

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD AT LEIGHTON BUZZARD LIBRARY THEATRE, LAKE STREET,
LEIGHTON BUZZARD LU7 1RX.

MONDAY, 21 MARCH 2022 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors C Palmer
 R Berry
 D Bowater
 A Dodwell
 M Freeman
 S Jones
 F Kharawala (Chair)
 T Morris
 G Perham
 V Harvey
 A Gray
 S Owen
 J Silverstone

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental
 Services
 M Jahn, Committee Officer

Members of the public: 22
Members of the press 0

1 **WELCOME**

The Town Mayor, Councillor F Kharawala, explained the format of the meeting and welcomed all those present and thanked everyone for attending.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Councillors Snelling, Spurr, Cursons, Carberry, Yates and Goodchild and from the Deputy Town Clerk.

3 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 22 March 2021 (remotely) were approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

AGREED that the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 22 March 2021 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

4 TOWN COUNCIL

A presentation was given by Town Clerk on recent projects undertaken by the Town Council, a summary of services and an indication of future town objectives.

Residents were advised that the Town Councillors were unpaid volunteers who wanted to make a difference to their community, often dealing with difficult issues and decisions, especially over the last two years with the restrictions of COVID. Thanks were given to all the voluntary organisations who assisted people during the pandemic showing how strong the community was in Leighton-Linslade.

Many organisations and groups had benefitted from grants from the Council which enabled them to continue after the pandemic and gradually build their membership and services back up to pre-pandemic levels.

The Market was celebrating its 10-year anniversary this year and had recently achieved an award for the Best Local Council Market 2022 in the Great British Market Awards. Visiting markets would be returning with Vegan and Street Food Heroes markets booked, and a Young Trader Scheme had been introduced to encourage younger traders to join the market.

Work on the planned fully inclusive play area at Parson's Close Recreation Ground had begun today. A variety of play equipment would be available making it accessible to all children. It was envisaged this would be completed before the start of the school summer holidays. The Council had undertaken its largest tree planting scheme with 63 new semi-mature trees planted, all chosen for their Carbon Performance rating. More tree planting was planned for later in the year.

The Teenage Advice and Information Centre ("TACTIC") provided a safe space for 12–19 year olds to attend after school social drop-in sessions, complete homework using Centre computers and join in themed discussions. Many schools in the area were benefitting from the Schools Offer provided by TACTIC whereby dedicated sessions were delivered to help young people manage anxiety, bullying etc. TACTIC also provided the opportunity for intergenerational work by delivering Christmas Hampers to older people and in working with a local Patient Participation Group to set up the Chatty Café, enabling social contact between the young people and older often lonely people to meet over a cup of tea and a piece of cake.

There was much to look forward to in 2022-23 which included the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations with fireworks and beacon lighting in Parson's Park Recreation Ground, as well as other events running during the whole weekend in the town.

5 VOLUNTEERING

A representative of the Community Voluntary Service Bedfordshire spoke to provide information on the support it could provide to voluntary organisations and any potential volunteers. Representatives would be available for any questions or advice after the meeting.

6 QUESTIONS

The Chair invited attendees to ask questions (Q) or make statements (S).

(S) A member of the Leighton Linlade Helpers wanted to thank the Council

for their support over the last two years and for their help in setting up a second community fridge.

(Q) What is the Council doing to alleviate the traffic in the town and ensure half of journeys within towns would be by cycle by 2030?

(A) The Council supports the Green Wheel Strategy and would be considering applying to CBC for funding for appropriate schemes – for which the town council would allocate match funding - at the next Planning & Transport Meeting. The member of the public was encouraged to leave his details so a more comprehensive reply could be provided.

(Q) Regarding the 55Up initiative what was the £10,000 grant awarded for?

(A) The Older Persons Sub Committee had been formed to look at digital exclusion and loneliness especially after the pandemic. Grant funding had been applied for and awarded to a number of local organisations supporting activities for older residents. A more detailed reply would be sent to answer this question.

(Q) A member of the public asked about the classes that used to be held in the library to teach computer skills and could they be reinstated as this was an objective set by the Older Persons Sub Committee.

(A) This was funded by Central Bedfordshire Council and delivered by an external company via Adult Education and could be explored further. However one of the initiatives the Town Council was funding was a free digital support helpline for older people.

(S) A representative from the Friends of Tiddenfoot Waterside Park wanted to thank the Town Council for their grant and support over the years. 400 sapling trees had been planted, litter picking took place 3 times a month and workdays scheduled once a month on a Friday. Any volunteers were welcome.

(Q) A representative of Leighton Buzzcycles spoke to ask how the Council was going to take action on the Climate Emergency, especially now that vehicles were allowed back in the High Street

- (A) The Council had declared a climate emergency and an intention to become net carbon neutral by 2030 during 2021. The next step would be to obtain baseline carbon emissions information. A more detailed reply would be provided by email to this question.
- (Q) Could a message be put up on the electronic boards around town to draw people's attention and highlight the climate emergency crisis and give examples of what the council were doing to alleviate this crisis?
- (A) The Council are actively looking to find an appropriate consultant to ascertain our carbon footprint and what could be done to improve this.
- (Q) Were volunteers at the Community Garden in the open space by Regent Street/Miletree Road going to be able to continue as the volunteers. They were unsure as they had been asked to stop their work at present.
- (A) There is no formal legal licence for this garden, which is not owned by the town council, as it has now expired. However, work could still continue at present.
- (S) A lady from Reclaim Life spoke to say they are offering Life Coaching Sessions in a building in Bridge Street which was supported by Ward Councillors and had proved to be very successful. Any support from the Town Council with this would be appreciated.
- (Q) Does the Town Clerk share my view there are a series of challenges for the Council and councillors with varied views who deal with different organisations like Central Bedfordshire Council and the Police.
- (A) We do share frustrations around collaborative working given that not all agencies are able to deliver at the pace we would otherwise wish them to. However, we must not lose sight to the importance of joined up working in the interests of the community we serve.
- (Q) There are concerns regarding the loss of the Garden Centre to the community not just as a business but as a meeting place together with the other businesses on the site.
- (A) The garden centre is not in the parish of Leighton Buzzard so the Town Council can only make their views known on the submitted planning application to build houses on this site. Its ability to act was limited. The town council understood that the land on which the garden centre has a lease had already been sold.
- (Q) What has happened to the grant made to the shop local website?
- (A) This grant has now been used to set up a website which would be

developed further.

(Q) What could the town council do to help with safety on the bypass.

(A) The Fire Service and Central Bedfordshire Council were talking together regarding the bypass including the problem of flooding. This would also be discussed by the Planning & Transport Committee at its next meeting.

7 FINAL REMARKS - MEETING CLOSES AT 2100 HOURS

The Mayor ended the meeting by thanking all present for their attendance and for participating. Any further questions could be raised by contacting the Town Council by phone or email.

The meeting closed at 8.38 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 21 MARCH 2022.

Chair

20 MARCH 2023