



MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL
ANNUAL STATUTORY MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 26 MAY 2020
AT 7PM VIA ZOOM WEBINAR FUNCTION

PRESENT:

Cllr D. Albone
Cllr I. Bond
Cllr K. Brown
Cllr G. Fage
Cllr L. Fage
Cllr F. Foster
Cllr M Foster
Cllr M. Knight
Cllr M North
Cllr R. Pullinger
Cllr H. Ramsay
Cllr M. Russell
Cllr D. Strachan
Cllr C. Thomas
Cllr J. Woodhead

Mr P Truppin – Acting Town Clerk, Biggleswade Town Council
Mrs S van der Merwe – Meeting Administrator, Biggleswade Town Council

Members of Public – 6

Meeting Formalities:

Following a reminder to meeting attendees, both panel and public, 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 the individual. The Mayor reminded all that when not speaking, please mute microphone and it would be impossible to hear if multiple attendees speak at the same time, the recommendation was for speaking one at a time. There is an IT Administrator who is able to mute or remove anyone who causes a nuisance. As this is a new way of working, the Mayor appealed for patience from all involved.

It was **RESOLVED** that Standing Order No. 9 was suspended since signed ballots are not possible given the virtual environment of this meeting.

1. ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR FOR THE YEAR 2020/2021

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Madeline Russell be elected to the office of Town Mayor for Biggleswade, for the year 2020/2021.

2. DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The Town Mayor, Cllr Madeline Russell signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

3. ELECTION OF DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Grant Fage be elected to the office of Deputy Town Mayor for Biggleswade, for the year 2020/2021.

4. DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The Deputy Town Mayor, Cllr Grant Fage signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- a. It was **RESOLVED** that the membership of Standing Committees and the appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs is adopted as follows:

i. Finance & General Purpose (F&GP):

Cllr H Ramsay (Chair), Cllr R Pullinger (Vice Chair), Cllr D Albone, Cllr I Bond, Cllr G Fage, Cllr M Knight, Cllr M North, Cllr M Russell

ii. Public Lands and Open Spaces (PLOS):

Cllr F Foster (Chair), Cllr L Fage (Vice Chair), Cllr K Brown, Cllr G Fage, Cllr M Foster, Cllr M Knight, Cllr M North, Cllr M Russell, Cllr D Strachan, Cllr C Thomas.

iii. Town Centre Management (TCM):

Cllr G Fage (Chair), Cllr M Knight (Vice Chair), Cllr D Albone, Cllr I Bond, Cllr M North, Cllr R Pullinger, Cllr M Russell, Cllr D Strachan, Cllr C Thomas, Cllr J Woodhead.

iv. Personnel:

Cllr J Woodhead (Chair), Cllr C Thomas (Vice Chair), Cllr M Foster, Cllr F Foster, Cllr M Knight, Cllr M North, Cllr R Pullinger, Cllr H Ramsay, Cllr M Russell, Cllr D Strachan.

v. Appeals:

Cllr K Brown (Chair), Cllr I Bond (Vice Chair), Cllr D Albone, Cllr G Fage, Cllr L Fage.

6. **BIGGLESWADE JOINT COMMITTEE**

Under the new constitution for the Biggleswade Joint Committee, members will be elected annually to sit on this Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that membership of the Biggleswade Joint Committee for 2020/2021 is adopted as follows:

4 Members: Cllr M Russell, Cllr M North, Cllr M Knight, Cllr H Ramsay
2 substitutes: Cllr R Pullinger, Cllr D Albone.

7. **APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES**

a. It was **RESOLVED** that the following Members be appointed to outside bodies for 2020/2021:

i. **Bedfordshire Association of Town & Parish Councils:**

3 Members for voting at the AGM: Cllr M Knight, Cllr C Thomas, Cllr J Woodhead.

ii. **Biggleswade Twinning Committee:**

1 Member: Cllr J Woodhead.
1 Substitute: Cllr D Albone.

iii. **Fen Reeves Meetings:**

1 Member as proxy voter: Cllr I Bond.
1 Substitute: Cllr M North.

iv. **Biggleswade Green Wheel Development Group:**

2 Members: Cllr I Bond, Cllr R Pullinger.
1 Substitute: Cllr M Foster.

v. **Police Liaison Officer:**

1 Member: Cllr D Strachan.
1 Substitute: Cllr L Fage.

vi. **Sir John Cotton Educational Foundation:**

It was **RESOLVED** to defer appointing a representative subject to Cllr M Russell liaising with other Trustees as to how many members should be on the Trust.

vii. **Wind Farm Grant Panel:**

2 Members: Cllr M North, Cllr H Ramsay.

8. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were none.

9. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive Statutory Declarations of Interests from Members in relation to:

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

None

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

None

10. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

11. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

To adjourn for a period of up to 15 minutes to allow members of the public to put questions or to address the Council, through the Chairman, pertaining to matters listed on the Agenda.

None

12. INVITED SPEAKER

None

13. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. For members to receive the minutes of the Annual Statutory Meeting held on 14th May 2019 at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, Saffron Road, Biggleswade.

The following amendments were agreed:

- i. **Item A14/0505.1:** Cllr G Fage should be added to the F&GP Committee.
- ii. **Item A14/0505.2:** Cllrs K Brown, M Foster and M Knight should be added to the PLOS Committee.
- iii. **Item A14/0505.3:** Cllrs D Albone and M Knight should be added to the TCM Committee.
- iv. **Item A14/0505.5:** Cllrs M Knight and D. Strachan should be added to the Appeals Committee.
- v. **Item A14/0505.6:** The Chair for the F&GP Committee should be recorded as Cllr H Ramsay.

- vi. **Item A14/0505.7:** The Vice Chair for the F&GP Committee should be Cllr D Albone; for the PLOS Committee should be Cllr L Fage and for Personnel should be Cllr C Thomas.

Subject to these amendments, the Minutes were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record.

It was **RESOLVED** that in future minutes of the Annual Statutory Meeting will be approved by the Town Council at the next scheduled Council Meeting.

- b. For Members to receive the minutes of the Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 12th May 2020** via Zoom online webinar.

The following amendments were proposed:

- i. Cllr M Knight requested that page numbers should be inserted across the whole document.
- ii. **Item A12/0504:** Cllr M Russell advised “Mr Kernon” should be amended to “Kernan”.
- iii. **Item A12/0510.1:** Cllr F Foster requested clarification of the date of 9 June 2020 as the date when the investment of funds would be considered. The accuracy of the minute was confirmed by Cllr H Ramsay. However, Cllr M Russell noted that the item had been brought forward to the current meeting.
- iv. **Item A12.0505.2:** Cllr M Foster requested correction of a typographical error in “Northhill”.

Subject to these amendments, the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

14. MATTERS ARISING

- a. From the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on **12 May 2020** via Zoom Webinar:
 - i. **Item A12/0505.1:** Cllr M Knight requested an update on the defibrillator at Century House and asked if CCTV had been viewed. The Acting Town Clerk is unaware of any CCTV and has therefore not viewed this. Given that recordings are only kept for a short while it is likely the incident is no longer on file. There is no indication of what has happened to the defibrillator. The Acting Town Clerk asked if Members would be happy to proceed with purchasing another defibrillator at a cost of approximately £950, which could be ordered within the next 24 to 48 hours. Cllr M North asked if the replacement cost could be covered by insurance, the Acting Town Clerk confirmed this would be verified, although an excess would apply and there may be an adverse effect on the future premium. Cllr Russell asked for an update at the next meeting. Cllr M North advised that the Century House defibrillator was donated to the Town Council by the Carnival Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** to defer this item to the next meeting on 9 June 2020 pending verification of whether an insurance claim can be made and review

of any CCTV footage available. Council will then make a decision on replacement.

- ii. **Item A12/0505.3:** Cllr J Woodhead asked if there were any further updates relating to the stabbing incident on Eagle Farm Rd. Cllr D Strachan stated that the recent letter from the Police & Crime Commissioner said that the matter was being investigated, and he was aware of arrests which were reported in The Biggleswade Chronicle. Given these updates that many Councillors would be aware of, he thought it prudent not to waste any further Police time.
- iii. **Item A12/0505.2:** Cllr G Fage asked if there had been any further progress relating to the work needed at the north entrance into Biggleswade. The Acting Town Clerk has asked the Works Manager to provide a programme of works and that will be on the list.
- iv. **Item A12.0508.5:** Planning Applications: Cllr M Russell advised that she, Cllr Bond and Cllr S Watkins (CBC Ward Councillor) have been privy to various letters sent from Wharf Mews residents to the Planning Officers at Central Beds. giving strong arguments against what has been built.
- v. **Item A12/0509.2:** Cllr M Russell asked to put on record that the Chairman of the Biggleswade Rail Users Group had contacted her to say that they are now fully in favour of Option 4. Cllr K Brown wanted to add as a matter of record that recognition should be given to our former MP, Alistair Burt, and Julian Vaughan, Chairman of BRUG, for their work on this matter.

15. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

a. **CB/20/01520/FULL - Phase 6B Stratton Business Park, East of Pegasus Drive, Biggleswade**

The erection of 4 no. B8 use distribution units, together with associated energy centre, balancing pond, landscaping and all other ancillary works.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application:

- 1) Provided the neighbours are consulted and that any comments they may make are considered by CBC in their deliberations. In addition, the Council is to ensure that their guidelines on the size of the proposed dwellings are complied with to eliminate detriment in respect of light and privacy of adjacent residents.
- 2) Council would like CBC to show transparency of where S106 monies are allocated.
- 3) That consideration is given to the bridleway or its possible re-routing as well as pedestrian and cycle access.

b. **CB/20/01500/DOC – Land off Saxon Drive, Biggleswade, Beds, SG18 8SU**

Discharge of Conditions 2, 4 and 5 from planning permission CB/19/02032/RM (Reserved Matters following outline application CB/17/01277/OUT erection of 200 residential dwellings with associated access, landscaping, open space and ancillary works.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council **STRONGLY OBJECTS** to this Planning application and does not want to see the discharge of conditions 2, 4 and 5 from the application.

c. **CB/20/01488/REG3 – Edward Peake School, Potton Road, Biggleswade, SG18 0EJ**

Installation of a temporary two classroom unit with WCs on existing school playground.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application provided that permission is for no longer than five years.

16. **ACCOUNTS**

a. **Financial Administration**

Members **ADOPTED** the following accounts:

- i. Detailed Balance Sheet to 31/03/2020.
- ii. Income and Expenditure by budget heading 31/03/2020.
- iii. NatWest Payment Listing to 31/03/2020.
- iv. Lloyds Bank Payment listing to 31/03/2020.

17. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Eagle Farm Design Consultation: Project number 60585975**

CBC Design Consultation relating to traffic control measures outside the school, including designated parking zones, parking restrictions and access route control.

The Council discussed the current plans and the consensus was that the severe reduction in parking will impact unnecessarily on residents. Clarification of the number of proposed spaces compared to the current spaces should be requested. It was suggested that, rather than all double yellow lines, restrictions should only apply on weekdays until 6pm and not at weekends. Another suggestion would be restricted parking on alternate sides of the road, morning and afternoon. Councillors also discussed the difficult junction with Drove Road and London Road and requested that the design of the Eagle Farm Road scheme should take into consideration possible improvements to that junction.

It was **RESOLVED** to write to Cllr Ian Dalgarno to ask if there are any plans to improve the Eagle Farm Road/Drove Road/ London Road junction.

It was **RESOLVED** to write to CBC 1) proposing the other parking solutions discussed (restrictions only applying during weekdays until 6pm or timed restrictions on alternate sides of the road and 2) requesting clarification of the current and future numbers of parking spaces in the currently proposed scheme.

c. **Council Meeting Schedule**

Councillors were reminded that the full schedule of Council and Committee meetings have been reduced due to the Coronavirus situation, with full Council meeting twice monthly on a virtual platform and Committee meetings suspended. Business that would have been dealt with at Committee meeting is being placed on full Council agendas. Members were requested to consider whether the public schedule of Committee meetings should resume.

Cllr G Fage suggested that the Committees could be more effective and that the new election year is a unique opportunity to re-think the way the Council Committees operate. Cllr G Fage proposed that Councillors re-set each Committee's priorities, with an informal meeting of the members of each Committee to start the process

Cllr M Russell reminded Members that BTC's meeting schedule is unusual in that there are many more formal meetings than other Parish or Town Councils. The Acting Town Clerk's advice is that the normal schedule is operationally impossible under the present circumstances of the pandemic. One of the more immediate tasks should be to review the whole budget and expenditure due to the impact on the budget by Covid-19 – the precept cannot be altered and expenditure needs to be reviewed. It may be that projects BTC would want to undertake may have to be delayed due to the financial situation. Work will have to be prioritised bearing in mind staff and financial capacity. Cllr M Russell voiced her support for informal meetings being conducted as a starting point.

Cllr M Knight commented that, given the number of personnel issues, restricting the number of Personnel Committee meetings could have a detrimental effect on progressing those issues and so the Personnel Committee should be less restricted.

The Acting Town Clerk clarified that a number of office and public realm staff are still self-isolating due to medical and family vulnerability limitations. Constant review of the legal changes from Central Government, NALC and PGC is necessary, as are risk-assessments relating to return to work under the current circumstances. Getting agendas out on time has always been held as sacred but the Acting Town added it would be impossible to get everything done timeously on a full Committee schedule. The Acting Town Clerk supported the proposal to move to informal Committees and Members were invited to identify urgent versus long-term priorities that the support staff could help to resolve or move forward.

It was **RESOLVED** that 1) each Committee should meet informally to consider its priorities and to bring any urgent matters to the attention of the next Council Meeting 2) the first Committee to meet should be Personnel and 3) all meetings should be held through the Town Council's Zoom account (4) the situation should be reviewed in July.

d. **Council Investments**

Councillors considered the available fund balances and potential investments for the Town Council.

Members were advised that the Council resolved to invest in the CCLA Deposit Fund at its meeting on 28th January 2020 in accordance with the agreed Investment Policy.

The Acting Town Clerk advised that the Town Council's decision to close its Natwest Account has now been processed but the closing balances are yet to be transferred

to the Lloyds account. The balance on the main account at Lloyds is over £700k and on average, between £70k to £100k is spent each month. The Acting Town Clerk believes it is sensible to have working capital of about 3 months' expenditure. The Acting Town Clerk clarified that the CCLA is an instant withdrawal account and that CCLA interest rates are better than high street banks.

Cllr H Ramsay wanted to put on record that she firmly believes the investment monies should be deposited with CCLA rather than left in the Lloyds account due to the current circumstances.

It was **RESOLVED** for the Acting Town Clerk to 1) to keep working capital of £300,000 and 2) that the Acting Town Clerk work with Derek Kemp to invest the balance of monies and 3) that any other financial issues be brought to the attention of the Council at the next Council Meeting on 9 June 2020.

b. **Market future**

To receive an update from the Acting Town Clerk following contact with NABMA to clarify what exactly they want the Town Council to say in respect of lobbying our MP to support their cause.

Councillors were informed that the Town Centre Operations Manager was already working to get the Saturday market fully operational again and government guidance is continually being issued as regulations change. A new layout and full risk assessment of the market is being prepared and consideration is being given to the interface with the retail outlets around the market. Work will then follow on for the other markets. The Acting Town Clerk gave thanks to the market traders who traded during the COVID-19 period with vital food goods and produce for the public.

Cllr M Russell mentioned consideration of market stall fees for the balance of the year and this will be added to the F&GP list of actions to review.

It was **RESOLVED** not to write to the MP as requested by NABMA but that TCM should consider the Council's position on the wider strategic issues raised in NABMA's correspondence.

18. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

None

19. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

To adjourn for a period of up to 15 minutes to allow members of the public to put questions or to address the Council, through the Chairman, in respect of any other business of the Town Council.

a. Cllr H Whitaker (CBC Ward Councillor) suggested that the Town Council apply to CBC Ward Councillors for a match fund grant to help with costs for the defibrillator.

b. **Before moving to next business, Cllr M Russell made a personal statement:**

The statement refuted the accusation of slander brought by Cllr H Whitaker at the previous meeting of Council, referring to comments made by Cllr M Russell at

Council on 10th March. Cllr H Whitaker had asked for a retraction and public apology 'by the next Council meeting'. There was no disagreement on what had been said and Cllr M Russell noted that she had used the word 'apparently' and explained why certain things had been apparent. There would therefore be no retraction or apology.

20. EXEMPT ITEMS

The following resolution will be moved that is advisable in the public interest that the public and press are excluded whilst the following exempt item issue is discussed.

- (21a. Exempt Minutes of the Council Meeting 12/05/2020)**
- (21b. Staffing update)**

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Council resolve to exclude the public and press because of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.