

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BIGGLESWADE JOINT COMMITTEE  
HELD IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING AT  
THE ORCHARD CENTRE, KINGS REACH, BIGGLESWADE  
ON THURSDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER at 7.00 PM**

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Present:               | <b>BTC:</b> Cllr M Russell (Deputy Chairman), Cllr M North, Cllr C Thomas, Cllr D Albone<br><b>CBC:</b> Cllr G Tranter (Chairman), Cllr G Fage, Cllr Dr. H Whitaker, Cllr P How (via zoom)<br><b>BTC Head of Governance &amp; Strategic Partnerships:</b> Karim Hosseini<br><b>BTC Meetings Administrator:</b> Funda Gumush |
| In Attendance:         | <b>CBC Community Engagement Manager:</b> Sarah Hughes<br><b>Co-opted Member:</b> Cliff Andrews<br><b>CBC:</b> Cllr Rebecca Hares  |
| Members of the public: | <b>2</b>  |

Following a reminder to Meeting attendees that this is a formal meeting, the Chair advised that members of the public will be given an opportunity to speak during public open session but not at other times. The meeting was being filmed and by being present attendees were deemed to have agreed be filmed and to the use of those images and sound recordings. The Chair advised that attendees should not disclose any personal information of individuals as this would infringe the Data Protection Rights of the individual. The Chair asked everyone to mute their microphones when not speaking.

**PART A – ADMINISTRATION**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Mr. P Tarrant, Cllr S Patel.

**NO APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr S Watkins.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in any agenda item – None.
- (b) Non-pecuniary interests in any agenda item – None.

**3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

To adjourn for a period of 15 minutes to allow members of the public to put questions or to address the Committee, through the Chairman, pertaining to items listed on the Agenda. Each speaker to be allocated a 3-minute speaking slot.

### **Helen Kingerley – Biggleswade Scouts Group**

Addressing the Committee, Ms Kingerley indicated that around 200 scouts access the Scout Hub on a weekly basis. She explained that the hub is located through an alleyway that runs from London Road and is only accessible through there. She added that in the summer, the alleyway, which is CBC land, is overgrown whilst in the winter it can be treacherous due to fallen leaves. Youngsters with mobility issues and visual impairments also use that alleyway.

Ms Kingerley asked whether there was a possibility of having a schedule of maintenance to look at that alleyway to help remove some of the trip hazards and improve the lighting there. She requested that the Scouts Group were made aware of any planning applications concerning that area that might benefit the access to the hub.

Cllr Whitaker responding said that CBC Officers would take the matter to Environmental Services and ask if establishing a schedule of maintenance on the alleyway was possible. She added that lighting for that alleyway was also an action that could be taken.

### **Carole Birtwhistle – Biggleswade Community Safety Group**

Ms Birtwhistle who is the Secretary to the Biggleswade Community Safety Group raised a few issues relating to crime statistics.

Ms Birtwhistle firstly indicated that shoplifting had become a major issue in the town adding that assaults with and without injury were also on the rise. She asked if anything was being done to combat this.

Secondly Ms Birtwhistle noted that despite reporting maintenance work with regards to potholes, the response had been poor.

Responding to the queries, Cllr Whitaker indicated that it would give a better understanding to know where the assaults were taking place so that if it was an issue with street lighting for example this could be improved or if it would need regular police patrolling. She added however this was something CBC Officers and Councillors would need to take away and look at.

Commenting on the issue of potholes, Cllr Whitaker noted that this was a longer process which would require traffic control hence the length of time it took for repairs.

Cllr Fage commenting on crime statistics pointed out that the Town Council used to receive crime statistic reports; he added that this was possibly something that could be distributed from the relevant body to relevant groups to help inform conversations.

Cllr North noted that in February, BTC Councillors had met with CBC Officer Tom Price with regards to the electric vehicle chargers in the Town. He indicated that there had not been any significant progress and asked if Ward Councillors were able to update.

## **4. MINUTES OF MEETINGS**

Members reviewed and **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Biggleswade Joint Committee Meeting of **Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023**.

## **5. MATTERS ARISING**

P6 - Cllr North inquired if there were any developments with regards to the Bus Interchange.

Cllr Whitaker responding noted that a solution had been found with regards to the grounding of buses and a meeting would be taking place over the next week when more updates would be made.

P7 - Mr Cliff Andrews gave an update on the App-Bike Scheme and indicated that as of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October, 92 residents had signed up to the scheme.

## 6. **CO-OPTION PROCESS**

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships introduced the report and indicated that Officers had prepared the report, in discussions with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee. He noted that the report sets out how the Committee wishes to co-opt Members from various groups within the Town.

Cllr Fage commenting noted that it was important for further expressions of interest in the Committee to be from individuals who were active members of the town parish.

Cllr Russell clarifying the process of co-option explained that anyone wishing to join the BJC Committee would apply to the Town Council as they are the secretariat for the Committee; the Committee would then decide on co-option.

Cllr Russell proposed that the matter of co-option of individuals is discussed in an exempt session at the January meeting of the BJC since it would involve personal details of those individuals.

Following on from Officers recommendations, Members **RESOLVED** to formerly co-opt Cliff Andrews, Deputy Chief Executive of the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity.

Members also **RESOLVED** to accept:

- Officers amend the co-option application form to enable the name of the organisation (if someone is part of one) to be included and also details to help to ensure equality and diversity.
- Officers would include the co-option form on the Town Council website (and in turn the CBC website if possible)
- The further expressions of interest are discussed under Exempt in the January meeting of the BJC.

## 7. **BIGGLESWADE JOINT COMMITTEE – STRATEGIC IMPACT**

### a. **CBC to provide an overview of Joint Committees in Central Bedfordshire**

CBC Community Engagement Manager Sarah Hughes presented a report on Joint Committees in Central Bedfordshire.

Ms Hughes explained that CBC had five joint partnerships with Dunstable, Biggleswade, Leighton – Linslade, Houghton Regis, and a pilot in Flitwick which had met once and added that they were Member led comprising equal numbers of Ward and Town Councillors.

Ms Hughes briefly explained the agenda's for each committee and underlined that the joint committees were a forum for sharing information, discussing local important infrastructure issues and a hub for wider stakeholder engagement.

Ms Hughes added that other Councils were making use of motions to agree a collaborative view on an issue.

### b. **BJC discussion on embracing a future strategic role**

Cllr Russell commenting on Ms Hughes previous comment about motions, asked how this would influence both Councils and how would the interaction be made. She underlined that the key was to become more forward looking.

Cllr Fage commenting noted that a good partnership between the chairman and the vice chairman of the committee, good visibility of the agenda in advance and potentially saying no to certain things being on an agenda from a CBC perspective and a Town Council perspective was a good start.

Cllr Whitaker indicated that a forward plan for committees would be beneficial to have as it would enable Members to be proactive to discuss future plans. She added that the Schools for Future programme for example, would bring with it a host of items such as planning applications, which the Town Council will be able to have an input into.

Cllr Whitaker proposed to have a Member's Questions section at the start of the agenda so that Members from both committees could ask each other questions regarding issues relating to their respective Councils.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendation.

The Chairman in checking with the Clerk noted that motions as a point of order, must be submitted beforehand in writing and suggested that these are submitted to Officers in advance of the meeting.

Cllr Whitaker asked that the Clerk email Members two weeks ahead of the Agenda being released to ask for any motions to be submitted.

## **8. PART B – TOWN CENTRE AND MARKET SQUARE VISION**

### **a. BTC presentation on the Market Square Vision and Urban Design Plan**

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships presented on the Market Square Vision and Urban Design Plan.

He noted that Officers had been working with Town Council Members to come up with a brief for obtaining professional help to produce a vision for the Market Square. On 10<sup>th</sup> October, the Town Council resolved to appoint an urban design company. Officers have now established a timeline for early December. The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships went on that this would be brought to the Town Council in December.

Cllr Russell indicated that as a new Council, with new Members, it was important to determine not only the Market Square, but how the Town operates, particularly now with the new Bus Interchange. Cllr Russell added that it was important to have an initial document so that it could be shared with other stakeholders, particularly CBC, and the public for their views.

Cllr Whitaker pointed out that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is giving £90,000 for Biggleswade and wondered if the Town Council knew how this money was going to be spent. Cllr Russell responded that at present Council did not have any plans.

Cllr Whitaker noted that funding could be used to improve the ground surfaces in the Town Centre, with a view to preventing trip hazards.

Cllr Fage indicated that power supply sources around the market square is one issue which needs to be addressed urgently. They need upgrading.

The spend-by date for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is March 2025 and the spend would be agreed between CBC and Biggleswade Town Council and the decision would be made by the end of February 2024.

b. **Cllr Grant Fage's proposal on brown "Town Centre" directional signage**

Cllr Fage presenting his proposal indicated that presently there was £200,000 of uncommitted Section 106 money related to the Town Centre.

He indicated that the majority of traffic on the A1 may not be aware of the historic town centre as there was no directional signage.

With regards to S106 money, Cllr Whitaker pointed out that it had to be used within the Town Centre boundary. She also added that it would be useful if the town had a digital car parking sign at entry points to the town to show which parking areas were available.

Cllr Whitaker asked whether the Town Council can take forward the idea of digital car park sign and apply for S106 money, to which Cllr Russell indicated that it should be on a future Council agenda.

Members **AGREED** on the following:

- To support brown signage at strategic entry points indicating the way to the Town Centre, and also signs are needed at the Railway Station, six signs in all.
- For Officers from both Councils to determine whether funding for this was available.
- That digital car parking signage be taken forward to a future Council meeting.

9. **PART C – FORWARD LOOK UPDATES FROM COUNCILLORS**

a. CBC Councillors gave updates on the following:

- A new developer for Land East of Biggleswade has been identified.
- There would be a delay in the final phase of Kings Reach as there was no planning application.
- Some success around fly-tipping removal and general maintenance around town.
- Possibility of funding for a youth club in Biggleswade and this would be pursued.
- Cutting of overgrown shrubbery around the roundabouts around Saxon Drive.

b. BTC Councillors updated on the following:

- Play Area Developments – refurbishment and regeneration.
- Refurbishment of Stratton Way Cemetery.
- Adoption of Kings Reach Estate. This is currently waiting for red line drawings and volumetrics.
- Drove Road Cemetery Project.

10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members agreed that the next meeting, to be held on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024, would take place at the Town Hall at 7pm.

Meeting Closed at 9.00pm

