

Joint Committee

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BIGGLESWADE JOINT COMMITTEE HELD VIA ZOOM ONLINE WEBINAR, ON THURSDAY, 22nd APRIL 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 H Whitaker
BTC Town Clerk & Chief Executive: Peter Tarrant
BTC Professional Assistant: Sian van der Merwe

In Attendance: **CBC Community Engagement:** Sarah Hughes
CBC Assistant Director – Business & Investment: Kate MacFarlane
CBC Highways Asset Manager: Paul Middleton
CBC Emergency Planner: Mark Conway
CBC Cllr Steve Dixon

Members of the public: **Three**

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 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.

PART A ADMINISTRATION

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Steven Watkins, Ingrid Hooley.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

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.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Terms of Reference of the Committee:

The Minutes and action log for the Town Joint Committee will be presented both to the relevant Town Council and to Central Bedfordshire Council. The detail of where this will be presented will be determined by both Councils and reported back to the Town Joint Committee.

Process:

1. Joint / Partnership Committees can use an existing process for requesting specific items.
2. Joint Committees can include a new item on their agendas "Requested items for CBC".
3. The CBC Joint Committee Chair or CBC Joint Committee Vice Chair would then need to request the item to the Monitoring Officer.
4. The Monitoring Officer will ensure the item is added to the relevant O and S agenda for consideration by the relevant Committee. (7 clear working days' notice required).
5. The CBC Member can attend the meeting to explain the reasons for the request. The Committee can then decide:
 - to resolve it forthwith; or
 - To request the officers to prepare a report for the next meeting; or
 - To set up a task and finish group to investigate and report back to the committee; or
 - To make recommendations to the Executive or Council, as appropriate; or
 - To decide to take no further action upon the request, for stated reasons.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Members received the Minutes of the BJC Meeting held on **21st January 2021**. The following amendments were requested:

- Page 6 – Cllr Russell stated "Housing England" should read "Homes England".
- "Spring Farms" should be amended to read "New Spring Farm".
- There appeared to be a duplication of parts of the minutes in the Agenda from Head of Place Delivery Ingrid" to the end of the Community Grant sections.

- Under the Neighborhood Plan report the maps referred to were of further scheduled monuments added by Historic England and which would have an effect on areas of growth in the town. The minutes are to be amended to reflect this.

Subject to these amendments being made, the Minutes of 21st January 2021 are APPROVED.

PART B – PLACE – KEY INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT UPDATES

Kate McFarlane, Assistant Director Business and Investment updated Members on the following:
Oxford to Cambridge Arc

There were a series of government announcements in February and March re-emphasising the importance of the arc, particularly focusing on proposals for a Spatial Framework that focusses on sustainable economic growth, quality of life, improvements to the environment & infrastructure. CBC are anticipating further announcements from MHCLG later in May/ June with a proposed timetable and how stakeholders feed into that.

Additionally, government announced it is exploring the creation of an “Arc Growth Body”, to be made up of a number of diverse sector business leaders. The focus will be on placemaking, place shaping, the type of area the Arc wants to be, infrastructure and connectivity of the future, productivity, employment sectors and other growth areas within the Arc economic prospectus and the environment. Within the scope of this the current focus is on a consultation on the East-West Rail connectivity which closes in June 2021.

Housing Infrastructure Fund

Funding has been confirmed and the next phase has projects and interdependencies with a clear need for public engagement and consultation in a coordinated way. There are 5 elements and 4 projects within the HIF project.

- i. Delivery of homes.
- ii. Schooling: consultation is now scheduled to go to the June Executive Meeting.
- iii. Transport interchange: planning application has been submitted following a number of recent workshops, ongoing discussions with Biggleswade Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council.
- iv. Substation: work is ongoing and is being led by UK Power Networks and National Grid. CBC would like to work with Biggleswade Town Council to discuss how to best take forward engagement work.
- v. Lindsells Crossing: work is underway in terms of bringing the scheme forward.

Cllr Ramsay questioned the timing and expected length of the consultation for Schools for the Future. Cllr Dixon and Cllr Whitaker confirmed it will be a 12-week consultation, to be implemented shortly after the 8th June 2021 Executive Meeting.

Garden communities / strategic housing sites

£150,000 funding has been received and a Project Board is up and running with representation from a range of representatives.

There have been a series of briefings recently and there are areas that identified the need to be focused on certain elements first. The next step is discussion and thinking about timing of engagement and appetite for that.

Cllr Russell stated communication is vital to the progress of projects and there has been some reluctance to share information. The sustainable transport corridor is important and it has been requested this be added to a Town Council agenda. East-West connectivity is vital to the growth of the town and Cllr Russell is waiting to hear if there is a second tranche of Garden Community funding from the Government which could enable further exploration of the possibilities.

Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Russell updated Members on the Neighbourhood Plan. There is a current public engagement survey underway developed by BRCC. There has been a good response and BRCC will collate the responses.

There is a Town Council meeting on 27 April 2021 addressing the Neighbourhood plan, with presentations from Jon Baldwin (the Neighbourhood Plan Project Manager) and Dave Chetwyn of Urban Vision Enterprise CIC.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed the Neighbourhood Plan Project is on track and confirmed it will deliver to its timescales.

Cllr Russell welcomed comments from neighbouring Councils on the Neighbourhood Plan.

PART C – ECONOMY AND TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

Major employment sites

Kate McFarlane advised the Local Plan modifications are out for consultation, with a deadline to respond of 5th May 2021.

In terms of Holme Farm, there are proposals for changing some of the allocation to accommodate smaller business units. The Industrial Park LDO is still on pause and is primarily because of linking it into the Council's new economic strategy adopted earlier this year. That work will start in early summer 2021.

Cllr Russell stated employment sites are vital to growth of the town, including New Spring Farm and Holme Farm which form part of the main modifications. At the Examination in Public Biggleswade was promised two bridge crossings - one over the A1 and one at the level crossing, the latter of which appears to have been removed from the plans but needs to be reinstated as this will be integral to the Green Wheel. Cllr Russell continued that a tree belt will be vital to shielding the proposed warehousing, but there is a reluctance for tree planting along the A1 which would prevent advertising of the businesses. The final issue is the number of shuttle buses planned. There are doubts about how many people will be coming to work by train and any shuttle bus would need to service the

housing areas of the town to enable people to live and work locally. There will need to be more than one shuttle bus to be effective.

Paul Middleton, Highways Manager updated Members on Highways projects in Biggleswade:

Future works to be carried out include:

- Swanbourne Close: resurfacing;
- Broad Mead: footway resurfacing;
- Hitchin Street to the footbridge over railway: Installation of 3 lighting columns;
- Orchard Close junction with Hitch Mead: junction improvements, new crossing, double yellow lines;
- Eagle Farm Road: outline design for footpath improvements;
- Speed reduction near John O'Gaunt;
- Drove Road: carriageway resurfacing;
- Sun Street: carriageway resurfacing;
- Nursery Close: footway resurfacing;
- Lawrence Road: S106 Junction realignment and drainage issues design with construction later in the year;
- Potton Road: Crossing.

Update on current works

- **Potton Road:** consultation period is over and design is ongoing with completion due 16 July with construction to follow straight after.
- **London Road Active Travel Scheme:** The consultation period is closed and future action is being assessed.
- **Lilac Grove:** double yellow lines consultation is ongoing to 30 April.
- **Fairfield Road:** double yellow lines consultation ongoing to 30 April.
- **Town Centre Decluttering:** Ongoing snagging works.
- **Traffic Signals:** CBC are still looking to deliver replacements with Luton to define the programme. The Department for Transport have put out a challenge bid for additional funds for signals and CBC are looking to tap into that with Luton, which may benefit Biggleswade.
- **Rose Lane Junction signals:** Upgraded following a vehicle collision.
- **E-scooters:** There is a meeting next week to discuss trials, and Members are welcome to give feedback to Mr Middleton to take to the meeting.
- **Saxon Drive Development:** Ringway Jacobs are providing ongoing support to temperamental signals at Saxon Drive development to facilitate traffic flow.
- **"Fix my street"** is live and Members were encouraged to contact Jack Bowers with feedback.

Cllr Whitaker raised almost non-existent line markers and paint on the mini roundabout near Shortmead Street and the roundabout near Halfords on the retail park. Novello Drive is not yet fully

surfaced nearly 6 years later. Mr Middleton confirmed the road has not been adopted by CBC and is still owned by the Consortium.

Cllr Foster asked for an update on the desire lines on Kings Reach. Mr Middleton recently met with Isaac Mercer and Martin Grant Homes. All parties acknowledge that when Kings Reach went through planning and technical approval years ago standards were significantly different to what they are now – both are dealing with legacy issues and lessons have been learnt about what needs to be done pre-adoption and post-adoption.

Cllr Ramsay commented there was a lot of opposition to the London Road Active Travel Scheme. Cllr Knight stated the last consultation included narrowing the road but there was no alternative consultation to use some of the verge. Mr Middleton will get some feedback for Members on this.

Cllr Russell requested a full update on Lawrence Road. Mr Middleton confirmed there is some persistent flooding in parts of the road - the gullies have been on the vulnerable gullies list for a while. The Gullies will be incorporated with junction improvement and double yellow line creation to address parking problems along the road, and he added CBC is likely to widen the scope of works to include resurfacing. Cllr Bond confirmed plans to make Lawrence Road into a one-way are underway and the gully works will be done independently of the other main projects. He added the gully will be cleaned out and if that does not work, it will be linked to a second soakaway.

Cllr Whitaker advised Members that planned changes to Lawrence Road include changing the road to a one-way from Havelock Road for vehicles travelling towards Crab Lane – it will remain a two-way at the Crab Lane to maintain access to the Health Centre. This is planned to go to outline design in Q2 in time for Autumn.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive offered his thanks to Lorraine Howitt from Central Bedfordshire Council's Assets Team for her assistance with resolving access road condition to the allotments.

PART D – COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder Forum

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised Members the Neighbourhood Plan Community Engagement Forum has been meeting monthly with a diverse range of stakeholders – both residential and business owners.

Agendas are put together by the Town Council and stakeholders, and they meet bi-weekly with Chairmanship shared between The Town Clerk & Chief Executive and Cliff Andrews from BRCC.

Community Grants

Sarah Hughes, Central Bedfordshire Council Engagement Manager updated the Committee on current Community Grants available to resident

- Ward Councillor Grant Scheme: They have processed a number of applications this year.
- The Community Asset Grant Scheme will be re-launched 29 April up to 1 July 2021.
- The Biggleswade & Langford Wind Farm Fund.

Cllr Foster requested a breakdown of what funds have been allocated so far.

Updated Agenda Format

Sarah Hughes asked for feedback on the new layout of the Agenda. Cllr Russell requested that Matters Arising be reinstated, as well as Members being able to choose subjects to be addressed.

Emergency Response preparedness

Mark Conway, Central Bedfordshire Council's Emergency Planning Executive presented to Members on planning for emergency situations within the community in line with the Civil Contingencies Act of 2004.

Biggleswade Town Council has been working with him to implement an updated emergency Community Response plan.

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:

14 October 2021
20 January 2022