



**MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2023
AT 7.00PM AT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES
THE OLD COURT HOUSE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL**



PRESENT:

Cllr M Knight – Chairman
Cllr D Strachan – Vice Chairman
Cllr D Albone
Cllr I Bond
Cllr G Fage
Cllr M North
Cllr M Russell
Cllr C Thomas
Cllr J Woodhead

Mr Karim Hosseini, Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships
Mr Isaac Lord, Place Shaping Manager
Ms Funda Gumush, Meeting Administrator

Members of the Public – 1

Meeting Formalities:

Following a reminder to meeting attendees 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 may infringe the Data Protection Rights of that individual.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr R Pullinger.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

3. **CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

a. **Vandalism at Franklins Recreation Ground**

Cllr Knight indicated that an urgent item was to be added to the agenda regarding vandalism at Franklins Recreation Ground. Cllr Knight noted that the item would be discussed as the last item under Items for Information.

4. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No one from the public wished to speak.

5. **INVITED SPEAKER**

None.

6. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

Cllr Strachan noted that following the felling of the four trees in the Market Square, several residents had voiced serious concerns over the future of the Square and inquired as to what communicate had been released over the felling.

Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships responded that no information had yet been released but noted that Officers would be doing so.

Cllr G Fage indicated that following the relaunch of the Market Square after COVID lockdown ended, investment had been made into rebranding for the Square. Having visited the Market several times recently Cllr G Fage noted that he had not seen any of the rebranding signs.

The Place Shaping Manager responded that Officers were instructed by a senior CBC Officer to remove the signage above Century House due to the pigeons and the cleaning but added that Officers would be looking at this matter again.

7. **MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

Members noted that resolutions which read 'It was RESOLVED by the Town Centre Management Committee that...' were too many words and should be corrected as 'It was RESOLVED that...'.

Subject to these amendments the Minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record of the Town Centre Management Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 18 October 2022.

8. **MATTERS ARISING**

Cllr Woodhead asked whether Officers had been successful with investigating the official ownership of the War Memorial and Victorian Water Fountain on the corner of High Street and Station Roads.

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships explained to Council that the matter was still under investigation and Members would be duly informed.

Cllr G Fage inquired about Item 10a Bus Routes on the Minutes and whether Officers had any updates with regards to the matter.

The Place Shaping Manager indicated that Central Bedfordshire Officers Transport Officers were still in discussions with the bus operators and would be giving Biggleswade Town Council Officers feedback soon.

9. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Market Square Vision Update**

Members discussed the written report by the Place Shaping Manager and welcomed that the Chief Executive of Central Bedfordshire Council recently suggested that Senior Officers of Biggleswade Town Council and CBC meet regularly to progress talks with regards to the Market Square.

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships responded to say that BTC Officers would be attending a meeting with CBC in June this year.

Members **RESOLVED** to review the draft Biggleswade Town Centre Masterplan at one half-day workshop with Members and Officers goal being to produce a list of specific aspirations in the context of:

- a vision for the Market Square specifically including what happens if and when bus exit lanes can close,
- what happens to Century House,
- where trees should be replanted,
- broader conversations about the Town Centre and Market Square layout.

b. **The Biggs Eat**

Members discussed the report by the Place Shaping Manager which was based on a previous report presented at the Town Centre Management Committee meeting in October recommending a monthly food truck event coined 'The Biggs Eat'.

It was noted by Members that having events in the Town Centre on days where the footfall was lower was more advantageous to the Market Square and surrounding businesses. Members added that in the warmer months different days could also be looked at.

In terms of financing Members urged Officers to tidy up the Terms & Conditions so that there was no ambiguity with regards to how profits are calculated.

Members **RESOLVED:**

- to proceed with the 'Bigg Eats' name rather than 'Biggs Eat',
- hold the event bi-monthly on a Thursday and not Wednesday throughout 2023.

c. **Street Food Heroes**

Members discussed the report by the Place Shaping Manager. Noting a resolution was passed in the previous item regarding the establishment of Bigg Eats event, there would be no need for any more Street Food Heroes events for 2023.

Members **REJECTED** the proposal to enter into a new agreement with Street Food Heroes.

d. **Busker & Street Performers Code of Conduct**

The Place Shaping Manager presented the report to Members and noted that this was a voluntary code of conduct as busking was not within the Council's jurisdiction, but it was within the jurisdiction of CBC.

The Place Shaping Manager added that the Council encouraged performers to sign up as it would build a positive relationship between the industry and the Council that could be used for future events.

It was also noted that BTC does not presently own a suitable noise meter and any busker wishing to collect money is punishable against Section 3 of the Vagrancy Act 1824. Selling merchandise without the correct license from CBC is punishable against the Local Government Act 1982.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the Code of Conduct subject to:

- the removal of paragraph 5 of the Terms & Conditions relating to decibel limits as it was a repetition,
- removal of 'set-up within 50m of another busker/performer' and adding 'only one busker at a time',
- amplification of instruments that require amplification like keyboards should not be disallowed,
- following the implementation of the Code of Conduct as adopted for a trial period, bring the Code of Conduct back to the next Town Centre Management Committee meeting for review.

e. **Commemorative Plaques, Benches & Memorials Policy**

The Place Shaping Manager presented the report and added that the estimated cost of purchasing a plaque would cost £50, the estimated cost of purchasing the bench would be £299. The estimated cost of maintaining the bench over 15 years, assuming 5% inflation, would be £1,800.

Members **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** the policy to the Town Council subject to wording included around:

- the approval of the final location of the benches at the discretion of officers,
- approval of the final wording is at the discretion of officers,
- changes to the wording around who accepts liability if something happens to the bench,
- £100 donation to the Mayoral Charities.

f. **Footfall Monitoring Devices**

Members discussed the report by the Place Shaping Manager which was based on a previous report to the TCM last year to defer a decision around the proposal to introduce footfall monitoring devices in the Town Centre.

The Place Shaping Manager indicated an amendment to the recommendation should be changed to reflect that Officers should ask whether S106 funding could be used. He added that if not the project can proceed this financial year with £4000 drawn from the election provision allocation as a by-election is highly unlikely before the 31st of March 2023 with the remaining £1000 being absorbed from general budget.

Members noting the report indicated that the proposed coverage area of the Market Square was too small an area to cover at a high cost.

However, it was also noted that it was an activity the Council and Central Bedfordshire Council should look at doing at some point in time.

Members proposed to **DEFER** the proposal for now but instruct Officers to find out if S106 monies could be used for this recommendation.

g. **The King's Coronation**

The Place Shaping Manager presented the report and added that BTC Officers had completed an application to the National Lottery for funding for this event and were waiting to hear back.

Members discussed the report, underlined the importance of ensuring that the public were aware that the event was going to take place.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept Officer recommendations to proceed with a Coronation Big Lunch on the Market Square on Sunday 7th May.

Members **AGREED** to form a small Working Group to include the Place Shaping Manager to proceed with the organisation of the event.

h. **Christmas Light Switch-on Planning**

Members discussed the report by the Place Shaping Manager.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendations by Officers to undertake an online survey with residents to understand their views for the event.

Members **RESOLVED** to proceed with pulling together quotes for all categories to present at the next TCM meeting.

Members **AGREED** not to have a Santa's Grotto this year.

Members **AGREED** for Officers to urgently source other options for lighting now that there were less trees in the Market Square and in other areas where lighting is limited.

10. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **CCTV Update**

Members discussed the response received by Central Bedfordshire Council and underlined that CCTV was more than necessary now considering the increased vandalism in Biggleswade.

Members **NOTED** the letter.

b. **Vandalism at Franklins Recreation Ground**

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships indicated that since the project began at Franklins Recreation Ground, vandalism has taken place on three occasions which caused some damage to the fencing and portable toilet. He noted that minimal damage to fencing and some wood play equipment had also occurred on another occasion and recently quite a lot of damage to the wood play equipment and to the installation works. This has been reported to Police with a crime reference number obtained.

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships indicated that the Contractor has temporarily halted the installation works stating that the vandalism has caused 2-3 weeks of installation delays due to the need to re-dig the multiple holes and trenches which were filled in, and re-prepare the surfaces for matting beneath play equipment.

The Contractor is calling for site security to be introduced to preserve the play equipment, the installation and the delivery timeline. As it stands, he can no longer guarantee 31st March deadline for completion of the works.

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships pointed out that Officers would be presenting a report to Town Council on the 28th of February 2023 with options to address the vandalism to be funded by the Public Works Loan Board.

Members **AGREED** to bring the item to the agenda of Town Council on 28th February 2023.

c. **Q3 Crime Statistics**

Members discussed the report by the Place Shaping Manager.

Members **PROPOSED** to put forward concerns to the Bedfordshire Police with regards to criminal damage to property as a priority and have more adequate policing on unsocial behaviour and vandalism.

Members **NOTED** the Q3 Crime Statistics and asked Officers to inquire with the police to get a better understanding of the increase and nature of assaults seen in the statistics.

11. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

- a. No one from the public wished to speak.

12. **EXEMPT**

- a. There were no exempt items for discussion.

The Chairman closed the meeting at **8.35pm**