

MINUTES OF THE CIVIC COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 JUNE 2017

PRESENT

The Mayor – Councillor Wood
The Deputy Mayor Councillor McGuinness
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Davies
Councillor Hart
Councillor Jones
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Salt
Councillor Swift

Also in attendance:

Mrs Elaine Rice
Councillor Nicosia

1.17

The Mayor called for nominations for Chair of the Civic Committee. Councillor Hart proposed Councillor Davies for the Chair, seconded by Councillor Jones; there were no other nominations and Councillor Davies was elected as Chair. Councillor Davies called for nominations for Vice Chair; Councillor Jones proposed Councillor Rogers, seconded by Councillor Lawson. There were no other nominations and Councillor Rogers was elected as Vice Chair.

2. APOLOGIES

Councillor Court
Councillor Hall
Councillor Redfern

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon in any matters concerning Biddulph in Bloom.
- b Other Interests:
 - Minute 6- Councillor Hart knows the landowner of the bridge. Councillor Sheldon is Chair of the Moorlands Partnership Board and Councillors Davies and Hart attend these meetings.
 - Minute 7- Councillors Jones and Salt are members of the British Legion; Councillor Harper is a member of the War Memorials Trust.
 - Minute 8- Councillor Jones' wife works at Sainsbury's.

4. MINUTES

- a The Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11 April 2017 were signed.
- b The Minutes of the Christmas Lights Switch-On meeting held on 22 May 2017 were received.

5. CONSIDERATION OF POP-UP SHOPS
a) REPORT TO PROVIDE BACKGROUND

The Events and Partnership Officer, Miss Hancock had researched and produced a report which had been circulated. There had been discussions for a number of months about the way forward for the High Street; pop-up shops are one option, and are included in the Town Council Action Plan for 2017-18. Members were encouraged to consider the High Street in a different way.

Councillor Wood considered the pictures that were included at the end of the report. These suggested different ways to advertise and improve the look of empty shops. Councillor Wood thought it a great way of giving people information on the High Street to advertise on the shops. Some shops were lying empty and this sort of action might encourage people to take one on.

Councillor Jones thought that on the face of it, it was a good idea. However, he would hate to see a shop changing month after month e.g. Halloween then Fireworks then Christmas; he cautioned about the quality of tenants attracted; but the principle was good.

Councillor Salt thought it was a good idea, but asked for information on the logistics of business rates. Councillor Davies also agreed in principle. There were no financial predictions at present; he had asked Mr McDonald for a business plan.

Councillor Jackson was concerned about the practicalities as shop owners were hard to engage, particularly if they did not live in the town. Councillor Davies noted that some owners of recently closed premises were local, these might be available for such a project prior to being sold and whilst vacant.

Councillor Rogers considered that Biddulph Museum was looking for suitable premises; he wondered if the bus hub could be utilised.

Councillor Hart thought it was a good idea in principle and it would be useful to explore the different pots of grants available to support the project e.g. LEP. Clarification would be needed on who legally would be liable for business rates.

Councillor Lawson noted that a start-up grant is available from the County Council; he has the details.

Councillor Nicosia thought it a good idea, but was concerned about how it would be marketed to the public. The public need to understand that a shop hasn't closed, when they move on. It should be made clear that the turnover of businesses could be quite high, and that this was the model.

Councillor Jackson suggested that it is added as an agenda item for the next meeting of the Town Deal; SMDC officers could bring more information.

Councillor Hart thought it would be good to have a list of what services and products are not available on the High Street.

Councillor Salt stated that the Facebook page 'Biddulph and Proud' had started to advertise businesses in the town. Councillor Hart noted that some businesses in

Biddulph did not shout loudly enough about the services they provided e.g. Snelson's provides a key cutting service.

b) MATT MCDONALD (BIDDULPH BUSINESS CHAMBER) TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mr McDonald had been unable to attend the meeting

6. HERITAGE PROJECTS UPDATE

a) COMPLETION OF A527 BRIDGE

Photographs were circulated. It was noted that the bridge looked very similar to old photographs of it; the restoration had been sympathetic.

b) TOWER HILL WELL BID TO MOORLANDS PARTNERSHIP BOARD

An application had been submitted to the Moorlands Partnership Board. Photographs were circulated to show what the well had looked like before it had been cleared, and after. Clearance had been necessary to understand what stone work was needed.

c) GILLOW HEATH PLATFORM REFURBISHMENT

Councillor Davies explained that a resident had brought to the attention of Councillor Hart the deterioration of the platform at the Smokies Way car park.

There was a discussion about what form the refurbishment could take. Suggestions were made including introducing authentic looking signage, directing passers-by to the town centre, adding seats and perhaps a baggage trolley incorporating a floral display.

It was noted that renovating this heritage site would have local support. Councillor Harper noted that the national cycle track runs through the station and action should be taken to make it as attractive as possible.

Councillor Davies noted that the route between Acton and Denstone had been similarly improved.

Councillor Jackson thought it a wonderful idea, the first step to bring the railways back to Biddulph.

Councillor Sheldon thanked Councillor Davies for how he had pursued projects that she had felt very passionate about; it was good to see action being taken. The track was in multi-ownership; this part was owned by the County Council and maintained by the District Council.

**7. RAILINGS ON WAR MEMORIAL AND ADDITIONAL NAMES
Item requested by Councillor Salt; Mrs Elaine Rice to speak**

The Chairman proposed that Standing Orders were suspended, this was agreed. Mrs Rice was invited to address the meeting. Mrs Rice brought two requests for additions to the Town War Memorial: John Rhodes' name is on the Memorial but he had been awarded the Victoria Cross, DSM and bar and the Croix de Guerre. This year would mark the 100th anniversary of his death. It was agreed to add the letters 'VC' after his name. Mrs Rice had also been approached by the family of John Holland who fought in WWII and later served in Malaya where he had died in 1952; he had been awarded the Burma Star. It was agreed that his name would be added to the plaque.

Councillor Jones noted that both were Biddulph men and if the British Legion felt it was worthy; that was good enough for him.

Councillor Hart was fully supportive, both men had served very bravely; this was an appropriate and very reasonable gesture.

Mrs Rice noted that the railings surrounding the war memorial were in a poor state of repair. Councillor Davies felt that they should be repaired and extended to encompass a larger area. Wreaths were attached to the railings following the Remembrance Day Service. Councillor Harper noted that grants were available from the War Memorials Trust. It was agreed to investigate a grant application.

Councillor Jones suggested that a kerb could be used instead of the railings and Councillor Harper noted that Rudyard used a wooden frame to hang the wreaths.

Councillor Davies thanked Mrs Rice and proposed that Standing Orders are reinstated. This was agreed.

8. STATION ROAD

Councillor Salt had recently visited London and observed a fountain which emerged from a cobbled area; she thought this might be worth investigating for the Station Road area. This would fit with the existing memorials and would be on a timer, switched off at night and in the winter months.

Councillor Davies noted that he had recently written to Sainsbury's expressing his disappointment with their response.

Councillor Harper suggested that the land could be acquired under a Compulsory Purchase Order. Councillor Davies said that this was a thought for the future.

Councillor Davies reminded members that Beverley Poole Architect had been instructed to work on a design for the area, with or without the road, and concerns about Health and Safety would be addressed in the specification.

Councillor Lawson noted that he had sent a letter to the Chronicle expressing his views about a fountain in that area; he was not in favour.

Councillor Hart doubted that the road was in the ownership of Sainsbury's. Councillor Davies noted that Land Registry showed that it was.

Councillor Nicosia noted that there were fountains in front of the United Nations building in Geneva.

Councillor Jones questioned the maintenance of the fountain.

Councillor Jackson noted that in a recent straw poll people were generally in favour of the fountain idea, but potential vandalism should be taken into consideration; he felt that credit should be given to Councillor Salt for trying to push this forward as he would hate for the money to go back to Sainsbury's.

Councillor Sheldon thought it was a lovely idea to have jets of water but didn't want too much. Vegetation should be kept away from the water; she was very supportive.

Councillor Swift noted that there had been a recreation ground where Sainsbury's was now located, but the funds had been transferred to the site behind the Labour Club which had now been lost. Councillor Sheldon noted that there had been a poor deal struck with the construction of a play area in the Paddock, in an unsuitable area.

9. HIGHWAYS FEEDBACK ON SOUTH VIEW

Councillor Davies explained that County Highways had proposed a very expensive scheme in the region of £115,000 and the Chief Officer had written to express the concerns of the Council; this was not what the Town Council had wanted. Unfortunately, there was no movement with this. The Chief Officer read an extract from the response, which again stated that an area of land would need to be purchased for larger vehicles to turn around.

Councillor Nicosia expressed concern about the mini-roundabout; drivers often cut across and she feared that there would be an accident. Councillor Jones felt that things had become over complicated and it would be simple to just remove the mini roundabout.

10. COUNCIL CHAMBER

a) LIGHTBULBS

Councillor Davies drew Members' attention to the light bulbs in the Council Chamber; these were all different colours and levels of brightness; SMDC would not pay for new bulbs as they were still working. The caretakers had sought a quotation and asked the Chief Officer to consider this. It was noted that to replace all the bulbs all with LED lights would cost £75. Councillor Rushton proposed this; seconded by Councillor Rogers. All agreed.

Councillor Nicosia requested an item for the next agenda – refurbishment of the tables.

b) REDECORATION

The Chief Officer reported that two quotations have been received and a third is awaited for the redecoration of the Council Chamber.

11. ARTISAN MARKET

a) CHARTER MARK- FRIDAY MARKET FEEDBACK

The Chief Officer had contacted Cheshire East Waste Contract Team who had confirmed that Congleton still held the Charter for a market on Saturdays for any market within a 6 2/3 mile area.

b) NEW MARKET STALL TOPS

Councillor Davies reported that some of the stall tops had disappeared from the locked garage. Replacements had been sourced at a cost of £340.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Chair to move:-

"That, pursuant to Section 100A(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 10 I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the Paragraphs indicated."

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm

Signed Date