

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 21 JUNE 2016

PRESENT

The Mayor - Councillor Salt
Councillor Baddeley
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 Walley
Councillor Whilding

Also in attendance:
Councillor Harper
Councillor Hawley
Councillor Redfern

9.15. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from
The Deputy Mayor - Councillor Wood

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

11. MINUTES

- a It was **Resolved** to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 17 May 2016.
- b The minutes of the Burial Grounds Sub-Committee meeting held on 13 June 2016 were received.

12. KNYPERSLEY AND KINGSFIELD FIRST SCHOOLS- CROSSING PATROLS (CLLR SALT AND MRS ABIGAIL ROURKE- EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER)

A letter from Mary Anne Raftery (Community Infrastructure Manager- Staffordshire County Council) had been received and was tabled.

Councillor Salt reported that the County Council would be axing the crossing patrol wardens at Knypersley Crossroads adjacent to Knypersley First School and the Gunn

Street junction adjacent to Kingsfield First School. Councillor Salt was furious about this as were lots of other people. The Chair invited Mrs Rourke to address the meeting. Mrs Rourke noted that she had not been formally informed of the decision, but that the Crossing Patrol warden had told her. She had been seeking alternative funding - £3,500 for each school, but felt that it was disgraceful that the school should have to do this. Mrs Rourke noted that the filter lane at the lights at Knypersley crossroads led to drivers 'jumping the lights'. Gunn Street was congested at the T-junction and the situation was exacerbated by the Post Office vans parked all the way up the street. Mrs Rourke had been told that the wardens were needed, but would have to be funded by the schools. Mrs Rourke felt that it was unfair to place the responsibility for funding these patrols onto schools. Mrs Rourke added that any help would be appreciated.

Councillor Rogers was appalled and disgusted. He didn't have a solution, but offered his support.

Councillor Jones was supportive. He felt that a child's life was worth more than £3,500 and that this Council should write in the strongest terms. This was seconded by Councillor Hall.

Councillor Salt agreed and stated that she felt it was important to invite Mrs Rourke to the meeting. Councillor Salt said that she wanted to see more information on the survey results to understand how these locations had been classed as low priority.

Councillor Jackson stated that he knew of the proposal, and that letters had been sent to schools the previous Friday. Councillor Jackson thought there might be affluent areas that could afford to raise the money, but questioned if this area could or should. He thought that at Knypersley there could be issues with the timing of filters. It was noted that there were online petitions in one part of the county already. Councillor Jackson felt that this was just the 'tip of the iceberg' with regard to funding cuts. The Council was encouraging children to walk to school, but not ensuring that they were safe on the way. Ms Raftery had been told to cut her budget. He proposed inviting her to a special meeting and hoped that the issue could be highlighted in the local press. One of the patrols was in Councillor Jackson's ward, the other in Councillor Lawson's. Councillor Jackson hoped that Councillor Lawson would be as angry as he had been.

Councillor Nicosia noted that in 2014 the lighting system had been changed and one lady had retired with her replacement only recently started after 18 months; she was now being given notice. Councillor Nicosia also pointed out that the crossing did not allow sufficient time for people to cross from Park Lane to the school.

Councillor Sheldon thought it was an essential crossing, which also served students from James Bateman Junior High and Biddulph High Schools for that leg of their journey. She added that the Police used to fill in if a patrol was not there.

Councillor Lovatt proposed that the letter be sent forthwith and suggested that if both schools joined together in a petition it may be better.

Councillor Hart added that both the crossings were busy, and gave the problem his full support.

13. THE LENGTHSMAN SCHEME BEYOND MARCH 2017

Councillor Hart had asked that this item was added to the agenda for Councillors to consider. Councillor Hart asked members whether they thought that the Town Council could take on the responsibilities of this scheme beyond March 2017.

Councillor Jones felt that the cost of the scheme was not an issue, but that the tasks completed by the Lengthsman were in need of investigation. He felt that it was a useful service and did not want to lose it.

Councillor Hall noted that tasks were completed on County Council land with their insurance and would like to see clarification of the issues before taking this forward. However, he felt that it was of local benefit and could be better if we could control it ourselves.

Councillor Hart reported on the past few years' costs:

2015/16	£5720
2014/15	£5235
2013/14	£3800

All of which had been reclaimed from the County Council. The system depended on good coordination and had not always been spent to the limit. This Council could claim up to the value of £5000 from Staffordshire County Council.

Councillor Redfern thought this would be a good opportunity to review the scheme in its entirety.

Councillor Hart added that the new procurement policy would give this Council the opportunity to see what could be gained from it.

Councillor Harper concurred with Councillor Redfern. This Council could enhance the scheme and have more control. He suggested the formation of a small working group to progress the idea.

Councillor Jackson expressed concern about a future headline of '300% rise in the precept' rather than praising all the extra things that this Council had taken on. This was another service that the public did not see until it had gone. He was happy that this Council considered it, but added that it was yet another cut elsewhere that the Town Council was taking on.

The Chief Officer would seek more information and bring to a future meeting. The General Purposes meeting in July would include a call for volunteers for the working group.

14. UPDATE FROM TRANSPORT COORDINATOR- CLLR MCGUINNESS

Councillor McGuinness had been invited to the SMDC Overview and Scrutiny Panel to pass on information regarding his role. He would be updating the General Purposes Committee at Biddulph Town Council every two months. He felt that this was a very interesting role and was learning a great deal.

Councillor McGuinness updated members about the 7a route and issues encountered by services within the town, depending on the length of the vehicle.

Councillor McGuinness stated that the town was gridlocked by blue badge holders parking along the High Street and South View, and this was the reason for the amended route.

Councillor McGuinness asked whether the Committee could look again at parking on the High Street, the bus stop outside B&M and making South View one-way.

Councillor Hart stated that there had been a Task and Finish Group set up to look at these issues. The County Council portfolio holder (Mark Deaville) was aware of the issues. In addition, the crossing had not been completed and was still just a temporary tarmac covering. Councillor Hart felt that a letter should be written to Councillor Mark Deaville again to express concerns with the lack of progress.

Councillor Jones agreed and felt that these issues had been dragging on too long. Blue badge holders should not be allowed to cause obstructions.

Councillor Rogers stated the buses and HGVs cause problems on the High Street every day.

Councillor Lawson apologised for his late arrival and suggested that Mary Anne Raftery should also be included in these communications.

Councillor Nicosia noted that the small roundabout at South View made it very difficult to cross the road; pedestrianisation would be a good thing.

It was agreed that Councillor Hart would write in relation to the need to move the bus stop, the 'temporary' repair of the crossing and South View.

Councillor Sheldon also felt that the issue of the traffic wardens should be tackled again. There is no sign of them in the town.

Councillor Hart stated that the 30 minute bays were being used for a lot longer and must be enforced. Clear Street had become a farce. Councillor Hart agreed to include this in his communications and would make enquiries in relation to how this was working in other boroughs.

All were in favour.

15. HERITAGE LOTTERY BID- BIDDULPH GRANGE COUNTRY PARK

The Chief Officer explained that there had recently been an initiative to encourage volunteers to become involved in the management of the Biddulph Grange Country Park. As part of this there had been a guided walk, which the Chief Officer had attended. The Town Council had been asked whether they would like to form part of a group that bid for funding from Heritage Lottery. This could be up to £100,000. A variety of other partners could also be involved. The Chief Officer was keen to seek the views of Councillors as to whether this is something they would consider to be beneficial, and whether further consideration should be given to this project.

Councillor Jones thought this was a great idea as long as all the cash came to the Country Park.

Councillor Nicosia had concerns that we were seeking funding for something that should be funded through SMDC.

Councillor Sheldon felt that there had always been partnerships in relation to the Country Park and that this was a good opportunity to have a look at some of the options for the site. The hydro-power is unique in the Park and could be a tourist attraction if restored.

Councillor Hart felt this was an historic piece of woodland that was well used by constituents.

Councillor Hall felt that the Town Council should get involved and see what was going on.

All were in favour, Councillor Nicosia abstained.

Councillor Hart left the Chair. Councillor Jones took over.

16. RESPONSE FROM SMDC- LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

A letter had been circulated from SMDC in response to the letter that had been sent regarding the Local Plan consultation.

Councillor Hawley did not feel that lessons had been learned and that the Neighbourhood Plan stand had not confused people at the event. This point is irrelevant.

Councillor Redfern felt that this had all been heard before. This is one of the most important decisions that will be made for years. The general public feel that poor communication is done on purpose and then there are conspiracy theories.

Councillor Nicosia felt that this was another placating response. Councillors in Biddulph have been elected to represent and there should be recognition of the status of Town Councillors.

Councillor Lawson felt that Officers were overwhelmed and had some sympathy with the three officers at SMDC. He felt confident that Councillors would fight for the needs of Biddulph people.

17. MEETINGS ATTENDED DURING THE MONTH

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

The Officer took the minutes for the following items

- a Councillor Hawley had attended two Neighbourhood Planning meetings and reiterated his points made at the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 13 June 2016. Councillor Harper congratulated Councillor Hawley on the hard work adding that he had done his very best.

Councillor Jackson added that Councillor Hawley had worked incredibly hard. Councillor Jackson knew this would happen and had never been an advocate of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Harper responded that he would not be dumping the Neighbourhood Plan, just would not be including site allocations.

Councillor Hawley noted that at the workshops all were in favour of the opportunity to comment. Councillor Jones noted that exactly the same thing had happened on Biddulph Moor, but as Councillors we had to serve the greater good.

Councillor Nicosia thought it would be interesting to note in September how many would return to the Neighbourhood Plan meetings when not discussing the sites.

Councillor Lawson added that his mailbox was full of sewage, concerns about the capacity of the works.

**Councillor Hart returned to the room and re took the Chair
The Chief Officer resumed taking the minutes**

- b Councillor Sheldon had attended a meeting of the Fairtrade group the previous Wednesday
- c Councillor Rogers had attended a meeting of the Staffordshire Parish Councils Association. The only part of note was that grants towards Neighbourhood Planning had risen from £7,000 to £9,000.

18. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1 Update of Members interests

A reminder that the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) Code of Conduct requires members to update their Register entry within 28 days of a change in their interests.

2 3 July 2016 engagements

The Mayor's Civic Service starts at 2.30pm at Biddulph Methodist Church.

Cllr McGuinness has also asked that Councillors are invited to a Songs of Praise Celebration Service at St Lawrence's, 6.30-7.30pm to celebrate the start of the Biddulph Festival.

3 Diversion of Vehicular Traffic- Under the Hill and Woodhouse Lane between 6 July and 26 August

Road closures due to new water main work.

4 Press releases from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

- The Staffordshire Victim Gateway offers a free advice and support service for all victims of crime.
- There has been an announcement about the investment in Biddulph Town Hall, which includes new police offices, interview rooms and a new enquiry desk.
- Residents across Staffordshire Moorlands are invited to join a panel to shape the work of local policing in their community. New places are available on the Moorlands Safer Neighbourhood Panel.
- The PCC is reminding parents to help their children stay safe online. More information is available at www.knowaboutcse.co.uk

5 Bateman Walk

The Bateman Walk at the Burial Ground will be closed 4-15 July 2016, for sewage work (Town Council previously sealed the Easement documents). Signs have been displayed in the Burial Ground and appropriate paperwork, particularly in relation to the badgers has been received.

6 Bowling Green Centenary Event

All members of Biddulph Town Council are invited to attend the dedication event at Biddulph Bowling Green, in celebration of the site being dedicated a Centenary Field, the first in Staffordshire. The event will take place on Friday 15 July at 12.00pm. This will be followed by a bowling demonstration by pupils from Woodhouse Academy and a buffet lunch. There will be music and a display of WWI images and memorabilia. Please confirm your attendance with sally.curley@highpeak.gov.uk

7 Springfield Road allotment site

Councillor Jackson asked for an update in relation to this allotment site at the meeting on 17 May 2016.

Wood Goldstraw Yorath has instructed a structural engineer to complete a further assessment of the site, which will incorporate additional information requested by SMDC. This is set to go to the SMDC Planning Committee on 14 July 2016.

Councillor Jackson felt that it is important that the Allotments Sub-Committee meets quickly when this decision has been made.

8 Hearing Loop

The Asset Management team at SMDC have been asked to fit hearing loops in Moorlands House as well as Biddulph. This means a tender exercise will need to be completed. They are developing the specification and will provide an update when this is completed and there is a realistic timescale in place.

Members felt that this was unreasonable and unrealistic, without an urgent timescale. The Chief Officer should ask for dates quoting the Equality Act 2010. This had been requested 2½ years ago. Councillor Hawley noted that he and others had been suffering a long time and that now the District Council had decided to include Moorlands House it would be much longer. It was agreed that the Chief Officer should write for more detailed information.

9 Clock at St Lawrence Church

An updated quote has been received from Smith Derby. The Chief Officer will seek additional quotes and advice from other suppliers, and aim to make this information available for a decision in August 2016.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Signed Date