

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS (in accordance with The Local Authorities and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

MINUTES OF PARISH MEETING

MONDAY, 22 MARCH 2021 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
 R Goodchild
 V Harvey
 A Gray
 S Hemmings
 S Owen
 P Snelling
 R Yates

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 V Cannon, Head of Cultural and Economic Services
 I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental Services
 S Sandiford, Head of Democratic and Central Services
 B Bodsworth, (Town and Community Promotions Consultant)
 M Jahn, Committee Officer

Members of the public: 13
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. The meeting was being live-streamed to the Town Council's Facebook page so that it could also be watched by people who were not present in the meeting.

Thanks were given to all the key workers and volunteers who had kept

essential services operating during the pandemic and continued to do so. Assurance was given that although the Council offices had been closed to the public most services had continued, especially the cemeteries and the parks, and any projects which had been delayed were being planned for 2021 and beyond.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B Spurr.

3 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 16 March 2020 were approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

AGREED that the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 16 March 2020 be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

4 **TOWN COUNCIL**

A video was shown which gave information on the services provided by the Town Council, including parks and play areas, market, events, community safety, community grants, charity fundraising and working in partnership with the local authority on matters such as planning, transport and the town centre. Each Standing Committee Chairman gave an overview of the work of each committee and what had been achieved throughout the past year and the projects planned for the coming year. The video would be available on the Town Council's YouTube channel for future viewing.

Thanks were given to officers, councillors and volunteer groups who worked together to keep Leighton-Linslade an attractive town to live in.

The Chair invited participants attending the meeting or those observing the meeting if they wished to ask questions or make comments in respect of the services for which the Town Council was responsible.

Q. Several questions were asked in respect of car parking. What had happened to the extension to the Central Linslade Residents Parking scheme which had been proposed several years ago and for which Central Bedfordshire Council had drawn up plans - why had this not been implemented, what had happened to the budget allocated by the Town Council towards this and did the Town Council have the ability to see this through now? Would the town council consider a contribution to other similar schemes, for example in Dudley Street? In the future, Central Bedfordshire Council would need to be considering schemes for on-street charging of electric vehicles as many other local authorities were already doing.

A. Parking was not a statutory function of the Town Council but of Central Bedfordshire Council. The Town Council would seek a statement from CBC as the highways authority regarding this particular scheme and the question

of charging points. It was understood that CBC was in the process of reviewing the parking strategy in Leighton-Linslade, following a parking study which had resulted in the recent publication of proposals to address parking issues on a number of streets. This information was available on the CBC website.

Q. When would Leighton Buzzard be getting more pedestrian-friendly infrastructure such as low traffic neighbourhoods, pedestrian crossings – specifically on Brooklands Drive – and consistent 20mph speed limits across the town with more facilities for cyclists and less preference given to car transport. The questioner said he had been disappointed that Councillor Freeman (current Chair of the Planning & Transport Committee) had recently replied to an email suggesting that the town council would not support changes to make driving less convenient.

A. Again, the Town Council was not responsible for Highways but would do its best, when consulted by CBC, to provide input into walking and cycling strategies. The Highways Department at Central Bedfordshire Council was responsible for highway decisions.

Cllr Freeman clarified that he could not speak for what the Town Council position on a matter would be but that he personally would not support any initiatives which had the **primary objective** of disadvantaging any group of people.

Q. The last 12 months had been difficult for everyone and it was recognised that the Town Council had formed part of the local response to Covid-19. Covid would not be going away so the question was asked as to what measures would be put in place by the Town Council to support business and the local community through the coming months, especially in the event of a third wave of infections.

A. The Town Council would be led by Government legislation but would support the local economy and do what it reasonably could to assist local businesses and keep people safe. The Town was working on a number of plans and initiatives for the year ahead which it hoped would be able to proceed, if Government guidance allowed.

Q. I am impressed with the open spaces and how they have been used over the last year and although I encourage cycling, I am concerned how inconsiderate some cyclists and users of e-scooters are. What could the Town Council do to assist in this, for example signage in the parks about scooter etiquette.

A. This is a good point and would be referred to our Head of Grounds to consider and take to a future meeting of the Grounds & Environmental Services Committee.

Q. After the consultation at the White House last year regarding the town centre was there a document available showing the results of this?

A. There was a record of information gathered from that consultation (undertaken by Central Bedfordshire Council) and this would be made available on the town centre page of the Town Council website. Work was ongoing by Central Bedfordshire Council regarding ideas gathered and funding available. The Town Council had also formed a Task & Finish Group regarding Land South of the High Street to gain a greater understanding of ideas for use and what opportunities there are to bring anything to fruition. Emerging plans would be market tested with the community.

A. It was interesting that this was the first parish meeting to be held online - the Teams meeting list shows 33 attending this meeting – was the engagement better online than in person? How had the council encouraged attendance at the Parish Meeting?

Q. In addition to those present in the meeting, it was being viewed by 19 people via social media. The event had reached 564 people with 81 engagements via social media.

The Town Council had extensively promoted the meeting with on-line posts, on its website and via the newspaper to raise the profile of the meeting. All council meetings were promoted through the Town Council website, social media and bi-monthly parish newsletter and residents were encouraged to attend and speak on any agenda items for those meetings rather than waiting for the yearly Parish Meeting. The Council could also be contacted at any time by telephone, email or letter as this would provide faster information on any subject.

Q. What was the timeline for delivery on the Shop Local Website and functionality for residents.

A. This website (www.shoplocallb.co.uk) was up and running within two weeks of the Town Council's decision to fund its start-up in time for the Christmas trade. It was put together by LB First who independently manage the platform. This Town Council has maintained contact about its ongoing development. The functionality of the site would continue to be reviewed and progressed, for example there was discussion about inviting market traders to join and about accepting online payments.

Q. What are the plans for Parson's Close Recreation Ground play area refurbishment and would local families be consulted?

A. The intention was to develop a fully inclusive adventure play area which would allow children of all abilities to play together, including play at height. The council was working with local groups to determine requirements for children with additional needs and the contractor for the project would also have specific experience in developing accessible play spaces. The project would complement the Changing Places pod already established in the park and provide a destination for families with either adults or children requiring specialist facilities, whilst also providing high play value for all

children. Once the project funding had been confirmed, the proposals would be available for public consultation and it would be possible to tweak certain elements of the design.

5 CLOSING REMARKS

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 and all questions and answers would be available on the Town Council website.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 22 MARCH 2021.

Chair

21 MARCH 2022