



# LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

## Council

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**Date:** 10 October 2022

**Title:** Future of the High Street

**Purpose of the Report:** To review the meeting held with the Executive Member for Community Services – Central Bedfordshire Council and to consider a formal response.

**Contact Officer:** Mark Saccoccio – Town Clerk

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<b>Corporate Objective/s</b>	LLTC Five Year Plan – Objectives: To continue to support a vibrant town through partnership working and initiatives including management of the street market, support for local businesses, town and community promotions and town centre enhancements	
<b>Implications:</b>		
<b>Financial</b>	Yes	A project of this scale will have financial implications for which no funding has been earmarked.
<b>Human Resources</b>	Yes	No capacity within the organisation to meet the increase in workload a project of this scale is likely to generate.
<b>Operational/Service delivery</b>	Yes	It is inevitable that the project will have operational and service delivery implications.
<b>Procedural/Legal</b>	No	
<b>Risk/Health and Safety</b>	No	
<b>Environmental Aims</b>	No	

## 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Should the Council be minded:-

1.1 To note the report .

1.2 To endorse that the Town Clerk writes to the Executive Member for Community Services inviting more meaningful involvement by the town

**council in the bringing forward of the land parcels known as Land South of the High Street as well as the future visioning of the High Street.**

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At the request of the Executive Member for Community Services (Central Bedfordshire Council), an informal meeting was held at the White House on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Attended by town council members, the meeting provided an opportunity to review the highway authority response to the covid-19 pandemic, current traffic management arrangements as well as future options for the High Street.
- 2.2 Contextually, the importance of the High Street cannot be underestimated. It represents the very lifeblood of this parish hosting the twice weekly charter market and businesses who meaningfully contribute toward the vitality and viability of the parish. The past few years have seen considerable change in the way the High Street is used. Individual consumer decisions or changes brought about by the way businesses now operate have influenced the modal shift. The speed of change has in part been influenced by the covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.3 To support and encourage a return to “normality”, various measures (supported by Central Government) were introduced by the highway authority over the past 2 years. The banning of vehicles by way of an 18-month Traffic Regulation Order encouraged pedestrians to return to the High Street. It allowed pedestrians to move more freely by using the carriageway to socially distance. Reconfiguration of the market layout with stalls facing inwards was possible with the banning of buses.
- 2.4 Pedestrianisation was not well received by all. The re-routing of buses to West Street disenfranchised certain bus users who would previously alight at the top of the High Street. For some businesses, pedestrianisation had a detrimental impact on deliveries as well as discouraging customers who relied on short-term parking spaces within the High Street.
- 2.5 During the 18-month Traffic Regulation Order period, the perceived lack of enforcement was considered a weakness. Signage and a failing management regime emboldened drivers to return to the High Street despite the vehicle ban remaining in place.
- 2.6 At its meeting held 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022, the highway’s authority agreed to make a new Experimental Traffic Regulation Order allowing entry to the High Street for buses on days other than market days and events. The Order would run up to 18 months. Effective from April 2022, this Order would supersede the now lapsed Order as described above.

Meeting the Executive Member for Community Services

- 2.7 Those members in attendance welcomed the meeting and the opportunity to engage with the Executive Member. The Executive Member acknowledged that the Traffic Regulation Order had fallen short in its objective of banning vehicles

and encouraging a café culture through businesses utilising the carriageway to expand their business into.

- 2.8 Discussion then focused on the future vision for the High Street and more effective methods of traffic management. A presentation is to take place on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> October where traffic management methods are to be discussed with a CBC officer. The expectation being that should the methods be ratified by the highways authority at a future meeting, they are likely to prove more effective when compared to the padlock system currently being operated on market and event days.
- 2.9 In respects of the future vision for the High Street, there was consensus that the High Street cannot be planned in isolation given its importance and relationship to the collective land parcels known as land south of the High Street. The Executive Member recognised that as a stakeholder, the town council should be involved in the planning process. Whilst this was welcomed by town councillors, it was recognised that the town council has neither the financial nor officer resources to manage a project of this scale. The meeting finished with the Executive Member being thanked for his attendance and for the update provided.

#### Potential Next Steps

- 2.10 Called by the Executive Member, the meeting has no formal status meaning no resolutions could be generated from it hence this paper to Council. Notwithstanding this however, members believed that every reasonable endeavour should be taken to keep momentum up with the timely delivery of land south as a well as a visioning exercise for the High Street.
- 2.11 Whilst the town council does not have the resources to undertake such a project, a formal response to the Executive Member inviting further engagement should be considered. That is, a joint venture utilising town council as well as principal authority resources.

### **3.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 3.1 Recognising that the town council has neither the financial resources nor expertise to manage a project of this complexity, it is appropriate that a collaborative approach be taken. By way of the recommendation set out at paragraph 1.2, an early meeting be called with relevant Portfolio holders to scope out the resource implications and how these are to be met.

**End.**