



**MINUTES OF THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 17th AUGUST
2021 AT 7.00PM AT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL
OFFICE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL**



PRESENT:

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

Mr Peter Tarrant, Town Clerk & Chief Executive, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr Karim Hosseini, Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr Simon Newton, Place Shaping Manager, Biggleswade Town Council
Mrs Sian van der Merwe, Professional Assistant, Biggleswade Town Council

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 M Russell and Cllr J Woodhead.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

Cllr Strachan – Item 12c.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman extended his thanks to the Biggleswade Business Consortium, Town Council Staff and business owners in Biggleswade for their contribution to the successful "Sunday on the Square" event held on 15th August 2021.

The Chairman noted that it was not possible to include a financial report to include revenue from Car Parks, the welcome back funding, and the events budget in this meeting, but that he had requested this be available for 23rd November 2021 TCM meeting.

Item 9d in relation to Century House will be discussed under Exempt matters at this meeting.

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

The Chairman advised members of the public wishing to speak to either raise their hand (for in-person attendees) or to use the electronic "raise hand" function on screen (for Zoom attendees).

None.

5. INVITED SPEAKER

None.

6. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

Members received and **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Town Centre Management meeting of **Tuesday 18th May 2021**.

7. MATTERS ARISING

a. Missing Biggleswade Market Advertising Banner:

Cllr G Fage asked when the banner that was missing would be replaced. The Place Shaping Manager confirmed this would be replaced as soon as possible.

b. Union Flag:

Cllr Strachan asked if the Town Council had permission relating to the flag pole. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised the Assistant Town Clerk would respond to Members with an update. The Town Clerk advised that new flags have not yet been purchased.

Cllr Albone asked if the height of the flag pole at the Town Hall could be looked at as the flag is sitting close to the building.

c. Community Toilet Scheme:

Cllr Albone asked if the Community Toilet Scheme would be deferred to the next Town Centre Management Committee meeting on 23rd November 2021. The Place Shaping Manager confirmed it would be.

d. **Footfall Monitoring – High Streets Task Force:**

Cllr Strachan stated the report on the outcome of the Footfall Monitoring application had not yet been sent to Councillors. Cllr Knight commented he is aware of the dashboard, but this is not electronic and when a technological solution is available, Members will be informed. Cllr Knight proposed putting this on the next Town Centre Events meeting of 23rd November 2021.

e. **Remedial Works to War Memorial:**

Cllr Albone asked if these works have been scheduled. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive commented that these works are insubstantive and rather more a sprucing- up of the Memorial. The Administration Manager is arranging for the letter typefacing to be touched up and the Public Realm Manager has been in discussions with Central Bedfordshire Council about updating the bedding plantings and having the railings painted.

8. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Christmas Offer**

Last year's light show and Christmas Entertainment Offer was hugely popular with residents of all ages and very well attended.

Members were provided with three quotes relating to proposals for different Christmas entertainment offers. The Place Shaping Manager advised he is still searching for additional entertainment providers to supply quotes. The quotes provided at this meeting are for light shows over four weekends in the Market Place, with road closures, as well as for a video wall.

The Place Shaping Manager discussed the potential extension of the contract for last year's light show provider and the Financial Regulations relating to this extension. He has also discussed potentially extending the contract for the Festoons with the relevant service provider.

Cllr Pullinger commented that additional quotes are vital to ensure compliance with financial regulations and to ensure best value is achieved. Cllr Pullinger asked for the Christmas Entertainment to be reviewed earlier in the annual calendar year going forward to ensure that additional quotes can be provided to the Town Council.

Members questioned the schedule of light shows and the Chairman asked for a copy of the schedule of dates to be distributed to the Committee and ultimately to the Public.

It was **AGREED** to defer further discussion on the quotations provided to this Committee to the Exempt Session.

It was **AGREED** that any decisions made by this Committee in relation to the proposed Christmas Offer be taken to the Town Council Meeting of 24 August 2021 for final approval.

b. Market Strategy

Cllr Fage presented the report updating Members on the progress with transforming the market.

It was **AGREED** that the Market Policy be recommended to the next Town Council meeting, subject to minor changes.

It was **AGREED** to continue with the Market Strategy until the Market Working Group has discussed the document.

c. Street Trading Application – Market Square

An application for a Street Trading permit was considered at the Town Council Meeting of 27th July 2021, where it appeared the Town Council was being asked to approve the application. It was therefore deferred to this meeting for further discussion.

The deadline for responses to the consultation period was 31 July 2021 and consequently, this application will be permitted by Central Bedfordshire Council. It is noted that the applicant is a regular trader at Biggleswade Markets.

Members asked for the Place Shaping Manager to follow up with Central Bedfordshire Council to establish whether the Applicant has permission to use a car parking space and requested to see the paper trail to that effect.

Cllr Knight expressed the importance of the Town Council developing a policy for Street Trading Applications to preserve the integrity and fairness of the Market and the Market Strategy.

It was **AGREED** to write to Central Bedfordshire Council giving the Town Council's view that:

- 1) whilst it does not approve of the Applicant trading on a Friday, it would be prepared to support the Applicant trading on a Saturday late afternoon/evening where the Applicant has traded at the Saturday market (on the same day);
- 2) In the event that the Town Centre is required by the Town Council for an event, this should take precedence over the Street Trading Licence, and
- 3) That the Applicant should remain in the same position that the Market Superintendent allocated on the earlier Saturday Market.
- 4) That the Street Trading Application only be granted for a period of 12 months and no longer.
- 5) Subject to the Town Council clarifying that Town Council staff do not have a position on the given application.

In addition, the Town Council should highlight that the Applicant has erroneously listed his application to cover one event only.

9. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Remembrance Service**

The Administration Manager gave the Committee an update on progress relating to this event.

Remembrance Sunday is on 14th November 2021 and the Town Council is working to support the Royal British Legion. The Administration Manager has been in contact with the Safety Advisory Group, who want a robust risk assessment 3 months before the event. There is some concern around attendance of Military troops at the event as a result of potential deployment and lack of funding for transport to Biggleswade for the ceremony.

The Administration Manager was encouraged to contact Inspector Louise Bates regarding police support for the event.

b. **Welcome Back Fund**

The Town Council submitted a bid for funding to support High Street businesses in Biggleswade and it was awarded £32,000. The funds are held by Central Bedfordshire Council and all procurement goes through them.

The first event to be supported by these funds was the “Sunday on the Square” event on 15th August 2021, which was very well attended and had significant positive feedback.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive and the Head of Governance & Strategic Partnership are developing a Community Engagement Plan for residents and business owners, which will support the Town Council’s response to the needs of the community.

c. **Communication within Biggleswade Businesses and Residents**

The Place Shaping Manager confirmed that there are mailing lists being prepared to facilitate contact and engagement with residents and businesses in the Town Centre. The aim is to be able to send out instant communications advertising events, local issues and the ability to garner instant feedback.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive stated the Place Shaping Manager would update the business locality maps in the Noticeboards around the Town Centre in due course.

d. **Century House**

This item to be discussed under the Exempt session at 12d.

e. **A-Boards**

The Place Shaping Manager intends to review the A-Boards policy and licence fee to bring this up to date. The proposed updates and recommendations will be presented to the next Town Centre Events Meeting for consideration on 23rd November 2021.

There have been some infractions of the policy, which the Town Council have proactively taken remedial action on, but overall the response has been very

positive from businesses and disabled residents about the difference this has made.

The Place Shaping Manager confirmed that all Town Centre businesses are governed by the policy.

f. Sunday Markets

The Place Shaping Manager advised the Committee that, as of 29th August 2021, there will be an additional monthly Sunday market. There are 8 traders currently signed up to the first market event with another 4 traders due to respond this week. The market will be well advertised via banners and through social media, with emphasis being on the fact that traders have a wider remit of goods and produce they can sell. Invitations have also been extended to all current Saturday traders.

Cllr Knight requested that the Place Shaping Manager liaise with Megan Green and Hannah Abel to discuss and implement differentiated branding for the Sunday Market to advertise the fact that a wider remit of goods and produce can be sold and bought.

10. 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.

None.

11. EXEMPT ITEMS

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.

- (12a. CCTV Report)
- (12b. Market Operations and Marketing)
- (12c. Pigeons and Market Square)
- (12d. Century House)

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.

12. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

a. **CCTV Report**

The fixed deadline to respond to Central Bedfordshire Council's CCTV proposition is 8th October 2021.

Officers will meet with the Town Clerk & Chief Executive and subsequently the Crime Working Group to finalise the Town Council's response and this will be presented to the next Town Council Meeting of 21st September 2021 for discussion and approval.

b. **Market Operations and Marketing**

Members **AGREED** to further extend the services of Hannah and Megan until the end of the Festive Season to concentrate solely on the promotion and marketing of the markets. Market operations has now been transferred to Officers, with data on footfall and stalls to be built up and presented at the next Town Centre Management Committee meeting on 23rd November 2021.

c. **Pigeons and Market Square**

Members requested Officers to investigate further the options on short and long term solutions to this problem.

This item is to be brought back to the 21st September 2021 Town Council Meeting for further deliberation.

d. **Century House**

This was discussed and options would be explored for the future of this landmark and surrounding area.

e. **Christmas Lights**

Members and Officers discussed the Christmas Lights Offer in further detail.

It was **AGREED** to recommend to full Council a further year extension of the Christmas Lights Festoons with our current provider. A new tender holistically covering the 2022 Christmas Offer will be launched from January 2022 in line with the Town Council's procurement policy.

It was **AGREED** to recommend to full Council to proceed with the Christmas Lights Show over 8 evenings, through November / December 2021. This will be tendered as part of the 2022 Christmas Offer which will be launched January 2022.

It was **AGREED** to recommend to full Council to proceed with Quote 2 regarding the stage and sound for the Christmas Lights switch-on, but no video screen this year due to concerns about there being sufficient time to generate content. This will be tendered as part of the 2022 Christmas Offer which will be launched January 2022.