

**LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**  
**MONDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2022 AT 7.30 PM**

Present: Councillors            D Bowater  
   F Kharawala (Chair)  
   C Palmer  
   R Berry  
   K Cursons  
   A Dodwell  
   M Freeman  
   S Jones  
   T Morris  
   G Perham  
   V Harvey  
   S Hemmings  
   D Scott  
   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  
   M Jahn, Committee Officer

Members of the Public:        4

**376        APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence for the meeting had been received from Councillors Spurr, Yates and Silverstone.

**377        DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made and no dispensations were requested.

**378        TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Kharawala advised the Council that the last few weeks had been very busy with various activities including meeting the contributors to the knitted poppy display for Remembrance at The White House, a charity coffee

morning, the Rock of Ages concert, a wine tasting event and the very successful Christmas Festival which was very well received and attended throughout the three days. Thanks were given to the Events Team and all who helped make this such a successful event in the town.

The next event would be the Candlelit Carol Concert at All Saints Church on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December.

### 379 LEADERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor S Jones, Leader of the Conservative group, spoke to echo thanks to all who helped make the Christmas Festival weekend a great success which encouraged residents into the town on all three days.

Councillor R Goodchild, Leader of the Liberal Democrat group informed Council about concerns in the increase of crime in the town over recent weeks with graffiti, car and cycle theft being most prominent. This would be discussed later in the agenda at item 10 (Bedfordshire Police response times).

Councillor P Carberry, Leader of the Labour group also wanted to pass his congratulations to the Events Team for a superb Christmas weekend which had demonstrated great community spirit in the town. Councillor Carberry wished colleagues and Town Council staff a Merry Christmas and happy new year.

### 380 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Speaking as a member of the public, Councillor R Goodchild asked about the status of Bridge Meadow given that more structures were being erected on this land which he thought had been designated a "green lung". A response was provided by Councillor Harvey advising that planning consent had been granted for that purpose but that a strip of land would be retained as a footpath.

### 381 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- (a) Council received the draft minutes of the Council meeting held on 10 October 2022.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 10 October 2022 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.**

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

Minute reference 367 (Policing in Leighton-Linslade): it was confirmed a letter had been written to the Police Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable and a reply awaited. At the Policy & Finance Committee meeting held on 14

November 2022, it had been decided to wait for criminal proceedings to complete before a decision was made regarding potential civil action against those responsible for vandalism and criminal damage.

Minute reference 369 (Future of the High Street): it was noted that no follow up meeting as promised by Central Bedfordshire Councillor I Dalgarno had as yet been arranged, with concerns raised that he would have less time for this following his recent appointment as Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner.

Minute reference 370 (Questions/Statements from Councillors): it was queried whether a visit with Central Bedfordshire Officers had taken place; this could be confirmed with the Head of Grounds and Environmental Services.

## **382 COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DELEGATED DECISIONS**

(i) Council received the draft minutes of Committee meetings held since the Council received and noted the minutes of the Committee meetings held between 10 October – 28 November 2022 and received the delegated decisions made on behalf of committees in the same period.

**RESOLVED to note the delegated decisions made since the previous meeting.**

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

- **Planning & Transport Committee 12 October 2022**
- **Policy & Finance Committee 24 October 2022**
- **Planning & Transport Committee 2 November 2022**
- **Policy & Finance Committee 14 November 2022**

(ii) Council considered the recommendations contained at 417/PF in the Policy & Finance Committee minutes 14 November 2022 regarding the Civility and Respect Pledge and the revised code of conduct which reflected the Local Government Association and local authority model.

**RESOLVED to adopt the Civility and Respect Pledge and revised code of conduct which reflects the Local Government Association and local authority model.**

(iii) One update was received regarding the Planning & Transport Committee meeting held on 2 November 2022. Councillor P Snelling advised he had called in the planning application for 13 Wing Road and the application had now been refused.

## **383 CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III**

Council considered a Motion proposed by Councillor Carberry: *Leighton-Linslade Town Council look forward to the Coronation of King Charles III. Our*

*council would wish to celebrate this event in a manner that reflects the devotion of so many to our monarchy but also reflects our current constraints and challenges. Our community would wish to mark this occasion and that a working party be formed to consider and make recommendations on how best we use resources that are available, any potential repurposing assets and how we can deliver a first rate public event based on best value.*

It was suggested that engaging with community networks would add value and ideas such as tree or woodland planting were discussed. It was noted that officers had already begun to investigate options and that a report was due to be presented to the Cultural and Economic Committee on 12 December.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was agreed unanimously.

**RESOLVED that Leighton-Linslade Town Council looks forward to the Coronation of King Charles III. Our council would wish to celebrate this event in a manner that reflects the devotion of so many to our monarchy but also reflects our current constraints and challenges. Our community would wish to mark this occasion and that a working party be formed to consider and make recommendations on how best we use resources that are available, any potential repurposing assets and how we can deliver a first rate public event based on best value.**

#### **384 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Council received and considered a motion proposed by Councillor Owen and seconded by Councillor R Goodchild: *that this Council resolves to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.*

In introducing the Motion, Councillor Owen cited the recent creation of a Neighbourhood Plan in Biggleswade with support from Central Bedfordshire Council, recent discussion at the Ouzel Valley Park Steering Group about how the Green Infrastructure Plan would hold more weight as part of the Neighbourhood Plan and a comment made at a recent meeting of the Land South of the High Street working party regarding the possible benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan. With Government encouragement and grant funding, new Neighbourhood Plans were being developed to “give communities a plan with real legal weight”. It was suggested that the lack of a Neighbourhood Plan may have led to the town missing out on S106 developer funding for infrastructure improvements and that the needs of the community should be put first.

Comments were made by a number of Council Members. It was felt that a Neighbourhood Plan might have been useful 15 years ago but they had not been in existence at that time. Instead, the Town Council had created a Town Plan (“Big Plan”) with significant community engagement. S106 developer negotiations and agreements were undertaken by the principal authority and focussed on essential infrastructure including highways and schools. Whilst space could be allocated for healthcare or policing facilities, only those

responsible authorities could provide the necessary staffing and equipment. It was felt that little land was left within the parish boundaries for housing development and therefore opportunities for future developer contributions were limited. Development of a Neighbourhood Plan could take several years and could not address any existing infrastructure deficits.

Summing up, Councillor Owen advised he felt that a Neighbourhood Plan had potential to deliver a health hub and noted that there were no alternative suggestions being made to address infrastructure deficits in the town.

A recorded vote was requested (see Appendix A). On being put to the vote, the Motion was not carried (9 against, 7 for and 2 abstentions).

**RESOLVED that the Motion to prepare a Neighbourhood plan not be carried.**

### **385 BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE RESPONSE TIMES**

Council considered a Motion from Councillor Owen in respect of public dissatisfaction with the speed and quality of responses by Bedfordshire Police to 101 and 999 calls and the understaffing of the Police Control room which had developed over a period of time. A document with statistics was provided, along with an amendment to the original Motion which was proposed by Councillor Goodchild and seconded by Councillor Owen.

Several Members of the Council spoke to express concern and disappointment with the statistics, noting the long-term lack of funding for Bedfordshire Police and the national difficulties being experienced with recruitment and retention of staff, particularly in the public sector and in emergency services.

In response to the comments regarding the Bedfordshire Policing and Crime Panel, it was advised that only the police authority could hold the Chief Constable to account and that the panel had a limited remit.

In summing up, Councillor Owen noted that the hard-working local community team was being let down by a centralised issue and that it was important to send a signal to the community to let them know the council was aware of their concerns about police response times. It was suggested this also be shared with other parishes in Bedfordshire whose residents might be experiencing similar concerns.

On being put to the vote, the Motion as amended was carried (17 for, 1 abstention).

**RESOLVED that this Council notes and shares the widespread public dissatisfaction with both the speed and quality of responses of Bedfordshire Police to 101 calls and the understaffing of the Police Control Room that senior officers and the PCC have allowed to develop.**

It also regrets the failure of the Bedfordshire Policing and Crime Panel at its meeting on 11 October 2022 to discuss or challenge the Police and Crime Commissioner's report on Force Control Room performance, or to demand improvement. It calls on the Chief Constable, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and the MPs representing Bedfordshire to urgently reassure this Council and the public of Leighton-Linslade that:

a) all the various shortfalls in Control-Room staffing are being addressed and that regular updates on Control-Room response performance are publicly shared with this Council.

b) the guidelines being used by Bedfordshire Police to respond to differing types of crime reports such as burglary, domestic violence, criminal damage, assault etc are made clear to the public (for example whether the Police aim to visit the complainant or not) along with target response times.

c) regular updates on Bedfordshire Police response performance begin to be published.

This Council also regrets that the Police and Crime Commissioner has not provided the information requested by this Council on 10 October 2022 about the facilities and functions of the Bossard House police office, which because it is tiny, unstaffed, and does not permit the public to report matters of public safety to police officers, does not meet the Commissioner's election promise in his 2021 Conservative election leaflet i.e. "I will bring back community-based policing for our rural and market towns by creating Police Contact Hubs in areas where Police Stations have closed", nor does it meet his written undertaking to this Council of 5 April 2022.

This Council also regrets that no response has been received to the Council's request to the Chief Constable, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and Andrew Selous MP on 10 October 2022, for an immediate increase in Police staffing assigned to Leighton Buzzard and Linslade, the lack of which is contributing to residents' concerns about community safety and the lack of deterrence to law-breakers.

That this Motion be sent to HMICFRS (the Government inspectorate of UK Police Forces), to the Bedfordshire Policing and Crime Panel, to the Chief Constable, to the Police and Crime Commissioner and to Andrew Selous, M.P.

### **386 PARSON'S CLOSE RECREATION GROUND**

Council considered a Motion proposed by Councillor Goodchild in respect of the possible provision of a permanent, fitting memorial to Queen Elizabeth II in recognition of over 70 years of service. An amendment to the Motion was proposed by Councillor S Jones and seconded by Councillor R Berry.

Councillor Goodchild advised he would withdraw section A of the Motion which suggested the renaming of Parson's Close Recreation Ground to "Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Recreation Ground", however he would accept the remainder of the proposed amendments.

It was noted that Pages Field had been designated a Queen Elizabeth Field in Trust several years ago but this was not formally part of its name.

Councillor Carberry noted that there had been several national projects named for the late Queen such as the Elizabeth Line on the London Underground and the naming of the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth.

On the amended Motion being put to the vote, it was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED to:**

- (i) Promote a competition to provide a suitable permanent public memorial to Queen Elizabeth II and to identify a prominent position for the siting of the memorial and**
- (ii) Request the Council to investigate available funding sources, in particular that of public sponsorship, sufficient to cover the cost of any memorial.**

**387 QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS FROM COUNCILLORS**

No questions had been submitted by Councillors in advance

**388 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES**

No changes to appointments to Committees were made.

**389 APPOINTMENTS TO/REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES**

It was noted that a new Councillor representative was needed for the Citizens Advice Bureau in Leighton Buzzard.

The meeting closed at 10.08 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2022.

Chair

30 JANUARY 2023

**APPENDIX A: recorded vote on Neighbourhood Plan (minute reference 384):**

COUNCILLOR	VOTE
BERRY, RAY	AGAINST
BOWATER, DAVID	AGAINST
CARBERRY, PAT	FOR
CURSONS, KAREN	ABSTAINED
DODWELL, AMANDA	AGAINST
FREEMAN, MARK	AGAINST
GOODCHILD, RUSS	FOR
GRAY, ANNE	FOR
HARVEY, VICTORIA	FOR
HEMMINGS, SHEONA	ABSTAINED
JONES, STEVE	AGAINST
KHARAWALA, FARZANA	AGAINST
MORRIS, TONY	AGAINST
OWEN, STEVE	FOR
PALMER, CLIVE	AGAINST
PERHAM, GORDON	AGAINST
SCOTT, DANIEL	FOR
SNELLING, PETER	FOR