



MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 12th OCTOBER 2021
AT 7PM AT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES, THE OLD
COURT HOUSE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL



PRESENT:

Cllr M. Russell (Chairman)
Cllr G. Fage (Vice Chairman)
Cllr I. Bond
Cllr K. Brown
Cllr L Fage
Cllr F. Foster
Cllr M. Foster
Cllr M. Knight
Cllr M. North
Cllr R. Pullinger
Cllr H Ramsay
Cllr D. Strachan
Cllr J. Woodhead
Cllr C Thomas

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

Meeting Formalities:

Following a reminder to meeting attendees, both panel and public, that this is a formal meeting, the Mayor 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 Mayor advised that attendees should not disclose any personal information of individuals as this would infringe the Data Protection Rights of the individual. The Mayor asked everyone to mute their microphones when not speaking.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr H Ramsay, Cllr D Albone, Cllr R Pullinger.

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:

Cllr Thomas – Item 10g.

3. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

a. 29 September 2021 – **Opening of Mantles Court**

The Mayor attended an open day at Mantles Court, the new care home in London Road. Also present were John Mantle, Ward Councillors, a senior Central Bedfordshire Council officer from Adult Social Care and the Chairman and Chief Executive of Quantum Care. Everyone was introduced to the Manager of the home and her team and were shown around the facilities in the care home. There is capacity for 76 residents, divided into five residential areas, each with a sitting room, a dining room with kitchenette and bedrooms with *en suite* wet rooms. The Home is expecting twelve residents to transfer from Abbotsbury and is arranging for them to be all together in one of the five areas so that they still have their community. The facilities are first class, with lots of outdoor space on balconies as well as in the extensive landscaped garden.

b. 7 October 2021 – **The Queen's Green Canopy Tree Planting at Jubilee Wood**

The Queen's Green Canopy is a unique tree planting initiative, created to mark Her Majesty Platinum Jubilee, where people across the country are invited to Plant a Tree for the Jubilee. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor were invited to the launch of the local campaign for Bedfordshire, held appropriately at Jubilee Wood in Biggleswade – the wood that was planted to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and which will now be extended.

The first tree was planted by Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant for Bedfordshire, Mrs Helen Nellis. Richard Wenham, Leader of Central Bedfordshire Council, and Cllrs. Russell and G Fage planted trees on behalf of their respective councils. Also present were Rod Calvert DL, who is co-ordinating the initiative for Bedfordshire, and Cllr. Steve Dixon, the CBC lead for Sustainability.

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no participants.

5. INVITED SPEAKER

Cllr Russell introduced PC Steven Beer, a member of the Bedfordshire Police Community Cohesion Team.

PC Beer explained that the Cohesion Team is a public facing team that attends events, emergency situations and panels to engage with the public and answer any questions they may have. Their primary aim is to work with the community to dispel myths that arise due to police involvement in issues across a broad range of social and crime management situations and to have an open and frank dialogue with the public, garner feedback and listen to what the public wants Bedfordshire Police to hear. PC Beer explained that he is responsible for all of Central Bedfordshire and works with all the Officers across Central Bedfordshire. He will be attending a number of events in Biggleswade in the future to build a rapport with residents, business owners and the Town Council.

Cllr Knight pointed out the Notice Board at the Police Office in Biggleswade could be updated with information on the work the Police have been doing in the Community.

Cllr Strachan, as the Town Council's Police Liaison Member, welcomed PC Beer and explained that the Town Council welcomes the opportunity to build on its already solid history of engaging with the Police for the benefit of the residents and local businesses. It was explained that, in the past, a Police representative used to regularly attend Council meetings. Members welcomed the resumption of that tradition.

6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

a. Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Knight asked for an update on the number of responses to date on the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Russell explained that leaflets are still being delivered around the town, and Officers have been looking at additional options to stimulate engagement from the public.

The Chief Executive & Town Clerk and Head of Governance & Strategic Relationships confirmed that the leaflet drop would be completed by 16th October 2021, and the management team were working on additional measures to ensure maximum exposure to the local public, such as additional press, social media and reaching out to local community groups.

b. Land North of Biggleswade Planning Application

Cllr G Fage reminded Members that the Town Council submitted its very detailed response to CBC on this application, together with Sandy Town Council's response and the Council's Transport Audit of the Applicant's Transport Assessment some time ago but these had still not been uploaded onto CBC's planning portal. Cllr G Fage asked Officers to escalate this matter to senior management at CBC to ensure that the Town Council's position is fully transparent.

7. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

a. Members noted that the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on the **Tuesday 21st September 2021** at the offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, 4 Saffron Road, Biggleswade are deferred to the next Town Council Meeting on 26th October 2021.

b. Members received and noted the draft Minutes of the Public Lands and Open Spaces Committee held on **Tuesday 28th September 2021** at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, 4 Saffron Road, Biggleswade.

Cllr F Foster requested reference Item 5g – that the word “adopt” be removed.

Members debated the process of presenting draft Committee minutes to Council. Cllr Russell explained that the draft minutes are brought to Council for information because of the length of time between Committee meetings. It is important that all Members know what the outcomes of the Committee meetings are.

The Assistant Town Clerk confirmed that adding these minutes to the agenda under the item 'Minutes And Recommendations Of Meetings' conforms to Standing Orders and they are in the correct place. Also, this is the route for any Committee recommendations to be brought to Council for consideration and decision.

Cllr Russell stated that it was appropriate for the Chairman of each Committee to be able to comment on the Minutes, even though they are only for noting in the Town Council Meeting.

8. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

9. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Pre-Planning Consultation MBE 18874**

This Planning Consultation relates to the erection of a 5G cellular capability mast near the Dunton Way entrance into Biggleswade.

Cllr G Fage commented there are five entrances to the town and the first impression of the Town is important. Having a mast - along with the planned electricity substation - close to and visible from important green spaces and Stratton Moat will have a detrimental impact on people's perception of the town as they enter Biggleswade from Dunton Lane.

Cllr G Fage understands there were up to ten locations being considered and would be interested to understand where these other sites were and why they were ruled out.

Cllr Bond advised that it is unusual to receive a pre-planning consultation and it is an opportunity to engage with the Applicant.

It was **RESOLVED** that Officers will respond to the Applicant to say that the Town Council welcomes the investment in Biggleswade's 5g Cellular capabilities and the opportunity to engage. However, the Council is concerned about the location, particularly its proximity to Stratton Moat, and would like to enter into dialogue to understand what other locations were considered and why this site took preference.

b. **A00156 Potton Road, Biggleswade – Traffic Calming and Waiting Restrictions**

Central Bedfordshire Council are consulting on the following scheme: A00156 Potton Road, Biggleswade Traffic Calming and Waiting Restrictions

Members were disappointed at the lack of urgency over the zebra crossing, were in favour of the crossing and the waiting restrictions but concerned about the proposed speed cushions on a main entry road into the town. Speed cushions cause braking and then speeding up, are a problem for emergency vehicles and cause extra pollution. Vehicle activated signs and/or a 20mph speed limit would be preferable.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council write to CBC:

- i. to request the urgent installation of the zebra crossing, together with a 20 mph speed limit;
- ii. that the Town Council **AGREED** the proposed waiting restrictions;
- iii. that the Town Council **OBJECTS** strongly to the installation of speed cushions or other physical obstructions on the grounds of causing pollution, slowing emergency vehicles and creating a hazard for road users. The Town Council would like to see the vehicle

activated speed signs as previously agreed with CBC Officers.

c. **2022 Planting Scheme Procurement**

The Assistant Town Clerk introduced the Public Realm Manager's Planting Procurement Scheme. The floral displays through the Town Centre and at the entrances into Biggleswade were of a very high standard this year, and the Public Realm Manager has a more comprehensive planting list for summer 2022 with specific species of plants. There is currently only one supplier who is able to provide all those specific plants and the Public Realm Manager is asking the Town Council to suspend Financial Regulations as the quote received is slightly over the level which would require competitive quotes.

Cllr Bond expressed interest in what was spent last year and what was ordered. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive advised Members that £3,301 was spent last year and the proposed quotation is for £3,370. He explained further that the volume of plants is significantly higher in this proposed scheme.

Cllr Knight advised that Financial Regulations can be suspended in part providing a suitable assessment of the risks is drawn up and provided in advance. Cllr Strachan expressed concern about the lack of competition and asked for clarity on whether there would be more competition next year at the time this is presented back to Council for planting in 2023. Cllr Russell commented that COVID has had a wide-ranging effect on various industries, particularly the horticultural industry, and the usual levels or stock are not available.

It was **RESOLVED**, under Financial Regulations 11.1.a.vii, not to apply Financial Regulation 11.1.i which would have required three quotes because of the specialist nature of the goods to be purchased.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council **APPROVES** the Planting Scheme and the order for the plants.

10. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

a. **CB/21/04169/FULL - 15 Clover Close, Biggleswade, SG18 8SS**

Single storey rear extension.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application provided the neighbours are consulted and that any comments they may make are considered by CBC in their deliberations.

b. **CB/21/04180/FULL - 33 London Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8ED**

Single storey rear extension.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application provided the neighbours are consulted and that any comments they may make are considered by CBC in their deliberations.

c. **CB/21/03905/FULL - 16 Presland Drive, Biggleswade, SG18 0FU**

Ground floor back extension.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application provided the neighbours are consulted and that any comments they may make are considered by CBC in their deliberations.

d. **CB/21/03921/FULL - 19 Chapel Fields, Biggleswade, SG18 0ND**

Single storey front extension.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application provided the neighbours are consulted and that any comments they may make are considered by CBC in their deliberations.

e. **CB/21/04173/FULL - 151 London Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8EJ**

First floor and loft side extension with a dormer and a rear single storey extension.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council **OBJECTS** to this planning application due to the lack of parking based on the change to five bedrooms.

f. **CB/21/04105/VOC – Lidl Great Britain Limited, Stratton Business Park, London Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8YX**

Variation (or removal) of condition number(s) 5 of planning permission CB/20/00479/FULL (Erection of a Class A1 retail food store with associated car parking, accesses, landscaping, substation and associated engineering works).

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application but subject to comments from police on security in the area.

g. **CB/21/04104/FULL - 17 Drove Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8HD**

Proposed loft conversion and first floor extension (to the rear).

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application provided the neighbours are consulted and that any comments they may make are considered by CBC in their deliberations.

h. **CB/TRE/21/00435 - The Lawns Early Excellence Centre, The Baulk, Biggleswade, SG18 0PT**

Works to trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order MB/99/0007: reduce the height of the whole crown by approximately 4 metres to Cherry Tree T1 leaving the tree in shape. Reduce in height by approximately 1 metre to prevent future breakages to Acacia Tree T2. Reduce in height by approximately 1-2 metres and to reduce the limb back into shape that has been left hanging over the building to Acacia Tree T3. Remove the 2 lower limbs that hang over the car park back into the trunk of the tree to Acacia Tree T4.

The Town Council **NOTED** this application.

11. **ACCOUNTS**

a. **Financial Administration:**

Members received and **ADOPTED** the following Accounts:

- i. Detailed Balance Sheet to 31/08/2021.
- ii. Summary Income and Expenditure by Committee 31/08/2021.
- iii. Detailed Income and Expenditure by Committee 31/08/2021.
- iv. Lloyds Bank Payment listing 31/08/2021.

The Chief Executive & Town Clerk advised Members that the format of the reports will change once the new Head of Finance & Planning joins the Council.

12. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. **Grants 2021/2022**

Members noted the letter from Trinity Methodist Church thanking the Council for its grant.

13. 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.

Mr Reynolds, Biggleswade Resident

Mr Reynolds expressed significant concerns about the lack of medical and dental facilities within Biggleswade. There are two doctors' surgeries (Ivel Medical Centre and Saffron Health Partnership) and three dental practices, one of which accepts NHS patients. Residents have been struggling to get appointments with the doctor's surgeries, and with the planned new housing, there is likely to be another 4,500 residents in Biggleswade with already stretched medical resources. Mr Reynolds requested support from the Town Council to approach Central Bedfordshire Council to resolve the medical crisis in Biggleswade.

Cllr Russell advised Mr Reynolds that she is aware that Central Bedfordshire Council has finally agreed terms with the NHS about the Biggleswade Hospital site in preparation for the proposed Health and Social Care Hub. The Hub is discussed regularly with CBC colleagues at the Biggleswade Joint Committee. The next meeting is in October and Cllr. Russell will raise the matter again.

Cllr Russell has had various conversations with Richard Fuller MP, Member for North-East Bedfordshire, who is in favour of a full review of the NHS to enable a better service.

Cllr Woodhead stated that COVID has obviously put additional stress on the NHS and Councillors have been speaking with the Chief Executive & Town Clerk, with a view to inviting local GP practices to a Council meeting to ask them what their plans are around COVID and opening up to the public. Cllr Woodhead highlighted that there are different patterns of operation for GP surgeries nationally, which indicates the issue lies in how each surgery is run. He stressed this is not a medical problem, purely an administration issue. He added that GP surgeries should provide accountability and inviting them to a Council meeting would be

the start of engagement on behalf of the residents. He also feels there are a number of villagers in surrounding villages that are on the books, adding further stress to the issue.

Cllr Strachan pointed out that there is a national shortage of doctors and nurses which poses a major issue. Cllr Russell explained that universities are ready to train more doctors but the NHS will not provide the practical experience they need to go forward and qualify.

14. EXEMPT

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.

None.

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.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.06 pm