

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BIGGLESWADE JOINT COMMITTEE
HELD IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING AT THE OLD COURT HOUSE, 4
SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL ON TUESDAY 15TH OCTOBER 2024 at
7.00 PM**

Present:	<p>BTC Members: Cllr M Russell (Deputy Chairman) Cllr D Albone Cllr G Barrett Cllr D Strachan</p> <p>Cllr C Thomas (substitute)</p> <p>BTC Town Clerk & Chief Executive: Peter Tarrant. BTC Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships: Karim Hosseini. BTC Committee Clerk: Kathrine Chambers.</p> <p>CBC Members: Cllr G Tranter (Chairman) Cllr H Whitaker Cllr P How (via Zoom)</p> <p>CBC Community Engagement Manager: Sarah Hughes. Head of Capital Delivery: Gareth Cheal (via Zoom). Head of Sustainability : Stephen Mooring</p> <p>Co-opted Members: Carole Birtwhistle (Community Safety Group). Samantha Conder (Community Safety Group) (via Zoom). Nick Gurney (Biggleswade Scouting).</p>
Members of the public:	None.

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

- a. Cllr J Woodhead, Beverley Gaynor, Cliff Andrews.

b. **Remote Attendance**

Cllr P How, Samantha Conder, Gareth Cheal.

c. **No Apologies**

Cllr G Fage, Cllr S Watkins.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a. **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in any agenda item**

None.

b. **Non-pecuniary interests in any agenda item**

Cllr Whitaker for Item 9.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Cllr Tranter noted that Central Bedfordshire Council have ongoing consultations for the School Organisation Plan and the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No members of the public wished to speak.

5. UPDATES FROM CBC AND BTC COUNCILLORS

- a. Cllr Whitaker noted that the Central Bedfordshire are working on budget setting and are focusing on where efficiencies can be made. She noted that she participated in a 'day of action' with CBC community officer, the Police and others, engaging with residents about issues in the local area.
- b. Sarah Hughes highlighted Footpath 27 and the work being undertaken with the Rights of Way and Sustainability teams to make this more accessible. Contact has been made with various volunteer schemes and will be completed on 4th November 2024.
- c. Cllr Whitaker asked that Members and Officers report street light issues when alerted to them and encourage local residents to report any issues, especially during winter.
- d. Cllr How provided an update on the bridge on Biggleswade Common, highlighting that new treads are being made and that a structural survey is being carried out to ascertain longevity. Repairs will then be completed after this.
- e. Cllr How recollected a presentation about businesses in the town and his comment that links should be promoted between colleges and local business. Cllr Russell responded that the Town Council recently hosted a business forum and that these links were raised and discussed as needs.
- f. Cllr Whitaker noted that she met with the Salamanca Group about Land East and suggested that they are invited to speak at Joint Committee and the Town Council about upcoming housing developments. Mr Hosseini responded that a representative has been invited to Joint Committee in January 2025.

- g. Cllr Russell raised concerns in relation to further development and its potential impact on the A1 roundabout and upcoming S106 agreements. Cllr Whitaker responded that the agreement remains in place and has not been renegotiated yet.
- h. Cllr Tranter noted ongoing work to resolve issues with streetlights, pedestrian crossings and vegetation on Saxon Drive. He highlighted concerns for the roundabout at Foxglove Drive and Moonflower Place and continuing unlit streetlights which may be due to an underground cabling fault.
- i. Cllr Tranter also highlighted the Youth Parliament launch at Priory House with representatives from Biggleswade schools.

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Members **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Biggleswade Joint Committee Meeting of **Thursday 11th July 2024**, subject to agreed changes being implemented.

7. MATTERS ARISING

a. St Andrew's Pedestrian Safety Island

Cllr Russell noted previous discussions about the safety island and that the Town Council still have not received a formal response from CBC, even just to confirm receipt. Cllr Whitaker responded that the annual plan is currently being reviewed by Highways and there is no formal mechanism for Town Councils to consult on this plan. Sarah Hughes was asked to follow this up with the Highways team and ask for further information on their plans.

Members discussed the idea of an ongoing list for any issues or concerns relating to Highways and that this could be shared regularly with CBC.

b. S106 Agreement

Cllr Strachan noted that the schedule has been received by the Town Council but that further information is needed on what funds have been committed in order to influence the Council's budget setting process.

Cllr Russell noted that the S106 training she attended was comprehensive and that Town Council Members would benefit having a CBC Officer discuss the process and limitations.

Cllr Tranter asked for an update S106 information on the CBC website. Ms Hughes responded that there has been significant progress and that more updates will be shared for the next meeting. The Town Clerk reiterated that budget setting has begun and that the Town Council need the information as soon as possible.

c. Formalised Agreement for the Market Square

Cllr Russell noted that this process is still ongoing between the Town Council and CBC. Mr Hosseini added that Officers have contacted CBC about the recent resolution to progress two leases for the Market Square and Century House.

8. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Members **NOTED** the outstanding actions and ongoing issues list.

9. SCHOOL ORGANISATIONAL PLAN

Gareth Cheal presented the ongoing School Organisation Plan 2025-2030 consultation which concludes on 10th November 2024. The consultation is running to ensure that the education system is well prepared for future needs. Mr Cheal noted that feedback will be reviewed and shared at CBC Executive Committee on 4th February 2025.

Cllr Whitaker asked whether Principle 7 regarding Special Educational Needs provision is related to additional resources rather than new schools. Mr Cheal replied that CBC have a graduated response for SEN provision and that many students with EHCPs currently attend mainstream schools. Another plan will focus on specialist provision.

Cllr Whitaker raised concerns over new developments and the two-tier transition within Biggleswade and its impact on education. Mr Cheal responded that current statistics indicate that there are enough spaces for students currently and in future.

Cllr Russell noted recent conversations with Ivel Valley School staff about the delayed development for the school. Mr Cheal answered that the current plan is primarily focused on mainstream education but that Ivel Valley's expansion will be reviewed in February 2025. Members observed that the new site would be more accessible for students and increase available places.

Cllr Tranter asked about the distribution of the consultation and the target respondents. Mr Cheal responded that in-person and online engagement events were taking place, that it has been shared across social media and would follow up with Youth Parliament

10. TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT – UKSPF

Mr Mooring noted that UK SPF funding is now being sent to Town and Parish Councils, which means projects can soon start progressing. He added that this fund was discussed at the recent Biggleswade Business Forum and highlighted the upcoming completion date of 31st March 2025. Mr Mooring also shared that the community grant process is underway, which will provide funds to eleven projects.

Mr Hosseini highlighted three blocks of UK SPF funding have been agreed with CBC, two for capital and one for revenue. The first capital grant will be for refurbishing Century House in Biggleswade, and the second will be used to increase heritage and functional signage and to update Abbot's Walk. The revenue grant will be used for cultural events in current development by a working group, including history & ghost walks, pop-up cinemas and a winter music festival.

Mr Tarrant asked if there was confirmation for when the work for the electrics will be completed. Mr Mooring responded that this has been inspected and that a proposal has been provided, which he has now responded to with questions. More details will be shared before CBC go out to procurement. Mr Tarrant noted upcoming events in the Town Square and how these are reliant on safe and reliable electrics.

11. ROAD SAFETY

Mrs Birtwhistle reflected on continuing road safety concerns in Biggleswade, highlighting issues with parking on pavements, broken electricity points, contraflow lanes and enforcement. Cllr Albone added that motorcycles continue to park on pavements even when spaces are provided.

Cllr Whitaker noted the need for more traffic enforcement officers to prevent incidents and/or impose rules in place. Cllr Thomas responded that he has had discussions with enforcement officers and that short-term parking issues are harder to enforce as staff are not always present.

Members shared similar experiences with the issues raised, including speeding, near misses, and lack of visibility.

Members **RESOLVED** that a formal letter be sent to the CBC Head of Highways, Gary Powell, and Cllr Baker to note road safety concerns and ask CBC officers to attend Joint Committee in future to provide a response.

12. HIGHWAYS TASK FORCE REPORT

Cllr Strachan noted recent works notifications received by the Town Council and the lack of clarity or practicality about the diversion routes provided, and that Officers have been in communication with CBC about this.

Cllr Russell highlighted that Section 27 (P31) states “methods of communication were dependent on the audience” but that Town and Parish Councils were not included.

Cllr Barrett noted that rewording the report could benefit the readership and make the process more streamlined. An example was that Section 22 (P31) does not quantify what minimised disruption is.

Cllr Albone noted Appendix A refers to leftover defects when roads and pavements are reopened after works, which are not fixed by the developers (ex. Hitchin Street). Cllr Whitaker responded that CBC Street works are the official regulator and that reviews must be completed within 12 months. She noted that any issues can be raised directly to Streetworks or FixMyStreet to ensure these are reviewed earlier. Mr Hosseini added that contact with CBC Streetworks was made and that the site will be checked soon.

Cllr Albone raised concerns that FixMyStreet only works when CBC owns the street in question. Cllr Whitaker noted that it was suggested at Highways Task & Finish that the system provide further information on the developer for the complaint to be progressed, but that this currently increases officers workload. Members noted that they receive concerns from residents about road and pedestrian safety but can only share the links to Streetworks or FixMyStreet.

Members asked that Cllr Tranter and other CBC Officers notify the Local Government Association about the issues in the reporting system and highlight the need for change.

Members also asked that accessibility of the footpath by the railway also be addressed in the letter to Mr Powell and Cllr Baker.

13. BJC WORKPLAN AND CBC EXEC & OSC FORWARD PLANS

Ms Hughes noted that this will be carried forward as a standing item for the Committee so that Members can see what the forthcoming discussions at CBC are and what may be relevant for future meetings.

Members asked that the dates be corrected on the BJC Workplan to reflect the correct year for future meetings.

Cllr Whitaker noted that CBC budgets will influence discussions at Executive Committee. She noted that freight strategy would be a good item for consideration

because Drove Road is part of the freight network and this has an impact on the local area.

Cllr Whitaker also noted that flooding should be discussed due to recent heavy rainfall in Biggleswade and how to best prepare and respond in future. Cllr Russell raised concerns about the impact of continued development on Biggleswade's flood plains. Cllr Whitaker noted that Alys Bishop would be a good connection for this item but that it should be scheduled for April 2025 to best suit the flooding team's schedule. Ms Hughes also offered to provide a presentation from Spring 2024 which covers flooding.

Members **RESOLVED** to invite Alys Bishop and other representatives from the flooding team to Biggleswade Joint Committee in April 2025.

Cllr Russell also asked that, once CBC budgets have been set, it would help if CBC Officers could provide a guide to what these mean and the impact it might have on Biggleswade. Cllr Whitaker responded that she would be happy to work with Officers to walk Members through the process alongside Cllr Tranter and Ms Hughes.

14. FUTURE MEETING DATES

Cllr Russell asked that these meetings remain on Thursdays in future to work best with the Town Council and CBC schedules.

Members **RESOLVED** to reschedule Biggleswade Joint Committee in April to **Thursday 3rd April 2025**.

15. EXEMPT

a. Co-option Process

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the co-option request.

b. Kings Reach Update

Members **RESOLVED** for an update to be brought to the next Joint Committee if responses have been received.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 16th January 2025 and would take place at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council at 7pm.

Meeting Closed at 9:12pm.

17. **EXEMPT**

a. **Co-option Process**

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the co-option request.

b. **Kings Reach Update**

Ms Hughes provided an update, stating that the land is still owned by Taylor Wimpey / Martin Grant.

Members **RESOLVED** for any updates to be brought to the next Joint Committee.