



MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 8TH DECEMBER 2020
AT 7PM VIA ZOOM WEBINAR FUNCTION

PRESENT:

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

Mr P. Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr P. Truppin – Assistant Town Clerk, Biggleswade Town Council
Ms H Calvert – Deputy Office Manager, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr Bob Catchpole – Public Realm Manager, Biggleswade Town Council
Mrs S. van der Merwe – Meeting Administrator, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr D Kemp – Managing Director & Principal Consultant – DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd

Members of Public – 5

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

a. **National Transport Planning Conference**

Cllr Russell attended this virtual conference on 16 November, where the keynote speaker was Rachel McLean MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Transport. The Royal College of Arts and the Transport Planning Society jointly presented the results of their “Our future place, our future journey” consultation, which included Biggleswade. Cllr Russell has since been contacted by the Transport Planning Society to use the toolkit developed to look at Biggleswade in further detail, in particular people’s aspirations for the town. This could be an important source of engagement with residents to help with planning future services, however, funding needs to be found and Cllr Russell is waiting to hear more on what would be involved.

b. **The Examination in public of Central Bedfordshire Draft Local Plan**

The Town Council submitted its Hearing Statement and Cllr Russell did not expect to contribute further on behalf of the Council, however, Cllr Russell was able to give direct input on the Holme Farm and New Spring Farm issues and made three points to the Inspector: loss of the only arable land left within the Parish, the requirements for improvements to access to the A1 and questioned the viability of Holme Farm given the large amount of infrastructure required for alternative transport to the site, including improvements to national cycle route 12 (resurfacing and lighting) and a bridle bridge over the A1.

c. **NALC Presentation**

Biggleswade Town Council was approached by NALC to be the subject of a 2-day study visit by NALC members to look at the Town Council’s involvement in strategic planning, considering the recent growth in Biggleswade. This study was cancelled due to COVID-19, but Cllr Russell and the Town Clerk & Chief Executive have been invited to present a webinar at the end of January entitled: “In Conversation, Biggleswade’s Strategic Planning for Larger Projects”. The webinar is sold out and Members will be updated in due course.

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

Mr Tobin Stephenson, Head of Service of the Meeting the Accommodation Needs of Older People (MANOP) at Central Bedfordshire Council, presented on care facilities within Biggleswade and surrounding areas, to help formulate a response to the consultation on Abbotsbury Care Home.

CBC reviews supply and demand statistics for independent living and care facilities to plan for future service provision in the local area. Three care homes were recently closed and residents re-homed in other local facilities. The two remaining facilities are Alison House in Sandy and Abbotsbury in Biggleswade. Central Bedfordshire Council are building two new facilities and will manage and own these.

Central Bedfordshire Council's research suggests there is enough care capacity within the Ivel Valley area up to 2027, should Abbotsbury close. Central Bedfordshire Council has opened its own company for the longer term in order to provide care for older people at the financial level that the Council can afford.

Abbotsbury Care Home is currently a Central Bedfordshire Council placement facility and in the event it does close, the MANOP team have a tried, tested and established process for dealing with moving residents that is determined by the needs of the resident.

6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

- a. **Buttercup Mead** (near Chambers way junction): Cllr Albone advised a fence has been removed by the Developer as it was in a poor state of repair. However, the play area fencing now only has three sides. The Public Realm Manager will investigate this.

White Hart Car Park: Cllr Albone is concerned about pedestrian safety following removal of all the fencing on the traffic circle. Members were updated that these were removed by CBC following government funding to help stop the spread of coronavirus and were removed without any consultation with the Town Council. Concerns were expressed for pedestrians when there are large events on the square with large crowds. Those were in place to guide pedestrians to safe crossing points and future Town Centre events may need consideration of temporary fencing, barriers or pedestrian crossing monitors.

Town centre cycle parking: Cllr Albone asked if CBC are going to replace cycle parking in the town centre. Cllr G Fage confirmed they are due to be replaced with similar cycle parking racks to those outside Peacocks.

Tennis Courts: Cllr Knight noted from the Town Council's Facebook page that the tennis courts have been reopened, but only on weekdays. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed the courts will be opened all week, including weekend days.

Cllr Woodhead extended his thanks to staff for all their effort in getting the light show and Christmas events. He has spoken to shop keepers and Town people and all the events have been well received. The variety and difference to the usual Christmas offerings of the past is welcome.

7. **MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

- a. Members received and **APPROVED** the minutes of the Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 10th November 2020** via Zoom Webinar.

8. **MATTERS ARISING**

Matters arising from the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting of **10th November 2020**.

- **Item 5: Transport Interchange:** Cllr Strachan asked if there was an update on the planning application which was due to be submitted on 1 December 2020. Cllr Russell advised Members that Ward Councillors and Town Council representatives had attended a workshop with Central Bedfordshire Council officers. An option was presented which showed that highways officers have really taken on board the feedback from Biggleswade Councillors and the public.

9. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

- a. **CB/20/04034/FULL - 8 Kittiwake Close, Biggleswade, SG18 8HH**

Single storey front extension and porch.

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.

- b. **CB/20/03396/FULL - Biggleswade United Football Club, Second Meadow, Fairfield Road, Biggleswade, SG18 0AA**

Replace current four floodlight stanchions with four new floodlight stanchions in each corner of the football ground.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application.

- c. **CB/20/04125/FULL - The Annexe, 148B Drove Road, Biggleswade, SG18 0HP**

Retrospective planning permission for annexe.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application.

- d. **CB/20/03566/FULL - 168 Drove Road, Biggleswade, SG18 0HP**

Revised Plan: Garage conversion and modification of roof structure to provide loft room/storage.

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.

e. **CB/20/04148/FULL - 16 Gale Drive, Biggleswade, SG18 0JQ**

Change of use from Home office garage to Home Hairdressers.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application provided that 1) CBC consult and notify every neighbour, 2) No signage to be installed or fitted outside this address, 3) Subject to adherence of operating hours as stipulated in the application.

f. **CB/20/04279/FULL - 40 Courtlands Drive, Biggleswade, SG18 8PQ**

Proposed Single Storey Front Extension.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application provided consideration is taken particularly to the effect on the adjoining property.

g. **CB/20/03616/FULL - 2 - 6 High Street, Biggleswade, SG18 0JA**

Alterations to courtyard involving demolition of existing single storey outbuildings, repairs to existing boundary wall and addition of security fence.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application.

h. **CB/20/04221/FULL - 63 High Street, Biggleswade, SG18 0JH**

Resubmission of planning application CB/20/02609/FULL Conversion of existing bank to physiotherapy clinic at ground floor and residential flats above. Construction of new residential block to rear. Change of use.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application provided:1) Central Bedfordshire Council conduct a noise assessment and take due consideration of impact of noise from business next door. 2) The residents are aware that in terms of Biggleswade Town Council's parking permit policy, there will be no eligibility for resident parking permits. 3) The physiotherapy clinic will be eligible for worker permits.

i. **CB/20/04222/LB - 63 High Street, Biggleswade, SG18 0JH**

Listed Building: Conversion of existing bank to physiotherapy clinic at ground floor and residential flats above. Construction of new residential block to rear.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application provided:1) Central Bedfordshire Council conduct a noise assessment and take due consideration of impact of noise from business next door. 2) The residents are aware that in terms of Biggleswade Town Council's parking permit policy, there will be no eligibility for resident parking permits. 3) The physiotherapy clinic will be eligible for worker permits.

j. **CB/20/03884/FULL - 8 Parry Rise, Biggleswade, SG18 8FU**

Revised application: Single storey rear extension and part garage conversion.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council remains of the view that there is insufficient off-street parking as a result of the part garage conversion and requires further clarification as to whether this planning application meets the standards set by CBC for off street parking for

the property. Assurances need to be obtained from CBC that these standards have been met. Correspondence to be sent to the respective planning officer for advice on the matter, a further comment therefrom may be forthcoming from the Town Council.

k. **CB/20/04266/ADV - Land at Phase 6 Stratton Business Park East of Pegasus Drive, Biggleswade**

Advertisement: 3 x Fascia 1x Roof Identification Sign 2 x Main Statement Sign 6 x Directional Sign 1 x Building Specific Signs.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **No Objection** provided that: 1) Neighbours are consulted and that any comments they make are considered by CBC in their deliberations.

l. **CB/20/04412/LB - 29 Market Square, Biggleswade, SG18 8AQ**

Listed Building: Hand painted 'Seasons Kitchen' logo on existing fascia above front door. Hand painted fascia's above windows x 2 displaying the words 'Fruit & Vegetables, Groceries, Cheese, Charcuterie'; and replacement canvas for existing canopies with 'Seasons Kitchen' logo x 2.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has No Objection to this planning application provided that neighbours are consulted and that any comments they make are considered by CBC in their deliberations.

m. **CB/20/04413/LB - 29 Market Square, Biggleswade, SG18 8AQ**

Listed Building: Installation of a staircase from the ground floor into the basement to enable the use of the basement as additional shop floor, removal of the kitchenette on the first floor & installation of a kitchen on the second floor.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has No Objection to this planning application provided that neighbours are consulted and that any comments they make are considered by CBC in their deliberations.

10. ACCOUNTS

a. Members received and **ADOPTED** the following accounts:

- i. Detailed Balance Sheet to 31/10/2020.
- ii. Summary Income and Expenditure by Committee 31/10/2020.
- iii. Detailed Income and Expenditure by Committee 31/10/2020.
- iv. Lloyds Bank Payment listing October 2020.

11. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. **Review of Financial Regulations**

The Assistant Town Clerk reminded Council this item had been deferred from the last Council meeting. Members had requested a comparison of previous Council regulations adopted December 2019 and these new proposed Council regulations.

Members discussed interpretation of the wording of Regulation 5.7 for Grants. This Regulation covers giving of grants to other organisations where there is a finite budget. These grants are currently recommended by the F&GP Committee and approved by Council.

For Regulations 6.17 authority has already been given for credit card applications, the Town Council has chosen not to apply for one.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree to the changes set out in the report to Financial Regulations 4.1, 6.17 and 14.2 as recommended and for Financial Regulation 5.7 to remain as it was originally.

b. **Public Realm Equipment**

The Public Realm Manager's report set out 3 quotations for specific commercial-grade equipment to be used for grounds maintenance. This had been shared with the Public Lands & Open Spaces Committee meeting on 24 November. The current Public Realm equipment is unfit for use, outdated and in some cases, dangerous to use. The equipment quoted has been selected based on quality, specification for use and reliability of brand. The recommendation is to accept the suggestions set out in the report.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed that purchase of this equipment will only be made once a depot has been obtained to ensure safe storage of the equipment.

Cllr Woodhead underlined the need for appropriate training to be provided to the staff to ensure correct and safe handling, which would ensure longevity in the equipment.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the Public Realm Manager's recommendations with the provision that the equipment is purchased after we have a depot to store it in safely and training is provided for staff on use of the equipment.

c. **Central Bedfordshire Council proposes to introduce Disabled Parking Spaces and amend Residents parking bays and waiting restrictions in Back Street, Biggleswade**

Members raised concerns about the loss of one parking space given the limited parking. Members also expressed concerns about pressure this change will place on parking in the area, as well as the danger posed by the current junction layout. It was felt 4 parking bays could easily be accommodated and CBC could potentially investigate changing the layout of the junction to ensure the safety of cars and people. Cllr Pullinger commented that making a disabled space doesn't ensure parking for residents because any disabled person could use the space.

It was **RESOLVED** to write to CBC requesting 2 residents and 2 disabled bays even if that means restricting the double yellow lines and for CBC to investigate other ways to make the London Road/Back Street junction safer.

12. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Planning Application outcomes

- Pegasus Drive, Phase 6B Stratton Business Park: Cllr Knight noted this application has been granted and BTC previously requested transparency from CBC about where the S106 monies will be allocated. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised this would be followed up.
- Pople Road: Cllr G Fage noted BTC objected to this application on the grounds of loss of parking and feels progress on parking issues around Kings Reach is being made. He encouraged Members to continue to object to parking issues on future Kings Reach applications.
- Cllr Woodhead asked if there was any update on the Lidl signs. Cllr M Foster confirmed work has started.

b. Crime Statistics – October 2020

The Deputy Office Manager and Amanda Cawthorn from Biggleswade Community Safety Group have been compiling crime statistics in a clear and easy to read form.

This report clarifies the level of theft-related crime around Biggleswade and the increase of thefts from shops and stalls in 2020. The Place Shaping Manager has since had a discussion with CBC Safer Communities and Partnership Manager about these concerns. Going forward, a member of the Safer Communities team will be looking in greater depth at the theft data and will work with Bedfordshire Police to understand contributing factors to these crimes.

Cllr Woodhead noted with concern the three-fold increase in hate crimes.

c. Keech Hospice Care – 2020 Drive-by Santa and his sleigh

Keech Hospice is doing a drive-by Santa in a sleigh with a banner advertising a funding link to raise funds in Saxon Gate and St. Andrew's Park.

The contents of this correspondence are noted.

d. Land North of Biggleswade

Hallam Land Management have responded to BTC's technical audit and have submitted supplementary information to their transport assessment. CBC Officers have responded to the transport assessment and requested additional information from Hallam.

The purpose of the draft letter to CBC circulated to Members is to respond to that new communication, laying out the concerns of the past and the new information at our disposal. Members are asked whether this should be sent and copied to Hallam.

It was **RESOLVED** to send the draft letter to CBC and to Hallam.

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

The resolution was **moved** that it was advisable in the public interest that the public and press be excluded whilst the following exempt items were discussed.

(14a.) Original Estimate Strategy 2021/2022

It was **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report and to recognise that the report was part of an ongoing consultation exercise. Various alternative options around future financial strategy were debated on the understanding that the decision on the amount of precept to set would not take place until January.

(14b.) Public Realm Depot

The Council considered a report from the Assistant Town Clerk and the Public Realm Manager on the provision of covered, secure accommodation for vehicles and equipment and as a base for the Public Realm Team. Comparisons of costs of a new build and a lease option were considered, with members being of the view that the preferred option was a 15-year leasehold agreement.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive proceed to secure a lease agreement for Unit 11 Eldon Way as the first preference, and Unit 9 as a second option;
2. Clarification be sought from the letting agent on the composition of the service charge for the premises;
3. Any required modifications to the premises be at the cost of the landlord;
4. The lease, when agreed, be signed as a sealed document in the presence of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and the Town Clerk & Chief Executive;
5. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive is authorised to seek alternative premises in the event Units 11 and 9 are no longer available, for consideration at an Extraordinary Meeting of Council.