



**MINUTES OF THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 11TH
MARCH 2021 AT 7.00PM VIA ZOOM WEBINAR**



PRESENT:

Cllr G Fage – Chairman
Cllr M Knight – Vice Chairman
Cllr D Albone
Cllr I Bond
Cllr Pullinger
Cllr D Strachan
Cllr C Thomas

Mr Peter Tarrant, BTC Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Mr Philip Truppin, BTC Assistant Town Clerk
Ms. Karen Saunders, BTC Meeting Administrator
Ms. Jackie Sadek, Chief Operating Officer, UK Regeneration
Mr Giles Heather, Director, Goldstein Heather
Ms Gill Marshall, Head of Stakeholder Engagement, UK Regeneration

Member of the public, Cllr F Foster

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 Russell, Cllr North, Cllr Woodhead, Simon Newton.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Statutory Declarations of Interests from Members in relation to:

- (a)** Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – Cllr G Fage - Parking permits
- (b)** Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – None.

3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no questions from members of the Public.

4. **INVITED SPEAKERS**

Ms Jackie Sadek from UK Regeneration, Mr Giles Heather from Goldstein Heather, and Ms. Gill Marshall presented to Members on plans for the New Inn Public House and the Red Lion Public House. Ms Sadek gave apologies for the absence of Simon Lyons who could not attend tonight.

Ms Sadek advised Members that the New Inn would be retained as a traditional pub offering craft ale, an extensive wine menu and good and affordable food with slides showing the interior decor, using traditional building materials in-keeping with the historical nature of the building and surrounding buildings. It will benefit from a complete interior transformation as well as a radical two storey extension at the rear with a transformed residential unit above, a sunken dining area outside and a bar area providing craft beers, a restaurant/kitchen area and a gin distillery.

Members discussed the homeless person who lives next to this property, UK Regeneration wishes to take guidance from the Town Council and the police on dealing with this matter.

Members were advised that there no plans for a tenant or partner. Due to COVID, the timescales indicate completion of the build towards Christmas of 2021.

Mr Heather gave a presentation on the Red Lion Public House, highlighting historical elements of the pub and the vision for the new offering, which includes 6 houses, 5 of which will be mews type. There will also be space for a farm shop, courtyard, orangery, restaurant and bar area.

Cllr Strachan stated the lack of parking at the Red Lion pub may cause servicing issues for the pub and it may deter the general public. Mr Heather advised there are other car parks close by and they are trying to enhance a social benefit by creating a social area which uses the space of a poorly used car park. The timescales would be confirmed as this is still at pre-application stage.

Cllr G Fage offered the services of Ward Councillors, particularly Cllr Bond, if there are any obstacles with the planning process. The Committee was keen to see meaningful progress to help the recovery of the Town Centre.

Cllr G Fage thanked the speakers for their time and for an informative presentation.

5. **MINUTES OF MEETING**

Members received and **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Town Centre Management Meeting held on **Tuesday 1st December 2020** via Zoom Webinar.

6. **MATTERS ARISING**

Matters arising from the Minutes of the Town Centre Management meeting held on **Tuesday 1st December 2020**.

Christmas Offering 8 (a)

Cllr Knight thanked Officers for their hard work in creating the Christmas grotto.

Parking Orders 8 (b)

Cllr G Fage stated that there is a draft signage package with the printers' but a final draft should be ready in the next few days and will be circulated to Members.

It was **RESOLVED** to move the parking permits matter to the exempt part of this meeting.

A-Boards 8 (d)

It was agreed that this item should be added to the next agenda.

Street Furniture 8 (e)

Cllr Knight stated that the benches that have been refurbished within the Town Centre look very nice and asked when the rest of the benches would be finished. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive informed Members there is a 6 to 7 week completion time on this project, however the bike stands are to be refurbished and will be stored in the new depot until a decision is made of where they should be located.

Public Conveniences 8 (f)

This item needs to be added to the next Agenda.

7. Items for Consideration

None.

8. Items for Information

a. Crime Working Group

Cllr Strachan updated Members on the Crime Working Group and welcomed Inspector Louise Bates who has been dealing with issues relating to the cemeteries and the installation of CCTV.

There are two CCTV contracts at present, one with Hertfordshire County Council and one with Central Bedfordshire Council. Central Bedfordshire Council have proposals to put forward about location and number of cameras, but these have not yet been received. Cllr Strachan wants to ensure the imagery and location of the CCTV cameras are of good quality.

Cllr Strachan stated that issues with the CCTV have moved on more quickly since Insp. Bates has been on board and the Town Clerk & Chief Executive agreed there is now a direct communication link with Insp. Louise Bates and any issues are quickly resolved.

It was agreed that the Town Clerk & Chief Executive would take point on raising any issues directly to Insp. Louise Bates, and Members should liaise with the Town Clerk & Chief Executive in the first instance. It was noted that issues should be logged and a crime number given as this has a direct impact on crime statistics. It was also noted that anything contentious would be both logged and brought up with Insp. Louise Bates.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive gave an example of where people are parking on double yellow lines around the funeral directors, and photographs were taken and given to Insp. Louise Bates as this is becoming a big problem.

9. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

None.

10. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

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.

(11a - Market Strategy)
(11b - Parking permits policy)

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.

11. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

a. **Market Strategy**

Members considered the draft Market Strategy. It was felt the document required more detailed analysis, although there were some aspects that could be delivered more quickly. Furthermore, some external input would be required.

It was **RESOLVED** to engage with the two contacts who run a bi-annual market in the town, with the intention of taking them on in contract roles up until the end of July. Also, for the Market Working Group to identify the deliverables in the Market Strategy document that can be implemented as a matter of priority. Further, to place an item on the agenda of the next TCM Committee meeting to receive a report on progress.

b. **Parking Permits Policy**

As Cllr G Fage had declared a pecuniary interest in this item, Cllr Knight took the Chair for this item of business.

Members considered the strategy for implementing the return to parking controls with particular reference to the reintroduction of Parking Permits for residents and workers. It was noted that all holders of permits that were valid on 16th March 2020 had been granted a four-month extension permit by an earlier resolution. It was proposed that holders of original, renewed or extension permits that were valid on 10th November 2020 will now be granted an additional five-month extension with these permits to be posted to holders without the permit holder needing to take any action. Eligible permit holders will, therefore, receive extensions totalling up to nine months, covering the periods where parking was not enforced between 16th March 2020 and 31st March 2021.

It was **RESOLVED** to grant residential and worker parking permit holders a further extension in lieu of the period where car park enforcement was suspended with all holders of original, renewed or extension permits that were valid on 10th November 2020 to now be granted an additional five-month extension. New permits will be posted to eligible recipients without the permit holder needing to take any action.

Also **RESOLVED** to temporarily remove the price-premium for purchasing short-term worker permits. Monthly permits that commence between 1st April 2021 and 30th June 2021 will be charged at the annual rate divided by 12. Quarterly permits that commence between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022 will be charged at the annual rate divided by four. Half-yearly permits that commence between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022 will be charged at the annual rate divided by two. There is no change to the price for an annual worker permit. All promotional materials and communication shall clearly state that this is a temporary reduction in charges for short-term worker permits.