



MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 18th FEBRUARY 2025 AT 7.00PM AT
BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES
THE OLD COURT HOUSE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL

PRESENT:

Cllr. J. Woodhead (Chairman)
Cllr. I. Agnew
Cllr. G. Barrett (ex-officio voting Member)
Cllr. M. Foster (ex-officio voting Member)
Cllr. M. North
Cllr. A. Skilton
Cllr. D. Strachan

Mr E Bour – Head of Finance & Deputy RFO
Miss H Calvert – Administration & HR Manager
Mr I Campbell – Community Development Manager
Ms F Gumush – Deputy Administration & HR Manager

Members of the Public – 1

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 D Albone, Cllr P Guilcher, Cllr M Knight, Cllr S Patel, Cllr C Thomas.

b. NO APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman indicated that he had no announcements; however, he indicated that he wanted to keep the matter of banking hubs and cash access in Biggleswade on the agenda of future TCM committees in order to inform the public of any developments.

4. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

Anna Franklin, Leader of Biggleswade LGBTQ+ Group

Anna, representing the LGBTQ+ Group at the meeting, urged the Committee to reconsider the Council's flag policy, which currently prevents the Progress Pride Flag from being flown during Pride Month.

They expressed the disappointment of the group's 30 members that the motion had not been fully passed in December and emphasised that allowing the flag to be flown would showcase Biggleswade as an inclusive and diverse community.

Anna also highlighted that revising the policy would be a meaningful way for the Council to acknowledge LGBT History Month and take an important first step toward making Biggleswade a more inclusive and prouder town.

5. **INVITED SPEAKER**

None.

6. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

Cllr. Skilton raised three questions for the Committee.

First, he questioned the absence of the Town Clerk and the Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships from the meeting, given the significance of the policy discussions. He suggested that this matter could be addressed by the Personnel Committee to prevent a recurrence.

The Chairman acknowledged the concern, noting that Mr. Bour was also a Senior Manager of the Council but agreed that the matter could be raised with the Chairman of the Personnel Committee.

Cllr. Skilton then highlighted concerns from a resident regarding the lack of disabled parking bays in Town Council car parks, particularly at Chestnut Avenue. Given that this issue had been raised before, he asked whether an audit should be conducted to ensure compliance.

The Community Development Manager confirmed that all car parks were compliant but stated that when refurbishments take place, Officers would aim to enlarge some bays, particularly those designated for disabled parking. However, he clarified that access, paths, and railings fall under the responsibility of Central Bedfordshire Council and Highways.

Finally, Cllr. Skilton's third question pertained to the Town Centre Vision paper, which was scheduled for discussion in the Exempt session of the meeting. Cllr Skilton noted that there were no financial implications in the document to prevent the report from being discussed and put forward a motion to bring the item into the open session.

Members **AGREED** to bring Item 12, Market Square Vision Update Report, to the open session and the Chairman indicated that this would be discussed at the end of the meeting.

7. **MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

- a. The Draft Minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record of the Town Centre Management Committee held on **Tuesday 29th October 2024**.

8. MATTERS ARISING

P7 Item 8b. Members asked if there had been any response to concerns over accessibility. Officers responded that they still had not received any updated information and would chase this again.

P9 Item 10b. Members asked whether a date had been set for the next Business Forum. The Community Development Manager indicated that April was currently being discussed but would notify further once a final date was secured.

9. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Advertising & Sponsorship Policy

The Community Development Manager presented the report, highlighting that the Town Council had historically operated without an advertising and sponsorship policy. He explained that Officers had identified opportunities for the Council to consider appropriate sponsorship and advertising offers, which could generate additional income.

A draft policy was included in the report for Members to review and discuss.

During the discussion, Members noted that on page 16 of the agenda pack, section 4e of the policy stated that the Town Clerk would "provide expertise on whether advertising is the most appropriate marketing communication method." Members suggested revising this wording, as "expertise" was not the most suitable term.

While Members acknowledged that the draft policy was well-structured, they agreed that further discussion and refinement were needed before finalising it.

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft policy be circulated to all Council Members for review within a certain timeframe and then brought back to the next TCM meeting in April.

b. Flag Flying Policy

Members commented that it was good to see the draft policy back on the agenda with more progressive aspects than in the previous policy.

Members noted however, as with the previous policy, that there was not enough time to review it in the Committee meeting this evening.

Members also asked for clarification on P25 and 29 of the pack about which flags need consent and clarity on pole heights.

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft policy be circulated to all Council Members for review within a certain timeframe and then brought back to the next TCM meeting in April.

c. Shop Window Competition

The Community Development Manager presented the report, explaining that the idea of hosting a shop window competition was proposed by a Member with the intention of making it an annual event.

Members noted that a similar competition had previously been held alongside the Christmas Light Switch-On but was discontinued after several years as the same individual won repeatedly. To address this, it was suggested that the competition could be divided into categories.

Members also discussed aligning the competition with another community event, such as a carnival or Christmas celebration. Additionally, they recommended renaming it to a Town Competition rather than a Town Centre Competition to ensure inclusivity for shops outside the town centre.

The Chairman mentioned that in informal discussions, he had suggested linking the event with Victory Day in July.

It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the recommendation, allowing Officers to develop and implement the concept in spring 2025, incorporating the suggestions raised by Members.

d. **Christmas Light Tender**

The Administration & HR Manager presented the report, explaining that the tender had been discussed at last week's Council meeting, where it was recommended for presentation to the TCM Committee. She noted that any suggestions made during this discussion would be incorporated into the tender before uploading it to the government platform.

However, Members pointed out that some of the issues raised during the previous Council meeting had not been reflected in the current document. Following a detailed discussion, Members highlighted the following key points for revision:

- Page 40 of the agenda pack: While the lights can be switched off on January 6th, it may not be feasible for the contractor to remove them entirely by that date, so the deadline should be removed.
- A single point of contact should be clearly identified in the tender document.
- Installation should take place only after Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day, meaning no earlier than November 12th.
- The tender should include laser lights, as previously discussed.
- Consideration should be given to expanding the number of lighting locations across the town.

After further deliberation, Members proposed and **AGREED** the following:

- A cohesive set of lights with matching designs.
- 24 illuminated lampposts, including three additional ones on Station Road and Shortmead Street.
- Inclusion of laser lights for three weekends as a separate tender item.
- Final approval of the tender document by the Chairman of TCM before it is published on the tender portal on February 21st, 2025.

10. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Drove Road Chapel Update**

The Community Development Manager presented the report, confirming that the three-year restoration project for Drove Road Chapel had now been successfully completed.

Members praised the project and welcomed the improvements made to the chapel. They emphasised the importance of acknowledging the consultants' report and ensuring the work carried out is properly maintained.

To preserve the restoration efforts, Members recommended that Officers implement a regular maintenance programme, with updates reported to the TCM Committee on a routine basis.

The Head of Finance assured Members that a comprehensive maintenance plan is already in place, managed by the Public Realm Manager and the Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships, covering all Council assets.

Members agreed to **NOTE** the following:

- The extensive work completed by Officers and the significant improvements achieved across all three phases of the project, including the chapel and perimeter walls.
- The project is now being closed, with the un-consecrated side to be marketed at competitive rates.
- A ceremonial opening of the restored chapel is being planned for early spring.
- A regular maintenance programme will be implemented to ensure the restoration remains in good condition and does not fall into disrepair.

b. **Biggleswade Carnival Fair 2025**

Members **NOTED** that the Carnival Fair would be held on the 19th – 22nd of June and the confirmation that the Carnival Parade would not be taking place this.

The carnival committee will be focusing on an enhanced duck race.

c. **Market Policy**

Officers reviewed the current Market Policy and believed it to be fit for purpose; however, a future update will be required to include Martin's Law and the Market Square electrical upgrades.

Members noted that a copy of the policy was not included in the agenda in the belief that it was not needed.

Members **AGREED** that the policy is brought to the next TCM agenda for review and for it to include Martin's Law and the market electrical upgrades.

d. **UK SPF Update**

Members **NOTED** the hard work taken on with the UK SPF partnership and welcomed the ongoing projects around town with different organisations.

e. **Permanent License Application – Jo's Ices Ltd**

Members commented however that the application represented a degree of unfair competition to other businesses in town. Other concerns included the loss of parking in the town centre

Members **NOTED** the application made and would wait for the governing body – Central Bedfordshire - to formally inform the Council.

11. **Market Square Vision Update Report**

After Members decided to move this item from the Exempt session into the public session, the Community Development Manager presented the report. He explained that Officers had worked with consultants to produce a condensed first draft based on the original Member-led and agreed version.

Members were given until 3rd March to submit comments and suggested revisions, after which Officers would incorporate the feedback.

During the discussion, Members raised the following concerns:

- The document establishes a policy and vision without any public consultation.
- While the concept is strong, it may not be practical in implementation.
- The original Working Group draft was more comprehensive, and the condensed version does not fully reflect its intent.
- The wording should be aspirational to align with the Council's long-term vision.
- The document does not clearly outline which elements were agreed upon and which remain in question.
- Although the draft mentions pedestrianisation, it lacks details on alternative parking solutions and does not address how elderly and disabled individuals would navigate these changes.

Following discussions, Members **AGREED** on the following actions:

- The Working Group should reconvene for one session to allow Members to properly critique the documentation from the consulting firm.
- If the document is finalised in time, it should be presented to Council in April.
- Once approved by the Council, the document should be shared with the broader community and important key stakeholders notably CBC.

12. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No one from the public wished to speak.

13. **EXEMPT**

- a. None

The Chairman closed the meeting at **8.54pm**