

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

25 JULY 2022 AT 1930 HOURS

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

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio (Town Clerk)
S Sandiford (Deputy Town Clerk)
I Haynes (Head of Grounds & Environmental Services)
Cllr V Harvey

Members of the public: 2

361/PF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors F Kharawala and T Morris.

362/PF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Harvey declared a personal interest as a member of the South East Area Arts Council.

No pecuniary interests were declared and no dispensations were requested.

363/PF QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public.

364/PF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee received the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 20 June 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee held on 20 June 2022 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

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

(a) The Committee received the draft minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 4 July 2022.

RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee meeting held on 4 July 2022.

RECOMMENDED to Council to approve the Learning & Development Policy and Procedure and the Councillor Learning & Development Policy.

(b) The Committee received the draft minutes of the Community Safety Sub-Committee held on 11 July 2022. A brief verbal update was given regarding liaison with Bedfordshire Police and Central Bedfordshire Council over antisocial behaviour issues.

RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Community Safety Sub-Committee meeting held on 11 July 2022.

366/PF LEIGHTON BUZZARD MARKET CROSS

By invitation, two representatives of the registered charity Leighton Buzzard Townlands Trust gave the Committee a presentation on their work to ensure the conservation of the historic Market Cross, a scheduled Ancient Monument subject to the highest level of protections. The Trust had commissioned an expert architect to undertake an initial report and geological assessment, which would eventually inform a programme of conservation work aimed at preventing any further deterioration in the condition of the monument.

Costs for conservation works were as yet unknown but could be significant and the Town Council was asked to consider supporting the Trust in sourcing external funding for these important works. It was agreed that the Market Cross was a symbol of the town, telling its history since the fifteenth century and should be preserved if possible.

It was agreed to discuss this further at the next meeting. Members of the Trust were thanked for their presentation.

367/PF LAND SOUTH OF THE HIGH STREET

a) Further to discussion at the previous meeting, the Committee received draft revised wording for the purpose of the South Side Working Party for consideration.

RESOLVED to approve the revised wording regarding the purpose of the South Side Working Party as set out in its Terms of Reference, as follows:

To continue to represent and share the views of the local community, businesses and interest groups in pressing the landowning interests to work collaboratively in the timely and early delivery of this important town centre site. To press Central Bedfordshire Council as the majority landowner and policy maker to deliver solutions to address evidenced local needs and in doing so, unlock the development potential for this site and the wider town centre.

b) The Committee received correspondence dated 25 July 2022 from Councillor K Collins of Central Bedfordshire Council in respect of land south of the High Street. Committee members expressed concern at the timescales and limitations of the work outlined in the letter and disappointment at the lack of comment regarding community needs in the town. It was agreed that the use of S106 monies for a feasibility study/social infrastructure needs analysis should be queried further as this was not believed to be a duplication of current work but an entirely different proposition, and for any update to be brought back to the next meeting.

RESOLVED to note the correspondence and to authorise the Town Clerk to reply on behalf of the Council.

c) The Committee received a report from Councillor R Goodchild regarding the proposal to instruct a consultant to develop up to four high level masterplan options looking at varying potential uses and concepts for land south of the High Street. The timescale was approximately five weeks and the cost would be £10,200 plus VAT plus £320 for a digital Ordnance Survey base to work from.

It was felt that an independent, professional view was needed on potential options for the site but agreed that more evidence might then be required to clarify community requirements and priorities. In accordance with the report and the recommendations set out therein, committee unanimously agreed the following:

RESOLVED:

i) To use the £10,000 from the ear-marked reserve for consultation on town facilities as resolved by Council on 27th June 2022 (9056/920) and draw down up to £570 from General reserves to meet the outstanding balance in respect of carrying out a scoping master plan exercise on land south of the High Street.

ii) To request the Town Clerk to formally advise landowners of the Town Council's intention to commission a professional consultancy to develop an indicative master plan involving their land.

368/PF PAYMENTS

The Committee received schedules of payments for June 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 June 2022 dated 8 July 2022 included BACS payments amounting to £253,242.90 (page numbers 3075-3085), including petty cash payments to Tactic of £96.84 and salaries of £104,932.93. A cash book report for June 2022, including details of all direct debit payments, was also received.

RESOLVED to receive the schedules of payments for invoices received in June 2022, paid in July 2022.

369/PF COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PLAN

The Committee received the Committee Work Plan and Objectives for 2022-2023.

RESOLVED to note the Committee Work Plan and Objectives for 2022-23.

370/PF FIRST QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received the budget monitoring report for the first quarter: 1 April – 30 June 2022. It was noted that utilities bills were paid by direct debit and although sometimes based on meter readings, these were sometimes estimates which then later resulted in credits back to the council. Utilities contracts were fixed but it was suggested that opportunities to move at a later date to a greener provider or to source grants to improve sustainability of town council buildings be investigated where possible.

RESOLVED to note the report.

371/PF RISK REGISTER ACTION PLAN MID-YEAR UPDATE

The Committee received a mid-year update report regarding the Risk Register action plan for 2022-2023. Actions for the current year were mostly underway and in progress. It was agreed that the risk of extreme heat should be added to the next year's Risk Register given the recent very high temperatures which had potential to recur in future.

RESOLVED to note the report.

372/PF INSURANCE CLAIMS

In accordance with its terms of reference, the Committee received a report outlining insurance claims for the period June 2021 – June 2022.

RESOLVED to note the report regarding the Town Council insurance policy and claims for the annual period 30 June 2021 to 29 June 2022.

373/PF CONSULTATION PROCEDURE

The Committee received a proposed revision of its 2011 Consultation Procedure.

RESOLVED to approve the revised Consultation Procedure.

374/PF TIMELINE FOR 2023-24 BUDGET SETTING PROCESS

The Committee received and considered a report with a proposed timescale for the 2023-2024 budget setting process.

RESOLVED to note the proposed timetable for the 2023-2024 budget setting process.

375/PF FLAG PROTOCOL

The Committee received and considered a report to seek endorsement of the proposed flag protocol for the White House.

RESOLVED to endorse the Flag Protocol.

376/PF CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE CONSULTATION ON ACCESSING SERVICES IN THE DUNSTABLE AREA

The Committee received a report to advise of a current consultation being undertaken by Central Bedfordshire Council regarding access to services such as Customer Service and Housing. It was proposed that access would be primarily online, with a “pod” provided in Dunstable for those without internet access at home and the potential for face to face meetings still to take place when necessary at venues such as the Library. The Registrar service would remain unchanged at twice per week in Leighton Buzzard.

The Committee was advised that a small but consistent number of residents did come into the White House on a regular basis in order to speak to a person and that these were mainly residents without the ability or equipment to access services online. The Committee was in agreement that a formal response be submitted requesting a continued in-person presence in Leighton Buzzard or if this was not possible, the ability for residents to access CBC’s reporting systems via Library computers or via a pod in the Leighton Buzzard library.

RESOLVED to submit a consultation response seeking a continued face to face presence for Central Bedfordshire Council services in Leighton Buzzard.

377/PF FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS

The Committee received a report with an update of work carried out thus far in terms of ongoing improvements to the White House building and town council owned building assets.

RESOLVED:

(a) To note the report.

(b) To approve expenditure of £8,000 from the Facilities Improvements earmarked reserve (£86,952 available) for the purposes of creating a planned maintenance schedule.

378/PF HENRY FINCH MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN

The Committee received and considered a report for funding of the partial refurbishment of the Henry Finch Memorial Fountain, further to discussion at the Grounds & Environmental Services Committee meeting held on 6 June 2022.

RESOLVED to endorse the funding of the partial refurbishment of the Henry Finch Memorial Fountain by allocating a maximum budget of £12,000 to be met from Grounds and Environmental Services Earmarked Reserve (9024/950) with available funding of £40,026.00.

379/PF BOUNDARY REVIEW DECISION

The Committee received a report to consider potential options following the recommendation by Central Bedfordshire's General Purposes Committee that no change be made to the Leighton Buzzard/Eggington boundary, which had now subsequently been endorsed by Central Bedfordshire Council at its meeting held on 21 July 2022.

It was agreed to write to Central Bedfordshire Council expressing disappointment with the process and outcome, querying the lack of acknowledgement of the Town Council's response to the first stage of consultation, querying the lack of publication of reasons for the decision and expressing concerns over predetermination. In addition, clarification would be sought regarding the format/process of the agreed "12 month check in" following the decision.

RESOLVED to note the report and to authorise the Town Clerk to write to Central Bedfordshire Council as set out above.

380/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.

381/PF VANDYKE ROAD UPDATE

The Committee received an update report in respects of the sale of a small parcel of land at Vandyke Road to Central Bedfordshire Council and setting out the three options permitted by law for use of capital receipts. It was agreed by Committee that options be considered for capital expenditure rather than drawing down existing borrowings.

RESOLVED:

(i) To note the report.

(ii) To endorse that the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee consider proposed projects for capital expenditure from capital receipts, with at least a proportion of funds used for improvements in the Vandyke Road area. Any recommendations to be taken to Council for authorisation.

The meeting closed at 22:00 hours.

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

CHAIR

26 SEPTEMBER 2022