

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 8 DECEMBER 2015 AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL,
THE OLD COURT HOUSE, SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE**

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

1. APOLOGIES

Cllr D Albone, Cllr F Foster, 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.

There were no questions from members of the public.

4. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

Members received and approved the Minutes of the TCM held on 29th September 2015.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Matters arising from the minutes of the TCM held on 29th September 2015.

Page 5, item g: Update on the request for a mini roundabout at the junction of Chambers Way/London Road. The Town Clerk has not yet received a reply to his letter and will write again with a request for an early response.

6. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Biggleswade Market

i. Update on the Saturday Market, (statistics attached).

Concern was expressed over the number of regular traders, although it was noted that casual trader numbers are increasing.

It was pointed out that some traders do not want to take up a regular pitch and prefer to trade casually. However, the trader numbers overall have increased.

Biggleswade Market traders themselves have contributed to the large editorial article in the latest edition of Market Trader News. This magazine is well received by traders, and the article, combined with the Town Council advertisement, is seen as a very positive step towards encouraging traders to our market.

Members asked if there has there been any noticeable effect from reducing the fees, and whether this information can be made clearer on the website as it has been placed at the bottom of the page where it could be easily overlooked.

It was acknowledged that regular income has taken a dip at the moment, but now that the reduction in fees has been heavily mentioned in the Market Trader News article, it was felt that we should wait and see if there is an outcome before deciding on any alternative actions.

Members were happy to note these figures and the Town Clerk will continue to monitor and bring figures to TCM.

ii. Market Rules and Regulations.

At the TCM meeting 29th September 2015, Members **RECOMMENDED** that the Market Rules and Regulations were placed on the next agenda of the TCM.

Following discussion, it was agreed to undertake a review and update of the Market Rules and Regulations. Members suggested that perhaps we could look at Rules and Regulations of other markets, as this may provide a useful comparison and possibly give us information that could be incorporated, thus making trading in Biggleswade a more attractive proposition to traders.

Regarding opening times, it was agreed that adverse weather conditions obviously have a direct impact on market trade, and there would therefore need to be a degree of flexibility at these times. Historically Market Traders set up stalls early in the morning as vans need to be off the market square by 8am as this is when the town starts to get busy. We also need to take into consideration the three hours required for clearing away at the other end of the day.

It was suggested that a Meeting/Working Group be arranged between BTC, the Market Superintendent, and perhaps a couple of the regular market traders, in order to get input from those directly involved in the market.

In conclusion it was **RECOMMENDED** to:

- Look at comparisons from other markets
- Look at timings for optimum coverage
- Form a working group with the Market Superintendent (Colin Keeble) and possibly two other regular traders, to see if there are any other issues they would like addressed that we may not be aware of.
- A written report of these findings will be produced and brought back to the next TCM.

b. **Car Park Management**

At Town Council on the 10th November 2015m Members **RESOLVED** to approve the **RECOMMENDATION** of the TCM Committee.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that following receipt of this information, the item be taken forward to the next Council Meeting Agenda.

Members are asked to consider the following information attached to the Agenda:

- A revised proposal from TPS to include reference to the RTA 1984.
- A revision to the contract regarding the Management fees.
- To reinstate the Parking Orders (currently suspended) on White Hart, Chestnut Avenue, St Andrews Street and Mill Lane Car Parks.
- To revise the Parking Orders (currently suspended) for Rose Lane and Dan Albone Car Parks. (Rose Lane proposed 6-hour restriction, Dan Albone proposed 10hour restriction)
- To consider to run in conjunction with a Merchant Account, a terminal with dedicated phone line to allow the Town Council to accept payments for other services that the Town Council provide.
- TPS have clarified that users of the pay by phone Car Park can pay after the event up to midnight on the day of parking

The current position is:

Parking orders are currently suspended. The Notices to reintroduce the Parking Orders to White Hart, Chestnut Avenue, St Andrews and Mill Lane are ready to be published; the Notices to change the hours in Dan Albone and Rose Lane Car Parks are also ready to be published. However, the Town Council currently has no further news and is waiting to receive the recommendations from CBC which have not yet been published. No decisions can be made until we are in receipt of this information.

BTC are meeting with TPS next week to discuss management of the Car Parks whilst ongoing work in the Town is being carried out. TPS Management charges will be in place, however It is intended to suggest that a 28 day "light touch" monitoring process take place, which in previous discussions TPS has agreed to undertake on our behalf, with the aim of gathering information on parking habits, and educating people on forthcoming parking restrictions.

This fact-finding exercise will provide BTC with valuable information on current usage of car parks, capacity required, and residential permit requirements. There will be no fixed penalties imposed during the "educational process".

It was agreed that an acceptable implementation date would be the 1st February 2016 as this will allow more detailed decisions to be taken and give us a practical way forward.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to propose Soft Touch implementation from 1st February 2016.

c. **Biggleswade Parking Consultation on Hitchin Street and Saffron Road**

Members are asked to consider a letter received from Rt. Hon Alistair Burt MP on behalf of a local business owner concerned about the impact of parking restrictions on Hitchin Street and Saffron Road.

Members discussed the correspondence at length and expressed sympathy with the letter writer.

Members would like to support the implementation of a one-hour restriction which would stop commuter parking, but allow shoppers. They would also like to see similar parking arrangements put in place in Foundry Land and Church Street.

It was agreed that the Town Clerk write to CBC giving strong support that these recommendations are carried out urgently. Copies of the correspondence to be sent to Alistair Burt, and to the letter writer.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Town Clerk write to CBC.

6. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Biggleswade Drum Clock**

Works to the Clock will begin in the Spring of 2016. This information was **NOTED**.

b. **Rose Lane Disabled Ramp and Footpath**

Rose Lane Disabled Ramp and Footpath are now complete. This information was **NOTED**.

c. **Biggleswade Market Article in Market Trader News**

A feature article and advert has been placed in the next issue of Market Trader News in order to promote the markets. (copy attached). This information was **NOTED** – previously discussed under item 6a i.

7. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

A period of up to 15 minutes is permitted to allow members of the public to ask questions:

The owner of the Surfin Café made the following points:

- Regarding Market times: as someone who is there trading on the market square for almost 50 weeks of the year, would like to point out following:

If we have windy day for example, then traders will set up sometimes in the wrong place. Some traders get there at 4am, others 8am. If inclement weather, then the market superintendent can contact traders beforehand and move them so that you could have the road open. There are often just four market stalls dotted about the market square, which in his opinion looks a joke.

Structure of market could be improved. It used to be a big triangle. At the moment people have to zig-zag about from one side to another – there is no structure.

Tuesday market: still getting traders parking on the parking spaces. He would like to stress that it is the Café customers who complain, not the owner. In other words, they see market traders taking up parking spaces. Council complain about footfall, but we still have issues of loading on the high street, not just for the café but also pharmacy and other shops along the high street. These still need to be addressed. Only the stalls on the edges leave early, for example, the vegetable stall closes 2.30/3pm. The town goes dead at 5.30pm. If the people were there then traders would stay, himself included. Time should be from 8am to 3.30pm.

9. 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.

(A Boards & CCTV)

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.

10. EXEMPT ITEMS

a. The Minutes from the TCM Meeting held on 29th September were agreed.

b. **Matters arising: Item 3, Wrigglies:**

The Town Clerk reported that this is still going through the process at the moment. A definitive map of footpaths in the town centre is awaited from CBC.

There is a meeting covering these issues taking place at CBC tomorrow (Wednesday 9th December), and it was suggested that Members watch the webcast in order to gain first-hand information.

This item will be on the next TCM Agenda on the 16th February 2016.

11. A Boards – Tables & Chairs

a. Members were asked to consider a proposal from the Surfin Café, regarding the placement of additional Tables and Chairs on the Market Square

The proposal was considered and discussed in depth, and the following comments were made:

- Health and safety issues must be complied with to avoid trip hazards for children and partially sighted people in the town.
- Canopies and awnings to meet Health and safety requirements.
- Due to the current interest in the Retail Park it was felt that interest in visiting the town will increase and the town would benefit from this proposal.
- The welcome provision of additional income of £3220 pa, together with £100 annual licence fee (with a limit of 28 tables).

(There were 6 in favour and 2 abstentions for this proposal)

It was **RECOMMENDED** to take this proposal to Council

b. CCTV

Following a meeting to discuss CCTV held at CBC on the 3rd December 2015; CBC advised that they have to make cost savings in their CCTV budgets for 2016 – 2017. In order to make these savings they intend to decommission CCTV cameras in Sandy, Dunstable and Biggleswade. (One camera in Dunstable, one camera in Sandy and two cameras in Biggleswade).

The two cameras in Biggleswade are situated at Rose Lane and Dan Albone car parks. CBC are willing to hand the cameras to the Town Council at no cost, if Town Council are prepared to cover the operating and monitoring costs of the cameras.

The additional costs for the two cameras; £5,210.00 per camera, this would increase the Town Council CCTV budget from £15,630.00 to £26,050.00.

Members were asked to consider if they wish to take on the two cameras along with the running cost.

Following lengthy discussion Members agreed that this will **NOT BE RECOMMENDED** to Council and that the two CCTV cameras in Rose Lane and Dan Albone car parks are decommissioned.

(2 in favour and 5 not in favour)