



MINUTES OF TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 18th MAY 2021 AT
7.00PM AT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE, 4 SAFFRON
ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL



PRESENT:

Cllr M Knight – Chairman
Cllr G Fage – Vice Chairman
Cllr D Albone
Cllr I Bond
Cllr M North
Cllr R Pullinger
Cllr M Russell
Cllr D Strachan
Cllr C Thomas
Cllr J Woodhead

Mr Peter Tarrant, Town Clerk & Chief Executive, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr Philip Truppin, Assistant Town Clerk, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr Simon Newton, Place Shaping Manager, Biggleswade Town Council
Mrs Sian van der Merwe, Professional Assistant, Biggleswade Town Council
Ms Helen Calvert, Deputy Administration and HR Manager

Member of the public: Cllr F Foster

Meeting Formalities:

Following a reminder to meeting attendees, both panel and public, 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.

The Chairman also announced that to maintain the 3-month cadence for committee meetings that the Council has agreed, the next meeting of this committee will be on 17th August 2021 rather than 7th September 2021

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Statutory Declarations of Interests from Members in relation to:

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

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

None.

4. INVITED SPEAKER

None.

5. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

Members received the Minutes of the Town Centre Management meeting of Tuesday 11th March 2021. The following amendments to the Minutes were requested:

- Date on the heading to be changed from 2020 to 2021.
- Page 6 should be numbered Page 5

Subject to these changes being made, the Minutes of the Town Centre Management Meeting of **Tuesday 11th March 2021** were **APPROVED**.

6. MATTERS ARISING

- a. **Public Conveniences at Century House:** Cllr North noted the previous Minutes recorded having the public conveniences at Century House added to this meeting agenda, but it hasn't been listed. Cllr Knight clarified Century House is an agenda item and the conveniences will be covered in that discussion.
- b. **Parking Permits Extension:** Cllr Pullinger asked if the resolution relating to sending parking permit extensions to all residents with parking permits had been sent out. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed that they had.

7. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. **Market Feedback**

Cllr Fage advised that at a previous Town Council Meeting it had been agreed by Council to engage the services of Megan Green and Hannah Abel of Made in the Wade up to the end of July 2021 to transform the services of the Market. Cllr Fage and Cllr Knight have been working with them to execute the Council approved Market Strategy and there has been a lot more to do on the market than was originally anticipated. Members broadly discussed the next steps of the market strategy.

Cllr G Fage commented that the “Welcome Back” Market Banner at Dan Albone car park seems to have disappeared and requested additional banners to replace the missing one, as well as being able to place one near the retail park. The Place Shaping Manager confirmed that the banner was removed in order to have a frame put up. Cllr Bond suggested banners should be made to the size of the rails so they fit properly.

It was **RESOLVED** to endorse the recommendations and next steps outlined in Cllr G Fage's report as follows:

Next steps

With approximately 14 regular weekly traders, plus some who trade bi-weekly, and others who trade entirely casually, the market will hopefully get close to capacity most weeks. However, managing this rotation of traders and the layout is a big job that requires a lot of effort leading up to Saturday. Investment is still required to make the process less manual, so that staff are not spending hours chasing potential traders, risking gaps or having to turn traders away on the day. To create a smooth onboarding process, an online booking form will be required, with payment taken once traders have been approved. This should be derived from the Market Policy, which is due to be redrafted in June. Once approved by the Council, requirements will be defined, and it is recommended that the Council's supplier is asked to provide a quotation for this work.

Meg and Hannah's services have been approved until the end of July. The next steps in the implementation of the market strategy will be to book more buskers, explore options around themed markets and create a quality promotional video for sponsorship on social media. Meg and Hannah have been supporting the process by planning weekly attendance, trader onboarding and online promotion. Their ongoing services will be required to keep the momentum and ensure a smooth transition to BAU. It is recognised that the services provided by Meg and Hannah will need to transition to Council employees as soon as capacity allows.

The banners have helped to improve the feel of the market. However, several require re-securing to the barriers and sandbags should be used. The larger banner at the Dan Albone car park should be mounted to a wooden frame much like the "Buy Biggleswade" banner. A further large banner is needed for the south entrance to town / retail park, near the BP garage. Further consideration is needed to identify measures that will encourage retail park shoppers to visit the town centre.

Recommendations

Retain services of Meg Green and Hannah Abel until the end of August 2021.
Review market strategy at the next TCM meeting on 17th August 2021.
Endorse the recommendations and next steps outlined in this report.

It was **RESOLVED** to retain the services of Meg Green and Hannah Abel until the end of August 2021.

It was **RESOLVED** to review the Market Strategy at the next Town Centre Management Committee meeting on 17th August 2021.

b. Welcome Back Fund

The final application date for this fund is 24th May 2021.

This funding is part of a £56 million initiative to reopen high streets and town centres safely as the end of COVID-19 restrictions draws nearer. The Place Shaping Manager's report includes suggestions for items eligible for consideration.

Members voted on items to form part of the Welcome Back Fund application:

Seasonal food festival	APPROVED
Totally Locally/Street Ambassador	NOT APPROVED
Market Place lighting	APPROVED
Hand Sanitiser Stations	NOT APPROVED
Hand Sanitiser Consumables	NOT APPROVED
Community Toilet Scheme	NOT APPROVED
Lamp Column drop-down signage	NOT APPROVED
Gazebos	APPROVED
Phone App	NOT APPROVED
Planters	APPROVED
Footfall Monitoring	APPROVED
Street Entertainers	APPROVED
Enhancing the Christmas offer	APPROVED
Sunday Activities – face painting, Sunday market	APPROVED
Temporary barriers for the market	APPROVED

It was **RESOLVED** that the Place Shaping Manager with draw up an application based on the items approved in the table above, with discussions to be held between the Town Clerk & Chief Executive, Place Shaping Manager and Chairman of the Town Centre Management Committee to confirm the Council's application form.

It was suggested that the Community Toilet Scheme to be deferred to a later Town Centre Management meeting.

c. **Union Flag**

It was **RESOLVED** to fly the Union Flag every day.

It was **RESOLVED** the Council's Flag Flying Policy be reviewed by Officers to ensure it is in line with this new requirement, as well as the permissions to fly additional flags.

It was **RESOLVED** that Officers will confirm that Planning consent has been completed by Central Bedfordshire Council.

It was **AGREED** that new flags/ensigns be purchased to replace current aged flags.

d. **Community Asset Grant Scheme**

This is a capital match funding scheme offered to encourage Councils to invest in their Community offer. Officers will be submitting reports for a number of projects that could benefit from these funds, for example, renovations and enhancements to the Council's play areas. Jonathan Woolley, Deputy Public Realm Manager, has been investigating other local Councils' offers and has a number of ideas that will be presented to the Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to defer this item for review by the PLOS Committee Meeting at the next meeting of 8 June 2021.

8. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Harris' Fun Fair**

Cllr Russell and the Town Clerk & Chief Executive met with Harris' Fun Fair representatives and it was agreed that this could run for one week in the second half of June 2021 (COVID regulations permitting).

b. **Transport Interchange**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive updated Members on progress of the Transportation Interchange issue. Recently Cllrs Russell and G Fage and the Town Clerk & Chief Executive from Biggleswade Town Council met with Paul Mason (Head of Highways) and Kate MacFarlane (Assistant Director, Business & Investment) from Central Bedfordshire Council. Suggestions were made concerning some of the proposed bus layovers (current proposals include Station Road, Teal Road, Church Road, Hill Lane and London Road), not all of which were considered suitable. Central Bedfordshire Council agreed to return with alternative plans.

Cllr Russell updated Members further on a meeting with Network Rail on 10 May 2021. Network Rail are in the process of appointing contractors to do drawings for bridge building and lift installation. GTR are proposing installation of toilets where the current bike rack is. However, it was revealed these will only be for disabled people in possession of RADAR keys and not for the general public. Cllr Bond added that Network Rail were reminded there are existing toilets on the station that have been unused for a number of years because the sewage lines pass under the railway lines.

It is widely acknowledged that Network Rail's reluctance to part with any other land, even though there is additional land near the station that is not in use, has caused the need for further revisions of the Interchange plans by Central Bedfordshire Council. Network Rail claims there are services that pass under the pocket of land in question which need to be accessed.

The land currently under consideration for the Transportation Interchange is owned by GTR and Central Bedfordshire Council will lease this from them.

c. **Century House**

Central Bedfordshire Council have commissioned Cornerstone Property Assets Limited to conduct a report to look at the potential options around Century House. It is likely this report will be issued mid-July 2021. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive has approached Central Bedfordshire Council to request a copy of this report for the Town Council's review.

d. **Town Centre Benches**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised Members that almost all of the Town Centre benches have been refurbished and replaced. Three benches are missing and are presumed to have been removed by a Central Bedfordshire Council contractor during the recent decluttering exercise of street furniture and signage in the Town Centre.

Central Bedfordshire Council have agreed to fund the replacement of those missing benches, with Biggleswade Town Council responsible for sourcing the closest match to the style of the Town Centre benches.

e. **Hanging Baskets & Memorial Area**

The hanging baskets will be delivered and installed to the Town Centre at the end of this week. Cllr Russell and the Deputy Public Realm Manager are discussing potential planting of colourful plants near the War Memorial.

The Deputy Public Realm Manager informed Members that the planter at the South entrance to town, has been re-shaped into a slanting planter. He has also ordered a number of red and blue coloured plants to mirror the Town Council emblem.

Cllr Woodhead suggested providing remedial works to names on the North face of the War Memorial in advance of the next Remembrance Day event in November 2021.

f. **Footfall Monitoring – High Streets Task Force**

The Place Shaping Manager updated Members. This scheme is offered by The High Streets Task Force for Local Authorities, place managers, businesses and civic groups in England to help monitor the performance and recovery of High Streets from the economic impact of COVID-19.

The Place Shaping Manager registered the Town Council's interest in an electronic footfall counter on 23 April 2021 and is awaiting notice of the outcome of the application. The Place Shaping Manager will circulate this information to Members as soon as he has this.

Members requested further details on exactly how the system will work once the outcome of the application is known.

g. **Summer Events Schedule**

There is a working group meeting on 24th May 2021 to discuss ideas for Town Centre events. Street Food Heroes are scheduled to return to the Town Centre on the first Friday of July 2021, to be hosted monthly going forward. This will be advertised on the Town Council's website once Street Food Heroes have confirmed its plans to ensure COVID regulations are adhered to.

Seasons Fruit & Veg store are planning barbeque events on 9th and 11th June which are sold out. They are also looking at the possibility of providing a cinema screen event on the Square to entice people into Town Centre. Cllr Russell cautioned that the Town Council needs to ensure events are properly licenced, risk assessed, insured and approved through Central Bedfordshire Council (Safety Advisory Group).

Cllr Pullinger said the Website Working Group had suggested having an "events" page and all events could be added to that page.

9. **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.

10. **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.

(11a. A-Boards and Street Furniture)

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.

11. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

a. **A-Boards and Street Furniture**

It was **RESOLVED** that three A-boards within the Town Centre on the Market Square and High Street be removed by the Town Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Place Shaping Manager is to contact the relevant premises to advise them of this action and that any unlicensed boards will be held for one month pending their collection and then disposed of if they have not been claimed.

It was **RESOLVED** that current street furniture applications for Town Centre retailers be extended to the end of this financial year (2021/2022) and should be reviewed every May on a yearly basis thereafter.

It was also **AGREED** that a contract be drawn up between the Town Council and Town Centre retailers (that require a Street Furniture and A-board licence) which formalises the parties' requirements in the events the Council requires the space for an event.

It was **RESOLVED** that Surfin' Café's application for erection of semi-permanent wind barriers be approved.

The current Street Furniture Policy needs review and Cllr Knight and Fage agreed to work with the Town Clerk & Chief Executive to present a revised policy to the next Town Centre Management Committee in August.