

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON
TUESDAY 15 MAY 2018**

PRESENT

The Mayor Councillor McGuinness
The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Davies
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Hall
Councillor Hart
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Jones
Councillor Lawson
Councillor Lovatt
Councillor Nicosia
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Salt
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Walley
Councillor Whilding
Councillor Wood

Also in attendance

Councillor Court
Councillor Harper
Councillor Redfern

1.18 ELECTION OF A CHAIR AND DEPUTY

The Mayor called for nominations for Chair of the General Purposes Committee; Councillor Hall nominated Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Rogers. There were no other nominations and Councillor Jones was elected.

Councillor Jones called for nominations for Vice Chair; Councillor Hall nominated Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Rogers. There were no other nominations and Councillor Hart was elected with seven abstentions.

Councillor Hart noted that he had really enjoyed being Chair but he felt it had restricted the comments he could make.

2. APOLOGIES

Councillor Swift

Councillor Hawley had apologised but was not a member of this Committee

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations: Councillor Sheldon any matters pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom.
- ii) Other Interests: None

4. MINUTES

It was moved to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 17 April 2018.

**5. UPDATE ON TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AT KNYERSLEY TRAFFIC LIGHTS-
ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR HART**

Councillor Hart felt that Councillor Nicosia might be able to update members on this item.

Councillor Nicosia noted that Councillor Flunder had said where the new barriers were to be erected; the position had altered and the barriers would now be installed on Park Lane, almost opposite her house. Councillor Flunder hoped to initiate a further phase; this was all that Councillor Nicosia was aware of, it had left her perplexed and very cross.

The Chief Officer noted that there was a response to the letter from this Council in the Chief Officer's report.

Councillor Wood felt that Councillor Nicosia had done a fantastic job. He proposed that a letter is sent requesting an urgent site visit; to include Councillor Nicosia, Councillors Flunder and Lawson and the Chief Officer. Councillor Wood felt that the money had been spent in the wrong place.

Councillor Jones agreed with Councillor Wood and thought this had been a typical County response.

Councillor Salt echoed the sentiment and wondered if the situation had arisen because Councillor Flunder was not familiar with the area. Councillor Salt noted that a School Crossing Patrol outside the Roaches school was important; cars were parked on both sides of the road.

Councillor Jones felt that a holistic solution was needed.

Councillor Lawson agreed with Councillor Wood, but the money should be spent before it was lost.

Councillor Nicosia thought that this discussion was running into the Chief Officer's report; she asked permission to speak on this matter later in the evening. This was agreed.

Councillor Jones noted that Councillor Wood had insisted on a site visit, this was then seconded by Councillor Salt and it was agreed that a letter to this effect would be sent. Councillor Jones asked that this be done forthwith.

**6. PARKING CHARGES ON WHARF ROAD CAR PARK- DECISION ON FUTURE
ACTION FOLLOWING APRIL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

Councillor Jones noted that this Council had agreed to write to the Portfolio Holder asking him to revisit this before the setting of next budget; he asked that this be done forthwith.

Councillor Hart suggested setting up a working group to decide what stance this Council would like take, then take this decision to the District - with one voice.

Councillor Jones felt that this Council should use the resolution made at the previous meeting; we would like an element of free parking.

Councillor Salt felt that a working group was not needed and would delay proceedings; this Council should use the previous consensus.

Councillor Rogers noted that at this moment parking tickets were being issued on land at Walley Street where the officers had no authority, and also at the Band Club site where tickets had been issued against the vehicle of the land owner. Enforcement had tried to remove his vehicle from his land.

Councillor Jones felt this was a separate issue.

Councillor Hall made Councillors aware of the current position. There was three hours free parking in this town on the Sainsbury's car park, 18 hours per day was free at the Wharf Road site; there is 24 hours free parking for disabled people. He added that if the car park on Wharf Road was completely free, people would use it to park all day and it would be full. The car park needed regulation and maintenance, this had a cost implication. He added that Biddulph had the best parking in the Staffordshire Moorlands.

Councillor Salt responded that 18 hours was free for some, but not for those visiting the Health Centre for a 10.30am appointment; an ill person would be unable to walk all the way from Sainsbury's. Councillor Salt thought this was a 'Stealth Tax'. She wondered if a Freedom of Information request would show how much money had been received and what the cost of the car park was. Councillor Salt disagreed with all that Councillor Hall had said and thought it was appalling.

Councillor Hall responded that he had stated the situation now, not what he wanted. This was a starting point for discussions with the District Council.

Councillor Lovatt noted that the government had given instruction that towns should be looking at social, economic and financial well-being for the community. Charges were not necessary then and they are not necessary now; there had never been problems here. Now people drive round and round the town centre looking for on-street parking spaces, causing town centre residents to fear going out and not being able to return to park anywhere near to their home. There is not an appropriate residents parking scheme. A working group will be no help.

Councillor Jackson noted that Councillor Christina Jebb had been able to find a space a number of years ago when she had been delayed when attending the lights switch. The District Council had sold 40% of car park to build the store and the Health Centre; he added that he had always found a space. Councillor Jackson felt that the District Council would never vote for free parking in Biddulph when Leek and Cheadle had to pay. He felt that the last two rises were 'beyond the pale'; you only had to look at trade in the High Street. Councillor Jackson noted that Councillor Rogers had intimated that there was a spike in trade after charging ceased for the day i.e. 3.30pm. Councillor Jackson thought there should be a block of time in the morning for people to access the Health Centre – a clear strategy was needed.

Councillor Jones would like to see first hour of parking free of charge at any time.

Councillor Sheldon noted that sometimes when visiting the town, she cannot find anywhere to park legally. She felt that the District Council had a difficult balancing act; Councillors at Leek and Cheadle would not be happy for Biddulph parking fees to be abolished; a later start for charging might be the answer. Charging should be maintained otherwise some would park there all day; different ways were needed.

Councillor Nicosia noted that Councillor Salt had mentioned requesting information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act rule; Councillor Nicosia had put in a FOI request two weeks previously, but had not received an answer to date; she would bring this to the next meeting. Councillor Nicosia added that she believed that the first two years of charging had caused a substantial loss; she was astounded.

Councillor Sheldon asked how the car park was maintained; a member of the public had approached her about this as their sister had broken an ankle in a rut on the car park. Councillor Sheldon noted that lack of enforcement in the town was a problem; some vehicles are parked on the North High Street for several hours.

Councillor Rogers noted that car park cost £55,000 per year; getting rid of rainwater had been the main cost, before the Health Centre was built.

Councillor Hart noted that there were 50 more car parking spaces on the street than there had been before Sainsbury's opened. There were 135-140 off-street, over and above what we had before. Councillor Hart noted that Mrs Pace (public participation speaker at the April Town Council meeting) had mentioned that Biddulph was comparable to various towns, citing Newcastle as an example. Whitchurch charged 10p per hour and East Staffs was two and half times more expensive than Biddulph. Councillor Hart still proposed a working group be set up to discuss this more fully.

Councillor Jones felt that comparing Biddulph to other towns was spurious; Biddulph was unique, the problems should be addressed. Biddulph had an element of free parking already; Councillor Jones had never paid to park in the town, but he recognised that not all were as fortunate as him

Councillor Hart proposed, seconded by Councillor Hall, to defer the matter to a working group; a vote was taken and the motion was lost.

Councillor Jones proposed that a decision was made to support the idea of an element of free parking, suggesting that the first hour was free of charge; this was seconded by Councillor Whilding.

Councillor Redfern agreed, but thought that times should be included. At the point of payment the first hour should be free and this Council should insist on adequate enforcement both on the car park and on the High Street.

Councillor Jones added that this Council should engage with the District Council and then maybe set up a working group.

Councillor Jones proposed that this Council write to the District Council and insist that for the good of Biddulph people, a one-hour element of free parking is considered.

Councillor Lovatt called for a named vote.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Salt and seconded by Councillor Whilding:

Councillor Rogers	for
Councillor Hall	abstain
Councillor Hart	abstain
Councillor Lawson	abstain
Councillor Baddeley	for
Councillor Sheldon	for
Councillor Nicosia	for
Councillor Jackson	for
Councillor Salt	for
Councillor Lovatt	for
Councillor Walley	for
Councillor Whilding	for
Councillor Wood	for
Councillor Jones	for
Councillor McGuinness	for

7. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1. PCC updates

Sue Arnold, Staffordshire's Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, is calling on businesses and residents to speak out by completing the 2018 National Rural Crime Survey.

The letter had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Councillor Wood wondered if the report was tongue in cheek, we did not need a survey to look at our own statistics; we needed more police on the beat.

Councillor Hart noted that 20 years ago there had been a rural crime squad which was cross border; specialised officers were needed.

Councillor Lawson added that since the PCC had come in, crime had gone down.

2. Response from Staffordshire County Council

Knypersley cross road communication - a letter from Helen Fisher, Cabinet Support Member for Highways and Transport had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Councillor Nicosia was disappointed to read the reply which had taken two months; she was gobsmacked by the content. Three things had been alluded to which would come under exceptional circumstances. Councillor Nicosia noted that the audible beeps stopped before anyone had crossed over the road, this indicated that there was not enough timing.

Councillor Nicosia noted that it had been suggested that the School would fund the training and pay the wages; perhaps seeking sponsorship. It would cost £1500 to train a crossing patrol warden. She added that the crossing had been changed and it was not working; she felt that before long there would be an accident.

Councillor Salt echoed Councillor Nicosia, it was not fair to expect the school to fund the patrol; it was the responsibility of the County Council.

Councillor Whilding had witnessed the problem first-hand the previous Saturday afternoon.

Councillor Harper would love to know what evidence the decision was based on. He added that we must make sure that the observation is carried out a peak times.

The Chief Officer noted that if members wanted the Town Council staff to dispose of paperwork; it should be brought to a meeting or could be left safely at Councils Connect Reception.

Councillor Salt cautioned about storing confidential papers; members should protect themselves in line with GDPR.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEM(S)

Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Chair to move:-

"That, pursuant to Section 100A(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 10 I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the Paragraphs indicated."

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm

Signed Date