

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2017

PRESENT

The Mayor – Councillor Salt
Councillor Davies
Councillor Hall
Councillor Hart
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Jones
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Lovatt
Councillor McGuinness
Councillor Nicosia
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Swift
Councillor Whilding

Also in attendance:
Councillor Court
Councillor Harper
Councillor Hawley

77.15 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:
The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Wood
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Walley

78 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon in any matters concerning Biddulph in Bloom.
- b Other Disclosable Interests. Reference Minute 86, Councillor Hall is in Biddulph Rotary with the contractor in question.

79 MINUTES

- a It was moved to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 17 January 2017.
- b It was moved to receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Burial Grounds Sub-Committee meeting held on 14 February 2017.
- c It was moved to receive Notes from the Biddulph Grange Country Park meetings on 12 December 2016, 23 January 2017 and 6 February 2017.

Councillor Jones had been encouraged by the support; the meeting had been well attended and the group was getting the Heritage Lottery bid together.

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 1 March 2017 at 6.00 pm

Councillor Hart thought that Councillor Jones was doing a 'sterling job'.

Councillor Jackson was also encouraged by how much had been achieved in such a short space of time. He noted that, historically, granting to former coal mining areas had been poor; this might serve as leverage.

Councillor Jones responded that it was a committed group who were working hard.

80. TRANSPORT COORDINATOR UPDATE

Councillor McGuinness would send a copy of his note to the Chief Officer, and this would be circulated to all Councillors.

Councillor McGuinness updated on local bus routes.

Service number 93 route had been restructured from 1 Jan 2017.

Water main repairs in Gillow Heath had left passengers in Long Valley Road and surrounding area without cover. It was not possible to use a smaller bus on the route. Concern had been expressed by some of the passengers that statistics reported that only 88 people had used the service 93, equating to 2 people per route. It was reported that often the ticket machine had not been working, so journeys were not accurately accounted. It was felt that this could undermine the case for retaining the service. Gillow Heathers were urged to 'use it or lose it'.

Councillor McGuinness had liaised with the water board and D&G and reported that the route would be up and running again on 6 March 2017.

Councillor McGuinness requested that fellow Councillors refer any transport issues to him; he would document and report back.

Councillor Jackson thanked Councillor McGuinness for the report. Councillor Jackson noted another area of concern; staff at the Roaches School parked at the end of St John's Road, making it tight for buses to get through. Councillor Harper agreed; he had reported the matter to Staffordshire Police and been told that it wasn't a problem.

Councillor Hart thanked Councillor McGuinness for his concise report; adding that he took his job very seriously and carried it out with dedication.

81. LENGTHSMAN SCHEME

The detail about the current work of the Lengthsman and suggestions for 2017/18 were considered; it was noted that figures were still confidential and were not discussed at this time.

The Chief Officer directed members to page 2 of the report. The costs of tasks completed over the past 10 years had been collated. The Chief Officer asked members to check the list of tasks to see if they thought it accurate and note any additional work that would be needed in their ward.

The following actions were agreed:

- The Chief Officer should develop a specification, in conjunction with the County Council, for the provision of lengthsman-type tasks within Biddulph, and present a draft of this to the General Purposes Committee. There should be a tender process to award a three-year contract. The purpose of this is to test the market and ensure value for money.

- The budget should be capped at £5,000, for the initial 12-months of the contract to allow time to embed a new arrangement.
- Until the tender process has been concluded, the existing arrangement with the current lengthsman should continue to ensure that the transition is seamless.

Councillor Jones noted that there had not been gritting on Biddulph Moor this winter; he agreed with the ballpark figures and supported the scheme.

82. PARKING ON ZEBRA CROSSING (HIGH STREET)- ITEM REQUESTED BY CLLR ROGERS

Councillor Rogers noted that his concerns had been addressed in part by PCSO Sherratt in Public Participation on the Town Council agenda.

Councillor Sheldon noted that parking in the area around the crossing on the High Street, adjacent to Sainsbury's cash machine, was also very dangerous.

Councillor Hart felt that police officers should take into account the concerns of drivers attempting to get past the parked cars; it was an offence to overtake on a zig zag line, drivers were being put into difficult positions.

Councillor Hart proposed that a letter is sent to Sgt Slinn expressing the concerns about High Street parking and asking officers to discourage people from performing this dangerous and illegal act. All were in favour.

83. TO APPROVE THE USE OF £1000 FROM THE LENGTHSMAN BUDGET FOR IMPROVEMENT WORK AT BIDDULPH VALLEY PARK- ITEM REQUESTED BY CLLR LOVATT

A map of the site and a photograph of the path had been circulated to members.

Councillor Lovatt gave an overview of the park. Staffordshire Moorlands District Council had laid the paths in 2000 under the Safer Routes to School (SRS) scheme. There had been no maintenance carried out and the path, which was originally one metre wide, was now only a few centimetres in width; making it impassable for wheelchair and pushchair users. Councillor Lovatt noted that the path is still part of the SRS and requested funding from the Lengthsman scheme towards the repair

Councillor Jackson added that the path was well used when in a good condition and is steep in some areas; he felt that ideally it should have been tarmacked initially and was now in desperate need of repair. Councillor Jackson proposed that this Council assist financially with the repair; tarmac would last for a considerable time. This was seconded by Councillor Rushton

Councillor Jones fully supported Councillor Lovatt in trying to get the path fixed and asked if there was sufficient funding left in the Lengthsman pot. It was noted that £500 had already been allocated from the Footpaths budget.

The Chief Officer noted that we had applied for and received slightly more than allocated from the Lengthsman scheme the previous year. At present is not clear what additional work would be completed by the Lengthsman before the end of the year.

Councillor Harper expressed concern that the Council should be clear about the funds available.

Councillor Hall fully supported the use of any money left in the Lengthsman scheme.

Councillor Hart proposed that a decision is deferred to the end of the meeting as a confidential item. All were in favour.

84. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1 Police and Crime Commissioner Updates

- The Staffordshire Youth Commission are improving engagement with their peers and discussing priorities, to find out their views on policing.
- Students Jack Copestake and Travis Holland who are both 11 years old and attend James Bateman Junior High School have been named as **winners in a cyber crime competition** run by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire.

Schools and colleges across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent were asked to submit posters designed by students, highlighting how to stay safe from cyber criminals when people are online. Cyber crime is a crime such as fraud, bullying, theft or grooming that is committed online using a device that can access the web, such as smartphones, tablets, computers or other devices.

2 REMINDER Joint SPCA / Staffordshire County Council Workshop 'Developing a Community Based Approach'

Thursday 23rd February 11.30am to 3.30pm

The Association and Staffordshire County Council are together arranging a workshop at which the County Council will outline proposals for inviting parish and town council to work in partnership and/or take full responsibility for a number of services historically vested in the county itself. The workshop will be held in County Buildings, Martin Street, Stafford on Thursday, 23rd February, commencing at 11.30am and continuing over a buffet luncheon.

NALC CEO Jonathan Owen will present the 'key-note' opening address, highlighting the opportunities now open to, and the challenges facing, the local council sector in respect of the 'devolution agenda'. Andrew Donaldson, Head of Strategic Policy & Partnerships of Staffordshire County Council, will then provide a synopsis of the funding issues facing the County Council and an introduction to the current thinking of how it was envisaged certain responsibilities might be transferred successfully to local councils.

Other speakers from SCC will include senior members and /or officers covering specific briefs including (i) highways and associated environmental maintenance and (ii) health and care, notably the issues surrounding social isolation. It is intended that representatives of parish councils which have already entered into partnership with the county for service delivery and/or successfully taken on particular responsibilities will participate in discussion on certain topic areas. More information about the workshop, together with booking details, will be announced shortly.

3 Local Councillor Training Course – Tuesday 7 March 2017

A second course has been arranged for Tuesday 7 March 2017. The topics being discussed are:

- Profile of an Active Council
- Profile of a Local Councillor
- A Good Chairman
- The Role of the Clerk
- The Council as Employer
- The Law and Local Councils
- Administrative Duties
- Section 137
- Council Budgets and Precepts
- What's on the Agenda
- The Localism Act 2011
- Planning
- The Nolan Principles

Date: Tuesday 7 March 2017

Time: 7.00pm – 9.00pm

Venue: Trentham / Rudyard Suite, Staffordshire Place One, Tipping Street, Stafford ST16 2LP

Cost: £20.00 for the first delegate, £15.00 for the second and £10.00 for subsequent delegates from the same affiliated council. The prices are doubled for unaffiliated councils.

4 Notification from EON

EON have advised that they will be removing the street lighting at 20 Victoria Row, Knypersley. The owner has confirmed their approval of this process. The light will not be replaced.