



**MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2019
AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL,
THE OLD COURT HOUSE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE**

PRESENT:

- Cllr D Albone
- Cllr K Brown
- Cllr G Fage
- Cllr L Fage
- Cllr F Foster (Vice Chairman)
- Cllr M Foster
- Cllr M North
- Cllr M Knight
- Cllr R Pullinger
- Cllr H Ramsay
- Cllr M Russell (Chairman)
- Cllr D Strachan
- Cllr C Thomas

- Mr P Truppin – Locum Clerk
- Mr M Thorn, Deputy Town Clerk
- Mrs J Durn – Meeting Administrator, Biggleswade Town Council
- Members of Public 11, including Simon Newton, Town Centre Operations Manager, BTC

B26/1101 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr I Bond, Cllr J Woodhead

ABSENT WITHOUT APOLOGIES

None

B26/1102 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

B26/1102.1 a. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in any agenda item - None

B26/1103 3. TOWN MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor together with Councillor colleagues attended the Christmas Lights Switch-on event on Friday 22 December and would like to record what an excellent event it was and to thank everyone involved in putting it together and ensuring the smooth running on the night.

B26/1104 4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no comments from members of the public.

B26/1105 5. INVITED SPEAKER

None

B26/1106 6. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

B26/1106.1 a. Cllr M Knight: informed Members that following reports of concerning levels of crime in the town, he had emailed the Clerk, with copies to Councillors, requesting some information about the provision of CCTV in Biggleswade. Looking at the Council Accounts there is significant unspent budget available for CCTV. Cllr Knight requested an update from the Clerk and is awaiting a response.

B26/1106.2 b. Cllr R Pullinger: Facebook refers to a Planning Application for Unit 1 Albone Way, but this is not on the Agenda tonight. It has a deadline of 10 December 2019 so if it comes to next meeting, there be no time for the Town Council's response to be recorded.

The Locum Clerk said that this Application has not reached the Council, and he will be looking into it and seeking an extension to the deadline if required.

B26/1106.3 c. Cllr D Strachan: Some months' ago, Members were told that there were going to be improvements made to Biggleswade station as a result of compensation due to rail delays and requested an update.

Cllr R Pullinger reported that he has been informed that Biggleswade Station is in the first tranche of planned improvements.

Council asked if Network Rail could be contacted and a formal update requested. The Clerk will action this request.

B26/1107 7. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

B26/1107.1 a. Members **received and approved** the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Tuesday, 12 November 2019 at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, Saffron Road, Biggleswade.

B26/1107.2 b. Members received the **Recommendations** and **Resolutions** of the Town Centre Management Committee held on 5 November 2019 at the offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, Saffron Road, Biggleswade.

Cllr North went through the **Recommendations and Resolutions** of the TCM:

The policy for the A Boards and Tables & Chairs has been adopted and will now be implemented.

The Car Park Working Group: TCM are waiting for the final benchmarking information covering Saturday footfall before making a final decision.

Biggleswade Town Centre Project ideas – the way forward:

A document giving ideas for future projects for the regeneration of the town has been put forward to TCM and a Working Group has been set for 3 December to take these ideas forward.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the **Recommendation** that the Car Park Working Group hold a final meeting, following which a decision will be made.

B26/1108 8. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the Town Council Meeting held on 12 November 2019.

B26/1109 9. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

**B26/1109.1 a. CB/19/03704/FULL – Holme Mills, Langford Road, Biggleswade SG18 9JY
Canopy Roof with no walls adjacent to Mill Building**

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

**B26/1109.2 b. CB/19/03772/FULL – 19 Torquay Close, Biggleswade SG18 0FS
2m rear garden ground floor extension to enlarge the existing kitchen/dining area**

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.

**B26/1109.3 c. CB/19/03608/FULL –7 Holme Court Avenue, Biggleswade SG18 8PF
Loft Conversion with Front Cottage Dormer and Rear Roof Velux
Deferred from the Town Council Meeting of 12 November 2019 due to incomplete drawings being provided.**

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 guidelines on the size of the proposed dwellings are complied with to eliminate detriment in respect of light and privacy of adjacent residents.

**B26/1109.4 d. CB/19/03310/FULL – 50 High Street, Biggleswade SG18 0LJ
External alterations including air conditioning units, kitchen extraction flue system and acoustic enclosures**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town council has **NO OBJECTION** to this Planning Application.

**B26/1109.5 e. CB/19/03814/ADV – Retail Unit 3, Purcell Place, Sullivan Court, Biggleswade SG18 8SX
1 x internally illuminated fascia signage 1 x internally illuminated projected sign 2 x Logo window vinyl's.**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town council has **NO OBJECTION** to this Planning Application.

B26/1110 10. ACCOUNTS

B26/1110.1 Financial Administration

Members received the following Accounts for adoptions:

- i. Detailed Balance Sheet to 31/10/2019.
- ii. Summary of Income & Expenditure to 31/10/2019.
- iii. Income and Expenditure by budget heading to 31/10/2019.
- iv. Current Bank Account, receipts and payment to 31/10/2019.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Accounts presented were approved.

Cllr Ramsay highlighted the fact that the current account balance stood at £709,080 and the bank will only guarantee up to £85,000, so the balance is not safeguarded. It was agreed in January 2018 that BTC would use the services of CCLA investment management.

CCLA manage investment for charities, religious organisations and the public sector. The Public Sector Deposit Fund offers a secure government backed fund with instant access and with nominal interest paid on the balance. You can request monies by 11am and it will be received by 4pm on the same day.

The Locum Clerk informed Members that there had been a change of personnel at CCLA, but new forms had been received. He added that after Derek Kemp, the Accountant, and the Clerk held the annual pre-budget meeting with the BTC Chairs, Derek Kemp and the Clerk were looking at alternatives to the Public Sector Deposit Fund.

Cllr Ramsay asked that in the meantime funds should be placed in the investment account as soon as possible.

B26/1111 11. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

B26/1111.1 a. Meeting Dates and Draft Minutes

1. The proposed schedule of Council and Committee meetings was not approved. The Meeting Chairmen will meet with the Town Clerk to discuss this further.

2. The request to withdraw the requirement to publish draft minutes within 28 days of the meeting was not approved. This requirement will stay in place. The proposal, which was voted on and passed, with one abstention.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Mayor and Committee Chairmen will meet with the Town Clerk to set acceptable meeting dates.

B26/1111.2 b. Boundary commission Electoral Review – Consultation period extended

This information was **NOTED**.

B26/1111.3 c. **Concerns from Biggleswade Shopkeepers**

Following concerns reported by shopkeepers at the last Council Meeting, Cllr D Strachan reported that he had a meeting with Chief Superintendent Boyle and has taken these concerns forward.

He was informed that a number of “Action Plans” have been put in place by the police, who are working in partnership with the Town Centre Operations Manager to act on information received.

Inspector Nick Masters attended the recent Joint Committee Meeting to update Members on the situation around shop burglaries and vandalism. He reiterated the need for information to be passed on to the police and a crime number received. The police can only act when they are in receipt of information and the importance of reporting crimes cannot be emphasised enough as the statistics do not reflect fully what is actually happening in the town. Inspector Masters assured Members that the police are putting considerable resources into resolving this matter.

Issues regarding additional CCTV are being investigated by the Town Centre Operations Manager who is liaising with CBC and CCTV central operations.

It was suggested that building relationships with businesses such as Wetherspoons in the town may help to report incidents of drug dealing which is also an issue of concern.

B26/1112 12. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

B26/1112.1 a. **Planning Application Outcomes**

Members considered the report of the Planning Application Outcomes as at 20/11/2019.

This information was **NOTED**.

B26/1112.2 b. **Biggleswade Baptist Church Proposal for a Community Hub at Kings Reach**

This proposal was **NOTED** and is supported by Members who would be pleased to assist with the publicity on the Town Council website. The Church would like to implement this before Christmas.

B26/1112.3 c. **Land North of Biggleswade**

Members received a copy of the updated Development Brief from Hallam Land Management, who are preparing the outline planning application for the site. It was not clear from this document what changes had been made to the Brief as a result of consultation.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk write to Hallam Land Management to request clarification on changes from the original brief.

B26/1113 13. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Member of public – owner of Café 8:

Queried where he and his staff are able to park in Biggleswade as parking fees are affecting his business. The Chairman informed him of the availability of parking permits for business owners and workers in the town, of which he was unaware. He will visit the Town Council offices and obtain further information regarding permits. He also reported that his business had been burgled.

Mr Seddons spoke of his disappointment that, despite repeated assurances, there has still been no positive action by the police on the thefts and vandalism on shopkeepers' premises. Crimes have been reported to the police. Mr Seddons has viewed CCTV evidence of recent burglaries which were captured on Maxwell's CCTV, and passed this information on to the police two weeks ago. Not only did no-one come out, but there has still been no further communication from the police. Shopkeepers have not been kept informed and are becoming increasingly frustrated. Business rates are exorbitant and each time a crime number is issued it has to be passed on to the insurance companies, who in turn increase the business insurance premiums to a higher level as they are considered a risk.

Mr Sheldon asked if Cllr Strachan could send the crime information to Cllr Bond who can then pass this on to the Chamber of Trade to make them aware of the issues concerning Biggleswade businesses.

Amanda Cawthorne from the Biggleswade Community Safety Team also suggested using their Facebook page "Biggleswade Business Watch" to report incidents and promote awareness.

Mr Harris, Pictures of Lily Tattoo Shop, has been passing information to the police, including descriptions, and even names of those involved. The level of crime is now putting pressure on businesses as it is having an adverse effect on people visiting the town and shopkeepers are, therefore, losing business.

It was reported that, during one call made to the police to report an incident, the advice was "not to bother". Councillors were surprised to hear this comment and said that the police should be asked why this happened.

A previous conversation with the Chamber of Trade regarding the supply of walkie-talkies for the shops has not received a response. The Town Centre Operations Manager reported that he is currently looking into the latest handsets which allow communication and also take photographs. He will be liaising with shopkeepers with this information.

Mrs S Grayson, Biggleswade Community Group, was upset to hear these reports from the shopkeepers. The Community Group slogan of "See something, say something" must be reinforced to help people be aware of the importance of reporting these incidents

The Chairman said that all this information will be passed on to the police but would reiterate that both Inspector Masters and Chief Superintended Boyle have asked that shopkeepers continue to report the crimes in order that statistics show the need for crime to be addressed with high priority.

Three points were noted by the Chairman:

1. The Council are unaware of what actions are being taken in the background by the police and they must be given some credit for dealing with the information they have to hand.
2. Cllr Strachan will feed back the information received tonight to the police as a matter of urgency.
3. Council do not like what is happening to the town at the moment and is fully in support of shopkeepers and workers in the town at this time. The Council is keen to work with businesses and the police in any way possible in order to have a resolution to these issues.

Mrs S Grayson would like to say a huge thank you to Council staff, including office and ground staff who worked closely with the Community Safety Group at both the Lights Switch-on event and the Remembrance event. She would like to acknowledge how hard the Council staff worked, and also the appreciation for all the extra hours they put in to ensure the smooth running of the event and the safety of the roads. She mentioned in particular the White Hart crossing which the BTC Office Manager helped to man.

Cllr H Whitaker: would like to confirm that Biggleswade has been put forward to receive passenger development funds. The first tranche of work is due to come forward, although no definite news has as yet been received.

B26/1114 14. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

**15a. Exempt Minutes and Matters Arising
from the Council Meeting 12/11/2019**

15b. Health Provision

15c. Traffic Management Survey

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.