

MINUTES OF THE CIVIC COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 NOVEMBER 2017

PRESENT

The Deputy Mayor Councillor McGuinness
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Hall
Councillor Hart
Councillor Jones
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Redfern
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Salt
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Whilding

Also in attendance
Councillor Harper
Councillor Hawley
Councillor Nicosia

53.17 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Court
Councillor Davies
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Swift

Councillor Hall proposed that an email is sent to Councillor Davies offering best wishes for a speedy recovery following his recent operation. All agreed.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon - anything pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom.
- b Other Interests: Minute 57, Councillors Harper, Jones, Salt and Whilding were members of the British Legion.

55. MINUTES

- a. The Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 1 October 2017 were signed.
- b. The Notes of the Christmas Lights Meeting on 17 October 2017 were received

Councillor Salt queried whether the wooden posts had been received; Jodie Hancock confirmed that they had, but there had been an issue with the screws.

56. STATION ROAD UPDATE

Councillor Rogers noted that this would be added to every agenda to keep members informed about progress.

The Chief Officer had received an email from the District Council to suggest that the Town Council begins the discussions with Sainsbury's regarding the lease for Station Road. The District Council can then dovetail with these arrangements. All agreed that these discussions should commence.

Councillor Jones queried whether this Committee had agreed plans for the area. The Chief Officer noted that this Committee had considered the items that it would like to include within the site; it is these ideas that will form part of the Planning application.

Councillor Salt felt that it was important that an application was made; this could be tweaked later.

57. WAR MEMORIAL LISTING AND RESTORATION

The Chief Officer noted that a letter had been received that confirmed that both war memorials in the town had been given Grade II listing as having Special Architectural or Historic Interest. The Conservation Officer at the District Council had confirmed that the railings are not included in this listing.

Following previous discussions, the Chief Officer sought two quotations from Ironage Design. One quote was for restoration of the existing railings; another was for enlarged railings with a gate.

Councillor Salt felt that there was no merit in completing the restoration if we ultimately wanted to change the design of the area.

Councillor Lawson noted that Sunday's Remembrance event was well attended.

Councillor Jones felt it was not appropriate to spend money on the existing railings; they should be removed completely. He also noted that the 'No right turn' for heavy goods vehicles sign should be relocated. When this memorial was installed, they could never have imagined how it would look now; it deserves a better space.

Councillor Hart felt the area should not be renovated; a range of options should be considered. He noted that people in the town don't want this memorial to be moved.

Councillor Rogers liked the railings.

Councillor Salt felt that whatever decision was made should be done quickly. The 100 year anniversary since the end of World War I is due to take place in 2018. Consideration should be given to getting rid of railings, looking at the structure and paving the area. Councillor Salt noted that it was fantastic that the names and adjustments had been added to the memorial; John Holland was very pleased about his uncle's name being added.

Councillor Harper stated that he didn't like the railing, but felt that they protected the memorial. There should also be a light installed to up-light the memorial; he thought this had been agreed. He wondered whether this had slipped off the radar. The Chief Officer was not aware of this, but would investigate.

The Chief Officer queried whether members would like to progress this by developing plans of the area, to set out options.

Councillor McGuinness felt that Sunday's service had been fantastic and enquired about adding names to the Remembrance book held at St Lawrence's church.

Councillor Jones felt that there was not time to do justice to this discussion tonight and suggested that a sub-committee is set up to consider these issues further.

Councillor Hart noted that there was 12 months to do this right.

Councillor Salt felt it was important to look at the future. There is no space remaining for additional names, but hoped this wouldn't be needed.

Councillor Sheldon couldn't recollect how many years the Town Council had been discussing this memorial. The flower bed is ugly; Biddulph in Bloom spend a lot of time there.

Councillor Rogers thanked Biddulph in Bloom for doing that.

Councillor Hawley felt that this group should also consider how to make sure the area can cope with the numbers of people that will attend next year.

Councillor Hall agreed with what he had heard; he felt that the memorial should be repositioned in the same area, 'out of harm's way'. This could be considered as an option.

Councillor Rogers suggested that the group meets in the New Year. The Chief Officer suggested that this should be done now, with the first meeting in December. All agreed.

Councillor Sheldon noted that any action would be much more difficult now the memorial is listed.

Councillor Jones felt we should concentrate on making the space better.

Councillor Salt considered that there were 2000 people in attendance on Sunday. In London, the parade does not stop outside the memorial; people lay wreaths and move on. Perhaps an open-air service outside the Town Hall could be considered.

Councillor Salt also noted that the Royal British Legion holds the town's Book of Remembrance; many of the individuals have addresses listed. Councillor Salt wanted to ask the people now living in these homes to display a name in the window. All agreed that this was a good idea.

Councillor Rogers called for volunteers to join the Memorial Working Group: Councillors Salt, Jones, Hart, Hall, Harper and Rogers volunteered. Elaine Rice would also be asked to attend.

58. CHRISTMAS:

a. UPDATE ON CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH-ON EVENT

The Chief Officer and Events and Partnerships Officer gave an update and itinerary of the event, which would take place on Saturday 25 November. The arrangements were similar to last year. A lantern parade would head down from the library to the Town Hall; there were around 120 young people

involved in this. Entertainment would take place outside the Town Hall and then Santa would enter the High Street from King Street and meet the children in the Town Hall. All agreed that this sounded positive.

b. CONSIDERATION OF PURCHASE OF AN AMP AND CHRISTMAS TREE

The Chief Officer noted that there was now no need to purchase an amplifier.

Councillor Rogers stated that as the entrance to the Town Hall has been refurbished, this now deserved a better Christmas tree. Councillor Hart moved that the Town Council purchase this with appropriate lights and decorations. This was seconded by Councillor Jones; all agreed.

59. HIGHWAYS:

a. RECOMMENDATION FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING GROUP- TO CONSIDER EMPLOYING A HIGHWAYS CONSULTANT TO WORK WITHIN THE TOWN AND PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS AND SOLUTIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Councillor Rogers introduced this item, noting that there were many discussions ongoing about changes to Highways and the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group were proposing that better coordination and a new perspective was necessary.

The Chief Officer had had some tentative discussions with Staffordshire County Council Highways and believed that they would support this piece of work to consider the road layouts in the town. The Neighbourhood Plan would look at developments in the town until 2035; it was important that the Town Council was able to plan strategically and budget effectively. This consultancy work could be funded from the regeneration budget within the Civic Committee remit.

Councillor Hawley noted that there were a number of projects going on and that it would be beneficial to consider feasible options and gather 'ammunition'.

Councillor Hart felt that the town was now at a point where larger developments had been completed; the Health Centre and Sainsbury's. This was a perfect time to consider how traffic around the town flowed. We need expert help.

Councillor Jones felt it would be positive to be told that we could do things; we know what we want and how we want the town to be. We could also consider making the pavement wider at the war memorial.

Councillor Lawson thought this was a good idea. Everything will still have to go through the County Council and there is no money. These projects may get done one day.

Councillor Jones noted that we could commit our own funding to support these projects.

Councillor Hall stated that we have to be ready to take opportunities when they arise.

Councillor Salt felt that we need a consultant.

Councillor Nicosia noted that the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group is made of residents too. They see the issues and don't always understand why we are constricted; we should fight for the town. We should also consider the use of buses and carbon emissions, and include the issue of pedestrianisation. In addition, there are a number of safety issues.

Councillor Hawley stated that this idea had come from the Chief Officer and was very positive. We should be looking at things we can pay for ourselves; small projects make a vast difference.

Councillor Hall noted that in Congleton, recent Highways work had been funded via a grant; they had 'ready-made' projects.

Councillor Sheldon felt that Biddulph suffered from a lack of inward investment. There are no private partners to support projects.

Councillor Hart noted that there should be 'spade ready projects'. We need short, medium and long-term goals. We should be aspirational and we can match-fund projects.

Councillor Lawson stated that looking for a consultant was a great idea; we should also look for contractors.

All were in favour of the Chief Officer developing a specification and reporting back to the Civic Committee. The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and Strategy Working Group would support this development.

b. NORTH HIGH STREET FEEDBACK

Councillor Rogers reminded members that this item involved consideration of the introduction of a loading bay in the North High Street. He felt that it was a shame that the Biddulph Business Chamber was no longer functioning; they could have inputted into this issue.

The Chief Officer updated the group on the email received from Highways. This stated that DHP funding has been allocated to other projects. It was suggested that it would be necessary to canvass the traders in a more formal way to gain their views on a loading bay. The minimum length would be 6.60 metres and its position could be at the end of the current parking bay area.

Councillor Nicosia noted that disabled badge holders can park for up to three hours on the double yellow lines; normally, these could be used for loading. Traders have a difficult time trying to find space. She queried whether traders could come to speak to the Town Council; it was suggested that this take place in the public participation section of Town Council. Councillor Nicosia was happy to canvass opinions.

Councillor Jones stated that the Highways consultant could canvass shops and opinions.

Councillor Hart felt that there was no harm in Councillor Nicosia speaking to traders and for them to speak to us; this would be a useful piece of work.

60. TOWN HALL:
a. POSITIONING OF TWINNING MOSAIC

The Twinning mosaic had been removed when the building work was taking place at the Town Hall. It now needed to be re-instated in an appropriate location. The Chief Officer noted that there were difficulties with regard to positioning the plaque in relation to special treatment required (if outside) or fixings on studded walls (if inside).

There are two considerations for Councillors: 1) should it be positioned inside or outside the building; 2) are the Town Council prepared to fund this as there is no money within the Twinning budget.

Councillor Jones felt this should be inside, not tucked round the side of the building. Studded wall issues can be overcome. It is a beautiful thing and should be in the Reception.

Councillor Hart felt it should be inside, in the best possible position. The Former Chair of Twinning should be invited to the opening.

Councillor Sheldon stated that it should be positioned outside, to the left of the entrance to the Town Hall.

Councillor Harper stated that it should be inside.

Councillor Rogers noted that the Twinning Committee were just keen to get this back on the wall.

Councillor Nicosia felt it should go in the foyer.

Councillor Salt felt it should be inside and noted that she had recently visited Fusignano. Twinning is a massive deal over there and it is the least we can do to get this reinstated.

Councillor Rogers asked Councillors to vote. All were in favour of reinstating this inside with the exception of Councillor Sheldon, who felt that this plaque had been designed to go outside.

All agreed that, within reason, this should be paid for by the Town Council. More information would be provided to the Civic Committee when this had been received.

Councillor Harper queried whether this was on the Town Council's insurance. The Chief Officer would investigate.

b. TV IN ENTRANCE- ADVERTISING OF COMMUNITY EVENTS

Councillor Rogers noted that this had been discussed previously. We had now received information that the District Council were unable to provide any monitors. He noted that TV screens were very effective in the Victoria Centre. Advertising in this way was compulsive viewing. Councillor Rogers had briefly looked at costs; a 32" screen could be £150.

Councillor Rogers stated that Councillor Davies would like this positioned to be seen from the outside. He queried how Councillors wished to progress.

Councillor Hart proposed that the Chief Officer investigate further costs and prices for installation. The Chief Officer should report back as soon as possible.

Councillor Jones agreed that the Chief Officer should investigate further options.

Councillor Salt queried whether this could be mounted from the ceiling. Councillor Salt also wondered whether this could be sponsored.

All were in favour.

Councillor Nicosia left at 8.40 pm

62. UPDATE FROM COUNCILLOR ROGERS- TOURISM PROJECTS AND CALENDARS

Councillor Rogers stated that the Biddulph 2018 calendars were fresh off the press. He was 'chuffed with the calendar'.

Councillor Rogers would talk to the Chronicle about advertising. He thanked the Chief Officer and Events and Partnerships Officer. There are also notecards available.

Councillor Salt thought the calendars were stunning.

63. 2018/19 BUDGET

The Chief Officer presented a document that included figures from last year's budget. Having spoken to Councillor Davies, she did not propose any increase in the budget for this Committee, but asked Councillors to consider a small increase in the cost of a pitch-only spot at the Artisan Market.

Councillor Salt noted that the town trail development should be included in the Tourism budget.

Councillor Hawley stated that the regeneration budget should be allocated to specific projects. We need to start using this budget.

The Chief Officer noted that this would be presented to the Finance Committee for further consideration in the New Year.

Councillor Salt left at 8.45 pm

All agreed.

64. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Councillor Rogers noted that the Council Chamber room decoration was well under way and stated that it looked good.

He thanked members for attending on Remembrance Sunday; it had been a well-attended event.

Councillor Rogers noted that the Town Crier had had his regalia for 12 years; it was held together with safety pins. As a representative of this town, the Town Council should consider replacing this.

Councillor Hall declared an interest; he is in the Rotary Club with the Town Crier.

Councillor Jones stated that the Town Crier should investigate the costs and let us know what these are; we should do our utmost to fund this. He felt that this uniform was as much a part of the town as the Mayor's Chain.

All agreed to look at costings.

Councillor Rogers noted that 'On Tap' was opening on Saturday; this is a new business in the town and is very positive.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm

Signed Date