

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 19 JULY 2016 AT 7.30 PM
AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE

PRESENT:

Cllr Mrs M Russell (Chairman)
Cllr D Albone
Cllr P Biernis
Cllr I Bond
Cllr B Briars
Cllr F Foster
Cllr M Foster
Cllr M North
Cllr H Ramsay
Cllr D Strachan

Mr R McGregor – Town Clerk, BTC
Mr M Thorn – Deputy Town Clerk, BTC
Mrs J Durn – Administrator, BTC

Members of public – 4
Cllr J Medlock

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr B Rix

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

- (a)** Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item - none
- (b)** Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item - none

3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no questions from Members of the Public.

4. INVITED SPEAKER

Sally Williams – from Retail Revival Ltd, the company commissioned by Central Bedfordshire Council to support the running of Central Bedfordshire Council “High Street Improvement Scheme”; gave a presentation to the Committee outlining the project, which will be delivered by Central Bedfordshire Council as part of the wider Market Town Regeneration Fund Programme. This is a separate strand of the programme and will be delivered in partnership with up to eleven Town Councils and will run from July 2016 to March 2018. It is intended to revitalise market town high streets by providing a range of physical high street improvements to shop fronts, and other local business enhancements. These include ensuring that shop fronts, forecourts and upper floors are well designed and in keeping with the surrounding area.

Local businesses will be invited to participate in this scheme by completing an "Expression of Interest" form, which will then be passed to a Panel consisting of Sally Williams, Retail Revival Ltd (RR), a Biggleswade Town Council (BTC) representative, and a Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) representative, for scrutiny against a scoring criteria. Participating businesses would be expected to commit to a financial undertaking of 40% to the total cost of works associated with their building, and if the application is successful, CBC will match fund.

Members voiced concerns that Biggleswade is a Conservation area, and as such has a "design guide", which is too often ignored by CBC in its planning decisions, permission for illuminated signs being a particular area of concern. There are also many Landlord owned properties in the town who are purely interested in rental, and the few independent businesses that exist may not have the funds to commit to such a scheme.

Standing Orders were lifted at 8.20pm to allow Mr Martin Thomas, from the Chamber of Trade, to speak on this subject.

Mr Thomas raised the following concerns: There are many charity shops in the town and these do not qualify. Also, most of the shops are under a 3 month licence. The footfall is vastly lower than the national average due to the recent lengthy bridge closure. Businesses may consider that the intrusion into their business/trading/staffing information, required by the application form, may not be acceptable.

Standing Orders were reinstated at 8.25pm.

The Presentation ended at 8.30pm and the Chairman thanked Sally Williams for her attendance.

5. **MINUTES OF MEETINGS**

- a. Members received the Minutes of the Town Centre Management Meeting held on 7 June 2016 at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, Saffron Road, Biggleswade.

Page 2, item a) Biggleswade Market

Cllr F Foster asked that the Minutes record his additional comments stated at that Meeting as follows:

"Market Statistics April-May compared to April-May 2016:

Attendance:

1. *According to the supplied figures in April/May this year we increased the total number of attendances of both Regular and Casual Traders from 163 last year to 182 this year.*
2. *Perhaps surprisingly, the figures show we have an increase in Regular Traders attendance in April/May to 129 this year from 85 last year.*
3. *And again surprisingly, the figures show that there has been a decrease in Casual Traders from 78 last year to 53 this year.*
4. *Overall in this period the total attendances of both Regular and Casual traders has increased by 19 – up by 12%*

Fees:

April – May 2015 £4948

April – May 2016 £3510

In Conclusion:

1. *It is encouraging that in April-May we have seen an increase in total trader attendances of 12%.*
2. *This increase in numbers seems to have come at a cost of 29% of our revenue year on year.*
3. *We need to consider if this trend will continue and if it does, whether the loss of revenue is a price worth paying in the shorter term to preserve and hopefully continue the increase in the number of traders – and revenue – in the longer term.”*

These comments will be added to the previous Minutes, which will then be signed as an accurate record of the Meeting.

6. **MATTERS ARISING**

- a. Matters arising from the minutes of the Town Centre Management meeting held on 7 June 2016.

Page 3, Item b: Rose Lane Car Park – Fencing:

The Town Clerk has ordered the fencing and is awaiting a completion date from the contractor.

7. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Biggleswade Market**

i) Update on the Saturday Market (statistics attached):

Members were asked to review the latest statistics for the Saturday Market and the 6 month reduced fee policy that is currently in place.

Cllr F Foster reported that from April – July we have had an increase of 54% on Regular traders; however we are 28% down on Casuals. Overall our Regular and Casual traders have increased by 14%.

Members felt that although the increased trader figures were encouraging, the town is still recovering from the difficult period of the bridge closure, and it is therefore not prudent to be considering increased charges at this time.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the reduced fees will be extended, and this item will be on the next Agenda in November for review. We will continue to monitor the situation and the Market Superintendent will also be invited to the November meeting to update Council on the effect of the reduced fee policy on the Saturday market.

ii) Update on the Tuesday Market (statistics attached)

Members were asked to review the latest statistics for the Tuesday Market and the 6 month reduced fee policy that is currently in place.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that a complete review of the Tuesday Market is carried out at the next meeting of the TCM Committee in November, together with an update from the Market Superintendent on the effect of the reduced fee policy on the Tuesday Market.

iii) Market Rules and Regulations:

It was suggested that this document be looked at in detail by the Working Group and following amendments, it will be re-presented for approval.

- iv) Following a meeting of the Market Working Group on 12 July 2016, (comprising Cllrs Mrs H Ramsey, Cllr Mrs M Russell, Cllr F Foster and Cllr M North), set up to discuss possible new ways to revitalise the market, in particular Cllr F Foster's suggestion of incorporating a Car Boot section to the Market. Members were asked to consider deferring a decision on incorporating a Car Boot section to the Market to allow time to review the impact on the Market of the bridge re-opening.

However, it was suggested that perhaps other avenues could be explored, such as music and food festivals, and that these and other options should be considered on the next TCM Agenda.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that an item "Market Regeneration Options" be placed on the Agenda for the November meeting, and that the Town Clerk produce a report for this item, covering how the Saturday market could be regenerated, and including the types of specialist markets available for consideration.

b. Market Town Regeneration Fund – High Street Improvement Scheme

Members were asked to consider whether to support a High Street Improvement Scheme proposed by Central Bedfordshire Council as part of the Market Town Regeneration Fund, as explained in the presentation given by Sally Williams from Retail Revival Ltd., under item 4 of the Agenda.

In addition to the presentation, Members also received the following information:

- Guidance Notes for Town Councils
- Draft Contract
- Draft Memorandum of Understanding
- Draft Guidance Notes and Application Form for Businesses

Concerns were raised regarding the interpretation of the Design Guide in relation to the Biggleswade Conservation area, and it was agreed that this would need to be closely monitored. There were also concerns about the additional workload this would place on the Town Council. However, it was felt that this could be potentially good for the town, and we should offer this opportunity to the town traders to gauge their interest in the scheme.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Town Council participate in the High Street Improvement Scheme.

c. Christmas Fair

Members were asked to consider a Working Group to discuss and recommend arrangements for a Christmas Fair.

It was agreed that the previous Fairs had been extremely successful events, and that this is something we can build on for the future.

A Working Group was agreed with the following members:

Cllr B Briars
Cllr F Foster
Cllr M North
Cllr Mrs H Ramsay
Cllr Mrs M Russell

A date will be set up and Members will be notified shortly.

d. Christmas Lights

Members were asked to consider a Working Group to discuss and recommend arrangements for the Christmas Lights.

It was agreed that the same Working Group as the Christmas Fair would meet to discuss the Christmas Lights at a date to be advised. Other Committee Members are welcome to attend when available.

e. Delegation Agreement and Terms of Reference

Members were asked to consider a delegation agreement and revised terms of reference that reflect the proposed delegation agreement.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the delegation agreement and terms of reference of the Town Centre Management Committee (TCM) are adopted by Town Council.

f. Farmers' Market

Members were asked to consider incorporating craft stalls with the Farmer's Market, in order to try and revive the farmers market which has suffered from low attendance in recent months.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that craft stalls are incorporated with the Farmers' Market, and that the market be advertised as the Farmers' and Craft Market. An advertising banner to this effect will be placed in the market square, together with appropriate advertising in the press and on the website.

8. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Market Trade News – Advertising

To inform members that an advertisement was placed in Market Trader News June, July and August 2016.

Members felt that the fees should have been included in the advertisement, and they would also like reference to the inclusion of the Craft Market to be placed in the August issue.

9. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no questions or issues raised from Members of the Public.

The Chairman announced that due to the timing of the High Street Improvement Scheme, the next TCM Meeting will be brought forward to the 1st November 2016.

10. EXEMPT ITEMS

There were no exempt items.

The Meeting concluded at 9.35pm