

**MINUTES OF THE RE-CONVENED MEETING OF BIGGLESWADE JOINT COMMITTEE
HELD IN PERSON AT THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE, THE OLD
COURT HOUSE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL ON THURSDAY,
18th NOVEMBER 2021 at 15:00**

Present:	BTC: Cllr M North, Cllr H Ramsay, Cllr M Russell (Deputy Chairman), Cllr M Knight CBC: Cllr I Bond, Cllr H Whitaker, Cllr T Stock BTC Town Clerk & Chief Executive: Peter Tarrant BTC Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships: Karim Hosseini BTC Head of Place Shaping & Town Centre Management: Philip Truppin BTC Head of Finance & Planning: Wilhelmina Solomon BTC Professional Assistant: Sian van der Merwe (Meeting Administrator)
In Attendance:	CBC Community Engagement Manager: Sarah Hughes CBC Head of Place Delivery: Ingrid Hooley CBC Head of Sustainability: Stephen Mooring CBC Highways Asset Manager: Mark Eaton CBC Programme Enabling Manager – Delivery: Sarah Morgan
Members of the public:	None

Following a reminder to Meeting attendees that this is a formal meeting, the Deputy Chair 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 to be filmed and to the use of those images and sound recordings. The Deputy Chair advised that attendees should not disclose any personal information of individuals as this would infringe the Data Protection Rights of the individual. The Deputy Chair asked everyone to mute their microphones when not speaking.

PART A: ADMINISTRATION

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr M Foster (Chairman), Cllr S Dixon.

This Meeting was re-convened as a result of a fire alarm interrupting the Biggleswade Joint Committee Meeting of 14 October 2021 at 14:30 pm. The agenda for this Meeting effectively continued from the point of interruption of the agenda for the 14 October 2021 meeting.

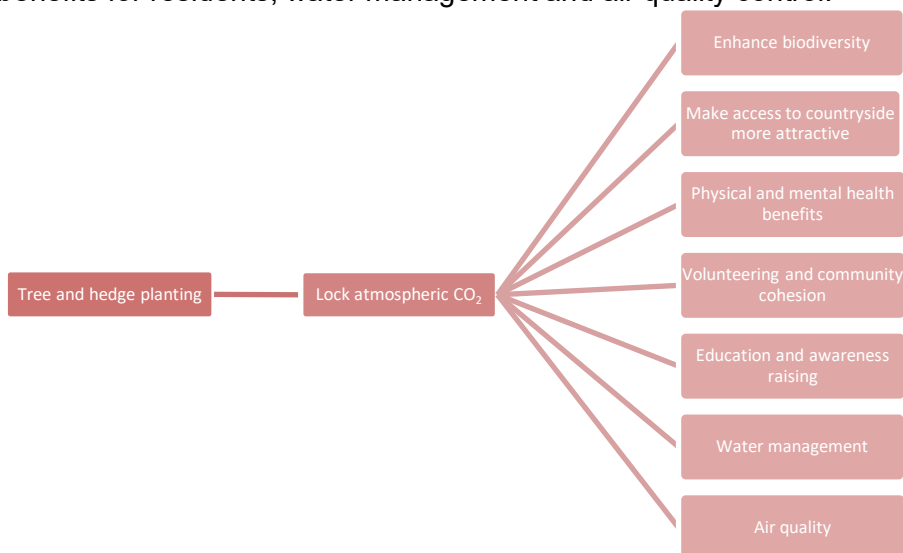
PART B: PLACE – KEY INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT UPDATES

- Sustainability Plan and Projects**

Mr Stephen Mooring, Central Bedfordshire Council's Head of Sustainability, advised that a Sustainability Plan was adopted in September 2020. This Plan was based on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and gives clear guidelines on areas of responsibility and scope of focus.



Mr Mooring advised that all of the Council's deliveries are planned with as many sustainable objectives as possible, for example tree and hedge planting to enhance biodiversity, wellbeing benefits for residents, water management and air quality control.



Central Bedfordshire Council has a number of key areas to focus on in supporting Biggleswade Town Council's initiatives, i.e. understanding the impact of Plans on towns, discussions with service providers which can inform initiatives and working collaboratively to understand the impact on each Council. Current projects include rollout of electric vehicle charge points at selected sites within Biggleswade, tree planting schemes (such as the Queen's Green Canopy) and providing technical support for energy efficiency, biodiversity and supporting local communities. Central Bedfordshire Council adopted an [Electric Vehicle Charge Point Plan](#) in June 2021 which sets out its role in supporting the uptake of Electric Vehicles, installation of charge points and ultimately rolling out the plan across Central Bedfordshire.

Central Bedfordshire's tree planting fund helps local voluntary and community organisations to deliver tree and hedge planting schemes across Central Bedfordshire. Mr Mooring encouraged the Town Council to look at the Tree Planting Fund and specialist consultants can be brought in to help with co-designing tree planting schemes. Central Bedfordshire Council were successful in securing Treescapes Funding from the Forestry Commission - that will focus on tree planting along highways and Biggleswade is one of the beneficiaries of this funding. Mr Mooring advised the Committee that those trees will be planted on Central Bedfordshire land, however, he will provide the Town Council with those plans in advance.

Cllr Ramsay noted that recent media coverage had indicated that not all EV charge points were standardised. Central Bedfordshire Council have been seeking a charge point provider to apply that consistency across the whole of Central Bedfordshire.

PART C: ECONOMY AND TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

- **Welcome Back Fund - Projects**

Philip Truppin, BTC's Head of Place Shaping & Town Centre Events Management updated Members on the progress of the Welcome Back Fund project.

BTC's Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships confirmed that a significant amount of work has gone into preparation of a projects list.

Ms Wilma Solomon, Biggleswade Town Council Head of Finance & Planning advised the Committee that the Town Council has spent £28,104 of the allocated funds to date and thanked Ms Sarah Morgan, Programme Enabling Manager, for her assistance in identifying the criteria for items eligible for the balance of the allocated funds. The Town Council has used the funds for promotional events and materials within the Town Centre to stimulate business and visitors into town, purchase of hand sanitiser and COVID safety protocol equipment to give visitors peace of mind, purchase of new branded gazebo's for use of businesses within the Town Centre, banners and advertising materials.

- **Benchmarking Survey:**

Cllr Whitaker advised the Committee Central Bedfordshire Council has launched a benchmarking survey to better understand why people visit town centres, how COVID-19 has impacted how people use them, and how they plan to use them in the future. The survey is open until Friday **10 December 2021**.

This report will be used to compare how local towns are performing against other similar local authority areas, as well as people's thoughts from the surveys conducted in 2019, such as the commercial offer, footfall, local attractions, and car parking.

- **Highways Update:**

Highways Programme Delivery: Mr Eaton presented to the Committee on the current planned highways schedule, including completed works, commenced works, drainage schemes on Lawrence Road, integrated transport on Potton Road and Lawrence Road, the Eagle Farm Scheme, design works across Biggleswade and S106 schemes. There are a number of schemes that have been postponed but no information was available to explain the reason for those delays.

Members requested that the Highways Update be distributed via email with additional information for each category to give a better understanding of what the works relate to.

Potton Road Crossing: Delays to delivery of this project were caused by a design review and the need to implement this during the school holidays. Subject to weather conditions the scheme will now be implemented in February 2022. The temporary traffic signals will remain in place until the scheme is implemented. In the interim, Central Bedfordshire Council will be liaising with volunteers and undertaking a Speedwatch with special equipment.

London Road Active Travel Scheme: Mr Eaton has been corresponding with Steve Lakin, CBC's Sustainable Transport and Active Travel Manager. Mr Lakin is investigating budget sources to commission a design and implement this scheme on a more permanent basis. Cllr Russell advised Mr Eaton that there has been considerable negative feedback from residents on this scheme. Mr Eaton confirmed Mr Lakin had collated all the feedback garnered during the consultation and would be using the feedback in future planning. Cllr Russell requested that any future design be presented to the Town Council for consideration.

Cllr Whitaker said that the Committee was involved in the original consultation for the Active Travel Scheme. Now that it has been in place for some time, she has raised concerns that London Road is not the most appropriate road for this scheme – experienced cyclists don't appreciate sharing the lane with pedestrians and inexperienced cyclists on a pleasure ride don't feel safe on the road due to the number of vehicles. Cllr Ramsay commented on the considerable danger to safety of motorists and cyclists alike with the scheme in its current condition. Mr Eaton agreed to inform Mr Lakin of the feedback.

Fix My Street: Mr Eaton updated the Committee on the current state of this programme. Members of the public can make instant reports on a variety of highway and safety issues. There is now an app. Cllr Knight commented he had used it before with some issues, there seemed to be limited classifications for reporting and if it needed to be transferred it seemed to have been closed rather than successfully transferred to the next responsible team. Cllr Bond informed he has been tracking reports for Biggleswade and that staff at Central Bedfordshire Council have been through a significant training programme in relation to use of this programme and using it is a much smoother process now. Cllr Whitaker advised that reports for the Market Square may not fit into the longer-term plans and KPI's.

Cllr Whitaker urged Mr Eaton to pass across a request to the Highways team to visit Biggleswade to fix a number of broken lights, she had recently had occasion to file 15 reports covering 2 streets in Biggleswade. In terms of resident's safety it is important to have all the illuminations fixed.

- **Co-op Recruitment Drive in Biggleswade:**

Ms Hooley advised the Committee that there has been significant interest in the roles the Co-Op are recruiting for but there are still a number of unfilled posts. There have been work clubs in Biggleswade through referrals from the Department for Work & Pensions, advertising on social media, discussions between CBC Skills Support Team at CBC, to name a few. The Co-Op are reviewing their recruitment plan and examining how they can be more flexible in their approach to accommodate people with caring responsibilities and childcare needs.

- **Community Engagement Group:**

Mr Tarrant advised the Committee that a Biggleswade Community Engagement Group had been set up in February of this year, with a diverse attendance between residents and business owners. The agenda is framed by both the attendees and the Council or other organisations that would like input. If Central Bedfordshire Council would like to get input on any consultations or plans, officers are encouraged to forward any agenda items to the Town Council.

- **Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan:**

Cllr Russell advised the Committee that the Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 Consultation is now closed and the 53 responses are being collated and will be presented to a Town Council Meeting in December 2021. The Town Council plan to submit this to Central Bedfordshire Council by the end of December and hope to have the referendum in May 2022.

Cllr Whitaker was concerned about the delay to delivery of some of the leaflets about the consultation and resident drop-in sessions, meaning that some residents on Kings Reach only received leaflets after the drop-in sessions were completed. Cllr Russell advised although the leaflet distribution company had let the Town Council down, there were a number of other initiatives that were put in place to notify residents of the consultation, including banners at key entry points to town, posters placed across town, leaflets handed out on market days, articles in the local press, the Town Council website and a number of social media posts and a stall on the Market Square manned by staff for the full period of the last week of the Consultation.

The meeting was closed at 15:58.