Kharawala (substituted by Councillor Bowater).

**345/PF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Palmer declared a personal interest as a member of the Friends of Leighton-Linslade in Bloom (referenced in the payments and budget monitoring reports).

No pecuniary interests were declared and no dispensations were requested.

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

There were no questions from the public.

**347/PF APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR FOR 2022-2023**

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Dodwell be appointed Vice Chair of the Committee for 2022-2023. There were no further nominations.

**RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Dodwell Vice Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee for the municipal year 2022-2023.**

**348/PF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

(a) The Committee received the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 11 April 2022

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee held on 11 April 2022 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.**

(b) Updates in respect of the previous meeting:

Minute reference 333/PF (Minutes of Sub Committees, Task Groups and Working Parties): Minute reference 103/CS Community Safety Budget: the Committee sought confirmation as to whether the town council could legally make a contribution to a local policing hub. The relevant legal topic note would be circulated for clarification.

**349/PF DELEGATED DECISIONS**

The Committee received a record of the decisions taken since the last committee meeting on behalf of the Policy and Finance Committee in accordance with the scheme of delegation agreed by Council, with email approval by a majority of committee members.

**RESOLVED to note the approved delegated decisions.**

**350/PF SUB COMMITTEES, TASK & FINISH GROUPS & WORKING PARTIES**

(a) The Committee received the draft minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 27 April 2022 and subsequent delegated decisions.

**RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 27 April 2022 and subsequent delegated decisions.**

(b) The Committee received the draft minutes of the Grants & Awards Sub-Committee held on 9 May 2022 and considered the recommendation therein.

**RESOLVED to create an earmarked reserve to ringfence the funding due to be returned by Central Bedfordshire Inspiring Music for the "Time Machine" project which had not been able to proceed due to Covid, to allow a future suitable project to take place.**

(c) The Committee received the draft minutes of the South Side Working party meetings held on 21 April 2022 and 23 May 2022 and the recommendations therein would be considered during agenda item 8.

**RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the South Side Working Party held on 21 April 2022.**

Minute reference 33/SSWP (Stakeholder Updates): – the wording in paragraph 4 of this item was questioned and would be revisited prior to approval at the next meeting of the group.

**RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the South Side Working Party held on 23 May 2022.**

(d) The Committee undertook the annual review of terms of reference for Sub-Committees, Task and Finish groups and working parties and it was agreed that:

- (i) Grants and Awards – no changes.
- (ii) Disciplinary, Grievance and Appeals – no changes.
- (iii) Community Safety - to add reference to CCTV and the aspiration to establish a local policing hub.
- (iv) Personnel – no changes
- (v) South Side Working Party – the committee agreed that the purpose of the group should be reworded (to be agreed later by committee) and the membership reduced from 10 to 7, with group leaders to agree the revised membership.

**RESOLVED to approve and amend the terms of reference for Sub-Committees, Task and Finish Groups and working parties as set out above.**

**351/PF SOUTH SIDE OF THE HIGH STREET**

Further to the recommendations made by the South Side working party at its meetings on 21 April 2022 and 23 May 2022, the Committee received a report on how to secure a feasibility study for a civic/community development on land south of the High Street as well as the possibility of commissioning a social infrastructure needs analysis.

No decision was reached on the two recommendations, as the discussion focussed on frustrations with the delay in bringing forward development of the site by Central Bedfordshire Council as majority landowner. It was generally agreed that all councillors felt frustrated on this matter but differing views were expressed about how to move forward, ranging from waiting for a holistic overall plan for the site arising from updating of the 2012 Central Bedfordshire development brief, to taking the initiative and holding a public consultation based on existing documents and the possible creation of an indicative masterplan by the town council, to seek views and gather an evidence base.

It was agreed to write to Central Bedfordshire Council again as a matter of urgency to seek answers regarding when the 2012 development brief would be revisited, what Central Bedfordshire's indicative timescale/roadmap for development on the site was and whether a feasibility study/business case for a civic/community building could be funded from S106 developer contributions allocated for town centre purposes. A response would be

requested before 25 July 2022 when the matter would be reconsidered at the next meeting of this committee.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) To note the report.
- (b) To request the Town Clerk to write to the Central Bedfordshire Council Leader, Chief Executive and relevant Portfolio Holders (copied to all nine Leighton-Linslade ward councillors) to seek answers to the above questions, to be received before the next meeting of the committee on 25 July 2022.

**352/PF PAYMENTS**

The Committee received schedules of payments for March 2022, April 2022 and May 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 March 2022 dated 13 April 2022 included BACS payments amounting to £244,518.73 (page numbers 3205-3038), including petty cash payments to Town Council of £77.40 and salaries of £119,605.57. A cash book report for March 2022, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

The schedule for April 2022 dated 3 May 2022 included BACS payments amounting to £299,970.81 (page numbers 3039-3054) including petty cash payments to TACTIC of £99.17 and Town Council of £75.13 and salaries of £103,375.15. A cash book report for April 2022, including details of all direct debit payments was also received.

The schedule for May 2022 dated 10 June 2022 included BACS payments amounting to £198,401.78 (page numbers 3060-3070) including petty cash payments to the town council of £187.48 and salaries of £102,509.79. A cash book report for May 2022, including details of all direct debit payments was also received.

**RESOLVED to receive the schedules of payments for March, April and May 2022 which had been approved for payment by the Town Clerk and two councillor signatories.**

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

The Committee received the committee objectives and work plan for 2022-23.

Members were advised that Facilities improvements proposals were anticipated for the July meeting and that external support was being sourced in respect of a data protection audit and work on procurement and tendering documentation.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

### **354/PF INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT - FINAL UPDATE 2021-2022**

The Committee received the final internal audit report for 2021-2022 and noted that no issues had been identified. It was recognised that the Council was continuing to operate a sound, pro-active approach to risk management and corporate governance issues, together with the development and management of effective internal controls and procedural documentation. The internal auditor had completed the internal audit section of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

The Committee expressed thanks to officers for another excellent report.

**RESOLVED to note the internal audit report (final update) 2021-2022.**

### **355/PF FINANCIAL CONTROLS & RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Committee received a report in respect of the annual review of risk management and internal controls. A review of various elements of internal controls had been undertaken as well as a review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Contract thresholds needed to be updated for 2022-23 and in addition, it was proposed to increase expenditure authorisation levels to ensure the smooth running of council operations.

A request was made whether Councillors could have access to the Business Continuity Plan and it was confirmed this could be accessed at the White House.

It was confirmed that the Fuel Card Policy had been reviewed by the internal auditor and found fit for purpose.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) To note the report.**
- (b) To endorse amendments to the Town Council's credit card procedure including an increase in overall expenditure limits and officer authorisation limits.**
- (c) To endorse minor amendments to the Town Council's Risk Management and Internal Controls statement.**
- (d) As set out in Financial Regulation 6.6, to endorse the continued use of variable Direct Debit payments for supply of services such as utilities (to be authorised by two signatories and payments reported to committee).**
- (e) As set out in financial Regulation 6.7, to endorse the continued use of BACS or CHAPS payments as deemed appropriate (to be authorised by two signatories and payments report to committee).**

**RECOMMENDED to Council to endorse minor amendments to Standing Orders in respect of public contract thresholds, as set out.**

**RECOMMENDED to Council to endorse amendments to Financial Regulations as set out, including an increase to officer expenditure authorisation thresholds for operational reasons.**

**356/PF ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT & STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2021-2022**

The Committee received an information report in respects of town council finances for the year ended 31 March 2022 and considered the recommendations contained therein. Despite the ongoing impact of Covid, income for the year had exceeded forecast and coupled with prudent expenditure, resulted in a surplus for the year. It was recommended that this be ringfenced for a number of future projects and likely future costs.

**RECOMMENDED to Council for approval of the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022, noting the transfer of £281,279 into earmarked reserves (including £5,000 to I.T, £5,000 to market stall repair/replacement, £10,000 to climate emergency and £10,000 to consultation for town facilities).**

**RECOMMENDED to Council that in respect of the 2021-22 surplus of £101,389 currently in the general reserve, the following actions be undertaken:**

- (i) Transfer of £26,958 into the existing Precept Support Fund earmarked reserve.**
- (ii) Transfer of £3,962 into the existing Elections earmarked reserve.**
- (iii) Transfer of £40,000 into the existing Grounds Maintenance earmarked reserve.**
- (iv) Transfer of £25,000 into a new earmarked reserve for the funding of a Community Agent in 2023-2025 (further to the recommendation made by the Cultural & Economic Committee on 13 June 2022)**
- (v) Transfer of an additional £5,000 to market stall repair and replacement due to increasing demand for market pitches.**

**RECOMMENDED to Council that Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (the Annual Governance Statement) for the year ended 31 March 2022 be approved and signed.**

**RECOMMENDED to Council that Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (the Annual Governance Statement) for the year ended 31 March 2022 be approved and signed.**

**357/PF ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022**

The Committee received the draft Town Council Annual Report 2021-2022. The report followed a more abbreviated format and contained key highlights from the year.

**RECOMMENDED to Council to approve the annual report for 2021-2022.**

**358/PF TOWN MAYOR'S ACCOUNTS 9/2020 - 5/2022**

The Committee received the full accounts for the Town Mayor's Charity Fund for the period Sep 2020 – May 2022. A total of £8,700.17 had been raised for Councillor Kharawala's chosen charities of Home-Start Central Bedfordshire, CHUMS Charity, Macmillan Cancer Support and Freddie and Friends.

The Committee expressed gratitude and appreciation to Councillor Kharawala for her efforts throughout the year in raising funds for these worthy causes.

**RESOLVED to note the Town Mayor's accounts for the period September 2020 – May 2022.**

**359/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: insurance contract.**

**360/PF TOWN COUNCIL INSURANCE CONTRACT**

The Committee received a report to seek endorsement to award a contract for the Town Council Insurance provider for a period of 3 years.

**RESOLVED to approve entering into a three-year insurance contract with Zurich at a premium of £17,209.79 per annum, to be met from the revenue budget 12/4382.**

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 20 JUNE 2022.

Chair

25 JULY 2022