

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 AUGUST 2014 AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE, SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE

Present: Cllr Mrs M Russell (Chair). Cllr I Bond, Cllr Mrs H Ramsay, Cllr D Albone, Cllr B Rix, Cllr P Biernis, Cllr G Wilson, Cllr M North.
Mr Rob McGregor – Town Clerk
Mrs Jan Durn – Administrator
Members of Public – 5
Also present – Cllr B Briars

1. APOLOGIES

None were received

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- (a) Disposable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – none declared
- (b) Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – none declared

3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Mr Foster raised a query regarding the Council procedure for publishing minutes. He asked if the Council felt it was acceptable that the last minutes of the meeting held on the 6th May were not distributed until three months later. He would like to put forward a recommendation that the minutes in draft form are put on the website.

The Chair responded that draft minutes should not be published before they are approved at the next meeting and that she would not be making any recommendations to change this practice at this time.

Mr Foster asked if the purchase of Rose Lane car park had fallen through.

The Chair replied that this was almost a standing item because we are still in negotiations and these negotiations cannot be made public.

Mr Foster asked if the Council could look at compulsory purchase. The Chair reiterated that this item cannot be discussed as negotiations are still in progress and cannot be made public.

Mr Green also raised the subject of Rose Lane Car Park and questions surrounding the future and possible purchase. The Chair said that she has responded in the local media on these items, and although valid points were being made, she had to try and find the right balance of confidentiality. She reiterated that she is satisfied that these matters should not be made public at this time.

Mr Foster said that if you were to sign a lease could you ensure that the Landlord is responsible for the upgrade of the car park; Rose Lane Car Park is in a bad state of repair and has been barely useable for most of this year as it has been under water.

Cllr. Ramsay thanked Mr Foster for his comments.

4. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

- a. Members received and approved the minutes of the Town Centre Management meeting held on 6 May 2014.

5. MATTERS ARISING

From the Town Centre Management meeting held on 6 May 2014

a) Reversal of Hitchin Street

The Town Clerk and Cllr Mrs M Russell have attended a meeting regarding the proposals put forward, and understand these proposals are now being costed. We have no further news at the moment.

e) **Biggleswade Transport Interchange**

The Chairman reported that all surveys have now been completed and that progress is being made, albeit slowly.

h) **Biggleswade Market**

Cllr P Biernis asked for an update on the Tuesday market stallholders as he felt that the market looked bare.

The Chairman said that unfortunately we do not have the Tuesday market stallholder figures, but she understood that stallholder holidays were having an effect on the Tuesday market. However the Saturday market is still well attended.

Cllr Biernis asked if any ways could be thought of to encourage people to attend the Tuesday market, such as children's entertainment.

6 **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Parking Strategy**

For Members to receive an update

The Chairman reported that new people were now in place at CBC and a meeting/planning session has now been held at BTC. We have passed on all of the public responses received by BTC and CBC are now in possession of this information.

We understand that CBC will now be re-modelling the Hybrid Strategy and when this has been completed they will arrange a further meeting for discussion with Biggleswade Town Council.

The Chairman reported that Cllr M Jones at CBC had originally expected the Parking Strategy to be in place by the end of June. Many efforts have been made to expedite this work and we will report back as soon as we have any further information.

Cllr H Ramsay asked if the Strategy would go to public consultation. The Chairman said that once the Hybrid Strategy has been approved by both full Council and Central Bedfordshire, then there will be a formal consultation when members of the public can feed in their comments

b. **Dells Lane Parking**

For Members to receive an update

The police report from Sgt Gary Kidd reported that there had been a blitz on both parking and speeding in the area, and that a number of tickets had been issued (6). It was not clear if this blitz was continuing, however Cllr B Briars reported seeing further parking tickets on cars in that area today.

c. **Christmas Lights**

For Members to discuss options and propose plans for the 2014 Christmas Lights, including arrangements for the switch-on.

The Town Clerk circulated copies of proposals and photographs – only just received from Lamps and Tubes today, for suggested additional lights and colours for the Christmas lights.

Members discussed the Christmas lights provision for 2014/2015; a cost was provided from Lamps and Tubes to add additional lighting to two trees at the west end of the Market Square and to change the lamp decorations to red and white to match the festoons and the lighting on the Christmas tree.

The increase in cost from 2013/2014 costs would be £354.30.

Members asked if costs could be obtained to provide extra strings of Festoons along the High Street to the railway bridge and also recommended setting up a Working Group to look at specifications to go out to tender for the 2015/2016 Christmas lighting display.

Members also discussed a review of the Christmas Light switch-on, and discussed various suggestions on how this might be improved. It was recommended that a small Working Group look at these suggestions and proposed improvements. It was noted that any Working Group would have the authority to co-opt members of the community.

Members also discussed the date for the Switch-On ceremony and recommended 21st November.

Members **RECOMMENDED** to Town Council: to agree the cost of providing additional lighting to two trees; to change the colour scheme of the lamp column decorations, (decoration model 170008 Astral); to obtain costs for additional festoons, and to set up a Working Group to look at the Christmas Light switch-on, and that the ceremony should take place on 21st November.

d. St John's Street/Sun Street one-way System

For Members to consider a recent report to CBC Traffic Management and discuss any response.

A copy is attached to this agenda.

Members considered a report that was presented to the Traffic Management Meeting at Central Bedfordshire Council.

Members raised concern that the proposals in the report for an area wide HGV ban had not been discussed with the Town Council; nor had the Town Council been notified that the petition would be considered at the Traffic Management Meeting. The report states: "members have also requested that the potential to introduce an area wide HGV ban be considered to ascertain if that would provide sufficient reduction in large vehicles to address the problem".

Members felt that the HGV ban and the proposed introduction of a one-way system should not be considered together; the one-way system should go ahead without the implementation of the HGV ban.

The HGV ban should not be considered until the Eastern Relief Road is fully in place.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Town Council write to Central Bedfordshire Council and ask why Town Council was not consulted; to ask which members requested the potential to introduce an area wide HGV ban; to request that the one way system and proposed HGV ban should not be considered together, and that no HGV ban should be considered until after the opening of the Eastern Relief Road.

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. 'A' Boards

For Members to receive an update with regard to the implementation.

The Town Clerk reported that Biggleswade Town Council staff have undertaken a survey of all "A" Boards in the Town. We are currently short staffed at the Council, but as soon as we are able we will be writing to all the Traders to ask them to apply for a licence for the "A" Boards.

8. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Mr F Foster asked if the Council would consider asking Pam Rhodes, a celebrity resident in the area, with both celebrity and religious connections, to switch on the Christmas lights. These comments were noted.

Mr F Foster asked if the Council would consider a children's fancy dress competition at the Christmas Light Switch on. These comments were noted.

Mr F Foster asked why the Bonds Lane Car Park was not on the agenda

The Chairman said that comments regarding Bonds Lane that were made at the last meeting were still valid and it was therefore felt that it was not necessary to include this item again.

Mr Green asked if the No 73 buses that currently go along St John's Street were classed as HGV's and would therefore be affected by the proposed one way system.

The Chairman said that this would need to be looked at properly as this would obviously raise concerns.

Mr Green asked about the effect of the one way system on Sun Street.

The Chairman agreed that this would also need to be looked at properly, and that local knowledge should be included.

Mr Jenkins said that the Biggleswade Restaurant "Croft Kitchen" had received a brilliant review in the Guardian Newspaper, and he asked that the residents of Biggleswade be encouraged to support it.

Mr M Foster asked if there had been a review of the last Christmas Lights/Switch on following the event in say January, to see what was right/wrong, and also, is this evening's meeting the best forum to discuss this topic.

The Chairman said she will take responsibility for the Christmas Lights and we will do our best within the timescale that we have got.

Mr F Foster suggested that when the draft minutes are published, all the public comments be minuted, together with the Chairman's comments. He also said that the minutes need to be published sooner.

Mr Jenkins said that the Chamber of Commerce only included one sentence in the middle of a very long email regarding funding for the Christmas lights to traders.

The Chairman said that we have got to accept that if we are going to do all of this, it is a big commitment of staff time and we would have to work with the Chamber of Trade as we do not have all the contacts. The Council would do their best to work with the Chamber of Trade to get a stronger message out.

Mr F Foster asked if we could look at the presentation of the minutes, particularly page 3.

Cllr Mrs M Russell agreed that we should look at our presentation.

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.

Exempt Items 10a, 10b, 10c – Leases

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.