



MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 13th JUNE 2023
AT 7.00PM AT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES
THE OLD COURT HOUSE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL



PRESENT:

Cllr M Knight (Deputy Mayor)
Cllr I Agnew
Cllr D Albone
Cllr S Patel
Cllr M Russell
Cllr S Sajid
Cllr D Strachan
Cllr C Thomas

Mr P Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Mr K Hosseini – Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships
Mr I Lord – Place Shaping Manager
Mrs S van der Merwe – Meetings Administrator

Members of the Public – 2 via Zoom and 3 in person

Meeting Formalities:

Following a reminder to meeting attendees that this is a formal meeting, the Deputy 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 Deputy 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. Cllr P Guilcher, Cllr J Woodhead, Cllr M North, Cllr M Foster.

b. REMOTE ATTENDANCE

Cllr A Skilton (via Zoom)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

Cllr Strachan - Item 9g – Barclays Bank Closure.

3. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

a. Telecommunications Base Station Upgrade Consultation

The Town Council was given 14 days to respond to a Consultation and the deadline for that expires before the next Town Council Meeting. The Deputy Mayor moved that this be added to the Agenda for consideration.

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Mr. Tony Reynolds - Biggleswade Resident

Mr Reynolds wished to thank the Council for its consideration of the Barclays Bank advertised closure and the effect this will have on the Community.

5. INVITED SPEAKER

Mr Cliff Andrews, Deputy Chief Executive at Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC), addressed the Council regarding the proposed 12-month pilot of the Bike Hire Scheme (included at Item 9a on the Agenda for this meeting) to be installed in 4 locations across Biggleswade.

BRCC will be paying the membership subscription for users who are referred to the scheme via the NHS. Users will be able to use the bikes for either a monthly subscription or a one-off payment, the bikes will be maintained monthly via a maintenance contract with the supplier and will be installed by the end of July 2023.

6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Cllr Patel

Following the closure of the Lloyds Pharmacy in Sainsbury's, he has spoken with Boots Pharmacy and Lloyds regarding their intentions of having a late night or weekend pharmacies. The Deputy Mayor agreed to speak with the Town Clerk & Chief Executive to discuss how this should be addressed via the Town Council.

7. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. For Members to receive the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 23rd May 2023 at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, Saffron Road, Biggleswade.

Cllr Strachan requested that the Title "Mayor" and "Deputy Mayor" be used instead of "Chairman" or "Deputy Chairman" on future Town Council Minutes.

- Page 12 – Financial Administration: Remove the word "not".
- Page 12 – Change the wording to read "there is no explanation as to the future crossing from Biggleswade to Northill".

Subject to these amendments the Minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 23rd May 2023.

For Members to receive the Minutes of the Annual Statutory Meeting held on Tuesday 16th May 2023 at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, Saffron Road, Biggleswade.

Page 19 - Item 15 – Correct “Hawthorn” to “Cawthorn”.

Subject to these amendments the Minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record of the Annual Statutory Meeting held on Tuesday 16th May 2023.

8. MATTERS ARISING

a. **Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 23rd May 2023.**

Cllr Strachan asked if there was any response from Barclays Bank, the Town Clerk & Chief Executive confirmed there was not.

b. **Minutes of the Annual Statutory Meeting held on Tuesday 16th May 2023.**

None.

9. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. **Bike Hire Scheme**

Following the Place Shaping Manager’s report and Mr Andrew’s further information under the Invited Speaker slot earlier in this meeting, the Town Council **RESOLVED** that it **APPROVES** the installation of the bicycle hire scheme by Central Bedfordshire Council at the locations set out in the report using land owned by Biggleswade Town Council at Grasmere Road.

b. **Land North of Biggleswade**

Cllr Russell addressed the Town Council in relation to this planning application and the draft letter included in the Agenda.

Cllr Russell advised the Town Council that she has been told that this application will not now go to the Development Management Committee in June, although this has not been confirmed in writing. Cllr Russell recommended the Town Council submits its response anyway on 14th June to maintain its position.

Cllr Russell advised that the letter includes information and documents related to this application in recognition of the fact that there will be new members on the Committee who will not know the full history and information on Biggleswade Town Council’s objection to this application. The letter draws out the fact that it is not only this application that is opposed, but all proposed development to the north of the Town.

Cllr Strachan put forward a request to Cllr Russell to attend the Development Management Committee Meeting on behalf of the Town Council.

That Town Council unanimously **APPROVED** that the letter of response be submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council with the attached appendices on 14th June 2023.

c. **Risk Management Policy**

Members were addressed by the Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships regarding the report. The Town Clerk confirmed that Councillors will be offered training in relation to the Risk Management Scheme and the Council’s regulatory responsibilities related to risk. The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships confirmed the Policy will need to be reviewed every two years.

The Town Council **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the updated Risk Management Policy document (Appendix A) and enable Officers to publish it on the Town Council's website.

d. **Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) Borrowing**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive wished to make it clear that this is not a commitment to any future borrowing requirements but that the Town Council is making a current application for up to £325,000. This is being brought back to the Town Council following updated DLUHC Guidance which stipulates what worded resolution of the Town Council is required to support the current application and to enhance the chances of success.

The Deputy Mayor noted the intention to increase the council tax by 1.016% but asked this be amended to read "... up to 1.016%" because the amount that it would be raised by would depend on the amount drawn down.

The Town Council **RESOLVED** to seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to apply for a PWLB loan of up to £325,000 over the borrowing term of 25 years for the investment in infrastructure projects to include and for example the enhancement to the town's allotments, refurbishment of further play areas, ongoing refurbishment of Drove Road Chapel and maintenance and refurbishment of Stratton Way Cemetery.

It is also intended to increase the council tax precept for the purpose of the loan repayments by up to 1.016% which is the equivalent of an additional £24,124 a year equal to the annual loan repayment on £325,000.

Consistent with good practice the Council has conducted a formal consultation exercise with the Community to ascertain if they would be in support of its strategic intentions, 69% voted yes and 31% voted against.

Members to determine the actual level of overall drawdown at a later date following receipt of advice from the Capital Asset Working Group, Public Land & Open Spaces Committee and Finance & General Purposes Committee.

e. **Finance & General Purposes Meeting Calendar Proposed Change Report**

The Town Council **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** that the F&GP meeting of Tuesday 4th July 2023 should be moved to Tuesday 18th July 2023.

f. **Unity Bank and CCLA Signatories Update Report**

The Town Council **RESOLVED** that it **APPROVES** that:

- 1) The Chairman and Deputy Chairman of F&GP be added as two signatories on the CCLA accounts;
- 2) that Councillors Albone and Knight are added as the other two new signatories for the Unity Trust Bank accounts and the two CCLA accounts;
- 3) The five outgoing Member signatories be removed from all bank accounts.

g. **Barclays Bank Closure**

Cllr Strachan advised the Council that it was only recently that he had been notified the Biggleswade Barclays Bank branch was closing via a leaflet, which appeared the decision had been taken unilaterally. The alternative offered is for customers and local businesses to use the Post Office but he has concerns about the statistics offered by Barclays which appear to have been very selective and subjective.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council:

- a) Reply in detail to Barclays consultation expressing the Council's concern, and the people of Biggleswade's concerns, over the closure and the failure of Barclays to consult in advance;
- b) Send a copy of that response to Richard Fuller, MP for North-East Bedfordshire, Central Bedfordshire Council and others as appropriate, and;
- c) ask Richard Fuller, MP to raise the matter in Parliament and explain the Council's concerns and that of the townspeople and businesses of Biggleswade at the impact of bank closures on Biggleswade and other towns throughout the country and ask the government to take action to ensure that all towns with a population of over 10,000 has at least one bank providing full banking services to the community;
- d) engage with Lloyds, Nationwide and Halifax to understand their commitment to Biggleswade.

Cllr Strachan will work with Officers to draft the response.

10. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

a. **CB/23/01468/FULL – 4 Thirlmere Close, Biggleswade, SG18 8LU**

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

b. **CB/23/01504/FULL – 168 London Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8EH**

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

c. **CB/23/01661/FULL – 24 Shuttleworth Court, Biggleswade, SG18 0QG**

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

d. **CB/23/01551/FULL – 47 Dells Lane, Biggleswade, SG18 8LJ**

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

e. **CB/22/00921/DOC – 57 Church Street, Biggleswade, SG18 0JS**

This Planning Appeal was **NOTED**.

f & g. **CB/22/00857/FULL – The Red Lion, 1 London Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8ED**

CB/22/01357/LB – The Red Lion, 1 London Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8ED

Cllr Russell believed the Planning Outcome conveyed to Central Bedfordshire Council from the Town Council Meeting of 12th April 2022 applied.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council **OBJECT** to this planning application on the grounds that:

- a) The recent owner of this site (UK Regeneration) presented commercially viable plans to Town Council evidencing commercial and community-supported demand for town centre hospitality facilities.
- b) The low number of large, vacant commercial buildings in town centre supports that there is good demand for commercial properties in the town centre and the current owner has not given sufficient evidence as to why the conversion of this property to a dwelling is necessary.
- c) Recent pre-planning advice issued by Central Bedfordshire Council for the Whistle & Flute on Mill Lane in Biggleswade indicated that CBC was not minded to support a conversion of the property to a residential dwelling. It would stand that the same principle should apply to this property if consistency in approach is to be maintained.
- d) This Town Council is concerned that this planning application proposes demolishing part of a listed site.
- e) The Pollution Officer has concerns over noise and the Town Council wishes to note that the nearby Stratton House Hotel is a popular outdoor venue and an important community asset.
- f) The Local Plan sets out under Policy EMP2 that a change of use to non-employment generating sites should “only be considered where there is no reasonable or viable prospect of the site delivering an employment generating use”. Evidence has not been supplied with this planning application demonstrating that this property would no longer support employment-generating use.
- g) The Local Plan sets out under Policy R1 that the proposed use would NOT positively support the vitality of the Town Centre by enhancing the range of facilities offered and/or stimulating activity outside normal shopping hours. This planning application shows no evidence of supporting the vitality of the Town Centre in the prescribed way.

The Town Council **RESOLVED** to write to the Planning Inspectorate to express its support for Central Bedfordshire Council’s grounds for refusal of this planning application as stated in their Notice of Refusal of Planning Permission dated 13th July 2022. Two letters will be sent, one for the planning appeal, one for the listed building appeal.

h. **CB/23/01812/FULL – 70 Fairfield Road, Biggleswade, SG18 0AA**

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

i. **CB/23/01791/FULL – 92 Brunel Drive, Biggleswade, SG18 8BJ**

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

j. **Telecommunications Base Station Upgrade Consultation:**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planned mast and this mast will be a welcome addition to the infrastructure in Biggleswade.

11. **PLANNING APPLICATION OUTCOMES**

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships advised the Town Council the format of this report needs to change.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council **APPROVE** that the Planning Outcomes Report be changed to include the following information only:

- a) Planning applications which have been decided against the Town Council resolution.
- b) Biggleswade items from the DMC work flow.
- c) Planning applications for other interest.
- d) Items with queries.

12. **ACCOUNTS**

a. **Financial Administration**

For Members to review and consider the following Accounts documents:

- i. Balance sheet to 30/04/23.
- ii. Detailed Income and Expenditure to 30/04/23.
- iii. Payment Listing from 01/04/23 to 30/04/23.
- iv. Summary Income and Expenditure to 30/04/23.

Cllr Albone queried duplicate rates payments for St. Andrews Car Park and the Town Council parking rates. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive will investigate these duplications with the Finance Manager.

The Town Council **RESOLVED** to **ADOPT** the Accounts as laid out.

13. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Minutes of the BTC Allotment Meeting**

These Minutes were **NOTED**.

b. **Public Notice – The Highways Act 1980 – Section 119 Central Bedfordshire Council - Biggleswade Footpath No 24**

Correspondence from Central Bedfordshire Council detailing the permanent diversion of a line of footpath.

This Public Notice was **NOTED**.

14. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

Mr Tony Reynolds – Biggleswade Medical issues

Mr Reynolds appealed to the Town Council to intervene in the continuing medical crisis in Biggleswade and shared a recent experience by a friend in a neighbouring county. The Deputy Mayor advised the Town Council and attendees that the Ivel Medical Surgery has recently had a change in ownership who plans to implement new staff and telephone systems. Councillors left the meeting feeling that positive changes will be put in place to the benefit of residents. Cllr Russell advised Richard Fuller MP has been meeting with the Integrated Care Board on residents' behalf and that the issue comes down to NHS/CBC agreement on the placement of the site for the Health Hub.

Cllr Fage - Central Bedfordshire Ward Councillor

Cllr Fage forwarded an email to Cllr Patel from a freelance journalist who writes for publications aimed at the pharmaceutical industry. Cllr Fage recommended to Cllr Patel that they both engage with her to get ideas on how to a) signpost residents on services that are available that they may not be aware of, and b) determine what could be done to encourage pharmacies to set up in Biggleswade as there is clearly a demand for the service not being met by the current pharmacies.

15. EXEMPT

a. Car Parking Tender Proposal

The Town Council **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the utilisation of £12,278 from S106 monies to purchase new touch screen parking machines operable by a parking app and to sign a five-year maintenance contract with Flowbird.

b. Provision of IT Provider

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised the Town Council about the tender process for the Town Council's IT provision and provided information on scoring of the twelve tenders submitted for review.

It was **RESOLVED** by the Town Council to:

- **APPROVE** the appointment of Node IT as the Councils ICT provider for a period of 3 years with the insertion of relevant break clauses in years 1 and 2.
- **APPROVE** a virement of £3,000 from the Christmas Lights budget.
- **APPROVE** the contract to be reviewed on a yearly basis and continuation to be subject to evidence of satisfactory performance and a new resolution of Council.
- **APPROVE** that satisfactory performance will be judged against the agreed IT Specification and the provision of appropriate volumetrics.
- **APPROVE** that a contract will be produced by the Councils' retained Solicitors Wellers Hedley.

The Deputy Mayor closed the meeting at **9:30 pm**