

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 6
MAY 2014 AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE,
SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE**

Present: Cllr Mrs M Russell (Chair), Cllr I Bond, Cllr Mrs H Ramsay, Cllr D Albone, Cllr B Rix,
Cllr P Biernis
Rob McGregor - Town Clerk
Angela Thomas - Administrator
Members of the public – 1
Also present: Cllr B Briars

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Tim Woodward.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in any agenda item - none declared
- (b) Non-pecuniary interests in any agenda item – none declared

3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no items discussed during the public open session.

4. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

- a. Members received and approved the minutes of the Town Centre Management meeting held on 18 February 2014.

5. MATTERS ARISING

- a. From the Town Centre Management meeting held on 18 February 2014.

Cllr Mrs M Russell stated that any matters arising from the last meeting were itemised on the agenda for this meeting.

6. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. **Biggleswade Parking Strategy**

For members to receive a verbal update.

Cllr M Russell stated that the Parking Strategy had been presented to the Town Centre Management Committee and Parsons Brinkerhoff, Town Council agreed to provide £6,000 towards Parsons Brinckerhoff modelling the Town Councils parking strategy, the Town Council and CBC will be working in partnership with Parsons Brinkerhoff.

Cllr Madeline Russell outlined that Biggleswade Town Council had started on some consultation and a few responses had been received from members of the public. Town Council have talked to Vision ICT regarding the use of the web site for public consultation. Vision were not happy with some of the questions put forward for the consultation as they were felt to be too open ended, this is something that still needs to be taken forward. Central Bedfordshire Council say that statutory consultation will have to take place when the agreed draft strategy is in place. We need to ensure that all the issues have been addressed within the strategy; to look at costing of works identified within the strategy, to include resurfacing, marking out, the implications of introducing additional disabled bays, and equipment – technology to monitor parking.

The points that have been raised by members of the public so far will need to be looked at by the task group when the modelling is complete.

The Town Clerk is collating all information received from the public where they have raised concerns with parking.

At this point Cllr Mrs M Russell asked for any comments.

Cllr B Rix said there is little point in making any amendments until the modeling is complete.

Cllr D Albone felt that consultation using the website would be limited and could emails also be used.

Cllr P Biernis – asked if there was any way we could feedback to the public.

The Town Clerk stated that all enquiries received have been replied to.

Cllr M Russell raised a question on whether the web site could be developed to update on the parking strategy.

Cllr I Bond arrived at 7.08pm and gave his apologies for his late arrival.

Cllr Mrs. M Russell informed members that it was intended that a joint strategy would go before the next BJC. Members will be updated on any progress.

b. Dells Lane Parking

For members to receive a verbal update.

Cllr Mrs M Russell was pleased to announce that a meeting was held with Jeanette Keyte from Central Bedfordshire Council, who has taken over parking enforcement from David Bowie. It was unfortunate the police did not attend, they had to attend another meeting.

There is a dispute between CBC and Bedfordshire Police as to who is responsible for parking enforcement.

Cllr Mrs M Russell was very disappointed that when a site visit was carried out there was not many cars, therefore not really highlighting the problem. Also, during a walk down Tennyson Avenue, no illegally parked cars were found. However, Jeanette Keyte will be taking the issues raised back to her Director.

Still continuing discussions with the police.

Town Clerk – confirmed that the police are attending a future Town Council meeting.

Cllr B Rix – Can we ask someone to come from CBC, as well as the police?

There is an issue with PCSO's not having the powers needed to enforce parking infringements. If they could it would alleviate the problem. We could request that the Chief Constable grant more powers to the PCSO's

Cllr Mrs M Russell informed members that Jeanette Keyte had said that there are ten Civil Enforcement Officers for the whole of CBC.

Cllr B Rix – If police are not able to sort the problem, can the Town Councils contractor not be given the powers? He stated that in Canary Wharf people in uniforms, very similar to PCSO's, man the parking situation, which appears to work well. Will this not work for Biggleswade?

The Town Clerk said he would talk to the Contractor.

c. Reversal of Hitchin Street

At the Town Centre Management Committee 18th February 2014, members discussed a letter from Jane Moakes, Assistant Director, and Environmental Services. The letter suggested; following our request they asked Amey for their initial assessment on the feasibility of our proposals and in consultation with town centre management colleagues they can consider any issues/implications and be clear on what options may be available for consideration with the Town Council and other key stakeholders.

I would like to suggest that having undertaken this initial assessment we arrange to meet with the Town Council to consider the way forward and progress matters. We would be seeking to meet in 4-6 weeks' time.

At this stage, should we be minded to consider implementing changes to traffic flows and other measures in Biggleswade, we would need to properly consider whether funding is available. This would include publication of any Traffic Regulation Orders required, as well as any implementation works such as signage etc. The matter would only need to be considered by the TMM if objections were received to publish TROs.

If you are happy with our proposals approach, I would be grateful if you could confirm this to me and Paul Mason, Head of Highways who will be leading the matter.

The Town Clerk had made contact on 27 February 2014, 3 March 2014 and 29 April 2014: no response has been received.

The Town Clerk confirmed that Paul Mason, Head of Highways had made contact on the 6th May 2014 to arrange dates for a meeting.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said that buses had still been going down Hitchin Street, and blocks have been cracked and need repairing already. She had contacted Councillor M Jones to inform him that some 90 blocks have been cracked and would it not make more sense for buses to go along Station Road or Saffron Road? Cllr M Jones took this up with transport officers and, after their discussions with the various bus companies, he was able to confirm that the buses would no longer use Hitchin Street.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay asked if the blocks are going to be replaced.

Cllr Mrs M Russell we could push for this to be done. We had been told that when the blocks were laid, there were not the correct specification. It is not clear whether the blocks will be replaced.

Cllr D Albone said there is still an issue with cars parked on the pavement, particularly on a Saturday. The public are not getting the message and the situation needs to be policed.

The Town Clerk confirmed that a CCTV vehicle regularly monitors the situation, but does not move the cars. Penalty notices are later sent through the post.

Cllr I Bond asked if there is there a warranty on the blocks that have cracked.

Cllr Mrs M Russell will raise the issue at the next Biggleswade Joint Committee Meeting.

d. Bonds Lane Car Park

Cllr Mrs M Russell stated there was no progress to report but Mr M Ruggeri still wants to work closely with the Town Council. The issue is that, due to the cost of building a multi-storey car park, the finances are difficult. He is exploring various building techniques but had not made a firm decision on how to proceed

e. Biggleswade Transport Interchange

Ben King, principle transport planner has now taken over the implementation of this project. The key priority is to carry out surveys of the site to establish what is currently there and these will be carried out in May 2014 by Sky High Technology.

GPRS surveys will also be carried out over the site by Amey, to determine what lies under the site, these surveys will also be carried out in May 2014. Following the publication of the findings of the survey work it is hoped that agreement can be reached on the extent of land availability for the interchange with Network Rail by the end of May 2014.

A detailed design of the scheme will be drawn up following confirmation of the land availability and be made available by mid June 2014. A near neighbour consultation event to be held once agreement reached on detailed design of scheme, early July 2014.

For members to consider.

Cllr Mrs M Russell informed members that Ben King attended a meeting of the Biggleswade Joint Committee a couple of weeks ago to update members of the Joint Committee. It is expected that a further update will be available for the next Biggleswade Joint Committee.

f. Sun Street / St Johns Street

Following the Town Councils decision of 25th March 2014 to part fund the Feasibility Study of a one way system Sun Street/ St Johns Street at a cost of £6,500; a study has now been commissioned to include the video of three junctions, to look at speed, formalization of parking and cyclists; a report is expected by the end of July 2014.

For members to consider.

Cllr Mrs M Russell informed members that CBC are keen to implement the scheme. The developers for Land North of Potton Road are also open to the suggestion of contributing to the scheme. Members will be updated on any progress.

g. CCTV

For members to receive a verbal update.

The Town Clerk stated the CCTV partnership includes CBC, Shefford, Sandy and Biggleswade Councils. At the moment BT have been able to offer an 18% reduction in BT lines which would run for a three year period. CBC are not in a position to sign a three year contract and would only be happy with a one year contract at this time with a reduction from BT of only 5%.

CBC have asked that partners sign the one year contract; partners have refused to sign the contract.

Sandy, Shefford and Biggleswade Councils have met to discuss with Herts CCTVP if a contract can be signed directly with Herts CCTVP with a view to dissolving the Partnership.

CBC have also pulled out of a ten year contract with Virgin; a contract that Virgin had with HCCTVP not with CBC. CBC informed partners that they no longer had a contract with Virgin and that the town council would be required to sign individual contracts with Virgin. The councils have not signed individual contracts as they have been informed by HCCTVP that they are still in the ten-year contract with Virgin that was negotiated by HCCTVP.

It is believed that in 2015, CBC intend to take all camera footage back through CBC systems to Dunstable.

Neither Shefford, Sandy nor Biggleswade want to transfer monitoring, to Dunstable, which is not 24/7.

Cllr B Rix – CCTV should be a Police matter, we need to find out the views of the Police Commissioner.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – perhaps we can seek the views of the Chief Inspector when they attend Council.

h. Biggleswade Market

Following the Town Councils decision to no longer erect market stalls on the Saturday and Tuesday markets; members are asked to consider if there are any implications of the changes.

For members to consider.

There has been a lot in the press and elsewhere suggesting that the market has suffered after the change which is why Biggleswade Market is on the agenda.

We have not lost any stallholders as a result of the Council decision to no longer erect market stalls on the Saturday and Tuesday markets. We receive records every week detailing who has used their pitches. It was pointed out that some stall holders take holidays during April/May and that one of the stall holders went to a weekend fair where he had two business, rather than one, but he has still kept

his pitch.

Stall holders who were reluctant to the change, have gone ahead and provided themselves with their own stalls. Over the last few weeks it has appeared there are less stalls, but this is the prime time for holidays.

New stalls are due for delivery to the Town Council shortly and will be used at the next Farmers Market to be held on the 21st May 2014.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said that members of the public had approached her in the town and have raised their concerns. She has reassured them that no problems exist.

We would like to get more stalls on the market as there is plenty of room but we cannot duplicate the stalls that are already on the market.

i. A Boards – Delegation Agreement

For members to receive a verbal update.

Cllr Mrs M Russell confirmed that the Town Clerk had carried out a survey to identify the A Boards in Biggleswade Town Centre. It has been established that 73 A Boards exist in the town, together with tables and chairs. The survey has raised issues with obstructions and possible private land issues. The Town Clerk has asked Highways for a map identifying all Highways land.

Traders in Hitchin Street want to have their A Boards showing at the end of the street, near the market square.

It has to be recognised that licencing may not reduce the number of A Boards.

Cllr Mrs M Russell suggested a Task Group be formed to involve the Chairman of Chamber Trade, Kevin Macan-Lind, who has taken over from Martin Thomas. It would be better to work with retailers with regards to licences and where the A Boards should go.

There is an issue over the agreement with CBC delegating the licencing to the Town Council. The agreement was signed by the Town Council in May 2013 and returned by CBC on 24th October 2013. The Town Clerk has asked for the agreement to be renewed. Cllr M Jones is keen that the A Boards, Tables and Chairs are a Town Council issue.

Cllr Mrs M Russell proposed that a small task group look at some of the issues raised during the survey and suggested 4 members.

The Chair, Cllr I Bond, Cllr P Biernis and Cllr S Watkins will form the task group.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay suggested a Totem Pole to advertise the businesses in Hitchin Street.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said this is something we could think about, and who will be responsible for updating any changes.

Cllr I Bond felt that more signs might clutter up the market square.

Cllr Mrs M Russell informed members that a screen had been investigated to advertise the traders in the Town, in which case A boards would not be necessary. However it was felt that the screen might be too large and it may be difficult locating a screen in the conservation area.

j. Biggleswade Christmas Lights

For members to receive a verbal update.

There was an improvement with the Christmas lights last year as opposed to the first year with the new suppliers. This year will be the third year of the new lights and the last year under the present contract.

We still intend to hold a wash up meeting with the Chamber of Trade. We also need to look at expanding the lights in 2014/ 2015.

We also need to talk to Kevin Macan-Lind to get the traders to put window displays in place to complement the Christmas lights.

k. Proposed Zebra Crossing on London Road, Biggleswade

The Town Council agreed to go back to CBC to let them know we do not agree with the suggestion of a raised Zebra Crossing. The Town Clerk duly made formal communication with CBC, together with Councillors who attended at the Joint Committee Meeting held at Chicksands.

Ben King notified Cllr Anthony Brown and Nigel Young of the Town Councils decision. Nigel Young, Portfolio Holder, replied as follows:

“It seems you have traffic engineers opinion that a raised zebra crossing is the best, safest and most appropriate solution, with safety concerns regarding speed approaching an at grade crossing”

“I would be extremely unhappy to put a less than safe crossing in place based on assumptions from non-qualified representatives and would not be happy at supporting this with the “Rural” match funding support.”

Cllr Mrs M Russell contacted Cllr Maurice Jones over the issue and he met with Cllrs Brian Spurr, Nigel Young and Tony Brown. His email response indicated that CBC’s policy is only to install raised crossings on road safety grounds unless special circumstances apply or if the parish accepts liability in the event of casualties. He did however say that CBC will seek funds from other sources to pay for the work and that he has asked for a report at the next BJC meeting.

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

There are no items for information.

8. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

A period of up to 15 minutes is permitted to allow members of the public to ask questions.

MOP 1 – does it have to be a zebra crossing, why not a pelican crossing? This would be better, and more effective and would make more sense.

MOP 1 – I have noticed buses no longer going down Hitchin Street, are the angles on the layout not the problem.

MOP 1 – Can we please clarify the date that the police will be attending Council?

Cllr B Briars – the blocks in Hitchin Street are not up to specification and the matter should be raised at the next Joint Committee.

9. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

Items 10a & 10b - Contracts

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Committee **resolved** to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.