

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, 24 APRIL 2023 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors D Bowater
 F Kharawala (Chair)
 C Palmer
 R Berry
 K Cursons
 A Dodwell
 M Freeman
 S Jones
 G Perham
 V Harvey
 S Hemmings
 D Scott
 J Silverstone
 P Snelling
 R Goodchild
 A Gray
 S Owen
 P Carberry

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk
 I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental
 Services
 Salmon, Head of Cultural & Economic Services
 M Jahn, Committee Officer

Members of the Public: 17

408 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received and were accepted from Councillors Morris, Yates and Spurr

409 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Palmer declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 (Land in Linslade) as a member of the Leighton Buzzard Society and Friends of Linslade Woods. Councillor Harvey declared a personal interest as a member of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth and Friends of Linslade Woods.

410 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Kharawala wanted to thank all councillors, officers at the Town Council and all community groups for their support during her time as Mayor, fundraising this year for her chosen charities, Leighton-Linslade Helpers and Citizens Advice Leighton-Linslade.

During the last four years there had been some challenging times, but with good and open discussion between Councillors, who had all worked tirelessly for the good of the community to achieve some positive results.

A special vote of thanks was given to the Administration Officer (Mayoral support) for her work planning and organising the Mayor's fundraising events, which had been well attended and appreciated by all attendees. One last fundraising event was scheduled for Saturday 29 April (a Tea and Tour of All Saints Church) and it was hoped as many people as possible would support this.

All Councillors were wished the best of luck if standing for re-election in the upcoming elections and if not standing, thanks were given for their service to the Town Council.

411 LEADERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor S Jones, Leader of the Conservative group, also thanked the Councillors standing down for their service and wished those standing for re-election good luck. He noted that it has been a challenging four years not only locally but nationally and globally, with most of that period impacted by the Covid pandemic. Councillor Jones said it had been a privilege to be part of the town council and to see a number of aims and projects completed.

Councillor R Goodchild, Leader of the Liberal Democrat group, thanked all staff at the Town Council for their hard work during the difficult period caused by the pandemic and also thanked his group for their support, with special thanks for many years of service to Councillors Gray and Snelling, who were not standing for re-election.

Councillor P Carberry, Leader of the Labour group, wished all Members the best of luck for the future and noted that all councillors cared about the local community, despite sometimes having differing views. Councillor Carberry also thanked town council staff and noted that two highlights from the current administration were having had two women as Mayor and Deputy Mayor, which he felt gave a strong message to the public, as well as the Council's commitment to the climate emergency.

412 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Five members of the public spoke on varying issues:

1. A representative of Freddie and Friends CIC thanked the Town Council

for its support for their inclusive Community Hub which operated from Pages Park pavilion and for the funding provided over the last four years which had enabled them to provide much needed support for families and individuals in the town.

2. Another three members of the public and members of the Friends of Linslade Woods spoke in respect of agenda item 10 (land in Linslade), to support the motion proposed by Councillor Palmer. Concerns were raised regarding the environmental and ecological effects of building on this land with the potential loss of hedgerows impacting bees, insects and birds, increase in domestic pets in the area and the extra noise and light pollution which could disrupt wildlife. One member of the public offered to help with crowdfunding to raise money to purchase the land in question if appropriate.
3. A member of Leighton-Linslade Helpers thanked the Town Council for its help and support with the emergency response when lockdown occurred at the beginning of the Covid pandemic in 2020 and for its continued support. The Leighton-Linslade Helpers would continue to work for the community and to work collaboratively with others.

413 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- (a) Council received the draft minutes of the Council meeting held on 30 January 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 30 January 2023 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

- (b) Council received updates on matters arising from the previous meeting.

Minute item 406 (Health Facilities in Leighton Buzzard and Linslade): the Town Clerk read out a recent update received from the MP for South-West Bedfordshire:

The MP had met with the Under Secretary of State for Health and Social Care along with representatives of Central Bedfordshire Council and the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes integrated care board (BLMK) to discuss a wide range of health services in the town. Subsequent to this, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care had visited the town to meet with representatives of BLMK ICB and frontline healthcare staff. Decisions had now already been taken to progress the expansion of primary care within the town and the MP expected there to be an announcement shortly on the outline of what this would look like. In his opinion, the project had now reached the delivery stage. The results from the consultation undertaken by the patient participation groups were eagerly awaited, which it was anticipated would also help inform future primary care provision.

Minute reference 395 (Minutes of Previous Meeting): it was confirmed that Bedfordshire Police would now be starting to offer weekly drop-in sessions

for the public at Bossard House, to be held on a Thursday from between 11.00 am and 1.00 pm.

Minute Reference 403 (Oxford to Cambridge Arc): the Town Clerk advised that the Acting Head of Place (Central Bedfordshire Council) had provided an email update that they had attended a conference about the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Partnership, the purpose of which was to review the opportunity of the arc area. Central Bedfordshire Council was keeping a watching brief on developments in the partnership and particularly the potential of the Central Area Growth Board. The next considered milestone was in May when East West Rail would announce the route through Bedfordshire, which would help set the direction for growth plans. Future updates on the project were anticipated.

Councillor S Owen asked to make comment on the updates provided. The Mayor clarified the agenda item was to receive updates from the previous meeting only.

414 LAND IN LINSLADE

Council received a Motion proposed by Councillor Palmer and seconded by Councillor Owen: *that Leighton-Linslade Town Council requests that Central Bedfordshire Council pursues the potential acquisition and addition to the designated area of Linslade Wood of*

- (a) The land covered by planning application CB/22/03445/OUT (land adjacent to 133 Stoke Road Linslade), and*
- (b) The land included in parcel HAS 33 (Land North of Soulbury Road) in the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and*

removes the land covered by (b) above, from the Small and Medium Allocations of land for possible development in an early review of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan as a logical and necessary linked step but also one which is justified independently in its own right.

It was noted that developers were currently undertaking a public engagement exercise regarding a potential planning application to build on land north of Soulbury Road. It was understood that a planning application could be submitted by mid-June. A number of personal views were expressed by Councillors including concerns regarding protection of its Green Belt status, potential impact on wildlife and biodiversity and highways safety.

It was noted that despite previous campaigning against development of this land, the site was now allocated for housing development in the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan.

A point was made that a Neighbourhood Plan could provide a mechanism for the community to express their views on potential development sites.

An amendment to the Motion was suggested to add another point to say the

Town Council would support efforts by residents to fund raise to purchase the land.

On being taken to the vote, the amendment was carried (17 in favour, 1 abstention).

On the amended Motion being put to the vote, it was carried (17 in favour, 1 abstention).

RESOLVED:

(i) that Leighton-Linslade Town Council requests that Central Bedfordshire Council pursues the potential acquisition and addition to the designated area of Linslade Wood of

(a) The land covered by planning application CB/22/03445/OUT (land adjacent to 133 Stoke Road Linslade), and

(b) The land included in parcel HAS 33 (Land North of Soulbury Road) in the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and

removes the land covered by (b) above, from the Small and Medium Allocations of land for possible development in an early review of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan as a logical and necessary linked step but also one which is justified independently in its own right.

(ii) that the Town Council would support efforts by residents to fundraise to purchase the land.

415 ANNUAL REPORT

Council received a recommendation from the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 17 April 2023 to consider approval of the Annual Report for 2022-2023. The financial information would be added once year-end accounts had been approved by Council in June.

A comment was made that faster progress was needed in respect of the climate emergency and a suggestion was made to change one of the cover photographs of the report.

Councillor Owen spoke regarding the reference in the report to the partnership working with Bedfordshire Police and advised Council had not received a written update in respect of the facility at Bossard House despite being promised this at an informal site visit on 15 February 2023. This would be followed up with Bedfordshire Police.

RESOLVED to approve the Annual Report for 2022-23 (financial details to be added following completion of year end accounting statements).

416 OPERATION DODFORD 2023-24

Council received a recommendation from the Community Safety Sub-

Committee meeting held on 3 April 2023 to approve the Operation Dodford agreement with Bedfordshire Police for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024. On being proposed and seconded, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED to approve the Operation Dodford Section 92 grant agreement with Bedfordshire Police for 2023-2024, to be signed by the Town Mayor and Leader of the Council in accordance with Standing Order 14.

417 COMMITTEE MINUTES

(a) Council received and noted the minutes of the Committee meetings held between 1 February – 11 April 2023 specified below.

RESOLVED to receive and note the minutes of the following meetings:

- Planning & Transport Committee 15 February 2023
- Policy & Finance Committee 27 February 2023
- Grounds & Environmental Committee 6 March 2023
- Planning & Transport Committee 8 March 2023
- Partnership Committee 9 March 2023
- Cultural & Economic Committee 13 March 2023
- Planning & Transport Committee 29 March 2023
- Policy & Finance Committee 17 April 2023
- Planning & Transport Committee 19 April 2023

In respect of the accuracy of the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 17 April 2023 (minute reference 465/PF: minutes of South Side working Party held 5 April 2023), Councillor V Harvey asked it be recorded that she had specified the need for a community needs assessment and also that in respect of three-part resolution made, she believed she had only been against the first part rather than all three.

RESOLVED to approve as a correct record the following minutes, to be signed by the Chair of the relevant Committee:

- **Grounds & Environmental Committee 6 March 2023**
- **Partnership Committee 9 March 2023**
- **Cultural & Economic Committee 13 March 2023**
- **Policy & Finance Committee 17 April 2023**
- **Planning & Transport Committee 19 April 2023**

(b) Council considered the recommendations contained in committee minutes.

Minute reference 453/PF (Annual Review of Investment Strategy):

RESOLVED to readopt the Town Council's Investment Strategy.

Minute reference 239/GE (Pleasure Grounds, Public Walks & Open Spaces): it was noted that the work on byelaws was ongoing and this recommendation would be deferred to a future meeting of the Council.

Minute reference 161/CE (Rotary Club of Leighton-Linslade):

RESOLVED to provide funding up to £5,000 to the Rotary Club of Leighton-Linslade towards costs for a free community laser light show to take place in autumn/winter to be funded from general reserves.

Minute reference 166/CE (Events Programme Update):

RESOLVED to create a new Events Development Earmarked Reserve as part of the financial year end process through the merging of existing earmarked reserves with revenue budget underspend from the financial year 2022/23.

Minute reference 169/CE (Cultural & Economic Budget and Earmarked Reserves):

RESOLVED to move £3,414 underspend from Town History revenue budget 101/4516 for the current year into earmarked reserve 9018/970 (Economic Development) for future town activity, as part of the financial year end process.

Minute reference 465/PF (Sub Committees and Sub Groups):

Council received a copy of the Central Bedfordshire Council consultation response form in respect of land south of the High Street, with proposed comments from the Town Council. The proposed response was agreed unanimously. Thanks were expressed to Councillor C Palmer for all his work on this matter.

RESOLVED to approve the formal response to the current Central Bedfordshire Council consultation in respect of land south of the High Street.

Council considered the recommendation to ringfence monies from the general reserve for the purposes of undertaking a community engagement exercise in relation to land south of the High Street. Further to the discussion at the South Side working party on 5 April 2023, an outline brief for this work had been circulated to the working party members for their comments, prior to seeking indicative costs. The Town Clerk advised Council that five indicative quotes had now been received ranging from £15,000 - £31,000 for the public engagement work as set out in the brief.

Further work would be needed and it was agreed to defer this for the next Council to take forward.

RESOLVED to defer the recommendation at minute reference 465/PF for

further consideration by the next Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 21:09 and was reconvened at 21:15 hours.

(c) Council received the delegated decisions made on behalf of the Council committees in accordance with the agreed procedure since 30 January 2023.

RESOLVED to note the delegated decisions made since 30 January 2023.

(d) Councillor comment and questions in respect of committee minutes:

Planning & Transport Minutes 15 February 2023, minute reference 382/PF (Transport Matters). A question was raised regarding the status of the High Street Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). An update was awaited from Central Bedfordshire Council and would be circulated to all Councillors.

Policy and Finance Committee 27 February 2023, minute reference 457/PF (Health Services). A question was asked as to whether BLMK ICB was about to announce what healthcare facilities the town could expect and the importance of consultation, collaboration and patient voice was underlined.

Partnership Committee 9 March 2023 minute reference 203/LLP (Leighton-Linslade Town Council Partnership Project List). A comment was made that there had still been no detailed discussion on the list and the objectives contained within it.

Planning and Transport Committee 29 March 2023 minute reference 397/P (Information Items). A comment was made highlighting to Council the mention at an informal meeting with representatives of Central Bedfordshire Council the potential of a Neighbourhood Plan as one mechanism to provide a vision for the town centre.

Policy and Finance 17 April 2023 minute reference 465/PF (Sub-Committees and Sub Groups). A comment was made that the South Side Working Party had undertaken some good work and that meeting with landowners should take place next. It was hoped that Central Bedfordshire Council would work with the Town Council on this project. It was felt that if the public engagement consultant fees referenced earlier in the meeting were too high then the town council should consider undertaking this itself.

418 NEXT COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION

Council received and considered a motion proposed by Councillor S Owen and seconded by Councillor Goodchild: *that this Council looks forward to a new Council that it is hoped:*

WAYS OF WORKING

a. modernises the Council's approach to meetings, making them shorter,

with key matters where councillor input can best be used listed early on agendas.

- b. gives training to those councillors who chair Committees or groups.*
- c. encourages new councillors to have a voice and an input.*
- d. seeks greater input from the public in a structured way, using public engagement with individuals and groups as inputs to its "gold objectives".*
- e. asks officers to track decisions and requests regarding Council objectives and provide progress reports to councillors as a standard item on meeting agendas and via councillors' newsletters.*

OBJECTIVES

- f. replaces the Council's current moribund 5 Year Plan with a living Annual Plan composed of objectives identified and prioritised by councillors, and kept short to enable officers to focus on delivering them.*
- g. delivers a Neighbourhood Plan at pace for the town, involving local people, the townspeople, and landowners.*
- h. pushes forward the Land South redevelopment and the Leighton High Street of the future as "gold objectives".*
- i. Develops a vigorous involvement in the infrastructure planning process, including a review of the Planning Committee's current remit.*
- j. supports and champion the town's patients and PPGs in their struggle with BLMK ICB, CBC and others for a Health Hub and new GP surgeries.*

BY MAKING USE OF

- k. creates a productive partnership with Central Beds Council, setting up mutually supportive working with our twin-hatted councillors.*
- l. reviews the Council's current financial reserves.*
- m. ensures that all Town Council staff are valued, encouraged and supported through the work of the Personnel Committee.*

Introducing the Motion, Councillor Owen stressed the need for new councillors to bring new ideas and energy and to be heard. He also felt there should be greater involvement of the public in decision making. He advised a new, shorter plan was needed to provide focus going forward.

A proposed amendment was put forward by Councillor M Freeman, that all wording after "it is hoped" be deleted and replaced with "and it is hoped that all Councillors will be involved in the determination of the way forward for the period 2023-2027, including ways of working and objectives. To expedite this, Officers are asked to run a workshop day to include Councillors and senior staff where possible at an early opportunity to start this process with an aim to having an outline plan ready for approval by Council at a meeting in the autumn of 2023."

In introducing this, Councillor Freeman advised he felt the Motion should be shorter and less specific, allowing the new Council to find its way. A number of views were expressed and Councillors noted the impact of

Covid on the last four years. It was suggested that buddying/mentoring for new councillors could be helpful, as well as more training.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried (12 for, 4 against and 2 abstentions). On being put to the vote, the amended substantive motion was carried (12 for, 6 abstentions).

RESOLVED that this Council looks forward to a new Council and it is hoped that all Councillors will be involved in the determination of the way forward for the period 2023-2027, including ways of working and objectives.

To expedite this, Officers are asked to run a workshop day to include Councillors and senior staff where possible at an early opportunity to start this process with an aim to having an outline plan ready for approval by Council at a meeting in the autumn of 2023.

RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3(x) to allow continued discussion for a further ten minutes.

419 QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS FROM COUNCILLORS

A question was submitted by Councillor Harvey: In light of the Council's planning advisory function in relation to planning applications submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council, and in light of this Council's support of the Green Wheel and Green Infrastructure Plan for Leighton-Linslade and in the light of the Central Bedfordshire Council local plan policies for this area, would this Council's policy be to object to an application for house building on the Leighton Middle Playing Field adjacent to Pulford lower school?

Three questions had been submitted by Councillor Goodchild but one was withdrawn.

(1) Could Cllr Jones kindly explain why he failed to advise the Proper Officer of this Council the fact that in January Cllr Cursons had resigned her position as a Conservative councillor in favour of becoming an independent member and so giving him the early opportunity of assessing any consequential change in proportionality to the membership of committees.

(2) In the absence of any written procedures within current Standing Orders to properly address both the responsibilities to the Proper Officer of a member wishing to 'cross the floor' or become Independent from a political group and the consequences of such a change to proportionality, could I ask the Town Clerk to include this item on the agenda for early discussion on the respective committee or sub-committee.

It was advised that written answers would be provided to both Councillors.

420 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

No reports were made, but it was commented that councillor representatives did not always receive invitations from the bodies to which they were appointed.

421 REFRESHMENT CONCESSION IN PARSON'S CLOSE RECREATION GROUND

Council received the tender evaluations in respect of the refreshment concession in Parson's Close Recreation Ground for the next five years. On being taken to a vote, the recommendation to appoint the concession was approved (17 in favour, 1 abstention).

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the report**
- (ii) To award Supplier A the concession for Parson's Close Recreation Ground for value of £70,000 + VAT for five years.**

422 POSSIBLE MEMORIAL TO HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Council received a report with the results of the resident survey undertaken during January – February 2023 regarding options for a possible memorial to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the report.**
- (ii) To endorse that officers undertake further scoping work on potential options as set out.**

The meeting closed at 10.06 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 24 APRIL 2023.

Chair

15 MAY 2023