

**MINUTES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 10 DECEMBER 2013 AT
THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE, SAFFRON ROAD
BIGGLESWADE**

Present: Cllr Mrs H Ramsay (Chair), Cllr Mrs M Russell, Cllr Ms Mulchrone, Cllr D Albone, Cllr B Briars,
Cllr I Bond, Cllr D Lawrence, Cllr Mrs J Lawrence
Rob McGregor – Town Clerk
Louise Wilcox – Deputy Town Clerk
Nikolas Smith – Central Bedfordshire Council
Members of the public - 5

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs Mrs W Smith, T Woodward, B Rix, Cllr M North, S Watkins and G Wilson.

The Mayor welcomed Nikolas Smith to the meeting.

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 read out a letter of condolence from Sandy Town Council.

The Mayor said that Rex Skinner's funeral will be held on Monday 16 December, 1.15pm at the Trinity Methodist Church, Shortmead Street.

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

MOP 1, Martin Thomas, spoke on behalf of the Chamber of Trade and Biggleswade traders regarding the reversal of Hitchin Street. He said that at the Traffic Management meeting a petition containing over 4,000 signatures, in favour of the reversal, was dismissed, Cllr Mrs J Lawrence attacked Town Councils decision and said that the Council meeting when this was discussed, was poorly attended.

Cllr Mrs J Lawrence said that she didn't think the petition represented local people as a lot of signatures were from people outside Biggleswade or other ends of the town. She supported CBC officer's recommendations.

MOP 1 said that Mrs Lawrence had only referred to 1 sheet of the petition, there are another 300 + sheets, she dismissed 4,076 signatures and asked why she attacked Town Councils decision.

Mrs Lawrence said she expressed an opinion, and did not say the meeting was poorly attended but that it was not attended by many people.

Mop 2 asked if a correction could be made to the minutes of the Council meeting 26 November 2013.

5. INVITED SPEAKER

Nikolas Smith – Principal Planning Officer, Central Bedfordshire Council to answer questions Town Council may have on Kings Reach development or on general planning issues.

NS he works predominantly on larger developments, but with things picking up a Kings Reach, he said it's a good opportunity to come along and answer any questions.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay asked about timelines.

NS replied that the scheme is picking up with occupations increasing

Cllr Mrs M Russell asked when the Eastern Relief road would be completed.

NS replied that S106 money would be available when 700 properties are occupied – it had been anticipated that there would be 250 new occupations per year. However, there are only 350 occupations at present. NS said that they are pressing for earlier completion, but 700 occupations is still the trigger point for completion.

Cllr Mrs M Russell asked Nikolas Smith if he would be attending a meeting at the Town Council offices in January 2014 to discuss Bellway Homes proposed development north of Potton Road and also asked if anyone would be attending the meeting from Highways.

The proposed development will be near to the Eastern Relief Road exit hence the need to address highways issues; what CLF monies will be available to assist with transport issues.

NS said these will be the first significant discussions it is very early in the development process. Highways will be central in discussion but the developers won't have got to this point yet. NS said that he is happy to bring a Highways Officer to the meeting, but reiterated that it is very early stage in the development process.

6. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were no Members questions.

7. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. Members received the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 November 2013 at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, Saffron Road, Biggleswade.
- b. Members **approved the recommendations** of the Finance & General Purpose meeting held on 19 November 2013.

Items as listed on the agenda:

6a) Council Tax Support Grant (CTS Grant)

Correspondence has been received from CBC regarding the CTS Grant for 2014/15. The Government has issued a provisional Settlement for 2014/15. This did not separately identify any amount for CTS Grant and overall the Settlement amount for CBC was £5.438m, or 7.7%, lower than that for 2013/14.

Since the publication of the provisional Settlement, the June Spending Review outlined a further 1% cut to Local Government funding. There are also other changes to funding currently being discussed, the impact of which is not yet known, but which may also be adverse for CBC.

Following helpful feedback on the Precept Request forms, the format of these has been revised and should be circulated to Town Council during November. The revised format has been designed to make as explicit as possible the full effect on Council Tax that Town Councils proposed precept would have.

A copy was attached to the agenda.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Town Council make no comment at this time.

b) Budgets

Members considered budgets for 2013/2014.

Cllr M North advised Members that Town Council may have to set the Precept at 8.49% increase, due to the reduced grant from CBC.

CBC has not met the target to provide the Tax Base figures.

There will be an F&GP meeting on 21 January to set the Precept and take to Council on 28 January, so the increase may change from 8.49%.

c) Financial Risk Assessment and Review

Members considered and reviewed the Financial Risk Assessment.

A copy was attached to the agenda.

Rob McGregor said that the Internal Auditor is satisfied.

Derek Kemp advised Members that Town Council needs to carry out a full Risk Assessment every year, prior to 31 March.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Town Council accept the Financial Risk Assessment and Review.

- c. For Member to **approve the recommendations** of the Town Centre Management meeting held on 19 November 2013.

Items as listed on the agenda:

5a) Request for Tuesday market rent reduction in January and February 2014

The stall holders who support the Tuesday market have requested a reduction in rent during January and February 2014, as these are very difficult trading months, especially in the current economic climate.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the stall holders are offered a 50% reduction for January and February 2014 on the condition that the stalls and stall holders vehicles are not impeding the parking on the Market Square.

7a) Sun Street St Johns Street

Town Centre Management Meeting 20th August 2013; members **recommended** to write to C.B.C to enquire if the survey to investigate the feasibility of introducing a one way system Sun Street – St Johns Street could be jointly funded by C.B.C. (response from David Bowie attached to the agenda).

Cllr Mrs M Russell said that Town Council has been quoted £10k to carry out a survey into the viability of a one way system and has offered to pay £5k, splitting the cost with CBC, but CBC have nothing in the budget in 2013.

Cllr D Albone asked that this item is kept on the agenda for review at a later date.

Members **RECOMMENDED** that a letter is sent to CBC to remind them to budget for the survey in 2014.

8c) Bonds Lane

For members to receive an update on Bonds Lane; proposed multi story car park and retail unit.

Cllr Mrs M Russell informed members that she had met Mr Ruggeri at the CBC business breakfast meeting.

Mr Ruggeri needs to know what S.106 demands will be placed on the development; the design incorporates CBC planning departments input. There had been some issues with the footway and the service yard. CBC had also raised the issue of upgrading Bonds Lane to Hitchin Street standards.

There are design pressures re: access to the development from Hitchin Street; Town Council agreed to the reversal of Hitchin Street. The Traffic Management meeting at CBC will take place on the 21st November 2013 to consider the reversal of Hitchin Street and does not include the Town Council's decision in its committee papers.

The Masterplan of 2011 and the County Council Transport Study of 2006 both support the Hitchin Street reversal and recommend further investigation and consultation.

There is an option for the northern end of Hitchin Street becoming pedestrianized, which would allow some of the market stalls to be located there. If implemented, this would mean that no traffic would be entering the Market Square and, therefore, there would be no impact on Century House.

Reversal of Hitchin Street is needed now to support the trade in Hitchin Street.

The report to the Traffic Management Committee makes sad reading and we should reiterate Town Council approval on the reversal of Hitchin Street.

Members **RECOMMENDED** to write to the Traffic Management Committee chair, Cllr B Spurr and reiterate that the reversal of Hitchin Street is vital for trade, the development of Bonds Lane and the possible pedestrianisation of the Northern end of Hitchin Street.

8. **MATTERS ARISING**

- a. Minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 November 2013.

Page 4 – Item 13a – Planning Outcomes – CB/13/03253/ADV – 22 High Street (Halifax Building Society)

The Town Clerk wrote to CBC regarding the above planning application:

Planning Application CB/13/03253/ADV 20 – 22 High Street Biggleswade, SG18 0JL; the Town Council have asked that I contact you to express its disappointment at the decision to grant approval for part internal illumination of a sign on this property.

The Town Council for many years have a policy of non-approval of any internally illuminated signs within Biggleswade; the Town Council would like to understand why Central Bedfordshire Councils planning department have on this occasion approved such a sign.

The Town Council ask; that when considering signage in future applications that external illumination is the preferred option of this Council; the Town Council have fought hard over the years to ensure internally illuminated signs are not part of the street scene in Biggleswade.

The following reply has been received:

I am writing in response to your email received on the 2 December 2013 regarding the above application which was approved on 14.11.13 for:

Advertisement: 2 No. New 680mm High Non illuminated fascia signs with only the brand mark being internally illuminated.

1 No. New 400mm High Non illuminated projecting sign. 1No New Non illuminated ATM Collar. 1No New Marketing Unit.

The Council considers proposals for signage very carefully.

During the determination of the advertisement application the plans were revised and the extent of internal illumination is now very limited. Based on the revisions made, in particular the level of internal illumination was significantly reduced - being removed from the projecting sign and ATM, and with the fascia's being Non illuminated except for the brand marks it was considered that the scheme was visually acceptable.

The Council welcomes the Town Councils comments during the determination of the planning process.

Cllr Mrs J Lawrence has complained about the sign which was off on Saturday but appears to be on now, Nikolas Smith will be taking a complaint back to the planning department at CBC.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay asked if they were in contravention of planning.

Cllr Mrs J Lawrence replied that strictly speaking they were.

9. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

- a. **CB/13/04012/RM – Land South Of, Potton Road, Biggleswade**
Blocks 54 and 55 of development south of Potton Road, Biggleswade consisting of residential development for 49 new dwellings and associated areas.

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

- b. **CB/13/02856/LB & CB/13/02860/ADV – New Inn Public House, 16A Market Square, Biggleswade**
Placement of 8 No signs including 2 No illuminated signs

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

- c. **CB/13/03197/FULL – Warehouse, Bonds Lane, Biggleswade, SG18 8AY**
Conversion of Warehouse to 2 No. Residential Units

It was **RESOLVED** that Town Council **OBJECT** to this application for the following reasons:

- Inappropriate development for the area
- Poor access
- This development would cause issues with lack of parking

- d. **CB/13/04151/FULL – 44 Rowan Crescent, Biggleswade, SG18 0PQ**
Single storey rear extension

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.

- e. **CB/13/04209/FULL – 22 The Grove, Biggleswade, SG18 8JW**
Single storey front and side extension

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. **Wildlife and Countryside ACT 1981 – Section 55 – The proposed mapping of the Biggleswade and Dunstable excluded areas**

When the former Bedfordshire County Council was tasked to survey and record all public rights of way in the county in 1950 it resolved to exclude four fully developed areas from the survey which eventually lead to the publication of the Definitive Map and Statement. These areas were the urban centres of Bedford, Biggleswade, Dunstable and Luton. These four areas are still excluded from the Definitive Map – despite later provisions in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 requiring them to be mapped.

CBC is planning to generate a map including its two areas, Biggleswade and Dunstable. The area to be mapped in Biggleswade is shown in pink on the extract attached to this agenda.

A second later phase will investigate any additional paths that come to light during the first phase – including any paths that the Town Council feels should be recorded.

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

- b. **Proposed introduction of Prohibition of Waiting and Loading on Verges and Footways in Central Bedfordshire**

Correspondence has been received from AMEY, on behalf of Bedfordshire Highways, regarding the proposed introduction of Prohibition of Waiting and Loading on Verges in Central Bedfordshire, except for the M1 motorway, A1, A5 and A421 truck roads.

The Public Notice, Draft Order and statement of reasons are attached to this agenda.

Objections should be sent in writing to the Transportation Manager, Bedfordshire Highways, Woodlands Annex, Manton Lane, Bedford MK41 7NU or email centralbedsconsultation@amey.co.uk stating the grounds on which they are made by 24 December 2013.

It was **RESOLVED** that Town Council made the following observations:

- If notices are to be placed to allow enforcement can signage be placed on any existing posts and can they be discreet

- Can Town & Parish Councils identify problem areas and forward them to CBC
- Can the Town Centre of Biggleswade be signed and enforced i.e. the pavements on the bus exit route Century House - Town Council would like to know how this prohibition will be enforced and would a blanket ban in its entirety not be a better solution.

c. Request from Bromford Support

Correspondence was received from Bromford support to request the use of a room for half a day a week at Town Council offices for one of their drop-in sessions.

Bromford Support help vulnerable people across Central Bedfordshire by providing housing related support. They are a preventative service funded by CBC.

They offer support with form filling and encourage people to become involved within the community and help people manage physical, mental health, drug and alcohol problems and assist those wanting to access employment, education and training.

They currently run one session at Biggleswade Library on Mondays and hold many more across Central Bedfordshire.

It was **RESOLVED** that, as Bromford Support are currently funded by CBC and have use of the Library, they ask for an extension to their current use of that facility.

d. Proposed Reversal of Hitchin Street

At a meeting of Central Bedfordshire Council Traffic Management Committee held on the 21st November 2013 the proposed reversal of Hitchin Street was considered; the decision of the Traffic Management committee is as follows;

Having taken all factors into account, (those set out in the report, the additional information contained in your email and the representations heard at the meeting), the decision Cllr Spurr reached with regard to the proposed reversal of the one way in Hitchin Street is to defer consideration until the wider impact of other activities is understood and can be taken into account. The decision in the Decision Digest is:

'The consideration of any changes to traffic management on Hitchin Street be deferred until the wider impact on adjacent streets and junctions as well as proposals for the Market Square including re use or redevelopment of Century House can be fully understood and taken into account.'

Members were asked to consider this response.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said the Traffic Management Committee was considering a petition presented by the Chamber of Trade with over 4,000 signatures.

The petition asked for two things – more parking in the town centre, with provision for up to 4 hours for visitors and the reversal of Hitchin Street traffic flow to allow access to the Market Square and ease continuing traffic problems in the High Street.

The decision of Traffic Management Committee is very disappointing, effectively kicking the proposal into the long grass; the views of the Town Council did not form part of the papers for the Committee decision, although the email with the views of the Town Centre Management Committee was presented at the meeting.

The formal report to the Traffic Management Committee had several inaccuracies notably that the Market Square is at the southern end of Hitchin Street and that 'there may be an opportunity to expand the improvements made in Hitchin Street to the wider Market Square.

Incomprehensibly, although the petition was about parking and Hitchin Street, the report did **not** mention the proposed retail store and multi-storey car park in Bonds Lane; it did mention the possible redevelopment of Century House.

Regarding parking, nothing will be done until there is a parking strategy. Nothing to say that the views of the petitioners will be taken into account when the strategy is being put together – simply that there will

be consultation with the local community. I would have thought that 4,000 signatures was a pretty good consultation with the local community . . .

Regarding reversal of Hitchin Street, more studies need to be done – but no commitment to doing them – and wait until CBC has decided what to do with Century House. One has to ask; what is the relevance of Century House to Hitchin Street – unless, of course, CBC has already got some grandiose plan which it is not being transparent about.

CBC has been trying to decide what to do with Century House for years – it is a real white elephant and should never have been built – but the Committee report says that CBC will undertake an options appraisal in 2014/2015 and we have to wait until CBC has made up its mind before they will even consider traffic flow in Hitchin Street.

What I don't understand is why? What are the alternative proposals, what's the vision, what's the big plan?

I would like to propose that the Traffic Management Meeting decision should be formally called in for scrutiny by the CBC Scrutiny Committee on the basis that the decision is unsound.

The Town Council's formal request and support for the proposed reversal was not part of the Committee papers

The Town Council request was not properly determined – it was addressed on the basis of the petition – when, in fact, the petition supported the Town Council's request

An irrelevant issue was introduced – the future of Century House

The Committee was misinformed both by errors in the report and the implication that the Town Council decision was unsafe in that the Council was not quorate.

My second proposal is that we formally re-submit our request for reversal of the traffic flow in Hitchin Street with the following supplementary requests:

That Bonds Lane from Hitchin Street to Foundry Lane is also reversed

That Hitchin Street from Bonds Lane to the Market Square is pedestrianised

That there be no change to the traffic flows on Mill Lane, Foundry Lane and the eastern section of Bonds Lane between the Aldi car parks.

This removes the objections raised by the Traffic Management Committee. There is no wider impact on adjacent streets and junctions (apart from minor reconfiguration of the Saffron Road/Hitchin Street junction) and there will be no impact on traffic flow around Century House.

There is nothing else for the Traffic Management Committee to 'fully understand' so let's get on with the changes which Biggleswade needs both to support our town centre and to enable the development of the retail store and car park in Bonds Lane.

Cllr Mrs J Lawrence pointed out that the Traffic Management Committee at CBC is not a committee; decisions are made by the chairman and two others; it is not a sensible idea to reverse Hitchin Street we do not need to feed more traffic into the market square; there is no urgency on the proposed car park; the decision at the Traffic Management Committee was made on the petition; Highways have no money at the present time.

Cllr D Albone raised concern that the proposed car park was not considered at the Traffic Management Committee, but was happy with the proposal to pedestrianise the bottom of Hitchin Street.

Cllr D Lawrence said that he supported the officers at the Traffic Management Committee and stated that there is a need to have an entire plan and proper proposal in place.

Cllr B Briars said that he was disappointed that three people at the Traffic Management Committee made a decision on Hitchin Street reversal, Century house is irrelevant and he would happily support the proposals put forward.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said there is no public money to build a car park, the monies need to come from a private developer, yes we might lose some car parking but it will be replaced by a multi storey car park.

The Town Centre Management Committee has set up a tasking group to look at the parking strategy and will report to Town Council and the Biggleswade Joint Committee in January 2014; we need to do everything to ensure the proposal for the reversal of Hitchin Street goes ahead.

Cllr D Lawrence said that we need to find a developer to finance a car park, until this happens planning is a waste of time. Cllr Mrs M Russell reminded Cllr Lawrence that the Council were in fact currently working with the proposed developer.

Cllr B Briars raised a point of order as two proposal had been put to Council; Cllr B Briars seconded the proposals.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Traffic Management Meeting decision should be formally called in for scrutiny by the CBC Scrutiny Committee on the basis that the decision is unsound.

The Town Council's formal request and support for the proposed reversal was not part of the Committee papers

The Town Council request was not properly determined – it was addressed on the basis of the petition – when, in fact, the petition supported the Town Council's request

An irrelevant issue was introduced – the future of Century House

The Committee was misinformed both by errors in the report and the implication that the Town Council decision was unsafe in that the Council was not quorate.

RESOLUTION 2 that we formally re-submit our request for reversal of the traffic flow in Hitchin Street with the following supplementary requests:

That Bonds Lane from Hitchin Street to Foundry Lane is also reversed
That Hitchin Street from Bonds Lane to the Market Square is pedestrianised
That there be no change to the traffic flows on Mill Lane, Foundry Lane and the eastern section of Bonds Lane between the Aldi car parks

e. Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group major review

The Town Clerk has emailed Members the link to view the details of the above.

Members are now asked to comment on the terms of reference set by the Clinical Commissioning Group for a major review of services.

Cllr D Lawrence said the concept is right although area groupings were a concern; the A1 corridor linkage in health should be considered.

11. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Further to Council meeting 12 November – Item 10i – A6001 London Road, Biggleswade – Proposed 40mph Speed Limit Extension and Pedestrian Crossings

A copy of Town Councils **RESOLUTION** and the subsequent reply from AMEY are both attached to this agenda.

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

b. Temporary closure of Footpath No 34 and Footpath No 35

CBC has notified Town Council of the above Temporary closures of Footpath No 34 and No 35.

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

c. Appeal Decision – 5 Apollo Gardens, Biggleswade

Correspondence was received from the Planning Inspectorate to inform Town Council that the above appeal has been dismissed.

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

d. **Street Naming and Numbering – Land South of Potton Road, Biggleswade**

Further to Council meeting on 12 November when Members chose four more street names for the next phase of the development, CBC has now confirmed the following street names will be used:

Evans Grove

Maskin Drive

Hunt Road

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 1 asked for clarity on when Cllr Spurr would be notified of Councils resolution on Hitchin Street reversal and the proposed car park; they also explained that the proposed developer of the car park had not asked for public monies.

Mop 1 also asked if Councillors would like to know what the developer had been asked for by C.B.C planners.

Mop 1 informed Councillors that they were in the process of taking the decision of the Traffic Management Committees decision on Hitchin Street reversal to the Local Government Ombudsman.

13. **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(s) is discussed.

Exempt Item – 14a - Staff

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