

Minutes of the Bicester Town Council

A meeting of the **Bicester Town Council** was held on **Monday 24th June 2024** at **19:00 hrs** at **The Council Chamber, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon, OX26 6PS.**

Present:

Cllr Damien Maguire (Chairman)
 Cllr Jim Webb (Vice-Chairman)
 Cllr Tom Beckett
 Cllr Nick Cotter
 Cllr Donna Ford
 Cllr Dan Hallett
 Cllr Sam Holland
 Cllr Nicholas Mawer
 Cllr Christopher Pruden
 Cllr Alisa Russell
 Cllr Les Sibley
 Cllr Paul Wheatley

In Attendance:

Phil Evans – Town Clerk
 Helen Pool – Responsible Finance Officer

Other Attendees:

Ian Charie – Cherwell District Council
 Amerik Manku - Cherwell District Council
 Malini Rumanah - Cherwell District Council
 Stuart Hurrell – WSP Consultant

7/2425 Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED that apologies of absence were received from Cllr Harry Knight and Cllr Rachel Mallows.

8/2425 Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED that declarations of interest were received from Cllr Russell, Cllr Beckett and Cllr Mawer as members of Cherwell District Council.

9/2425 Public Session

PRESENT at the meeting were members of the public.

- Karen Smith introduced the Womens' Royal Army Choir Association. They were not invited to the Civic Service. Councillors apologised for the upset. She suggested getting a list of groups that can be emailed to invite groups. Town Clerk will ensure that the mailing list for invites is up to date and Cllr Maguire will have a meeting with the member of public.
- Dee Bailey stated they were not notified of the meeting regarding the Market Square Update, and she does not know if any of the shop owners were told about the meeting either. Have members of the public been notified?

Councillors explained that CDC are here at a public forum to talk about the Market Square and they were hearing about this at the same time as the public. They acknowledged that there is more that can be done with communication and outreach. Ian Charie said that this was the 1st event by Cherwell District Council regarding the Market Square. It was the first civic presentation to the Town Council and then to the public at a later.

- Christine Townsend requested that there needs to be publications in the notice boards as well as online. Civic Service on Sunday should have been on notice boards in the town. The Councillors said they are committed to bringing communication to the community.

Cllr Maguire proposed bringing agenda item 12. Market Square Update and then agenda item 10 Motion forward for the public.

10/2425 Market Square Update

Presentation given by Ian Charie; Amerik Manku; Malini Rumanah and Stuart Hurrell Interim

- Introduction: Ian Charie- Interim Programme Manager

They are here to support the community regarding the Market Square. They are at the beginning of the project and would like to be a champion to help get the word out to councillors and members of the public.

- Malini Rumanah – Interim Communications Manager
Here to support the public to listen to residents and businesses needs for now and and the future. They welcome feedback. They would like champions to help them get the word out from councillors to members of the public.
- Americ Manuku – Project Manager
Bicester is a growing town, and this scheme captures the importance of the high street. There has been a lot of change over the last 20 Years and in North West Bicester there are 6500 homes planned. There is significant national and international interest in Bicester with Bicester Village and Bicester in Motion. There are few spaces in Bicester where people can come together, and this scheme captures this for communities. In 2019 there was some work done towards this and it identified that Market Square was a central hub for Bicester for Cultural purposes. There have been a few attempts and desire by the Council to do something in the market square.

In 2021 work was completed between OCC and CDC to look at the concept and it was found that there needs to be some intervention and funding for this. Also, there is more investment in town centres now to ensure sustainability. £4.25 million was allocated in February 2023 for this.

They have engaged WSP Commission and there will also be engagement with other groups. They are the consultants who are completing the scheme which will be a co-designed piece with the community. This will then lead to a plan and responsibilities with the County and BTC. They hope to conclude the first part of the scheme by January 2025. It will be thought of as a legacy project for 1- to 15 years. The preferred scheme would hopefully be within the next 5 years.

- Stuart Hurrell – Design Lead – WSP, Associate Landscape and urban design. They are a large consultancy drawing in experts such as Project Director David Tompson. They have a core team of specialists in transport, business, cost management, heritage specialists, etc. Mr Hurrell has previous work experience in other town centres such as Shrewsbury, Salisbury, Shifnal, Harrogate and Oswestry.

His first impressions of Bicester Market Square is that it functions as a town centre car park dominated by vehicle movement. Pedestrians have narrow footways, it's unsafe, has insufficient crossing points and special constraints. But has architectural setting with underutilized space and is the focal point of the community.

Design history: In 2010 there was a design that maximised the pedestrian area. In 2021 there was a pre-feasibility report that was taken as fact and Option B was going to cut off all traffic through town and this scared people. There was amenity analysis with special analysis that shows the small area for footway.

Project delivery:

First is the base line analysis to mid-August. Then a co-design event in September/October and finally a prelim design will be delivered in the New year – 1st two weeks of January.

Pre-engagement: This meeting is the start of the engagement and then there will be talks with Bicester Bug, disability groups and intergenerational groups to get feedback from youth and elders.

Council Offices – Pre engagement with Cherwell District Offices to discuss issues / risks – concept workshop 10/05/2024

Local Business – Pre engagement with 11/07 with a co-design event to discuss issues, risks and drop in for discussions. A public drop-in session will follow.

This will be more an engagement than public consultation around focus groups to spread the net. The co-design will bring more people in to provide feedback. Funding will allow for the opportunities to develop at a later stage.

There will be technical studies in:

- Transport planning
 - Parking
 - Drainage
 - Urban realm
 - Heritage
 - Air quality
 - Carbon reduction
 - Business case study
- Points raised by Councillors: Expressed concerns regarding the cost of the fees for the consultants as £4.25 million is a modest amount; the use of historic buildings and not wanting to use cheap materials that will not last such as cement slabs. Traffic needs to be considered e.g. London Road crossing and concerns cutting off access to the town. Changes are expected within the Market Square and we need to welcome changes and have the courage to build a town centre for the residents and future. We also need to look at the facilities and retail that the residents of the town need that we have a shortage of.

Ian Charie; Amerik Manku; Malini Ramanah and Stuart Hurrell left the meeting.

11/2425 Motion

The motion was brought forward to include:

- **DRAW** up a calendar at the beginning of each year of all military dates/events for the year to be brought to the events committee, which should include the 80th Anniversary of VE Day in 2025.
- **ENSURE** plans for each military related event are presented to the events committee and both the military and RBL are also asked for comment.
- **REQUEST** officers investigate the cost of installing a beacon.
- **REQUEST** officers investigate the possibility of holding homecoming events for local regiments.

Councillors **VOTED** 8 in favour and 4 abstains, motion **CARRIED**.

12/2425 Minutes of the Town Council Meeting.

- **BTC06/2324** – Monday 15th January 2024
54/23 Cllr Paul Wheatley requested a report of the premium rates – this was not received.
55/2324 The potential to hold Webcast meetings, this was supposed to go to the next Policy Committee meeting to be held on the 29th January 2024 – this was not completed.
- **BTC07/2324** – Monday 11th March 2024
12/2324 Remove wording: Cllr Les Sibley reported an update on – improvement of signage for Banbury Road Roundabout.'
- **BTC7A/Special/2324** – Tuesday 26th March 2024
4/2324 Cllr Wheatley requested the rewording of the minutes.
- **BTC02/2425** – Monday 20th May 2024
Cllr Wheatley requested the rewording of Cllr Mallows as the appointee for Bicester Food Bank.

13/2425 Minutes of the Environment Committee Meeting

- ENV03A/2324 Special – Monday 30th October 2024
- ENV04/2324 - Tuesday 21st November 2024
- ENV05/2324 – Tuesday 16th January 2024
- ENV06/2324 – Tuesday 19th March 2024

RESOLVED that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions, proposed by Cllr. Maguire and seconded by Cllr Sibley. 1 Abstain by Cllr. Willet as he was not in attendance at the meeting.

14/2425 Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting

- FIN04/2324 – Tuesday 19th December 2023
- FIN05/2324 – Tuesday 13th February 2024
- FIN06/2324 - Tuesday 26th March 2024

RESOLVED that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions, proposed by Cllr. Maguire and seconded by Cllr Sibley. 1 Abstain by Cllr. Willet as he was not in attendance at the meeting.

15/2425 Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting

- PL11/2324 – Tuesday 27th February 2024
- PL12/2324 – Tuesday 16th April 2024

RESOLVED that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions, proposed by Cllr. Mawer and seconded by Cllr Beckett. 1 Abstain by Cllr. Willet as he was not in attendance.

16/2425 Minutes of the Policy Committee Meeting

- POL05/2324 – Monday 19th February 2024

RESOLVED that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions, proposed by Cllr. Maguire and seconded by Cllr Sibley. 2 Abstain by Cllr. Willet and Cllr. Ford as they were not in attendance at the meeting.

17/2425 Minutes of Working Parties

- AWP03/2324 – Wednesday 6th December 2023
- EWP04/2324 – Wednesday 8th November 2023
- EWP05/2324 – Wednesday 14th February 2024
- BTAG05/2324 – Thursday 25th January 2024
- BTAG06/2324 – Thursday 28th March 2024
- CSWG04/2324 – Thursday 4th January 2024
- CSWG05/2324 – Thursday 14th March 2024
- CSWG06/2324 – Thursday 2nd May 2024

RESOLVED that Councillors **CONFIRMED** the minutes and resolutions, proposed by Cllr. Maguire and seconded by Cllr Sibley. 1 Abstain by Cllr. Willet as he was not in attendance at the meeting.

18/2425 Mayor's Cadet Badge

Council **APPROVED** the cadet badge.

Council **APPROVED** the appointment of more than one future cadet starting in the next Mayoral term 2025. Design of the badge delegated to Town Mayor and Town Clerk.

19/2425 Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Section 1) Report

The Full Council **NOTED** the accompanying documents and **CONSIDERED** and **AGREED** the contents of Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2023/2024

20/2425 Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Pt 2) Report

The Full Council thanked the Officers for their work with the Internal Audit and year end reports.

The Full Council **CONSIDERED** and **AGREED** the contents of the Annual Governance Statement (AGAR Pt 2).

21/2425 Internal Auditor Report

Cllr Wheatley noted that the Finance Reports were also discussed and approved in the Finance Committee Meeting.

The Full Council **NOTED** and **APPROVED** the contents of the Audit and Statement of Accounts.

22/2425 Exercise of Public Rights Report

The Responsible Finance Officer clarified that the Exercise of Public rights was the public notification of the AGAR that will be sent to the External Auditor Moore and would consist of the AGAR and Internal Auditor report.

The Full Council **AGREED** to the dates of the Exercise of Public Rights.

23/2425 Earmarked Reserves Report

Committee **AGREED** that the General Reserve be maintained at a level of £810,110 for this purpose;

AGREED that £307,921 be added to earmarked reserves and allocated as outlined.

AGREED that £30,100 for 9044 Partnership be moved and included under 9011 Play Areas and Open Space Investment.

24/2425 Bank Mandate

Council **APPROVED** the request for the Responsible Finance Officer to be included on the Bank Mandate.

25/2425 Date of Next Meeting

Monday 14th October 2024 – 7pm, The Chamber Room, Garth House

Close of meeting: 9.30 pm.