

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 16 FEBRUARY 2016 AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL,  
THE OLD COURT HOUSE, SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE**

<b>Present:</b>	Cllr Mrs M Russell	(Chairman)
	Cllr I Bond	
	Cllr Mrs H Ramsay	
	Cllr M North	
	Cllr G Wilson	
	Cllr D Strachan	
	Cllr B Briars	
	Cllr B Rix	(Vice Chairman)
	Cllr M Foster	
	Cllr F Foster	
	Mr R McGregor	BTC Town Clerk
	Mrs J Durn	Meetings Clerk
	Members of Public	2

**1. APOLOGIES**

Cllr D Albone

**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 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

**5. MATTERS ARISING**

Matters arising from the minutes of the TCM held on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

**Page 1, item 5:** 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; however, this point will be covered at a meeting with CBC officers next week.

**6. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

**a. Biggleswade Market**

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

There was general disappointment with market attendance. Although figures for 14/15 and 15/16 are almost level there still appears to be a loss in revenue. Many regular traders have become casual, and the 6-month initiative agreed for the reduction of fees does not seem to have had an impact.

However, it was agreed that these months are traditionally slower for the markets, and adverse weather conditions, such as severe winds, are not conducive to attracting either stallholders or public.

Market stallholders have reported that although slow, business on the whole has been good. There may also yet be additional impact from the article in the Market Trader magazine, particularly once the weather conditions improve.

Cllr B Rix asked that the TCM Minutes record his request for an update of the bridge situation to be a standard item on the TCM Agenda as this is perceived by the public as a town centre issue. The Chair said that this is already a standard item on the Council Agenda and as such was covered and updated on a more regular basis.

## ii. **Market Rules and Regulations**

It was originally agreed to trial the reduced fees initiative for 6 months. However, due to the ongoing work in the town, it was felt that this review should take place at the end of the next quarter.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that this item be brought forward to the next TCM.

It was also previously agreed to set up a Working Party to discuss the Market Rules and Regulations. Cllrs: Mrs M Russell, F Foster, G Wilson, M North and Mrs H Ramsay will form this Working Party and dates will be circulated and agreed so that it can take place before the next TCM. Findings will be reported at the next meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

## iii. **Cllr F Foster proposed that consideration be given to Biggleswade Market including a Car Boot section to attract more shoppers by utilising unused spaces on the Market Square, possibly using the spaces outside the White Hart.**

Members discussed this idea at length. Concerns were voiced that this may not mix well with the current market. It was felt that although the concept was good, towns such as Dunstable, who have previously introduced a Car Boot section, have reported disastrous results, with the loss of their entire market traders. This resulted in a four-year recovery for their market.

Despite some reservations it was agreed that this idea could be looked at by the Working Group that will be set up to discuss the market rules and regulations. The working group will consist of Cllrs Madeline Russell, Hazel Ramsay, Frank Foster, George Wilson and Michael North.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that this will be an Agenda item at the next TCM.

## b. **Market Town Regeneration Fund**

Members considered a bid to carry out a complete revamp and upgrade of Biggleswade Town Centre. The bid would include: the demolition of Century House and new arrangements for buses and public conveniences; de-cluttering (removing railings, bollards, rearranging seating); changing the space and how it works, with a possible shared space area; carrying out works around the trees where roots are lifting the paving; taking control of the parking on Market Street; reviewing and updating current signage, including the introduction of the 3D information boards that council has already considered (to be placed in all TC car parks, in the town centre and in the retail park); the introduction of free Wi-Fi in the town centre; and generally improving the Town Centre to make it a vibrant and attractive place to visit.

The bid would have to be match-funded, either in cash or in kind, over the next five years. It was suggested that the project should only go forward if the Market Square is given back to the town under the care of the Town Council.

If the bid is successful, a working group would be set up, with appropriate professional advice, to develop the project in detail, obtain quotations and make recommendations to Council.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Council should submit an outline bid to the Market Town Regeneration Fund for a minimum of £500,000 – maximum of £1,000,000 to cover the areas as listed above, based on the Market Square being handed back to the Town Council in perpetuity.

**c. Business Improvement District**

As part of the discussions with Central Bedfordshire Council's Regeneration Team, around a bid for the Market Town Fund, consideration was given to the possibility of a Business Improvement District.

Members were asked to consider exploring with CBC the possibility of a bid outside of the Market Regeneration Fund to look at the feasibility of a formal partnership of town centre businesses (and potentially London Retail Park) that would identify services additional to those already delivered by the Town Council and CBC that they require for the area.

It was agreed that this could encourage positive marketing of Biggleswade businesses. The Town Clerk reported that Hitchin Town have just been through this process, and he will invite the Hitchin Town Bid Officer to attend a Council Meeting in order to talk us through the procedure.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Town Clerk invite Hitchin Town Bid Officer to the next Council.

**d. Shop Front Programme**

As part of the discussions with Central Bedfordshire Council's Regeneration Team, around a bid for the market Town Fund, consideration was given to the possibility of a shop front programme, delivered on a Central Bedfordshire wide basis.

Members were asked to consider exploring with CBC how the shop front programme would work and the outcome we would want to achieve.

Members agreed that they would like to look into this further, but would also like to ensure that this is viewed sympathetically, in line with our existing Victorian town centre architecture.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to explore further the shop front programme with CBC.

**e. Rose Lane Car Park – Fencing**

Quotations have been received for removing the old fencing around Rose Lane Car Park and replacing with pedestrian guard rail fencing.

In order to obtain clarification on both finishes and placement of Spoils, it was agreed that the Town Clerk obtain further quotations to include both powder coating and galvanized finishes. These quotations will be presented at the next Council Meeting.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Town Clerk obtain additional information.

**f. Pressure on Parking in the Town Centre**

Members were asked to consider writing to CBC Planning Department and to the Directors for Regeneration and Environment to request acknowledgement of the difficulties in Biggleswade Town Centre when planning applications are considered.

The current thinking that people living in the town centre do not need cars is completely misguided, and it was agreed that we need a clear indication from Central Beds Planning Department on the rules and question the legitimacy of parking as a planning objection, we also need to know from CBC what they are able to do to support parking in the Town.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Town Clerk write to Central Beds Planning Department, Directors of Regeneration and Central Bedfordshire Council, Ward Councillors and request this information.

**7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

There are no items for information.

**8. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

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

A Member of Public asked if there has been any further update on the Bonds Lane car park. Council has no further information.

**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.

(Car Park Management).

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. **Car Park Management**

Members received a verbal update on car park management.

Town Council is extremely disappointed with the lack of response from the car park management company they have been in recent discussions with.

Despite offering what we considered to be the right approach to our parking management, they have repeatedly refused to answer calls from the Town Clerk, and have instead been pressurising Central Beds for use of their back offices to process their PCN and other paperwork. This request has been denied.

They were originally requested by the Town Clerk to commence a soft implementation commencing February 2016. However, this will now not be going ahead.

The Town Clerk is in discussion with Central Beds to look at using their parking management resources. Other avenues will also be explored.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Town Clerk pursue further a quotation from Central Beds Council, together with any other alternative quotations to provide this service.

**ITEM FOR RECOMMENDATION FROM THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2016**

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