

**MINUTES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 8 APRIL 2014 AT  
THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE, SAFFRON ROAD  
BIGGLESWADE**

**Present:** Cllr Mrs Hazel Ramsay (Chair), Cllr David Albone, Cllr Peter Biernis, Cllr Ian Bond,  
Cllr Bernard Briars, Cllr Michael North, Cllr Bernard Rix, Cllr Mrs Madeline Russell,  
Cllr Steven Watkins  
Rob McGregor – Town Clerk  
Angela Thomas – Administrator  
Tony Keaveney, Assistant Director Housing Services (CBC) - Speaker  
Laura Hutchinson – Biggleswade Chronicle  
Members of public – 5

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs W Smith, Cllr David Lawrence, Cllr Mrs Jane Lawrence,  
Cllr George Wilson & Cllr 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. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor had no announcements for the Council.

**4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

MOP 1: Raised a query, with regards to the voting on Item 14 of the minutes dated 25.03.2014.

Town Clerk stated the minute will be amended.

MOP 2: Raised issues about parking in Dells Lane, it is a matter of time before a serious accident occurs; they confirmed that an incident had occurred that afternoon, the police attended and put a polite notice on the car. We cannot hide behind the fact that a parking study has to be complete before action is taken; I requested that something more positive is done as soon as possible, to address the situation, CBC have a van that could visit the area and deal with some of these issues.

Councillor Mr M Russell gave an update; the Town Clerk also explained that a meeting has been set up with head of parking enforcement at CBC and the Police to carry out a site meeting and try and get some immediate action to deal with the issues. The Town Clerk had also spoken with Cllr M Jones who was going to pass the concerns to the Traffic Management Committee at CBC.

MOP 2: Thanked the Town Councillor for the update.

**Standing orders were suspended at 7.08pm**

**5. INVITED SPEAKER**

Tony Keaveney - Assistant Director Housing Services – CBC - re Housing Allocations in Central Bedfordshire.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay welcomed the Speaker to Biggleswade Town Council.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay asked the public if they had any questions, and none were asked at this point.

The Speaker gave a thorough talk about the housing allocations within Central Bedfordshire. Also, commented on the situation within Biggleswade as there are concerns about non availability of specialist, and 1 bedroom housing.

Since the Governments withdrawal of subsidies, this has had an effect on the housing situation.

Under Freedoms given by the government CBC embarked on a journey to look at the resources, and how housing was being used. They felt that choice based letting was of no benefit to local residents. Eligibility is being restricted to being a resident for three years, or six months continuous working; this tackles the issues of benefit dependency; workers have priority according to need; the Council now consider in date order.

The demand in Central Bedfordshire is high, with a waiting time of 38 weeks; the total housing is just short of 1000 per year; 114 lets in 2013 for Biggleswade; bidding activity is high with particular stress points for certain properties, more work needs to be done around older persons housing.

The key objective is to run the scheme at a low cost with demand and waiting periods not under stress, this is a ground breaking scheme and will go live later in the year.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay asked for the figures on the waiting list for Biggleswade.

TK - we have stopped asking what preference for where people want to live; people seeking accommodation in Biggleswade, one bedroom = 21, two bedroom = 45, four bedroom = 1 and 3 bedroom is absent from the list as they are currently under occupied.

Cllr M North asked if figures include assessment of need.

TK - the figures could potentially.

Cllr D Albone raised concern that the percentage of new social housing proposed for land east had now gone down to 10%.

TK - Land East's commercial viability has been sorely tested, social housing is squeezed when developers are required to provide large public structures, and the real issues are optimising the supply.

Cllr P Biernis asked what the waiting list was for the whole of Central Bedfordshire.

TK – 3000 people are registered to bid, however only hundreds are bidding.

Cllr B Briars asked about younger families wanting to move up the housing ladder; this is now more difficult with the 300 social houses being removed from the list at Land East.

TK – erosion of affordable housing comes down to cold hard economics, the economics and viability of the developments are tested vigorously; there is no public funding for social housing. There has been 150 moves linked to downsizing in 2013, 65 in Biggleswade are effected by housing subsidy.

Cllr Mrs M Russell was struck by the figures and asked if the figures were distorted at the moment with the welfare reform.

TK - stated there is a distortion in the figures, we need to think about how we use the stock, 2 & 4 bedrooms houses are in demand.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay in incentivising work, what parameters is there for travel.

TK – we create a quota for accommodating new business workers.

Cllr P Biernis asked if CBC would consider development of social housing in their own right.

TK – CBC has control of rental income and are trying to develop a scheme for Biggleswade; they have 56 million to invest in the next six years, the challenge is land availability and regeneration.

Cllr B Briars asked if CBC had sold of land for development and would it not have been better to hold onto the land and self-develop.

TK – pieces of land have been sold for development, the economics are difficult as we do need to fund capital programmes. Garage sites are available but are difficult to develop, although this is good use for the land.

A Member of the public said that they were glad that they had retired from housing management but would ask seriously about one bedroom accommodation for the elderly; the elderly do not always want to live in specialist schemes.

TK – quite a lot of work has gone into forming a clear policy for the older persons market, in CBC currently 4,500 elderly, in 2030 the number is expected to rise to 30,000.

A Member of the public asked if Aragon controlled the majority of the 5,000 properties in Southern Bedfordshire. MBDC sold the majority of its housing stock, how much control does CBC have over housing stock in the Biggleswade area. The Funds raised from the sale of the MBDC stock was supposed to be reinvested in housing, what has happened to the pot and has it been reinvested?

TK – the Transfer of housing stock was a real success for MBDC, the receipts that MBDC had all went into a pot to manage the debts inherited from Bedford County Council when CBC was formed.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay thanked the Speaker for staying and answering the questions, and confirmed the Speaker (Tony Keaveney) will be returning in October/November 2014 regarding the new proposals that have been prepared for consideration by CBC.

### **Standing Orders were re-instated at 7.55pm**

#### **6. MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

There were no questions raised.

#### **7. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

- a. Members received the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 25 March 2014 at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, Saffron Road, Biggleswade.

Changes were made to Item 12a ii “Grants”:

Biggleswade Army Cadets amended to £450  
Biggleswade Town Youth FC amended to £250

It was **RESOLVED** that subject to the amendment Town Council **approve** the minutes for **25.03.14**

#### **8. MATTERS ARISING**

- a. Minutes of the Council meeting held on 25 March 2014.

There were no matters arising.

#### **9. PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

- a. **CB/14/0067/RM – Land South of Potton Road, Biggleswade**  
Reserved Matter: following outline application MB/03/01205/OUT to land parcels 1 and 10, including adjacent Block 46 of development south of Potton Road, Biggleswade consisting of residential development for 288 new dwellings and associated areas.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council raise no objection to this planning application.

- b. **CB/14/00999/FULL – 19 Courtland’s Drive, Biggleswade**  
Proposed boundary fence.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council raise no objection to this planning application.

- c. **CB/13/03979/FULL – 4 Apollo Gardens, Biggleswade**  
Retrospective: Convert garage to living accommodation.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council **STRONGLY OBJECT** to this application, as with previous application for 5 Apollo Gardens, as it adds to parking difficulties for residents.

**Also, Town Council raise concerns at receiving retrospective planning applications.**

- d. **CB/14/01103/FULL – 476 Kitelands Road, Biggleswade**  
Ground Floor rear extension & ground/first floor extension to side.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council raise no objection to this application 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 extension to the principle dwelling are complied with in order to eliminate detriment in respect of light and privacy of adjacent residents.

10. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Biggleswade Parking Study**

In 2013 CBC commissioned a parking study from Parsons Brinckerhoff focussed on Biggleswade town centre and surrounding areas within 10 minute walking distance from Biggleswade Rail Station. The purpose of the study was to fully understand how on street and off street car parking was being used to inform a future parking management plan.

A range of surveys was carried out as well as analysis of parking data such as the issue of penalty charge notices and modelling of off street car parks to inform this work. A workshop was also held with members of Biggleswade Town Council to consider some initial suggestions on strategy. As CBC controls on-street parking and Biggleswade Town Council controls off street parking, it is essential to work closely together to develop a future parking strategy, which can be jointly delivered.

Following the work of the Town Council on a range of detailed proposals for improving car parking management, it is necessary to extend the original study to consider and model these proposals fully. To carry out this additional work there are additional fees (totalling £6,000) on top of the fees already paid by CBC? As we believe this is very much a joint project, and in keeping with similar projects in Leighton Buzzard and Houghton Regis, CBC would like to enquire whether Biggleswade Town Council wishes to contribute towards this final stage of the project. The contribution would be at the discretion of the Town Council with Central Beds Council providing the balance to ensure that the project is brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

CBC considers that the next and final stages of the parking study are:

- Town Council Parking Strategy review – April
- Modelling of car parking usage/changes resulting from implementation of Town Council parking strategy document – April (report issued)
- Final option selection – May
- Finalisation of parking study and parking management plan/parking strategy – June (report issued)
- Members are asked to consider the proposed time table and a contribution towards the modelling of a range of detailed proposals for improving car park management.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay asked Cllr Mrs M Russell to update the Town Council.

Cllr Mrs M Russell informed members that a meeting had been held on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014 in the Town Council offices, present were Cllr M Jones, Cllr Mrs M Russell, Sam Caldbeck and the Town Clerk; the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the parking strategy and how to move it forward.

The agenda that Cllr M Jones wants to work to is good; in the initial comments back from Parsons Brinckerhoff they have no issues with the Town Councils parking strategy with the exception of the first hour of parking to be free of charge.

The next stage is for Parsons Brinckerhoff to model the Town Councils Parking Strategy, the cost of this is £6,000. CBC will pay if we do not wish to, however I think that Town Council should pay the full £6,000 as we are equal partners.

Cllr M North felt that he did not disagree but we would set a precedent, in the spirit of equal partnership we should pay half.

Cllr D Albone suggested that the additional work to be carried out was due to the Councils contribution to the parking strategy and seconded the proposal to pay the £6,000.

Cllr B Rix suggested half as the contribution and get recognition from Parsons Brinckerhoff that the Town Council is a partner if the feeling of the Council is the Full amount I will go with that.

Cllr P Biernis did not disagree but felt that it was a lot of public money for a survey.

Cllr Mrs M Russell was concerned that CBC would go ahead without Town Council on the strategy.

Cllr M North felt that Town Council were clearly not experts and do need experts to vet Councils ideas.

It was **RESOLVED** to fund the £6,000 required to extend the Study on the provision that Parsons Brinckerhoff are made aware; Town Council are a client and working in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council to produce a parking strategy for Biggleswade. BTC would expect to receive all of the information from Parsons Brinckerhoff and to attend all the meetings with CBC and Parsons Brinckerhoff.

**b. Meeting with Alistair Burt MP – Saturday May 17 2014**

Alistair Burt MP would like to invite representatives of Biggleswade Town Council to attend a meeting on Saturday 17 May, 10am-12noon, at Cople Village Hall, Grange Lane, Cople, Beds MK44, for a discussion of local concerns of mutual interest.

The meeting will be for Chairman, Clerks, and members of Parish and Town Councils.

Members are asked to let Alistair Burt's office know (alistair.burt.mp@parliament.uk) if they would be able to attend and if there are any specific issues they would like to be raised.

It was **RESOLVED** that this be noted.

**c. Consultation with Town and Parish Councils on Dog Control Orders**

A copy of the above document and questionnaire is attached to this agenda for Members consideration.

Cllr Mrs M Russell - as this is a formal consultation, are we intending to make any proposals, I recommend that the Town Clerk complete the consultation, to include closed church yards and not current burial grounds.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council support CBC for Dog Control Orders.

**11. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**a. Proposed Temporary Road Closure – B658 Stanford Road, Southill**

AMEY on behalf of CBC, has informed Town Council of a proposed temporary road closure of the B658 Stanford Road, Southill, for 2 days from 16 April to 17 April to enable carriageway patching and surface dressing works to be carried out in safety.

A copy is attached to this agenda.

It was **RESOLVED** that this be noted.

**12. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

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

MOP 2: Raised concerns about the parking in Biggleswade, when people come into the new Retail Park in London Road, they will want to visit the town centre can we ensure that the parking strategy will cater for this.

Cllr M Russell explained that it is envisaged that visitors will leave their vehicles at the Retail Park; (4 hour parking will be enforced) and travel into Biggleswade via the shuttle bus that will run regularly every 10 minutes, this should then eliminate some of the problem with regards to parking. Biggleswade Town Council need to look further into this.

MOP 3 asked if Town Council could ask CBC why Planning Application **CB/13/03979/FULL – 4 Apollo Gardens, Biggleswade** has come back to Town Council.

**13. 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(s) is discussed.

**Exempt Item 14a + 14b (Staff) 14c (Contracts)**

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