

Minute for Zoom online meeting held by Biggar Community Council on Monday 15th June at 7pm.

Present: Jerry Sumpster – Chairman, Gil Dunn – Treasurer, Jan Currie – Secretary, Lesley Craise, Janet Moxley, Jimmy Ritchie, Laura Shirley and Thelma Ingram (who took the minute).

Ex Officio members: Councillors Ian McAllan and Alex Allison.

Apologies: Al Stewart - Associate Member - Bonfire

There were 18 members of the public in attendance.

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

He congratulated the Gala week Committee for a superb week of fun and virtual activities which have been enjoyed by all.

2. The etiquette for the meeting was explained.

3. Essential shopping on a restricted budget.

The Chair thanked Ross for coming to speak about his concern which he had tried to raise on the Biggar Community Facebook page. Ross said that the cost of essential shopping at the Co-op had increased and was not justified. For those who can shop in Lanark and elsewhere the cost of shopping is noticeably less.

The expense of purchases and current restricted bus services have made local shopping more costly for those on restricted income and those without access to transport. Local shops in Biggar do provide quality and niche products, but he was concerned that the money spent in Biggar is reduced if people find they have to shop elsewhere or limit what they buy.

A £20 food shop at the Co-op gets less food than in Lanark. He would like the prices for essential shopping to be more in line with those offered in Lanark. He had spoken to a fair few people who are finding essential food costs are now an issue. He felt the town as a whole could benefit more from its own local customers.

Cllr Ian McAllan said he was in dialogue with the Co-op and would write to them about essential food items and costs. Janet said the market decides what

shops there are in Biggar and this is not something the BCC can directly influence. Jan Currie said that she had, in Edinburgh, found some supermarkets receptive to increasing their essentials range. Online grocery shopping has doubled since three months ago and Biggar has lost Sainsbury's and Spar in the last year.

Ross suggested a poll could be done in Biggar to see what the community thought about local food shopping and essential and or basic items, and show what the local needs were. Thelma offered to investigate food-coops and a survey to feed into the Community Action Plan.

Actions – Cllr Ian McAllan to write to Co-op, Thelma to work on survey options and research food co-ops etc with Ross and others.

4. Micro-grant applications. There were none, so instead Item 6e. "Suspension of Parking. Draft proposal to support social distancing" - was moved up the agenda due to public interest.

6e. Suspension of Parking - Draft proposal to support social distancing.

The Chair informed the meeting that this item was not about widespread removal of parking on the High St. Jerry wanted to make it clear that no proposal has been presented to BCC for discussion. He understands that Gary of The Crown has currently shelved his proposal due to lack of support. Recognising that a number of businesses were represented at the meeting because of this possible misunderstanding (and approx. 9 emails had been received from businesses expressing concerns), Jerry sought to make it clear that this was not the matter under discussion.

Janet said the queue marshals were concerned that the stretch of narrow pavement from Graeme's Pharmacy to the Olive Tree was congested by queuers, pedestrians and mobility scooter riders making it difficult to maintain social distancing. It has been suggested that suspending two or three parking spaces in front of these shops might help and she wanted to take views on this suggestion.

Janet confirmed that she had already approached SLC with a proposal along these lines, but that SLC had responded that they did not currently support this proposal.

All who spoke at the meeting agreed that this pavement, the road in front with unrestricted spaces and the 30 minute parking spaces on the island near the A702 were not easy to negotiate. It was felt the town and its shops need all the spaces possible and that considerate behaviour encouraged by the marshals and ourselves should partly relieve the problem.

It was noted that in future making the service road one way from the John Street end could help considerably and a redesign of the area to address the problem could be looked at. That direction is already the most used direction.

Also discussed was the need to ensure that we have as many parking spaces available on the High St as possible. Mention was made of the post office vans and the use of spaces for Brownlies' cages. The work compound in front of the Corn Exchange for the pavement work for Transport Scotland by Amey should be removed at the end of this month. The business people present all repeatedly stressed the importance of parking to Biggar, its shops and its future.

Also mentioned were the electric car charging points which Cllrs McAllan and Allison confirmed are to put in the area between the Corn Exchange and the museum. A member of the public said that Biggar is short of disabled parking spaces.

Action - Cllrs Ian McAllan and Alex Allison to work with BCC to reduce the problems in this area and whether it could be made one way.

5 Finances.

Gil Dunn, Treasurer presented the accounts from 1 April to 14 June 2020. She explained there has been no recent movement in the Business or Clyde Wind Farm Microgrant Accounts. The Business Account balance is £27.07 with the annual payment from SLC now overdue, while the Clyde Account balance is £510.50.

The Incentive Account presently contains four separate internally kept accounts

1. The Glenkerie Account for small grants administered by BCC which has remained the same since 1 April at £743:92.
2. The Incentive A/c which started at £698:43 and finished at £758:44 as BCAG have returned £60.01 of their microgrant award.

3. The Biggar Community Action Group monies which BCC under its delegated powers has allowed to be held in the incentive Fund till a bank account can be opened by BCAG, currently £3975:62.
4. The Covid -19 Fund administered by the BCC to distribute microgrants during the effects of Covid-19, which stands at £6244.76.

Jerry, as a member of BCAG, gratefully thanked BCC for providing a bank account to put their grant funds into so BCAG could have volunteers delivering food and prescriptions, buy mobile phones for these services and provide hot meals and the Listening Ear. The availability of the BCC bank account enabled this to be set up quickly.

Jerry, as the Chair of BCC, said that this was agreed as an urgent decision by the three office bearers of Biggar Community Council - Jerry, Gil and Jan. All three are also members of the then Biggar Community Coronavirus Action Group (now called Biggar Community Action Group) formed by a group of like-minded individuals from Biggar. The three BCC office bearers made this decision on the 18th of March as an urgent decision under powers given by SLC's Scheme for Community Councils for urgent decisions.

This and any other urgent decisions taken by the officers of BCC will be published and reported to the first full, public, face to face meeting following lockdown OR the first full online meeting that takes place after SLC change their guidelines regarding virtual meetings.

Jerry said that he was proud of what the CC has done to support BCAG and what the action group and its 100 volunteers have done in Biggar.

Gil said that she will resign as Treasurer and as a Community Councillor once the BCAG account has been set up.

BCAG have given the Bank all the necessary forms, a copy of the draft BCAG constitution and signatures. The bank have confirmed they have all the paperwork they need but have said that due to current restrictions setting up the account may take some time.

Thelma asked that as BCAG were still using a BCC bank account at the moment the constitution of BCAG should be shared with the BCC as a courtesy. Gil said that the BCAG members would have to consider this. Janet asked who makes the financial decisions within BCAG. Jerry stated that decisions are made by

the members of BCAG, which includes Gil, Jan and Jerry, who are the signatories on the new bank account which has been applied for.

6a. Municipal Hall repairs.

The contractors may start in August 2020 depending on the restrictions at the time. BCC will be kept in touch. These are important repairs as this building has the largest SLC public hall in Biggar for indoor meetings.

6b. Roads and Pavements.

SLC are hoping to include all the following areas for resurfacing when the next round of work is drawn up. The areas concerned are Municipal Hall, Station Road Junction, the Biggar Mill Road south of the Splash, Rowhead Terrace and the area between Corn Exchange and traffic lights.

Thelma will keep an eye on their state until the work is done. Members of the public can also report defects to SLC themselves, by links on BCC website, emailing direct to SLC or by phone.

Thelma informed the meeting that the Transport Scotland contract for A702 is to be given to BEAR from August 2020, she asked that Amey be thanked for their helpfulness and to welcome BEAR to work with the town.

6c. Planning.

Some SLC decisions will continue to be made under delegated authority with the Chief Executive consulting with the five political groups. Some meetings, including the Planning Local Review Body, Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board and the Risk and Audit Scrutiny Committee will be held using Microsoft Teams on a pilot basis. They hope to hold the Planning Committee, scheduled for 23 June 2020, by the same means. This will be the first, large scale meeting to be held on this platform and will provide an opportunity to review the potential for further meetings to be held in this way. The situation regarding meetings will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, taking account of the relevant public health advice at any given time.

The SLC councillors confirmed that any major planning applications are being deferred at present and that the appeal against the local Plan is with Scottish Ministers. Janet mentioned that a recent decision in the Court of Session may

affect future appeals relating to housing land supply. No applications for Overburns quarry will be considered for another three years.

6d. Hogmanay.

Jimmy Ritchie reported that the Bonfire Committee for 2020 has been drawn up with Al Stewart who is BCC's Associate member for the Bonfire, and other Cornets and a representative from BCC full members. The application for the Licence to SLC will be submitted when SLC know the position for such an event. SLC hoped it could be submitted the end of July. Jimmy said if the Bonfire can't happen we will need to consider something else, we need to wait and see what happens.

SLC insurers have said, through SLC, they recognise the BCC has provided the insurance in the past. They recognise the role of the Cornets and The Bonfire Committee. The insurers have said when BCC make the proposal, the BCC need to state who is on the Bonfire Committee and what their responsibilities are. Jerry stated that the SLC insurers have said that if BCC are part of the arrangements, administration and organisation of the Bonfire then the insurers will acknowledge that they are.

7. AOCB.

Members of the public commented as follows-

Several members of the public said there is a need to involve those who have been isolated and those who can't volunteer because of age and changed circumstances. People who are vulnerable need to see the contribution they can make. Many people may not be able to participate in ways they did in the past.

Public Transport – Janet commented that Stuart's have indicated they don't intend to increase their bus service until at earliest phase 3. At present due to subsidies on off peak services there are fewer buses in the daytime than at other times. The reductions of bus services and carrying capacity further restrict peoples' travel options. There is a danger of passengers becoming second class citizens. Transport to hospitals from this area may become an even more noticeable problem.

Action - Janet will ask SPT to re-examine the effect of subsidies on daytime travel.

Black Lives Matter – Janet noted that ‘Black Lives Matter’ posters had been put on the A702’s road bridge, but had been removed by persons unknown. She felt this was regrettable and that black lives do matter to people in Biggar.

Jerry noted that BCC are required to be inclusive of all members of the community at all times and did not feel that a specific statement on this was necessary.

Janet acknowledged that she was not suggesting that BCC itself was saying that black lives didn’t matter. She felt that the majority of the community would agree that black lives do matter and that BCC should support this view.

Closing remarks.

This meeting has shown an online meeting is more accessible than the monthly physical meeting.

A brief poll at the end indicated that all those present felt the meeting went well, if you have access to a device to get on line.

Next Meeting – Monday 20th July at 7pm.