



MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
MEETING TUESDAY 19th OCTOBER 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 M Knight
Cllr M. Russell
Cllr D. Strachan

Mr P Tarrant –Town Clerk & Chief Executive, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr P. Truppin – Head of Place Shaping & Town Centre Management, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr K. Hosseini – Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships, Biggleswade Town Council
Ms. H. Calvert – Administration & HR Manager, Biggleswade Town Council (Co-Meeting Administrator)
Mrs S. van der Merwe – Professional Assistant, Biggleswade Town Council (Co-Meeting Administrator)

Members of the Public – 0

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.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr G Fage, Cllr I Bond.

ABSENT WITHOUT APOLOGIES

Cllr H Ramsay.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item

None.

b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item

Cllr D Albone – Allotments.

Cllr Russell informed the Committee there is a general dispensation in place for Councillors in relation to pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests in relation to the Town Council's Budgets. Cllr Russell requested that this general dispensation be reviewed and that Members are advised on the status of that general dispensation before the next budget discussions.

3. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

4. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

Cllr Knight asked why the Revenue Optimisation Report has been included in the exempt session and not in the public session, given the nature of the information within the Report. The Chief Executive & Town Clerk confirmed this is an options paper with a list of items to be considered and due to the nature of the content, it needs to be discussed under Exempt.

5. **MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

Members **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes meeting held on **Tuesday 7th September 2021** at the Town Council Office.

6. **MATTERS ARISING**

From the Minutes of Tuesday 15th June 2021

Page 6, Item C: Asset Register: Cllr Strachan requested an update on the actions from the Minutes. The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships confirmed that there is now a supporting project plan for actioning the Asset Register Review, and an update report will be presented to a future F&GP Committee meeting.

7. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

None.

8. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

None.

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.

There were no members of the public present.

10. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

Cllr Knight requested a recorded vote on whether Members were in favour of continuing the Committee Meeting with the Revenue Income Optimisation Report under Exempt.

Members voted as follows:

For:

Cllr M Russell
Cllr D Strachan
Cllr D Albone
Cllr M North

Against:

Cllr M Knight
Cllr R Pullinger

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.

(12a. Revenue Income Optimisation Report)

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.

a. REVENUE INCOME OPTIMISATION REPORT

The Chief Executive & Town Clerk gave a verbal update to Members on the contents of this report. General comments made by Members are recorded below.

Advertising & Sponsorship

Members requested a report showing who owns what land to investigate where advertising can be placed on Town Council land.

Cllr Strachan added that the Town Council should create a policy on Advertising before we commence with advertising for revenue income.

Allotments

- Cllrs requested a breakdown in the difference in offer between the Letchworth/Stevenage Allotment offer versus Biggleswade Allotment Offer.
- Cllrs requested a breakdown in what it would cost to provide strimming and compost delivery services and clarity on the operation of a water levy.
- Cllrs requested information on what the return would be on new equipment – a cost benefit analysis would help.
- Cllrs suggested putting out a call for new allotment sites – there may be agricultural land available in suitable locations.

Cemeteries

Members indicated that their feeling was that our fees are significantly lower than the market and that we should review these, especially for out of parish burials. Members requested that the costs of providing these (and other) services are identified to support decisions of future increases.

Car Parking

Members indicated that there should not be a review of the car parking fees for this budget planning session – but to schedule these for review in 2 years (2023/2024).

Cllrs asked to understand utilisation and capacity of the car parks in the Town Centre, especially in light of ASDA's new daily ticket offering.

The Orchard Community Centre

It was agreed that the Assistant Town Clerk investigate whether an alcohol licence can be applied for, and that a business case be prepared to fully understand the impact including staffing costs, stock management, capital investments, etc.

Officers recommended to implement a corporate rate pricing structure, in addition to the current fees structure.

Members requested the Town Council to look at the costs for purchasing a bouncy castle and other items that could fit into a “package hire cost” and present these as a business case.

Members requested that the broken coffee machine be replaced with vending machines to be installed to maximise income from visitors to the centre.

Website

Members stated that they did not believe there would be sufficient visitors to the website to make advertising viable.

Events Sponsorship

It was suggested that the Town Council develop a sponsorship policy to facilitate future sponsorship opportunities.

Fishing Permits

It was recommended that Officers of the Town Council meet with the Ivel Protection Society regarding fishing permits for the Ivel River. Members indicated that any charge over and above a nominal administration fee would be unacceptable.

It was confirmed that the enforcement of fishing permits for the BTC stretch of river is performed by Ivel Protection Society.

Leisure facilities

Members asked for Officers of the Town Council to investigate utilisation of the Drove Road site and provide the update and full business case to a future Town Council meeting.

Public Realm

Members requested that the reports make it clear that the £1.1 million is a one-off receipt should the parks be adopted for a period.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised that CBC will inform how much will be capital and over what time period.

Public Conveniences

There was strong feeling amongst members that there should be no charge for access to the current public conveniences.

It was **RESOLVED** that the increase in fees be considered by the Town Council as part of the forthcoming budgeting cycle and that the Orchard Centre fees be reviewed as part of the Orchard Centre review.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council explores the widening of the Council’s service offer as per Appendix B and that appropriate business cases be presented to the relevant committees and/or Council for approval, taking into account the feedback provided by Members.

It was **RESOLVED** that a Capital Income Maximization project be immediately initiated with the expectation of reporting back to the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 15th March 2022.

It was **RESOLVED** that Officers continue to maintain a RIO Ideas Bank with the expectation that a yearly review takes place with this Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that an Efficiency and Cost Reduction project be immediately initiated with the expectation of reporting back to the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 15th March 2022.

The Chair closed the Committee Meeting at 8:40pm.