

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF SOUTH SIDE WORKING PARTY
MONDAY, 23 MAY 2022 AT 11.00 AM

Present: Councillors M Freeman
 R Goodchild
 V Harvey
 S Jones
 F Kharawala
 S Owen
 C Palmer

Also in attendance: V Cannon, Head of Cultural and Economic
 Services
 S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk

Members of the public: 0
Members of the press 0

27/SSWP APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received for Councillor A Dodwell, Natasha Seale and Paul Brown.

28/SSWP DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Palmer, Harvey and Kharawala declared a personal interest as members of the Leighton Buzzard Society and Councillor Harvey also declared a personal interest as a member of the South Beds Friends of the Earth.

29/SSWP QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC (3 minutes per person; 15 minutes total)

A question was raised by Councillor Owen, as a member of the public, regarding the seeming lack of a clear objective for the working party as well as the concern that there was no clear plan or timescale at Central Bedfordshire Council either, in respect of the future of the currently derelict land south of the High Street. Councillor Owen asked whether the town council would be better served by taking the initiative and whether it would be possible to get any assurance from Central Bedfordshire Council about their plans for the site, as the latest consultancy work commissioned through Cushman and Wakefield appeared a largely desktop exercise.

Councillor Freeman added that if reviewing the objective/s of the working party, its membership should also be reviewed as it was as large as main committees but comprised of only town councillors. This would be

discussed further in item 7 on the agenda Stakeholder updates.

30/SSWP **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

(a) The Committee received the minutes of the South Side Working Party held on 21 April 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the South Side Working Party held on 21 April 2022 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

(b) Minute reference 25/SSWP: the resolution made was discussed and it was noted that costs for a feasibility study would be needed. It was anticipated that a report would come to Policy & Finance Committee for further discussion. On part b) of the resolution, it was agreed that the working party wished to know how any planning work on the future of land south of the High Street might sit in relation to the anticipated Local Plan update.

31/SSWP **PERFORMANCE SPACE**

Natasha Seale, musician and member of Peppercorn Company, had sent apologies for the meeting. It was suggested that a written summary be circulated instead and for Members to pass on any questions via the Head of Cultural & Economic Services, but then agreed that attendance at a future meeting would be preferable if possible.

32/SSWP **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL UPDATES**

Sam Caldbeck was not in attendance at the meeting but it was confirmed that the appointed Consultants from Cushman and Wakefield had received the initial feasibility study for a building on land south of the High Street created by The Peppercorn Group.

It was noted that Central Bedfordshire Council was still in the research phase of its cultural needs analysis and that an online survey would close at the end of May. The work was expected to be concluded in the autumn. A concern was expressed that not all the relevant people had been engaged in the work, particularly young people.

Further to his earlier question, Councillor Owen suggested writing to Central Bedfordshire Council to seek clarification on any strategic objective for land south of the High Street. It was further agreed that clarification should be sought on the future planning use of the site and any supplementary planning advice which might form part of the Local Plan update.

RESOLVED:

(i) To write to the appropriate Portfolio Holder at Central Bedfordshire Council to ask what the strategic objectives were for

the Land South of the High Street, what the timescale to achieve objectives was and whether financial resources had been allocated to that work.

(ii) To write to Central Bedfordshire Council to seek clarification on whether any supplementary planning advice would be issued urgently in respect of the land south of the High Street, given that the review of the Local Plan was at least two years away.

33/SSWP **STAKEHOLDER UPDATES**

A confidential meeting had taken place recently with two landowners on land South of the High Street, with frustration expressed at the lack of progress but a keen interest expressed to see development of the land.

Concerns were expressed about the potential for solely commercial development of the site and it was agreed that an evaluation of the wider needs of the community was needed.

In discussion it was felt that a needs analysis of the community/arts/social/cultural/civic needs (social infrastructure) of the town should be undertaken. It was unclear whether such a study could be funded from S106 developer monies and suggested the town council fund this directly.

Councillor Goodchild suggested approaching a Master Planner who could ascertain the process and costs for creating a design for the site. It was noted that creation of any such plan should be led by the local authority and that there might be overlap in the process with that of reviewing the Local Plan. In conclusion the group agreed it would be useful to have the information for reference, completed and to bring back findings to members to decide how to proceed.

The objectives and membership of the working party should also be reviewed.

RESOLVED to authorise the Town Clerk in conjunction with Cllr Goodchild to seek information on likely costs and process for creating a Masterplan design for land south of the High Street.

RECOMMENDED to Policy & Finance Committee:

i) To investigate commissioning a social infrastructure needs analysis of the town, in part to evidence needs which might be relevant to the future uses of land South Side of the High Street and to explore whether s106 funds could be released to facilitate this activity.

ii) To review the objectives and membership of the South Side working party.

The meeting closed at 12.26 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 23 MAY 2022.

Chair

DATE TBC