

Police Minister To Address Town's Concerns

Kit Malthouse MP, Minister of State for Crime and Policing, is to write to the Chief Constable of Bedfordshire over concerns about policing in Leighton Linlade. This follows his meeting with Andrew Selous MP, Cllr Steve Jones - Leader of Leighton Linlade Town Council (LLTC) - and Cllr Russ Goodchild – Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group LLTC, held on 23rd February 2021.

Introducing the Councillors, Andrew Selous reiterated his long-standing concern over both the funding of Bedfordshire Police and the policing model for the town.

Cllr Jones stressed the lack of an adequate allocation of Leighton Buzzard based officers in general, but particularly in respect of the night time economy on Friday and Saturday nights. He also expressed concern that there has been no progress on the promised new policing hub. This would provide increased space close to the town centre and act as a facility for police contact with the public together with an adequate base for officers.

Cllr Goodchild focussed on the lack of a policing plan for the town, public accountability and inadequate liaison with the Chief Constable and the current Policing and Crime Commissioner. He also stressed that the Police & Crime Panel lacked 'bite' and highlighted the reduction in warranted Police Officers dedicated to the town.

All agreed that the current Community Policing Team were doing an excellent job with the limited resources at their disposal. However, the public's lack of confidence in policing in the town is increasing given the reduction in officer numbers since the closure of the Police Station despite an increase in population of over 5000 in the last ten years.

Mr Malthouse expressed the view that the 100 officers due to be recruited in the next 2 years, in addition to the 50 already in post, should have an impact on numbers in the town. Serious and organized crime has been the main focus for policing but he stressed that it was important that all incidents, even those seemingly minor, should be reported via 101 or online together with any suspicious behaviour. If incidents are not reported, the Police cannot accurately assess the level of crime in an area, a point he frequently makes to his own constituents.

In a joint statement, Cllrs Jones and Goodchild said "It is very unusual for Town Councillors to request meetings with Ministers of State but we believe that this reflects the depth of concern felt by all members on this subject. We would like to thank Andrew for arranging this and now await the outcome of the Minister's involvement."