



MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 23rd MAY 2023
AT 7.00PM AT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES
THE OLD COURT HOUSE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL



PRESENT:

Cllr M Foster (Chairman)
Cllr M Knight (Deputy Chairman)
Cllr I Agnew
Cllr D Albone
Cllr M North
Cllr S Patel
Cllr M Russell
Cllr S Sajid
Cllr A Skilton
Cllr D Strachan
Cllr C Thomas
Cllr J Woodhead

Mr P Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Mr R Youngs – Finance Manager
Mr I Lord – Place Shaping Manager
Ms F Gumush – Meetings Administrator

Members of the Public – 3

Meeting Formalities:

Following a reminder to meeting attendees 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 to 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.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr P Guilcher.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

3. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Cllr Grant Fage

Commenting on Item 9a with regards to the change in the meeting date for the Biggleswade Joint Committee, Cllr Fage suggested that the format and timings could be considered at a future meeting to support to increase public attendance

5. INVITED SPEAKER

None.

6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Cllr Woodhead pointed to a recent announcement by Barclays Bank to withdraw their branch in Biggleswade at the end of August and suggested that this item be brought to the next agenda for discussion around banking needs of the Town.

Cllr Strachan also commenting on the withdrawal of Barclays Bank indicated that the Community Engagement Group would be meeting soon and asked if the item could be included on the agenda there.

Cllr Strachan asked whether any communications had been made to the Town Council of the bank's intention to withdraw. Responding to this the Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed that there had been none.

Cllr Patel commenting on the upcoming Carnival, indicated that he was a member of the committee for the Duck Race taking place on 11th June and asked for confirmation that the Public Realm Team would be helping with the gazebos this year and advertisement of the event on Town Council Notice Boards.

The Place Shaping Manager responding to this question confirmed Public Realm participation but noted that no material for advertising had yet been received.

Cllr Patel speaking on another matter, indicated that he had been approached by a member of the public asking about the removal of waste bins on the Kings Reach Estate and if the Council would be able to help in getting them reinstated.

Cllr Foster noted that this was an issue and suggested that Officers write to the Consortium to request assistance on the matter.

Cllr Agnew inquired about the notice board at The Orchard and asked if Officers could update the material advertised there.

Cllr Patel speaking on Franklins Recreation Area, noted resident concerns that the wall along the river at the park has been damaged and could be dangerous for anyone who walks there and asked if the matter could be brought to the attention of Central Bedfordshire Council.

7. **MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

- a. P9 Item 3e Charter Lunch of Biggleswade Rotary Club – text should be corrected to read 57th birthday not 73rd.

Subject to these amendments the Minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 25th April 2023.

- b. Members **NOTED** the minutes of the Annual Assembly held on Tuesday 18th April 2023.

8. **MATTERS ARISING**

Item 9a – Bicycle Hire Proposal. Cllr Albone asked whether Officers had received any response from Central Bedfordshire Council with regards to a clear proposal on racks installation.

Officers responded that no response had been received to date.

9. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- a. **Change in date of Biggleswade Joint Committee**

Members **RESOLVED** to cancel the Biggleswade Joint Committee meeting scheduled for Thursday 25th May and carry any agenda items to the next BJC meeting to be held on the 13th of July, 2023.

Members also **AGREED** that the timings and format of the meetings should also be looked at a later stage.

- b. **Capital Assets Working Group Update**

Members **AGREED** to put themselves forward to join the Capital Assets Working Group and agreed to Officers issuing an invitation for the first working group meeting on 14th June.

- c. **One-way traffic on Sun Street**

Members discussed the correspondence that was sent to the Town Council regarding a proposal to retrospectively consult on a one-way traffic order on Sun Street.

Members noted that one way traffic was originally introduced on a temporary basis, has been operating for some time and that the Traffic Order seems to be required to address an administrative error.

Members **RESOLVED** to fully support the order and asked that Officers respond to CBC with the belief that an enforcement camera is not needed on Sun Street.

- d. **Unity Bank Signatories**

The Finance Manager noted that following the formation of a new Council, there are only two Members who are signatories for payments, which is insufficient.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept Officers recommendation to sanction the new Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, as signatories.

e. **Franklins Recreation Ground Official Opening Report**

Commenting on the report, the Town Clerk & Chief Executive welcomed the Public Realm Team's hard work to achieve the results at Franklins.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive explained that in consultation with various Members, it was suggested that as well as Members, the Carnival Prince and Princess could be present for the grand opening.

Members commenting on the report noted support for the opening of the Franklins Recreation Area as well as hoping there would be a swift return to business as usual.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the opening for Saturday 3rd June for late morning/early afternoon timing.

10. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

a. **CB/23/01283/FULL - 8 Wiseman Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8LN**

The Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this application, subject to consultation with neighbours and consideration of their comments.

b. **CB/23/01098/LB - 36 High Street, Biggleswade, SG18 0JL**

The Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this application, subject to consultation with neighbours and consideration of their comments.

c. **CB/23/01404/FULL - Fairfield Cottage, Fairfield Road, Biggleswade, SG18 0AA**

The Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this application, subject to consultation with neighbours and consideration of their comments.

However, the Council would like that the comments from the Arboriculture Impact Assessment regarding trees being protected from any damage during these works are taken into consideration. As the works appear to be close to these protected trees additional information would be required on the impact on the root areas of these trees.

The Council would also like that the recommendations in the Ecology Appraisal followed as well.

d. **CB/23/01447/FULL - 4 Coltsfoot, Biggleswade, SG18 8SR**

The Town Council **OBJECTS** to this application on the following basis:

- Concerns that the new position of boundary fence and new front boundary wall with railings will change the street scene.
- The new fencing will not be in keeping with the other houses as this house will have an enclosure.
- Fencing seems to be elevated and will look intrusive.

11. **PLANNING APPLICATION OUTCOMES**

This report was **NOTED**.

Members **AGREED** that the structure and value of the document would be discussed at a future Council Meeting.

12. **ACCOUNTS**

a. **Financial Administration**

No accounts were available for this agenda.

13. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **National Highways Response to proposed closure of the central reservation gap on A1**

Members discussed the response by National Highways and indicated that more detail was needed as to what the future holds for this crossing.

Members **RESOLVED** that Officers contact Central Bedfordshire Council and:

- highlight the response,
- add the Council's concern that there is there is no explanation as to the future crossing from Biggleswade to Northill,
- ask how CBC is going to address the issues in particular with the underpass.

14. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

a. **Cllr Grant Fage**

Cllr Fage commenting on an item under Exempt with regards to Partnership Working highlighted that through email discussion he had noted that there was an appetite for Central Bedfordshire Councillors to be more involved in Town Council meetings.

Cllr Fage pointed out that several items were discussed on the agenda, to which CBC Councillors could respond if they were present at meetings.

b. **Mr Simon Denchfield**

Mr Denchfield commenting on the Land North of Biggleswade item under exempt, indicated that he had looked at the paperwork carefully on the Central Bedfordshire Council website and was unsure if it was a stand-alone document or an amendment.

Mr Denchfield believed that the documentation was unclear, confusing, and misleading to the public.

c. **Ahead of the Exempt Session**, Cllr Albone indicated that there were two items under Exempt which he believed should be brought to the open session.

Cllr Albone indicated that Item 15c Councillor Co-option Vacancy should be discussed in the Open Session to allow openness and transparency.

Members voted and **AGREED** that the item should be discussed in the Open Session.

Cllr Albone expressed the view that Item 15e Partnership Working should also be discussed in the Open Session in the interest of openness and transparency.

Cllr Skilton commenting on the item noted that having a discussion with CBC Councillors who were not affiliated with any political parties, in a private way, could be misconstrued by the public.

Members voted and **DISAGREED** that this item should be discussed in the public session.

Cllr Albone and Cllr Skilton asked that their vote for this item to be discussed in the public session to be recorded in the minutes.

d. **Councillor Co-option Vacancy**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive who introduced the paper indicated that the closing date for the vacancy is the 2nd of June and pointed to three items that need to be debated:

- Definition around the shortlisting.
- Definition around the interview process.
- Definition around the voting process.

Members discussing the item agreed that the process should be open and transparent.

Members **AGREED** on the following procedure:

- all candidates (who are eligible in electoral terms) are brought forward.
- each candidate to make a 5-minute statement to all Members in an Exempt session of a Council meeting.
- if a candidate is unable to attend the meeting in person a written statement may be submitted.
- the order of the candidate statements to be selected at random in advance.
- voting will be a series of secret ballots until two candidates are reached.

15. **EXEMPT**

a. **Land North of Biggleswade**

Members **AGREED** that a Working Group would be established to draw up a response letter to be sent to Central Bedfordshire Council.

Members **RESOLVED** that the item would be brought back to the Town Council meeting on 13th June 2023, before the response is sent to CBC.

b. **Car Parking Tender Update Report**

Members **AGREED** to **DEFER** the item until the next Town Council meeting on 13th June 2023.

c. **Provision of Electricity Contract**

Members **RESOLVED** that the Town Council should agree a one-year contract with Tandem Together for the provision of electricity.

d. **Partnership Working**

Members **AGREED** to invite all five Central Bedfordshire Councillors for Biggleswade to an informal meeting with five Town Councillors to consider the way forward to support a working partnership, with proposals to be brought back to Full Council for a decision.

e. **Funfair Proposal**

Members **RESOLVED** for Officers to liaise with the event organiser to confirm a third-party agreement for June.

Members also **RESOLVED** that Officers work with the Public Land and Open Spaces Committee Chairman and Deputy Chairman with key actions for any further events and bring the item back to Town Council for approval.

The Mayor closed the meeting at **9.35 pm**