

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 2 JUNE 2015
AT THE OFFICES OF BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE, SAFFRON ROAD,
BIGGLESWADE**

Present: Cllr Mrs M Russell (Chairman)
Cllr D Albone
Cllr I Bond
Cllr M Foster
Cllr F Foster
Cllr M North
Cllr B Rix (Vice Chair)
Cllr D Strachan
Cllr S Watkins
Luke Gardener (Biggleswade Chronicle)
Members of Public 10

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs H Ramsay, Cllr B Briars and Cllr G Wilson.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – none declared.
- (b) Non Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – Cllr F Foster, Cllr M North and Cllr D Strachan declared a non pecuniary interest in Item 6g “Sun Street – St Johns street” as listed on the agenda.

3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Mop 1: On behalf of the residents of Royal Oak Close, asked what is happening with the Pod, Height bar and floodlight in Dan Albone car park.

Cllr Mrs M Russell stated the draft lease is currently being discussed and the pod may be moved, the height barrier etc. will be discussed later in the meeting regarding the Dan Albone Lease

The Town Clerk confirmed that the police had removed the Pod today.

Mop 2: Was not happy to receive the information on the Sun Street – St Johns Street Gyrotory so late in the day. Parking is an issue for residents and parked cars act as a calming measure. The crossing in Sun Street is dangerous; there will be nowhere for residents to park; there are issues with the Rose Lane direction; concern on the buses; I welcome the weight restrictions but feel the proposals will create a backlog of traffic.

Cllr Mrs M Russell pointed out that the scheme had been detailed in the Biggleswade Chronicle, on the Town Council website and on Facebook; the consultation is by Central Bedfordshire Council; and the Town Council has supported the one way system as the right way forward. It is, though, absolutely right to raise the details. Of course, parking is a useful traffic calmer and should be dealt with as such on these three roads. Cllr Russell said that it was difficult at the moment to see what is being proposed due to the lack of any plans. There have been issues in the past with gritters and other large vehicles passing along Sun Street. The Town Council has told CBC we want more parking in the Rose Lane area. The current scheme seems to be over the top in the way that it has removed parking and the issues need to be raised with Central Bedfordshire Council.

Mop 3: Agreed with the issues raised by the resident and also agreed some parking would have to go, however felt too much parking is being removed. Has anyone considered one way on just Sun Street to Potton Road and not the other way, this will solve three issues that is flow of traffic, parking and traffic back log.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said that junctions are going to be remodelled but that the proposal received from

CBC was not what the Town Council had asked for. Engineers have gone over the top and it's up to the Town Council to go back with more common sense proposals.

Mop 4: I am unhappy about the proposals as since the Women's Refuge was built there was a loss of side parking and now I am going to be affected again as I will lose a space on street.

Cllr Mrs M Russell confirmed that no one has the right to park outside their house. The issue of no off street parking should have been taken up before the Women's Refuge was built.

Cllr Russell added that as many people as possible need to get their points across to CBC as soon as possible.

4. MINUTES OF MEETING

Members received and approved the Minutes of the Town Centre Management Meeting held on the **17th February 2015**.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Cllr F Foster asked who is responsible for cleaning the Town.

The Town Clerk confirmed that initially there was a budget that was held by MBDC. The County Council, the Town Council and MBDC all contributed £2,500 annually to the budget. The Town Council would apply to MBDC when works were required and draw down on the budget for materials and labour. The budget disappeared when Mid Beds and the County Council became a unitary authority.

Cllr M North – can we take up Town Centre Regeneration with James Jamieson at CBC?

Cllr Mrs M Russell confirmed the responsibility lies with CBC and that the Town Council has met with Jason Longhurst (Director of Regeneration), regarding Town Centre regeneration and management.

Cllr D Albone – can we raise this at the BJC?

Cllr B Rix asked who is responsible for clearing up the graffiti in and around the Town Centre with particular reference to Palace Street.

The Town Clerk responded by saying where the property is privately owned, or rented, it is down to the individual to clear it up and not the responsibility of either the Town Council or Central Bedfordshire Council. We have already taken it up with Central Bedfordshire Council and they are quite adamant it is not their responsibility.

Cllr Mrs M Russell also stated it is the same principle as a broken window.

Cllr D Strachan said it is a criminal offence and that the police should pursue and seek retribution for the owners.

Cllr Mrs M Russell suggested we ask Cllr G Wilson to raise the issue with Sergeant G Kidd the next time he has a meeting with him.

Cllr B Rix asked for information regarding Item 8, Page 8 "Public Open Session".

Cllr Mrs M Russell stated that nothing had been done about it since the last meeting and asked the Town Clerk to take it up again. It was not a formal recommendation.

6 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Improvements: Rose Lane – Mill Lane & St Andrews Street Car Parks

Members were asked to consider obtaining quotations:

- i. To install a disabled ramp
- ii To carry out improvement works to the footpath at the northern end of the car park.

Cllr Mrs M Russell confirmed that the Town Council had asked the Contractor to come back with a quotation for installing a disabled ramp, to improve the state of the footpath at the northern end of Rose Lane car park together with the removal of a Maple tree. The total amount for the work is approximately £12,000 (£6,072 for the footpath and £5,786 for removing the Maple tree).

We are also awaiting the works programme for the re-surfacing of both Mill Lane and St Andrews car parks.

Cllr B Rix - would this also include a height barrier which was supported by Cllr M North.

Cllr D Albone – I am not convinced on a height barrier; can I ask if the quote was just for a single tree, and there is no problems with the other trees. The Town Clerk confirmed just one tree was causing a problem.

Cllr D Albone asked if there could be a wild flower meadow on the banks of the car park.

Cllr Mrs M Russell - we should get this in place first. We will go ahead and get a full set of quotations for the disabled ramp, footpath and a height barrier. When we get the quotations they will be on the next agenda.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that a full set of quotations are obtained for a disabled ramp, improvement works to the footpath and a height restriction barrier.

b. **Improving Wayfinding and Mapping System in Biggleswade Town Centre**

Members were asked to consider a report produced by Adam Turney, to improve the mapping systems in Biggleswade.

Cllr B Rix thanked Adam Turney for giving up his time and doing this report for free. This is a vast improvement to what we have at the moment. Do the Town Council have the ability to have signage in the new Retail Park – suspect we will not.

Cllr Mrs M Russell stated we have had negotiations in the past regarding a noticeboard at the retail park.

Cllr D Strachan was concerned about the signage being metric and not feet and inches. Could we please have it in feet and inches.

Cllr D Albone asked if we could have the sign at the entrance of the Retail Park more Town Centre focused.

Cllr Mrs M Russell asked members what they felt about the new, modern signage i.e. tall/narrow, rather than old fashioned. We could go for the old fashioned look rather than the more modern look.

Cllr D Albone said we have the traditional look in the Town Centre. Cllr B Rix agreed with him as we have a historic Town Centre and the traditional look would be more in keeping and sympathetic towards the town.

Cllr F Foster wanted to see an actual sample of the signage and Cllr Mrs M Russell pointed out that it was only the insert we were referring to. She suggested Adam Turney to develop further and look into how easily it is to upgrade information and to make any changes when necessary.

Cllr M Foster agreed with Cllr Mrs M Russell and is not averse to having some old and some new signage.

Cllr Mrs M Russell if you change all of the signage it will cost more.

Cllr D Strachan said the concept is fine and re-iterated his concerns about the distance being metric and that we should seek to use yards instead.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that a mock up sign is produced and the measurements used are imperial, not metric.

c. **Biggleswade Town Market**

Following the Town Centre Management Meeting on 17 February 2015, where members considered a revised layout for the Saturday Market with a view to freeing up additional parking on a Saturday. Members recommended to approach CBC for a TRO for Hitchin Street and the Market Superintendent along with the Town Clerk explore revised layouts for the Market.

Members were asked to consider attached proposals that the Town Clerk and the Market Superintendent feel would allow additional parking on the Saturday Market.

The Town Clerk reported that he and the Market Superintendent have had several meetings and that discussions had also taken place with the market traders to find out what other options we might have. Concerns were raised regarding the Health and Safety aspects however hoped to compromise to free up 21 parking spaces. The Market Superintendent was quite prepared to try and enhance the market taking into account any health and safety issues.

One of the suggestions was for the market stalls to be facing towards the shops from Iceland up towards the end of Market Square/Hitchin Street with the backs towards the road. Cllr Mrs M Russell asked for any comments.

Cllr D Strachan asked if there had been any consultation with the shopkeepers and traders.

Cllr Mrs M Russell pointed out that the Chamber of Trade asked for this to be done and it is the shopkeepers who are asking for more parking spaces to be freed up to allow more trade.

Cllr D Strachan said that he had spoken with some of the shopkeepers in Hitchin Street and can confirm that they have not been consulted. It does not make any sense to be discussing this without any consultation with them. We should be supporting and not ignoring the shopkeepers down Hitchin Street.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said that there was no problem with consulting them.

Cllr B Rix said that emotions are running high on this matter and there is no surprise that market traders are against the market being moved to the top part of Hitchin Street. We must hold a consultation. We do have a problem with parking and instead of having yellow lines, additional parking could be created in Foundry Lane, Church Street and in St Andrews Street, CBC could make room for further parking spaces. Can we write to CBC again.

Cllr M Foster raised his concerns about the safety aspects with cars driving passed the stalls backed onto the road. We do need to support traders and adjusting the market is not necessarily supporting it, the market appears to be in decline.

Cllr I Bond said that the plan could have an advantage regarding spaces and disabled spaces, we should write to the traders in Hitchin Street regarding the proposals.

Cllr Mrs M Russell acknowledged the proposal came from the market traders, we need to take that on board. Is it not best to see how it works first?

After much discussion it was agreed that two proposals would be brought to the next Council Meeting.

The first was the current market should be laid out according to the plan presented, with stalls on the Market Square and the south side of Market Street with the stalls facing towards the shops, which would free up the parking spaces on the north side of Market Street.

Concerns were raised about the safety of pedestrians and Cllr M North could not agree with this proposal - there are pros and cons and it is not all one sided. The market traders are making the best of what has been suggested.

Secondly, any new market holders to be invited to use the top part of Hitchin Street between the Market Square and Bonds Lane, if the necessary traffic order is obtained to close that part of Hitchin Street to traffic.

Eventually it was decided to vote for the proposals.

The proposal to implement a trial of the new market layout for the Market Square at a date to be recommended by the Market Superintendent and Town Clerk together with a consultation with market users to take place on the first day of the new layout was rejected.

To consult with the market traders and shop keepers about the new layout was accepted.

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** consultation to take place with market traders and shopkeepers in the Market Square and Hitchin Street about the following proposals:

- a. That the current market should be laid out according to the plan presented, with stalls on the Market Square itself and the south side of Market Street, with the stalls facing the shops/pavement. This would open up Market Street and freeing the parking spaces on the north side of Market Street
- b. That new market stalls be invited to use the top part of Hitchin Street between the Market Square and Bonds Lane if the necessary traffic order is obtained to close that part of Hitchin Street to traffic.

d. Dan Albone Car Park

Members were asked to consider the draft Lease for Dan Albone car park which was attached to the agenda.

Cllr D Albone asked if conditions 3.3.22 & 3.7.11 has a bearing on how we manage the car park.

Cllr D Strachan – we could find out the definition of “light vehicles”.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said what we would like to see is the banning of large vehicles in both Dan Albone and Rose Lane car parks, the draft lease seems very unsatisfactory.

Cllr I Bond asked about dilapidations.

The Town Clerk mentioned minor repair of potholes and fencing that he and John Scott agreed would be done prior to the new lease being agreed.

Cllr D Strachan said we need to take into account the break clauses and see what they should be. We need to be careful about the conditions which are not clear in the Lease.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – it look as if they are trying to take away our rights under the landlord tenant act. Condition 3.52 speaks about fixing and displaying advertisement signs, how does that affect the Council.

Cllr F Foster – I had the impression that the Town Council allowed the fixing of advertising banners.

Cllr D Albone – do we have our own sign up, we need clarity.

Cllr D Strachan – we need to get clarity on condition 3.52.

Cllr M Russell - Use of picnic area condition 3.7.1.2, we need to get this clarified as the picnic area is used for other events.

Cllr I Bond - we pay BBW regarding the lease do we have any input?

Cllr Mrs M Russell – we need to compare the proposed lease against the old lease and take it forward with the solicitors, then take directly to Town Council.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to take the matter forward with the Town Council’s solicitor and take the final draft lease to the next available Town Council meeting.

e. Christmas Lights

Members were asked to consider a small working group that can meet daytime with a view to looking

at contracts for the Christmas Lights for 2015/2016 and beyond.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said we required 2 – 4 people to make up the Working Group.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Cllr M North, Cllr I Bond, Cllr B Rix, Cllr M Foster and Cllr Mrs M Russell are on the working group.

f. Pedestrian Crossing – Shortmead Street

Members were asked to consider a pedestrian crossing for Shortmead Street.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said this has been in abeyance – 2 years ago CBC put forward a request for match funding, Council agreed at the time to match fund. It was also agreed that the crossing needs to be somewhere between Brunts Lane and Methodist Church.

Cllr M North asked if the crossing would be Traffic Light controlled.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – it was agreed previously that it would be beacon controlled.

Cllr I Bond - we would have more chance if we push for a zebra crossing.

Cllr Mrs M Russell confirmed there is some money in the Town Council budget.

Cllr D Albone - happy to propose.

Cllr M Foster - we need to ensure visibility for the crossing to ensure that it is effective.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to investigate further the possibility of a crossing in Shortmead Street.

g. Sun Street – St Johns Street One Way System

Central Bedfordshire Council has published and consulted on the proposed traffic scheme for Sun Street – St Johns Street one way system. Members were asked for any comments on the proposed traffic scheme. (Attached to the agenda; proposal to introduce no waiting; proposal to introduce a one way system and proposal to introduce a 7.5 tonne weight restriction.)

Cllr Mrs M Russell – I am disappointed that there is no map.

Cllr D Albone – the proposed parking restrictions in Sun Street are over the top, we need to challenge the length of the parking restrictions. We also need to convey that the timings on the traffic lights coming from Crab Lane need to be reviewed.

Cllr F Foster – at the end of Birch Road and St Johns Street there is a large area of grass that could be used for parking, can this be investigated.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – this was discussed years ago, but wooden posts were put up.

Cllr D Strachan said the implementation of yellow lines does not solve the problem. Do we want a one way system there.

Cllr M Foster – we also need to look at the proposed parking measures for St Johns Street and the timing of the traffic lights.

Cllr D Strachan – the grass area Birch Road and St Johns Street, cars parked there for a number of years, can we approach CBC about ownership.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – the Town Council formally agreed to the plan and we need to look at how it can be implemented. When this goes to Council we need a copy of the plan or something more substantial than we have here at the moment.

Cllr D Strachan said we should include comments from the Members of the Public.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to support the weight restrictions; to seek clarification on the effect the weight restriction will have on the buses; to provide a plan of the proposals for the Town Council meeting.

h. Request to display model Funfair in aid of Great Ormond Street

Members were asked to consider the request from a member of the public to display a model in the White Hart car park – copy was attached.

Cllr D Strachan asked can we clarify what this means and then put up to Council. Has this been asked for before and Cllr Mrs M Russell confirmed once and had not been done for a few years.

We need to get a date when the model is to be placed and take it to the next Council meeting.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that the applicant clarify the date of the display and that the Town Council will then consider the request.

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Biggleswade Parking Strategy

Cllr Mrs M Russell – I am disappointed with the consultation with which took place in the Town Council chamber with CBC. Attendees were disappointed that none of their concerns were written down. Residents asked for areas to be added to the scheme, residents tried to raise issues but no notice was taken; we need to raise this at the next Biggleswade Joint Committee.

Cllr M Foster - what can we do next as a Town Council.

Cllr Mrs M Russell confirmed there was a formal consultation in July.

Cllr M Foster – the consultation form gave no chance to provide other options.

Cllr Mrs M Russell recommended that the Town Clerk writes to Central Bedfordshire Council and expresses disappointment at the way the consultations was carried out. The Town Clerk is to add this to the agenda of the BJC for the next meeting.

Cllr B Rix raised a question on enforcement.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – on three occasions we have asked CBC to devolve parking enforcement to the Town Council, the Town Council have approved their own parking management company. Cllr M Jones CBC Councillor had said that this could be looked at, with a proposal put forward for consideration.

Cllr D Albone – have CBC got the powers to delegate enforcement and do we the Town Council have the capacity?

Cllr Mrs M Russell – this has happened elsewhere, that is what we have asked CBC to investigate. We could ask our Parking Management Company to enforce on behalf of both the Town Council and CBC.

b. Transport Interchange

Cllr Mrs M Russell pointed out that nothing has moved on since the last meeting – access issues have to be taken forward, concerns around conflicts with pedestrians. There is a backlog of the network infrastructure of about 18 months and we appear to be getting lower and lower down the list. We cannot go forward as we are waiting for a revised plan from CBC.

Cllr D Strachan asked how long before things will get moving.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – we should discuss this at the next BJC.

Cllr I Bond we need to write to CBC to make sure they are ready for discussion at the next Joint Committee.

Cllr Mrs M Russell presumes that Maurice Jones will continue with dealing with this. The Town Clerk will be meeting with Maurice Jones to set up an agenda.

c. Car Park Management

We should be putting arrangements in place to start the contract. However, the Town Council are waiting for advice from CBC. We have not yet suspended existing parking orders; we are trying to follow the right process.

d. St Andrews Street and Mill Lane Car Parks

The Town Clerk spoke to the contractors last Friday and the time required to complete the works on both car parks is two and a half days.

Cllr Mrs M Russell asked the Committee how they felt about closing both the car parks at once.

Cllr D Albone said it would probably cost more to do them separately – the Town Clerk confirmed that it would. It would take two days to do the work including re-surfacing and filling in potholes, with an extra half day to do the white lining for both car parks.

Cllr F Foster said that from his point of view we should get it done.

Cllr D Albone agreed as long as the members of the public are informed of the closure of both car parks well in advance.

e. Hitchin Street Reversal

We still have not received a response from CBC on the request we put in over 1 year ago for the reversal of Hitchin Street – TRO for the closure of Bonds Lane to the Market Square. We need to keep pushing it as it is an outstanding item from CBC.

f. A Boards

Cllr Mrs M Russell stated that we are now ready to implement the policy on A Boards. We did a survey on the A Boards some time ago and more have been added since. This does need to be regulated if the traders are being awkward. Some of the A Boards are obstructing wheelchair users and we need to agree with the traders where exactly the A Boards should go.

Cllr M Foster stated that it's not just the A Boards that are specifically causing an obstruction.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said it will cover chairs and tables etc.

Cllr D Albone pointed out that they do take up a large area.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said that we need to implement the minimum width for a footpath. It is illegal to obstruct the pavement.

8. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Mop 5 - said that the writing on his wall was not graffiti but absolute filth and needs to be removed by the Town Council.

Cllr Mrs M Russell said we need to find out how we stand legally and that his comment was noted.

Mop 2 - said that a meeting was taking place at the Viceroy on Sunday morning at 10.00 am to discuss the proposal for Sun Street & St. Johns Street and all are welcome to attend. As a resident at the end of St Johns Street, I do not encourage a one way system. As residents, we should have been notified by the Town Council that this was being discussed, the whole concept is wrong. We did not know about this and are disappointed that the Town Council has made a decision without discussing with the residents. We are all affected by this and clearly you should have asked for our views before making a decision.

Cllr Mrs M Russell – some of this proposal is not what the Town Council wanted, CBC have gone forward with a different proposal.

Mop 6 – I am glad that the Town Council are behind a crossing in Shortmead Street. In the charges the Council will make for licences for tables, does it cover if there will be a need to refuse someone.

Cllr Mrs M Russell we did not expect such a high level of obstacles including tables and chairs outside cafes, shoe recycling bins are also included, it will be done in a way that recognises other users, we will object to any impingement to pedestrians.

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.

(Minutes 17th February 2015).

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.