

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER 2016

PRESENT

The Mayor – Councillor Salt
The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Wood
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Court
Councillor Davies
Councillor Harper
Councillor Hart
Councillor Hawley
Councillor Jones
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Swift
Councillor Walley
Councillor Whilding

Also in attendance:
Councillor Harper
Councillor Redfern

61.15 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:
Councillor Hall
Councillor Lovatt
Councillor McGuinness
Councillor Nicosia

62 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon in any matters concerning Biddulph in Bloom. Councillor Hart relating to Local Plan site specifics. Councillor Davies was a Trustee of SN and SOT CAB
- b Other Disclosable Interests.

63 MINUTES

- a It was **Resolved** to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 15 November 2016.
- b It was **Resolved** to receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Burial Grounds Sub-Committee held on 6 December 2016.

64. UPDATE FROM STRATEGY WORKING GROUP MEETING ON 1 DECEMBER 2016

The Chief Officer updated Members that there had been an initial meeting of a Strategy Working Group (notes were included, for information). Subsequently, the Civic Committee had recommended that the Working Group should feed into the General Purposes Committee. All agreed that this was appropriate. There would be a further meeting of the Strategy Working Group at the end of January 2017.

65. VERBAL UPDATE FROM BIDDULPH GRANGE COUNTRY PARK MEETING ON 12 DECEMBER 2016

Councillor Jones reported that the meeting had not been well attended; it had been a dreadful night. In attendance were officers from SMDC and Biddulph Town Council, himself and four members of the public.

Several issues were discussed; the immediate remit would be to return the park to a decent state of repair, involving the community.

A site visit was arranged, meeting at the visitor centre at 10 am on Saturday 14 January 2017. There would be a follow-up meeting in the Council Chamber from 6-7 pm on 23 January 2017 to discuss findings, agree work, consider costs and move forward with the grant application.

66. SPRINGFIELD ROAD- CONSIDERATION OF BUND/FENCING AROUND SITE

Councillor Davies had brought this item for consideration; he had talked informally with contractor who was concerned about the increase in fly tipping since he had signed the contract. The contractor had warned that extra removals may be an additional cost and had suggested the protection to stop vehicles accessing and dumping on the site. Councillor Davies thought it was in our own interest to take photos to monitor the site.

Councillor Jackson said that previously SMDC hadn't wished to put a fence/bund around the site and were happy for us to call and report anything; this additional tipping could be due to recent changes at the tip. Councillor Jackson was concerned that the contractor had not contacted the Council directly or during the initial negotiations. Councillor Jackson noted that Biddulph Valley Park was not fenced and had no problem with fly tipping; the problem only arose now because the site was currently untidy.

Councillor Sheldon thought it would be such a short time that the site would be vulnerable that the contractor could absorb the cost of household tipping and suggested that those in the houses overlooking the site could be alerted to report tipping.

Councillor Wood felt it was the responsibility of the District Council to deal with fly tipping. The situation should be monitored, and the contractor asked about his concerns.

Councillor Lawson reminded members about the situation at the old dye works on Congleton Road where lorry loads of industrial waste were tipped overnight. He was concerned that the same thing could happen at this site.

Councillor Harper thought that taking photographs was a good idea and that Ward Councillors views should be taken into consideration

Councillor Davies agreed that the protocol was wrong, but had brought this to the attention of the Chief Officer for inclusion on the agenda, for further discussion. He was happy to defer to local knowledge.

Councillor Jackson thanked Councillor Davies for his diligence, and noted that there were no incidents of fly tipping on sites which were regularly mowed.

After a vote, it was agreed that no further action would be taken, but that taking photographs and alerting neighbours were both positive steps.

67. REDUCTION IN FUNDING FOR CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU BY STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The letter had been circulated asking all Councils to consider providing additional funding for the CAB. It would need an additional £300,000 to maintain the same level of service when the proposed reduction from Staffordshire County Council (SCC) was applied.

Councillor Jones said it was a vital service to our town and queried if SCC was aware of how much this Council already contributed, noting that others may not put as much money towards this service.

Councillor Hart noted that this Council had given an additional £3,000 following the sudden closure of the Biddulph Resource and Information Centre (BRIC)

Councillor Davies was a Trustee of Staffordshire North and Stoke on Trent CAB and said it was tragic that Staffordshire County Council was reducing its funding. CAB had its hands tied; the lack of funding would hit generalist advice and those who walked through the door. This council was extremely generous and should not consider giving any more than it already did; others should be encouraged to step up to the mark.

Councillor Rogers said it was a fantastic organisation, but wondered why it cost so much to run.

Councillor Lawson asked if the premises were needed or was there anywhere they could they work from in the Town Hall.

Councillor Harper noted that advice could be sought from the internet these days and that the work of the CAB was diminishing. He queried the number of Councils being asked to contribute and wondered if the use of mobile offices would help.

Councillor Jackson thought that the reasons given for reducing funding were that more people were in work, so there were not as many problems; this was not. He noted that Leek Town Council only gave £11,000. The offices in Biddulph, Leek and Cheadle were vulnerable to closure, leaving no cover in the Moorlands. Councillor Jackson added that the internet was is all well and good, but you need face to face appointments as debt is multi-faceted. The CAB writes to debt agencies and have debts reduced on a person's behalf. There is a phenomenal amount of money that the CAB bring into this town; the organisation always gives value for money and Councillor Jackson felt that demand for its services is growing. He added that this Council was generous had always supported the CAB; the CAB was not like the library service, travelling around would not work. The CAB was like a Lifeboat to a person drowning in a stormy sea. Councillor Jackson reported that Alan White - Cabinet Member Health, Care and Wellbeing at Staffordshire County Council had a £15m 'black hole'. The Better Care fund was a disaster, and unless something changed there would be an increase of 4% in Council Tax bills from April 2017. Councillors felt that the people of Biddulph were paying more and more, but queried whether they were getting more. Councillor Jackson suggested that we find out how much each Council in Staffordshire contributed to CAB. Biddulph Town Council

should not take on more slack from the County Council and should not volunteer to put more money in.

Councillor Wood said that it was the most vulnerable in society who were being punished again, as the benefit system is complex. People would seek advice from CAB, which was well supported by volunteers. Pro rata Biddulph Town Council gave a lot and Staffordshire County Council needed to start looking at its priorities

Councillor Davies noted that CAB did offer internet service; he offered to give a guided tour of the facility in Biddulph or in Stoke to any interested Councillors. He believed our contribution was 'money well spent'. Councillor Davies explained that Biddulph had amalgamated with Stoke to keep its head above water; it runs a tight ship and uses data services linked across the CAB service.

Councillor Salt proposed that a letter is sent to County Councillor Alan White strongly condemning the proposed reduction in funding, and pointing out that Biddulph had given £28,000 (*confirmed by the Chief Officer*) this year and other councils should pull their weight.

Councillor Jackson proposed an addendum to the letter to say that companies of the gambling and pay day loan industry should be approached for funding as they caused some of the debts.

All were in favour of the letter being sent with the addendum.

68. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1 Highways update

Councillors and the Chief Officer met with Cllr Deaville on 21 November 2016; the Chief Officer has also met with officers and engineers from Staffordshire County Council Highways since then. Feedback is as follows:

- Engineers from Staffordshire County Council/ Amey are working on a scheme to improve High Street (south) and South View. This will be discussed further at the Civic Committee in February 2017.
- Feedback in relation to the Lengthsman scheme in 2017/18 onwards is that there will be a relatively informal approach, as there is now. The aim is that there will be regular dialogue between the towns/parishes and the County Community Highway Liaison Teams. The Lengthsman agreement (signed in 2001) details the types of work that will be permitted. It is envisaged that this will be the type of work that the Town Council continues to complete, with regular discussions with the County.
- Following the request from Cllr McGuinness that ownership of the bus shelter by Sainsbury's should be considered, confirmation has been received that Staffordshire County Council are responsible for this. The County do not currently consider lighting in shelters, but may be willing to permit the Town Council to do this.

Councillor Jackson requested that lighting of the bus shelter be added as an item on a future agenda for the General Purposes Committee. This was Agreed.

2 Annual General Account- Biddulph in Bloom

Cllr Sheldon has submitted a copy of the Biddulph in Bloom Annual General Account, year ended 31 January 2016. This is available to view, if required.

3 Local Council Advisory Service training

Zurich Risk Engineering are holding seminars in 2017. These will cover accident & claims review, managing events safely and manual handling. The nearest venue is Northwich on 26 January 2017. Please let the Chief Officer know before Christmas if you would like to attend.

4 Wrekin Housing Trust invitation

Karen Lloyd has been invited to attend a future meeting to discuss progress with the Extracare development.

5 Officer training

The Chief Officer and Officer will be out of the office on Thursday 15 December 2016 to attend a training day in Lichfield.

6 Press release in relation to building works at the Town Hall

Please note that building works will be taking place at Biddulph Town Hall from Monday 9th January to the end of May 2017. The works will be carried out by Link Contracting Services Ltd. of Wigan.

The Town Hall and the SMDC Customer Services desk will remain open throughout the works but access to some areas will be restricted and will change as the works progress.

- The rear car park will be closed to staff and the public for the whole of the works but pedestrian access from High Street to John Street will still be available. Some parking spaces will be reserved for Police use only and access to the private car park at the rear of TSB will be retained.
- The bottle banks will be removed from site for the duration of the works.
- Most of the work will be carried out during normal working hours and there will be some noise and general disruption but the Council will work with the contractor to minimise the effect on our building occupiers, visitors and neighbours. Access into the building will be affected and will change, depending on the current stage of the works, therefore you are asked to please take note of any temporary signage and not to access any areas under control of the contractor.
- Phase 1 will run from the start of the contract until mid-March and will include alterations to the main entrance hall of the building and refurbishment of the main toilets. Both areas will be closed for the whole of Phase 1.
- Meeting room B will be reserved for toilet access for the whole of phase 1 and meeting room C is reserved for the caretakers; neither room will be available for other bookings.
- There are two general toilets in room B with a disabled toilet to the rear. Additional temporary toilet facilities will be provided in the car park at the rear of the building. Public conveniences are also available at the Bus Hub at Wharf Road.
- The Main Hall will be available for existing bookings only and customers will have to use the entrance from the car park. The closure of the main foyer affects the emergency escape routes from the Main Hall, therefore anyone using this space will be advised about the temporary safety arrangements and some minor alterations to room layouts may be necessary. Depending on the number of attendees and the type of event, organisers may be required to provide specific risk assessments for their event.

- Phase 2 is expected to commence in mid-March and will include refurbishment of the ground floor offices, minor works on the 1st and 2nd floors and replacement glazing in most areas.
- We will liaise with our building occupiers regarding the timescale for works in each room.
- The new reception will be open and public access will be via the main entrance or rear doors as appropriate. Availability of the Main Hall will depend on the timescale for window replacements in this area so customers should check with us for more details.

Councillor Redfern requested that a letter is sent to SMDC Property Services demanding that the bottle banks which will be removed, be reinstated following the completion of the works. They are the only ones left in the town centre and are handy for Biddulph in Bloom litter pickers

7 Removal of public payphones consultation

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council has received notification from BT regarding their current programme of intending to remove several public payphone in the Staffordshire Moorlands Area.

The consultation process gives local communities the opportunity to adopt a traditional red 'heritage' phone box; more information including the locations of the telephone kiosks they propose to remove has been sent.

The consultation period end date is the 11th January 2017, therefore if you wish to adopt one of the Telephone Kiosks or object to the removal of one, please let SMDC know by the 4th January 2017, as any responses received by BT after their consultation end date will not be accepted.

BT has put up site notices on the intended telephone kiosks.

When replying please quote the reference GEN/2016/0053.

The consultation affects the following payphones:

- O/S The Talbot, Grange Road
- O/S Biddulph Arms, Congleton Road
- Jcn Lawton Street/ Kingsfield Road
- Jcn Tower Hill Road/ Brook Street

Councillor Wood had mentioned at the last meeting of the Civic Committee that Brown Lees Community Association would like a red telephone kiosk on the village green. It was proposed that a letter is sent to SMDC asking if one was available

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm.

Signed Date