



**MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**  
**HELD ON TUESDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 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 – Professional Assistant, Biggleswade Town Council  
Ms. H Calvert - Deputy Administration & HR Manager

Members of Public – 3

**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. On behalf of the Town Council, Cllr Russell was recently invited by the Lord Lieutenant, Mrs. Helen Nellis, to attend the County of Bedfordshire Thanksgiving Service for HRH Prince Philip. The service was held on the eve of his funeral, 16<sup>th</sup> April, at St Paul's Church, Bedford in the presence of the Lord Lieutenant and the High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, Eric Masih.

b. Cllr Russell welcomed this evening's presenters for their expert knowledge on:

- Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan: Dave Chetwyn of Urban Vision CIC and John Baldwin from Parrot Planning & Regeneration Ltd
- Green Infrastructure Plan: Cliff Andrews of Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity
- Drove Road Chapel: Brian Hawkins of Hawkins Historic Ltd.

**4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

The Chairman advised members of the public wishing to speak to use the electronic "raise hand" function on screen.

a. None.

**5. MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

a. Cllr Knight asked how many responses had been submitted to the Neighbourhood Plan consultation so far. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised that 480 responses had been received at that point.

b. Cllr Albone stated there is a flock of city pigeons resident in the Market Square which have caused damage to retail stores on the Market Square. Shopkeepers have put spikes up to dissuade them and he asked if the Council is able to take any action on this issue.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive agreed to look into this and will discuss this with Central Bedfordshire Council.

**6. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan**

Cllr Russell, as Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Strategy Group, had submitted the report to Members which was included in the Agenda.

Dave Chetwyn from Urban Vision CIC presented to Members on the Neighbourhood Plan formal process.

Once the Neighbourhood Plan is made, together with the Local Plan it forms the Statutory Development Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan has a statutory status in decision making - it is a planning policy document against which planning applications and development proposals

will be considered, addressing the use and development of land and looking at the social and economic impact of local development.

Public engagement on the Neighbourhood Plan has been on an informal basis to date. There is a formal statutory consultation that will need to take place and this has to consider the aims, themes and strategy of the plan. Neighbourhood plans need to be independently screened to ensure they meet four basic conditions: 1) having regard to national policy and guidance; 2) being in conformity with strategic local policy, 3) to help achieve sustainable growth and social, environmental and economic sustainability; 4); to be in conformity with UK obligations and cannot breach human rights legislation. The Plan moves through various stages (consultation, consideration and amendment, submission to CBC, further consultation and amendment, examination, referendum and finally to adoption), but it will start to have bearing on planning decisions as it moves through the process.

Jon Baldwin of Parrot Planning and Regeneration Ltd is working as Project Manager to get the Neighbourhood Plan through to completion. He noted that the Neighbourhood Plan relies heavily on public engagement and public support for the Plan. There is a Neighbourhood Plan Strategy Group that has been meeting regularly, whose members include local business owners and other stakeholders. The Strategy Group has been actively working towards mitigating the risks of delay to the process through active decision making and working towards ensuring all supporting paperwork is in place. Allowance has been made for up to two months for amendments to be made to the Plan in order to reach the targeted referendum date in May 2022.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the progress so far and endorse the strategy as proposed.

b. **Green Infrastructure Plan & Local Green Space Assessment**

Cliff Andrews from Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity updated Members on this initiative and its relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan.

This plan is a formal identification of environmental assets, of biodiversity, heritage, open space, access and landscape. The last plan was dated 2010, which resulted in the creation of the Biggleswade Green Wheel.

The top three Green Infrastructure priorities identified through public consultation are:

1. Creation of a "Town and Country Park including woodland walk, nature reserve, picnic area and boating lake". This would involve restoration of the river to create a more natural setting.
2. North of Town: Area in the middle of the common: Extending Biggleswade Common southwards, to include a community orchard.
3. East of the Town: to protect and widen the linear park east of Baden Powell Way, extending it to the east of the watercourse and extending Biggleswade Common southwards to enhance the eastern section of the Green Wheel.

Through the Neighbourhood Plan there is the ability to protect various green spaces that are of value to the community, as long as they meet various criteria. Of the 19 sites identified in the Green Infrastructure Plan as important local spaces, only four do not meet the criteria. Cllr Russell confirmed that three of the four rejected spaces are owned by the Town Council, so it would be up to the Town Council to ensure that those three spaces are retained as Community Assets.

It was **RESOLVED** to endorse the Green Infrastructure Plan and seek to be an active partner.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the BRCC recommendation to designate the 15 green spaces as Local Green Spaces within the Neighbourhood Plan.

c. **Drove Road Chapel**

Repairs to Drove Road Chapel are an important action point for the Town Council and have been for a number of years. Brian Hawkins from Hawkins Historic has a wealth of expertise as a listed building expert who can provide Members with detailed information to enable Members to come to an informed decision over time.

Mr. Hawkins conducted a condition survey in March 2019 which identified a number of repairs and maintenance needed to the chapel building. A further and more recent examination and condition survey has highlighted a marked decline in the condition of the chapel through weathering, vandalism and the age of materials. His last survey was extended to include the boundary wall and railings which are also in poor condition.

Mr Hawkins has provided the Town Council with a specification of works which sets out a number of aesthetically sympathetic and traditional repairs, maintenance and upgrades needed to both the chapel, the driveway, and the external boundary wall and railings.

7. **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.

8. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

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

(9a. Drove Road Chapel Repairs)

(9b. Neighbourhood Plan Budget for 2021/2022)

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.

9. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

a. **Drove Road Chapel Repairs**

Mr Hawkins updated Members on the tenders submitted for various works on the chapel and boundary wall.

Members requested the following:

- The 2019 condition survey report to be emailed to Members;
- The Town Clerk & Chief Executive to send a roadmap and schedule of works to Members;
- The Town Council needs to agree the priorities;
- The Town Council needs to agree commercial utilisation of the chapel;
- There needs to be a further tender process addressing the priorities agreed by Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to take the matter forward in the proposed way so that the Council can make an informed decision.

b. **Neighbourhood Plan Budget**

Helen Calvert, the Deputy Finance & HR Manager updated Members on this budget.

It was **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the £21,000 proposed budget for 2021/2022 to complete the Neighbourhood Plan in the next twelve months.