



MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 11th JANUARY 2022
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 D Albone
Cllr I. Bond
Cllr K. Brown
Cllr L. Fage
Cllr F. Foster
Cllr M. Foster
Cllr M. Knight
Cllr R. Pullinger
Cllr D. Strachan
Cllr C. Thomas
Cllr J. Woodhead

Mr P. Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr K. Hosseini – Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr P. Truppin – Head of Place Shaping & Town Centre Management, Biggleswade Town Council
Mr J. Woolley – Public Realm Manager, Biggleswade Town Council
Ms W. Solomon – Head of Finance & Planning, Biggleswade Town Council
Mrs S. van der Merwe – Professional Assistant, Biggleswade Town Council (Meeting Administrator)

Members of the Public - 1

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 that individual. The Mayor asked everyone to mute their microphones when not speaking.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr H Ramsay and Cllr M. North

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 Strachan – Item 16a – Biggleswade Town Football Club.

Cllr Russell – Item 11k – Enforcement Notice Appeal: Land at Fairground Site, Mill Lane.

3. **TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

a. Cllr Russell wished all attendees a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year.

b. **Biggleswade Choral Society Christmas Concert – 18 December 2021**

Cllr Russell attended the Biggleswade Choral Society Christmas Concert at St. Andrews Church - a lovely way to get into the Christmas Spirit with good music and opportunities for audience participation.

4. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

None.

5. **INVITED SPEAKER**

Ms. Charlotte Gurney, Central Bedfordshire's Head of Housing Solutions, was invited to give a presentation to Members following the launch of the Housing Allocation Scheme Consultation.

Ms. Gurney advised Members that the Housing Register falls under her remit and the Allocation Scheme is the current scheme employed to manage and control the qualification criteria for the Housing Register.

The Allocation Scheme was adopted in 2014 and is now outdated following a number of recent guidance updates. Central Bedfordshire Council began a review of the Allocation Scheme before 2020, taking into account feedback from housing officers, people who have applied for social housing and other registered providers of social housing, both private and charity-based. From that feedback, a list of themes has been compiled of issues that impede the smooth allocation of housing. CBC acknowledges the Scheme needs to be clearer to facilitate applications and bring transparency to the process.

There are four categories to the Allocation Scheme with a number of changes being consulted on:

1. Helping vulnerable people and families: the need to minimise the transition time families are in temporary accommodation, which currently sits at approximately 26 weeks. This needs to be reduced. There is also an emergency banding for people at high risk in their current home and who need to be moved quickly and safely to a new home.
2. The One Housing Register/One Housing Scheme: this previously prioritised over-50's who may not usually have qualified for the Housing Register, but their age was the qualifying factor.
3. Making fair assessment: residents of Central Bedfordshire Council should be prioritised over non-residents. The consultation includes new criteria for qualifying and more transparency for qualification terms.
4. Increase the number of bands for qualification and implement a new Local Lettings Policy with updated Rural Exceptions Scheme.

Cllr Russell asked if the Housing Solutions department has input into the Local Plan. Ms. Gurney confirmed that she is able to give input into any planning application if there is housing demand for that area.

Cllr Strachan asked for further information on temporary accommodation sites and whether these are based in Central Bedfordshire or are further afield. Ms Gurney advised that Central Bedfordshire Council owns all of its current temporary accommodation sites and these are mainly within the county's borders, with a small number of out of borders properties necessary for certain categories of need.

Cllr Albone commented on the exception for armed forces personnel within the consultation. Ms. Gurney stated that the government's statutory requirement for housing for armed forces personnel is for personnel to have served in the armed forces at any time in the five years preceding their application. Central Bedfordshire Council are proposing to extend this to any time within the preceding ten years in the consultation.

Cllr Russell thanked Ms. Gurney for her informative presentation.

6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Cllr G Fage asked for clarification of why the Town Council no longer advertises in the Biggleswade Bulletin. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised that discussions with the publisher confirmed low distribution numbers within Biggleswade and its surrounds and subsequent enquiries by staff with various residents across Biggleswade highlighted many did not receive the Bulletin. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive took the decision to advertise through the Biggleswade Chronicle Bulletin which has a wider coverage.

Councillors felt the practice needs to be reviewed with an expectation that advertising resume with the Biggleswade Bulletin.

7. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. Members received and **APPROVED** the Minutes of the **Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 14th December 2021** at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, 4 Saffron Road, Biggleswade.

8. MATTERS ARISING

- a. **From the Town Council Meeting of Tuesday 14th December 2021:**

Cllr F Foster – Item 6 - Cllr F Foster asked if the Town Council had written to Cllr Dalgarno and whether he had responded. The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships advised that Cllr Dalgarno had responded to let the Council know that CBC would be proceeding with the scheme as approved, but hoped that Biggleswade Town Council would continue to engage on future consultations within the time limit stipulated.

Cllr F Foster – Item 6 – Cllr F Foster requested an explanation from Officers as to why this matter had not been completed in time. The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships explained that internal investigations showed that this had occurred as a result of staff absence for holiday and sickness and lack of resilience.

9. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **CBC Housing Allocation Scheme Consultation**

Central Bedfordshire Council have approved an extension to the deadline for this consultation up to 31st January 2022. Cllr Pullinger said that there are 30 questions to answer on the consultation and suggested this item be brought to the next Town Council meeting of 25th January 2022. This would allow Members time to review the consultation.

Members commended the time and effort that CBC has invested in trying to improve the housing application process. The emerging process appears more transparent and Members are encouraged by the changes that are being proposed.

It was **RESOLVED** that the matter be deferred to the Council meeting on 25th January 2022 to allow Members to consider the response in more detail.

b. **Highways Act 1990, Section 119 – Proposed Creation of Biggleswade Bridleway No. 60 and 70 and Langford No. 18 informal Consultation**

It was **RESOLVED** to **STRONGLY SUPPORT** CBC's proposals for Bridleway No. 60 and 70 and Langford No. 18.

c. **Play Areas Strategy**

The Head of Governance & Strategic Planning thanked Officers for their contributions to the proposed strategy. This is an outline of what the play areas can look like over a five-year term for the sixteen play areas currently owned by the Town Council and will enable each play area to be distinct, relevant to a wide variety of physical abilities and to offer a positive impression to residents and visitors. Officers have been engaging with the Chairman of PLOS committee and other Members for feedback.

The Head of Finance & Planning stated that funding solutions for this project will be presented to the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 18th January 2022. One of the options would be for a Public Works Loan, which entails a formal public consultation.

Cllr F Foster thanked Officers for their input into the project but said that this is just the start of what will be a significant project. Members agreed that the project was overdue and asked whether feedback had been sought from the public to formulate what is needed in each play area. The Head of Finance & Planning said that the first step would be getting the Council's approval for the strategy before proceeding to public consultation. It was suggested that a panel of young people be used to help with the choice of play equipment.

Cllr Knight felt there are other areas within Biggleswade that also require landscaping, benches and a focal landscaped areas which could contribute to Biggleswade being scenic. Cllr M Foster felt it is important to ensure the play equipment covers between the ages 3 and 10 years, or even older if possible and that the information and photographs need to be available and accessible by the public.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Play Area Strategy in principle.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the capital budget subject to agreement by Finance & General Purposes Committee and Council approval of the overall budget.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the £122,000 proposed budget for Year 1 subject to agreement

by Finance & General Purposes Committee and Council approval of the overall budget.

It was **RESOLVED** that PLOS will give guidance around the operational deployment of the £122,000 Year 1 budget.

10. **FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION**

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

- i. Detailed Balance Sheet to 30/11/2021.
- ii. Summary Income and Expenditure by Committee 30/11/2021.
- iii. Detailed Income and Expenditure by Committee 30/11/2021.
- ii. Lloyds Bank Payment listing November 2021.

11. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

a. **CB/21/04648/FULL - 15 Coppice Mead, Biggleswade, SG18 8LE**

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/21/05415/FULL – 46 Fairfield Road, Biggleswade, SG18 0BS**

Single storey front extension and double 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/21/05396/FULL - Harrison House, Sheep Walk, Langford Road, Biggleswade, SG18 9RB**

Erection of new storage unit with facilities.

Cllr Albone expressed concerns relating to the potential increase in traffic onto Langford Road.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application, but wishes to register concerns around vehicle impact on Langford Road and the fact that the access road is a bridleway and therefore subject to use by members of the public.

d. **CB/21/05161/FULL - Land to the north of Dunton Lane, Dunton Lane, Biggleswade**

and

e. **CB/21/05590/EB - Land to the North of Dunton Lane, Biggleswade**

CB/21/05590/EB - Land to the North of Dunton Lane, Biggleswade

Electricity Board Notification: amendment of an existing OHL route, in particular the conductors associated with the route between towers 4VK422A and 4VK423A . It is proposed to replace the existing OHL conductors which comprise the circuit on the western side of the identified towers to provide a connection to two new gantries, which will in turn enable the

provision of electricity to the proposed substation.

Cllr G Fage asked that these two items be taken together and said that the planning application is required to meet timescales agreed with Homes England in order to unlock Housing Infrastructure Fund monies. The Town Council has been engaging with the applicant pre-application and giving feedback on the various design stages. However, the application as it stands does not reflect the landscaping which was discussed and which is vital to lessen the substation's impact.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council **OBJECT** to these Applications as follows:

“Biggleswade Town Council recognises the need to increase power supply in the town and the strategic importance of successfully delivering a new substation.

That said, the appearance of the substation and the subsequent landscaping are vital for preserving Biggleswade's rural heritage and for meeting the unique ambitions of Biggleswade's new Garden Village to the east of the town.

This application does not provide sufficient detail on the exact landscaping, specifically there is little visual evidence of the extent to which the large structures will be shielded from sight for passing walkers, drivers, or for nearby properties.

This is particularly the case for the new footpath on the east side of the site, which appears completely exposed to views of the substation, with no mitigating hedgerow.

The Town Council understands that further documentation might be forthcoming. However for now, comments can only reflect what is included on the planning portal.

*As a result, the Town Council **OBJECTS** to these current planning application.”*

It was agreed that the applicant should not be invited to a future meeting of Council until the planning application is determined and that any correspondence should be with the Planning Officer. This is because there may well be a revised application submitted to which the Council will have to respond.

Members requested that this response be sent separately.

f. **CB/21/05338/FULL - 9 Playfield Close, Biggleswade, SG18 8JL**

Proposed ground floor rear extension.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application, but wishes to register concerns around vehicle impact on Langford Road and the fact this is a bridleway.

g. **CB/21/05348/FULL - 146 Holme Court Avenue, Biggleswade, SG18 8PB**

Side extension with roof lights, reposition of entrance door with gable canopy.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application, but wishes to register concerns around vehicle impact on Langford Road and the fact this is a bridleway.

h. **CB/21/05344/FULL - 24 Beech Avenue, Biggleswade, SG18 0EG**

Single storey conservatory, on rear elevation.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application, but wishes to register concerns around vehicle impact on Langford Road and the fact this is a bridleway.

i. **CB/21/05537/FULL - 7 Bantock Way, Biggleswade, SG18 8UX**

Erection of single storey rear extension to join existing garage. Internal reworks throughout.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application, but wishes to register concerns around vehicle impact on Langford Road and the fact this is a bridleway.

j. **CB/21/05555/FULL - 136 Mead End, Biggleswade, SG18 8JX**

Two storey side and rear extension. Re roof part of the existing rear extension.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application, but wishes to register concerns around vehicle impact on Langford Road and the fact this is a bridleway.

k. **Appeal Against Enforcement Notice – CB/EN/18/0028 - Land at Fairground Site, Mill Lane, Biggleswade**

Alleged change of use of agricultural land to open storage.

It was **RESOLVED** to **STRONGLY SUPPORT** the enforcement action on the following grounds:

- a) The full extent of the red line area on the Site Plan impacts heavily on the amenity of the Kingfisher Way, the long-distance footpath which runs along the west bank of the river through Biggleswade.
- b) The site also impacts on the Franklins Recreation Ground, which has been a facility for the town for over 100 years, long before the travelling showpeople came to the site after 1970.
- c) The access to the site is not suitable and an historic lane and bridge are being damaged. The bridge is humpbacked and the narrow lane has the only remaining cobblestones in the town. Often large lorries leave the site with two trailers – so a three-part vehicle – totally unsuitable for the lane and such traffic is a danger to children using the Recreation Ground.

Cllr Bond noted that any response should be sent directly to the Planning Inspector and it was agreed that a copy be sent out of courtesy to the Gypsy & Traveller Enforcement Officer.

12. PLANNING APPLICATION OUTCOMES

Cllr Knight expressed disappointment that the 5G Mast Application on Dunton Lane and the Land North of Biggleswade Applications have both been approved, despite the Town Council's previous strong objections.

This report was **NOTED**.

13. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. **Bus Strategy**

This correspondence was **NOTED**.

b. **Keech Hospice Care Grant Report 2021**

The grant report was **NOTED**.

14. 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.

15. 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.

(16a. Biggleswade Town Football Club)

16. 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.

a. **Biggleswade Town Football Club**

The Head of Place Shaping and Town Centre Management gave an oral update to Members.

It was **RESOLVED** that Officers write to the Club's surveyor to ask for written details of their proposal.

The Chairman closed the Meeting at 21:03 pm