

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2015

The Chair requested than an item be added to the agenda re the proposed closure of the Co-operative Bank in Biddulph. This was Agreed.

PRESENT

The Mayor - Councillor Swift
The Deputy Mayor - Councillor Adams
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Davies
Councillor Deane
Councillor Ellsum
Councillor Hall
Councillor Hart - Chair
Councillor Hawley
Councillor Jackson
Councillor Jones
Councillor Lovatt
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Sheldon MBE
Councillor Whilding
Councillor Wood

Also in attendance
Councillor Gibson
Councillor Redfern
Councillor Walley

91.14 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:
Councillor Deane
Councillor Deaville
Councillor Harper

92. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Dispensations. Minute 94; Councillor Wood as a retired employee of Staffordshire FARS. Minute 98; Councillor Jones – as an employee of the NHS.
- b Other Disclosable Interests. Minute 93b; Councillor Hall – as a member of Biddulph Rotary.

93. MINUTES

- a It was **Resolved** to sign the Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 20 January 2015.
- b It was **Resolved** to receive the Minutes of the Burial Grounds Committee held on 10 February 2015.

94. STAFFORDSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Item deferred due to the absence of Councillor Harper

95. STAFFORDSHIRE REGIMENT MEMORIAL AT THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM

Item brought forwards from last meeting (see Minute 91.1). The Chief Officer reported that the past Mayor who had raised these funds had been informed. Councillor Jones felt that this would be a totally appropriate use of the money. It was Proposed by Councillor Hall and seconded by Councillor Jones that the sum of money raised for the Staffordshire Regiment memorial be donated to the Regiment for the purpose of providing a new memorial at the National Arboretum. All were in favour.

96. RED TELEPHONE KIOSK, GRANGE ROAD

Biddulph Lifeline had asked if the Town Council would adopt the red kiosk adjacent to the Talbot Inn to house a defibrillator. Councillor Jones was in favour of the proposal, but asked if Lifeline could be contacted to see what was happening with the kiosk at Rock End, which was in a disgraceful state and full of rubbish. Councillor Jones did not believe that the box had power, but that it did house a defibrillator. Councillor Redfern asked for clarification of the position, the locals had wanted the kiosk to remain in situ. Councillor Jones proposed that this Council proceed with the purchase of the kiosk on Grange Road, seconded by Councillor Hall, all were in favour.

97. COOPERATIVE BANK CLOSURE

It has recently been announced that the Biddulph branch of the Co-op/Britannia was to close. The branch at Congleton was also to close.

It was proposed to write to the Cooperative Bank to ask for a reconsideration of the decision citing the large population of elderly people who used the service and the poor bus services, the nearest alternative given was the Kidsgrove branch, which was two bus journeys away. Councillor Jones thought the bank would lose a lot of business if the branch was closed and he seconded the proposal.

Councillor Hawley had read the news with dismay, the decision would let down hundreds of people, the decision to close branches within 10 miles of each other was an insult to local people, he also expressed disappointment at the response of our MP who he felt should be banging on the door of the Coop. Councillor Hawley proposed that a letter be sent urging that the branch be kept open.

Councillor Lovatt echoed everything said by Councillor Hawley, adding that this would not be fair to the many small groups in the town who used the bank. The Coop would lose a lot of custom; she added that it was a very big building and wondered why it could not use the smaller portion. Councillor Lovatt was also disgusted with response of the local MP.

Councillor Jackson noted that he would be moving his account, and thought many would, and that this would strengthen the three remaining banks. He added that the branch was not economic and the group was rationalising. Councillor Jackson felt that many people could not conduct internet banking and that the local MP should fight for the retention of the branch. He proposed that a letter be written to Ms Bradley and to the Cooperative Bank expressing the Councils utter disgust at the proposal. He added that Biddulph had supported the company for sixty years and it should show some loyalty back.

Councillor Redfern was disappointed that the only part of the Cooperative which was left in Biddulph was the Funeral Director business. Councillor Rogers gave anecdotal reports of unhelpful behaviour from the Coop banking staff. Councillor Sheldon still missed the Coop grocery store; its passing had been a blow to the High Street. She noted that she had found the Hanley Economic to be absolutely excellent.

The Chair remarked that the Hanley Economic had taken over the site from the Cheshire Building Society, and he wondered if another banking institution would like to come into Biddulph. Councillor Gibson remembered the Britannia Building Society taking over the other half of its premises and saying at that time that this was the flagship branch; its imminent closure was causing a lot of hardship to a lot of people.

Councillor Wood thought that the Britannia/Cooperative merger had been a disaster. The town was losing another facility. Biddulph was bearing the brunt of bad decisions yet again. Councillor Wood felt that this Council could put up fight and state our objections. He felt that the MP response had been woeful, adding that campaigns had kept branches open elsewhere.

Councillor Jones said that this Council should make clear that it was not in agreement with the closure and that the Cooperative did not care about Biddulph. The people were complaining about the loss of the Britannia and would vote with their feet. Councillor Hawley said that what Councillor Rogers had said was incorrect; a pass book should not be given to a third party.

The Chair noted that all had seen and read of the merging of the Cooperative with the Britannia over the past few years. Biddulph had a long tradition of supporting the Britannia. Many Biddulph residents were elderly and were traditional where banking was concerned. He felt that the prolonged trauma at the Cooperative bank did not help the Biddulph residents. Councillor Hart proposed that a letter be sent opposing the closure, but that if it was to go ahead the Cooperative should actively seek a replacement financial institution for the site, this was seconded by Councillor Wood. All were in favour.

Councillor Jackson proposed that a letter also be sent to the local MP asking her to intervene on behalf of the people of Biddulph to ask them to stay in the town or to persuade the Cooperative to find a buyer for the site. This was seconded by Councillor Hall. All were in unanimous agreement. The letters to be sent forthwith.

98. COMMUNICATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

- a Letter received from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) seeking views on a proposed new model of care.

Councillor Wood had attended a presentation at the District Council, and the CCG was now firming up proposals. He was concerned about the loss of beds, he knew that there must be a balance; if the saved funding was being put back into the community all was well and good, but he felt that the infrastructure was not yet in place to provide critical care in a person's own home.

Councillor Jackson challenged the documents use of statistics, adding that most people preferred to be treated at home, but without the resources this would not get off the ground. He added that the Day unit could have helped in this process, and he would certainly attend one of these consultations.

Councillor Jones noted that capacity had not increased and he felt that people were sent home too soon. He added that both Leek and Cheadle had local hospitals and minor injuries unit, Biddulph had none. Councillor Wood noted that there was no information to comment on.

- b A copy of the unexamined Biddulph in Bloom accounts to January 2015 received.

- c The District Council is considering making use of five new powers within the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, namely: *Injunctions to Prevent Nuisance & Annoyance (IPNA)*; *Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO)*; *Community Protection Notice (CPN)*; *Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO)*; *Closure Power*. Copy of Report received.

99. MEETINGS ATTENDED DURING THE MONTH

No reports.

100. LENGSTHMAN WORK

Members were reminded to report items for the Lengthsman, along with a sketch location plan. A member of the public had email a list of road signs which he felt needed cleaning. The list would be passed to the Lengthsman.

Councillor Redfern informed members that the railings at New Buildings which were in a decrepit state were to be replaced by Staffordshire County Council.

100. CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

1 Trees at Churchyard/Burial Ground

We have received reports of two leaning trees during the past few days. One is at the front of the church ~ the large lime nearest to the church hall ~ and may need to be removed. The second is a small-ish birch tree on the boundary of the churchyard/burial ground. I have asked the District Council tree officer for advice and informed the church office.

2 Libraries Consultation Update

Information received that the final proposals on the Libraries consultation will be considered by the County Council's Cabinet on 18 February. Biddulph Library is recommended to remain as a County Council Managed/Delivered Library, where the County Council will continue to manage/deliver the full library service, sharing space where possible with a wide range of partners. The recommendations for opening hours are to remain open until 6pm on a Tuesday and to close an hour earlier (ie at 5pm) on Monday, Wednesday and Friday = a saving of 3 hours per week (a £3,120 saving per annum). It is suggested that the community may be given the opportunity to extend the opening hours through the use of volunteers.

It was agreed to write forthwith to Staffordshire County Council resubmit the suggestions made previously; that the library should open at 9.30 and close at 5.30 for the three days

3 Fairtrade Town

Biddulph Fairtrade is organising 'The Great Biddulph Fairtrade Bake-off' event between 10am-12 noon on Saturday 7 March in Sainsbury's Café. All are most welcome.

4 Co-op/Britannia Biddulph Branch Closure

It has recently been announced that the Biddulph branch of the Co-op/Britannia is to close. The branch at Congleton is also to close. The Chair asked me to add this as an emergency item to the agenda, as this closure will greatly disadvantage local people.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm

SignedDate.....