

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON
17 FEBRUARY 2015 AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE,
SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE**

Present: Cllr Mrs M Russell (Chairman)
Cllr D Albone
Cllr P Biernis
Cllr M North
Cllr Mrs H Ramsay
Cllr B Rix
Cllr S Watkins
Cllr G Wilson
Rob McGregor – Town Clerk
Angela Thomas – Minute Clerk
Members of the Public (MOP) – 10
Adam Turney

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr I Bond (Vice Chairman).

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

To receive Statutory Declarations of Interests from Members in relation to:

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – none declared.
- (b) Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – none declared.

3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Mop1: I note that you have refurbishment of car parks on the agenda, how & when will Council receive recommendations of this committee.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – I am sure that you have been informed of this previously, the recommendations will go to Council next week or the first Council meeting in March.

4. MINUTES OF MEETING

Members received and approved the Minutes of the Town Centre Management Meeting held on the 18th November 2014.

5. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the Town Centre Management Meeting held on the 18th November 2014.

6 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Improvements: Rose Lane – Mill Lane & St Andrew’s Street Car Parks

Quotations were received to carry out drainage, surfacing and marking out of parking bays on Rose Lane car park.

Quotations were also received to carry out surfacing and marking out parking bays on Mill Lane and St Andrews Street car parks.

Members considered quotations to carry out drainage, surfacing and marking out of parking bays on Rose Lane car park.

Members also considered quotations to carry out surfacing and marking out parking bays on Mill Lane and St Andrews Street car parks.

Cllr Mrs M Russell stated that the quotations came from companies recommended by Highways at CBC as they had already done work for CBC.

Cllr P Biernis – who is responsible for the fence at Rose Lane car park I am concerned about the fencing as the condition is very poor.

Cllr Mrs M Russell stated that there are issues at the bottom end of the car park; I will ask the Town Clerk to look at this.

Cllr D Albone said that one of the quotations mentioned that the car parks will be maintained for 6 years, and the other does not.

The Town Clerk confirmed it was an error on his part and that they are the same.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay highlighted that one quote stated machine suck the drainage and one flush jet the drainage and would this give the same result. It was felt that it would.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – Quote A is the better quote although slightly more expensive. It indicates a more thorough job.

Cllr M North – I agree with Cllr Russell we need to get the best job we can as we will have to live with the outcome for a long time.

Cllr G Wilson wondered what was going to happen with the excess materials, once removed.

Cllr Mrs M Russell replied that it depended on which Quotation we went for, Quotation C will re-use any excess materials at the allotments, Kennel Farm Road, Quotation A will have no excess materials.

Cllr B Rix – would the allotment holders object to the materials being used on the site.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the allotment road needs repairing and that the allotment holders would be content.

QUOTE A Proposed: Cllr Mrs H Ramsay Seconded: Cllr S Watkins

It was RECOMMENDED that Quote A is accepted for the works to Rose Lane, Mill Lane and St Andrews Street car parks at a total cost of £99,260.00 + VAT.

Members **resolved** to take item 6e of the agenda as Adam Turney was present at the meeting.

e. Improving Way finding and Mapping System in Biggleswade Town Centre

Members were asked to consider improving way finding and mapping systems in Biggleswade town centre.

Cllr B Rix said he was very delighted that Adam Turney brought this proposal forward with no benefit to himself and would like to take forward the proposal.

Cllr D Albone agreed and asked who will take ownership of this – can we do it ourselves

Cllr Mrs M Russell replied by saying that we would need to talk to CBC, the Town Clerk has advised that CBC did update the signs 5 years ago at their own cost. Do you agree that the Town Clerk and I discuss the proposal with Adam Turney and report back to the next meeting of Town Centre Management.

Cllr Mrs M Russell told Adam Turney that we would very much like to go ahead and will discuss the proposal in more detail with him at later date. The Town Clerk would contact him to make arrangements.

Proposed: Cllr B Rix Seconded: Cllr D Albone

It was RECOMMENDED that the proposals are taken forward, that the Chairman of TCM and the Town Clerk meet with Adam Turney and take any recommendations back to the next meeting of TCM (2nd June 2015).

b. Car Park Management

Quotations were received for management of Town Council car parks at the Railway Station, White Hart, Chestnut Avenue, Mill Lane and St Andrews Street car parks.

Members were asked to consider the quotations for the management of Town Council car parks;

Cllr Mrs M Russell – the TCM parking task group met 3 weeks ago and these quotes were obtained as an outcome of that meeting. I was disappointed that we did not receive a third quotation from our current contractor with regards to extended car park management.

Concerns have been raised about parking with regard to Dominos. The delivery drivers use Chestnut Avenue car park, wait to deliver and return within the 2 hours limit; they continually park on the pavement and road on the corner by Dominos. Although the manager has been approached about this by Smart Parking – nothing has been done.

Cllr B Rix said some degree of monitoring and enforcement should be taken regarding Dominos.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – Dominos parking on street comes under CBC control. However, there is a case for going to CBC to offer to manage all the parking.

Cllr M North – we should go with the management fee, we need to have the car parks monitored daily and a dedicated patrol.

Cllr Mrs M Russell pointed out that in Quote A any PCN income will be retained by the Management Company. However, in Quote B there will be a 50/50 split between the Town Council and the Management Company.

Cllr North stated we should therefore go for Quote B.

QUOTE B Proposed: Cllr M North Seconded: Cllr G Wilson

It was RECOMMENDED that Quote B is accepted for the management of Town Council car parks; Signage initial year £1,650.00 + VAT; Management Fee £13,000.00 + VAT per annum.

c. Biggleswade Saturday Market

Correspondence was received from the Biggleswade Chamber of Trade asking members to consider a revamp of the Saturday market. Below is set out the proposals.

I wonder as we have now seemingly got the question of the parking problems caused by commuters being addressed at the BJC, can we include on the next Town Management Meeting the revamp of the town centre Saturday market as discussed for the future when the Master Plan was discussed. The market being in the Town Council's control.

This being the market on a Saturday being split up between the Market Square itself and the top half of Hitchin Street. This will without doubt increase the Saturday trade in the town for shops and the Market by opening up the Market Street for car parking as is the case for the mid-week market. Estimates for the year could increase trade up to £720,000 per year. It will also help the Town Centre hold its own when the new Retail Centre in London is opened.

With the extra parking will encourage the letting of the large empty shops that are presently vacant, coupled with the present trading being helped to mitigate any future loss of traders?

With the Market being more attractive for the town will also encourage more stall holders.

To this end the Chamber will in discussion with the Town Council help to market by raising funds to help the towns trading.

Members were asked to consider the correspondence from the Chamber of Trade. Also, copies of potential revised layouts were handed out to the Committee.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – the Chamber of Trade has some planning done and has produced three different layouts of the Saturday market, (A, B, & C) without using Market Street. The plans indicate that the market could be contained within the actual Market Square and the top of Hitchin Street. Closing the top of Hitchin Street would mean losing three parking spaces on a Saturday but this would free up 41 spaces on Market Street.

A TRO would be required to close the top of Hitchin Street although we could remind CBC of the outstanding request to reverse the flow of traffic in Hitchin Street which would mean the permanent closure of the top of Hitchin Street. There is an issue with plan A in that stalls 17 & 19 are placed on land that is privately owned.

If members were happy to recommend to Council, the market superintendent and the Town Clerk could get together and review the revised layouts.

Cllr B Rix – I like the idea of exploring options and getting the feedback.

Cllr D Albone – I couldn't support these proposals as there would be an increasing conflict with pedestrians.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay – how would traffic flow be effected.

Cllr Mr M Russell – the traffic would enter off the High Street and exit through Market Street.

Cllr P Biernis – how has the £720,000.00 loss of income been worked out.

The Chair asked members if they would be happy for Martin Thomas of the Chamber of Trade to explain.

Martin Thomas – the Town is below the average national retail take and there is an issue in the re-letting of shops. I have spoken with the Chamber of Commerce and larger retailers who give an expected spend per retailer, per car, it comes to about £20.00 to £21.00 per car, freeing up the parking in the market square on the Saturday would help retailers and bring more money to market traders as well.

Boots & New Look are going out of the Town Centre to the retail park and we have the loss of SPAR.

Stores are not being taken up due to the lack of available parking and it is important that we keep a vibrant Town Centre. I thank the Town Council for grasping the situation and doing something with their car parks.

Revamping the market would also generate more trade for Hitchin Street and the market would look more attractive.

Cllr B Rix – I do hear what Cllr Albone is saying about safety, but we do need to support our traders and ask the Town Council to look at this, including measures to look at pedestrians.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – said there is an implication that we would need to get a Traffic Order for Hitchin Street from CBC.

Cllr S Watkins – I support the TRO and exploring this in more detail.

Cllr G Wilson - I don't think there would be any danger to pedestrians, this could give more scope, we should be thinking of advertising the Town and the retail park in something like the Evening Standard. We should give more scope to scrubbing up the town as it is becoming very shabby as the Retail Park is now coming to its conclusion.

Cllr P Biernis – I broadly support, could we not have the crossing as a zebra crossing.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – the traffic would not be going through at any speed, what is the difference between the Saturday market and the mid-week market.

Cllr B Rix – I propose that we progress this matter and take forward the revised layouts and seek a response from the traders, shoppers and residents.

It was RECOMMENDED to approach CBC for a TRO for Hitchin Street and that the Town Clerk, together with the Market Superintendent, explore the revised layouts.

Cllr D Albone asked for a recorded Vote – In Favour Cllr Mrs M Russell (Chairman), Cllr M North, Cllr Mrs H Ramsay, Cllr B Rix & Cllr G Wilson.

Against - Cllr D Albone, Cllr P Biernis & Cllr S Watkins.

d. Parking Problems in London Road, Biggleswade

Correspondence was received from a resident regarding parking in London Road, between the junctions of Dells Lane, and Drove Road/Eagle Farm Road.

He proposed that an order is made to prohibit parking on the carriageway into town, between the aforementioned junctions to London Road, and authorise permit parking in the out carriage way from town, also between the aforementioned junctions on London Road.

Cllr Mrs M Russell pointed out that this has already been addressed by the Council and CBC is preparing a consultation on parking in residential streets. She suggested that we forward the correspondence to Paul Mason who is dealing with the problem of parking and ask him to add this to the current work regarding residential streets.

Cllr M North agreed and proposed that we write to the resident and explain.

Cllr P Biernis has real concerns about this area as there is a high level of near misses and something really serious will happen. This problem has been going on for well over 12 months now.

Cllr B Rix said that in the reply we should make it clear that it is not the Town Council's fault.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said that CBC is thinking of putting a crossing where the lollipop lady is at the bottom of London Road which will restrict parking to some extent. The proposal is to design the crossing and then go to Consultation. CBC councillors also want to extend the 20mph limit from the town centre to the crossing.

It was RECOMMENDED that the issues raised are passed to Paul Mason at CBC to add to the forthcoming consultation on parking in residential streets; that the Town Clerk write to the resident to explain the parking strategy and where the Town Council are with it.

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Transport Interchange

Members received an update from Cllr Mrs M Russell.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said this has been talked about for some time but delivery is going back and back and back. At one stage, CBC had hoped to agree the design with Network Rail by this Spring but there are still some difficulties to overcome. The situation has not been helped because there have been four different CBC officers who have been in charge of this. An initial design was discussed at the last Joint Committee but it was not accurately showing existing buildings and there was too much conflict between pedestrians, cyclists, cars and buses. One of the other issues is existing railway infrastructure which would be difficult to move. It is a work-in-progress but it is not making very fast progress.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay confirmed that every time there is a Joint Committee meeting, there is a different officer dealing with the transport interchange.

Cllr B Rix asked if CBC have any direct sway on improving access to the railway station platforms.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay said that decisions on the priority for improved access are made on footfall and Biggleswade comes well down the list. It is Network Rail who do the infrastructure.

Cllr M Russell said that she attended a meeting several years ago when Network Rail said their funding for disabled access was limited and, at that time, Biggleswade was not due to be improved until 2015. We are now in 2015 and have heard nothing about improved access. She suggested that we could write to Network Rail.

Four other towns nearby have already been sorted and we never seem to get to the top of the list and appear to be going lower on the list.

Cllr B Rix suggested that we give an invitation to Network Rail to attend Council.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay said that Anne Skinner had been looking into this on behalf of the Town Steering Group and it would be worthwhile getting in touch with Anne Skinner first.

b. Sun Street – St Johns Street One Way System

Members received an update.

This had been raised at the Biggleswade Joint Committee and we were told that a design has been developed with a budget estimate of £150,000.00 to include re-surfacing as well as the necessary signage, etc. The works are currently unfunded but the developers from land North of Potton Road have agreed in principle to put money towards the scheme.

Cllr P Biernis said that he would like to see calming measures in this area with a 20 mph speed limit. In fact he would like a 20mph zone all across the Town. He said that he had concerns about noise and safety issues.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said that the Town Council has already objected to calming measures in St. John's Street as it felt that parking acts as a calming measure.

Cllr D Albone - would developer's contributions fully fund the project.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – I don't know the answer to that question. We will keep pushing this issue at the Biggleswade Joint Committee.

c. Dan Albone Car Park

Members received an update.

The condition survey is now complete and with the solicitors and the Fen Reeves.

Cllr D Albone – can we also manage Dan Albone as it is wrongly used by lorries.

The Town Clerk confirmed that Dan Albone has the same 24-hour order as Rose Lane. The Council would need to look at both and get new traffic orders in place.

The Town Clerk will look at the parking orders for Dan Albone and Rose Lane.

d. Rose Lane Lease

Members were informed that a copy of the lease signed by both parties has now been returned to the Town Council.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said that we now have the Lease in place for another 6 years unless the Lord of the Manor invokes the breaks the clause. The Lord of the Manor wrote during the negotiations to say they would be willing to discuss the long term future of Rose Lane when the lease was signed. We should now pursue this option with the Lord of the Manor if the Committee agrees.

It was RECOMMENDED that the Town Council write to the Lord of the Manor and ask for a meeting to discuss the long term future of Rose Lane car park.

e. Biggleswade Parking Strategy

Cllr Mrs M Russell – we had a meeting with CBC Councillors, Town Council, Martin Thomas representing the Chamber of Trade and Paul Mason, Senior Highways Officer, and went through all the streets affected by commuter parking. There was a long list. We have been asking for a one-hour restriction alternate sides of the roads, as requested for the Dells Lane area. Paul Mason is currently looking at the practical details of such a policy.

The Town Clerk received an email from Paul Mason with the latest timescale; a pre-consultation document will be issued to CBC members in late February, and one week later, it will be issued to the Town Council. The intention is then to make any required adjustments prior to going out to the public in late March. The public consultation will be held in the Town Council chamber.

It is a wide area that is being considered for restrictions, if we don't deal with it all at the same time, the problems will be shifted to other residential streets.

Cllr B Rix – a sub committee of TCM discussed this a year ago and the parking issues are wider than commuter parking, we had a plan for clearer parking that included patrols, and we should ask CBC to take account of what we have all agreed already. Dealing with commuter parking will draw issues to other areas of parking.

Cllr Mrs M Russell pointed out that we don't have the legal powers to implement the entire parking strategy. We can't take some of this forward without the help of CBC.

Cllr Mrs H Ramsay – we have tried through the BJC to push the parking strategy forward, I think we need to go along with what can be done.

Cllr P Biernis – we put forward modelling to CBC on parking, no one from CBC has come to talk to us, and I have been trying for four months to get white lines painted outside a school.

Cllr B Rix – I think we should write to CBC expressing our concern that they are only dealing with one parking issue in town.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – during the task group set up by the BJC to look at parking, it became obvious that CBC only wanted to look at commuter parking. The issue of the effect on other aspects of parking, particularly the Town Council car parks, was raised several times but not taken forward.

Cllr D Albone – If CBC are working on proposals and that is the offer, we should go along with it.

It was RECOMMENDED to write to CBC to support the proposals to deal with commuter parking but to express concern at the negative impact of pursuing a single strand for parking in Biggleswade rather than an overall strategy.

8. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Mop 1: What is the position with regards to communicating the outcomes of tonight's meeting. Town Council have the Website and Facebook - can information be added to the facebook by members of the public.

Also, the sound system in the Chamber is very poor. Is there any way that Town Council can find something that would work successfully.

Cllr Mrs M Russell pointed out that the recommendations will go before council on the 24th February 2015 or the first council meeting in March 2015. Until approved by Council, there is nothing definite to report.

The Town Clerk confirmed that he was already looking into a suitable sound system for the chamber.

Mop 2: The majority of the agenda tonight has been CBC issues and inaction by CBC. Can Council write to CBC and ask for answer on the issues and also write to CBC ward councillors for Biggleswade.

At 8.30 pm Cllr M North left the meeting.

Cllr Mrs M Russell - we could write to the CBC but it is not appropriate to send letters to individual councillors. We could, however, copy the letter to CBC to the ward councillors.

Mop 3: With the car parking management recommended, will the council have any influence on when the 35hrs are worked.

The Town Clerk said that the company is fairly flexible.

9. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

(10a - Contracts)

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