

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2016 AT 7.00 PM
AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, SAFFRON ROAD,
BIGGLESWADE

PRESENT:

Cllr Mrs M Russell (Chairman)
Cllr P Biernis
Cllr I Bond
Cllr B Briars
Cllr F Foster
Cllr M Foster
Cllr J Medlock – joined the meeting at 7.30 pm
Cllr M North
Cllr H Ramsay
Cllr D Strachan

Mr R McGregor – Town Clerk, BTC
Mrs J Durn – Administrator, BTC
Mr C Keeble – Market Superintendent - for Items 7a and 7b

Members of Public – 3

29/1101 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr D Albone

ABSENCE WITHOUT APOLOGY

Cllr B Rix

29/1102 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

1102.1 Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – Item 8a,
Cllr J Medlock

1102.2 Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item - None

29/1103 3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

1103.1 Mr Mills: It seems that the Council are between a rock and a hard place in respect of Century House. Should not CBC actually be cleaning the toilets if the Town Council don't own the building?

The Town Clerk reported that historically CBC has refused to pay for the cleaning of the toilets, and therefore the Town Council have taken on this service.

1103.2 Mr P Fox: The toilets are in a dreadful condition. What does the Council think about installing a time clock so that the toilets can be more widely available? Mr Fox has spoken to Cllr M Jones who has confirmed that CBC owns the building but has not taken responsibility for the cleaning.

The Chairman reported that the Council would have lost the toilet facility if they had not taken them on. The loss of the toilet facility would mean the loss of the Charter Market, as these facilities are a condition of the market.

This item will be discussed in full under Agenda item 7j.

29/1104 4. INVITED SPEAKER

No invited Speaker.

29/1105 5. MINUTES OF MEETING

1105.1 a. Members received and approved the Minutes of the Town Centre Management meeting held on 19 July 2016 at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, Saffron Road, Biggleswade.

29/1106 6. MATTERS ARISING

1106.1 a. Matters arising from the minutes of the Town Centre Management meeting held on 19 July 2016.

1106.2 Page 4, item 7c, Christmas Fair: Cllr M Foster commented on the success of the Christmas Fair and asked if the recommendations of the Working Group had come back to Council before actions were taken.

The Chairman reported that the Christmas fair is an annual project that rolls forward from previous events, it is therefore not necessary to make a presentation from the Working Group to Council.

The Chairman thanked Mike Thorn, the BTC Administration team and the Ground staff for their hard work in making this an extremely successful event. Also, thanks to Hayley Down, who is a volunteer worker, and who works tirelessly and enthusiastically, for the Town Council at this event every year.

The unwelcome Buskers who appeared at the edges of the market square, hold Pedlars Licences which allow them to operate. They were however, encouraged to make a financial contribution to the event.

29/1107 7. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a **Biggleswade Market**

Members received updates and statistics on:

- i. Saturday Market
- ii. Tuesday Market

and information on the concept of:

- iii. Teenage Market

Mr Keeble reported that the introduction of the stall rent reduction has encouraged more traders to the Market, and has allowed the Market to be more competitive with other Markets in the area. The Tuesday Market, historically a quieter day, is still struggling from the effects of the bridge closure and the opening of the Retail Park. Trade has increased over the last few weeks, but it is largely weather dependant. However, the Saturday Market has seen an increase in consistent trading (doubled), and as a result is busy and buoyant.

It was noted that the Market Trader advertisement has successfully encouraged new trader enquiries; however, it has become clear that traders prefer to trade on a casual basis, rather than be tied to a regular contract that restricts their working pattern, particularly with regard to holiday entitlements and attendance penalties.

The Town Clerk suggested, following discussions with Mr Keeble, that Council consider giving notice to Bedford Borough to cease supply of the large refuse bins, most of which are being mis-used and are an unnecessary expense. This would provide a considerable saving to Market costs.

It was agreed that consideration will be given to reviewing the types of markets the Town can offer to the community; such as holding French, German and Italian markets over two days, rather than one; combining craft and farmers' markets; and the possibility of offering an evening market during summer months.

1107.1 It was **RESOLVED** that:

i. Market fees are increased by £1 from 1st April 2017 to cover inflation.

1107.2 ii. The Town Council terminate the Bin service from Bedford Borough with effect from 1st April 2017.

The reports are positive and encouraging. The Council will continue to monitor the situation and progress any avenues of improvement.

1107.3 iii. Teenage Market

The Chairman explained the concept of the Teenage Market which encourages young people to be entrepreneurial, trial new business ideas and sell creative products, which will in turn revitalise our local markets. This is now a national initiative and Members were asked if they were interested in pursuing this concept for Biggleswade.

It was **RESOLVED** that the initial cost of £1,000 for three years be accepted and that further details would be obtained.

1107.4 b. **Markets Policy**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Markets Policy be adopted.

1107.5 c. **Highways Rural Match Fund Scheme - Application 2017/18**

Members discussed in depth the guidelines and application details for CBC Highways' Rural Match Fund scheme for the financial year 2017/18.

(The closing date for applications is **Friday 3 February 2017**).

1107.6 It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk take forward the following questions:

1. What has already been planned?
2. What LTP funding is being allocated/is available?
3. Chambers Way/Eagle Farm speeding restrictions
4. Incomplete pavements on old and new Estates
5. Upgrade of crossing on Shortmead Street from Zebra to Pelican

Cllr I Bond left the meeting at 8.25 pm.

1107.7 d. **Town Entrances**

Following the request from the Town Council Meeting on 27 September 2016, the Town Clerk has investigated ownership of the land and understands it belongs to Aberdeen Assets.

Cllr Strachan will forward details of a land registry search site to the Town Clerk to enable this information to be clarified.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk contact Highways at CBC to ask if BTC can tidy the small triangle of land at the entrance to Back Meadows, despite not owning it, in order to make it less of an eyesore. There is however, a safety implication for ground staff working close to the Highway, which will need to be taken into account.

1107.8 e. **Mountstar Metal Corporation Ltd – Licence Agreement**

Correspondence informing the Council that the licence agreement will be terminated effective 30 April 2017, was **NOTED**.

1107.9 f. **Parking Enforcement**

Cllr Mrs M Russell and the Town Clerk have been actively involved in meetings with CBC regarding BTC request to look at a partnership arrangement to cover parking enforcement in Biggleswade. However, protracted negotiations have ensued as CBC has been unable to provide a satisfactory proposal.

The installation of no-pay “pay and display” ticketing has been looked at as a way of assessing the length of time cars stay in the car park.

It would be a natural progression for BTC and CBC to work in partnership, as CBC already has the back-up administration necessary to provide this service. However, Members felt that this was an unacceptable length of time for these negotiations.

It was **RESOLVED** that if nothing was in place by the end of February 2017, the Council will discuss alternative parking enforcement arrangements.

1107.10 g. **Banners Policy**

Members considered and discussed in full the draft banner policy.

It was **RESOLVED** that Council adopt this policy with the following caveats:

- Banners must be taken down within two days of the end of the advertised event.
- A fee of £10 will be charged for removal of the banners if they are not removed within the specified time.
- The use of the word “Business” is to be left in the policy and used at the Council’s discretion.

1107.11 h. **Notice Boards**

The Town Clerk will organise a “walk around” with a member of Highways in order to see which signs need changing. We are currently trying to invite a member of M&S to join the BJC, where we can then take this issue forward.

1107.12 i. **Revitalising the High Street - Conference**

Members received a report from the Chair following her attendance at a Conference covering next steps for revitalising High Streets. This report covers the thinking nationally and shows the way forward.

The first three bullet points on the report would require partnership working with CBC, and reinforces the need for dialogue with CBC on the issue of using the market square to its’ full potential.

It was **RESOLVED** that this report be placed on the BJC Agenda. The next BJC Meeting is an informal meeting on 8 December 2016 at 3.00 pm.

1107.13 j. **Century House – Toilets**

Members discussed a letter received from a resident of Sandy relating to the condition of the toilets at Century house. (Referred to in Public Open Session, Item 3).

The toilets are a requirement of the Charter Market and are a constant source of concern for the Town Council. They have suffered severe vandalism and the cost of replacing and repairing damaged items is in excess of £30K. The cleaners face an impossible job given the level of abuse the toilets receive from some members of the public.

The electronic locks suggested in the letter have been tried previously and have failed to resolve the problem. The use of a radar key, as in the disabled toilet, has also resulted in abuse of the facilities. CCTV footage covering abuse and vandalism has been passed to the police, but no action has been taken.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- Town Council talk to CBC to see if we can obtain agreement to replace the toilets with a toilet "pod".
- Talk to local businesses to see if they will allow market traders access to their toilets.
- Put the question of lack of response regarding vandalism to the toilets, and the CCTV footage, to the Chief Constable during his visit to BTC in the new year, where questions have been invited.

1107.14 k. **Code of Conduct – Buskers**

Members considered the revised Code of Conduct for Buskers.

It was **RESOLVED** that Council adopt the Code of Conduct for Buskers and Street Performers as presented.

8. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. **Shop Front Scheme**

Cllr J Medlock left the meeting at this point.

1108.1 It was reported that five shops applied for the scheme in rounds one and two. There has now been a second round, and only one application (Surfin Café) has been taken forward.

A third round will be taking place, but at the moment the Council have no indication that any other shops wish to take up this offer.

12. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no questions from members of the public.

13. 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.

There are no Exempt Items.

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

Meeting closed at 10.20 pm