



MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 28 JULY 2020
AT 7PM VIA ZOOM WEBINAR FUNCTION

PRESENT:

- Cllr D. Albone
- Cllr I. Bond
- Cllr K. Brown
- Cllr G. Fage (Vice Chairman)
- Cllr L. Fage
- Cllr F. Foster
- Cllr M Foster
- Cllr M. Knight
- Cllr M. North
- Cllr R. Pullinger
- Cllr H. Ramsay
- Cllr M. Russell (Chairman)
- Cllr D. Strachan
- Cllr C. Thomas
- Cllr J. Woodhead

- Mr P. Truppin – Acting Town Clerk, Biggleswade Town Council
- Ms N. Villa – Interim Deputy Town Clerk, Biggleswade Town Council
- Mrs S. van der Merwe – Meeting Administrator, Biggleswade Town Council

Members of Public – 8

Meeting Formalities:

Following a reminder to meeting attendees, both panel and public, that this is a formal meeting, the Mayor advised that members of the public will be given an opportunity to speak during public open session but not at other times. The meeting is being filmed and by being present attendees are deemed to have agreed be filmed and to the use of those images and sound recordings. The Mayor advised that attendees should not disclose any personal information of individuals as this would infringe the Data Protection Rights of the individual. The Mayor asked everyone to mute their microphones when not speaking.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

ABSENT WITHOUT APOLOGIES

None.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

3. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Station Accessibility Project

Network Rail have confirmed that the preferred option, as supported by Biggleswade Town Council, has now been endorsed by the Department for Transport (“DfT”). No further official signoff is required from the DfT, although they will be kept informed of progress via regular updates. The next stages are the detailed design and tendering for a contractor. The project team has set a challenging programme for implementation with work due to start in the summer of 2022 and the new access open in Winter 2022. Network Rail intend that the Biggleswade scheme should set a new benchmark for delivering successfully and safely at speed.

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

The IT Administrator advised members of the public wishing to speak to use the “raise hand” function on screen.

None.

5. INVITED SPEAKER

None.

6. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

- a. Town Centre De-Cluttering: Cllr G Fage asked if there was an update on receipt of the report. The Acting Town Clerk confirmed that the Town Centre Operations Manager has been liaising with the officer at CBC and whilst he is keen to proceed, this has not been provided to BTC despite numerous requests. Cllr Russell commented that the report is needed to ensure that the planned decluttering fits with the Neighbourhood Plan. The Interim Town Clerk requested assistance from Councillors in helping to get this request progressed.

It was **AGREED** that the Town Centre Operations Manager would copy Cllrs M Foster and I Bond into the existing chain of emails liaising with CBC Planning Officers to obtain a copy of the decluttering report for Biggleswade Town Centre.

7. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

Members received the minutes of the Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 14th July 2020**.

The following amendments were proposed:

- **Page 1:** Cllr North was not listed as being present.
- **Page 3: Item 5:** Second Paragraph: Cllr Russell requested a deletion of 3 words – “CBC’s design codes”. The sentence should read “There should be no conflict between the Neighbourhood Plan design codes and the Garden Community Projects”.
- **Page 4: Item 8.a.** Cllr Pullinger felt the minute does not accurately record what he asked. Members agreed to his recommended change: “He asked if it could be confirmed that risk assessments will be completed while the works are underway so that the centre can reopen once the floors are finished”.
- **Page 5: Item 9 b.:** Cllr L Fage queried the phrase “he will control the pitches”. Members agreed to change to “he will control his pitches”.
- **Page 7: Item 12 c.:** Cllr Russell requested that “Neighbourhood Planning Committee” be changed to “Neighbourhood Planning Group”.

Subject to these amendments, the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

8. MATTERS ARISING

Matters arising from the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting of **14th July 2020**.

- a. **Page 3: Item 6a.:** Parking Orders agreed February 2020: Cllr Knight said that the Interim Deputy Town Clerk was to email Councillors with an update re the parking orders agreed on 11 February 2020, but that Members had yet to receive this. The Interim Deputy Clerk agreed to send this on.

The Town Clerk said that he had sent a follow-up to Mr Marcel Coiffait (Central Bedfordshire Council Director of Community Services) on 15 July 2020. Despite several emails he has not yet received a response.

It was **AGREED** that Cllrs M Foster and I Bond would progress the issue of implementation with Mr. Coiffait.

- b. **Page 3: Item 6c.:** Public Toilets at Century House: Cllr G Fage requested an update on access to the public toilets. The Acting Town Clerk confirmed that the aim is for them to be fully opened on 3 August 2020, pending increased cleaning visits being implemented to comply with current government regulations.
- c. **Page 4: Item 8a.:** Orchard Centre Refurbishment: Cllr R Pullinger asked for an update on the scheduled re-flooring works at the Orchard Centre and the potential opening date of the Centre.

The Acting Town Clerk confirmed contractors are due in this week and following a “settlement period” the floor will be inspected for sign-off. If all goes well, the Acting Town Clerk believes it will be opened forthwith. Risk Assessments not already completed are being done but to give a firm date will depend on whether works proceed smoothly.

9. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

a. CB/20/02285/FULL - 41 Shortmead Street, Biggleswade, SG18 0AT

Conversion and extension to existing workshop with partial demolition to create two dwellings and erection of a detached barn cottage.

Cllr Pullinger said that although this is described as 41 Shortmead Street, this is the rear of 33 Shortmead Street which has been dealt with on a number of occasions and has been refused. In view of this, Members asked Cllr I Bond to call this application in.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council **OBJECT** to this planning application for the same reasons as previously.

1) Overdevelopment of the site; 2) The access to Shortmead Street will be compromised; 3) The privacy of neighbours will be compromised; 4) There is inadequate parking.

b. CB/20/02292/FULL - 10 Torquay Close, Biggleswade, SG18 0FS

New garage and garage conversion and link to existing extension.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application provided the neighbours are consulted and that any comments they may make are considered by CBC in their deliberations. In addition, the Council is to ensure that their guidelines on the size of the proposed dwelling are complied with to eliminate detriment in respect of light and privacy of adjacent residents.

c. CB/20/02410/FULL - 40 Potton Road, Biggleswade, SG18 0DZ

Double storey side and rear extension.

Cllr R Pullinger advised this relates to a change from 2 bedrooms to 3 bedrooms with two existing car spaces remaining. Cllr R Pullinger recommended registering a comment that there are concerns regarding access to on-street parking for any additional cars.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application provided the neighbours are consulted and that any comments they may make are considered by CBC in their deliberations. In addition, the Council is to ensure that their guidelines on the size of the proposed dwellings are complied with to eliminate detriment in respect of light and privacy of adjacent residents. The comment re access to on-street parking will be submitted.

10. ACCOUNTS

a. Financial Administration

Members received the Accounts for June 2020 and the following amendments were proposed:

Item 10a ii) Detailed Income & Expenditure Report:

Town Council Offices: The current Cleaning Costs balance on the Report was queried at the last meeting as it seemed high. Subsequent investigations highlighted that incorrect coding of the invoices had resulted in allocations that needed to be amended. The Acting Town Clerk tabled an amendment as follows:

- Town Council Offices: £3,245
- The Orchard Centre: £1,040
- Market Square Toilets: £3,950
- Stationery: £27.

The Acting Town Clerk committed to circulating an amended Income & Expenditure report confirming these changes.

Subject to these changes to the relevant budget codes, the Accounts for June 2020 were **RECEIVED AND ADOPTED**.

b. Internal Audit – Final Report 2019-20:

Members received the Internal Audit Final Report for 2019/2020.

Cllr Ramsay said that there were no issues raised in the report and expressed her thanks to the staff for their hard work.

Cllr G Fage commented that the audit report is complimentary of the way the accounts are coded. Given the previous item on the agenda, he questioned if they have conducted thorough checks since they have not highlighted the incorrect coding issue.

Cllr Russell commented that there is a recommendation regarding review of employee fidelity insurance and Cllr Ramsay confirmed this is being forwarded to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Members **RECEIVED** the 2019/2020 Internal Audit Report.

c. Accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 2020:

- i) Members **APPROVED** and **ADOPTED** the Annual Governance Statement of the annual return for the year ending 31 March 2020 and it was signed by the Chairman.
- ii) Members **APPROVED** and **ADOPTED** the 2019/2020 Accounts and Statement of Accounts contained in the Annual Return for 2019/2020 and they were signed by the Chairman.

11. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. BATPC County Committee:

Cllr Pullinger said this consultation appears to be well written but there is no mechanism for sanctions or enforcement built into the Code of Conduct to govern how those in breach of the Code of Conduct will be dealt with.

Cllr Pullinger questioned when the Code would apply – it is clear that it definitely applies when someone is acting or says they are acting as a Councillor. There is a grey area around when the Councillor is acting in a personal capacity. Many Councillors try to separate their personal social media profiles and their Councillor social media profiles. The consensus of Members was that Councillors should behave with the same level of discretion regardless.

It was **RESOLVED** to respond that Members have an issue with the lack of sanctions where there is a breach of the Code and therefore a lack of ability to enforce the Code of Conduct.

b. Central Bedfordshire Local Plan

Central Bedfordshire Council has submitted further documents to the Planning Inspectorate regarding the emerging Local Plan and is now consulting on those documents.

Cllr G Fage said that the Town Council should be very clear and re-state its position as held for the last two years, even where specific issues are not overtly part of the consultation. He said that some of the Council's decisions have not been easy in that they relate to loss of green space but they are necessary to control the future growth of the town. He therefore made the following proposal:

- The Council supports economic development to the south of the town: between the East Coast mainline and the A1(M) and with easy access to the road network, it is a realistic site for economic development and will bring benefits to the town in the form of high-skilled employment.
- The proposed bridge across the A1 will support the Green Wheel and is to be welcomed.
- The Council continues to support residential development to the east of the town. The first 1,500 units are now a strategic site following the grant of outline planning permission.
- Appendix 7 should not be removed from the Plan as it relates to Biggleswade. The further 5,000 houses are in the most sustainable place.
- The Countryside Gaps should not be removed from the Plan to prevent negative impact on Biggleswade Common and to prevent coalescence with Sutton, Dunton and Sandy.
- The Town Council is very disappointed that HAS06 still appears to be included in the Emerging Plan and still strongly objects to this allocation.

All the above are consistent with positions the Town Council has held in the past.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Council respond to the consultation as proposed.

It was further **RESOLVED** to request clarification from Central Bedfordshire Council as to the location of the proposed bridge over the A1 and whether the bridge is planned to be a bridle bridge or a footbridge.

It was also agreed that the Council should write to Richard Fuller MP to request his support on these issues.

c. **Public Notice – Biggleswade Footpath 33 – Extension of Temporary Closure (Temporary Prohibition of Through Traffic) Order 2020**

Cllr R Pullinger said there is not much that can be done as it has already been extended.

This item was **NOTED**.

d. **Public Notice – Biggleswade Footpath 36 – Temporary Prohibition of through Traffic Order 2020**

Members commented on the length of time stipulated for the works to be completed but noted that this was standard practice in order to give extra time in the event of delays.

This item was **NOTED**.

e. **New Website:**

Cllr G Fage commented this is quite urgent due to new regulations coming into force in the autumn.

It was **RESOLVED** to set up a Working Group with the following members: Cllr Pullinger (Chairman), Cllr Knight, Cllr G Fage, Cllr Thomas, Cllr Russell to work with the Office Manager.

12. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Trader Consultation of Market Policy/Rules & Regulations**

Following the consultation with Market Traders, there were two suggestions from the Traders.

It was **AGREED** to **ADOPT** the Market Policy in its current form with the Town Centre Operations Manager monitoring the two issues raised by Traders and reporting back to Cllr G Fage as Chairman of the Town Centre Management Committee should the policy need to change in light of those concerns.

b. **CB/TRE/20/00373 – Works to Trees – Holme Woods, London Road, Biggleswade, SG18 9SS**

This item was **NOTED**.

c. **Certificate of Appreciation:**

This item was **NOTED**.

Members requested this be put on the website for members of the public to see.

13. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

To adjourn for a period of up to 15 minutes to allow members of the public to put questions or to address the Council, through the Chairman, in respect of any other business of the Town Council.

a. **Cllr Steve Watkins (Central Bedfordshire Ward Councillor):**

Cllr S Watkins praised the Town Council on its mature approach to the Local Plan. He commented that the Council has identified areas of support, areas it is more critical of and built an impressive strategy. This is a credit to the Town Council and it is great to hear the positive approach to this.

14. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

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

- a. **Staffing Matters:** The Interim Deputy Clerk gave a verbal Report.
- b. **Update on appointment of the new Town Clerk:** The Interim Deputy Clerk gave a verbal report.

The Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to appoint Peter Tarrant as Town Clerk, subject to references.

- c. **VE/VJ Day:** Members considered contractual implications of the plans for VE/VJ Day activities.