

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BIGGLESWADE JOINT COMMITTEE
HELD VIA ZOOM MEETING ON THURSDAY, 9 JULY 2020**

Present: **BTC:** Cllr M Russell (Vice Chairman), Cllr M North, Cllr R Pullinger, Cllr M Knight, Cllr C Thomas
CBC: Cllr S Watkins, Cllr H Whitaker, Cllr I Bond, Cllr Mark Foster (Chairman)

In Attendance: **CBC Highways Asset Manager:** Paul Middleton
BTC Interim Deputy Town Clerk: Nina Villa
BTC Office Administrator: Mrs S van der Merwe
CBC Community Engagement: Sarah Hughes

Members of the public: **None**

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr M Foster was elected as Chairman.

2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Cllr M Russell was elected as Vice Chairman.

3. WELCOME NEW COUNCILLORS

Cllr M Knight, Cllr R Pullinger.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr H Ramsay (BTC), Mr G Jones (CBC).

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in any agenda item – None declared.
- b. Non-pecuniary interests in any agenda item – Cllr S Watkins, relating to the Leisure Facilities Strategy in his capacity as the Deputy Chairman on the Executive Committee.

6. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no members of public present.

7. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Cllr S Watkins in his role of outgoing Chairman (and prior to election of Cllr M Foster) wished to extend his thanks to all Members of the Committee and supporting parties for a successful year.

8. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Members received and approved the Minutes of the BJC held on 23rd January 2020.

9. S-106 – PROJECTS

Sarah Hughes clarified that this point refers to committee's interest in S106 monies nearing their spend by date. There are currently four contributions nearing that date:

- 1 Library – Mid Beds 2003
- 2 countryside (Mid Beds 2003 and 2005)
- 1 sports contribution (Mid Beds 2005)

The Library contribution of £14,000 has been secured for a refurbishment with emphasis on children's area and events. The two countryside contributions are secured by BRCC (working with CBC and in discussions with Shuttleworth Trust) relating to creation of a green link – from North of Mill lane to Hill Lane. As regards the sports contribution, discussions are still underway with BTC and were severely delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members were advised of a number of recent archaeological finds on the Saxon drive development and it was discussed that showcasing those at the library would be a great long-term community engagement effort. Cllr S Watkins and Cllr H Whitaker will work on this project.

10. HIGHWAYS PROJECTS

a. Chambers Way and Drove Road junctions (not listed)

Mr Middleton advised these projects have been pended but as part of COVID-19 response and initiatives from Central Government and the DFT regarding cycling initiatives, there is a proposed project for London Road (including Drove Road and Chambers Way) and they are awaiting details on that. Those two junctions will be assessed in line with the proposal for cycling improvements. Mr Middleton advised he would update the Committee with further details as they become available.

b. Kings Reach - Coach Road

Mr Middleton advised the original approved plan was that this was to be a through road. Developers have supplied drawings for houses on one side of the road and some prospective homeowners for a later phase were provided with different maps showing this to be a dead end. CBC are working with the Developer to reach consensus.

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c. Kings Reach – Maunder Avenue (whole length)

There are no safe footways and CBC and Cllr S Watkins are in discussions with the consortium lead about changing grass verges on both sides of the road to asphalt footpaths. Residents have raised a petition to do that which is now with the Developer.

d. Eagle Farm Road - bus turning

This was discussed in a recent TMM. Cllr I Bond advised he and Cllr S Watkins were present at the TMM. The decision was to combine Eagle Farm Road and Hitchmead projects. Mr Middleton said he would discuss this with Mr Salmon and would report back to the Committee separately.

e. Brigham Gardens

Mr Middleton advised this project has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic but confirmed it remains on the programme of works list.

f. Works coming up over the next year

- Cedar Avenue – Footway resurfacing;
- Dunton Lane – Surface dressing;
- Southill road – Retexturing;
- Drove Road – on the reserve list for carriageway resurfacing (additional funding from DFT for the reserve list has been secured);
- Crossing to be installed at Dunton Lane south (green wheel link).

Mr Middleton has also had some queries from the public about the crossings installed at the Swimming Pool roundabout on Saxon Drive to the green wheel. Well-established greenery on the roundabout is causing visibility issues which need to be addressed.

g. Rights of way works this year

- Three phases around Edward Peake: footpath on both left and right directions being resurfaced with ducting. Street lighting will be installed along stretches of the walkway;
- West Sunderland Farm bridleway 64;
- S106 Works at Orchard Close junction with Hitchmead Road;
- Temporary crossing went in earlier this week at Potton Road – the original crossing is being re-designed due to an issue with planning delivery.

Mr Middleton advised is waiting on prices for traffic signal replacements at Abbots Walk and two in the town centre.

Members expressed concern about a previously issued plan to clear any redundant assets and furniture in the Town Centre. Mr Middleton advised that delays were due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, this will be actioned in the near future.

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Members were updated on traffic issues on Planets Way - numerous incidents have occurred relating to speeding and the blind bend. Mr Middleton advised this is being built to technical approval - various traffic calming measures are in place and parking enforcement has now been permitted. He recommended waiting until the third access point is installed which should provide some relief to traffic flow on Planets Way.

Members commented on the fading of white lines on Saxon Drive in light of recent re-lining of Baden Powell Way and Chambers Way. Members asked Mr Middleton to investigate whether Saxon Drive can be added to the programme of works.

11. COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND DRAFTWORK PLAN 2020/2021

Members were invited to submit topics for forthcoming meetings and the following topics were discussed:

- The Health & Social Care Hub – whether a new doctor’s surgery is being planned for the new development and plans for health care within the community.
- The New Garden Community Project Board – The Town Council is tracking the ever-evolving housing infrastructure fund and various developments at different stages of planning. The Garden Community Board provides valuable feedback on progress.
- Transport interchange at the station – Cllr M Russell has attended meetings with Network Rail in the week before where they promised updated plans for the interchange and she requested they be forwarded to the Council too, but this has yet to be provided.
- Schools for the future for Biggleswade – updates have been requested but have not been forthcoming.
- Additional Joint Committee meetings to make up for those cancelled during the COVID-19 lockdown.
- Town Centre regeneration - Cllr H Whitaker asked that the Committee examine the Town Centre regeneration and what Central Beds can offer the town and how it can support businesses coming out of COVID-19 lockdown.
- Town Centre decluttering: Cllr S Watkins advised that Cllr S Dixon walked around the town centre with his transformation hat on and there have also been discussions with Marcel Coiffait. Wider discussions around the S106 funding allocated for the library is helpful but the long-term future of that facility in the current location would be considered in a longer-term project.

12. LEISURE FACILITIES STRATEGY UPDATE

Cllr S Watkins asked for feedback from Members based on plans included in the Agenda.

Members asked for a progress update around the planned 3G pitch for Biggleswade and what the leisure centre capacity will be with new developments in pipeline. Members were advised that a 3G

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pitch could be added to Stratton Upper School and there is opportunity to do more in the new development in the Land East development.

CBC uses the Sport England modelling system to project population growth and capacity. Where the projected population growth warrants, CBC can apply for additional funding for a new leisure centre. At present, Biggleswade are not in the position to apply for a new leisure centre but there is a need for additional short-term capacity, likely through the Saxon Centre. Cllr S Watkins explained that historically leisure centres are successful capital programmes for CBC because they generate an income, however, following the COVID-19 pandemic, this might not be the case.

Cllr S Watkins added that this will be presented at the next meeting in October.

13. POLICE UPDATE

Sarah Hughes advised Members that there is no current information to update Committee and has added future meetings to the police calendar to ensure we have access to up to date information.

14. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cllr M Russell updated Members on recent Neighbourhood Plan Group (NPG) activity:

- The Group is focused on putting plans in place for another round of consultation with the public to get their comments. The Group is working with Bedfordshire Rural Communities charity to help with public engagement and it is hoped this will be in place by September 2020.
- The NPG has been working with BRCC on their update to the green infrastructure plan (which is over 10 years old). Pre-lockdown, BRCC carried out a public engagement consultation about the green infrastructure plan as well as green spaces around town and which are the most important to members of the Community. The outcome of that engagement will feed into the Neighbourhood Development Plan and ultimately result in protection for those green spaces identified. BRCC will release that report in due course and additional engagement sessions are planned for September 2020.
- The NPG is working towards designating more land in the North (up to the Common) and South of Biggleswade as important countryside gaps to prevent coalescence with Langford and Sandy.
- In line with current Town Council policy, the NPG are working to designate land within the Parish to the East for housing and need a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This can be carried out by Aecom, in consultation with Dave Chetwyn from Urban Vision CIC, funded through a government grant.
- In addition to the Green Infrastructure Plan, there is the Biggleswade Town Centre Master Plan, the Town Plan and the Place Shaping Report prepared by David Edwards as evidence for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- David Edwards' Place Shaping Report highlighted that the biggest area of concern is East-West connectivity which is a reason why we have so many cars trying to access the town

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centre. UK Regeneration and Central Bedfordshire are both producing studies of alternative forms of transport. The Royal College of Art is working with the Transport Planning Society on a study "Our future places - our future journeys". The report is scheduled to be released by November 2020 and direct input from a variety of Biggleswade entities will form part of their report.

- Town Centre Regeneration: The NPG is looking at design guides for shop fronts and Urban Vision CIC is working on the technical aspects of this. The Group feels that further design guides need to include the planning of housing extensions, road widths and off-street parking.
- The formal stage of the Neighbourhood Plan process is a referendum where all electors in the Town can participate. Current government guidelines state that this can not happen until May 2021. The Neighbourhood Planning Consultant has challenged NPG to have the draft Neighbourhood Plan ready to begin the formal process in the New Year.

15. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The following resolution will be **moved** that it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press are **excluded** whilst the following exempt item issue is discussed.

No Exempt Items

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Committee **resolve** to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

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Approved: