

MINUTES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 24 MARCH 2015 AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE, SAFFRON ROAD BIGGLESWADE

Present: **Cllr H Ramsay (Chair)**

Cllr S Watkins

Cllr I Bond

Cllr M Russell

Cllr M North

Cllr G Wilson

Cllr D Lawrence

Cllr J Lawrence

Cllr P Biernis

Cllr B Briars

Cllr D Albone

Cllr B Rix

Mr R McGregor (Town Clerk)

Mr M Thorn (Deputy Town Clerk)

Miss M Beckwith (Minute Taker)

Olly Martins (Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire)

8 MOP's (Member of the Public)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Cllr T Woodward

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in any agenda item
- (b) Non-pecuniary interests in any agenda item

Cllr J Lawrence and Cllr D Lawrence declared an interest in item 9B

3. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr H Ramsay and Cllr M Russell represented Biggleswade Town Council at Stotfold Civic Service
Cllr H Ramsay and Cllr M Russell also attended the Chairman of Central Bedfordshire Councils Civic Service at Northill.

4. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Cllr P Biernis asked that the Town Council in the upcoming budgets would consider further provisions for street cleaning around Biggleswade.

Cllr H Ramsay informed Cllr Biernis that the budgets had already been set.

5. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no questions from the members of public.

6. INVITED SPEAKERS

Olly Martins – Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire.

There is a high rate of serious crime compared to other counties. The extent of high crime in Bedfordshire makes the county appear to look like a high conurbation but it is not. The transport links here are great although this aids criminals to travel here. Bedfordshire police do not receive the level of funding which goes with the risk it receives. Per person funding is low in Bedfordshire compared to elsewhere and there are on average 38 crimes recorded per officer per year. Despite this Bedfordshire

police are the 11th top performing force in terms of detection. But there are limitations of performance as there are no longer constables on neighbourhood policing. There are less police resources which limits problem solving and community intelligence due to having to spread the resources thin. There are issues with police response times especially within Central Bedfordshire and these impacts on victim satisfaction and affects public confidence. The low police presence is not ideal although they are working hard to enhance resources and Bedfordshire is the 3rd lowest for staff costs in the country. To help with efficiency, Bedfordshire is working with Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. Bedfordshire are also working with technology and have bought body worn cameras to help with vexatious complaints and collecting evidence. Lenovo Think pads have also been purchased which will save police an hour per day as they do not have to keep returning to the station. Victim satisfaction is a key focus for the force. Visibility of the force is important as it boosts public confidence. A quality improvement plan is also in place which requires each department to justify their resources. Diversity is also addressed as the force should reflect the communities they are serving. In order to increase public confidence the police need to get better at informing the public of the good work going on.

Cllr G Wilson said that there appears to be a vast amount of civilian staff for officers.

Olly Martins agreed there was a large amount of staff but collaborations will result in staff totals falling and staff are needed to do the jobs they are able to do, as using in warranted officers for these tasks will be a waste of an expensive and high resource.

Cllr D Albone asked what would be the local impact if the police were to receive the extra funding and what would the impact be without the extra funding.

Olly Martins said that could not promote or procure to vote one way or another but the answers could be found in the leaflet provided.

Cllr D Lawrence enquired about recruitment. If the police were to recruit locally then the officers would know the areas.

Olly Martins agreed that local police knowledge would be helpful and there was a need to tap into those who want to police local communities.

Cllr I Bond said that the crime figures which are sent to the Town Council are not clear and do not say when they have been solved.

Olly Martins agreed but there is always difficulty in matching up the crimes in a solved and reported manner as there are varying times. The reports do need to have more context. However, some types of crime that do not always get counted as a crime should nevertheless appear in the figures.

Cllr I Bond said that it would be useful if the reports went back several months so it was more visible to see when the crime was reported and when it was solved.

Cllr D Albone asked if the PCSO's within Biggleswade could be given policing powers to deal with parking

Olly Martins replied saying that the Chief Constable would be reluctant to have the PCSO's being used as parking wardens.

Cllr B Rix asked why the police and Central Bedfordshire Council had not yet teamed up as residents are complaining about parking and being passed from one to another. He also asked of the future of the police station.

Olly Martins said that for the size of Biggleswade it was desirable to have a station and although safe for now he cannot confirm what will happen in the future. Many forces are looking to share premises with other emergency services, for example sharing premises with their Fire or Ambulance Services. The next hurdle for Bedfordshire police was to work closer with other authorities.

Cllr D Lawrence said that there was a problem of young girls dropping out of school and moving out of the catchment area.

Olly Martins replied that there are a lot of agencies working around this matter and a lot of energy is put into looking for these people although in most cases they have just moved away and not contacted the correct people.

Cllr M Russell asked if Bedfordshire Police were going to be able survive as an individual police force

Olly Martins confirmed they were trying their best to do so. Bedfordshire is the ideal size to get the balance right. The collaborations with other police forces meant that Bedfordshire were gaining the advantages of working with these forces while maintaining their own status as an individual police force.

Cllr G Wilson asked if he was correct in thinking the referendum will cost £370,000.

Olly Martins said that it depends, the actual cost of the referendum is £350,000 but as it is being held at the same time as the elections he could see no reason why some of the costs should not be shared. If there is a no vote then there will be a further cost for rebilling making the total £600,000.

Cllr W Smith asked if we could expect police officers to be placed in more rural areas as well as the more built up towns

Olly Martins said that it was reasonably safe to say that the 30 additional police could be split into the 5 teams across the area.

(Standing orders were suspended to allow members of the public to ask questions).

MOP1 – Will the leaflet provided to the councillors at this meeting regarding the referendum be available to the public?

Olly Martins said that a similar leaflet will be sent out to all households.

Cllr. Ramsay stated that the residual referendum leaflets from this meeting would be available from the Council reception.

MOP 2 – Receiving a positive response when calling 101 would be appreciated in order to get the community and police working together better.

Olly Martins agreed with this and said that it is in his vision and is working towards it with the Chief Constable but the control room is under pressure.

(Standing Orders were reinstated)

7. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. Cllr B Briars requested that item 11a be amended to say “Cllr B Briars asked that Town Council seek further information regarding the number of affordable housing to be included in developments”

Members received and approved the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 10 March 2015 at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, Saffron Road, Biggleswade. Subject to the above amendment being made.

- b. **PLOS 17th March 2015 Recommendations:**

Item 6a - Development of Sport facilities

Cllr D Albone asked if there was any discussion on what would happen to the vacated field.

Cllr M North confirmed that Biggleswade United would still train on the field and the building would be given to the cricket club.

It was **RESOLVED** to support the proposal by Biggleswade United Football Club.

It was **RESOLVED** to support the proposal in principle by Biggleswade Town Cricket Club and to arrange a further meeting between the Town Council and the Cricket Club to clarify the financial aspects of the proposals before proceeding further.

Item 6b - Music Festival

Cllr B Rix volunteered to be part of the working group to discuss arrangements for a Musical Festival. Cllr M North said that the Town Clerk will be contacting all councillors to ask for volunteers.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Deputy Town Clerk contact all Councillors to ask for volunteers to form a working group to discuss arrangements for a Music Festival and to give recommendations to Council.

Item 6c - Community Garden

Cllr J Lawrence enquired as to who owned the land.

The Town Clerk confirmed that it was Town Council land. It was **RESOLVED** to proceed with a Community Garden on the flower bed at Chestnut Avenue and to ask Cllr P Biernis to establish a group of volunteers to manage it.

It was **RESOLVED** not to install a sign on the flower bed outside Stratton House.

Item 6d - Angler Parking Permits

Cllr M Russell said that she was not happy that this item went to be considered at the PLOS meeting as it is a matter for TCM due to the nature of parking.

Cllr M North explained the reason it was on the PLOS agenda was due to it following on from the fishing issues.

Cllr B Briars said that the item should read "It was **RECOMMENDED** to defer this item until the Town Centre Management meeting when more clarity on the management of car parks is available."

It was **RESOLVED** to defer this item until the Town Centre Management meeting when more clarity on the management of car parks is available.

Item 6e - Quotations for Play Equipment – Springers

It was **RESOLVED** that Quotation A should be accepted (funded from 321 EMR Dev Contributions).

Item 6f - Quotations for repairs to Flood Lighting at Stratton Way Recreation Ground

It was **RESOLVED** that Quotation B should be accepted.

Item 6g - Quotations for repairs to Stratton Way Pavilion

It was **RESOLVED** that Quotation B should be accepted.

Item 6h - Play equipment at the Lakes Recreation Ground

It was **RESOLVED** to seek quotes for the removal of the play equipment and safety surfaces from The Lakes Recreation Ground and relocation of the swings to a more suitable location.

Item 6i - Kubota Utility Vehicle

It was **RESOLVED** to ask the Town Clerk to provide further information to include details of the current vehicles, their usage and how an additional vehicle would be used.

8. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Cllr B Briars asked if there had been any answers regarding item 8a where he had previously asked if there was any word from the Lord of the Manor and had there been any response regarding parking on verges. He also asked if these items can be kept on the agenda until resolved.

The Town Clerk said that the agents for the Lord of the Manor have confirmed that they are considering the Town Council's correspondence. There has been no response on Verge and Footway Parking.

9. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- a. **CB/15/00756/MW - Biggleswade Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC), Bells Brook, Biggleswade**

Redevelopment of the Biggleswade Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) to form a split level HWRC, incorporating a site office/welfare facility, parking and associated infrastructure.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council raise **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application, but request that the speed bump as you enter the site is removed from the plan.

b. **CB/15/00424/FULL – 48A Shortmead Street**

Change of Use: Conversion and alterations to existing industrial building to provide 2 No. two bedroom flats, demolition of existing single storey workshop building, detached garage/outbuildings, and provision of 3 No. parking spaces, amenity space and cycle storage shed.

It was **RESOLVED** that Town Council **OBJECT** to this planning application on the grounds of over development and restricted vehicular access & egress causing safety issues.

10. ACCOUNTS

a. **Financial Administration**

Cllr P Biernis asked for clarification as to why the rent expenditure for the year to date was showing a minus figure.

Cllr M North confirmed that it was down to a question of recharging it to the main account.

For members to receive and **RESOLVED** to adopt the following accounts:

- i. Detailed Balance Sheet to 28 February 2015
- ii. Summary of Income & Expenditure.
- iii. Current Bank Account, receipts and payments to 28 February 2015.

11. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. **Bedfordshire Constabulary**

Members received and **NOTED** the Crime Figures from Bedfordshire Police.

b. **BIGGLESWADE SUN STREET, ROSE LANE, ST JOHN'S STREET PROPOSED ONE-WAY GYRATORY SYSTEM – DESIGN OPTION**

Cllr M Russell was pleased that this scheme had come this far. However, she pointed out that there was no additional parking in Rose Lane.

Cllr J Lawrence said that the cycle way which goes against the traffic was dangerous, there will be increased traffic and buses, and there are already alternate ways to cycle.

Cllr B Rix asked if there was any intention to consult the public on this matter

Cllr H Ramsay confirmed that there was

Cllr D Albone said that there was not already a direct alternative cycle route and that the consultation was a good idea.

Cllr P Biernis asked if there was to be a ban on LGV's as articulated lorries would have difficulty turning at the junction.

Cllr M Russell confirmed there would not be a ban as Highways are altering the junction for buses which should mean that most vehicles will be able to negotiate the junction.

Cllr M Russell formally proposed that additional parking is more important than a cycleway and the Cycleway should be removed from the scheme, (residents of Sun Street should be consulted).

Cllr D Albone asked for an amendment to be made to the resolution for the cycle way to be included.

Members voted to **OBJECT** the amendment.

The Town Council **RESOLVED** that parking is more important than a cycleway and the Cycleway should be removed from the scheme, (residents of Sun Street should be consulted).

c. **Naming of London Road Retail Park**

At the Town council meeting 10th March 2015 It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk write to CBC with the Town Council's suggestion of 'Biggleswade Retail Park'.

The Town Clerk has received the following response;

Unfortunately as previously explained, providing the name selected is considered suitable within the Street Naming and Numbering guidelines Developers are able to select a name of their own preference.

As you may be aware there is a table of charges for street naming and numbering and to amend/change a registered address incurs a fee of £62.00

I could write to the Developer with regards to the Town Council's views but as the application is closed the charge to change/amend the registered address would be required.

I feel it is unlikely that the developer would be agreeable to this.

Members **NOTED** this reply and **RESOLVED** not to pursue this matter any further.

12. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. **Planning application outcomes**

Cllr M Russell commented that the CBC overruling's on this report echoed that of the Red Lion application where the issues and concerns discussed at council and forwarded to CBC, regarding the Red Lion have unfortunately already materialised. Therefore the Town Council's concerns and objections should be taken into account by CBC when applications are being considered.

Cllr M Russell said that there was a list of issues which had been reported prior to the planning application

Cllr J Lawrence said that the issues such as music are dealt with by licencing at Central Bedfordshire Council and any issues should be reported to them. However, with the opening of the refurbished Red Lion this list will have to be started from the beginning.

13. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no questions from the members of public.

Cllr Ramsay informed the meeting that the exempt matters discussed on 10th March were still ongoing.

14. 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.

There were no exempt items.

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.