

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 AUGUST
2015 AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE, SAFFRON
ROAD, BIGGLESWADE**

Present:

Cllr Mrs M Russell (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs H Ramsay
Cllr M North
Cllr G Wilson
Cllr F Foster
Cllr M Foster
Cllr D Strachan
Cllr D Albone
Cllr B Briars
Cllr B Rix (Vice Chairman)
Cllr I Bond

Mr R McGregor – Town Clerk
Mrs J Durn – Minute Taker

Mr C Keeble – Market Superintendent (For item 6)
Mr A Whiteman – Ex Vice President Market Traders Federation (For item 6)

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr S Watkins

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in any agenda item - None declared
- (b) Non-pecuniary interests in any agenda item - None declared

3. 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.

MOP1 Mr M Thomas: The market square layout on a Saturday is of concern, particularly the ongoing parking issue. The Chamber of Commerce would be happy to put funds towards a viable solution.

The Chairman said that as this item is on the Agenda under Agenda item 6a iii). The Market Superintendent is also present and will be able to answer any points of concern; therefore any further discussion on this item should be deferred until we have heard this information.

4. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

For members to receive the minutes of the TCM held on 2nd June 2015.

Page 1: Members asked for clarification on the use of names of those members of public who speak at the meeting. The Town Clerk will check the standing orders to see if the minutes should record the public as MOP, or by the use of their name.

The Minutes will be signed following this clarification.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Matters arising from the minutes of the TCM held on 2nd June 2015.

Page 2: Cllr B Rix asked for information regarding item 8, page 8, Public Open Session. The Town Clerk to look into.

Page 2: Cllr Wilson has been in regular contact with the Sgt Gary Kidd and will keep the committee informed of progress.

Page 3: Item 6b) Improving Wayfinding and Mapping System in Biggleswade Town Centre: Cllr B Rix asked for an update. Cllr Mrs M Russell reported that work on this is ongoing and that she and the Clerk are due to meet Adam Turney to see the progress made.

Page 4: Biggleswade Town Market – parking difficulties: Cllr B Rix asked for an update on the potential move of the market to the top of Hitchin Street and the continual problem of parking. The Town Clerk reported that he has spoken to Mr P Mason at CBC and has been told that CBC do not consider this to be a priority, and it will be covered under the Parking Strategy.

The Chairman assured the members that she will keep pressing for this item to be given urgent consideration.

Page 6: Cllr Foster asked for an update regarding the use of the area of grass at the end of Birch Road and St Johns Street being considered for parking. The Town Clerk reported that this suggestion had been put forward to CBC and had been well received.

Page 7: Transport Interchange. The Town Clerk reported that CBC negotiations are still ongoing regarding the land currently being used by the taxi company and a letter has been sent to Network Rail. The situation has been complicated due to the loss of commercial land. At the moment the date for the transport interchange is 2017.

Members asked for an update on the car park management. This item is covered on the Agenda, under item 6b.

Page 8: Item 7f) A Boards: Cllr B Briars asked for an update as the situation has not improved and the boards are causing obstructions.

The Town Clerk reported that letters are shortly going out to all traders stating that they will need to apply for a licence from the Town Council to display A Boards, and to obtain agreement for the position and placing of the board. The Town Clerk will keep us informed of the results of this.

6. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Overview of Biggleswade Saturday Market

- i. Income for the 3 years ending 31st March 2015, (attached).
- ii. Trader attendance 3 years ending 31st March 2015, (attached).
- iii. Market Consultation.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Colin Keeble, Market Superintendent to the meeting. He was accompanied by Mr Anthony Whiteman, Ex Vice President of the National Market Traders Federation.

Item i) & ii): Income and Trader Attendance

The Members addressed comments and questions to Mr Keeble and received the following response:

Question: There is a noticeable fall in regular traders. Why the decline and why an increase in Casual?

Mr Keeble: Former traders have dropped off due to age, illness and a decline in their takings largely due to competition such as Poundland in the Town. A lot of traders have tried to diversify and adapt their stalls accordingly, however it is a sad fact that nationally markets are in decline and this is the situation all over the country.

I have been actively attracting new traders to the market which has resulted in an increase in Casual. However there is fierce competition from all market towns to attract traders, with incentives of reduced rates, attend for four weeks and have one week free, and other such inducements.

Question: The figures over the last 3 to 4 months show the market in rapid decline. Carnival Day for example, had a particularly low turnout. Has the Market Superintendent any views on how we can halt this decline?

Mr Keeble: Carnival Day is a non-profit making day and therefore a lot of traders choose not to attend as market customers do not go to the market on Carnival Day. The Funfair and attractions take precedence, and market traders simply do not take any money when that event takes place.

The general feedback from the market traders is that the Biggleswade market is more expensive to attend than other markets in the area. Incentives mentioned previously are affecting attendance. The market needs a variety of stalls, and although there is a small waiting list, several of these are duplications. Although a certain amount of competition is healthy, too much duplication would not be beneficial and in the long term would not sustain the market. The ideal complement would be a variety of stalls which is the outcome that the Market Superintendent is striving to achieve.

Comment: Concerns expressed over the increased tables and chairs outside the Surfin Café causing obstruction and restricting access. The Town Clerk reported that the owner of the Surfin Café is bringing a proposal to the Town Council to consider an offer of possible payment for his increased use of space.

Question: Can the Council provide stalls. The Town Clerk said that the Town Council has moved away from stall erection as it was not cost effective due to the decrease in market stalls versus the cost of market erectors.

Question: Do Casual traders become permanent or do they stay as Casual and is there a conversion rate?

Mr Keeble said that most Casual traders want to stay that way. He is unable to enforce permanent traders as this is not wanted by the traders.

Question: Why do people actually visit the market in the first place?

Mr Keeble said that they came for a variety of reasons. Good value products, variety of choice, the wealth of knowledge and expertise provided by established traders.

Mr Anthony Whiteman, Ex Vice President of the Market Traders Federation, spoke in support of Mr Keeble's excellent work, and gave the Members information on fees and incentives that were being offered by other Markets in the area. He is happy to provide more detailed information if required.

Question: If the charges were lower would you invite more traders to attend, regardless of duplication?

Mr Keeble said that the traders are just not out there – however a reduction in rent would increase popularity and interest, and he could then consider duplication.

It had been suggested that Mr Keeble produce a written report, but in light of the current situation it was felt that more urgent and immediate action be taken.

After further discussion on rental charges it was **RECOMMENDED** that the Council halve the current rental fee on the Tuesday Market to £12 and Saturday Market to £14 with immediate effect. This should then be reviewed every six months thereafter.

Item iii) Market Consultation

The Town Clerk reported that he has held discussions regarding the market layout and the issue of freeing up parking spaces on Saturday. The feedback from Traders is that they are not in favour of the suggested rearrangement as this would effectively split the market in two and this would not be conducive to a compact market atmosphere. However as they do not consider Hitchin Street to be an option, they are prepared to compromise.

The Chairman reported that there appeared to have been a lot of mis-information circulating amongst the Traders which has caused unnecessary unrest. It was suggested by the Members that the market consultation be delayed for 6 months as it will not be helpful at the moment.

A decision was made by Council to request a market consultation and in order for the Clerk to take this back to Council for review he will need at least five signatures of support.

The Members were in agreement with this request and will send in signatures to the Town Clerk in order that this item be re-visited at a future Council meeting.

Members felt that the position with the market needed to be monitored and asked for a meeting sooner than three months. The Chairman agreed to a meeting after six weeks.

b. Car Parking Management

New National Government Legislation on Parking is expected shortly. Details are currently available on line if Members wish to research the item.

In the meantime Town Council has suspended criminal parking orders and is ready to use civil enforcement for the car parks it owns.

The Committee was asked to consider appropriate restrictions for Rose Lane and Dan Albone car parks. It was felt that a 6-hour restriction on parking in Rose Lane would be appropriate and that permits for workers and residents should be investigated. The cost of a permit should cover admin costs and the means of operating the system would need to be sorted.

A weight restriction of 3.5 tonnes is within the lease for Dan Albone but we should consider whether a lower limit is necessary. A restriction of up to 10 hours was felt suitable for Dan Albone.

It was agreed that further discussions should take place with Total Parking Solutions to sort out the practicalities of the above for the Committee to consider and put a formal recommendation to Council.

We will then be in a position to implement parking management when the changes required due to the national legislation are in place.

c. Dan Albone Car Park – Lease

Following the Town Centre Management meeting 2nd June 2015 where members **RECOMMENDED** to take the matter of the lease forward with the Town Council's solicitor, a revised draft lease for Dan Albone car park is now available for consideration.

Subject to minor typographical amendments it was **RECOMMENDED** that the lease is signed.

d. Biggleswade Drum Clock

Following consideration it was felt that the one quotation received for the refurbishment of the Drum Clock was unacceptable. Cllr I Bond will contact the Town Clerk with information and contact details of the original clock installation engineer. This item will be deferred until further a further quotation is obtained.

e. Biggleswade Christmas Lights

Members are asked to consider quotations for the Biggleswade Christmas lighting display. The quotations are based on a three-year contract. (copies of the Quotations were attached to the agenda).

It was **RECOMMENDED** to accept Quote 2.

Year 1 Costs - Grand Total £14,489.00.

Year 2 Costs - Grand Total £14,489.00.

Year 3 Costs - Grand Total £14,489.00.

f. **Biggleswade Christmas Fair**

It was agreed that the following Councillors' will form a task group to assist with the Christmas Fair.

Cllr M North
Cllr B Rix
Cllr G Wilson
Cllr B Briars
Cllr Mrs M Russell

g. **Mini Roundabout – Chambers Way & London Road Junction**

It was **RECOMMENDED** that we formally ask CBC to install a mini roundabout at the junction of Chambers Way/ and London Road Junction.

h. **Height Restriction Barrier – Rose Lane**

Members were asked to consider quotations for the purchase of a Height restriction Barrier for Rose Lane Car Park.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to accept Quote 2.

Quote 2. - £1,617.00 + Vat + free delivery, 7m width, 2.1m height.

i. **Rose Lane – Disabled Ramp and Footpath**

Members were asked to consider quotations for the disabled ramp and footpath works.

Following consideration, Members requested an urgent re-quote to include steel edges or concrete kerbs for the footpath. The Town Clerk will obtain these quotations.

j. **Correspondence from a Trader on the Tuesday Market**

Members are asked to consider a letter from a trader on the Tuesday Market, (Letter attached).

The Rules of the market on disputes are as follows;

All Traders are advised to comply with the lawful requests of the Market Superintendent and should if aggrieved record in a proper manner in writing to the Market Superintendent.

Any failure to resolve the dispute should be taken up with the Town Clerk where the aggrieved person and his/her representative will be given the opportunity to discuss the issue.

No approach shall be made to any elected Councillors until these procedures have been fulfilled.

In the event that any grievance relating to these regulations cannot be resolved by either the Market Superintendent or the Town Clerk, the trader may put their grievance in writing to the Chairman of the Town Centre Management Committee who will raise the matter at the next available meeting of the Committee or the next available meeting of the Council.

The decision of the Committee or the Council will be final and binding on all matters.

Following discussion it was the decision of the Members to **RECOMMEND** that Council uphold the decision of the Market Superintendent and the Town Clerk.