



MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 14 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

Ms N Villa – Interim Deputy Town Clerk, Biggleswade Town Council
Mrs S van der Merwe – Meeting Administrator, Biggleswade Town Council

Members of Public – 6, including 3 Biggleswade Town Council Staff

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

Philip Truppin (Acting Town Clerk).

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**

None.

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**

Ms Lynsey Hillman-Gamble, Strategic Planner from CBC, gave an introduction to the Garden Community Project and progress so far. The presentation slides were to be circulated after the meeting.

The Government has published some high-level principles of what a garden community should encompass:

Clear identity	Sustainable scale	Well-designed places	Great homes
Local vision and engagement	Transport	Healthy places	Green space
	Legacy and stewardship arrangements	Future proofed	

Cornerstone Developments Ltd has been appointed to manage the project. The first phase is to identify characteristics of the area and to interpret the high-level principles for Biggleswade. This is the first of a series of engagements with BTC around this project and there will be engagement with the Neighbourhood Planning group and other local groups for their input. There will also be a review of what has gone well and what has not gone well in recent developments and learning those lessons.

Cllr G Fage expressed interest in the high-level aspect of this development and asked if there is an expectation of any further guidance/restrictions nationally that will set the tone for what is expected. Ms Hillman-Gamble said not specifically in relation to garden community in general - the ten published principles will be used to guide development but with a specific focus on what Biggleswade needs. She explained that, as you drill down, some ideas might have more impact than others. At the same time, the work will be used as an opportunity to learn about how the principles can be used in other future developments in Central Bedfordshire. Homes England are pleased with progress so far.

Cllr H Ramsay asked whether a full range of homes will be provided for all age groups and circumstances. She also asked if the Garden Community Project could guarantee that there will be long-term transport links to the development. Ms Hillman-Gamble responded that the local plan makes provision for 1500 homes with outline planning permission having been approved with a variety of accommodation types and styles, including affordable housing. CBC are keen to investigate transport linkages for this proposal and the rest of the town and to encourage the community to use alternative transport – walking, cycling and bus. This is a key concern but CBC acknowledges that it requires realistic thinking. Cllr H Ramsay asked about disabled access to properties across all ages. Ms Hillman-Gamble confirmed that this has been factored in.

Cllr M Russell added that design codes are important and there should be no conflict between the Neighbourhood Plan design codes and the Garden Community Project's. Ms Hillman-Gamble added that she appreciates that a collaborative approach with the Neighbourhood Planning Group would be mutually beneficial.

6. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

- a. Cllr M Knight: on 11 Feb BTC agreed amended parking fees. Given that charges will be reintroduced from 1st August 2020, Cllr M Knight asked for an update on the consultation to change the Parking Orders as he believes that the changes need to be implemented swiftly. The Interim Deputy Clerk agreed to circulate an update.
- b. Cllr G Fage: Decluttering was discussed at the Town Centre Management informal meeting. The Council is expecting a report on decluttering from CBC and Cllr G Fage asked when that might be available. The Interim Deputy Town Clerk agreed to provide an update by email. Cllr M Russell said that she had asked for an update at the Joint Committee Meeting on 9th July 2020.
- c. Cllr R Pullinger asked if the Interim Deputy Clerk could update Members on when the public toilets at Century House will be open. There was a recent complaint that a disabled member of the community was unable to access the toilet with a radar key and Cllr R Pullinger asked if disabled access could be prioritised.

Cllr D Albone said he had emailed the Clerk about disabled access and was told the facility was open for those with a radar key. The Interim Deputy Clerk agreed to circulate an update as soon as possible.

- d. Cllr J Woodhead referred to the Government's "Eat out to help out scheme" to stimulate the hospitality sector and asked if there was any information on which local businesses, if any, have signed up to it. It was agreed this should be promoted to the benefit of town residents and hospitality businesses.

7. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

Members received the minutes of the Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 23rd June 2020** via Zoom online webinar.

The following amendment was proposed:

- Page 4 – 11b: Cllr G Fage asked for the words "potentially misleading" to be removed.

Subject to this amendment, the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

8. **MATTERS ARISING**

Matters arising from the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting of **23rd June 2020**.

- a. Page 2: Cllr R Pullinger: Item 6a: Cllr R Pullinger believes the work on the floor at the Orchard Centre is starting tomorrow and will take up to 2 weeks. 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. The Interim Deputy Clerk confirmed that it would be.
- b. Page 3: Cllr M Knight: Item 8a: Cllr M Knight understood that a new defibrillator had been ordered and asked for an update on when this would be installed. The Interim Deputy Clerk agreed she would circulate an update as soon as she had spoken to the Acting Town Clerk.

9. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

- a. **CB/20/02020/ADV - Land adjacent to Unit 2 (Plot 3 Phase 5), Juno Place, Stratton Business Park, Biggleswade, SG18 8XP**

Advertisement: To permit the use of signage in two locations on the main building, plus the use of flagpoles and a totem.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this Planning Application.

- b. **CB/20/01989/FULL - 78 Hitchin Street, Biggleswade, SG18 8BE**

Single storey rear extension, Two storey front extension, removal of chimney, alterations to existing garage roof and additional alterations to existing dwelling.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this Planning Application providing 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.

- c. **CB/20/02151/FULL - 184 Hitchin Street, Biggleswade, SG18 8BP**

Create dropped kerb for easier vehicular access to driveway.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this Planning Application.

- d. **CB/20/02172/FULL - Little Acre One, Langford Road, Biggleswade, SG18 9JU**

Siting of 4 static and 4 mobile caravans with new separate cross over/vehicular access and change of use of land.

Cllr H Ramsay asked whether this site is limited to the number of pitches available since other families have joined since the original planning permission.

Cllr L Fage said that the landowner has purchased extra land (between back of Football club and his home). He will control his pitches, has cleared the fly tipping that was on site and only mobile caravans will be parked there. The landowner is not legally obliged to declare this on the planning permission, but he wants everything to be up-front and transparent. People will be living in the static caravans, not the mobile. Cllr M Russell asked whether this was the original site owner who removed all the trees. Cllr L Fage confirmed that it was and added that he has planted a number of conifers.

Cllr G Fage walked the site and said that the owner takes pride in the site, it is well maintained, has a stone drive and is tidier than it has been in the past.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this Planning Application.

e. **CB/20/02239/FULL - 3 Apple Tree Close, Biggleswade, SG18 8NF**

Proposed timber-framed home office.

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.

10. **ACCOUNTS**

- a. None

11. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Market Update**

The Market Policy had been circulated and Members discussed any final revisions, whether Market Traders should be consulted and any applicable consultation lead time with them.

It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Market Policy as agreed with effect from 1st August 2020, subject to consultation with the Market Traders. Should there be substantive feedback, the policy to be brought back to Council on 28th July 2020.

b. **Electoral Review of Central Bedfordshire Council: Draft Recommendations**

There was support for 5 Ward Councillors as Biggleswade is a growing town. There was discussion about the need to change the parish boundary but that should not be conflated with the present consultation. There was also criticism of the consultation document, which did not give clarity about the specific changes being made.

It was **RESOLVED** that Council accept both the Central Bedfordshire and Town Council ward boundaries as proposed by Central Bedfordshire Council.

c. **Parking Controls**

The Interim Deputy Clerk provided Members with an update on resumption of parking charges on 1st August 2020.

The Town Centre Operations Manager had provided the Interim Deputy Clerk with the status of all the ticket machines and this will be circulated by email to Members. The software issues are being addressed with the service provider's newly appointed Area Service Manager and the Data System Engineer and the Local Engineer will be working on the machines on Monday 20 July 2020. The potential for compensation for the poor levels of service we have received will be investigated.

Additionally, Officers have looked at the parking permit issue and propose a potential solution that when permits are renewed, allowance should be made for the period of non-enforcement due to lockdown. Any complaints should be dealt with by the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of Town Centre Management.

Members were advised that laminated notices of the resumption of parking charges in the Car Parks from 1st August 2020 are already in place, following a request by Members at the meeting of 23rd June 2020.

It was **RESOLVED** to make allowance for period of non-enforcement and that the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of Town Centre Management, should deal with any complaints.

It was also **RESOLVED** that the Interim Deputy Clerk circulate the Town Centre Operations Manager's report to Members for their information.

d. **Diversion of Footpath 24 Biggleswade**

Members were advised that this diversion will allow for the building of new flats for disabled housing.

It was **RESOLVED** to ask Central Bedfordshire Council for further clarification on this point as it is not clear what is being asked of Biggleswade Town Council.

e. **Diversion of Footpath 30 Biggleswade**

Members discussed this notice and expressed their concern that this is along a very popular dog walking, cycling and pedestrian route.

This item was **NOTED**.

12. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Planning Application Outcomes:**

Cllr H Ramsay commented on the number of items still "under discussion". Cllr M Foster advised that there were delays due to COVID-19.

Cllr R Pullinger commented that Bonds Lane is still showing as “awaiting decision” and asked for an update on whether BTC has received a response from the letter we agreed to write to CBC Planning. Cllr I Bond advised Members he has been asking about this on and off since it came to DMC in July 2019 – the reason this has been delayed is because the S106 agreement hasn’t been signed, although his last communication with CBC Planning indicates this is imminent.

Cllr M Russell commented that she is pleased to see the mast that was objected to by Members was rejected.

Members **NOTED** this updated.

b. **Crime Statistics – June 2020:**

Cllr D Strachan commented that there were a large number of crimes reported showing a disturbing trend of Section 4 crimes (physical intimidation, harassment, provocation of violence). Cllr D Strachan proposed asking the Local Inspector of Police to identify whether this is a knock-on of COVID-19.

Members discussed the format of the data presented, preferring a “rolling” report which would easily highlight trends over a longer period and provide a summary. Should the Police not be able to accommodate this request, it was felt that expertise amongst Councillors could help if provided with the raw, backdated data.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr D Strachan should contact the Inspector of Police on the Section 4 crime trend and the possibility of providing a more user-friendly report showing trends.

c. **Our Future Places, Our Future Journeys:**

The Royal College of Art and the Transport Planning Society together with Local Councils is looking at public transport solutions of the future and, at short notice, asked BTC to partner with them so that Biggleswade is one of the focuses of their Study.

The Neighbourhood Planning Group will work with The Royal College of Art to identify groups that have as wide a representation of the local demographic as possible and invite them to participate in an online survey. This consultation and the results of the study will also form part of the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan.

This item was **NOTED**.

d. **Grants 2020 – 2021 – Thank you letter:**

Letter from Biggleswade Scout Group for their windows project grant support.

This item was **NOTED**.

e. **Neighbourhood Planning Update:**

Cllr M Russell updated the Members on progress of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr G Fage commented that focus should be maintained on the primary aims of the Neighbourhood Plan to prevent delay to the timeline of delivery of the Plan.

Cllr M Russell added that the Future Places consultation should be concluded by November 2020 and any land take for alternative forms of transport could be included in the Plan.

If the draft plan is ready by the end of the year, the formal stages could be programmed from January with the target of a referendum in May 2021.

f. **Market Update**

Cllr G Fage expressed thanks to Simon Newton (Town Centre Operations Manager) for getting the Market back up and running on time and for providing the report for Councillors. However, he commented on the small number of traders at the Market and added that we need all traders to return as soon as possible for the viability of the Market.

Cllr M Russell said that she had had a complaint from a retailer about the number of parking spaces taken up for such a small number of stalls.

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.

None.

14. EXEMPT ITEMS

- a. **Costings for Town Centre Events:** The Town Centre Operations Manager provided a confidential report to the Members.
- b. **Update on appointment of the new Town Clerk:** The Interim Deputy Clerk gave a verbal report.
- c. **Costings for Town Centre Events:** The Town Centre Operations Manager provided a confidential report to the Members.

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.