

MINUTES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 10th NOVEMBER 2015
AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE,
SAFFRON ROAD BIGGLESWADE

Present:

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay (Chair)
Cllr F Foster
Cllr M Foster
Cllr I Bond
Cllr B Briars
Cllr P Biernis
Cllr S Watkins
Cllr M North
Cllr Mrs M Russell
Cllr D Strachan
Cllr G Wilson
Cllr D Albone
Cllr T Woodward

Mr R D McGregor –Biggleswade Town Clerk
Mr M Thorn- Biggleswade Deputy Town Clerk
Mrs J Durn – Minute Taker

5 Members of Public

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr Ms B Kerfoot, Cllr B Rix

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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 - Cllr D Strachan, Item 11g.

3. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 28th October - Cllr H Ramsay and Cllr G Wilson attended the Royal British Legion Presentation Event.
- 30th October - Cllr Mrs H Ramsay and Cllr Mrs R Russell attended the Civic Reception and Business Networking Event at Priory House, Chicksands.
- 6th November – Cllr M North and his wife attended Sandy Town Council Dinner/Dance
- 8th November – The Remembrance Day Parade and Service took place. The Chairman thanked everyone from BTC involved in the organisation of this very successful event, including the Staff, Groundsmen and Councillors. Thank you also to Cllr G Wilson for coordinating and planning the event in accordance with the RBL guidelines and regulations and arranging for representatives of the Royal Artillery and the Air Force to participate in the Parade and the Service.
- 11th November – Armistice Day Assembly in the Market Square, Biggleswade at 11.am for the observance of one minute silence.

4. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

A period of up to 15 minutes is permitted to allow members of the public to ask questions that are pertaining to matters listed on this Agenda.

Regarding Item 10c) Request for proposed sign from Rotary Club of Biggleswade:

- Council were asked to bear in mind the decision previously made at the March meeting, where permission was refused, when considering the new request.

5. **INVITED SPEAKER**

Ms Mary Davidson, from MD Associates, attended the Council meeting to discuss the Planning Application, Agenda item 9c, Biggleswade Retail Park, London Road, and to give members an update on the current situation.

Following discussions with Retailers interested in occupying the available units on the Retail Park, Planning Application Item 9c has been submitted to request a variation of the Planning Condition for Unit K. This would allow for a Poundland store to occupy Unit K and to use 15% of the 75 sq. m floor area for the ancillary sale of food, comprising snack foods such as crisps, sandwiches and drinks, which would be useful for those working on both the Retail Park and the nearby Stratton Business Park.

Poundland are fast becoming a popular retailer in the UK and they have no intention of closing the town centre store. Both Poundland and Boots have agreed to legal requirements to keep the town centre stores open for the remainder of the lease, which expires in 2020.

Council did raise objection to this request at a previous meeting on the 22nd September 2015 on the grounds that *"the application contradicts the planning conditions relating to the sale of food and drink on the premises, and if granted would create a future precedence for similar applications to be granted"*. However, as it is not intended to operate as a food store this application has been resubmitted. It is hoped that the Council will support this application as the inclusion of this Retailer, along with Boots, will help create a wider offer on the Park than just clothing.

The next phase will see six more Retailers fit out from next April 2016, ready for opening in June/July 2016. These will include River Island, New Look and Outfit, Next, M&S and Boots. The last clutch of units to be complete will be those on London Road next to the Laura Ashley Unit. Discussions with Poundland and Wilko are currently taking place. There is also interest from a well-known furniture store but this has yet to be officially confirmed.

Ms Davidson answered questions from the Members:

- There is no intention or plan for the Retail Park to include a family restaurant.
- The Poundland Store will be almost the same floor area (75 sq. m) as the town centre store.
- There are plans for a bus stop in the Retail Park and the bus operator will need to put this in place.
- There are currently three disabled parking places outside Matalan store. However, these will be increased to meet the standard requirements with disabled parking bays outside the Boots and Next stores.
- The current vacant unit is under negotiation with a furniture retailer and has yet to be confirmed.

The Chairman thanked Ms Davidson for a very informative update.

6. **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

There were no Members questions at this time.

7. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. Members received the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 27th October 2015 at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, Saffron Road, Biggleswade.

Cllr B Briars asked that Item 11c, regarding Biggleswade Parking Proposals, Zone E, be amended to read “*Members would like the existing restrictions to increase from the corner of Hitchmead Road to Orchard Close*”. Following this amendment the Minutes are approved and will be signed.

- b. Members received the **RECOMMENDATIONS** of the Town Centre Management Committee (TCM) held on 29th September 2015 at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, 4 Saffron Road, Biggleswade. (Car Park Management).

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the **RECOMMENDATIONS** of the TCM subject to the inclusion of the following amendment “*for all car parks, permits will be available to residents and workers, subject to criteria being satisfied*”

This item will be brought back to a future Council Agenda as we do not yet have information on timescales and a start date for implementation.

- c. Members received the **RECOMMENDATIONS** of the Public Land and Open Spaces (PLOS) Committee held on the 3rd November 2015 at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, 4 Saffron Road, Biggleswade. (Public Open Space, Land East of Biggleswade).

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the **RECOMMENDATIONS** of the PLOS Committee subject to S106 & Commuted Sums.

8. MATTERS ARISING

From the Minutes of the 27th October:

Item 11c) Biggleswade Parking Proposals:

Concerns were raised over the possibility of dangerous safety issues surrounding these proposals. We do not have an implementation date as yet and the Town Clerk will write to CBC to ask for an update.

Item 11c) Conference Microphone Systems:

The Microphone system agreed upon at the Meeting of the 27th October was ordered the following day and we are currently awaiting delivery.

Item 11h) Standing Orders:

Due to an additional request for amendment of Standing Orders, this item will now be taken at the next Council Meeting.

9. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- a. **CB/15/03885/FULL – 94 East Road, Langford, Biggleswade**
Change of use from one dwelling to two dwellings.

This item was noted for information as the area is not covered by Biggleswade Town Council.

b. CB/15/04023/FULL – 20 Eagle Farm Road

Two storey side/front extension and single storey front extension.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this Planning Application providing 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 guideline on the size of the proposed dwellings are complied with in order to eliminate detriment in respect of light and privacy of adjacent residents.

c. CB/15/03377/VOC - Biggleswade Retail Park, London Road

Variation of Condition 20 of planning application CB/14/01181/VOC: to allow up to (75sq. m) of floor space within Unit K to be used for the sale of food and drink.

This Planning Application has previously been before Council on the 22nd September 2015, where objections were raised.

Following in depth discussions after the information provided by the invited speaker on this subject, it was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this amended Planning Application.

It was requested that in the case of a close vote the result of the vote should be recorded in the Minutes. The words "No Objection" can be misleading as in some cases it appears that all the Councillors are in favour.

10. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Biggleswade Castle

The site of the former Biggleswade Castle is not marked in any way, and only a few in the town appear to know of its location. Members were asked to consider a request from Councillor B Rix to recognise the historical feature of Biggleswade Castle and consider working with BRCC or Biggleswade History Society to produce an information board near its former location.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council have **NO OBJECTION** to this proposal

b. Proposal for an FOI Request – Cllr B Rix

Cllr Bernard Rix proposes that the Town Council make a formal FOI request to Central Bedfordshire Council and/or Councillor Brian Spurr, asking for copies of the information that Councillor Spurr displayed at the meeting on the 17th September 2015, when Councillor Spurr said that he thought that CBC had made every effort to communicate the information to the residents of Biggleswade on the negotiations with Network Rail regarding the Stratton Street Bridge. The proposal by Cllr F Foster regarding a FOI request was not seconded.

Following discussion the Members felt it would be more appropriate for the Town Clerk to write to the relevant Directors and Chief Executive of CBC to make them aware of our concerns.

Members asked that the Town Clerk write to Richard Carr, Chief Executive, with copies to Marcel Coiffait, Director of Highways, and Jason Longhurst, Director of Regeneration, making it clear that BTC are unhappy with the way in which CBC are dealing with the problems concerning Biggleswade.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk will write to CBC.

c. Request for proposed sign from Rotary Club of Biggleswade.

The Rotary Club of Biggleswade have contacted the Town Council to request permission to erect a Rotary Road Sign on Town Council land outside Stratton House Hotel, London Road.

Members agreed in principle to the erection of a Rotary Road Sign, but felt that placing it on the suggested site of land outside Stratton House Hotel was not acceptable.

It was **RESOLVED** that this item be brought back to Council in order to decide on a suitable location.

d. Century House – Property Maintenance

Cllr Bernard Rix has asked that members discuss the issues of bus station maintenance.

An update will be added on the next Council Agenda.

e. Dan Albone – Art Feature

Following the Town Council meeting 27th October 2015, the Town Council made the following resolution; *“following discussion on the distance and safety aspects of seating and subject to the Town Council approving a proposed layout, the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to the proposal.*

This information was **NOTED**.

f. Standing Orders

Adjourned from the Town Council meeting 27th October 2015, a proposal from Councillor Hazel Ramsay to amend standing order 16a to read;

“To receive and record apologies from members not able to be present and to note absent members from whom no apology has been received”.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this proposal.

g. Biggleswade Parking Proposals

Members considered the response from the Traffic Engineer following comments forwarded by the Town Clerk after the Council meeting on the 27th October 2015.

There were concerns that comments and views made by BTC were not being taken into account. It was felt that the phrase “It is outside our scope” was not acceptable as these are valid concerns and need to be addressed. Confirmation is also required that work at the Baulk is not carried out until the Medical Centre has moved to Chestnut Avenue, and that the residents of Sun Street and Rose Lane will receive parking permits for Rose Lane Car Park.

The Town Clerk will write to CBC to point out areas that have been missed and formally request that action be taken to address these concerns.

Clarification is also required for the trial of a one-way system during the bridge closure, details of which were discussed at the Biggleswade Joint Committee (BJC) held on the 26th October 2015. Minutes of this meeting were not available for Council and will be emailed to Councillors as soon as the approved draft is available from CBC.

h. Advertising Banners and Posters

Councillor B Briars has raised concern over the high level of advertising banners and posters placed around Biggleswade. It was felt that this is a form of fly-posting and is both unsightly and unacceptable.

The Town Clerk will write to Highways at CBC to request that they deal with this issue, together with the removal of directional signs that are now not required. He will also contact Edward Peak School with regard to the particularly large banner they have placed along their fence.

i. **Quotes for Christmas Fair Sound and Lights**

Following the Town Council meeting 27th October 2015, where Council **RESOLVED** to accept quotation C which offers sponsorship and supply of equipment free of charge, with an invoiced cost of £360 it was also requested that the Town Clerk take up references offered by this company and bring this information back to the next meeting.

Following the Town Council meeting the supplier has informed the Town Clerk they are now unable to offer the service quoted for.

Members were asked to reconsider the quotations A & B from the Town Council meeting of the 27th October 2015.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept Quote A - £3780

11. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Updates**

1. London Road Bridge Works – No update.
2. Crown Inn – Public Consultation 7th, 10th & 14th November 2015: This took place today (10th November) at the Biggleswade Town Council Office and also Biggleswade Library.
3. Parking Consultation – Town Council responses to on Street parking proposals, returned on the 28/10/15. This information was **NOTED.**
4. Eastern Relief Road – update 03.10.15 - We are in the final stages of inspections with Highways The RSA3 is scheduled for 11th November 2015 and depending on what that brings up the road will open. Our target is Friday 13/11/2015. This information was **NOTED.**

12. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

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

- A request was made at the BJC that plant and heavy equipment involved in the bridge works would not encroach in that area. As a result it is now understood that fencing will be moved right up to the bridge so that access can be gained, and this news is very welcome.

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 is discussed.

Agenda Item (None)

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.