



**MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE PUBLIC LAND AND OPEN SPACES MEETING
HELD TUESDAY 28th JANUARY 2024 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 M Foster (ex-officio voting Member)
Cllr D Albone
Cllr J Jones
Cllr A Skilton
Cllr D Strachan
Cllr J Woodhead

Mr P Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Mr K Hosseini – Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships
Mr H Henderson – Public Realm Manager
Mr E Bour – Head of Finance & Deputy RFO
Ms F Gumush – Deputy Administration & HR Manager

Members of the Public – 3

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 G Barrett, Cllr M Knight.

b. NO APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr P Guilcher.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

Item 9b – Cllr Skilton and Cllr Thomas.

3. CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Mrs Rachel Stott – Biggleswade Allotments Association

Commenting on Item 9b, Allotment Lettings Policy and Terms & Conditions, Mrs Stott noted that the Biggleswade Allotments Association (BAA) had worked closely with the Town Council with regards to the policy.

She noted that whilst BAA members were happy on the whole, they believed the flat rate increase needed to be looked at again. Mrs Stott indicated that despite changes being discussed, the policy did not reflect this.

Mrs Stott noted that an explanation for the increase would be appreciated. She pointed out that some plot holders were struggling to cover the costs of the plots and on occasion lost crops to rodents even with traps being provided by the Council. She also asked for a further review of any neglected plots.

Mrs Stott thanked the Public Realm Manager and his team for all the work they have done at the allotments and the regular briefing sessions taking place between the Public Realm Manager and the Chairman of the Allotment Association.

Commenting on Mrs Stott's presentation, the Chairman of the Committee indicated that the fee increase was decided by the Finance & General Purposes Committee and approved by Council. He added that all Members would of course take note of Mrs Stott's comments.

5. INVITED SPEAKER

No guest speaker was invited.

6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

There were no Members' questions.

7. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

The Minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record of the Public Lands & Open Spaces Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 1st October 2024.

8. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

9. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. PLOS Status Report

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships presented the report. This and other relevant information were included in the weekly Members update provided by the Clerk.

A presentation was shared on screen reflecting the work and initiatives being taken by the Public Realm team. The Public Realm Manager indicated that this would become a regular occurrence at the PLOS Committee meetings if Members perceived it to be beneficial.

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships indicated that the project for signage of all assets was nearing completion.

The Public Realm Manager highlighted that Officers were continuing to work with Central Bedfordshire Council to determine additional land for allotments and cemeteries.

Members **NOTED** the status report and presentation.

b. **Allotment Lettings Policy and Terms & Conditions**

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships presented the Allotments Lettings Policy and noted that the existing policy had been reviewed in collaboration with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of PLOS and the Biggleswade Allotments Association.

He pointed out that some of the main changes included clarification of the percentage of plot area cultivation and an increase in the plot deposit amount.

Members **AGREED** that it would not be useful to go through the policy page by page at this stage but to have any amendments added to the current document and shared with Members via SharePoint.

Members **AGREED** to **DEFER** this item to the next PLOS Committee meeting.

c. **Burial & Memorial Regulations**

Members reviewed the policy and **RESOLVED** to adopt the Burials & Memorials Regulations, and that Officers upload the policy to the Council's website.

d. **Football Pitch Bookings Policy and Terms & Conditions**

Members reviewed the policy and **RESOLVED** to adopt the Football Pitch Booking Policy, and that Officers upload the policy to the Council's website.

e. **Drove Road Tennis Courts Update**

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships presented the report and indicated that it was an update report following the capital project report which came to Town Council in October 2024. Officers had previously reached out to the community to gauge their support for the project.

He noted that although the tennis courts were currently health and safety compliant, they are fast degrading. The report also looked at the potential option for flood lighting.

The Head of Governance explained that the indicative costs for foundation, resurfacing and floodlighting would be circa £184,000. This would not be sourced by a PWLB loan in the short to medium term. He added that Officers would be meeting with CBC Officers to determine the availability of S106 funding and will also explore other external funding options.

Members **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** the following:

- For Officers to discuss S106 funding options and other funding options with CBC (who are the principal leisure authority) and to explore other external sports funding.
- Officers to submit a planning application to CBC for the proposed flood lights.

10. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Stratton Way Cemetery – Phase One

The Public Realm Manager presented the report and noted that Phase One of the Stratton Way Cemetery Project was underway.

He explained that the Town Council had submitted two funding applications for landscaping and furniture and that these had in part been successful.

The Public Realm Manager noted that all the bins and benches for the project at the cemetery had been ordered as well as the plants. It was anticipated that Phase One of the project would be completed on the 31st of March, 2025.

The Town Clerk thanked Cllr Knight for Chairing the Working Group. It would reconvene to provide direction on phase 2 and 3 when the time was right.

Members **NOTED** the progress of Phase One, the two external awarded grants and the proposed direction of travel.

11. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No member of the public wished to speak.

12. EXEMPT

a. Sports Provision Update

Members discussed the report and recommendations regarding the sports provisions in the town.

Members **AGREED** that the item would be included on a future agenda.

The Chairman closed the meeting at **10.00pm**

13. **EXEMPT**

a. **Sports Provision Update**

Members discussed the report and recommendations in regard to Fairfield Road (Football Club).

Members were grateful for the analysis provided by Officers that highlighted in detail those instances where the Club had not been able to evidence adherence to expected good governance, Health and Safety requirements and contractual obligations.

It was agreed that Officers would seek legal advice connected to the construction of a letter to the management of the Football Club. The letter to highlight specific non-adherence issues, explain why the Council was concerned and require the tenants to remedy the situation.

The areas of concern should be differentiated between immediate critical issues around for instance Health and Safety and more general good governance concerns. The tenant would be given 7 days' notice to remedy critical issues and longer and to be determined (after seeking legal advice) for broader governance related concerns. It should be made clear that if all matters cannot be brought to fruition within the stated timescales then the Council will give consideration to giving formal notice of eviction recognising the legal requirements of the contract signed by both parties.

It was further noted that the contract allowed a period of up to 2 months for the tenant to remedy serious issues of concern (once formally notified by the Council) and only then could the Council serve notice of eviction. The Council is keen to work with the tenant and avoid this option if at all possible.

Serious Health and Safety infringements (and for example consistent restricted fire door access) should be immediately reported to the proper authorities by Officers.