



**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC LAND AND OPEN SPACES  
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16TH  
MARCH 2021 AT 7.00PM VIA ZOOM WEBINAR**



**PRESENT:**

Cllr F Foster (Chairman)  
Cllr L Fage (Vice Chairman)  
Cllr K Brown  
Cllr G Fage  
Cllr M Foster  
Cllr M Knight  
Cllr M North  
Cllr M Russell  
Cllr D Strachan  
Cllr C Thomas  
Cllr H Ramsay, Cllr R Pullinger (non-Committee Members)

Mr P Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive, Biggleswade Town Council  
Mr P Truppin – Assistant Town Clerk, Biggleswade Town Council  
Mrs S van der Merwe – Professional Assistant, Biggleswade Town Council

Members of Public – 2 Cllr R Pullinger (non-Committee Member)

**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 to 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**

None.

**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:**

None.

**3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

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

None.

4. **MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

Members received and **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Public Lands & Open Spaces Meeting held on **Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020**.

5. **MATTERS ARISING**

Matters arising from the Minutes of the Public Lands & Opens Spaces Committee Meeting of **24<sup>th</sup> November 2020**.

Cllr Strachan – Item 5b/Item 6a: Great Outdoor Gym Company: Cllr Strachan asked for an update on this item. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised Members quotes were not available but that one of the priorities for the new Public Realm Manager (once recruited) will be to conduct a full audit of all play and leisure equipment as there is opportunity to modernise these. This will be returned to the agenda at the first available opportunity after the Public Realm Manager takes up the position.

6. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **New Public Realm Depot and Equipment**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive apologised for the number of oral updates on this agenda as a result of staff absences.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised Members that the initial Agreement to Lease for the new depot was signed in February. The Assistant Town Clerk clarified that the lease document will be completed when the dividing wall between Units 10 and 11 has been completed. The landlord has applied for planning permission for the wall. Dates agreed with the landlord for possession of the new depot would be a minimum of one month from Agreement to Lease and a maximum of up to three months. The two major items of change to be effected are 1) agents to build separating wall, 2) utilities to be separated, 3) electrical quotations agreed and works scheduled.

The Public Realm Equipment previously approved for purchase by the Council has been ordered and once the Town Council is in possession of the new depot, the equipment will be delivered.

b. **Old Public Realm Depot**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive stated that the Public Realm Team have been clearing out and cleaning up the current depot building and redundant equipment has been sold off. Cllr Bond suggested use of the old depot for a local church food bank, however, this did not move forward. Officers are investigating creative ideas for use of the Public Realm depot going forward, with those tenants to take possession of the depot shortly after the Public Realm team has moved to the new depot.

Cllr Knight added that it would be sensible to ensure monetisation of the old depot to offset some of the costs of the new depot and suggested getting a valuation or appraisal to establish market rental values. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive stated that the Council is already seeking to undertake a global chartered surveyor valuation project to review all assets for insurance purposes and this building will be included. Cllr F Foster asked if a specification and list of services at the current depot is available for future tenants. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive will share this information to Members as soon as he is able to.

c. **Flower Beds/Hanging Baskets**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive and Cllr F Foster conducted site visits to the North and South entrance roundabouts into Biggleswade with members of the Public Realm team. The Town Council's aim is to have these adopted in order to make those entrances more attractive to visitors and residents. Other plans include having more planters, raising the Biggleswade name signs to make them more visible, sloping the planters to give a better visual impact to drivers and maintaining the roundabouts to a higher standard than is currently the case. Central Bedfordshire Council Highways to request adoption of these roundabouts so that the Town Council is able to manage them.

Three quotations were received for flower bed stock and hanging baskets and planting of the hanging baskets is now underway. Flower planting is scheduled to begin in the second week of May 2021. The Public Realm Team has a schedule of works covering planting of beds, baskets and planters, with a number of additional planters being manufactured by the Public Realm operatives.

In the long term, the Town Clerk & Chief Executive would like to invest money in maintaining those flowers in a better way to make the annual seasonal planting and growing costs go further through purchase of greenhouses and self-cultivation materials.

d. **Saxon Gate Pocket Park and Biggleswade Linear Wood**

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive toured these sites with Cllr F Foster and he had approached Lindsey Bignell at Central Bedfordshire Council with a view to taking on a partnership agreement for maintenance of these areas, subject to terms agreement and payment of a maintenance fee for a 25-year period.

Both sites are attractive and pose a positive addition to the Town Council's offer for its residents. Where there is a commercial agreement with another Council or a private contractor, the Town Clerk & Chief Executive recommended it should be considered to extend the Public Realm team proportionate to that income.

e. **Tree Inventory**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed this project remains a priority for the Public Realm Team but is not yet complete. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive has been conducting site visits to assets across Biggleswade to see what needs to be done and three tree surgeons were recently invited to quote on maintenance of the trees at Drove Road Cemetery.

The Tree Inventory will help build a picture of what work needs to be done in a season, which would then easily translate into budget requirement going forward.

f. **The Spinney**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive is aware of a misunderstanding within the Community that an oak tree was felled in the Spinney by the Town Council. This was done by an unknown person and not the Town Council. Cllr Russell had received a complaint from a member of the public and has sent a holding reply. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive will discuss the information he has on this matter with Cllr Russell.

The new Public Realm Manager will be tasked with examining The Spinney and to recommend what should be done to provide the Community with a space that is more user friendly.

Cllr M Foster asked if the Town Council has a list of the Town Council assets, along with a map of the relevant sites. He added this would be useful information for Councillors and would clearly list the assets. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive added he was happy to share the Asset Register with Members.

Cllr Knight suggested the cutting down of the tree is an act of vandalism and should be reported to the police.

g. **Allotments Notice Board/Map and Bay/Internal Road Repair**

The Professional Assistant advised Members that she and Karen Saunders of the Administration team had met with Cllrs F and M Foster at the end of January at the allotments to inspect the access road from the Taylor Wimpey development site up to the allotment gates. Lorraine Howitt from Central Bedfordshire Council had been instrumental in getting Taylor Wimpey on board to carry out repairs to the road, but there was still a section that had not been repaired. Central Bedfordshire Council had been contacted to update them on the current situation and a response from CBC is pending.

There was significant degradation in the road between sites 1 and 2 of the allotment, and this would require some repair.

h. **Buttercup Mead Fencing, Fairfield Play Area and Maintenance of all play areas**

The Professional Assistant advised Members the fencing at Buttercup Mead has been completed.

Cllr F Foster had visited the play area at Buttercup Mead and the site is very small and the equipment is in poor condition. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive reiterated that all play areas need to be audited, with recommendations on what investments should be made to modernise or repair those and the future of certain play areas. However, this project should be done by the Public Realm Manager once that position is filled.

i. **Biggleswade 3g pitch**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised he had written a letter to Mr Young from the Football Association on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021 asking for information on what criteria had been used for choosing the site and suggesting other sites that could be suitable. He recommended a feasibility study be conducted and the Town Council is awaiting Mr Young's response.

Cllr Strachan advised the Committee that there had recently been an article in the Biggleswade Chronicle representing the three town Football clubs, and he recommended inviting those football clubs and Stratton School to discuss this matter collectively.

Cllr Madeline Russell reminded the Committee that the funds for the football pitch will come from the Football Foundation, with a contribution from S106, so it is necessary to work with the FA to progress this.

Cllr G Fage recommended sending Mr Young a gentle reminder to help progress the matter. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive stated that conversations with wider stakeholders would be beneficial in the long run.

j. **Magnolia Place**

The Professional Assistant updated the Members on progress on this matter. The trees around 7 Magnolia Place identified in a report have been felled and the tree surgeon confirmed the homeowner was happy with the result.

k. **Drove Road Cemetery Update**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed there is an ongoing schedule of works around maintaining the graves and trees on site. This is a cemetery with a number of very old graves and where some graves have gone into disrepair, the Town Council will, over a period of time, write to the families asking them if they would like to assist with maintaining those graves. The Town Clerk has visited the site and spoken with homeowners nearby and there are tree surgeons visiting with a view to providing quotations for trees overhanging the wall and larger older trees that need to be reduced.

Cllr Knight asked for a specification of these works to be supplied to the Committee.

7. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

None.

8. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

**Mr John Ingrey**

Mr Ingrey raised the issue of the roads on the allotments and asked what the final decision is regarding the road maintenance. Cllr F Foster confirmed the Town Council accepts the responsibility as a Council to maintain the access road and internal road between the two allotment sites. Mr Ingrey added there are some allotment tenants who are disabled and safe access to the second site via the internal road is vital.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive added that Members may be aware that a concrete mixer truck almost tipped over on the access road, which has caused quite significant damage to the road and Taylor Wimpey should be encouraged to put this right. The Professional Assistant confirmed this has been raised with Central Bedfordshire Council and we are awaiting a response.

9. **EXEMPT**

The following resolution will be **moved** that is advisable in the public interest that the public and press are excluded whilst the following exempt item issue is discussed.

(10a Public Realm Recruitment)

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.

10. **EXEMPT**

a. **Public Realm Recruitment**

Jonathan Wooley joins Biggleswade Town Council on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021 as the Deputy Public Realm Manager on a temporary contract for two months.

There have been very few applications for the Public Realm Manager position and as a result the Town Clerk & Chief Executive is meeting with two Recruitment Companies who may help with the recruitment.

Although this item was on the agenda under Items for Consideration, 6f The Spinney, it was moved to exempt following a request by the Town Clerk & Chief Executive.

6f. **The Spinney**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive will contact the Police to report the cutting down of the Oak tree on The Spinney.