



MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE PUBLIC LAND AND OPEN SPACES
MEETING HELD TUESDAY 3rd OCTOBER 2023
AT 7.00PM AT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES
THE OLD COURT HOUSE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL



PRESENT:

Cllr M North (Chairman)
Cllr C Thomas (Deputy Chairman)
Cllr P Guilcher
Cllr M Foster (ex-officio voting Member)
Cllr A Skilton
Cllr D Strachan

Mr P Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Mr K Hosseini – Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships (via Zoom)
Mr J Woolley – Public Realm Manager
Ms F Gumush – Meetings Administrator

Members of the Public – 4

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 M Knight, Cllr J Woodhead.

b. **REMOTE ATTENDANCE**

Cllr J Jones (via zoom).

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. None.

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No member of the public wished to speak.

5. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

- a. Cllr Skilton pointed to concerns residents had raised regarding cows on Biggleswade Common which have caused problems not only for dog walkers on numerous occasions but have broken out of their enclosures, damaged fences and entered private properties.

Cllr Skilton indicated that even though the Town Council did not have any jurisdiction in this area, it was disturbing for residents and a matter which needed attention.

The Chairman of the Committee explained that Cllr Russell, was scheduled to have a meeting with Fen Reeves who are the custodians of the Common, to discuss this matter.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive underlined that the Council strongly sympathises with residents and although has no legal powers, has supplied residents with contact information for the Fen Reeves.

Cllr Foster indicated that the Council website should be updated so that it gives contact information for the Fen Reeves.

- b. Cllr Strachan asked that going forward, the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor are included on distribution lists of all Committee meetings.

6. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

No amendments were made to the Minutes which were **APPROVED** as an accurate record of the PLOS Committee meeting held on **Tuesday 6th June 2023**.

7. MATTERS ARISING

P7 – Cllr Strachan noted the resolution regarding progression of a power source to facilitate future connection for lighting and CCTV at Franklins and added that as Members had received informal reports on the matter, it would be appropriate to note this.

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships pointed out that the outcome of this work would be presented at a forthcoming growth budget discussion.

8. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. **Brunel Drive Play Area Update Report**

The Chairman explained that several Members of the PLOS Committee had recently carried out a visit to Brunel Drive and Kitelands Play Areas with the Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships and the Public Realm Manager.

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships explained that there were several pieces of equipment in the play areas which had worn over time and for health and safety reasons needed to be reinvigorated.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive indicated that he was working with the Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to prepare a report for Town Council on the 10th of October, which provides an umbrella overview of the potential funding streams for the key projects. He added that the debate this evening will contribute to that paper.

Regarding the location of the swings, the Public Realm Manager noted that they could not be relocated because this would cause damage to the swing sets. Presently, the seats of the swings would be replaced in situ.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendation that they support the contents of the report and recommend to the Town Council that Officers and Members assess the anticipated bids with a view to selecting a winning supplier.

b. **Kitelands Play Area Update Report**

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships presented the report.

He explained that one of the contractors had provided a 3D walk-through for both Brunel Drive and Kitelands Play Areas and these would be shared with Members in due course.

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships pointed out that the first tranche of the Community Grant funding of £57,000 would be provided once the Town Council selects a viable contractor through the tendering process. He added that the children's play area would be completed first and the larger play area would receive the second tranche of funding once the go ahead is given.

Members questioned the material of some of the play equipment and their position in the park, noting that some of the metal equipment was positioned in the sun whilst the wooden equipment was placed in the shade.

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships noted that one of the suppliers had prepared their bid with this in mind.

Members commented that once the preferred supplier is selected, Members will need to scrutinize the plan, equipment, layout and colour of the equipment in order to achieve the right balance.

Members pointing to the vandalism issues during the renovation of the Franklins Play Area, also questioned how security would be achieved during the renovation of these new play areas.

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships indicated that fencing would be erected around the parks, but other measures had not yet been explored. This would become clearer once the preferred supplier is selected.

On the point of colours for the play equipment, Members asked that colours were taken into consideration for children with special needs in mind.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive suggested that it may be an opportunity to reach out within the community and take into consideration the views of parents and teachers who work with less able-bodied children and young adults such as the Ivel Valley School, to get a sense of what they would like to see in play areas.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendation that they support the report and recommend to the Town Council that Officers and Members assess all anticipated bids with a view to selecting a successful supplier.

c. **All Play Areas Equipment Replacement Report**

The Town Council is now in the second year of its five-year play areas project. In August 2023 Officers conducted a detailed review and the report calls for the replacement of identified play equipment and ground surfaces which are in poor condition.

The Chairman noted that the Council currently has a maintenance budget of £1,500 a year, which is inadequate to maintain the play areas.

Members **RESOLVED** to note the findings of the report and **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** to approve option A.

This will enable Officers to:

- Draw down an indicative £183,000 in 2023-34 from PWLB funding.
- It will also enable Officers to make the case in October 2023 for growth funding of £20,000 maintenance for 2024-25.
- This will allow Officers to deliver timely improvements to play equipment with ground surfacing across all 11 play areas on a worst condition replaced first basis.

d. **Stratton Way Cemetery Project**

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships and Public Realm Manager presented the report.

He noted that the project aimed to transform the cemetery into a more dignified offering for all faiths.

The project aimed to enhance both entrances to the cemetery and fortify the roundabouts to ensure it can be negotiated easily by vehicles. Additionally, memory walls and ash scattering areas will be introduced to boost the current offer.

Members commenting indicated that in heavy rain fall, the eastern part of the roundabout is usually flooded, and this needed to be addressed.

Members also indicated that it would be a good opportunity for Members to have a walkabout so that they are clear on how the cemetery could be set out better at a later stage.

Members **RESOLVED** to note the report and accept the recommendation for the use of an indicative £60,000 of PWLB funds and for Officers to report the tender outcomes to a future Town Council meeting.

Members also **PROPOSED** and **RESOLVED** that Officers present a report for Town Council to review the Terms & Conditions and Burials Policy to ensure they are aligned with future configuration and lay out of the Cemetery.

9. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

None.

10. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

a. Ellie Church, Biggleswade Resident

Ms Church who has been a resident of Biggleswade since 1989 wanted to draw the Committee's attention to the issues she has experienced due to the cattle on the Fen Reeves Common.

Ms Church underlined that for the last five years the cows from the common have crossed the river and destroyed her garden. She indicated that only recently, 20 cows overran her garden as well as her neighbour's property and despite the herdsman being notified, the issue was not taken into control until the next day.

Ms Church explained that although she contacts the managers of the common, she does not always get a prompt response. She stressed that the situation had become untenable and was causing her an untold amount of distress.

The Chairman repeated that a Member of Council would be meeting with the Fen Reeves Management soon and added that despite the Council not having any legal jurisdiction, they would be following the matter closely.

11. EXEMPT

a. None.

The Chairman closed the meeting at **8.05pm**