



**MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**PUBLIC LANDS & OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON**  
**TUESDAY 7<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2022**  
**AT 7PM AT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES, THE OLD**  
**COURT HOUSE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL**



**PRESENT:**

Cllr M North (Chairman)  
Cllr C Thomas (Vice Chairman)  
Cllr K Brown  
Cllr G Fage  
Cllr F Foster  
Cllr M Foster  
Cllr M Russell  
Cllr D Strachan  
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 J. Wooley - Public Realm Manager, Biggleswade Town Council  
Mrs S. van der Merwe - Deputy Administrator & HR Manager, Biggleswade Town Council  
Mrs R. Jandu – Senior Administrator, Biggleswade Town Council

Members of the Public – 9 Members of the Public

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

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr M Knight and 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 D Strachan – Item 10a - Apollo Gardens Play Area.

**3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

The Chairman advised that Item 6b in relation to the Allotment Policy will be **DEFERRED** to the next Public Lands & Open Spaces meeting for further consultation.

Three Members of the public addressed the Committee in relation to the Allotments.

a. **Ms. Julia Duffin - Member of Biggleswade Allotment Association (BAA), spoke on the Allotment Policy (Item 6b).**

Ms Duffin spoke on behalf of allotment holders, both members of the Biggleswade Allotment Association as well as non-members, in relation to concerns about the draft Allotment Policy.

- Ms Duffin asked if all future proposals could be in written format so that allotment holders have an opportunity to formulate comment.
- There are concerns about the Allotment Policy and the Terms and Conditions and that there are inconsistencies in the content across both documents.
- It is a concern that the deposits and rents have increased, which could potentially rule some people out of being able to continue with their allotment.
- The Town Council needs to apply further clarity on its definition of 'good order' as written in the terms and conditions.
- It was a concern regarding the condition of the access road and mobility around the allotments. It was believed that the Town Council tractor is a major contributor to the poor condition of the access road and around the allotment.
- The specification for buildings is on the small side and references to water butts in the ground needs review.
- It was recommended to consult with allotment holders on all areas to do with the allotments.

b. **Mr Brian Barraclough, Chairman of the Biggleswade Allotment Association (BAA), wished to make comments on the allotment rent increase.**

- Mr Barraclough feels the allotment fee benchmarking does not reflect current neighbouring borough costs for allotments, where varying plot sizes and costs need to be taken into account. It would be beneficial to compare the allotment fees of surrounding towns.
- There are a number of allotment tenants who will have to relinquish their allotment plot as they cannot afford to pay the increased charges.
- Mr Barraclough stated it would be beneficial for the Allotment Association to see the Council's allotment accounts, there is no evidence from previous account information that the allotments run at any loss.
- The BAA are willing to discuss any matters regarding the allotments.

c. **Cllr Hayley Whittaker, CBC Ward Councillor, wished to make comments on the rent increase as well as other allotment concerns:**

- The allotment price increase for the next financial year are unjustified and the benchmarking exercise is flawed.
- The allotment deposit of £150 means that a lot of the public wouldn't be able to afford to take on an allotment plot.
- There are no concessions on the price of the deposit or on the price of the allotment per year.
- The Town Council should not be trying to make a profit on the allotments, the allotments should be part of their offer to the town.
- It was encouraged for the Town Council to work with the BAA on all matters regarding the allotments.
- It would be good to justify the rule regarding tyres at the allotment.
- The current rules state that no crop is planted at the allotment that requires more than 12 months to mature should be reviewed.
- It would be beneficial to include what the Town Council plans to do with its green

waste within the Allotment Policy.

- The size of sheds and polytunnels allowed on the allotments should be reviewed.

Members thanked the public for their comments.

#### **4. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

- a. Members received the Minutes of the Public Lands & Open Spaces Committee Meeting held on **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022** at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, 4 Saffron Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8DL.

The Minutes were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate reflection of discussions.

#### **5. MATTERS ARISING**

- a. From the Minutes of the Public Lands & Open Spaces Committee Meeting held on **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022**.

**Cllr G Fage – Item 6a – Buttercup Mead:** Members were informed that positive feedback has been received from residents that this play area has been removed and grassed over. It was suggested by residents that once the grass had settled it would be good to plant shrubs and a tree to enhance the landscaping.

**Cllr Strachan – Item 7b – Allotment storage building:** Cllr Strachan asked for an update on this item. Mr Tarrant advised that he had since had a meeting with the Biggleswade Allotment Association who stated they no longer wished to proceed with the development of a storage building for the time being.

#### **6. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- a. **Play Areas Project**

Mr Hosseini introduced the Play Area Project.

Members will have more clarification on this project at the Town Council Meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022. A further report will be presented to Members in August 2022 with the procurement outcomes and associated quotes.

Mr Hosseini informed Members the reason for this change of direction was because the procurement cycle has been underway over the last few months. The potential bidders would be subject matter experts in their field and

It was **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the recommendations stated in the report provided by Mr Hosseini.

- b. **Allotments Plan 2022-2023**

Members received an oral update from Mr Tarrant. A number of opportunities were identified to improve the allotment site following a meeting with representatives of the BAA and Town Council staff.

Members were informed of the work that will be completed at the allotments within the next year:

- The existing gate at the bottom of the allotment site will either be made good or repaired to improve security.
- Internal routes around the allotments will be improved by laying down significant amounts of MOT. This will help to navigate around the allotments more easily, especially when there has been heavy rainfall.
- Overgrown shrubbery will be cut back by the Public Realm team.
- The area for collecting rubbish will be cleared and the Public Realm team will continue to regularly clear this area.

The Public Realm Team will continue to complete a weekly allotment check of the site to ensure the site is safe for the allotment users.

It was noted that communications regarding this allotment improvement work will be uploaded to our website shortly.

**c. Allotment Policy and Terms and Conditions**

It was **RESOLVED** to **DEFER** this item to a future Town Council Meeting to allow Officers to consult with the Biggleswade Allotment Association and Allotment Tenants about the amendments to the Allotment Policies and fees.

Mr Tarrant confirmed there will be three documents that will return to the Town Council for approval:

- A clear and concise Policy Statement;
- A detailed Conditions document;
- The individual contract between the Council and the allotment tenant.

**d. Memorial Bench – Dan Albone**

Members requested a bench policy to ensure that all benches are of a similar type to ensure consistency of design and to define who takes on responsibility for the bench for future, with a clear defined end period for the placement.

It was **RESOLVED** that the email request for a memorial bench to be placed at Dan Albone was **APPROVED** subject to the Public Realm Manager deciding on the placement of the bench.

**e. Memorial Tree – Stratton Way Cemetery**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Public Land & Open Spaces Committee **DOES NOT APPROVE** of this request to plant a memorial tree at the Stratton Way Cemetery.

**7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**a. Planters, Planting & War Memorial**

Members received an oral update from Mr Woolley on the Planting arrangements for the town and War Memorial.

The Memorial works (cleaning and re-lettering on the North face of the War Memorial) will be completed by the end of July 2022 and was funded by Central Bedfordshire Council.

Planting across the town was completed by 3 staff, with assistance from the Rotary Club. Members were advised that 3000 plants were planted in August 2021, and that this work was funded from Section 106 monies.

Members thanked the Public Realm Team and the Rotatory Club for their hard work.

b. **War Memorial**

Members received an oral update from Mr Woolley regarding the repair work and cleaning. This information was **NOTED**.

c. **Great Big Green Week 2022**

Members received an oral update from Mr Hosseini on the events that will be taking place from 24<sup>th</sup> September 2022 to 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2022.

Members were informed that a written report will be presented to the Town Centre Management Committee on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July 2022 which will set out the recommendations on the upcoming plans.

d. **Linear Wood & Saxon Gate Pocket Park**

Members received a written report from Mr Hosseini. BTC Officers met with CBC Officers on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022. It was agreed in principle that a 25-year lease be undertaken for both areas to be adopted by BTC, with costs to be met by CBC for the first 13 years and then for BTC to fund the rest of that term up to 25 years.

Improvement works on both sites will be done by CBC prior to handover, and BTC will be hearing back from CBC Officers by the end of May 2022.

It was **RESOLVED** that the financial aspects of this item be moved to the Exempt session for further clarification.

8. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

One Member of the public, Mr Andy Skilton, wished to speak:

- Mr Skilton listed appropriate locations of where memorial benches and trees should be placed.
- Mr Skilton suggested that the Town Council incorporate National Car Free day along the high street, which takes place on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022, into the Great Big Green Week. He suggested extending some of the market stalls and encouraging a café culture on the additional space.

9. **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.

(10a. Apollo Gardens)

(10b. Kings Reach Play Areas)

**10. 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.

**a. Apollo Gardens**

Mr Hosseini updated Members on the progress of potentially adopting this play area. Mr Hosseini is awaiting a response from CBC regarding a recent conversation with their legal provider.

**b. Kings Reach Play Areas**

The actions around this item have been incorporated into the Kings Reach report to go to Town Council Meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

**c. Linear Wood & Saxon Gate**

Following the earlier discussion in the agenda, Members were informed of financial matters relating to adoption of the two green spaces. Officers are still awaiting the final decision by CBC and have issued reminders to them.

The Chairman closed the Meeting at 8:25pm