

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OFF STREET CAR PARKING COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 MAY 2012 AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE, SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE

Present: Cllr Mrs M Russell (Chair), Cllr Mrs H Ramsay, Cllr Ms S Mulchrone, Cllr Mrs W Smith, Cllr G Wilson, Cllr S Watkins, Cllr D Albone (arrived at 7.05pm), Cllr R Skinner
Louise Wilcox – Deputy Town Clerk

Also present Cllr I Bond (arrived at 7.10pm), Cllr B Briars and Cllr P Vickers

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr D Lawrence

a. ELECTION TO THE OFFICE OF VICE CHAIR

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr D Lawrence be appointed to the office of Vice Chair of the Off Street Car Park Committee for the period 2012/2013.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Mr Alan Clark raised concerns regarding parking on Sun St, the need for gullies near ASDA to be cleared and the poor condition of the car park alongside the Rose Lane car park.

Mr Clark elaborated that poorly parked vehicles on Sun Street are making it difficult for vehicles to pass through and in particular emergency vehicles.

Cllr Mrs M Russell advised that the council has previously requested CBC highways write to all residents in Sun St. Cllr Mrs M Russell requested that the town council ascertain if CBC have done this.

Mr Clark highlighted that the footpath along the Rose Lane car park is breaking up in places and is falling away. The condition of the footpath is causing some access difficulties.

Cllr Mrs M Russell advised Mr Clark that this issue will be noted and taken forwards.

Mr Tony Reynolds- raised concerns regarding parking on Chaucer Drive, Dells Lane, London Rd, and Tennyson Avenue. This issue is getting worse and refuse vehicles have difficulties passing along these roads.

Cllr Mrs M Russell advised that the Town Council are looking to meet with CBC regarding the development of a parking strategy for the town. These matters can also be referred to the new joint committee.

4. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

a. Members received and approved the minutes of the Off Street Car Parking meeting held on 14 February 2012.

b. MATTERS ARISING

Item 4G as listed on the agenda – Commuter Parking – Tennyson Avenue, Chaucer Drive & Dickens Court.

Cllr Mrs M Russell asked the deputy town clerk if a response had been received to the letter sent to CBC. The Deputy Town clerk advised that she was not aware that a response had yet been received. It was requested that the Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk follow this up.

5. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Aldi car parks

1. Members received a petition against the parking restrictions in Aldi car parks

Cllr Mrs M Russell advised she was unaware who had prepared the petition; other councillors similarly did not know the source of the petition.

Cllr D Albone proposed that the petition be accepted. This was seconded by Cllr R Skinner.

2. Cllrs Mrs M Russell and H Ramsay gave the following report to the Council on their meeting with Aldi on 14 May 2012.

Cllr. Ramsay and I invited the Chairman of the Chamber of Trade, Martin Thomas, to attend the meeting with us.

We met Francesca Haynes, Store Operations Director, and Roland Stanley, Property Director.

Aldi explained their position:

- After it first opened, the Biggleswade store was borderline viable
- After the introduction of 1.5 hours parking, the store turnover went up by 45%
- They serve 8,000 to 10,000 customers a week
- The catchment area that they need is 30,000
- A store the size of Biggleswade needs 80 car parking spaces
- They have 100 – roughly 50 on either side of Bonds Lane
- They are not responsible for the overall parking situation in the town
- They believe that they are keeping the terms of the covenant in that parking is available.
- The situation was abused before by all-day parkers – both commuters and people who work in the town.
- They feel that they have unfairly received a bad press.
- They now have a similar policy across all their stores and acknowledge that it would have been better to introduce restrictions immediately the store opened.

We explained the town's position in detail:

- We agreed that Aldi are not responsible for the situation that Biggleswade finds itself in.
- We agreed to disagree on their interpretation of the covenant.
- We agreed that there does need to be some management of parking.
- We understood their trading position and would want them to remain in Biggleswade.
- We pointed out that long term solutions are complex and expensive.
- However, the Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council are looking at strategic options.
- Meanwhile, to help the situation in the short to medium term, we asked that Aldi consider extending the parking time limit to 3 hours, at least on the northern side of Bonds Lane.
- We also asked if it would help if the Town Council managed the northern half of the car park for them.

Cllr H Ramsay added that Aldi advised they would consider the Town Councils request although their car parking policy applies nationally and it would be difficult to make a variation to this policy.

Cllr D Albone thanked Cllrs Russell and Ramsey for attending the meeting and recommended a follow up letter be sent to Aldi, thanking them for the meeting and imploring them to consider the matters raised.

Cllr Mrs M Russell explained that they discussed the petition with ALDI and they noted this.

Cllr Mrs W Smith asked if this makes the covenant null and void.

Cllr Mrs M Russell responded that the Land Registry title deeds are not sufficiently clear on this matter and CBC are unable to provide any clarification and the deeds date back to the 1970's. Cllr Mrs M

Russell stated that in her own opinion the Council would be wasting time and money attempting to pursue a legal route.

Members **RECOMMENDED** writing to Aldi thanking them for the meeting and reiterating the points put forwards in the meeting.

b. New Inn walkway - update

Members received an update on the ongoing issues with the new Inn Walkway, correspondence was attached.

Cllr Mrs M Russell informed members that Martin Thomas of the Chamber of Trade has been speaking with Andrew Scanlon of Greene King regarding the issues with the walkway and that Mr Scanlon has acknowledged that there are problems with the walkway. Cllr Mrs M Russell believes that CBC may have served an enforcement order on the premises.

Cllr R Skinner noted that the gazebos are still present in the walkway.

Cllr P Vickers stated that as 2+ months have passed since the letter from Greene King; very little progress has yet to be made.

Cllr Ms S Mulchrone explained that she has heard that the licensee of the New Inn is looking to make an application to CBC to license the area of land in front of the premises. It is possible that this application may have now been submitted to CBC.

Cllr Mrs M Russell asked members if they wished to respond to Greene King's letter of 6th March.

Cllr P Vickers stated that there has been no apparent change in the 2+ months since the letter was received and that there is the possibility that this area could be extensively used over the summer months this should be addressed with Green King.

Cllr Mrs W Smith proposed that a letter be sent to Greene King, Cllr S Watkins seconded this.

Cllr D Albone suggested that as Mr Scanlon's contact number is included within the letter he could be contacted verbally.

Cllr Mrs W Smith stated that the council should try and speak to Mr Scanlon and also put a letter in writing.

Members **RECOMMENDED** that a letter be sent to Mr Scanlon and that the companies managing director Mr Longbottom be copied in.

c. ASK Restaurant – waste bin storage - update

At the Off Street Car Park meeting of the 14th February 2012 the Clerk was asked to write to ASK to have them remove the waste bins from Town Council Property.

Members considered a response received from agents acting for ASK Restaurant.

Cllr Mrs M Russell explained the response received from ASK Restaurant's agent, which states that CBC agreed to a variation of the planning condition permitting ASK to store bins on the White Hart car park.

Cllr B Briars expressed his surprise that CBC have given permission when the land in question is owned by the Town Council. He stated that this should be pointed out to both CBC and ASK, and they should be asked to explain how this circumstance has occurred. He noted the increasing numbers of bins stored in the area now in the region of 4 or 5 and the possible issues that this may cause with rodents and vermin.

Cllr Mrs W Smith stated that this response from ASK was totally unacceptable, CBC are clearly at fault here and they should be asked to explain what the procedure should have been.

Cllr Mrs M Russell informed members that she met with the Town Clerk the previous week to discuss this issue, she proposed that a response along the lines of Cllr B Briars and Cllr W Smith's comments be sent to ASK and CBC.

Cllr Mrs M Russell proposed a letter be sent to ASK requesting they revert to the approved plan for internal bin storage and remove all bins from the Town Council land. She added that the Town Council should include the possibility of making a rental charge for the use of the land.

Cllr Mrs M Russell proposed a letter be sent to CBC Head of Planning Trevor Saunders referring to condition 7 asking for the status of this condition and an explanation of the process that led to the 2009 variation and to why the Town Council as landowner was not consulted.

Cllr B Briars suggested that ASK could be charged for the space as car parking spaces, other authorities have been known to do this. Cllr B Briars asked if ASK could be suggested to negotiate with the White Hart pub regarding space for bin storage.

Cllr Mrs M Russell felt it would not be appropriate for the Town Council to recommend this.

Cllr Mrs M Russell explained that the Town Clerk has reviewed correspondence on the planning files on CBC's website regarding the variation of this planning condition in 2009.

Members **RECOMMENDED** that letters be sent to ASK restaurants and CBC as discussed.

d. ASDA car park

At a meeting of the Biggleswade Community Liaison Forum held on 7 April 2004, (minutes were attached to the agenda) a representative of ASDA said that parking would be restricted to 2/3 hours and that they would be happy with 3 hours.

This subsequently changed when the section 106 agreements were approved.

Due to current parking difficulties in the town, I ask this Committee to consider approaching ASDA to discuss an increase the parking limit from 2 hours to 3 hours.

Cllr Mrs M Russell explained that at a meeting in 2004 the Town Council requested a 3 hour limit on car parking. The subsequent S106 negotiations which councillors are not party to did not address this requirement.

Cllr Mrs M Russell invited member's comments on whether the Town Council should approach ASDA and request the current 2 hour limit be increased to 3 hours.

Cllr Mrs W Smith suggested there would be no harm in making this request, although she would be surprised if ASDA agreed to it.

Cllr Mrs M Russell advised that the Town Clerk is endeavouring to get a meeting with the officer at CBC responsible for parking strategy. It is essential that the strategy is in line with CBC's document. This is also a matter that can be addressed through the joint committee.

Cllr D Albone recommended that the Council should take a consistent approach as with the Aldi store and request the 3 hour waiting limit as the Council requested in 2004.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Town Council write to ASDA.

6 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

There were no items for information.

7. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Mr Bacon requested could ALDI be asked to tidy up there car park. Cllr Mrs M Russell responded that the Council would look to request this at a later date.

Members further discussed the issues with the New Inn walkway

8. 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.

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