MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 15th APRIL 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. S. Patel (Deputy Chairman)
Cllr. D. Albone
Cllr. M. Foster (ex-officio voting Member)
Cllr. P. Guilcher
Cllr. A. Skilton
Cllr. C. Thomas

Mr P Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Mr K Hosseini – Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships
Mr I Campbell – Community Development Manager
Miss A Green – Committee Clerk
Ms H Calvert - 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 Agnew, Cllr Barrett, Cllr Knight, Cllr North, Cllr Strachan.

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

None.

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Mr Harjit Nandha, Postmaster at Bonds Lane Post Office

Mr Nandha addressed the Council to voice his disappointment, over Cash Access UK's decision to reject the Council's application for a Banking Hub in Biggleswade. He stated that, to his understanding, the planned closure of Lloyds Bank in November could increase Biggleswade's chances of receiving further banking provision. Mr Nandha encouraged the Council to persist in its efforts to secure a Banking Hub for Biggleswade, emphasising that the Council has the support of himself and the Bonds Lane Post Office.

5. INVITED SPEAKER

None.

6. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

None.

7. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

a. A typographical error was noted under the Present section of the minutes —"Cllr North" should include a full stop after "Cllr."

Subject to these amendments the Minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record of the Town Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 18th February.**

8. MATTERS ARISING

P9: Typographical error noted under the public open session section of the minutes. Anna Franklin's pronouns are incorrect and should be updated to "they" rather than "she."

9. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Banking Provision Update

Members requested that this item be a standing item on the TCM agenda.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive provided Members with an update on developments regarding banking provision. In conjunction to his update, he asked Members to review the supplementary documentation provided: The Cash Access Process document and the assessment conducted by Cash Access UK. He noted that when Cash Access conducted the assessment Lloyds Bank was excluded as a resource.

He highlighted that Cash Access UK had determined, there are already cash services in the area within one mile in an urban location and three miles in a rural location which are suitable for the needs of consumers and small businesses.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive noted that BTC could continue with plans to submit another request to Cash Access once Lloyds closes. But given Cash Access's criteria and that Lloyds Bank was excluded as a resource in the original assessment further requests for a Banking Hub do not appear to have the potential for a positive outcome.

Members questioned whether Cash Access had considered the rural inter-land in their assessment.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive responded he will ask them and attempt to convince them to look at the Town from a larger perspective.

Members suggested Officers upload the Cash Access Process document and the assessment conducted by Cash Access UK to the website.

Members **NOTED** the update.

b. **Business Forum Event**

The Community Development Manager outlined the report to Members.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive highlighted the success of last year's event and noted that Officers are making an effort to engage with big businesses that are in the circumference of the town and see if they are prepared to contribute towards the day.

Members expressed that they too believed the event had been well received and they were pleased to see it will be being held again.

Members noted that the recommendation is for the Committee to endorse the report and approve the event; however, the event is already proceeding, rendering the Committee's role more of a formality, as events have effectively overtaken the decision-making process.

Members asked that the recommendation be reworded to:

"For Members to note the report and agree to enable Officers to progress the event planning and issue invitations to all attendees based on the information provided to the Committee."

Members **AGREED** to the recommendations subject to Members amended wording.

c. Bigg Eats Trader Selection Process

Cllr Patel proposed that the Council requests that the organisers of Bigg Eats publish their selection criteria and ensure that all traders are provided with feedback and support where necessary, so all Biggleswade businesses have equal opportunity to participate and engage with the event. He explained that a particular trader had raised grievances, leading him to make the motion.

The Community Development Manager explained that Bigg Eats' selection criteria's primary focus is whether a business can operate food services from a vehicle, as the event is designed for food trucks and mobile traders. While there is limited provision for ground-based gazebos, these are intended for vendors offering items such as sweets and other non-hot food options.

Members noted that it is not widely known that the event is for mobile traders and asked whether this criterion could be relaxed.

Officers responded that Bigg Eats is hosted by an outside contractor in partnership with BTC so while officers can encourage, they cannot guarantee.

Members asked for the following:

- For Officers to circulate Bigg Eats selection criteria to Members.
- For Officers to add the Bigg Eats selection criteria to the website.

Members suggested that the proposal be amended to the following:

"That the Council requests the organisers of Bigg Eats to publicly publish their selection criteria and request that all traders are provided with formal feedback and support where necessary."

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the motion subject to the amended wording.

d. UKSPF Cultural Events Programme update - WadeFest

The Community Development Manager outlined the report to Members. He emphasised that the WadeFest committee has been responsible for securing external funding this year.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive noted the previous success of the event.

Cllr Knight raised the following questions:

1. The "WadeFest Management Committee" spent over £10k+ of public money but the structure and accountability remains opaque. Who serves on the "WadeFest Management Committee," who is the Chair, and how were Committee members selected?

Officers responded as follows: "Papers giving an overview of the cultural events programme and broad funding were presented by Officers at TCM on 24th February 2024, Full Council on 9th July 2024, and Joint Committee on 11th July 2024 and 15th October 2024. A further written report was presented to TCM on 18th February 2025. As the cultural events were externally designed and delivered by the Community, BTC had no input into the programming other than ensuring it remained true to the national guidance. Danii Reales is the Chairman, Simon Bailes is the vice Chairman. Each voluntary venue was represented at the committee. As the committee is entirely voluntary, there is no selection process as per national guidance."

2. Did anyone from BTC serve on the WadeFest Management Committee?

Officers responded as follows: "External governance was the responsibility of the voluntary WadeFest Organising Management Committee in accordance with national guidelines which allow for voluntary work and participation. The Community Development Manager attended some meetings in a supportive and national guidance capacity. CBC approved the governance arrangement."

3. What role did BTC play in securing the funding?

Officers responded as follows: "BTC was alerted to and encouraged by CBC to apply for UKSPF funding and successfully received £29,000 of UKSPF funding of which £10,200 was allocated to the voluntary WadeFest Organising Management Committee as part of the wider cultural events programme. This was all approved by CBC. The schedule of wider cultural events activities was agreed with TCM and CBC. There were approximately twenty cultural events planned and being delivered over the year."

4. How were venues selected? It appears that five or more town centre music venues weren't invited to participate and there was no transparent selection process. Why not?

Officers responded as follows: "CBC provided UKSPF confirmation of funding in September 2024 which was halfway into the financial year. In October and November 2024, the Community Development Manager initiated a series of conversations with local business to understand levels of interest and this included discussion at Pub Watch, held at the Conservative Club. Zero interest was evidenced at the time by all attendees. Responsibility was then taken over by the voluntary WadeFest Organising Management Committee itself in part derived from the BIG group consortium of independent arts and cultural venues in town."

Members expressed that the event was welcomed by the Committee, and they were happy to see that the event was not BTC's direct financial responsibility.

Members asked for the following:

- That the WadeFest organisers be encouraged to engage with a wider range of local businesses for support and participation.
- That Officers update the WadeFest poster, incorporating the BTC colours where relevant.
- That the wording of the recommendation be revised to: "That Members authorise Officers to collaborate with WadeFest organisers to support the development of the event into an annual, community-led initiative."
- That the wording of the recommendation be revised to: "That the Committee request Officers advise WadeFest on the benefits of forming a legal entity to manage future events.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive stated that Officers would circulate the responses to Cllr Knights full list of questions, as he believes the information provided would be beneficial for Members to see.

Members **RESOLVED** to the recommendations as follows:

- That Members authorise Officers to collaborate with WadeFest organisers to support the development of the event into an annual, community-led initiative.
- That the Committee request Officers advise WadeFest on the benefits of forming a legal entity to manage future events.

e. Jones' 5K Run 2025

The Community Development Manager outlined the report to Members.

Members expressed their support for the event.

Members **AGREED** to acknowledge and welcome the initiative of 'Jones' Fitness' in bringing this event to the town and recognise the assistance being offered by BTC to safely enable this event.

f. Car Parking Provision

The Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships outlined the report to Members.

Members thanked Officers for the report. They voiced concerns over the proposed use of a pay by QR codes option, in BTC car parks. Members noted that there has been a rise of phishing scams in connection to QR codes and would like Officers to provide more information on them before the Committee agree to implement QR codes in future.

Members expressed that they felt Central Bedfordshire's (CBC) response in connection to flooding in Rose Lane car park is unacceptable and asked that Officers continue to challenge CBC.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive noted that Officers have provided clear evidence to CBC connected to the issue of flooding within the Rose Lane Car Park. He suggested that for the time being there are two things that BTC can do:

- Members resolve that Officers to write to Cllr Zerny to escalate the matter.
- Members resolve that Officers regularly flush the system.

Members asked that the car parking provision within BTC car parks reflect the need of residents and not just aim to achieve the national guidance minimum.

Members **AGREED** to the recommendations as follows:

- Officers to make the proposed changes to disabled parking and blue badge provision subject to funding.
- Focus wider improvements on two car parks each year, starting on Chestnut Avenue and White Hart.
- Officers to source additional S106 funding from CBC for thirteen new signs and the QR code pay by App option with the contractor.
- Officers be requested to write to Cllr Zerny to escalate the Rose Lane Car Park matter.
- Officers be tasked with regularly flushing Rose Lane Car Park in an effort to mitigate the flooding.

g. Advertising and Sponsorship Policy

The Community Development Manager presented the report to Members.

Members noted that on page 33, at the bottom under point (f), the policy does not reference items such as vaping products. This was not raised as a proposed change, but simply as an observation.

Members also suggested it would be helpful to include a list of locations where different types of signage can be advertised, especially if BTC intends to offer advertising space. This would provide useful guidance for potential advertisers.

Additionally, Members observed that the policy references only seven of the Equality Act's protected characteristics. Members recommended that all nine protected characteristics be included, along with the relevant legislative references and corresponding dates.

Members **AGREED** to adopt the proposed new policy outlined in Appendix A, subject to amendments, and once adopted, to allow Officers to pursue agreements with external organisations.

10. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. None.

11. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

a. No one from the public wished to speak.

Members **RESOLVED** to go into the exempt session in view of the nature of the business to be discussed.

12. EXEMPT

a. **Market Place Report**

Members discussed the report by the Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships and **AGREED** to bring back to future meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at **20:19**