



**MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**  
**HELD ON TUESDAY 21<sup>st</sup> JANUARY 2025**  
**AT 7.00PM AT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES**  
**THE OLD COURT HOUSE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL**

**PRESENT:**

Cllr M Foster (Mayor)  
 Cllr G Barrett (Deputy Mayor)  
 Cllr I Agnew  
 Cllr D Albone  
 Cllr P Guilcher  
 Cllr J Jones  
 Cllr M North  
 Cllr S Patel  
 Cllr M Russell  
 Cllr A Skilton  
 Cllr D Strachan  
 Cllr C Thomas

Mr P Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive  
 Mr K Hosseini – Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships  
 Mr E Bour – Head of Finance & Deputy RFO  
 Mx K Chambers – Committee Clerk

Members of the Public – 2 (online).

**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. Cllr M Knight, Cllr J Woodhead.

**b. Remote Attendance**

Cllr S Sajid.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chairman noted that all Committee Members have a dispensation to participate and vote in relation to the 2025/26 Budget & Precept.

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

None.

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

**Item 10d:** Cllr I Agnew, Cllr C Thomas, Cllr P Guilcher, Cllr S Patel, Cllr G Barrett, Cllr M Russell, Cllr M North, Cllr M Foster.

**3. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor had no announcements.

**4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No member of the public wished to speak.

**5. INVITED SPEAKER**

**6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

**7. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

- a. The minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting on **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025** have not yet been reviewed by the Chairman of the Committee and therefore will be shared at the next available meeting.

**8. MATTERS ARISING**

**9. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Precept 2025-26**

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive and the Head of Finance & Deputy RFO gave a brief summary of the report presented to Members.

The Head of Finance & Deputy RFO noted the following:

“The Precept is a tax that Town Councils charge their local electors to meet their budgetary requirements.

The Town Councils do not receive any direct funding from central Government and rely on their Precept, plus any other income they generate from services or facilities they provide. The Town Council Precept is part of the Council Tax and is collected from local electors via their Council Tax payments. It requests this funding from its ‘local billing authority’ – in this case, Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC).

The Precept requirement is the difference between the Town Council’s estimated income and its anticipated spending requirements for the financial year (its budget). The financial year runs from 1st April to 31st March.”

Members asked why the BATPC are required to assess applications for PWLB loans. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive responded that the BATPC are the designated clearinghouse for central government and they are the relevant committee for this submission.

Members also raised concerns over the increase of the Precept and its impact on Biggleswade residents, and whether the 8.5% increase may be better suited. Other Members responded that the Public Realm team make a visible difference to the town and also help with events and emergencies.

Members **RESOLVED** to:

- i. Set the level of budget for the year 2025/26 as a total income £2,129,818, and total expenditure of £2,129,818, as presented in Option 3 of the Officers' report.
- ii. Set the level of precept for the 2025/26 year as Option 3 (£1,838,460.08), a £26.68 increase for the whole year, 51 pence per week, or 13% increase for the whole year for a Band D property.
- iii. Support the Officer recommendation around the minimum level of General Reserve for the 2025/26 financial year, notably a sum not lower than £526,119, consistent with good accounting practice and statute. The amount is equivalent to 3 months' gross expenditure.
- iv. Support Officers making an application to the Public Works Loan Board for an amount up to £79,528. The loan is particular to essential upgrades to the remaining play areas for a term of 15 years. Prior to making such an application the Council will conduct a formal consultation exercise with the community and Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils (BATPC) will need to assess the submission.
- v. That the Town Council invest £25,000 in each of the next 4 years which will create a 'ringfenced capital fund' of £100,000. This will act to negate any future PWLB borrowing costs and/or impact upon a depleted Capital Reserve.

#### **Communication to CBC Financial Planning**

It is essential that Council submit its balanced budget and precept requirements to Central Bedfordshire Councils Financial Planning Team by 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2025.

#### **10. PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

a. **CB/25/00003/FULL – 14 Bellflower Gardens, Biggleswade, SG18 8YW**

CBC Excerpt: Conversion of detached garage into associated annex.

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

b. **CB/24/03734/FULL – 240 London Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8PJ**

CBC Excerpt: Outdoor oak framed structure for use as an eating and cooking area, enclosed on 3 sides with glass or cladding.

The Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this application, subject to Officers consideration of the buildings size.

c. **CB/25/00039/FULL – 51 Fennel Drive, Biggleswade, SG18 8WD**

CBC Excerpt: Single storey rear extension with roof light.

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

d. **CB/TCA/25/00002 - Conservative Club, St Andrews Street, Biggleswade, SG18 8BA**

CBC Excerpt: Works to trees within a Conservation Area: Dismantle a group of large Conifer Trees G1 near to ground level. Some limbs are failing over the smoking shelter and close to the building at the left, front of the site.

The Town Council **NOTED** this application.

11. **PLANNING APPLICATION OUTCOMES**

12. **ACCOUNTS**

13. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

14. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No one from the public wished to speak.

15. **EXEMPT**

The Mayor closed the meeting at **7:35pm**.