



**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
MEETING TUESDAY 7th SEPTEMBER 2021 AT THE OFFICES OF
BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE, 4
SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE COMMENCING AT 7:00PM**



PRESENT:

Cllr R Pullinger (Chair)
Cllr M North (Vice Chair)
Cllr D Albone
Cllr I Bond
Cllr G Fage
Cllr M Knight
Cllr M Russell
Cllr D Strachan

Mr P Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr P Truppin – Assistant Town Clerk, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr K Hosseini - Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships
Mrs A Dennis – Meeting Administrator, Biggleswade Town Council
Ms H Calvert – Deputy Administrator & HR Manager , Biggleswade Town Council
Ms W Solomon – Head of Finance & Planning
Members of Public - 0

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr H Ramsay

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

Cllr M Russell Item 7b ii. Grants 2021/2022.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No public present.

5. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

Members received and **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Finance & General Purpose Meeting held on **Tuesday 15th June 2021**.

6. MATTERS ARISING

From the Minutes of Tuesday 15th June 2021

Page 5 Item 3 – Meeting dates were discussed. The Assistant Town Clerk advised that the meetings calendar will be discussed at the next Council meeting. An informal meeting with Members was to be held next week before the next Council meeting to review the dates and to take this information to the next Council meeting.

Page 6 Item c. Website Update. A brief verbal update was given on this item.

7. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Grants & Sponsorship Policy Update

The Assistant Town Clerk presented a report on the Grants and Sponsorship Policy. A previous draft policy from 2016 had never been adopted. Several points were raised on the policy application process which were accepted. Additionally, a discussion ensued regarding the meeting cycle and its fit within the context of the financial calendar.

The following was **RESOLVED** to:

Adopt the draft policy subject to:

- deletion of the reference to unsuccessful applicants being given the reason for not being awarded a grant.
- amendment to the cycles for payment in April and October, to replace 'awarded' with 'paid.'
- the proposed 1st Cycle and the 2nd Cycle be reversed going forward.
- invitations for applications should additionally be placed on all possible social media with an online application.
- ensure previous successful applicants to be invited to apply again.
- any out of cycle applications will be considered in the next cycle and be referred to as interim applications.

b. Grants 2021/2022

- i. Members were asked to consider the financial request from the Biggleswade Sports Meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve this application for the amount of £360.00.

- ii. Members were asked to consider the financial request from the Trinity Methodist Church for the Defibrillator Project.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve this application for the amount of £1,971.60.

- iii. Members were asked to consider the financial request from the Bedfordshire Police Partnership.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve this application for the amount of £500.00.

8. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Finance Review**

- i. Members received an oral update from the Town Clerk & Chief Executive on the action items from the Finance Review.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised Members that work has started on the Finance Review and then introduced Wilma Solomon (WS) who joined the meeting via Zoom. Two new roles have been appointed as Head of Finance & Planning (WS) and a Finance Manager who will be working on the implementation of the Finance Review recommendations. Once they commence in role, a plan for implementation will be prepared and reported to the committee.

- ii. Members received an oral update from the Town Clerk & Chief Executive on the status of the Revenue and Income Optimisation (RIO) work.

This is key and vital tool which drew from over 30 Councils to benchmark pricing. This is looking at what is charged as well as what is not and could be charged by the Council. Work is about 70% complete. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive intention is to bring a detailed report to the next Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting with recommendations for implementation in October, subject to Members' approval.

The updates were **NOTED**.

b. **Orchard Centre**

Members received an oral report from the Assistant Town Clerk on the scope of, and progress with, the forthcoming Orchard Centre report.

Members were advised that a report looking at the past, present and future of the Orchard Centre is in progress looking at the facilities and services that are on offer. Charges and pricing would be linked with the RIO. Recommendations to remove inconsistencies in the charges for example on concessions on the main hall for block bookings versus hiring of the training room would be provided.

The intention is to produce a report with recommendations for Officers to consider and subsequently Members to discuss, either at a Council meeting or at a future meeting of this Committee. One of the recommendations would be to seek feedback from users.

This update was **NOTED**.

c. **Asset Register**

Members received an oral update from the Head of Governance and Strategic Partnerships who complimented Officers' work to date on pulling together a good register. At present there is no Approved Suppliers register but a standard contract will be offered to existing and new suppliers.

Members wanted confirmation of lease renewal dates to ensure that dates do not run over. These details are important to make decisions on investment decisions.

Two significant actions remained:

- a complete review by an external expert surveyor on condition, current asset valuation, and maintenance budget along with schedule for all buildings, assets,

and land owned by BTC.

- conducting a greater Biggleswade area land parcels search on HM Land Registry to identify all land plots and their ownership, to inform the wider place shaping BTC strategy.
- Timelines for these actions would align with the new finance team to enable the latter to take this forward under budget planning.

This update was **NOTED**.

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 Committee, 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 **resolved** to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

None.

The Chair closed the meeting at 8:10pm.