

**Minutes of the AGM of Biggleswade Community Group,
7pm, Tuesday 17th September 2024 at Biggleswade Baptist Church**

1. Welcome Attendees

Attendees: Iris Bull, Alan Dansey, Paula Dansey, Shirley Legate, John Robertson, Neil Spencer

Apologies: Sheila Beard

2. Trustees

Shirley Legate is standing down as trustee but sufficient trustees remain according to the requirements of the constitution.

3. Partners

- Relationships with partner organisations are working well.
- The recent addition of The Bigg Theatre as partners has been welcomed.
- It is hoped that the Biggleswade Carnival will be joining as partners in due course.
- The Group would welcome more partners.

4. Roles

- It was noted that there were vacancies for Secretary and Fundraising and, with Shirley Legate stepping down, for Social/Events. It was noted that it was not necessary to be a trustee in order to fulfil one of these roles.
- Alan Dansey is happy to continue as Chair and to act as in charge of Accounts (although if someone else came forward to take over Accounts, he would welcome this). He is also effectively acting Secretary, but would like to hand this role to someone else
- There is an urgent need for someone to look after Fundraising and find/apply for grants, etc.
- John Robertson reported that someone who had been in contact with Good Neighbours might be approached to assist with roles.

ACTION: John Robertson to contact potential volunteer.

- The editing and distribution of the newsletter was going smoothly. Alan Dansey is happy to continue as Editor and John Robertson is happy to continue looking after Distribution. It was noted that the newsletter being constrained to 8 pages for financial reasons also meant that it was lighter for distributors to carry than if it contained more pages.

- Social/Events
 - The Great Yarmouth coach trip organised by Shirley Legate had been a success. 30 people had gone on the trip through Biggleswade Community Group. The coach company Cozy's had been excellent. It is hoped that a poem written by one of the attendees about the trip might be included in a future newsletter.
 - With Shirley Legate stepping down from the role, two people had been approached with a view to potentially taking over the role for Social/Events. However, after consideration, both of these had declined. Iris Bull has agreed to take over the role and all present expressed their thanks.
ACTION: Iris Bull to take over Social/Events.
 - The tickets for the Great Yarmouth trip had been facilitated by Shirley Legate starting the social/events fund with £400 of her money to buy the tickets from Cozy's. A total of £367 had been received as payments from those going to Great Yarmouth. It was noted that this was somewhat less than the £400 expected because the balance between concessionary and full price tickets being sold leaned more towards concessionary than had been anticipated.
 - The trustees (other than Shirley Legate) present at the meeting considered that it would be appropriate to return the balance of £367 to Shirley Legate, noting that if the balance had been higher, the full £400 would have been returned.
ACTION: £367 to be returned to Shirley Legate
 - Shirley Legate is resigning as a trustee and from her Social/Events role. Her involvement in setting up Biggleswade Community Group as a founding trustee was acknowledged and she was thanked unanimously for her contribution to Biggleswade Community Group. It was hoped that while she may no longer be a trustee, she may in the future continue to be involved in activities of interest to the group, and the newsletter.

5. Organisation

- Sheila Beard had sent a letter to the meeting via Iris Bull, who read it out.
 - Sheila Beard was disappointed that she could not attend the AGM. The meeting noted that the AGM was arranged with idea that Shirley Legate could give her a lift to the venue, but it was a shame that this ended up not being possible due to the timing of her carer's visit.
 - Sheila Beard queried the choice of producing a colour newsletter and wondered if black and white might be more cost effective. Alan Dansey reported that according to the printers with whom he had discussed the matter in the past, the saving obtained by not having a colour newsletter would not be significant. It was also noted that the appearance of the newsletter was frequently praised and caused readers regard it as a quality product to be valued.
 - Sheila Beard expressed her disappointment that opportunities for information sharing within the group/partners via social meetings had been fewer than one might have wished for. The matter was discussed by those at the meeting and the idea of having a table at a coffee morning at Trinity Methodist Church or in the coffee shop at The Bigg Theatre once every so often might be a good idea (Café Mocha being too small for such an event).
ACTION: Paula Dansey and Alan Dansey to arrange meeting along the lines the above.
- Alan Dansey had been looking at the Group's constitution and planned to suggest some "tweaks". He would circulate these suggestions to the trustees. He had previously explored idea of the Group becoming a charity, but this did not seem to be necessary or particularly helpful in order for the Group to achieve its aims at this point in time.
ACTION: Alan to circulate suggested changes to the constitution.

6. Accounts

- Alan Dansey presented a set of accounts (see attached).
 - It was decided that Public Liability Insurance would not be renewed, but events organised by the Group's partners can be covered by their insurance.
 - Money had been received from Flix Cinema Club when it closed down.
 - An application to Biggleswade Town Council for a grant has been submitted.
- The cost of printing a monthly newsletter puts a strain on the accounts. It would be good to find additional funds to enable the Group to pay in full for other things such as websites, materials for stalls, a talking newsletter, etc.
 - Selling advertising in the newsletter would require additional pages to be printed and extra printing costs so would probably be uneconomic. It was noted that in the case of other newsletters circulated locally, their main clients/customers were the advertisers rather than their readers whereas the Group's newsletter was aiming to have its readers as their main focus.
 - It was noted that by having 1500 newsletters printed and distributed on a monthly basis, it served a different purpose to other newsletters (such as that produced by Biggleswade Town Council which was quarterly and online only).

7. Reports

- Two reports had been produced (in February and August 2024) and circulated to Biggleswade Town Council and others (see attached).
- It was agreed that reports should be produced at timescales appropriate to the purposes of each report, rather than to an arbitrary timescale.

8. Closing Thoughts/Plans

- The need to fill roles, particularly Fundraising and Secretary was again noted.
- Growing contacts with other organisations would be aimed for.
- A stall, along with partners, at the Biggleswade Christmas Lights Switch-On was planned. John Robertson was going to apply for stall on behalf of Biggleswade Good Neighbours who would then be supported to run it by other partner groups.
ACTION: John Robertson to book stall.
- Iris Bull brought up the issue of difficulties faced by older people when trying to manage the demands of an increasingly digital world (e.g. in the healthcare system). It was noted that Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charities could provide help with this, and that this could be signposted via the newsletter.
- It was noted that there was a need to make sure that newsletter items that could potentially be viewed as adverts were worded so as to be more like reviews of services, or similar.



BIGGLESWADE COMMUNITY GROUP

c/o 10 Horseshoe Close, Dunton, Biggleswade SG18 8RY

Tel: 01767 310163

17 February 2024

Interim Report February 2024

Biggleswade Community Group was established in September 2020. It exists to reduce isolation and ensure that everyone has access to important information in a way that is easy to read and understand. A monthly newsletter is produced with local community, council, NHS and government information of relevance to the people of Biggleswade and nearby. We publish both in print and online. For those with internet access we send updates as required during the month via email and social media.

We continue to publish Biggleswade Community News 12 times a year as an A5 size printed booklet. To keep costs down it is currently limited to 8 pages of local, council, NHS and government information of interest to the people of Biggleswade and its surrounding community. This means careful and selective editing and extra pages would be good on occasions to enable more information to be included. We are not taking adverts due to space limitations and to retain editorial control. However, we do include information in support of local small businesses when possible and suggest a small donation.

We work in partnership with Biggleswade Good Neighbours and Ivel Valley College. These distribute paper copies of the newsletter direct to about 800 Good Neighbours clients and helpers, plus pickup points at a large number of town locations. Other partners include Future Action Biggleswade (FAB) and Biggleswade Community Garden. We had a joint stall at the 2023 Christmas Light Switch On.

Volunteers perform all tasks and so the main expense is printing. Our funding has been almost exclusively from a Town Council grant for which we are very grateful. Without it we could not have continued to reach so many people by producing 1250 paper copies. We are investigating other grants but most are only for capital expense, not operating costs.

As our accounts show our balance is insufficient to continue until the end of this year and we no longer have any separate reserves set aside. Donations have fallen to almost zero despite encouraging them via "Just Giving" and our web site. We are determined to keep the newsletter free at the point of delivery to ensure that it is accessible for all.

We are now submitting another application to Town Council, in the hope that we will be successful in obtaining sufficient funding to guarantee that we can continue as we are and possibly increase the number of pages and copies if needed to include important information.

We are seeking other partnerships with appropriate community organisations. And are discussing joint initiatives such as open days, stalls at events and drop in coffee mornings etc aimed at reducing isolation

We have started reviewing our constitution and have added another trustee. Overall, we continue to be successful and are keen to further the benefit that we offer to the local Community of Biggleswade.

Alan Dansey, John Robertson, Iris Bull, Sheila Beard, Neil Spencer – Trustees.



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c/o 10 Horseshoe Close, Dunton, Biggleswade SG18 8RY

Tel: 01767 310163

07 August 2024

Interim Report August 2024

Biggleswade Community Group was established in September 2020 as a not for profit venture run by volunteers. It exists to reduce isolation and ensure that everyone has access to important information in a way that is easy for them to read and understand.

Our main project, a monthly newsletter, provides important local community, council, NHS and government information of relevance to the people of Biggleswade and nearby. It is available both in print and online.

We publish Biggleswade Community News 12 times a year as an 8 page A5 size printed booklet. This requires careful editing to ensure that nothing important is missed. 1500 copies are available free of charge and readers are eager to receive them. Funds are low so we need more funding to continue.

For those with internet access we send updates during the month via email and social media. However most readers rely on printed copies. Our only cost is printing as compiling, editing and distributing is all done by volunteers.

Our funding is almost exclusively from a Town Council grant for which we are very grateful. Without it we cannot continue to reach so many people. We are investigating other grants but most are only for capital expense, not operating costs. We are not taking adverts due to space limitations and to retain editorial control. However, we do include information about selected local small businesses when possible and suggest a small donation.

We work in partnership with Biggleswade Good Neighbours and Ivel Valley College. These distribute paper copies of the newsletter direct to about 800 Good Neighbours clients and helpers, plus pickup points at a large number of town locations. Other partners include Future Action Biggleswade (FAB) and Biggleswade Community Garden. We sometimes share a stall at local events.

As our accounts show our balance is insufficient to continue. Donations have fallen to almost zero despite encouraging them via "Just Giving" and our web site. We are determined to keep the newsletter free at the point of delivery to ensure that it is accessible for all.

We are now submitting another application to Town Council, in the hope that we will be successful in obtaining sufficient funding to guarantee that we can continue as we are and possibly increase the number of pages and copies if needed to include important information.

We trustees, are reviewing our constitution and plan to hold an AGM. Overall, we continue to be successful and are keen to continue the benefit that we offer to the local Community of Biggleswade. As a new venture we have organised a coach outing to Great Yarmouth and it is proving popular. This is self funding.

Alan Dansey, John Robertson, Iris Bull, Sheila Beard, Neil Spencer, Shirley Legate.
Biggleswade Community Group Trustees