



MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC LANDS & OPEN SPACES MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 24th NOVEMBER 2020 AT 7PM
VIA ZOOM WEBINAR



PRESENT:

Cllr F Foster (Chairman)
Cllr L Fage (Vice Chairman)
Cllr K Brown
Cllr G Fage
Cllr M Foster
Cllr M Knight
Cllr M North
Cllr M Russell
Cllr D Strachan
Cllr C Thomas
Cllr H Ramsay, Cllr R Pullinger (non-Committee Members)

Mr P Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr P Truppin – Assistant Town Clerk, Biggleswade Town Council
Mrs S van der Merwe – Professional Assistant, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr B Catchpole – Public Realm Manager, Biggleswade Town Council

Members of Public – 3

Meeting Formalities:

Following a reminder to meeting attendees, both panel and public, that this is a formal meeting, the Chairman 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 Chairman advised that attendees should not disclose any personal information of individuals as this would infringe the Data Protection Rights of the individual. The Chairman 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. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

The Chairman advised Members of the public wishing to speak to use the “raise hand” function on screen.

Mr Terry Domagala, Chairman of the Biggleswade Allotment Association

Mr Domagala advised Members that access to the allotments has been challenging since building work began on the Taylor Wimpey site. Initially the Developer promised a separate road would be installed leading towards the allotment site, however, this has not been built and allotment holders have been unable to leave the site for considerable lengths of time. The Chairman confirmed that this matter would be looked in to.

4. **MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

Members received the Minutes of the Public Lands & Open Spaces Meeting held on **Tuesday 18th February 2020**.

- Item 7a: Correction from “Ashly Gardens” to “Ashley Gardens”.
- Item 9: Misplaced apostrophe on the final page.

Subject to these changes, the Minutes of the Public Lands & Open Spaces Meeting held on **Tuesday 18th February 2020** were **APPROVED**.

5. **MATTERS ARISING**

Matters arising from the Minutes of the Public Lands & Opens Spaces Committee Meeting of **18th February 2020**.

a. Cllr Steve Watkins has updated the Chairman that Biggleswade United Football Club have applied for a Community Assets Grant for lighting which has been approved and they have successfully applied for 63% partnership funding from the Football Association.

b. **Item 6a – The Great Outdoor Gym Company:** Cllr Strachan asked for an update on whether quotes and information have been obtained. The Public Realm Manager advised he has quotes and will provide these at the next meeting.

Cllr G Fage added that this could potentially be funded by the S106 monies at the Town Council’s discretion.

c. **Item 7a - Jubilee Recreation Ground:** Cllr M Foster asked what actions have been taken for this minuted item. This related to fencing installed between Ashley Gardens and Jubilee Gardens by the developer. The Public Realm Manager confirmed he had spoken with the resident after the last meeting but will ask for an update from the Developers as a matter of urgency.

6. **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Public Realm Equipment**

The Public Realm Manager updated Members on the status of the current Public Realm equipment. Overall, the equipment needs replacing - the majority of the equipment is not for commercial use, is not safe or in some cases, not fit for purpose. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed that some of the equipment needed is specialist in nature and a number of quotes for those specialist items are being sourced. These will be submitted to the next Town Council meeting on 8 December 2020.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed that the cost of replacing the equipment will be funded from the capital reserve but, going forward, this will be added to the Asset Register and will be regularly reviewed and future replacement costs will be built into annual budgets.

b. **Public Realm Depot**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive reaffirmed to Members that this project remains a top priority and a report will be submitted to Town Council Meeting of 8 December 2020, clearly setting out a cost analysis for building a workshop versus leasing local premises. Once the Town Council has made its decision this will be actioned swiftly.

The Assistant Town Clerk updated Members on his search for a potential lease property and a number of agents are actively searching on the Council's behalf following provision of a clear, structured specification of the Public Realm needs.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive will be viewing two properties within the week with the priority being to find premises within Biggleswade.

c. **Drove Road Cemetery and Chapel**

The Public Realm Manager will be meeting with a chartered surveyor next week to ensure that a full scope of works is identified before requesting estimates.

Cllr Russell is a trustee of Beds & Herts Historic Churches Trust, whose members advocate for a number of medieval churches with significant damp problems. Cllr Russell explained that the usual manner of dealing with damp in a chapel of this type is to install a French drain and she asked if Hawkins Historic would consider installing a French drain before resorting to removing the tarmac which is a costly fix.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive and Public Realm Manager updated Members on a number of concerns relating to work to the front wall, damage to the gates and the poor quality of the railings which need replacement. Significant work has already been carried out to clear a number of trees from the site which were of significant concern.

Previous reports of antisocial behaviour reported to the Town Clerk & Chief Executive and Public Realm Manager by local residents have been addressed by securing a fence and cutting back hedges to aid visibility. All incidents of antisocial behavior occurring on this site (where these have been reported to the Town Council) have been reported to the Police.

Cllr Bond updated Members he is making enquiries of records held at the County Records Society and the Historical Society to help inform sympathetic construction for the repairs project.

Suggested uses put forward for commercial use of the chapel included non-consecrated use by a Funeral service, a humanist or non-denominational church or a business.

d. **Staff update**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed a job description and person specification is being prepared for the position of a Deputy Works Manager in preparation for recruitment.

Carl Rummey was recently appointed to Charge Hand and this has made a clear difference to supporting the Public Realm Manager, the Public Realm team and the work of the Town Council.

e. **Stratton Way Cemetery**

The Public Realm Manager confirmed that work is still being done around the proposed signage and planters and he will be investigating other cemeteries' Memorial Garden offerings in the coming months to submit ideas to the Council.

Cllr Knight updated the Committee that CBC has been working on the footpath along the north boundary and during the course of that work, an area adjacent to the path has become churned mud as a result of machines traversing through. Cllr Knight expressed concerns that there is a risk of someone sliding on that patch if action is not taken. The Public Realm Manager proposed to investigate.

f. **Allotments**

Plans for a notice board/map display and bays for recycled materials are still progressing and will be presented at the next Public Lands and Open Spaces Committee meeting.

The sieve will be brought in at the end of February into March to work on improving soil quality.

Cllr D Strachan commented on Mr. Domagala's allotment access concerns raised in the public open session and Members supported formally reviewing the access controls issued by Central Bedfordshire Council to Taylor Wimpey and engaging them formally on those, together with safety issues reported to the Town Council by allotment holders. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive confirmed that Officers and Administration staff have been in regular contact with Taylor Wimpey and Professional Assistant Sian van der Merwe joined the meeting to advise on the history and the ongoing contacts involved.

g. **Tree Inventory**

The Public Realm Manager advised the tree inventory has been completed and he is expecting the final quotes which will be submitted to a future Town Council meeting. These should include the work needed (where identified) and a regular maintenance plan.

One recent issue is a report received from an insurance company for a tree on Magnolia Place (off Heather Drive) claiming that the trees are causing subsidence to a neighbouring property. It is unclear whether those trees were *in situ* before the neighbouring properties were built. The Public Realm Manager has sent the report to the Town Council's insurers and is awaiting their advice. Cllr Bond encouraged him to invite Pat Longland (Central Bedfordshire Council Trees & Landscape Officer) to inspect these trees for a second opinion before any plans are made to remove them.

Cllr L Fage asked the Public Realm Manger to inspect and manage a tree on the walkway from Ashley Gardens, where a pathway has been created and leads directly to a fence, with a tree on the other side. Cllr Knight reminded the Committee that no decision had been made around removal of the fence and discussion should be had with the Developer around whether that needs removing at a future meeting.

h. **New ways of working / manging projects**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed the Programme Plan is now complete which has identified a clear schedule of works over the year, and which will inform Public Realm projects going forwards. The incumbent Deputy Works Manager will have clear Project Management skills showing deliverables.

The Town Clerk extended his thanks to the Public Realm team for their commitment during the COVID lockdown and with everything they have achieved.

7. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

None.

8. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

Cllr Hazel Ramsay (not a committee member) suggested that the left-hand unconsecrated chapel at the Drove Road Cemetery could be used for non-Christian, Humanist or non-religious funeral services.

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

9. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

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.

None.

10. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

Although this item was not on the agenda, it was moved to exempt following a request by the Town Clerk & Chief Executive.

a. **Biggleswade Town Council assets and green spaces**

Members and Officers discussed the need to understand the distinction between Biggleswade Town Council assets and green spaces, which information could be used in support of Local Plan provisions, as well as CBC-owned green spaces and assets which Biggleswade Town Council could potentially have a say in how those are managed and/or disposed of to support the Community.