

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 19 APRIL 2016

PRESENT

The Mayor - Councillor Baddeley
The Deputy Mayor - Councillor Salt
Councillor Court
Councillor Davies
Councillor Hall
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Jones
Councillor Hart - Chair
Councillor Lawson
Councillor McGuinness
Councillor Nicosia
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Swift
Councillor Walley
Councillor Whilding
Councillor Wood

Also in attendance:
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Harper
Councillor Hawley

111.15. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from
Councillor Lovatt

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon declared in any matters concerning Biddulph in Bloom. Councillor Hart declared an interest in any matters concerning site specifics to do with the Local Plan. Councillor McGuinness as Churchwarden at St Lawrence's Church. Minute 119b Councillor Court declared an interest as a homeowner.
- b Other Disclosable Interests. None were declared.

113. MINUTES

- a It was **Resolved** to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 15 March 2016.
- b It was **Resolved** to receive the Minutes of the Allotments meetings held on 30 March 2016.
- c It was **Resolved** to receive the Minutes of the Burial Grounds Committee meeting held on 12 April 2016. Councillor Harper had declared an interest, he also knew the contractor's father.

Reference Minute 39b - Councillor Hart thanked Councillor McGuinness for his help with the proposed sewage pipe that would be laid through the Bateman Walk.

114. BEMERSLEY HOUSEHOLD WASTE & RECYCLING CENTRE

Councillors Winnington and Heath did not attend the meeting.

An email had been received from Councillor Heath advising that that the Site would not be considered for closure in the near future. Councillor Hart felt that nothing would happen before the County Council election the following year. Councillor Hart had attended a meeting of an outside body where he had the opportunity to speak to County Councillor Winnington and Stoke-on-Trent City Councillor Follows – cabinet member for Greener City Development and Leisure, therefore he felt that the item should be put on hold for the time being.

Councillors Hart and Sheldon had been invited to attend and would support Councillors Jackson and Redfern at the meeting of the Bemersley Waste Recycling Centre Liaison Committee to be held on 11 May 2016

Councillor Wood felt that this Town Council should continue to work on an action plan. He was disappointed, he had wanted Councillor Winnington to attend so that he could hear first-hand the frustration and upset of this Council and to hear how valuable and precious the facility was to the town and to the strength of feeling in Biddulph. This town wanted to maintain the facility and a strong case must be made, Councillor Wood felt that a face to face meeting would still be of use. Councillor Lawson also wanted a face to face meeting to keep the pressure on.

The Chief Officer noted that Councillor Winnington's PA had telephoned to say that this Town Council had all the same paperwork as Councillor Winnington.

Councillor Jones said that he would have welcomed the opportunity to speak to Councillor Winnington face to face and to keep the pressure on.

Councillor Harper thanked Councillor Hart for his efforts.

Councillor Sheldon said that we should prepare our case and build on the facts and challenge any information. There was no viable alternative to Bemersley. Councillor Sheldon noted the lack of soundproofing at the site. It had been an industrial site for over 65 years.

Councillor McGuinness thanked Councillor Hart and asked Councillors Redfern and Jackson to keep the ball rolling.

Councillor Jackson felt that this Council had not had all the paperwork and after 2¾ years of uncertainty the question should be asked to all prospective candidates in the election the following year, where they stood on this. Councillor Jackson would resign if a Labour administration closed BHWRC.

Councillor Hall felt we should get a case together and maintain working group meetings to get answers to all our questions, so get case ready in advance to send to County when ready.

Councillor Davies felt that we would be in a better position in 12 months time to fight our corner.

Councillor Salt concurred that the working group must continue.

Councillor Lawson had been part of a delegation which had visited the Four Ashes recycling site and saw what the future might hold.

Councillor Hart agreed that the working group should meet after 11 May 2016.

Councillor Wood suggested that professional help be brought in to draft the report.

115. POSSIBLE TRANSFER OF COUNTRY PARK MANAGEMENT

Councillor Jones reported that there was a proposal to transfer management of Biddulph Grange Country Park to the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. He noted that the vast majority of users were responsible dog owners and expressed concern and asked for the support of this Town Council to request that regulations regarding dogs were not changed. Councillor Jones believed that this was the only place where dogs could run free. Councillor Jackson also expressed concern about the protection of fishing rights in the Park. Councillor Jones proposed that a letter to this effect is sent to Councillor Johnson, seconded by Councillor Whilding, carried with 1 against. Councillor Nicosia added that she did not own a dog but was concerned about safety and well-being of families visiting the Park.

Councillor Jackson expressed concern about the over use of volunteers.

116. BIDDULPH MOOR PLAY AREA

Councillor Jones asked for support for Biddulph Moor play area where the equipment was nearly 50 years old. He had spoken to Councillor Johnson that day and had received assurance that the unfit equipment would be replaced with equipment of a similar play value within the next financial year to meet current safety standards.

Councillor Harper noted that Biddulph Moor must have the same facilities as everywhere else in the town.

117. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Nothing to report

119. MEETINGS ATTENDED DURING THE MONTH

Reports from members attending meetings of outside bodies where important information relating to Biddulph has been received.

- a Councillor McGuinness had met with the Police and Crime Commissioner at a recent Church event. Mr Ellis had sent his best wishes to this Council.
- b Councillor Court had chanced on a site meeting at the sewage works, the owner of some of the adjoining land was also present.

At this point Councillor Hart left the Chamber and Councillor Jones took the Chair for the following items:

- c Councillor Court having introduced himself; had been invited to join the group as it toured the works. The representative from United Utilities expressed concern about the proximity of the suggested new development site, to the sewage works and would recommend that the new housing went elsewhere.
- c Councillor Hawley had attended three neighbourhood planning meetings; with Councillor Harper he had attended a seminar at Bridgnorth which had been enlightening and informative, a very useful day;

- with District Council Officer Jo Bagnall;
a neighbourhood working group meeting.
- d Councillor Wood had attended a District Council meeting about the site options and expressed disappointment that the District Council was not listening to public opinion, especially in Biddulph. In his opinion the whole planning process was in disarray and he had no faith in the process at the District Council. Councillor Jones concurred.

Councillor Hart returned to the Chamber and re took the Chair

- e Councillor Sheldon asked for volunteers at the Clean for the Queen events she had organised. All to be held between 9 and 11 am
Thursday 21 April - meet at Brown Lees Chapel
Saturday 23 April - meet at Church Road roundabout
Monday 25 April - meet at Mill Hayes – meet at the playing fields
Thursday 28 April - meet at Halls Road changing rooms
Saturday 30 April – meet on Wharf Road car park
Equipment would be provided for volunteers.

120. LENGTHSMAN

Councillor Hart reported that a problem with flooding under the bridge on Marsh Green Road was being tackled with the help of a local farmer and the Lengthsman. Councillor Jones reported that the footpath from Rowan Close was overgrown.

121. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

A letter had been received from County Councillor Mark Deaville – Cabinet Support Member for Highways and Transport; advising that the Lengthsman scheme would end in April 2017 and from that date a review would be taken of the future of Neighbourhood Highway Teams.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Signed Date

Following the meeting the Mayor addressed those present

'Colleagues, Ladies and Gentleman

I now have a sad duty to perform, to say Goodbye to Kate, on her retirement.

Kate has served this Council for an incredible 28 years, ably assisted by Jean for 18 years. Kate has seen many Mayors and Councillors come and go, and has seen some changes over the years, some good, some bad, but you have met them all stoically and with good humour.

Sarah, you have a hard act to follow, but I am sure that you will be receiving the same accolades on the occasion of your retirement.

Kate, you have earned our trust and respect and we shall miss your professionalism and expertise, and also your friendship. You know you will be much missed, so please take with you our very best thoughts and good wishes, and most of all hope for the future.'

Councillor Hall gave a brief history of the post. He said that this Council kept high standards and was the envy of others and this was due in some part to the dedication, commitment and leadership of the Chief Officer – Mrs Kate Thacker; who had dealt with all types of Councillors with courtesy and a professionalism which was second to none. He offered thanks for a job well done and for her kindness, help and consideration over the years.

Mr John Robinson – Biddulph Town Crier gave a proclamation and presented a copy to Kate.

Councillor Jackson noted that 28 years was a long time in one job and that Kate had carried out her duties across the political and social spectrum; he thanked her for her service to this Council and the town.

Councillor Wood noted that Kate had been honest and helpful and wished her well for her retirement adding that she would be sorely missed; she had been a First Class Officer.

The Chief Officer responded that it had been a privilege to work for Biddulph Town Council and to become part of this community. It was also an honour to work with Councillors; hard working, enthusiastic, giving freely of so much of their time for the love of Biddulph. The past 28 years had been happy and sad times.

The Mayor, on behalf of fellow Councillors, presented The Chief Officer with a Gift, Vouchers, A Bouquet, a Handmade Card and a Cake from Councillors. Other personal cards and gifts were presented along with a bouquet from PCSO Sherratt. All those present were invited to join the Chief Officer and partake of a sumptuous buffet catered by the Staffordshire Knot.