



MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 27th JUNE 2023
AT 7.00PM AT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES
THE OLD COURT HOUSE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL



PRESENT:

Cllr M Foster (Mayor)
Cllr M Knight (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr I Agnew
Cllr D Albone
Cllr P Guilcher
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 K Hosseini – Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships
Mr R Youngs – Finance Manager
Ms H Calvert – Administration & HR Manager
Mr I Lord – Place Shaping Manager
Ms F Gumush – Meetings Administrator

Members of the Public – 1

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

a. None.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

None.

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

Cllr Russell for Item 11e.

3. **TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

a. **New Councillor Co-option**

The Mayor announced that two of the items on the agenda under exempt would be moved to the public open session for discussion. These were:

- Market Square Electrical Supply
- Working with Ward Councillors

4. **CO-OPTION OF NEW MEMBERS**

The Mayor proposed that the Council go into the exempt session to carry out the process of co-option of new members to Council following a resolution on 23rd May 2023 as below:

- 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.

Members **RESOLVED** to end the public session and begin the exempt session.

The Mayor selected names at random and each candidate was given five minutes to address the Council.

5. **DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE**

It was **RESOLVED** that Mr Gary Barrett be elected to the office of Town Councillor of Biggleswade, for the municipal years 2023 to /2027.

It was **RESOLVED** that Mrs Jo Jones be elected to the office of Town Councillor of Biggleswade, for the municipal years 2023 to 2027.

The Mayor welcomed Mr Gary Barrett and Mrs Jo Jones as the newly elected Councillors to Biggleswade Town Council after which the new Councillors signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

6. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

Cllr Grant Fage, Ward Councillor

Cllr Fage commented on Item 12e – Planning Application for Land South of Potton Road and indicated that there were issues of crime on Salcombe Close.

The applicant submission of this application arose as a result of Central Bedfordshire Council requesting that David Wilson Homes use alternative measures such as flattening mounds of earth and installing lighting instead of the CCTV to discourage anti-social behaviour that has been happening in the play and public open spaces.

7. INVITED SPEAKER

None.

8. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Cllr Patel spoke in relation to CCTV and indicated that the matter was recently raised at the Community Safety Group meeting.

Pointing to vandalism at Franklins Recreation Ground, Cllr Patel asked what the situation was with the mobile CCTV unit and could it be used at the play areas.

Responding to this, the Place Shaping Manager noted that the mobile CCTV units were being used at Drove Road Chapel and the White Hart Car Park and not at Franklins Recreation Ground due to a lack of power supply there.

The Place Shaping Manager added that as a short-term solution, a wild-life camera had been installed at Franklins which was monitored when incidents occurred at the play area and shared with police.

Cllr Agnew asked what influence the Council has on agricultural activities along Baden Powell Way recently where fields were sprayed with manure leaving a heavy stench in the air and resulting in complaints from residents.

Cllr Agnew went on to add that regulations stated manure spraying was not allowed during the summer months when temperatures exceeded 30 degrees.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive responded that this was not in the duty or power of the Council but under Central Bedfordshire Council's environmental health department and should be registered with them.

Officers indicated that they would intervene on behalf of Cllr Agnew's question and speak with CBC.

9. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. P7 – Cllr Knight indicated that Cllr Skilton attended Council meeting via Zoom and based on the Local Government Act of 2021, if a person attends via zoom, they are not deemed to be present. Members indicated that another heading such as 'Remote Attendance' could be added to the attendance record of the minutes to reflect anyone attending virtually.

P9 – Item 9a, Mr Cliff's should be changed to Mr Andrews.

P9 – Item 9b, second paragraph under Land North of Biggleswade should read 'Development Management Committee in June'.

P10 – Item 9d, PWLB, first paragraph should read 'which stipulates what worded resolution of the Town Council is required to support the current application and to enhance the chances of success'.

P10 – Item 9f, no 2 should read 'that Councillors Albone and Knight be added as'.

P11 – Item 9g top of the page should read 'but he has concerns about the statistics offered by Barclays which appear to have'.

P12 – Item 10 f&g Should read ‘Cllr Russell believed the Planning Outcome conveyed to Central Bedfordshire Council from the Town Council Meeting of 12th April 2022 applied’.

P14 – Exempt Item – last sentence should read Councils’ and not Councils.

Subject to these amendments the Minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 13th June 2023.

10. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

11. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Franklins Project Extension**

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships indicated that since the release of the report, two new gates had been installed at Franklins Recreation Ground.

Members commented on the report and noted that there were two amendments which were needed to the report:

- The report indicated that work would be completed by the end of July 2024. This should read July 2023.
- Funding should indicate that funds would be secured from the PWLB.

Members noted that with all the investment being made at Franklins, it was important to try to preserve and protect these improvements due to the risk of vandalism.

With the installation of the wild-life camera, Members indicated that this should be reviewed on every occasion of an incident and reported to the police.

Subject to those amendments, Members **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendations to consider the report, to note additional requirements to the project and enable Officers to procure required items to complete the work.

b. **Drove Road Chapel**

The Place Shaping Manager who presented the report indicated that for clarity, the contractor referenced throughout the report was the External Project Manager, not the sub-contractor.

Members pointed out that the Capital Assets Working Group would be meeting on a weekly basis; therefore, any issues such as the damaged boundary wall and the remedial work needed for this could come to the working group.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendations of the following:

- For the three non-agreed omissions in year one to be completed in year two, using the £2,279 underspend from year one budget.
- An additional £8,211.80 to be drawn down from year one PWLB underspend of £166,000 for use on the tower windows and to cover the 10% inflationary increases.
- Defer a decision on the drawdown of an indicative £10,000 for the boundary wall. This is to allow for Officers to meet with the contractor and determine the minimum spend to make the wall good.

- Agree for phase two to proceed as soon as possible subject to sub-contractor availability.
- Officers to routinely chase the contractor for weekly updates once year two commences, which will be relayed to Members when appropriate, clearly highlighting any discrepancies ahead of work being completed.

c. **Commemorative Memorials and Benches Policy**

Members commented on the report and touched on the matter of length of time that plaques can remain on benches. It was noted that pre-existing plaques on benches would however remain indefinitely.

Members **RESOLVED** that going forward the policy should include the length of time of 15 years that plaques could remain on new benches.

Members **AGREED** the tracked changes made in the policy and to adopt the policy once Officers format it appropriately.

d. **CCTV Update**

Members asked for an amendment to be made to the recommendations to include S106 monies to be pursued with Central Bedfordshire Council in retrospect.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendations to:

- Agree expenditure of £1,500 from the Council's Capital Reserves. The Town Clerk will then be in a position to sign the contract with BT for the upgrade of the existing analogue line to a new digital line.
- Officers to review the projected outturn of CCTV revenue. In the event of an overspend, as projected within the figures presented, Officers will request a virement from the accounting fees heading.

e. **St Andrew's Church Heating Project**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive indicated St Andrew's Church were seeking support from Biggleswade Town Council which would allow them to apply for other grant-based schemes for their proposed project.

Members **RESOLVED** to support the Church on their project going forward.

f. **Market Square Electrical Supply**

The Place Shaping Manager explained that Officers held a meeting with several Members on 23rd June and the electrician who produced the report explained the problem and physically showed Members the pillar boxes and outstanding issues.

The Place Shaping Manager indicated that it was Officers perceptions that Members preferred Option 4 out of the various options presented in the report, which was to remove the 32A socket in the ground, and hard wire the pillars into the isolator below ground. This would be safer, as it removed the 32A socket that currently poses the issue.

There would be the addition of changing one of the 16A outlets to a 32A outlet. This way there would be a 32A and 2 x 16A available in each pillar.

The Place Shaping Manager indicated that the electrician now quoted £5,670 for this option. Other local electricians have also been approached and will be investigating the Market Square before giving in a quote.

The Place Shaping Manager pointed out that the matter will be discussed with Senior Leadership of CBC in a meeting to be held on Wednesday 28th June.

Members noted that this is a wider issue as CBC had registered the Market Square with Land Registry in 2009. It was important that a formal agreement with regards to the Market Square was established so each Council was aware of their respective responsibilities.

With regards to the electrical work, Members indicated that moving on the present issue of the remedial electrical work was more urgent than ownership matters now.

Members **RESOLVED** for Officers to urgently source quotes for Option 4 as suggested by the Place Shaping Manager in his report and remove the 110V equipment as well.

Members **RESOLVED** for Officers to continue to liaise with CBC Senior Leadership Team.

Members **RESOLVED** for Officers to continue mitigating the electricity issue in the short-term by hiring an electrician at all events.

Members **AGREED** for Officers to update Council as appropriate.

Members **RESOLVED** for Officers to discuss and establish a legal agreement regarding assets.

g. **Working with Ward Councillors**

A meeting was recently held between Ward Councillors and Town Council Members, following a Town Council resolution at the end of May.

A positive meeting was held, and four proposals were made:

- Ward councillors do not want a formal slot on the Town Council agenda.
- Ward councillors will try to view the agenda in advance and email the Town Clerk if there are specific items of information which may influence the TC discussion.
- If, during any item on the agenda, Ward councillors feel they have some information which would help, they will raise their hand and the Chairman may suspend Standing Orders to allow them to speak.
- If Ward councillors have an important update about something that is not on the agenda, they will speak in the Public Open Session at the end of the meeting.

It was agreed that there should be a three-month trial period if the above is approved by Council and a review meeting should be held in October.

Joint Committee was discussed briefly, and all agreed that it should be more strategic that more senior Officers need to attend and that subject to further consideration, the possibility of future meetings could be held in the evening.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the proposals.

12. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

a. CB/23/01792/FULL - 17 Gemini Lane, Biggleswade, SG18 8DN

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

b. CB/TCA/23/00179 - 4 Mill Close, Biggleswade, SG18 8BQ

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

c. CB/23/01664/FULL - 158 Hitchin Street, Biggleswade, SG18 8BP

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

d. CB/23/01813/FULL - 3 Devon Drive, Biggleswade, SG18 0FJ

The Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this application subject to the building NOT being used as a permanent dwelling

e. CB/23/02014/SECM - Land South of Potton Road, Biggleswade

The Town Council **OBJECTS** to this modification of Section 106 Agreement attached to planning permission MB/05/01477/OUT:

- There is insufficient background information,
- There is not enough information regarding the outcome on crime and other activities if the mounds are removed.
- The agreement is premature as the mounds are not yet removed therefore the CCTV line cannot be determined.

f. CB/23/01965/FULL - 60 Wilsheres Road, Biggleswade, SG18 0DN

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

13. PLANNING APPLICATION OUTCOMES

This report was **NOTED**.

14. ACCOUNTS

a. Financial Administration

- i) Balance sheet to 31/05/23.
- ii) Detailed Income and Expenditure to 31/05/23.
- iii) Payment Listing from 01/05/23 to 31/05/23.
- iv) Summary Income and Expenditure to 31/05/23.

The Chairman of the F&GP Committee noted that after the upcoming F&GP Committee meeting, finance reports would be laid out in their new format and in keeping with the current process would continue to be published on the Council website.

Members **ADOPTED** the May Accounts as laid out.

15. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Holding of documents for public view**

Members indicated that they were happy to support National Highways on their proposal.

Members **NOTED** the correspondence.

16. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

Cllr Grant Fage, Ward Councillor

Cllr Fage commented on the decision regarding Ward Councillors and said he hoped the 3-month trial period would be successful.

With regards to the planning application for Salcombe Close, Cllr Fage noted that he had requested the email trail connected to this application and would be happy to share with Members.

In the first week of August, Cllr Fage said Ward Councillors were trying to organise a meeting with National Highways to discuss issues relating to Highways.

17. **EXEMPT**

a. **Community Agent Service Level Agreement Report**

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the agreement subject to some specific amendments.

b. **Capital Assets Project Cricket Club License Report**

Members **AGREED** to defer the draft license to the next Capital Assets Working Group meeting.

c. **Barclays Bank Update Report**

Members **NOTED** the report and agreed to invite the Deputy Director of Customer Services to a future Town Council meeting.

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