**LEIGHTON LINSLADE HOMELESS SHELTER – TO CLOSE**

Leighton Linslade Homeless Service, the charity that runs the homeless shelter from the former Black Horse Public House has announced its intention to close the shelter at the end of March 2021. It will continue to run its foodbank service and will look at new ways to support the local community.

The decision has not been an easy one to reach. Many homeless persons have now been provided with accommodation as a result of increased funding from central government. In part, this has been brought about because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that such funding will continue for the foreseeable future.

The charity was founded in 2006 and initially provided support and accommodation for homeless people in the Leighton Buzzard area using community facilities, mainly church halls. Through the support of a local landlord, the charity was able to enhance the services offered by running a shelter from the old Black Horse Public House in North Street, Leighton Buzzard.

Staff have worked tirelessly for the charity and its services have been commended as an example to others as a beacon of excellence within the homelessness sector. Black Horse House has provided a safe refuge and support for many people who otherwise would have been sleeping rough. The charity has also received support from many volunteers who have helped in many ways.

Whilst there remain some rough sleepers within Bedfordshire these are mainly people, who for their own reasons are unwilling to accept accommodation whether provided by a charity or the relevant local authority.

When asked, the chairman of the board of trustees, said:

*" We are very grateful for all the support provided over the years to assist in the important work that we have done – from local churches, businesses, schools and caring individuals. We also wish to express appreciation for the support provided by dedicated volunteers whose contribution pre-pandemic was invaluable.*

*I would like to express my personal thanks to the hugely dedicated staff, who often went beyond what is required of them to assist our guests and service users.*

*We will continue to run Leighton Linslade Community Foodbank - providing support by the community for the community.*

*We will be putting out future statements explaining what we intend to do in the future. Information will be available on our website".*