

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BIGGLESWADE JOINT COMMITTEE
HELD VIA ZOOM ONLINE WEBINAR, ON THURSDAY,
21st JANUARY 2021**

Present: **BTC:** Cllr M North, Cllr H Ramsay, Cllr M Russell (Deputy Chairman), Cllr R Pullinger, Cllr M Knight
CBC: Cllr M Foster (Chairman), Cllr I Bond, Cllr S Watkins, Cllr H Whitaker
BTC Assistant Town Clerk: Philip Truppin
BTC Administrator: Sian van der Merwe

In Attendance: **CBC Community Engagement:** Sarah Hughes
CBC Head of Place Delivery: Ingrid Hooley
CBC Highways Asset Manager: Paul Middleton
CBC Deputy Director of Transformation-Children's Services: Sarah Ferguson

Members of the public: **One**

Following a reminder to meeting attendees 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 to 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

None

2. MEMBERS INTERESTS

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in any agenda item – None declared.
- (b) Non-pecuniary interests in any agenda item – None declared.

3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

To adjourn for a period of 15 minutes to allow members of the public to put questions or to address the Committee, through the Chairman, pertaining to items listed on the Agenda. Each speaker to be allocated a 3-minute speaking slot.

None.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Members **RECEIVED** and **APPROVED** the Minutes of the BJC meeting held on **15th October 2020**.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Matters arising from the Minutes of the BJC meeting held **15th October 2020**:

Cllr Whitaker asked if there was an update on Lilac Grove – Central Bedfordshire Council's Highways Asset Manager agreed to review this with Mr Salmon on his return and would update Members accordingly.

6. SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

Central Bedfordshire Council's Deputy Director of Children's Services, Sarah Ferguson, updated Members on Central Bedfordshire's 10-year Schools for the Future initiative to support future provision of schooling and education to accommodate future growth within the county.

Two aspects of the programme include moving from a three-tier to two-tier schooling system and ensuring expansion in schools to meet future demand. Central Bedfordshire Council are collaborating with a number of external agencies, schools, dioceses and the public. Phased implementation of the plan across Biggleswade has interdependencies with the Housing Infrastructure Fund and Ivel Valley Special School projects. Central Bedfordshire Council has an indicative date to launch a 12-week consultation process for Biggleswade schools in April 2021 which will be presented to Members at a Biggleswade Joint Committee meeting.

There is a dedicated website for the programme at www.schoolsforthefuture.co.uk with updates added regularly.

7. PLACE APPROACH

Central Bedfordshire Council's new Head of Place Delivery, Ingrid Hooley, informed Members that the Place Delivery function within Central Bedfordshire Council will now play a role co-ordinating information to the Joint Committee on strategic planning and implementation relating to place, planning, business investment, employment and skills, highways, waste, community safety.

Key projects planned for this team over the next year include working in partnership with BJC to support priorities such as improvements to the Market Square, Hitchin Street and connectivity to the river. Longer term projects will include investment in the Housing Infrastructure Fund, the Garden Communities programme, and a clear delivery plan for Biggleswade.

The Head of Place Delivery updated Members on the following initiatives:

Housing Infrastructure Fund

All targets relating to the deadlines from Homes England for funding purposes are on track. Central Bedfordshire Council have claimed £1.3 million to date. The UK Power Networks and National Grid projects are legally signed and sealed.

The next key milestone will be proceeding to planning stage towards the end of 2021. Consultations will be held with the public explaining the HIF programme and what is planned and how the project fits into the community. Draft story boards are being devised for communications purposes in the consultations, and these drafts will be presented to Biggleswade Town Council for feedback in due course.

Housing delivery is ahead of schedule, although there have been some delays around Lindsell's Bridge because surveys need to be conducted.

Garden Communities:

Central Bedfordshire Council have applied for additional funding from Homes England for sustainable transport corridors and are awaiting the outcome of that application.

Caroline Danby will provide a funding update at the next Garden Communities meeting.

Ivel Valley

- Phase 6b has been approved for Stratton Industrial Park, with plans for provision of 700 jobs.
- The Local Development Order around the agri-food sector is currently under review. It is likely to be deferred to Autumn 2021 as this will need to go to Consultation and survey first.
- Lidl was granted full consent in March 2020. Construction will commence December 2021 with opening scheduled for Autumn 2022.
- Local Plan – this is currently under examination.
- Central Bedfordshire Holme Farm allocation – the Inspector will issue comments in April 2021.
- Power Capacity and Usage – Biggleswade should be an attractive proposition for utilities providers in terms of the land and geographical placement.

The Head of Place Delivery confirmed she is attending an Assets project team meeting next week on Holme and New Head of Place Delivery and will be attending an Infrastructure and Delivery Board meeting to discuss the power offer and phase 6b.

Cllr Ramsay asked the Head of Place Delivery to consider provision of incentives for businesses for apprenticeships or traineeships. The Head of Place Delivery confirmed discussions are already underway with the Head of Transformation within the scope of the CBC Vision.

Central Bedfordshire Council's new Head of Place Delivery, Ingrid Hooley, informed Members that the Place Delivery function within Central Bedfordshire Council now incorporates strategic operational planning and implementation relating to place, planning, business investment, employment and skills, highways, waste, community safety.

Key projects planned for this team over the next year include an upgrade to Market Square, Hitchin Street and a project focusing on connectivity to the river. Longer term projects will include investment in the Housing Infrastructure Fund, the Garden Communities programme, and a clear delivery plan for Biggleswade.

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The Head of Place Delivery confirmed she is attending an Assets project team meeting next week and will be attending an Infrastructure and Delivery Board meeting to discuss the power offer and phase 6b, as well as the future of Holme and New Spring farms.

Cllr Ramsay asked the Head of Place Delivery to consider provision of incentives for businesses for apprenticeships or traineeships. The Head of Place Delivery confirmed discussions are already underway with the Deputy Director of Transformation within the scope of the Plans for the Future.

8. COMMUNITY GRANTS

Central Bedfordshire Council's Community Engagement Officer advised Members of Biggleswade United Football Club's recent award of a community grant. Subject to budget confirmation, the next Community Asset Grant scheme award will be April 2021, with a second or third round of the Ward Councillor Grant Scheme. An updated report on both schemes is on website.

The Head of Place Delivery and Community Engagement Officer discussed potential for community transport funding from the grant schemes and will explore further.

9. HIGHWAYS UPDATES

CBC's Highways Asset Manager updated Members on various works:

- The Annual Plan for Highways works: Cllr Whitaker recently provided Central Bedfordshire Council's Highways Asset Manager with a number of suggested sites across two Biggleswade wards for inclusion into the Plan. The plan for 2021 – 2022 has already been agreed, and Members were informed of the annual calendar process:
 - **April 2021 to June 2021:** Suggestions accepted for sites to be included in the Plan for the following financial year.
 - **September:** Decisions have been made about what sites are to be included for the following financial year.
 - **January 2022:** Commercial and contractual information is drawn together to generate the annual Highways Plan.

Cllr Foster clarified the process is useful to know and suggested forming a review group to discuss those submitted suggestions to help prioritise sites, as necessary.

- Cedar Avenue Footways: Work scheduled for completion 24 February 2021.
- Potton Road – Edward Peake Footpaths: Work scheduled for completion by 31 March 2021. The footpath towards Baden Powell Way will not be upgraded as this is still under development and blocked by fencing. Central Bedfordshire Council will complete this last section the end of the year.
- High Street Works: Works scheduled for completion 15 March 2021.
- Cllr Ramsay asked what works are underway at the Junction of London Road and Back Street. The Highways Asset Manager advised this is a junction reconfiguration which went through the Traffic Management Committee with a zebra crossing to be installed here.
- Bridleways 72 and 73: Works are underway and due to be completed by 31 March 2021.
- London Road – Active Lifestyle scheme: Ringways Jacob are due to install signage imminently. A more formal design for this scheme is being drawn up and will go to consultation before permanent implementation.
- Potton Road Traffic Lights: Plans are being redesigned by Ringways Jacobs to a zebra crossing. The current temporary lights are not being used due to low attendance at school during the lockdown.

Cllr Russell asked for clarity on what issues caused the need for redesign of this crossing to a zebra crossing, and whether the new design will include measures that will prevent parents parking at the junctions of Potton Road / Stratton Way and Potton Road / Nursery Close to wait for children. Cllr Russell has received a significant number of complaints from homeowners on Nursery Close on this issue.

Members were advised the original crossing design overlooked a planning application for a dropped vehicle crossover point at the exact place the crossing was proposed. Members will be provided with further information on why this is being changed to a zebra crossing and feedback on parking issues at those junctions.

Cllr Foster requested the redesign of the zebra crossing be sent to the Town Council for consultation and the Highways Asset Manager agreed to give that feedback to the Walking & Cycling Officer and update Members in advance of the next meeting.

Cllr Watkins submitted a Freedom of Information Request in relation to the cost of the temporary crossing, which currently amounts to just over £5,000. No updates or communication have been sent to the Town Council and Ward Councillors on the permanent installation of the crossing. Cllr Watkins asked for feedback to be provided to the Walking & Cycling Officer to ensure future communication on this matter is given to Ward and Committee Members as well as the Town Council.

- The Welleslaw Walk has been developed in conjunction with The Greensand Trust. This is an 8-mile circular walk from Biggleswade, through Sutton to Potton and back to Biggleswade and is designed to encourage residents on newer developments to explore the countryside around those developments.
- Weatherley Centre – Use as COVID-19 Vaccination Centre: The Centre's exit onto Orchard Close is to be temporarily re-opened whilst the Centre is used as a COVID-19 vaccination centre. Members were advised the entrance to the Centre will be along Eagle Farm Road and exit will be along Orchard Close.

Cllr Whitaker asked for clear communications on the access to be given to the public. Signage around the Centre needs improvement and the Highways Asset Manager would be willing to facilitate additional signage for the vaccination centre on request.

- Traffic Signals: Luton Borough Council are to publish a programme of works for delivery and installation of these signals.

- The Highways Asset Manager has met with Stephen Mooring about e-scooters and how these can be utilised within Central Bedfordshire Council's green infrastructure and sustainability issues. There are potentials to trial those in an around Biggleswade.
- Members discussed future plans for installation of electric charging points around the town. Central Bedfordshire Council are seeking to understand current and projected demand for this service and a company has been engaged to assess statistics, demand and uptake of electric vehicles across Bedfordshire.

Future planned projects include:

- Broad Mead / Nursery Close footway resurfacing works.
- Carriageway resurfacing works – Swanbourne Close and Drove Road.
- The online reporting tool “Fix My Street” goes live next week.

10. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Cllr Russell updated Members on current Neighbourhood Plan Group activities:

- Time scales have slipped dramatically as a result of lack of capacity at the Town Council.
- The Town Clerk & Chief Executive has set up an Officer Project Board and appointed an independent Project Manager who has previously worked with Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils.
- Additional government grant funding has recently been received to help fund the Neighbourhood Plan.
- The Group are still developing policies to go forward to the Town Council for approval.
- Significant supporting evidence needs to be gathered to support the Neighbourhood Plan, including:
 - Evidence to do with Biggleswade previously produced by Central Bedfordshire Planners in support of the Local Plan.
 - The Town Centre Master Plan 2011.
 - The Town Centre Plan done by BRCC resident group.
 - Maps of the flood plains.
 - The maps referred to were of further scheduled monuments added by Historic England and would have an effect on areas of growth of the town. This will have an effect on growth within Biggleswade.
- The informal engagement planned for Autumn 2020 needs to be rescheduled.
- It is likely a referendum will be held in May 2022.

11. COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PLAN

Members felt regular project progress updates from the Head of Place Delivery and the Highways Asset Manager are helpful. It was agreed that the Chair, Vice Chair, Head of Place Delivery and the Community Engagement Manager would agree a reporting framework for the Committee.

Cllr Whitaker requested Mark Conway's attendance at the next meeting to discuss the Emergency Response preparedness.

12. 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.

Schedule of future meetings:

22 April 2021

15 July 2021

14 October 2021

20 January 2022