



**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC LAND AND OPEN SPACES
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 8th JUNE 2021 AT
7.00 PM AT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL,
SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE**



PRESENT:

Cllr F Foster (Chair)
Cllr C Thomas (Vice Chair)
Cllr K Brown
Cllr G Fage
Cllr M Foster
Cllr M Knight
Cllr M Russell
Cllr D Strachan
Cllr R Pullinger

Mr P Tarrant, Town Clerk & Chief Executive Mr P Truppin, Assistant Town Clerk
Mr J Woolley, Deputy Public Realm Manager Ms K Saunders, BTC Meeting Administrator
Members of the public – None

Meeting formalities:

The Public Lands and Open Spaces Committee Meeting is being filmed. By being present, either in person or virtually via an online link, attendees are agreeing to being filmed and to the public use of those images and sound recordings. Members of the public will be given an opportunity to speak during the public open sessions but not at other times. Attendees should not disclose information of any individuals as this will infringe the data protection rights of those individuals. For those attending virtually, please mute your microphones when not speaking.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Cllr M North.

ABSENT

None.

2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

a. **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in any agenda item**

None.

b. **Non-pecuniary interests in any agenda item**

None.

3. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

4. **MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETING**

- a. Members **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Public Lands and Open Spaces Committee Meeting held on the 16th March 2021.

5. **MATTERS ARISING**

- a. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Public Lands and Open Spaces Committee Meeting held on the 16th March 2021.

Item 6b – Old Public Realm Depot: The Deputy Public Realm Manager informed Members that the equipment will be moved into the new Depot within the next few weeks. The electrics for the new Depot have now been installed. There are currently conversations being had on the old Depot. It was suggested that we may arrange for a commercial surveyor to visit the old Depot and provide a value for the property. There has been one expression of interest received for the old Depot.

Item 6c – Flower Beds/Hanging Baskets: Cllr Knight requested an update on this. The Deputy Public Realm Manager confirmed that work on this is currently underway and that the flower bed placed at the A1 entrance of the town has been planted to resemble the Biggleswade Town Council logo.

Item 6f – The Spinney: The Town Clerk & Chief Executive informed Members that the Deputy Public Realm Manager is planning to plant trees at The Spinney during the autumn. This will be supported by parts of the community, particularly the Scout Association. Cllr Pullinger wished to raise a non-pecuniary interest in this due to his role as District Commissioner for the Biggleswade District Scouts. Cllr M Foster raised that he hadn't yet seen the Assets Register. It was agreed that all Councillors receive the Assets Register.

Item 6j - Magnolia Place: The Town Clerk & Chief Executive is in ongoing conversations with the residents living in or near Magnolia Place to ensure that the work resolves the issues raised.

6. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- a. **Jubilee Recreation Ground**

Members discussed the Jubilee Recreation Ground report from Cllr F Foster.

It was suggested that a gap through to Jubilee Recreation Ground be created to allow traffic through to the north side. It was suggested that the Recreation Ground could include a dog training area towards the south. It was agreed essential to consult with nearby residents. It was felt that we should look at the original planning permission when progressing this matter.

Members **RESOLVED** to **ACCEPT** the recommendations as written in the Jubilee Recreation Ground report. It was agreed to consult with residents and to consider the position of a gap in the fence. There will need to be conversations with the developer and a plan will need to be created of how the area will be used and how the pathway will continue.

b. **Deputy Public Realm Manager Report**

The Deputy Public Realm Manager updated Members on matters relating to the Public Realm Team.

Planters

It was noted that four planters will be installed shortly.

The purchase of additional equipment

It was confirmed that four steel strimmer's, four steel hedge cutters and four steel blowers have been purchased. There has been a slight delay with hand blowers but these will be delivered shortly.

A minitruck has been purchased and delivered and additional trucks are to be purchased shortly.

War Memorial Beds

The Public Realm Team plan to develop four small beds around the War Memorial subject to CBC approval. Members suggested that we proceed with caution due to the War Memorial being a sensitive subject. It was agreed to speak with the Royal British Legion and to gain approval for this work before proceeding. The Deputy Public Realm Manager assured Members that this work will not clash with Remembrance Sunday.

Allotments

The Deputy Public Realm Manger has been liaising with Central Bedfordshire Council's Highways Team, and other agencies, to restore the access road to the allotment site. The Allotment Association are pleased with the positive response received from the Town Council and further discussions will continue shortly.

The Deputy Public Realm Manger is meeting with a representative of the Allotment Association to discuss an area for composting on the allotment site. There is currently a large area of soil and other waste materials at the allotments that will be cleared shortly.

Public Realm Review

The Public Realm Review was discussed at the Personnel Committee on the 25th May 2021.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive answered the following two questions that were raised by Members during the meeting:

- 1) The cost of Public Realm overtime in a given year: The answer is £9k-10k.
- 2) The projected outturn for the 2021/22 financial year: The projected outturn will be presented to the Finance & General Purpose Meeting on the 15th June 2021.

c. **Public Realm Depot Equipment**

This item was covered under Matters Arising.

d. **Allotments**

The Deputy Public Realm Manger provided an oral update on a number of matters relating to the allotments.

Signage

It was noted that this is a low-cost task and Members were supportive of this. It was agreed that the signage will be in line with the Town Council colour scheme and will include the high- resolution logo.

It was suggested that we should also renumber the allotment plots so that they are in consecutive order.

A Design Guide should be progressed for the future.

The Deputy Public Realm Manager is currently looking at options to increase the number of allotments in order to meet the growing demand for an allotment plot. There is the potential to use part of the wildflower meadow for additional allotment plots. As the number of homes increases in Biggleswade it is anticipated that so will the demand for an allotment plot.

Storage Area

A Grant Application from Biggleswade Allotment Association (BAA) to provide a secure on-site storage building had been received and a meeting with two representatives from BAA was held at the Council offices. Following this meeting it was agreed that rather than pursuing the grant application it would be better that the building should be owned by Biggleswade Town Council and remain a Council asset. It could then be rented to the BAA. It was also agreed at this meeting that a wooden building which could be properly secured, would be preferable to an adapted metal shipping container both aesthetically and for transporting and assembly on site. Members were generally in agreement with progressing this matter and that the building should remain a Biggleswade Town Council asset.

It was agreed that we need to be sure that the allotment land, leased from CBC, is secure for the future before we make any further investment into the allotment site.

After further discussions with the BAA have taken place, a proposal will be presented to Members at a future Public Land and Open Spaces Committee meeting.

e. **Play and Recreation Areas**

The Deputy Public Realm Manager provided an oral update.

There has recently been work completed to ensure that the equipment at Brunel Drive is safe. The following was suggested:

- That we look at adopting additional play areas on future developments.
- That we produce a policy on the adoption of community assets which would allow Council Officers to have conversations with Central Bedfordshire Council.
- We should have a greater input to the planning process before we receive the planning applications from Central Bedfordshire Council.
- We should take advantage of Capital Match Funding.
- We need to consider future Play Areas that we will be managing in the future.
- That we create a 3-5 year plan for this work.

The following was agreed:

- That we prioritise safety before beginning work to install additional equipment.
- That the equipment at Play and Recreation Areas needs to meet the needs of different ages as well as the needs of those with special educational needs and physical disabilities.

f. **Tree Survey**

The Deputy Public Realm Manager provided an oral update.

Members were informed that software for managing the tree surveys has now been installed. A report on tree surveys will be presented at a future meeting.

The Public Realm Team are trained on completing some areas of the tree work; however we do also use tree surgeons when required.

g. **Drove Road Cemetery and Chapel**

Members received an oral update from the Town Clerk & Chief Executive and the Deputy Public Realm Manager. It was noted that Officers are committed to maintaining the Drove Road Cemetery and Chapel. Members were informed that a paper in relation to capital required for this work will be presented at a future meeting.

h. **Stratton Way Cemetery**

The Deputy Administration & HR Manager informed Members that the Cemetery Regulations have recently been reviewed and updated. The most notable change to the Regulations is that undertakers will now be responsible for the removal of any excess soil in the preparation of an interment.

The reposition of the northern entrance to Stratton Way Cemetery should be considered.

Members questioned the size and style of memorials at both cemeteries and whether these are in line with our requirements. The Deputy Administration & HR Manager confirmed that although we do have rules on the size of memorials, we do allow for larger memorials for members of the traveller community in line with their traditions. It was agreed that this be discussed at a future meeting.

The revised Regulations will be circulated to Members shortly.

It was noted that our Cemetery Fees are significantly lower than other towns in the area. It was felt important to review our fees and bring them more in-line with the market rate. A full review of other towns rates is currently underway to allow for a proper comparison.

The Cemetery Regulations should also include who is responsible for the upkeep of memorial benches.

i. **Biggleswade Town Council Owned Sports Areas**

Members received an oral update from the Deputy Public Realm Manager.

It was noted that the Neighbourhood Plan can designate local green spaces, however the criteria for local green space is laid down by Central Government. BRCC analysed the green spaces that are important to local people and the spaces that were seen as important, and do meet the criteria, have been put forward for local green space designation.

Members agreed it beneficial to identify the sports areas that we own and to review other sports areas in the town. It was suggested that if there is a national scheme that we could get involved with to show our commitment to these resources.

It was **RESOLVED** for the Town Clerk & Chief Executive to arrange a meeting with Fabio Santos-Costa and Fergus Morrison on tennis for Biggleswade.

7. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

None.

8. **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.

There were no members of the public present.

9. **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.

(10a. Drove Road Chape)
(10b. Apollo Gardens)

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.

10. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

a. **Drove Road Chapel**

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive informed Members that an enquiry has been received expressing an interest in renting Drove Road Chapel. Alternative options of future usage of the Chapel will continue to be explored.

It was noted that we need a survey of Drove Road Chapel to be completed and further discussions will need to be had on what we should use the asset for in the long term.

It was suggested that Funeral Directors may wish to use the Chapel, however it was noted that a lot of work needs to be completed to make the Chapel useable.

b. **Apollo Gardens**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed with Members that the adoption of the play area at Apollo Gardens is currently being progressed and an update will be given at a future meeting.

AOB

Heads of Service

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive stated that the vacancy for the Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships role has now been filled; Karim Hosseini will join the Town Council in the first week of August 2021.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed that the Council are still recruiting for the Head of Finance & Planning position.