



MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 26TH JANUARY 2021
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
- Mrs S. van der Merwe – Meeting Administrator, Biggleswade Town Council
- Mr D. Kemp – Managing Director & Principal Consultant – DCK Accounting Solutions Ltd

Members of Public – 2

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. **NALC presentation**

Cllr Russell and the Town Clerk & Chief Executive hosted a webinar presentation on 26th January 2021 for The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) on Zoom titled "Biggleswade: Strategic Planning for Larger Councils". The presentation was well attended and NALC have issued thanks to the Town Council for its contribution. The hope is that this has helped raise Biggleswade's profile.

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. **MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

- a. It was **RESOLVED** to **DEFER** the review of the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 12th January 2021** via Zoom Webinar to the Town Council Meeting to be held on **09th February 2021**.

6. **Budget and Precept 2021 - 2022**

Members were asked to consider the draft budget and precept paperwork for the 2021/2022 year.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised Members that the budget report includes figures that focus on building up the general reserve and factoring calculated growth in, with focus for the year ahead being on renewing and driving forward the Corporate Plan to deliver key priorities over the next five years. The proposed budget and precept figures will allow for much-needed investment in the Council to help cater for long-term growth and helping to grow its revenues in addition to the precept.

Additionally, The Town Clerk & Chief Executive commented that he has, over the last six months, given Members a sense of potential commitments that are in the pipeline and which will be brought to the Council for approval. The recommended investment will make a fundamental difference to the community.

Cllr Ramsay said that Biggleswade has expanded from a population of over 9,000 to over 20,000, soon to be over 21,000. Biggleswade is now ranked in the top four towns in Bedfordshire and the Town Council needs to be fit for purpose to cope with future growth. Cllr Ramsay noted that training for staff, remote access and IT modernisation is an important part of supporting the population growth and the resulting additional responsibilities this has put on the Council. The purchase of more, as well as new, grounds maintenance equipment

has become necessary to help maintain the Town's green spaces and numerous important projects planned for the year ahead need to be taken into consideration. The Town Council needs to ensure that sufficient funds are available to accommodate the growth planned for the Town as well as anything that might arise in the coming year.

Members offered opinions on their preferred options, with comment from Cllr Pullinger that consideration should be given to transferring more of the Capital Reserve funds into the General Reserve balance. He noted that only part of the current General Reserve has been earmarked for 2021 projects, with no detailed plans for the remaining balance. He reminded Members those funds were originally intended for building a new depot but the Council would now be leasing a depot.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive reminded Members that the projected outturn is potentially open to change pending the closure of the financial year end records. Derek Kemp of DCK Accounting advised Members the current deficit is likely to rise as the original projected figures were calculated in the hiatus between the first and second lockdown and were made assuming revenue levels would be back to their normal levels. This has subsequently been undermined by a second lockdown and loss of revenues.

Cllr Ramsay said that local parish council budgets may be capped in the coming years. Derek Kemp of DCK Accounting confirmed that recent comment from Her Majesty's Treasury and The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is that the question of capping funding in parish councils remains under review.

Cllr Knight asked for a recorded vote per Standing Order No. 10. Members voted on the recommendation to increase the budget and precept by 9.5% per Standing Order Number 10 as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Cllr D Albone	For
Cllr I Bond	For
Cllr K Brown	Against
Cllr G Fage	Abstain
Cllr L Fage	For
Cllr F Foster	For
Cllr M Foster	Against
Cllr M Knight	Against
Cllr M North	For
Cllr R Pullinger	Against
Cllr H Ramsay	For
Cllr M Russell	For
Cllr D Strachan	For
Cllr C Thomas	Against
Cllr J Woodhead	Against

It was **RESOLVED** by the Town Council to **ADOPT** the recommendation to increase the budget and precept by 9.5%, a total monetary value of £1,289,691, for the financial year 2021/2022.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive's report detailed additional recommendations in relation to:

- The Transformation Programme
- The Efficiency and Cost Reduction Review
- Additional Revenue streams
- Performance Indicators
- Staff Salary Review
- Residents Messaging

It was **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** all the recommendations by the Town Clerk & Chief Executive in relation to the above-mentioned projects.

14. EXEMPT ITEMS

None.