



**MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2024**  
**AT 7.00PM AT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES**  
**THE OLD COURT HOUSE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL**

**PRESENT:**

Cllr. J. Woodhead (Chairman)  
Cllr. S. Patel (Deputy Chairman)  
Cllr. M. Foster (ex-officio voting Member)  
Cllr. A. Skilton  
Cllr. D. Strachan  
Cllr. C. Thomas

Mr P Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive  
Mr I Campbell – Community Development Officer  
Ms H Calvert – HR & Administration Officer  
Mx K Chambers – Committee Clerk

Members of the Public – 8 (3 online)

**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 would infringe the Data Protection Rights of that individual.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

a. Cllr. D. Albone.

**b. Online Attendees**

Cllr. I. Agnew, Cllr. P. Guilcher, Cllr. M. Knight, Karim Hosseini

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:**

None.

**b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:**

None.

**3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

#### **4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

##### **a. Anna Franklin, Biggleswade LGBTQ+ Group**

Mx. Franklin noted their support for funding towards an LGBTQ+ event in Biggleswade during June 2024 as mentioned in Item 9b (Full Calendar of Town Centre Events). They also encouraged an increased relationship between Biggleswade Town Council and the local LGBTQ+ community, as well as other minority groups.

##### **b. Cllr Grant Fage, CBC Ward Councillor - East**

Cllr. Fage commented on Item 9d (Licensing Applications Process Report), highlighting that the Town Council are not a statutory consultee in alcohol licensing. He advised that the Town Council be clear on their approach to this item, whether it be to suggest a framework to consider future applications, to focus primarily on the application by The Venue, or both.

Cllr. Fage noted that CBC Officers cannot accept commentary from non-statutory consultees. However, the Council can reach out to consultees and provide comments. He noted that these comments should be definitive and explain the Council's comments.

Cllr Fage also noted his support from the local nighttime economy, observing that this could encourage people to stay in the town centre for longer. He also highlighted that conditions could be put in place to ensure that the business does not affect local residents negatively.

#### **5. INVITED SPEAKER**

None.

#### **6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

a. Cllr. Skilton raised questions surround the Town Council's existing A-board policy in relation to his Clear Pavements e-petition, which was recently discussed at the Executive Committee at Central Bedfordshire Council. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive confirmed that this policy remains more advisory than enforceable, although the latter has been attempted previously.

Cllr. Skilton also questioned whether there had been any progress relating to a falling wall at Chestnut Avenue car park and if these works could include creating a ramp for accessibility. The Community Development Manager confirmed that Officers have been obtaining quotes from bricklayers in the last week.

b. Cllr. Strachan extended the conversation about car parking walls, asking whether there was budget allocated to fix the various car parks. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive Confirmed that the capital asset group were consulted, but only one wall (not mentioned in session) was prioritised. The Head of Governance and Strategic Partnerships added that three quotes will be obtained, and a further report will come to Council for Members to review.

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

- a. The Draft Minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record of the Town Centre Management Committee held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

## **8. MATTERS ARISING**

- a. P8. Item 10a – Cllr. Foster asked if there had been any response from CBC regarding the UK SPF application. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed that nothing had been received.
- b. P8. Item 10b – Cllr. Thomas asked if there was any result for the electrical infrastructure in the Market Square. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive confirmed that, after repeated escalation since August 2023, the Head of Service will visit on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024 with electrical professionals to ascertain the nature of the issues identified.

Cllr. Foster highlighted that CBC promised this would be completed within the last financial year (2023/24) and this meeting surpasses their timeline. He encouraged to continue pushing CBC forward. The Town Clerk confirmed that he had contacted the Chief Executive regarding the concerns for health and safety, which will hopefully prompt action.

- c. P10. Item 10d – Cllr. Skilton highlighted the Shopwatch group and asked if there were any further updates and/or successes. The Community Development Officer noted that the second Shopwatch meeting was held in BTC's Council Chamber to show support for the initiative. He highlighted that there was a positive mindset, as many of those involved in recent shoplifting had been caught by the Police.

## **9. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **Car Parking Update Report**

The Community Development Officer introduced the report, highlighting that the wording for the TRO Schedule 2 needs to change to accommodate the new ticketless parking. The wording was developed by Officers alongside CBC Officers.

Members highlighted the need for Officers to consult with Specialist Traffic Order Makers at CBC to ensure that the correct legal phrasing is used in line with other ticketless car parks. The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships noted that Officers had been consulting with CBC and Flowbird, and that they are happy to revisit the current wording where necessary.

Members asked for Officers to clarify if ticketless car parking would be tested in one location before being establishing in all six BTC owned sites. The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships responded that a first trial will be held, lasting approximately one month and potentially at the Dan Albone Car Park. This, however, can only take place once the wording of the TRO has changed.

Members also highlighted the need to consult on the wording of new signage needed for the new ticketless approach. Members highlighted that signage needs to be clear for the public and establish that registration plates should still be registered, even if they only intend to use the two hours of free parking. The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships responded that the car park signs will be updated with large

decals, clarifying the change alongside the changes to the TRO wording. These will both be confirmed with Council Members before works go underway.

Members **RESOLVED** to agree with the proposed TRO wording and enable Officers to progress the TRO changes with the CBC legal team, subject to further observations from the licensing authority.

b. **Full Calendar of Town Centre Events**

The Community Development Officer confirmed four major annual event and seven Bigg Eats events. There will also be six cultural events throughout the year subject to UK SPF approval.

The HR & Administration Officer noted the number of event companies Officers had contacted in the local area to improve the event offer. The vast majority either did not respond or did not have availability. However, the contact for reindeer during the Christmas period did progress and is referred to in Item 9c (Christmas Lights Switch-On Event 2024).

The Community Development Manager also noted Appendix D (Event Ideas) and how these might be discussed. He proposed an informal meeting with Members to discuss the list. Members suggested that these discussions could be held at a Council Reserve meeting.

Members highlighted that these events could celebrate the history of Biggleswade and promote inclusivity / support minority groups. These events could be used for both entertainment value and informational use.

Members noted that, from a financial perspective, event planning should be considered earlier so that funding can be allocated and preparation time given. Members encouraged Officers to prepare the Events Calendar for 2025/26 before the end of the year to allow for sufficient budget preparations.

Members asked why some events in Appendix C were not linked to events companies, despite the Town Clerk & Chief Executive's comments that this was desirable. Officers clarified that it was desired to also include local societies within BTC events, such as 'Dan Albone Day' alongside the Biggleswade History Society.

Members also noted that the Orchard Centre could be utilised within the events as a Town Council owned space.

Members **RESOLVED** to note the appendices and approve of holding a separate meeting with Officers to discuss potential future events ideas for the town.

c. **Christmas Lights Switch On Event Update Report**

The Community Development Officer noted key updates in the event's progress, including the hiring of a Santa and two quotes obtained for Christmas trees. He noted that the next priority was hiring performers and contacting local schools to participate.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive highlighted that progress is being made, but the details of the finances need to be completed. He also noted that there was an extensive GANTT with all the existing and upcoming progress should Members want to view it.

Members asked if a report surrounding the Christmas lights decorations will be received at a committee meeting similar to last year. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed that this would be the case.

Members also inquired about the ice rink and whether this could go ahead at no expense to the Town Council, with the supplier taking any profits made. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive noted that this had been discussed at previous meetings, with estimated costs being £6,800 to £11,300 and estimated income being £4,200 to £12,600. The solution suggested would reduce the risk to the Town Council.

Members recognised that a breadth of feedback was collected in relation to the Christmas lights switch-on in 2023, and asked how this would be implemented this year. Members noted the need to consider the layout of the event in order to prevent overcrowded areas and suggested that Station Road could be utilised more.

Members also noted the importance of hiring a Master of Ceremonies who was enthusiastic about Biggleswade and eager to participate. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed that contact had been made to local theatre groups to ascertain their interest.

Members **RESOLVED** to note the report and agree that:

- Officers arrange a monthly daytime meeting with Members to facilitate event planning, and
- Officers proceed with pulling together quotes for all categories to present at the next meeting.

d. **Licensing Applications Process Report**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive reminded Members that this application was mentioned in Matters Arising at the Town Council meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> April and asked to be brought to TCM. He recognised that the Council are not statutory consultees and that comments would not be included in official decisions. He highlighted the recommendation of bringing future license application to Council committee meetings using email alerts.

The Chairman identified the need to separate discussion between the prospect of bringing applications to Council first, and then the existing application from The Venue.

Members **RESOLVED** to note the report and agree that:

- In future, Officers should bring all licensing applications to the Town Council and, following the process outlines, contact CBC Councillors, relevant CBC Officers, and the Members of the Licensing Committee as a Town Council where deemed necessary.

The Chairman suspended Standing Orders so that the licensee applicant could speak in relation to their application.

The Director of The Venue Music Bar & Lounge Ltd, Mr. Komomafe, spoke on behalf of the application and noted that they had received noise complaints from the local community, but he believes that these are connected to the old residents of Georges Hall.

Mr. Komomafe noted that the company have chosen to set up in Biggleswade due to the director's proximity (Potton) and the need for later nightlife provision in the local area. He highlighted that they have received an overwhelmingly positive welcome from local residents, especially young people in Biggleswade and also their parents. Mr. Komomafe emphasised that The Venue is eager to create an inclusive environment that does not encourage over-intoxication or public nuisance, but rather a place for young people to meet and socialise within Biggleswade, rather than surrounding towns.

Members asked whether the license application would be until 3am and if this would be utilised every night. Mr. Komomafe noted that this was extended from the original 2am license from the old tenants in response to feedback in questionnaires extended by the company.

Members also asked what measures The Venue intends to implement in order to prevent public nuisance. Mr. Komomafe noted that the Police provided strategies to reduce this. For example, the Police suggested reducing the music and reminding clientele of the close time around 3am, which would encourage clientele to leave in smaller groups rather than all together. Mr. Komomafe noted that they have five security agents as well to ensure safety of their clientele and the public.

The Chairman recommended that The Venue could join the Biggleswade Pubwatch scheme. Mr. Komomafe noted that they discussed this and the Manager was in contact with the Pubwatch team.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Komomafe for his and his team's attendance at the meeting.

Members noted that the Biggleswade nighttime economy was important and should work alongside local residents to reduce impact, following the advice and conditions put in place by the licensing authority.

Members asked for clarification as to whether The Venue will be open until 3am every day. Mr. Komomafe confirmed that their events would be primarily on Fridays and Saturdays and that the license for all week licensing would act as a blanket.

Members **RESOLVED** to allow Officers to write to CBC Councillors, relevant CBC Officers, and the Members of the Licensing Committee, expressing that the Council has no formal objection, provided that disruption to local resident is reduced where possible.

10. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Biggleswade 5K Run**

The Community Development Manager provided an update that the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) has not responded yet. Once this has been received, the Council will promote this on their social media platforms in support of Jones Fitness. Members requested that a map be included to clarify the route for the 5K run at the next meeting.

Members also questioned when Officers are expecting a response from the SAG. The Community Development Manager confirmed that the member of the group responsible has returned from leave, so Officers will push for an answer.

Members **NOTED** the report.

b. **D-Day Anniversary Update Report**

The Community Development Officer noted that there will be a planning meeting for this event on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024. The Royal British Legion and Shuttleworth will be preparing a programme and this meeting will focus on the last items to ensuring a smooth-running event. The Community Development Officer highlighted that this event is run by the Royal British Legion, and the Town Council are supporting it.

Members questioned whether there was any traffic management being organised for the event, considering Bigg Eats will be set up in the White Hart car park to respect the memorial area in the Market Square. Members asked Officers to consider whether part of Station Road should be closed to ensure pedestrian safety between the two areas.

Members also asked that Officers send out an official invitation to Members.

Members **NOTED** the report.

11. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No one from the public wished to speak.

12. **EXEMPT**

a. None.

The Chairman closed the meeting at **8:40pm**.